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Pre-school leadership and the Influence this
has upon Outcomes for Young Children: a
comparative study

Doctorate in Education (EdD)
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Abstract

This research focuses on pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children, situating it within a broader framework of social inequality specifically in regard to the educational achievements of disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. As the study is comparative in nature the findings are discussed in relation to settings that have been graded by Ofsted as '*outstanding*' and '*requires Improvement*'.

The research takes into account that the social inequality associated with childhood poverty has a negative impact on outcomes for children, particularly in their earliest years. It is premised upon the known importance of good quality early years provision as an effective means to ameliorate the effects of childhood poverty on outcomes for young children and that effective leadership of early years settings is a defining factor of good quality provision.

A mixed methods approach was adopted to explore the influence that pre-school leadership has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children. Qualitative data collated from four semi-structured interviews, along with each setting's most recent Ofsted report were analysed through a process of content analysis. School performance data were analysed to provide the contextual background of the participating settings. Descriptive statistics are used to situate the local authority's performance in the context of other local authorities regionally and nationally and enable direct comparisons to be made between settings.

Key findings from this study indicate that, in settings deemed by Ofsted to be '*outstanding*' less affluent children made good progress towards the early learning goals, this demonstrates effective leadership within those settings. Where a setting was deemed to '*require improvement*' children did not make good progress, this indicates that leadership in that instance was less effective.

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I would also like to express my gratitude to all those authors (too numerous to mention) who have unknowingly contributed to my research. They have provided a platform from which to launch this study and to further my own knowledge.

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Glossary

BERA	British Education Research Association
BL	Bureaucratic Leadership
CA	Content Analysis
CIF	Common Inspection Framework
CMPS	Centre for Management in Policy Studies
CPS	Child Poverty Strategy
DCSF	Department for Children Schools and Families (2008)
Demographic data	Refers to data collated by external agencies which is accessible to Schools
DfE	Department for Education (2012, 2014, 2017)
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment (1996, 2000, 2002)
DL	Distributed Leadership
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECM	Every Child Matters
ELEYS	Effective Leadership in Early Years Study
ELGs	Early Learning Goals
EPEY	Effective Pedagogy in Early Years
EPPE	Effective Provision of Pre-school Education
EPPSE	Effective Provision of Pre-school and Secondary Education
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYPP	Early Years Pupil Premium

FSM	Foundation Stage Profile
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
IL	Instructional Leadership
KS1	Key Stage 1 (ages 5 – 7 years)
LA	Local Authority
LSSP	Local Sure Start Programmes
NAO	National Audit Office
NCSL	National Centre for School Leadership
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education and Children’s Services and Skills
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Education
On- entry Data	When children enter pre-school they are observed and assessed to establish their initial level of development.
Pre-school education	This refers to the education of young children aged between 3 and 5 years
PP	Pupil Premium
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
SEF	Self- Evaluation Form
SES	Socio Economic Status
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
TL	Transformational Leadership
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

Chapter 1

1.1 Chapter Structure

This Chapter outlines the rationale behind the research that is situated within a framework of social inequality associated with childhood poverty. It provides the context for the research in terms of the demographic location of participating settings and the policy context guiding early years provision and practice.

Definitions of key terms relating to the various aspects of the research will be discussed with a view of leadership being offered.

1.2 Rationale for the study

The purpose of this research is to explore pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children. My interest in this topic stems from my previous experience within early years both as a practitioner and as a strategic manager for early years workforce development within a local authority. As part of this role to determine the continuous professional development needs of early years practitioners I conducted several training needs analyses, that revealed that pre-school leaders/managers within the local authority had not received any formal leadership training. These findings support the work of Muijs et al. (2004) who identified that there was a lack of specific training in early years leadership available to leaders within the sector.

Given my interest in the topic and in recognition of the fact that Sylva et al. (2004) identified that strong leadership was an essential element of good quality provision I began writing leadership programmes for pre-school leaders and managers at both undergraduate and post-graduate level. The phenomenon of strong

leadership will be explored in more depth in Chapter 2. As a senior lecturer in Education I teach leadership and management to leaders and managers from a range of settings. Anecdotal evidence gained from conversations with students has led me to believe that pre-school leaders in this instance were not fully aware of the influence that their practice has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children. Also, little consideration appeared to be given to the demographic influences within their localities that also impact upon children's outcomes. This combined with my interest in, and experience of, early years practice acted as the catalyst for my research. It is also hoped, that the findings arising from the research will provide the basis for the development of a new conceptual framework to guide early years leadership practice.

1.3. Defining key terms

To provide clarity for the reader it is necessary to define the key terms relating to this research. The following sections will define and discuss definitions associated with early years, leadership and childhood poverty.

1.3.2 Leadership

Coleman (2005) draws a distinction between management and leadership suggesting that management refers to the operational aspects of an organisation and is task orientated. Leadership however appears to be more abstract in nature and is as Coleman (2005) explains more concerned with the development of an environment where practitioners are motivated, and inspired to work cooperatively to ensure that children receive the best possible care and education. Leithwood et al. (2010) expand upon Coleman's definition of leadership suggesting that within

their Organisational Pathway (p678) it is the organisational structures, policies, and procedures that serve to motivate and inspire practitioners. Bush (2008) suggests that the concepts of leadership and management are intertwined further acknowledging that within educational leadership there is a tension between the two. Leithwood et al.'s (2010) explanation of their Organisational Pathway highlights the inter-connectivity between the concepts of leadership and management, as organisational structures and policies are often tasks associated with management as described by Coleman.

Within the field of early years the concept of leadership has proven difficult to define. Rodd (2001) argues that this is attributed to the fact that it is interpreted differently by different people and as such suggests that it is difficult to develop a conceptual framework specifically relating to early years. More recently, Aubrey et al. (2013) also highlight the difficulty associated with defining leadership specifically in relation to early years suggesting that leadership within early years is variable across provision, and is therefore difficult to define. Ofsted (2015b:11) state that '*excellent teaching needs strong leadership*' and suggest that strong leadership is present when leaders are visionary and see the potential in both staff and children. They further argue that strong leaders foster an environment where '*learning flourishes*' (p11).

Within the context of this study the phrase 'pre-school leaders' is used to refer to those who have responsibility for leading and supporting the learning and development of children aged between birth and five years (see Appendix 2). For the purpose of this research the term pre-school leadership will represent the way in which leaders as identified in Appendix 2, ensure that the needs of children

within their settings are met. While this may appear to be a reductionist definition of leadership it encompasses all aspects of practice, however variable, that collectively contribute to improving outcomes for young children.

1.3.3 Early years

For the purpose of this research the term early years will be discussed in relation to English pre-schools within the maintained, private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sectors providing early education and care to children aged from birth to five years. In England pre-school settings in receipt of government funding to deliver early education and care to young children must have regard for the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (EYFS)(Department for Education (DfE) (2017) that sets out the learning and development requirements for children aged from birth to five years. Outcomes for less advantaged children will be discussed in relation to the educational outcomes as identified in the EYFS.

In recognition that in the first five years of life children enter into a period of rapid growth and development successive governments have, and continue to, invest in the provision of early years education in England. In addition to pre-school provision within schools, pre-school provision in the PVI sectors plays an important role in supporting the government to achieve its aims to increase the provision and quality of early education for children aged from birth to five years. It is worth clarifying that within the context of English primary schools the term pre-school is used in reference to three and four year old children accessing their entitlement to free early education.

A further point of clarification concerns governing bodies. Within this study the term 'leaders' is discussed in relation to those practitioners who have the main leadership role within their settings. This excludes the role of the governing body within maintained provision. The rationale for this exclusion is two-fold, firstly, currently within England all State maintained schools are required to establish a governing body that is constituted under the '*School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012*' (DfE, 2017:3), this requirement does not apply to pre-school provision within the PVI sectors. Therefore it was felt that to include governing body representatives from the maintained settings in this study would not give an accurate comparison across settings.

Secondly, the role of the governing body is, as stated by DfE (2014a:6), concerned with setting the '*strategic direction*' of the school this includes being held accountable for the expenditure of school budgets, including the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) (DfE 2014a). Drawing upon my experiences as a Governor with specific duties to monitor the expenditure of the EYPP, responsibility for the day-to-day expenditure of this funding is devolved to the head teacher. My role as responsible Governor is to ensure that strategies funded by the EYPP are linked to identified priorities within the school improvement plan (SIP), and that staff monitor and evaluate the impact that these have on outcomes for eligible children. Given that this study is concerned with the day to day leadership practices within the participating settings my experiences as responsible Governor for the EYPP further support the rationale to exclude representatives of the governing body from the sample in this this study.

1.3.4 The role of Ofsted

With regard to the quality of early years provision in England pre-school settings registered to deliver early education and care to young children are regularly inspected by Ofsted to determine the extent to which they meet the education and care needs of children. Within the early years sector the role of Ofsted is to regulate and inspect services to ensure consistency in the quality of provision for children from birth to five years of age. In their article that explores the inspection processes in Sweden, Scotland and England, Baxter and Clarke (2013) explain that Ofsted is the mechanism through which quality improvement within the English education system is maintained, especially since the return to a more centralised governance of schools.

While it is acknowledged that Ofsted inspections are fundamental to the quality assurance process Gaertner and Pant (2011), question the validity of Ofsted inspections. They argue that Ofsted inspections merely provide a 'snap shot' (p90) of practice and in light of this question whether inspections accurately reflect the everyday practices within schools. Gaertner and Plant also explain how inconsistencies associated with the inspection process could impact upon the reliability of inspection judgements. They contest the reliability of inspection judgements on the basis that schools are '*rarely revisited on the same day and by the same inspectors to verify results*' (p90). In addition, they also suggest that observations made throughout inspections could be influenced by an inspector's own bias. This then raises questions concerning the extent to which observations of practice can be '*generalised beyond the individual inspector*' (p90), and the reliability of the inspection process.

Another critique of Ofsted reports is explained by Case et al. (2000). In their study they explored teacher perceptions of the value of Ofsted inspections as a means to improve practice. Case et al. conducted a longitudinal study spanning three years in which they interviewed teaching staff from ten schools across three LAs. The findings within their study highlight how prior to the inspection, teaching staff felt they had to '*get ready*' (p612) for the inspection and that this often put additional pressure on them as they felt that the process of readiness often conflicted with the overall ethos of the school.

Anecdotal evidence gleaned from my work with pre-schools resonate with the views of Case et al. as it has been observed that pre-schools also prepare for Ofsted inspections. This then raises questions concerning the value of inspections as Ofsted inspectors' observations may not be an accurate reflection of the pre-school's everyday practice. This resonates with the findings of Gaertner and Plant (2011) above. Case et al. (2000) also noted that one year after the inspection teachers felt that the inspection process had '*minimal or no impact*' (p617) on their practice. However, it is worth noting that at the time of writing minimal time is afforded to schools/settings to prepare for Ofsted inspections, therefore, this reduces the time settings have to 'prepare' for the inspection.

It is also worth noting that another major limitation concerning the validity of Ofsted reports is that they are not academically peer reviewed and therefore the integrity of the data within the reports could be questioned. Furthermore, Ofsted does not generally draw upon external data to inform judgements made within their reports that is they do not take into consideration demographic data such as childhood poverty that could impact upon children's performance. Gaertner and Plant (2011)

suggest that Ofsted inspections were to some extent target driven that is, the quality of teaching and learning is determined by pupils' progress towards predetermined targets. Therefore it could be argued, that Ofsted reports that draw upon school performance data alone do not provide explanations that lie behind children's performance in a given locality and, subsequently they may not be an accurate reflection of progress made by children. Whatever perceptions of Ofsted we have, it has to be noted that in England they are the force that drives quality improvement in schools (Ofsted 2017). Therefore, we cannot ignore the judgements made arising from the inspection process.

1.3.5 The early years inspection process

DfE (2017) advises that all children are expected to reach age-related early learning goals (ELGs) by the end of their reception year in school. Pre-school leaders have a statutory obligation to monitor and report children's progress towards the ELGs and provide this information to the DfE via their local authority (LA). At the end of their reception year all children are assessed to determine their progress towards the ELGs. All pre-school leaders must prepare a '*Foundation Stage Profile*' (FSP) (DfE 2017:14) for each child that accurately reflects the child's level of development. That is, whether they have met, exceeded, or not yet reached the expected level of development.

Throughout the inspection process Ofsted inspectors consider five main aspects of provision. These include overall effectiveness, the quality of teaching and learning, personal development, behaviour and welfare, and outcomes for children. In addition, Ofsted inspectors observe and assess the effectiveness of the leadership

and management within the setting. Pre-school settings are judged against a four point rating scale, the grade awarded represents the extent to which they are meeting the needs of children, and the quality of their provision.

‘Grade 1- Outstanding, that is the quality of teaching and learning is deemed to be outstanding along with all other aspects of provision.

Grade 2 – Good, that is the quality of teaching and learning is deemed to be good along with all aspects of provision.

Grade 3 – Requires improvement, there are aspects of provision which require improvement.

Grade 4 – Inadequate, that is all aspects of provision require improvement’.

(Ofsted 2015b:28)

This study will explore how pre-school leadership influences outcomes for disadvantaged children in pre-school settings that have been graded by Ofsted as *‘outstanding’* and *‘requires improvement’*. However, in view of the concerns raised above regarding the value and reliability of Ofsted inspection judgements, the findings within the Ofsted inspection reports for the participating settings will be triangulated with school performance data and participants’ responses. It is hoped that this will enable comparisons to be made between settings to identify aspects of good practice that will inform recommendations for practice.

1.3.6 Childhood poverty

For several decades, many definitions of poverty have been articulated, Townsend (1979) defines poverty as a citizen’s lack of basic resources to enable them to live healthy lives and participate fully in society. Unicef (2012:13) expands upon

Townsend's definition suggesting that '*relative poverty occurs in households in which the disposable income, when adjusted for family size and composition, is less than 60% of the National median income*'. Thus suggesting that poverty is the direct result of the level of income a family receives, also that this is a relative situation that may vary between families. Poverty can also be defined in terms of absoluteness, that is, absolute poverty exists when families do not have the means to meet their basic needs such as food, water, shelter or access to medical care that can result in severe deprivation (Davis & Sanchez-Martinez, 2015).

Absolute poverty is generally discussed in relation to developing countries rather than the United Kingdom (UK). However, Sen (1983) elucidates that absolute poverty can be observed within the UK when families do not have the minimum income to meet their basic needs over a prolonged period of time. FullFact (2017) explain that, irrespective of the definition of poverty referred to, children are more at risk of poverty than the general population. They state that the number of children living in absolute poverty within the UK has declined since 1994 (see Table 1 below). While the number of children living in relative poverty has also reduced, the percentage of children in the UK living in relative poverty is greater than those living in absolute poverty (see Table 2 below). While the levels of child poverty appear to have fallen in both categories, it could be argued that table 1 does not accurately reflect the exact number of children living in absolute poverty. The measure used to ascertain the level of child poverty in the tables below was based upon the level of household income; this does not take into consideration homeless children.

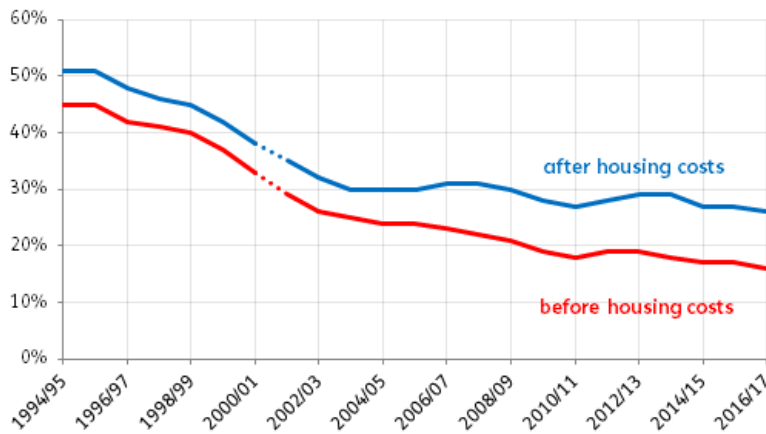
The Children's Society (n.d.) identified that 100,000 children go missing every year, of these, approximately 17% of children end up sleeping on the streets.

These children are not included in the figures presented below. Therefore, it could be argued that the level of children living in absolute poverty within the UK is higher than that depicted in table 1. Data within tables 1 and 2 were provided by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) (2016/17).

Table 1: Number of children living in absolute poverty in the UK

Absolute child poverty

Percentage of children in absolute poverty over time in the UK*



*Figures are for Great Britain up to 2001/02, and for the United Kingdom from 2002/03.

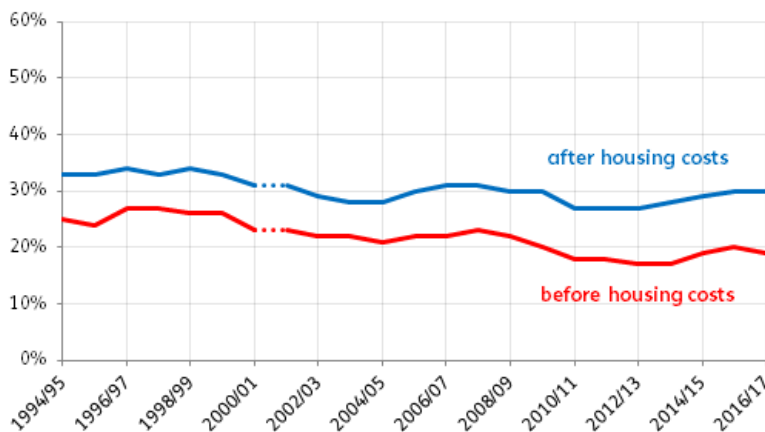
Source: DWP, Households Below Average Income 2016/17, Table 4a

Full Fact

Table 2: Number of children living in relative poverty in the UK

Relative child poverty

Percentage of children in relative poverty over time in the UK*



*Figures are for Great Britain up to 2001/02, and for the United Kingdom from 2002/03.

Source: DWP, Households Below Average Income 2016/17, Table 4a

Full Fact

In recognition of the continued high levels of poverty within the UK, in 1999 the Labour Government under the leadership of Tony Blair made a commitment to end child poverty by 2020, and to halve this by 2010. However, Brewer et al. (2010) in their review of the progress made towards the Government's aspiration to reduce income related child poverty to 10% by 2010, identified that this target had not been met. Rather than reducing child poverty, they state that '*child poverty rose in three consecutive years after 2004- 05*' (p10). They further acknowledged that in 2010 the level of child poverty in the UK remained high. In response to the continued high levels of child poverty, in 2010 the Labour Government, with the full support of all Parties, enshrined the commitment to eradicate child poverty in statute. The Child Poverty Act (2010) set out the Government's commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020. It states that progress toward the eradication of child poverty should be tracked using four *measures, these are:*

'Relative low income,

Combined low income and material deprivation,

Absolute low income,

Persistent poverty (defined as being in poverty for 3 consecutive years)'

(pp 2-3).

The measures identified within the Child Poverty Act primarily focus upon household income and family position within the economy. Economic theories of poverty as described by Davis and Sanchez-Martinez (2015:24) seek to explain poverty in '*monetary terms*'. However, Sen (1983) debates that poverty cannot be solely explained in terms of income level. Field (2010), in his review of poverty and life chances concurs with Sen, and argues that poverty is more than income, suggesting instead that it is a combination of lack of opportunity, aspiration and

stability, a view supported by HM Government (2011:12). Cooper and Stewart (2013) argue that one cannot ignore the impact that income level has upon children's development stating '*Low income affects direct measures of children's well-being and development, including their cognitive ability, achievement and engagement in school, anxiety levels and behaviour*' (p2). However, they too concur with the view of Sen (1989) that economic theories of poverty cannot provide a holistic explanation of the root causes of poverty.

Sen (1983) proposed that poverty should be viewed in relation to '*a deprivation of basic capabilities*' (p159). The capability approach as proffered by Sen, suggests that there are basic capabilities required to live a meaningful life such as: making a positive contribution to society, living a normal healthy life, being treated as an equal. It could be argued that viewing poverty through the lens of a capability approach emphasises the inequalities associated with poverty, that is, those in poverty are at risk of health inequalities such as premature mortality. Marmot and Bell (2012:18), argue that health inequalities are aligned to social inequalities, that is, the '*lower a person's social position, the worse his or her health is*'.

In recognition of the continued high levels of child poverty with in the UK in 2010, the Government (H.M. Government, 2011) outlined a new approach to tackling child poverty. In their Child Poverty Strategy (CPS) they recognise that income measures alone do not reveal information concerning the origins of poverty, and the impact that it has upon children's lives. While it is acknowledged within the CPS that income levels are central to the standard of living experienced by families, it also outlines a '*more co-ordinated effort to achieve social justice*' (p11).

The aims identified within the CPS are clearly linked to the research questions guiding this study. For example:

Aim 1: Is to have a stronger focus on supporting low income families who are either, in employment, or in receipt of benefits to help them '*overcome barriers to work*' (p11). This links to research question 3 (RQ3) specifically in regard to how pre-school leaders use policy to inform their practice.

Aim 2: The focus of aim 2 is upon early intervention to improve children's development and educational attainment. Allen (2011) recognises the need to raise educational achievements as a means improve outcomes for young children, particularly those in poverty. He advocates that early intervention in children's learning and development is crucial if children are to be ready for school (p46). Research question 2 (RQ2) seeks to explore how pre-school leaders ensure that the needs of disadvantaged children in their setting are met through effective intervention strategies.

Aim 3: In this aim greater focus is placed upon the family in the context of their communities. Research question 1 (RQ1) seeks to ascertain the extent to which pre-school leaders understand the communities they serve. To be able to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged children are met, pre-school leaders must identify the issues associated with child poverty in their localities.

Evans and Schamberg (2009) recognise the impact that family income has upon educational achievement, suggesting that there is a correlation between the length of time children are exposed to childhood poverty and their continued educational

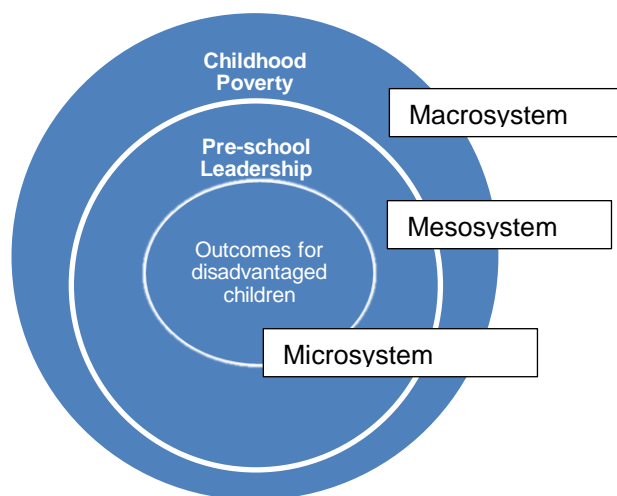
achievement. The findings of Evans and Schamber are confirmed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Education(OECD) (OECD, 2017), that makes explicit the link between attendance at pre-school and academic achievements. They argue that greater exposure to pre-school experiences had a positive influence on outcomes at the age of fifteen years, and further explain that early access to pre-school plays an important role in child development, particularly among children from less affluent families. With this in mind, the definition of poverty underpinning this research is that expressed within the CPS, that is, '*Poverty is about more than income; it is about a lack of opportunity, aspiration and stability.*' (HM Government, 2011:12) as articulated by Field (2010). As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the research is situated within a broader framework of social inequality that is underpinned by Davis and Sanchez-Martinez (2015:24) notions of social exclusion and social justice. They acknowledge those macro influences that are beyond the control of the individual that serve to limit the opportunities available to those families living in poverty.

1.4 Conceptual framework

It has been acknowledged that the social inequality associated with childhood poverty has a negative impact on outcomes for children, particularly in their earliest years (Pugh, 2010, Ridge 2011, Engle et al. 2011). Research has also acknowledged the importance of good quality early years provision as an effective means to ameliorate the effects of childhood poverty on outcomes for young children, and that effective leadership of early years settings was a defining factor of good quality provision (Duncan, 1998; Melhuish, 2004; Taggart et al. 2015). It is the intention of this study to build upon previous research and explore pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon outcomes for disadvantaged

children, and thereby provide greater insight into the inter-relationship between outcomes for young children associated with social inequality and pre-school leadership. Figure one below identifies the three main strands of the conceptual framework underpinning this research that influence outcomes for disadvantaged children. The strands are depicted in relation to Bronfenbrenner's (1986) Ecological Theory. In his theory, Bronfenbrenner identifies factors that influence children's development, locating these within environmental systems in relation to their proximity to the child. Within the microsystem one of the main factors that directly influences children's outcomes is their developmental level upon entry into pre-school. Bronfenbrenner explains that there are also factors beyond the child's immediate environment that have an influence on their outcomes these, he explains, are located within the mesosystem. Within the context of this research, the primary factor that influences outcomes for young children located within the mesosystem is pre-school leadership. Moving beyond the realms of the child and pre-school, Bronfenbrenner identified that within the macrosystem there were societal factors beyond the control of the child, and pre-school that influence outcomes for young children, these include childhood poverty. This research explores the interplay between childhood poverty, pre-school leadership and the influence that this has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework locating child poverty, pre-school leadership and outcomes for disadvantaged children within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory.

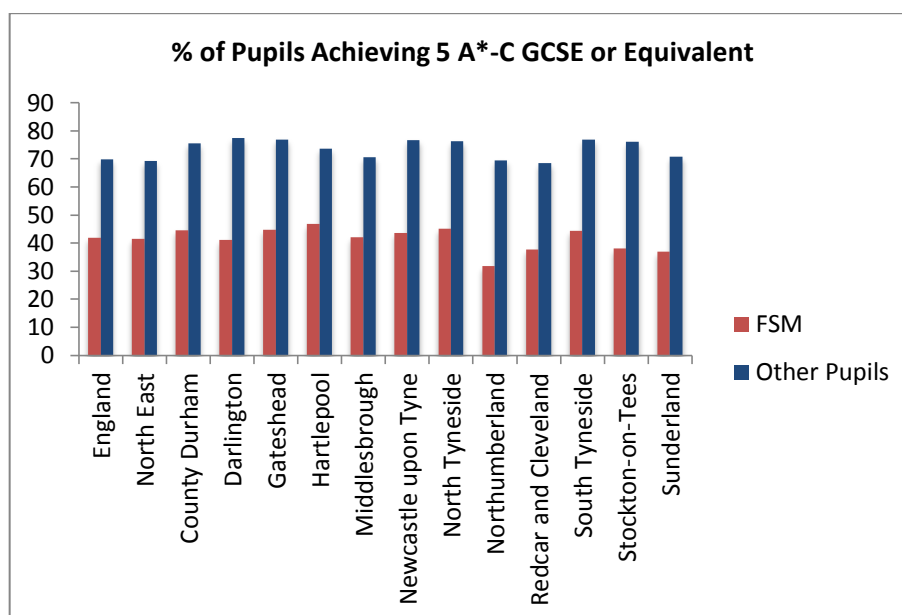


1.5 Research context

1.5.1 Demographic Context

This research was conducted within a local authority in the North East of England that is situated within an area of economic disadvantage. The North East Child Poverty Action Group (NECPAG) (2015) identified that the North East of England had the fourth highest rate of child poverty in England. During 2016 -17 within the participating LA out of 6097 children 31.6% were living in child poverty (End Child Poverty 2017). HM Government (2011:42) identified that childhood poverty negatively impacts upon the educational attainment of children from low income families, highlighting a gap in educational achievements between them and their more advantaged peers. This disparity is evident within the local authority, as 45% of disadvantaged children achieve five or more GCSEs grades A*- C, compared to 77% of all other children. Children within the local authority in both categories perform less well than the national average, that is, 42% of children from less affluent families and 70% of all other children.

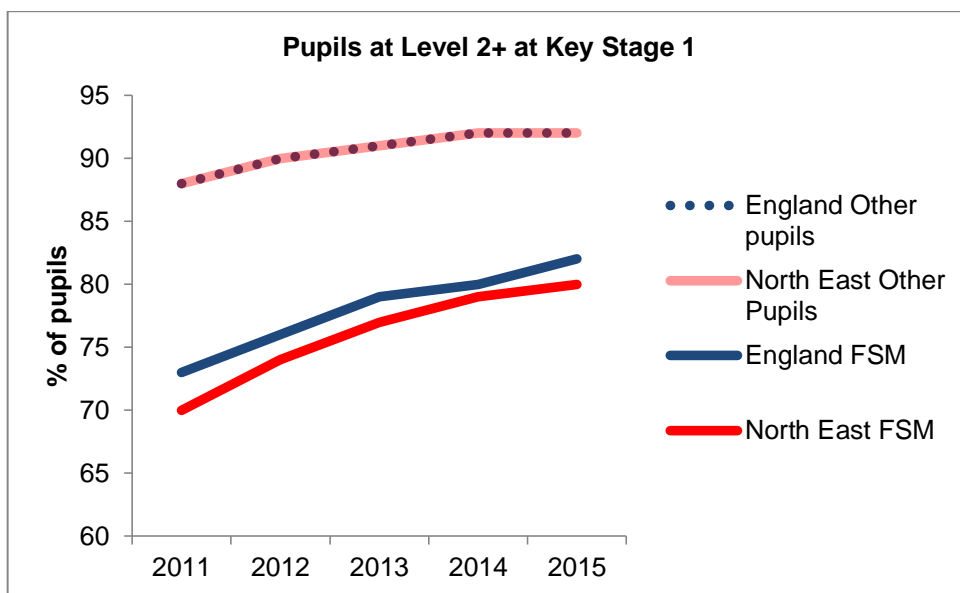
Table 3: Percentage of Pupils Achieving 5 A*-C GCSE or Equivalent in the North East



Data retrieved from NECPAG (2015)

In terms of the educational achievements of children at the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1) figures demonstrate the gap between the educational achievements of children classified as being disadvantaged and all other pupils. Within the North East 80% of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieved level 2+ (L2+) at the end of KS1, compared to 92% of all other children. With regard to disadvantaged children achieving L2+ at the end of KS1 in the North East of England 80% of children in receipt of FSM achieve L2+. This is below the national average of 82%. This further demonstrates that the gap in educational achievements between both groups of children exists across different educational phases. Ofsted (2015a) confirms this view as they state that *'there is no sign of the gap narrowing'* (p6)

Table 4: Education achievements of pupils at the end of key stage 1



Data retrieved from NECPAG (2015)

The data provided in Tables 1 and 2 provide the demographic background for this research and highlight the inequality between educational achievements of children classified as being disadvantaged and those more fortunate. The performance data of young children at the end of the reception year will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

1.5.2 Policy context

This section provides an overview of policy developments relating to early years provision and practice. The National Audit Office (NAO) (2001:1) define policy as being *'the transformation of government's political priorities and principles into programmes and courses of action to deliver desired changes'*. In England the Centre for Management in Policy Studies (CMPS) was formed by the Cabinet Office in 1999, the overarching aim of which was to provide a robust approach to policy development. In their report Bullock, et al. (2001) identified that many policies were informed by evidence based research and experts in the field. This

is reflected within early years. Early years practice has, for example, been informed by research such as the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (Sylva et al. 2004) and the review of the EYFS (Tickell, 2011) these studies will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 2.

With regard to policy developments within education, the OECD is at the cutting edge of education policy development globally and is instrumental in informing policies relating to educational leadership within a school context in England.

While the OECD does not necessarily focus upon leadership within the context of early years specifically, it could be argued that aspects of policy relating to school leadership are transferrable and therefore can be applied to leadership within pre-school provision especially as it is acknowledged that school leadership plays a key role in improving school outcomes (Pont, et al. 2008). It is only recently that the OECD has begun to focus on early years provision as a discrete phase of education. This is recognition of the growing importance of early childhood education and care (ECEC) as a policy priority (OECD 2017).

Over the last twenty years successive governments have increased their support for early years which has resulted in a plethora of new policies being developed along with the introduction of statutory curriculum guidance for early years provision (see Table 5), the overarching aim of which was to improve outcomes for young children. Brewer et al. (2010:9) recorded that in 1993 the United Kingdom (UK) had its highest level of child poverty since 1961 with 29% of children living in child poverty. When the Labour government came into power in 1997 this figure had fallen to 26.1%, with the North East of England having the highest level of child poverty in England, 37.2% of children in the North East of England were

living in poverty at that time. In light of the continuing high levels of child poverty the new Labour government introduced a range of policies to reform early years services and improve the lives of the poorest families.

Table 5: Policy timeline relating to early years 1989 – 2017

Date	Parliamentary Statutes	Date	Curriculum guidance for the early years	Date	Changes to the regulatory system for early years
1989	The Children Act	DfEE 1996	Desirable learning outcomes	1989	Day care Inspections augmented by the L.A.
1998	The National Childcare Strategy	2000	The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage	2001	Introduction of National Standards – setting inspected by Ofsted
2004	Every Child Matters: Change for Children The Children Act	DfEE 2001	National Standards for day care and childminding	2013	Introduction of the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework
2005	The Disability Discrimination Act	DfES 2002	Birth to Three Matters	2015	Common Inspection Framework (1 st revision)
2006	The Childcare Act	DfCSF 2008	The Early Years Foundation Stage	2017	Common Inspection Framework (2 nd revision)
2010 2011	The Equality Act The Child Poverty Act The Child Poverty Strategy	DfE 2012	The Early Years Foundation Stage (1 st revision)	2018	Common Inspection Framework (3 rd revision)
2014	The Children and Families Act	DfE 2014	The Early Years Foundation Stage (2 nd revision)		
2016	The Welfare Reform and Work Act The Childcare Act	DfE 2017	The Early Years Foundation Stage (3 rd Revision)		

The policies identified in Table 5 highlight the fluidity of the early years landscape as with each newly elected government or departmental minister, political ideologies changed and subsequently, changes to statutes were made, which then impacted on the way in which early years services were delivered.

The Labour government, for example, in their National Childcare Strategy (NCS), set out to reform early years services to support the development of affordable, good quality childcare provision, the aim of which was to reduce unemployment and improve the life chances of England's poorest families (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (DfEE 1998). An initiative arising from the NCS was the development of Local Sure Start Programmes (LSSP), which provided early years services to improve the life chances of disadvantaged children and families. Four years after their inception and as a result of the 2002 Childcare Review (DfEE 2002) the Government made funding available to support the development of Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCC), which were initially designated LSSP. Again services delivered through SSCC were targeted at disadvantaged families as a means to address child poverty. However, over time, changes within government resulted in a shift from services being targeted at low income families only, to universal services for all children that resulted in SSCC being established in every community, rather than solely in areas designated disadvantaged. In an attempt to further address childhood poverty when the Coalition Government came into power in 2010 services delivered via SSCC were again targeted at less affluent families only. This example demonstrates the dynamic landscape that pre-school leaders must work within.

With reference to curriculum guidance for early years, this too has been subject to many changes over time. In recognition that the early years plays an important role in young children's learning and development the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), introduced the curriculum guidance for the foundation stage (DfEE 2000), which outlined the learning and development requirements for children aged between three and five years old. Following the

Childcare Review (DfEE 2002) and in recognition that early years provision can positively impact upon children's outcomes, the DfEE introduced the curriculum framework for children from birth to three years. Leading on from this, and in light of the findings within the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) report (Sylva et al. 2004), which highlighted the benefits of pre-school provision on very young children's learning and development, the EYFS(DCSF 2008) curriculum framework was introduced to bring together both the Birth to Three Matters Framework and the Statutory Guidance for the Foundation Stage, to provide a curriculum framework for children from birth to five years.

Since it was introduced in 2008 the EYFS (DCSF 2008) has been revised three times. The first revision was in response to the Tickell review in 2011 (Tickell 2011) which highlighted the complexity surrounding the language used within the document and the early learning goals (ELGs) within the guidance. Subsequently the framework was modified to streamline the ELGs and simplify the language used (DfE 2012) and to introduce the two year progress check for two year old children (DfE 2014). The third revision in 2017 was in response to changes in government policies around safeguarding and the qualifications of practitioners (DfE 2017).

It could be argued that frequent revisions to both policy and curriculum guidance can leave pre-school leaders feeling confused and can place additional burden on resources. The EYFS (DfE 2017), for example, places a statutory responsibility on pre-school leaders to ensure that staff who hold the new level 3 early years educator (EYE) qualification also hold a level 2 qualification in English and Maths. Anecdotal evidence gleaned from my discussions with programme leaders

delivering the new EYE qualification explained how this shift in policy requirements had repercussions for those staff that were recruited onto the programme that did not previously hold the relevant level 2 qualifications in Maths and English.

Subsequently this impacted upon practice within those pre-school settings that had employed newly qualified staff who did not hold the necessary underpinning qualifications, in that they were unable to include these staff members in their staff - child ratios. This example also reveals the fluidity of the early years landscape and the implications that frequent policy changes have upon early years provision and practice.

Another area of policy change concerns the regulation of day care provision, including pre-schools in England. In 1989 the regulation of day care provision came under the auspice of the LA, however following the introduction of the National Standards for Day care in 2001, in 2002 the regulatory system was and continues to be driven by Ofsted. In 2013 the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) was introduced which meant that for the first time early years provision across all sectors (PVI, and maintained) was inspected against a common set of standards. Since its inception the CIF has been revised three times (see Table 5 above). One of the proposed changes to the regulatory system was to end the duplication of inspections (DfE 2013:11), that is the DfE sought to remove the need for LAs to inspect early years providers to determine their eligibility to receive early education funding. In doing this the DfE proposed that Ofsted would become *the 'sole arbiter of quality'* (p11). While it is recognised that the changes to the framework are minimal (Ofsted 2015a) they do, again, highlight the fluidity of the early years landscape.

Robertson and Hill (2014) in their extensive review of education policy and practice argue that the incongruence between policy initiatives and practice highlights the complexities faced by pre-school leaders as *'the translation of ideology into action is by no means assured or straightforward'* (p170). Embedded within the EYFS (DfE 2017) for example, is the notion of equality for all children, that is, the EYFS advocates that less fortunate children have access to the same opportunities as their more advantaged peers. Robertson and Hill (2014) make the distinction between equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes (p167), as such it could be inferred that the ideology on which the EYFS is premised is to ensure that all children have the same outcomes at the end of their reception year, that is they all achieve the ELGs at the end of their reception year. Therefore, it could be argued that rather than improving outcomes for disadvantaged children, pre-school leaders must ensure that all children achieve the same outcomes at the end of their reception year. Robertson and Hill exposed the pressure that leaders felt when trying to ensure that all children achieve the same outcomes irrespective of their S.E.S., especially as it is acknowledged that children from low income families enter pre-school with lower levels of development than their more advantaged peers (Ridge 2011). Therefore, rather than promoting equality, it could be argued that the EYFS promotes an ethos of *'social elitism and inequality'* (Robertson and Hill, 2014:167).

The discussion above illustrates the tension between early years policy and practice. The frequent changes to policy and curriculum guidance, as identified above support the view of Mukherji and Dryden (2014) who argue that frequent changes to policy or curriculum initiatives do not always result in the desired

changes as they are not always given sufficient time to embed before evaluations are commissioned.

1.6 Research questions

There has been much research exploring the influence that educational leadership has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children, for example, Leithwood and Mascall 2008, Leithwood 2010, Day et al. 2011, Sun and Leithwood 2012, however there appears to be a little research that specifically focuses upon pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for young children. Therefore, this research aims to:

- Clarify how pre-school leaders look to ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged children in their settings are met
- Draw out wider implications for debate and discussion in relation to childhood poverty policy and practice specifically in relation to pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children
- Identify how national policy is used to inform early years practice and provision in relation to creating parity between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers

The research aims will be addressed through the following research questions.

- 1) To what extent are pre-school leaders aware of the outcomes relating to child poverty in the communities they serve?
- 2) What measures do pre-school leaders take to ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged children in their settings are met?

3) How is pre-school leadership enacted in a range of pre-school settings?

1.7 Overview of Chapters

The following Chapters provide an insight into my learning journey as an education doctoral research student. They outline the theoretical discussions that have informed my approach to the research and expanded my knowledge in an area of practice about which I am passionate.

Chapter 2 begins by discussing childhood poverty and the impact this has upon outcomes for young children and recognises the importance of early years provision as a means to ameliorate the effects of childhood poverty on young children. The literature review reveals a gap in both knowledge and research specifically relating to pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for young children. As a result of the apparent gap in knowledge it has been necessary to explore literature relating to various domains of educational leadership more broadly and the influence this has upon improving educational outcomes of children, including disadvantaged children. This Chapter also provides a theory focus that identifies the complexities associated with the application of theoretical frameworks to pre-school leadership.

Chapter three outlines the key debates that have helped to justify the methodological approach taken and research methods adopted to ensure that participants' views are accurately captured, concluding that a feminist approach as described by Limerick, (1996)' Gubrium and Holstein (2003) and Sprague (2016) was the most appropriate approach to adopt. As this study is comparative in

nature I argue the case for a mixed methods approach to data collection to ensure that direct comparisons between settings can be made. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:14) argue that '*methodological pluralism*' enables a higher level of understanding to be gained than when adopting a single methodological approach. When carrying out the field work to ensure that I conducted my research in a professional and ethical manner I was ever mindful of the ethical guidelines as outlined in British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011).

Chapter 4 presents the findings arising from an analysis of the various data sets, that is performance data demonstrating progress towards the early learning goals as outlined in the EYFS, the content of the most recent Ofsted reports for each setting, and participants' responses. The Chapter is framed by the research questions, presenting the data in this manner I feel, enabled me to begin to make sense of the research questions and provided an opportunity for me to begin to make comparisons between settings as suggested by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004).

Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to the research questions identified above and makes connections between the findings presented in Chapter 4 and the literature discussed in Chapter 2. Implications for practice arising from the research will be identified and discussed both in terms of the content of leadership programmes I teach and also in relation to informing leadership practices within pre-school settings to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged children are met.

Chapter 6 begins by discussing the term strong leadership and proposes the development of a conceptual framework highlighting the relationship between outcomes for disadvantaged children and strong leadership. Issues relating to the limitations of the three data sets will also be discussed. This chapter concludes by acknowledging the complexity associated with early years leadership and argues that this is inextricably linked to outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Context and Rationale for the Literature Review

A Literature review is as Hart (1998:13) describes

'The selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic, which contain information, ideas and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, an effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed'

When considering the inclusion of unpublished material in literature reviews, Egger and Smith (1998) explain that only studies that are statistically significant are ever published and that this results in publication bias. Egger and Smith suggest that including unpublished material in the literature review helps to minimise against publication bias. Burgess et al. (2006:24), citing Hammersley advise that, irrespective of document type, it is the *'reliability'* of literature to be included in the literature review that is important and researchers should adopt a *'flexible approach'* to the selection of literature to ensure that the literature to be reviewed is pertinent to the research topic. When considering the inclusion of Ofsted documents in the literature review, despite the fact that Ofsted reports are not academically peer reviewed it was felt appropriate to include these in discussions as they provide an insight into the quality of leadership in the participating settings.

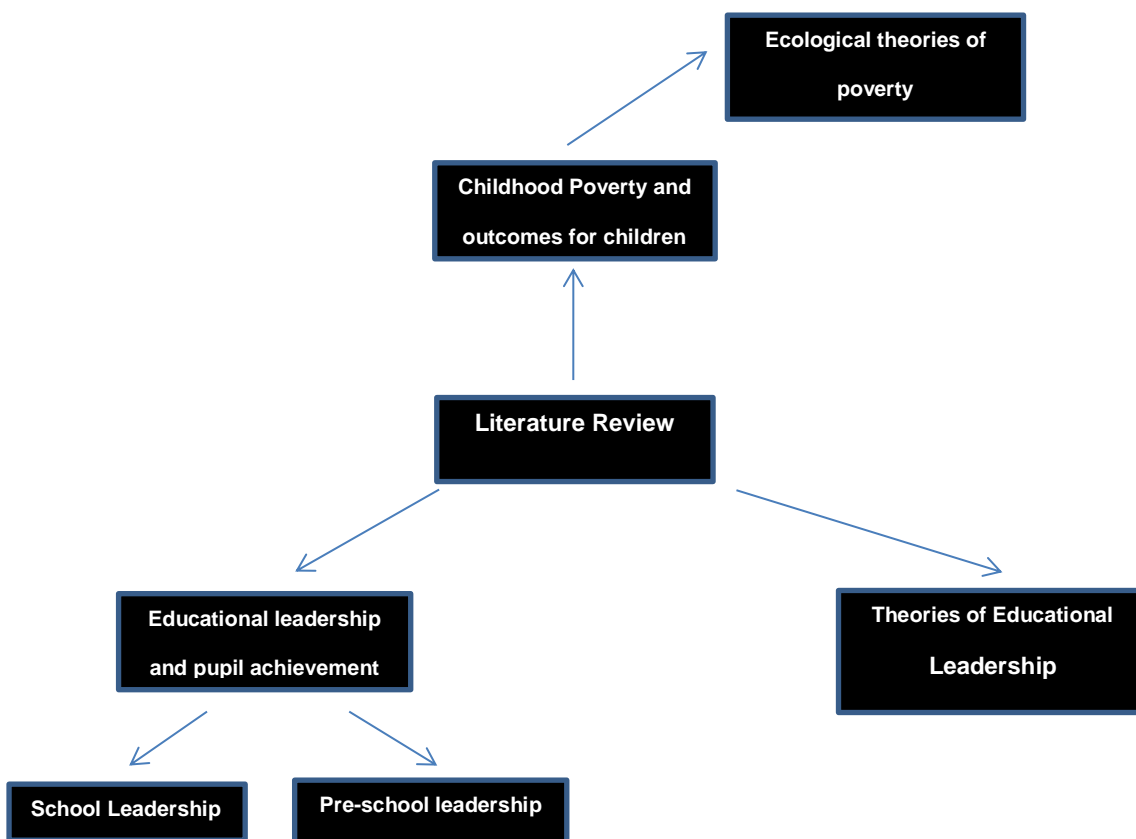
2.2 Structure of the Literature Review

To ensure that the literature was apposite and sufficient in content to inform the research questions, I followed the recommendations of Hart (1998:31) and developed a '*literature map*'. This enabled me to corral appropriate resources to give structure to the literature review. Three primary areas were identified:

- I. Childhood Poverty
- II. Educational leadership - A theory focus
- III. Educational leadership and pupil achievement

Each primary area was then broken down in subsections each covering different aspects of the topic; see diagram 2 below – literature map.

Figure 2: Literature Map (Hart 1998)



In developing the literature map, I was also mindful of the recommendations of Burgess et al. (2006) to remain open minded about the relevancy of literature and ensure that literature selected was appropriate to my research questions.

A central focus of this literature review will be upon educational leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children, specifically in relation to leadership in pre-schools. Research articles and text were retrieved from search engines such as Academic Search Complete, British Education Index, and Google Scholar using key word searches including leadership, pre-school leadership, educational leadership, leadership and improving pupil outcomes, poverty and or disadvantage, or social inequality and school achievement. The initial literature search revealed an apparent paucity of literature specifically relating to pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon outcomes for young children. This resulted in an additional key word search that included the terms school leadership and or educational leadership, educational leadership and outcomes for older children, but not further or higher educational leadership. Hart (1998) highlights the problems associated with selecting literature from across disciplines, arguing that it can be problematic as other disciplines may contextualise ideas and theories differently, suggesting that this may result in valid arguments being overlooked. To minimise this, the literature review was carried out within a framework of relevance that is, literature pertaining to leadership within a further education and higher education context was disregarded as I felt that this was too distant from the aims of my study. The following section will explore literature that investigates the influence that disadvantage has upon outcomes for young children.

2.3 Disadvantage and the influence of this on outcomes for young children

The purpose of this research is to explore pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children. The research is situated within a framework of social inequality, specifically in relation to childhood poverty and the educational achievements of children from low income families and their more affluent peers. Ridge (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of qualitative research with disadvantaged children spanning across a ten year period. Research included in the study was identified by following a '*pragmatic and iterative*' process (p74) with explicit exclusion criteria guiding the selection of documentation. That is, following an initial key word search, Ridge excluded studies she deemed to be methodologically weak.

Ridge (2011) highlights, that all areas of cognitive ability are negatively affected by the effects of childhood poverty especially among children in their early years. Therefore, this suggests that less affluent children enter pre-school at a lower developmental level than their more advantaged peers highlighting that social inequality exists among children in their earliest years. Ridge's findings appear to suggest that it is unrealistic to expect disadvantaged children to reach age-related early learning goals especially if they are starting their learning journey at a developmental disadvantage to their more advantaged peers.

The findings from Ridge's study also focus upon the '*child's voice*' specifically in relation to their schooling. Ridge reported that children from disadvantaged backgrounds were dissatisfied with their teachers and '*felt poorly served by their*

school' (p80). The significance of this study to my own research is that it demonstrates the negative impact poverty has upon children's holistic development, and emphasises the importance of effective leadership in pre-school settings. If pre-school leaders are to influence outcomes for children from low income families my experience suggests that they should firstly, identify the issues relating to child poverty in their own localities and secondly, ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged children in their settings are met.

Another study that highlighted the influence that disadvantage has upon outcomes for young children is that of Engle et al. (2011). Like Ridge, they assert that economic disadvantage negatively impacts upon children's holistic development. Engle et al. conducted a systematic review of intervention strategies aimed at improving developmental outcomes for young children aged between 2 and 5 years of age attending pre-school in low and middle income countries. Forty-three intervention strategies from across the globe were reviewed, including those within Central and Eastern Europe, South Asia, East Asia and Pacific, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. In their review Engle et al. highlight that the developmental inequalities that existed between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers were a global issue.

With specific regard to Engle et al.'s (2011) review of pre-school provision as an intervention strategy leading to improved outcomes for disadvantaged children a comparison was made between attendances at improved pre-schools against attendance at non-improved pre-schools. While definitions of *'improved and non-improved'* pre-schools were not explicitly stated, it can be assumed that the terms refer to those schools that met the expected standards of quality and those that

did not within the selected countries. Also, it is worth noting that while Engle et al. refer to pre-school provision within a range of countries, they concluded that in all participating pre-schools it was the quality of provision that had the greatest influence upon outcomes for young children, and that the greatest benefits were seen in disadvantaged children compared with non-disadvantaged children. The findings within Engle et al.'s study affirm those of previous studies within the UK, for example Sylva et al. (2004), which also acknowledged the influence that good quality provision has upon outcomes of children from low income families.

Within Engle et al.'s study several aspects of practice were identified as contributing to good quality provision. These included effective supervision of staff, and leadership of pre-school settings. However, given that Engle et al. reviewed a range of intervention strategies, including parenting programmes and health intervention strategies, aimed at improving outcomes for disadvantaged children, pre-school provision cannot be viewed as the panacea to ameliorate the impact that childhood poverty has upon children's outcomes. Rather they argue that, when integrated with a range of strategies aimed at improving outcomes, good quality pre-school provision can mitigate the impact that child poverty has on outcomes for less affluent children. The relevance of Engle et al.'s study to my own research is that they make explicit the link between good quality pre-school provision and improved outcomes for young children.

Other studies have identified the impact that child poverty has on outcomes for children for example, Pugh (2010) claims that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are at greater risk of poor outcomes. Pugh's study focused upon children aged from birth to thirteen years and the extent to which they achieved

the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes (Department for Education and Skills 2004), and as such has a much broader focus than my research. Rather than conducting primary research, Pugh reviewed policy developments relating to the child poverty agenda and literature associated with Narrowing the Gap Project (Springate, et al. 2008). It is not clear within the article how the reviewed literature was selected, that is the exclusion and inclusion criteria are not clearly articulated. Thomas et al. (2004) recommend that in order to ensure that the literature selection process is rigorous, quality selection criteria must be established prior to the document selection and that these should be clearly stated. The relevance of Pugh's study to my research is that it is concerned with social inequality associated with children who achieved the ECM outcomes well and those who did not.

Pugh also acknowledges that strong leadership in early years settings is required to ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged children are met. However, it is not made explicit within the report as to what is meant by strong leadership, consequently the reader is left to draw their own conclusions as to what this means. Therefore, it can be suggested that Pugh assumes that the reader associates high quality provision with strong leadership and understands how this is reflected in practice. The research fails to make the link between pre-school leadership and outcomes for disadvantaged children explicit. That said, Pugh acknowledges that high quality early years provision can help to ameliorate the negative effects of childhood poverty. Not only is Pugh's work of topical relevance to my own study it has to some extent helped to inform my research questions, specifically in relation to leadership practice in pre-school settings and how this influences outcomes for young children.

Research question 1: *To what extent are pre-school leaders aware of the influence that child poverty has upon outcomes for children?*

This study is particularly relevant as it demonstrates the positive influence high quality early years services exert upon improving outcomes for young children. It is hoped that the current research will expand upon the findings of Pugh (2010) by exploring specifically the influence that pre-school leadership within pre-school provision has upon outcomes for young children and thereby contribute new knowledge to an area that continues to be at the forefront of academic discourse.

The following sections will discuss literature relating to the influence that early years provision has upon outcomes for less affluent children and will identify elements of practice that will help to define what is meant by strong leadership in this instance.

2.4 Early years provision and the influence this has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children

Melhuish (2004) emphasises the importance of high quality early years provision as an intervention to improve outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, a view supported by Taggart et al. (2015) who identify that effective pre-school leadership is a defining factor of good quality provision. Melhuish (2004) conducted a literature review of international research exploring the impact of early years provision on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. A meta-analysis of 7 intervention programmes from across the globe identified that there was *'strong evidence of the lasting benefits of pre-school education'* (p22). The

analysis also revealed that while the benefits were apparent for several years, by the age of 19years any cognitive benefits had diminished. The findings within Melhuish's (2004) study illustrates how the gap in educational achievements of disadvantaged children present at the end of KS2 and at GCSE (see Tables 1 and 2) widens over time. Melhuish's study highlights that the negative effects of childhood poverty are universally consistent in that it impacts on all areas of children's development. It is hoped that this research will build upon the work of Melhuish and provide further evidence to demonstrate the influence that early years leadership has upon outcomes for young children.

Another study exploring the influence that pre-school provision has upon outcomes for young children is that of Taggart et al. (2015). They conducted the first major longitudinal study The Effective Provision of Pre-school and Secondary Education (EPPSE), researching the influence of pre-school provision on children's development over time. The development of 2,800 children from 141 settings in England was documented across the different phases of their educational journey. The findings of the study support the findings of Melhuish (2004) identifying that good quality, well led pre-school provision has a positive impact on children's development. Taggart et al. (2015:11) argue that the positive benefits are still apparent at the age of 16years as these pupils were predicted better grades at GCSE, although overall educational achievements of disadvantaged children at GCSE were lower than their more advantaged peers (see Table 5). However, unlike Melhuish, Taggart et al. suggest that beyond the age of 16years the positive effects of attendance at, and duration in, pre-school indicated a '*greater likelihood*' (p14) of success beyond GCSEs.

With reference to children from disadvantaged backgrounds Taggart et al. (2015) highlight that these children achieved lower GCSE grades at the age of 16 years than their more advantaged peers, concluding that pre-school education should not be viewed as the panacea for social inequality. Duncan, et al. (1998), analysed data from a longitudinal study of household data in the United States (US), including that relating to income and family circumstance. In their study they claim that early years education plays a valuable role in militating against the effects of childhood poverty as it equips children with the skills necessary for a smooth transition into formal education. While Duncan et al.'s research involved analysing household data from the United States the study is deemed appropriate especially as the negative influence of childhood poverty upon children's development is universally recognised (Melhuish, 2004, Engle et al. 2011).

With reference to the relevance of Taggart et al.'s (2015) study, I felt that given that this was the first major longitudinal study exploring the impact that pre-school provision in England has upon child development and school achievement in the long term it would not have been prudent of me to exclude the study from the literature review. The study has made a major contribution to early years discourse and has influenced policy development, specifically concerning the professionalisation of the early years workforce, recognising the need to have graduate early years professionals leading early years provision. The study has also influenced curriculum development in early years degree programmes, justifying the inclusion of modules of study in pre-school leadership. Taggart's study along with other research discussed above, have in conjunction with my teaching on leadership modules of study acted as the catalyst to my research.

2.5 Researching Pre-school leadership

Literature relating to pre-school leadership is as Heikka, et al. (2013:31) describe it '*sparse and difficult to locate*'. Previous discourses in pre-school leadership have primarily focused upon the characteristics and skills associated with leaders and have identified tasks associated with leadership practice within early years settings. In addition, they have provided an overview of leadership theories, recognising the importance of underpinning knowledge and understanding of leadership theory as a means to improve practice. The following discussion will provide a review of previous leadership discourse specifically relating to early years.

In her early studies Rodd (1996, 1997, 2001), Rodd investigates the perceptions of childcare co-ordinators to identify the characteristics and attributes relating to effective leadership. Rodd draws the distinction between educational leadership in a school context and leadership of childcare provision, arguing that managers and leaders of childcare provision have a much broader remit than that of head teachers in schools. This distinction forms the basis for the selection of studies reviewed that is the studies were drawn from the childcare sector only and as such could be deemed apposite to my research. However, given that the focus of Rodd's earlier studies was upon skills and attributes of leaders rather than upon the strategic leadership of settings, it could be further argued that they are not pertinent to this research. That said Rodd's studies do highlight a gap in knowledge concerning pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and is, therefore, pertinent to this study.

The findings from Rodd's study (1996) were informed by childcare co-ordinators' responses to questions from a questionnaire that was emailed to them. It is stated within the report that the response rate to the questionnaire was poor and that the quality of the responses received was shallow (p120) that is, the responses collated did not provide opportunity for in-depth analysis. Therefore it could be argued that this was a limitation of the study as Ilieva et al.(2003), suggest this could affect the validity of the study because it is difficult to determine the extent to which the sample size, and responses given, are representative of the original sample of childcare co-ordinators. The findings of the study identify aspects of leadership, such as the skills required of leaders, and roles and responsibilities of leaders, rather than focusing upon leadership enactment within settings and how this influences outcomes for young children. While not being directly relevant to my research Rodd's studies highlight the gap in research pertaining to leadership in pre-school settings and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for young children. That said, Rodd concludes that, leadership within early years at that time was an emerging concept, this could account for the gap in research.

In response to the limitations of Rodd's study in 1996, Rodd conducted a further study to explore practitioner perceptions of their role as leaders, (Rodd, 1997). Rather than emailing practitioners a questionnaire she conducted structured interviews involving 76 childcare practitioners from a range of settings. While the interviews yielded more elaborate responses to questions, as with her previous study Rodd identified aspects of practice that practitioners associated with leadership, such as managing and supervising staff and managing budgets (p42). In addition, practitioners identified skills and attitudes associated with effective

leadership, including the ability to influence others and being responsive to the needs of parents (p43). As with Rodd's previous work, this study identifies a gap in research that seeks to explore the influence pre-school leadership has upon improving outcomes for young children and as such justifies its inclusion in the literature review.

Expanding upon her previous studies (1996, 1997) Rodd (2001) explores the concept of leadership in early years. Within her article Rodd conceptualises pre-school leadership in relation to the range of skills and attributes leaders must acquire to be effective classifying these in terms of the '*technical, conceptual and interpersonal skills*' leaders must develop in order to be successful (pp 10–12). Rodd's 2001 study highlights the limitation of pre-school leadership research as a means to inform professional practice within pre-school settings, insofar as it merely identifies the skills required of leaders, rather than exploring how leaders use these skills to improve practice. It is deemed necessary to include a discussion of Rodd's early studies in this literature review as they provide the historical context to academic discourse relating to pre-school leadership. I hope to expand upon Rodd's study and actively seek to explore how pre-school leaders use their skills to ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged children are met in their settings.

In their systematic review of literature relating to leadership in early years Muijs et al. (2004) identified that, at that time, there was a paucity of research specifically relating to leadership within the early years sector, explaining that previous leadership discourse was dominated by '*a relatively small number of researchers*' (p158) such as Rodd (1996, 1997, 2001). Muijs et al. also identified that previous

research into early years leadership primarily focused upon traits of, and tasks associated with leadership, such as those identified in Rodd's earlier studies. In addition, they also acknowledged the importance of leadership as a contributing factor to good quality provision.

Given the identified paucity of early years research, Muijs et al. (2004) included a review of evidence from international research studies that adopted both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. They also reviewed more general books and professional journals that discussed the topic more broadly, although the quantity of each type of document was not explicitly stated within the study. Muijs et al. concluded that leadership within early childhood was multifaceted and thereby complex and difficult to define. They also recognised that if early childhood leaders were to be effective, continuous professional development opportunities to enable leaders to be more effective in their role were required. Muijs et al. (2004) also identified the need for further research to explore '*what is meant by effective leadership in early childhood and by association, how leaders could be equipped to be more effective*' (p167). As the aim of this comparative study is to explore the influence leadership in the sample of pre-schools has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children, it is hoped that the findings will contribute to the growing body of early years leadership discourse and thus provide greater insight into the notion of effective leadership and subsequently build on the work of Muijs et al. (2004).

The Effective Leadership in Early Years Study (ELEYS) (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni 2006) expands upon previous research studies exploring effective pedagogy in the early years, that is the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education

(EPPE) study and Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (EPEY) study. Using qualitative methodologies Siraj-Blachford and Manni revisited pre-school settings within both the EPPE and EPEY studies in which strong leadership was identified. The focus of the ELEYS study was to identify different leadership approaches adopted by leaders within good quality provision. As with previous studies that contribute to the notion of strong leadership including, developing a shared vision, shared understanding and effective communication. In addition, the study made explicit the link between leadership theory and practice, identifying that distributed leadership was evident in good quality provision. However, Siraj-Blachford and Manni make the distinction between distributed leadership as deployed within a school context and that within private day care provision. They highlight that, within a school context distributed leadership is common practice, however, this was less so in private day care provision, citing lack of experience and lower levels of qualifications as some of the reasons why distributed leadership was not practiced. This will be discussed in more depth in the section 2.8 below. While the ELEYS was a very comprehensive study exploring leadership in early years the limitation of this study is that does not explore how effective leadership influences outcomes of disadvantaged children, which is the focus of this research. As with Rodd's studies, the ELEYS provides the historical context of, and contributes to the growing knowledge of, pre-school leadership and is therefore apposite to this literature review

Woodrow and Busch's (2008) discussion paper heralded a change in the focus of discourse relating to pre-school leadership. They argue that strong leadership of early years settings is crucial if the social inequality that exists between less fortunate children and their more fortunate peers is to be addressed. With regard

to the term strong leadership, it is not clear in the study what is meant by the term, rather the reader is left to assume what this is and how it is enacted in practice. Woodrow and Busch claim that teachers view leadership as being different from the act of teaching as a result opportunities to '*make a difference*' (p87) within localities are missed. This claim directly relates to my research, as anecdotal evidence gleaned from discussions with pre-school leaders studying on degree programmes I teach, suggests that pre-school leaders are, in this instance, not fully aware of the influence that their practice has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children. If pre-school leaders are to make a difference and improve outcomes for young children within their settings then the link between effective leadership in early years and improved outcomes for children should be made explicit, this then will inform effective leadership practice in pre-school settings. It is the intention of this research to explore the influence that pre-school leadership has upon improving outcomes for young children and thereby, make explicit the link between the two.

More recent research undertaken by Aubrey et al. (2013) builds upon previous research exploring leadership within early years provision. Aubrey et al. acknowledge the limitations of previous research suggesting that it is not well informed by theory and research in educational leadership in the broadest sense (p6), and that it merely identifies the roles and characteristics of leadership from the perspectives of leaders, as well as aspects of leadership practice such as developing a shared vision. Aubrey et al. adopted a case study approach to investigating leadership in twelve settings across a range of provision, including children's centres, private and voluntary day care, and foundation stage provision with maintained schools. All of the selected settings were deemed by the LA to

be offering high quality provision, as identified in each setting's Ofsted report. A mixed methods approach to both data collection and analysis was adopted. To provide multiple perspectives data were collected from 194 questionnaires, interviews and video vignettes of everyday practice within settings. The data were then analysed using a range of inferential statistical techniques. The methodology adopted within Aubrey et al. (2013) influenced my decision to adopt a mixed methods approach within this study, albeit on a much smaller scale.

As with previous studies Aubrey et al. identified that effective leadership was a prevailing factor that influenced organisational performance. They also highlight similar aspects of leadership such as the roles and responsibilities of leaders, and the characteristics of effective leaders. However, in addition to previous studies, Aubrey et al. identified how the decision making process in the various settings was carried out and how every day leadership was enacted in settings and in that respect extended the discourse relating to leadership in early years settings.

While being very comprehensive in terms of its methodology and breadth of findings, Aubrey et al.'s research did not address the issue I wanted to explore, which was the influence that pre-school leadership has upon improving outcomes for young children. However, given that Aubrey et al. are leading exponents in the field of early years research it was deemed pertinent to include a review of their research as it further exposes a gap in knowledge relating to pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for young children.

Similarly, Hard and Jonsdottir (2013) reviewed two qualitative studies of leadership in early childhood, education and care (ECEC) settings in Australia and Iceland. The findings within their review are based upon in depth discussions with the original authors of both studies. As with previous research their findings highlight themes previously discussed that were associated with pre-school leadership. Hard and Jonsdottir explained that in both studies early years practitioners did not view leadership as a formal aspect of their practice, rather they viewed leadership within ECEC as an optional extra that was associated with notions of power and authority. As such it could be inferred that leadership within ECEC in this instance reflects aspects of bureaucratic leadership. In addition, the findings highlight various characteristics of leaders, including personality traits such as '*níceness*' (p320) and collaborative working between leaders and teams.

Hard and Jonsdottir identified similarities in the way that leadership was perceived in both studies and conclude that leadership is an important element of ECEC provision that should not be '*left to chance*' (p322) or viewed as an optional extra. While acknowledging the importance of leadership in ECEC provision, a limitation of Hard and Jonsdottir's review is that it does not appear to make explicit the link between effective leadership and improved outcomes for children, rather they argue that '*strong*' (p323) leadership is required and suggest that this will lead to improved quality provision. As with previous studies, the phrase strong leadership is coined, yet the phrase does not appear to be clearly defined. This lack of specific definition leads the reader to imagine that the authors assume that the reader has a vision of how this is reflected in practice. Also the term strong leadership could be said to reference notions of power and authority as identified above.

The relevance of Hard and Jonsdottir's review to my research is that it also exposes the gap in research exploring the influence pre-school leadership has upon improving outcomes for young children whilst also providing the background context to my study. As Hard and Jonsdottir's review reflects similar findings to previous studies carried out in England, such as ELAY and EPPE, they highlight the international interest in academic discourse relating to pre-school leadership. The following discussion focuses specifically upon pre-school leadership and how this improves outcomes for young children.

2.6 Pre-school leadership: improving outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Whilst it is acknowledged that research exploring pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children is limited, the focus of the following discussion is upon leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for children specifically within the context of Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCC). Coleman, et al. (2016) undertook a review of literature relating to Children Centre leadership, combined with a study of 25 case studies of SSCC. The case study selection was informed by Ofsted inspection reports that judged SSCC to be '*high performing*' (p776). This aspect of Coleman et al.'s study relates directly to my study as I too draw upon the findings within Ofsted reports to inform comparisons between settings graded as '*outstanding*' or '*requires improvement*'.

Following the selection of case studies Coleman et al. carried out a series of interviews with professionals from a range of contexts associated with the centres. They conducted 158 interviews involving a range of professionals including SSCC leaders, Local Authority personnel, centre staff and parents thus providing multiple perspectives to responses to questions. The findings of the study identify elements of effective leadership behaviours that collectively contribute to improving outcomes for children. It is not clear within the study how the literature and interview transcripts were analysed and, as such, one is left to assume that a discourse analysis technique was applied to identify leadership challenges and behaviours.

The findings within Coleman et al.'s study identify the challenges faced by Children's Centre leaders, along with the skills, knowledge and attributes required for successful leadership, these are similar to the findings of Rodd (1996, 1997, 2001). In addition, Coleman et al. make a tenuous link between leadership theory and practice, suggesting that contingency theory (Feildler 1978) underpins leadership within SSCC, insofar as the leaders effectiveness is determined by the way they respond to the complex nature of their role. While several aspects of leadership were identified, those of particular interest are, firstly, making leadership visible and valued, and, secondly, using information and data to inform practice.

When considering the value and visibility of leadership, Coleman et al. (2016) suggest that professionals within the study felt that leadership in SSCC was not afforded the same level of professional identity as leadership of schools. While there is a growing acknowledgement that pre-school leadership is important,

evidence suggests that pre-school leaders do not feel valued in the same way as other educational leaders (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2011). The lack of research concerning pre-school leadership would affirm this view. Coleman et al. state that the perceived devaluing of pre-school leadership can have '*significant consequences for organisational effectiveness and the impact that services have upon children and families supported*' (p7).

Secondly, Coleman et al. (2016) identified that, where Centres were successful in improving outcomes for children and their families, Centre leaders used evidence and data from a range of sources to help inform the services they provide to families. This directly relates to my own research as it seeks to explore the types of data pre-school leadership use to improve outcomes for children. With regard to improving outcomes for children, SSCC have a much broader remit than that of early years providers, that is they are concerned with providing a range of support services for disadvantaged children and their families rather than focusing solely upon educational outcomes.

A more recent study conducted by Mistry and Sood (2017) focused upon the skills of pre-school leaders and explored how these might indirectly improve outcomes for pupils by supporting other leaders in the same setting. Mistry and Sood conducted interviews with twenty practitioners in primary school settings in England, ten of whom were not formally employed in a leadership role, although they led early years practice, and ten designated pre-school leaders within the same primary schools. It could be argued that, while not being formally employed in a leadership role, all early years practitioners who are responsible for the learning and development of the children in their setting are leaders of children's

learning and are, therefore, by virtue of this, pedagogical leaders albeit that remains unacknowledged in their job title. This could be the reason why they included early years practitioners not in formally recognised leadership roles in their interview sample.

The findings of their study identified characteristics associated with good pre-school leaders similar to those identified in previous studies (Rodd 1996, 1997, 2001, and Aubrey 2011). However, rather than focusing solely on the skills of pre-school leaders, Mistry and Sood expanded upon these earlier studies to highlight how informal pre-school leaders used their skills to support other designated leaders in the same setting to collectively improve outcomes for pupils. One of the strengths of this study, I feel, is that the findings highlight the collaborative nature of leadership within the context of early years that resonate with the principles of distributed leadership as explained by Spillane (2005) this will be discussed in more depth in section 2.8 below.

While Mistry and Sood (2017) focused upon pre-school leadership within the context of primary schools, a tenuous link was made between pre-school leadership and improved outcomes for children and thus gives justification for its inclusion in this literature review. They acknowledge the complexity associated with measuring the impact of leadership on '*others or learning or on pupil attainment*' (p130). Therefore, rather than attempting to measure the impact that pre-school leadership has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children, my study aims to explore the influence that this has upon outcomes for less fortunate children. It is hoped that this research will provide greater insight into the link between pre-school leadership and improved outcomes for young children

particularly disadvantaged young children, within the context of pre-school settings.

Given the paucity of research concerning pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for young children, the focus of the following section will be upon educational leadership within a school context and the influence that this has upon improving educational outcomes for children in the broadest sense. It is envisaged that exploring educational leadership more broadly will provide greater insight into the influence that leadership has upon outcomes for young children.

2.7 The complexity of pre-school leadership: a theory focus

The day to day leadership and management of schools, including pre-schools, is as Day et al. (2011) highlight complex, as such they identified many challenges faced by school leaders (p9). Not only are leaders and governors responsible for the strategic vision and management of school/pre-school resources, they are also accountable for the quality of teaching and learning, workforce development, and behaviour management. Leaders also have a statutory responsibility as set out in the 2014 Children and Families Act (HM Government 2014) to establish effective partnership with parents. All of these tasks are central to effective school/pre-school leadership and, as such, highlight its complexity. Bolden (2011) also highlights the complex nature of leadership, arguing that it is a social process and not just the remit of one person. Given the complexity of educational leadership the following discussion seeks to explore theories of educational leadership and their relevance to leadership in pre-school settings.

2.7.1 Theories of educational leadership

The Open University (2001:24) explains that the relationship between educational theory and practice is highlighted by the way a theory *'is acted out in practice'*.

While it is acknowledged that there is a range of leadership theories that deal with educational leadership, the following section will focus upon bureaucratic, transformational, distributed and instructional theories of leadership and their application to educational leadership within pre-school settings.

2.7.2 Bureaucratic theories of Leadership

Within bureaucratic theories of leadership as described by Bush (2011) leadership practices focus upon power relations within the organisation, in that there exists a formal chain of command that is hierarchical in nature where accountability and decision making are held by those at the apex of the hierarchy. Bureaucratic theories of leadership can be applied to educational leadership as overall accountability for school improvement lies with the governing body and head teacher or with the pre-school leader/manager. Central government oversees curriculum content, assessment strategies and identify generic pupil progression targets, thus further highlighting the bureaucracy of school leadership. With regard to early years specifically, as mentioned previously, all early years providers in receipt of government funding must have regard to the statutory guidance for the EYFS and as such are accountable to the Department of Education via their LA.

It would appear that the underpinning ethos within bureaucratic theories, such as those described by Western (2013), for example, '*controller leadership*' (p158) and '*authoritative leadership*' (p74) emphasise the notions of control and autocracy. This suggests that within bureaucratic theories leadership occurs in isolation of those who are led.

In his paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Symposium, Greenfield (1973) outlined one of the weaknesses associated with bureaucratic theories of leadership and their application to educational leadership. Greenfield suggested that, within bureaucratic theories of leadership, the beliefs and influence of the individuals within the organisation are not taken into account, and, by virtue of this, do not take into consideration the impact that individuals have upon goal achievement. Within an early years context one cannot ignore the influence that teachers, support staff, parents and pupils have upon the setting's performance. Hallinger and Heck (1996) in Chapter 21 of Leithwood et al. (1996: 723 – 783) argue that educational leadership cannot be wholly explained in isolation of the interaction between leaders and other members of staff this further illustrates the complexity of educational leadership and acknowledges the importance of effective communication between leaders and those they lead.

2.7.3 Transformational Leadership

In addition to bureaucratic theories of leadership, transformational leadership practices focus upon the process of influence and the impact that this has upon improving organisational outcomes. Rather than focusing upon power relations,

Bass (1990) suggests that transformational leaders gain commitment to the organisational aims, vision and culture through influence and personal appeal.

Within the context of educational leadership it can be assumed that within an educational organisation that adopts a transformational style of leadership, it is the head teacher/pre-school leader who influences teachers and pupils and through this influence improves overall performance. Sun and Leithwood (2012) in their study of 79 unpublished thesis and dissertations identified that there were factors that were beyond the control of the leaders that had a consequential impact on pupil achievement. Of these factors, the S.E.S. of families had the largest association with pupil achievement and was beyond the control of leaders. If the S.E.S. of families is, as Sun and Leithwood suggest, beyond the control of leaders, then pre-school leaders must be aware of the influence this has upon outcomes for children in their care. In this regard, the views of Sun and Leithwood (2012) have to some extent helped to inform the development of my research questions, specifically research question 1 that seeks to explore the extent to which pre-school leaders are aware of the outcomes relating to child poverty in the communities they serve. Perhaps it is worth noting that although Sun and Leithwood studied unpublished thesis and dissertations, these will have been thoroughly reviewed as part of the examination process and thus they are apposite to this study.

Another factor that was deemed to be beyond the control of leaders is the influence that individual teachers have upon pupil achievement. Darling-Hammond, (2000) adopted a mixed methods approach to both data collection and data analysis to explore factors that influence student achievement. In their study

of 50 state surveys of policies, school and staffing surveys, state case studies, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress , they argue that this influence cannot be ignored and that this, to some extent, is beyond the control of the leaders. However, in their book Caldwell and Spinks (1992:49) propose that transformational leaders gain the respect and commitment of those they lead to such an extent that followers become morally obliged to give of their best. Therefore, it could be argued that by adopting a transformational approach to leadership, leaders have the capacity to influence teaching and learning within their organisations to ensure that the best outcomes for children are achieved.

2.7.4 Distributed Leadership

It has been observed in practice that leadership roles and responsibilities are not the sole responsibility of the head teacher or pre-school leader, rather these are delegated across the school senior leadership team (SLT) or organisation.

Delegating areas of leadership responsibility underpins the concept of Distributed Leadership (DL) (Spillane, 2005). However, Spillane argues that the focus of DL is not merely concerned with sharing leadership roles across an organisation, rather it is concerned with leadership practices, that is how those with delegated responsibility interact with each other and with the staff they lead stating *'leadership takes the form of the interactions between leaders and followers, rather than as a function of one or more leaders'* (Spillane 2005:147), a view supported by Bolden (2011), who argues that leadership is a social process and not just the remit of one person, that is DL is collegial and operates within an ethos of democracy. Bolden warns that DL may not always result in effective leadership especially when there is discord between those who lead. The views of Bolden

(2011) were drawn from his review of literature relating to the concept of DL, however, Hallinger and Heck (2010) contest this view.

In their longitudinal study Hallinger and Heck examined the effects of collaborative leadership in 192 elementary schools in the United States of America over a four year period, concluding that DL practices can draw upon the expertise of a range of staff that can benefit both the organisation as a whole and the pupils within it. The view of Hallinger and Heck is reflected in current practice within my institution, insofar as, teaching on modules of study is allocated to those with subject expertise. This benefits the institution in that we have a knowledge rich and diverse team, that positively impacts upon the quality of teaching and learning experience students receive.

Within the context of early years, DL in pre-school settings is based upon valuing the knowledge and expertise of staff (Heikka and Waniganayake 2011). In their commentary of pedagogical leadership through a DL lens, Heikka and Waniganayake identified that areas of the curriculum responsibility are delegated to those with subject expertise, for example, the role of Special Educational Needs Coordinator is allocated to a member of staff with a specific interest in and knowledge of special educational needs. It could be argued that distributing leadership responsibilities, as described above, merely provides a functional explanation of DL and, as Hallinger and Heck (2010) infer, this does not always result in effective leadership as DL is only effective if those with delegated responsibilities have the skills and expertise to fulfil their roles. Also functional explanations of DL do not take into consideration the social dimension of

leadership as described by Bolden (2011) which as Spillane (2005) explains, is concerned with the interactions between leaders and followers.

When considering the relevance of DL to leadership within pre-school settings, Heikka et al. (2013) in their meta-analysis of 12 papers from across different countries identified that research regarding this is limited and, as such, reveals the inherent difficulties in defining DL and calls for a '*reconceptualising*' (p39) of DL specifically within the context of early years. Therefore, with the views of Bolden (2011), Spillane (2005) and Hallinger and Heck (2010) in mind, it could be proposed that within early years there are three components to DL: functional, social, and cognitive, that together provide '*conceptual clarity*' (Heikka et al. 2013:39) when discussing DL in relation to leadership in pre-school settings. On a practical level, it could be argued that all those involved in the care, learning and development of young children are leaders of learning and therefore, within this context, leadership is a collaborative process.

2.7.5 Instructional Leadership

The final theory to be discussed is instructional leadership. Heck, et al. (1990) investigated several variables relating to IL that they felt influenced student outcomes. A total of 332 teachers and 56 principals participated in Heck at al's study. Conclusions drawn from it indicate that IL has a positive influence upon educational outcomes. Blasé and Blasé (2000) suggest that the primary focus of IL is to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge to enable them to deliver good quality teaching and learning. From their study of 800 teacher's perceptions of characteristics associated with IL they argue good quality teaching and learning

is achieved through structures that support and guide teacher practices. Blasé and Blasé emphasise that through staff supervision and appraisal teachers learn to become reflective and reflexive practitioners. It could be argued that during these processes leaders adopt the role of critical friend and encourage teachers to critically reflect on their learning and professional practice.

Another characteristic associated with IL as explained by Blasé and Blasé, is direct assistance, that involves '*providing feedback, making suggestions, modelling good practice*' (p133) and asking probing questions. In their study Blasé and Blasé report that participants valued direct assistance when communicated in a nonthreatening manner. In addition, they highlighted that staff development was a salient feature of IL as this provides teachers with opportunities to develop their curriculum knowledge and learn new teaching strategies. It could be argued that when taken to the extreme, rather than encouraging innovative teaching IL in this instance could stifle innovation as too much direction and guidance may be given.

In their study Mestry et al. (2014) highlight the complex nature of educational leadership and the impact this has upon the practice of IL. Given the diverse range of tasks associated with educational leadership as previously identified by Day et al. (2011), headteachers in Mestry et al.'s (2014) study highlight the challenges associated with the practice of IL. In their qualitative study Mestry et al. interviewed six primary school headteachers in a South African context, the findings of which suggest that headteachers experienced conflicting demands on their time, that impacted upon the way in which IL was practised, insofar as, greater emphasis was placed upon continuous professional development (CPD) and peer learning than upon direct headteacher instruction. It was deemed

appropriate to include the findings of Mestry et al.'s study in this literature review as it explored IL specifically within the context of primary schools, albeit it within a South African context and I felt the findings were transferrable to the context of my research.

Anecdotal evidence gleaned from conversations in my professional practice suggests that many of the characteristics associated with IL as identified above, form part of every day leadership practice in pre-school settings. Although it could be argued that within pre-school settings, leaders are charged not just with the responsibility for the education of young children, but also with their care and development and, as such, it could be suggested that leaders in this instance have a much wider remit than those within the studies discussed, this highlights the complex nature of leadership within pre-school settings as explored by Mestry et al. (2014).

With regard to the theoretical perspectives discussed above it would appear that no one theory of leadership alone can provide a holistic explanation of pre-school leadership, rather they, as Western (2013:59) states, '*work alongside each other and often merge*' to provide greater insights into leadership within an early years context. In his book '*Leadership: A Critical Text*' Western focused upon four discourses in leadership, that are drawn from his experiences and observations in a diverse range of context. Western (2013) presents an innovative approach that reconceptualises leadership theories. He introduces, for example, the notion of '*Controller Leadership*' (p158), that resonates with the tenets of bureaucratic leadership as described in Bush (2011) above also his discourse on '*Messiah Leadership*' (p216) is conversant with the underpinning principles of

transformational leadership as discussed by Bass (1990) above. Although not specifically discussed in relation to educational leadership, throughout his book Western (2013) acknowledges the limitations of each approach when applied to educational contexts, and in doing so it could be argued that this provides further insights into the complexity of leadership within an early years context.

The theoretical perspectives discussed have influenced the development of my third research question that seeks to explore how leadership is enacted in a sample of pre-school settings.

2.8 Educational Leadership and Pupil Achievement

There is much research that acknowledges the influence that educational leadership has upon improving outcomes for pupils for example (Mulford et al. 2007, Day et al. 2011, Sun and Leithwood 2012, West 2010). During 2006 and 2009 an extensive research project was undertaken by Day et al. (2011) on behalf of the then Department of Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and the National Centre for School Leadership (NCSL). The Impact of School Leadership on Pupil Outcomes (IMPACT) study was a major longitudinal research project involving a total of 20 primary and secondary schools. While the IMPACT research project did not specifically explore leadership within an early years context, given the paucity of research within this field it was deemed relevant to the proposed research as the findings of the study identified leadership that had the greatest influence upon pupil achievement.

Day et al.'s research was undertaken in schools that were deemed to have existing high levels of pupil attainment in the short term, therefore it could be

argued that Day et al.'s study is not applicable to the proposed research as the participating settings pupils enter pre-school with lower than expected levels of development. However, Day et al. also acknowledged that many of the case studies were '*located in areas of disadvantage with lower than expected levels of attainment*' (Day et al. 2011:153) therefore it is suggested that they are demographically similar to those within this study and as such are worthy of inclusion in this literature review. The IMPACT study is pertinent to this research as it identifies the correlation between pupil achievement and educational leadership.

With reference to the methodology used to inform the IMPACT study, a mixed methods approach was adopted, drawing upon both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data were collected from case studies and interviews, while quantitative data were collated from an analysis of pupil performance data. Within my research qualitative data were collected from semi-structured interviews, however, rather than analysing individual pupil performance data, quantitative data was derived from an analysis of school performance data and presented using descriptive statistics. Given that the IMPACT study was a large scale research project, it could be assumed that the findings from the study can provide valuable insights into the impact that educational leadership has upon pupil outcomes.

Leithwood et al. (2010) also explored how educational leadership influenced pupil achievement, suggesting that there were several underlying factors associated with leadership that when taken into account collectively provide a more holistic understanding of successful educational leadership. This study situates leadership practices within a framework of four pathways with each pathway

focusing upon a specific aspect of leadership, for example, the '*Rationale Pathway*' (p 373) focused upon the knowledge and skills required of leaders for successful school leadership to occur. Leithwood et al. use the Pathways Model to test a series of hypotheses to explore the extent to which leadership variables within each pathway influence aspects of student behaviour and outcomes. They concluded that pupil achievement was influenced by a range of factors, including family circumstance and the school environment, and was not solely attributed to the leadership of the head teacher.

This study also adopts a quantitative methodology, that is, the data were collated from an online survey using a 5 point Likert Scale of agreement. A limitation of this is that the overall response rate to the survey is not known, although it is estimated by the authors that three teachers from each participating school (199 schools) responded to the survey. Given that within the study the head teachers within each school acted as gatekeepers of the survey, it is difficult to ascertain how many teachers actually had access to the survey. Running et al. (1999) suggest this could affect the validity of the research because it is difficult to determine the extent to which the sample size is representative of the entire population of teachers within the participating schools. That said, approximately 597 responses were received therefore it could be argued that the sample size was large enough to overcome this challenge to its validity.

The central focus of Leithwood et al.'s study was upon leadership in elementary schools in Canada, where the age of entry is between five and 6 years, rather than upon early years education in pre-schools, where the age of entry is the term after the child's third birthday. With regard to the relevance of Leithwood et al.'s study

to my research, Leithwood et al. studied educational leadership and the impact this has upon pupil achievement. In addition, the sample of case studies used to inform the study included those located in areas of disadvantage, highlighting that within the *'Family Pathway'* (p 693) the S.E.S. of families accounted for 47% of the variation in pupil achievement.

When considering the inclusion of unpublished literature within the literature review, Egger and Smith (1998) recommend that this helps to minimise against publication bias. In their study Leithwood and Sun (2012) conducted a systematic review of unpublished doctoral theses exploring the impact that transformational leadership has upon improving student achievement. It could be argued that the reliability of the study can be compromised in that the chosen theses have not been academically peer reviewed. That is they have not been reviewed by experts within the field of study and, as Weller (2001) cautions, this could question the academic integrity of the study. That said, it could be debated that the unpublished theses have been reviewed as part of the examination process and therefore the academic integrity of the study is protected.

All of the selected theses adopted quantitative methodologies, the findings of which were analysed using *'meta-analytical techniques'*, and *'narrative review methods'* (Sun and Leithwood, 2012:391), that is they used inferential statistics to analyse studies that provided evidence of TL in practice (p390). In addition, narrative reviews were used to identify practices associated with TL within the sample of studies. Sun and Leithwood's study is based upon the findings arising from both data analysis techniques. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) argue that studies that adopt quantitative methods of data analysis do not allow the perceptions of

individuals to be explored. As this study seeks to explore the extent to which pre-school leaders are aware of the issues relating to disadvantage, and the influence these have upon outcomes for young children, it could be deemed that Sun and Leithwood's study is of little relevance to my research. Flick (1998) explains that the primary objective of statistical analysis is to establish cause and effect relationships between variables to allow generalisations to be made. In this instance, generalisation refers to the extent to which leadership practices associated with transformational leadership can be applied to the context of early years and, in this regard, it is deemed that Sun and Leithwood's study has something to add to my study. The focus of Sun and Leithwood's study is upon pupil performance in Maths and English in elementary and secondary schools in the United States, therefore, one could argue that it is not context specific. As previously stated, the age at which children enter elementary education is 6 years and this again highlights a gap in research focusing upon pre-school leadership.

In their study Leithwood and Mascall (2008) explore the impact that collective leadership or distributed leadership, as discussed in section 2.7.4 above, has upon pupil achievement in a sample of Canadian schools. They suggest that within collective leadership, leadership practices are distributed across the school team thereby empowering teachers to be innovative in the way they respond to, and pre-empt the needs of those they teach in-line with school priorities.

Leithwood and Mascall (2008: 543) argue that the effectiveness of distributed leadership on improving pupil achievement is dependent upon the characteristics of individual teachers, that is, the more capable and motivated teachers are the more effective they are in their teaching practices, which then positively impacts

upon pupil achievement. Distributed leadership will be discussed in more depth in the following section.

In Leithwood and Mascall's study a mixed methods approach to data collection was adopted, that is 2,570 teacher's perceptions of collective leadership practices were sought using an online survey. Student performance data in English and Maths (available from the public domain) was analysed across a three year period. Given that the performance data from a range of schools, including Elementary Schools in Canada, was analysed it could be argued that this study is not pertinent to the proposed research as it did not specifically explore the educational achievements of disadvantaged early years pupils as the age of entry into Elementary school is normally 6 years. However, as the study identified leadership practices associated with collective leadership, it could be further argued that the findings are transferable and, therefore, of relevance to leadership in pre-school settings.

Teacher perceptions were analysed using a quantitative methodology that is, they were subject to statistical analysis. Given that teacher perceptions are subjective in nature potentially the '*measurement validity*' (Punch and Oancea, 2014) of the survey tool can be questioned insofar as it could be argued that statistical analysis does not capture the true feelings and thoughts of the teachers' responses.

When exploring the impact that two leadership types has upon student outcomes Robinson et al. (2008) concluded that instructional leadership (IL) was context specific and linked to under achieving schools where more directive leadership

was required. However, it could be argued that the effectiveness of IL is context specific Blasé and Blasé (2000) highlight that if too much direction and guidance is given IL can have a detrimental impact upon teaching insofar as it can stifle creative teaching. Robinson et al. conducted a meta-analysis of the findings within published material exploring the relationship between educational leadership and student outcomes. In their study Robinson et al. highlight the tension between the rhetoric of policy and the reality of policy implementation, specifically in regard to educational leadership. They argue that previous quantitative studies have suggested that the link between educational leadership and student performance is somewhat tenuous.

In view of the tenuous link between leadership and student outcomes Robinson et al. (2008) question whether expectations to improve educational outcomes placed on leaders by policy makers are too ambitious, they also question whether previous research has underestimated the impact that leadership has upon student outcomes. Mistry and Sood (2017) also outline a caveat against claims of the impact leaders have on outcomes, arguing that the complexity associated with notions of leadership make it difficult to determine the impact that specific leadership practices have upon improving outcomes of children. In view of the inherent difficulties associated with claims of impact in relation to leadership, Robinson et al. (2008) use these questions to form the basis of the rationale for their study that is, rather than exploring the impact leadership has upon improving outcomes, they focus upon the different leadership practices adopted by leaders that collectively contribute to improved outcomes for students. Robinson et al. identified 5 dimensions of leadership that are required if leaders are to improve outcomes, these are:

1. *Establishing goals and expectations*

2. *Resourcing strategically*
3. *Planning, co-ordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum*
4. *Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development*
5. *Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment'*

(Robinson et al. 2008: 659-664)

In selecting material to be included in their study Robinson et al. argue the case against the inclusion of unpublished theses and conference papers on the basis that these have not been academically reviewed. However, as discussed above, it could be argued that unpublished thesis have been academically reviewed as part of the doctoral examination, therefore claims of publication bias as suggested by Egger and Smith (1998) maybe applicable to Robinson et al.'s study. Within this study Ofsted reports have been analysed to enable comparisons to be made between settings that have been graded as being either '*outstanding*' or '*requires improvement*'. Ofsted reports are not academically peer reviewed, therefore their inclusion in this study minimises any claims of publication bias.

With regard to the sample size, Robinson et al. (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 27 studies that highlight the link between educational leadership and student outcomes from across the globe, although the majority of their studies were located within the Unites States of America (USA). Given the global context of their study it could be argued that Robinson et al.'s study is relatively small in scale, therefore, the findings within cannot be generalised. However they argue that their study is robust on the basis that the

'thoroughness of the research can be assessed by comparing it with the number of studies included in two recent literature reviews... which yielded fewer than a dozen publications' (Robinson et al. 2008:641). Participating schools were selected from different educational phases therefore Robinson et al.'s study is much broader in scope than this study and as such it could be argued that it is not relevant for inclusion in this literature review. However, it could be debated that the findings are transferable and as such germane to leadership within the sample of pre-schools and, therefore, worthy of inclusion in this literature review.

2.9 Educational leadership and resource management

Successive governments have introduced initiatives to address the educational achievement gap associated with social inequality. The following discussion provides an overview of the various funding initiatives available to support disadvantaged children. Within England, primary schools receive the Pupil Premium (PP) (Department for Education (DfE) 2018) to support children from low income families, for each eligible child the school receives £1,320. Abbott (2015), in their study of the use of the PP in outstanding schools highlight how effective use of the PP led to improved outcomes for less affluent children. From September 2015 the EYPP (Department of Education 2014a) was introduced to support all disadvantaged three and four year old children attending nursery school, including pre-schools in the PVI sectors. For each eligible child schools receive approximately £284, this is considerably less than the per capita allocation associated with the pupil premium. In addition, to encourage more parents back into employment, and in acknowledgement of the known influence that access to

pre-school has upon outcomes for young children the government has also made funding available to settings to support the care and learning of disadvantaged two year olds (Department for Education (DfE) 2010). Given the relatively small amount of funding per capita available to settings via the EYPP, and disadvantaged two year old funding ,and in view of financial constraints placed on schools today, pre-school leaders must decide how best to use this funding to ensure that children's learning and development progresses in a meaningful way to improve their educational outcomes.

In determining how best to use the EYPP pre-school leaders must identify those children deemed as disadvantaged using the indicators of disadvantage as outlined in the conditions of grant. This can, at times, be difficult especially when the indicators of disadvantage are not consistent across the different funding streams as is the case with the funding to support disadvantaged two year old children and the EYPP as discussed above. Gibb et al. (2010) were commissioned by the then DCSF to evaluate the initial pilot programme implementing the disadvantaged two year old funding project. Gibb et al. identified that in addition to the primary eligibility criteria within the funding guidance for disadvantaged two year olds secondary criteria were also identified that afforded LAs some flexibility when identifying eligible children. However, they also highlight how this level of flexibility was not transferred to the eligibility criteria within the EYPP guidance subsequently some children accessing the two year old free entitlement were not eligible to receive support from the EYPP.

School leaders, including pre-school leaders must decide whether specific funding, for example, the EYPP should be treated as a discrete funding stream and used to

implement specific interventions to support only those eligible to access the funding. Monk (1990) describes this process as '*vertical equity*' and suggests that beneficiaries of the funding are limited to those who are eligible to receive support. An alternative approach to the expenditure of funding would be to combine specific funding streams with the general school budget to address school improvement in a more holistic way. Monk (1990) advocates that when applying the principle of '*horizontal equity*' to funding expenditure all children benefit from the interventions provided by the funding whether they meet the eligibility criteria or not.

With reference to the expenditure of the EYPP, if horizontal equity was applied, all early years children would benefit from interventions provided by the funding irrespective of their eligibility to receive support. When making decisions regarding budget expenditure, governing body and head teachers and pre-school leaders must ensure that they do not contravene the conditions of the grant as this will form part of the education inspection framework (Ofsted, 2015).

In respect of the various approaches to managing school budgets and school improvement, several studies offer different perspectives concerning the link between funding and school improvement. Caldwell (1998), for example, in his study draws upon the findings from several research projects that explore school improvement in relation to the management of school budgets. Set within the context of decentralised budgets in Australian schools, Caldwell highlights the tenuous link between school improvement and the effective use of school budgets stating that '*there appear to be few if any direct links between school-based management and gains in learning outcomes for students*' (Caldwell 1998, p8).

Given that the English education system is based upon decentralised budgets, it

was deemed necessary to include an overview of Caldwell's study in this literature review.

Conversely, Baldi et al. (2007) refute Caldwell's suggestion. In their study for the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) they report that devolved budget responsibilities have a positive impact on school improvement. Baldi et al.'s study is premised upon a comparison of the educational outcomes of children at the age of fifteen years between the United States and 57 international countries, including England. It could be argued that it is of little relevance to my study, however, given that Baldi et al.'s study outlines the long term impact of effective resource management upon school improvement it was felt that it was appropriate to this study. Levačić (2008) supports the findings of Baldi et al. (1997) in her study exploring the evolution of the English school finance system spanning across a nineteen year period. Levačić acknowledges that school improvement should be central to decision making as this facilitates more effective use of funding.

With regard to the expenditure of specific budgets such as the EYPP, Carpenter et al. (2013) acknowledge that strategic decisions to determine the most effective use of the PP vary from school to school and are dependent upon the type of data schools used to define disadvantage. Given that head teachers have a level of autonomy in the use of PP Carpenter et al. were commissioned by the DfE to evaluate the use of PP in English primary, secondary and special schools. Carpenter et al. identified that where schools use local demographic data to identify the needs of their local community a greater number of children benefited

from the funding, thus confirming the view of Levačić that school improvement should be central to the expenditure of school budgets.

Abbot et al. (2015) conducted qualitative research in 11 English schools graded as '*outstanding*' by Ofsted to explore participants' perceptions of the rationale in determining the most effective use of the PP. In their study Abbott et al. (2005) highlight that in most outstanding primary schools the pupil premium was used to support the employment of additional support staff, arguing that this would be the most efficient use of the funding enabling more children to benefit. From this it can be inferred that again, school improvement is central to effective resource management.

In terms of the expenditure of the EYPP, Roberts, et al. (2017b) were also commissioned by the DfE to conduct a detailed qualitative study to explore how 30 early years providers in England used the EYPP to support disadvantaged children and how they perceived it to impact on their outcomes. Roberts et al. (2017) also explained that some settings used local demographic data to identify the specific needs relating to children in their care and used the EYPP to commission specialist staff to support eligible children this concurs with the findings of Carpenter et al. (2013). They also found that some settings would invest in continuous professional development of staff to provide them with additional skills to support specific needs such as language and communication, explaining that in these instances staff were able to support all vulnerable children whether eligible or not. Roberts et al. (2017) also identified that settings used the funding to directly support parents to give them the skills to be able to '*support their children's learning and involve them in the settings' activities*' (p29). Roberts

et al. study also acknowledges the link between school improvement priorities and effective resource management.

With reference to the decision making process in the participating settings, Roberts et al. (2017b) explained that as there were no explicit guidelines outlining how the EYPP funding should be used other than to support outcomes for disadvantaged children. This afforded a degree of flexibility for leaders that subsequently influenced decision making in their settings. They observed that decision making regarding EYPP expenditure varied depending upon setting type, identifying that in smaller settings responsibility for funding expenditure was delegated to those staff directly involved with eligible children. Whereas in larger settings rather than delegating responsibility for funding expenditure to practitioners, decision making regarding the use of the funding lay with senior managers.

While it is not the intention of this study to evaluate the impact that specific funding streams such as the EYPP has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children, it was considered relevant to include a discussion of Roberts et al.'s research in this literature review as it explored an aspect of leadership within the context of early years. Also the participating settings were all located in areas of disadvantage and therefore they are demographically similar to those in this study. This section of the literature review has helped to inform my second research question:

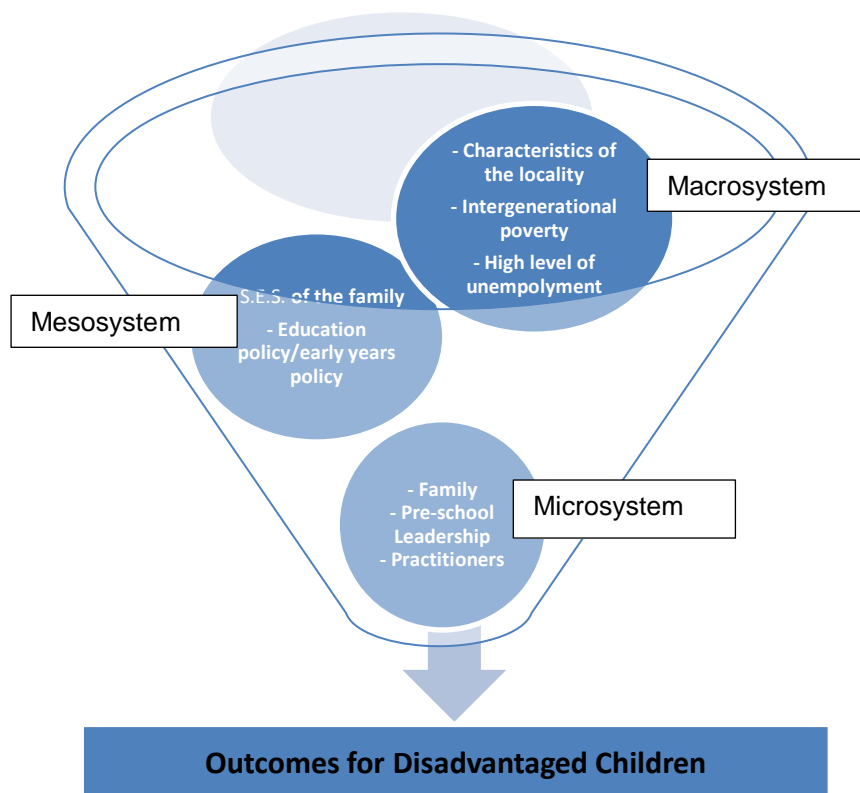
What measures do pre-school leaders take to ensure that the needs of the most disadvantage children in their settings are met?

2.10 Influences on outcomes for disadvantaged children: a theory

focus

As discussed above, Leithwood (2010), and Sun and Leithwood (2012) explored the relationship between educational leadership and pupil achievement, identifying factors that were beyond the control of leaders that influenced educational outcomes. Bronfenbrenner (1986) locates these factors within environmental systems in relation to their proximity to the child. In his ecological theory, Bronfenbrenner recognises that while children primarily develop within the context of the family, he argues that there are influences external to the family that collectively impact on outcomes for children either directly or indirectly (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Factors influencing outcomes for disadvantaged children beyond the control of pre-school leaders located within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory



Those factors that directly influence children's outcomes are located within the microsystem and include interactions occurring within pre-school, that is, interactions between children and pre-school practitioners, and children and pre-school leaders. As indicated by Leithwood (2010) interactions between children and pre-school practitioners are, to some extent, beyond the control of pre-school leaders. Children will establish relationships with practitioners that are often based on individual personalities, outside the realm of the pre-school leader. Moving beyond the immediate environment of the microsystem, Bronfenbrenner (1993) explains that within the mesosystem there are structures and processes that occur between different contexts '*one of which does not involve the child*' (p40), that indirectly influence outcomes for young children. Within the context of this research these relate to the S.E.S of the family (in which the child is directly involved), and education policy that guides pre-school practice, this indirectly involves the child. The third ecological system as described by Bronfenbrenner, relative to this study, is the macrosystem. This refers to those societal factors that influence young children's development such as those identified in figure 3.

Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) in their exposition of four ecological models framing transition to kindergarten, expand upon Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model to include a dynamic dimension to children's interactions. In their '*ecological and dynamic model*' (p449), Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta assert that outcomes for young children are not only influenced by the context of their relationships, rather, they argue that over time '*these connections form patterns*' (p500) that affect outcomes. While Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta explain these connections in relation to children's transition to kindergarten, they can be explained within the context of childhood poverty. For example, Wagmiller and

Adelman (2009) assert that children from low-income families are '*more likely to face multiple family transitions*' (p1) than their more affluent peers. In addition, they explain that relationship connections formed during childhood transfer into adulthood. That is, children who experience child poverty are more likely to be poor in later life this, they claim, can result in '*generational poverty*' (p5).

Reflecting upon the ecological theories discussed above in relation to child poverty has, to some extent, influenced the title of this study. My initial title was 'Pre-school leadership and the '*impact*' this has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children'. However, after consideration of the range of environmental influences as identified above, and given that Mistry and Sood (2017) highlight the complexity associated with making claims of the impact in relation to leadership, I felt that it would be naive of me to assume that pre-school leaders could impact children's outcomes in isolation of all other environmental influences. Subsequently, to give a more accurate title for this study I replaced the word '*impact*' with '*influence*' that is, 'Pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children'.

2.11 Chapter summary

In determining what literature to include in this literature review I first considered the purpose of my study, that was to explore pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children. I thought that if I deconstructed the purpose of my study this would then guide my reading and give structure to the literature review and help to inform my research questions so to this end, as recommended by Hart (1998), I developed a literature

map (see figure 2 above). This provided a framework for the literature review that I feel resulted in a sensible approach to my reading.

Before exploring the influence that pre-school leadership has upon outcomes for less fortunate children it was deemed necessary to consider literature that demonstrates the impact childhood poverty has upon children's learning and development. The review of literature in this regard revealed that childhood poverty has a profound and lasting negative impact upon outcomes for disadvantaged children. In addition the literature review demonstrates how early years provision can help to ameliorate the negative effects of childhood poverty (Springate 2008, Pugh 2010, Engle et al. 2011, Ridge 2011, and Taggart et al. 2015).

Literature relating to pre-school leadership focused primarily upon the characteristics associated with leaders and as such I feel did not provide an insight into how leadership within pre-school settings influenced outcomes for disadvantaged children. Previous studies (EPPE, REPAY and ELAY) highlighted that strong leadership was evident in good quality provision, although this term was not clearly defined or explained. Given the limitation of research into the influence that pre-school leadership has upon outcomes for young children it was deemed necessary to focus on educational leadership and the influence this has upon educational outcomes in the context of school leadership. Reading literature in this context helped to inform the methodological approaches to be adopted for this study.

When reviewing literature relating to educational leadership, all of the studies discussed suggest that educational leadership influences children's educational outcomes. The literature reviewed has highlighted a gap in research specifically relating to pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for young children and as such provides the context for my research. The final section of the literature identified the range of environmental influences through the application of Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological systems theory and Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta's (2000) ecological and dynamic theory in relation to childhood poverty.

This literature review has helped to inform the development of three research questions that together will help to address the overarching research aim that is:

'To explore pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children'

Research questions:

- 1. To what extent are pre-school leaders aware of the outcomes relating to child poverty in the communities they serve?*
- 2. What measures do pre-school leaders take to ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged children in their settings are met?*
- 3. How is pre-school leadership enacted in a sample of pre-school settings?*

The following chapter will present a critical discussion of the methodological approaches that were considered prior to conducting the field study. It will also describe the practical research methodology employed in this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Chapter structure

This chapter will discuss the various aspects of the research process and will present a justification for adopting the most appropriate approach to enable the research questions to be addressed. Reflections on the learning gained from implementing the initial pilot study will be integrated into each discussion and will provide further justification for the chosen methodological approach adopted.

3.2 Explanations of social phenomena

A research paradigm is as suggested by Brundrett and Rhodes (2014) a set of beliefs and assumptions that guide research. These assumptions can be described as being ontological and/or epistemological. Cohen et al. (2011:5) explain that ontological assumptions concern the nature of the social phenomenon being explored and the social interactions that exist within that phenomenon. Cohen et al. (2011) further debate the essence of a given social phenomena, that is whether it is objective or subjective in origin. With regard to the current research, the ontological assumptions are concerned with the interactions between educational leadership in pre-school settings, pupil achievement and the current political agenda in regard to social inequality. The current political agenda to narrow the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and all other children underpins school improvement. The political agenda is imposed upon educational leaders, including pre-school leaders, as it is through the regulatory process (Ofsted 2015c) that judgements are made upon the effectiveness of school leadership in narrowing the achievement gap associated with social inequality. One could argue that the ontological assumptions in this instance are

externally driven, that is, they are the result of external political ideologies that are imposed on both pre-school and school leaders. It could be further argued that the ontological assumptions underpinning the research are subjective in nature, as they are as Cohen et al. (2011:5) suggest '*the result of individual cognition*' as they are determined by the underpinning beliefs and assumptions held by the political leader in power at a given time and also by me as a researcher. Foucault, & Deleuze (1977) assert that political ideologies can perpetuate social inequalities, as through their position of power and authority politicians elicit policy changes that can impact negatively upon disadvantaged groups and thereby exacerbate social inequalities between the two groups.

As stated above, the ontological assumptions underpinning this research are concerned with the interaction between pre-school leaders and outcomes for young children. To provide greater insight into this phenomenon consideration was given to a phenomenological approach to research as described by Cohen et al. (2011), that is, participants' descriptions of their leadership practice were explored. Finlay (2009) explains that this exploration will provide greater insight into participants' everyday experiences of leadership. However, Selvi (2008) as cited in (Tymieniecka 2008:40) claims that descriptions of actions and experiences alone do not provide explanations or reasons behind behaviour. Therefore, to elicit greater insight into the influence that pre-school leadership has on outcomes for disadvantaged children this study also seeks to explore how the lived experiences of pre-school leaders are interpreted by others that is, by me as a researcher and from the perspective of Ofsted inspectors.

Cohen et al. (2011) explains that an individual's understanding of behaviour is premised upon their own experiences in a similar context and that these experiences can be perceived differently by different people. That is, my experiences of pre-school leadership may differ slightly from those of Ofsted inspectors, subsequently Finlay (2009:9), states that the '*phenomenon in question varies slightly*'. The variation in this instance could be attributed to the way in which I, as a researcher, and Ofsted inspectors view the phenomenon in question. As a researcher I am not observing leadership behaviours to inform judgements in the same way as Ofsted inspectors, rather I am using participants' descriptions of their practice to gain a better understanding of the influence pre-school leadership has upon outcomes for less affluent children.

Cohen et al. (2011) acknowledge that as a researcher one must be aware of the knowledge that is used to inform the research. That is, as a researcher I must be aware of my own knowledge of educational leadership and the influence this might have on both the research and the outcomes of the research. The knowledge used to inform my research has been gained from my experiences of educational leadership in the context of my lecturing role, previous employment, previous research, and by theoretical knowledge gained from previous study. Hellowell, (2006) argues that subjective knowledge can determine the researcher's position within the research and how they may be viewed by their participants. As a researcher I could be viewed as being either internal or external to the research, however as I am not involved in the day to day management of the settings or curriculum delivery, I am external to the research and as such I may be viewed as an outsider by participants.

In relation to Hellowell's (2006) argument concerning researcher positionality, I would suggest that my position along the insider-outsider continuum will change depending upon the research questions being asked and whether participants perceive me to have insider knowledge relating to specific questions. Given my knowledge and experiences of leadership within early years, participants may view me as an insider irrespective of my own views. In this instance Marshall and Rossman (2016) question the dependability of participants' responses and as such I must consider whether these accurately reflect their views or whether they are based upon the perceptions they have of me as an academic working with pre-school leaders.

If participants' responses to questions do not necessarily reflect their views this could have an impact on the findings within the research, insofar as concerns regarding the truth and accuracy of the findings may be raised. Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) explain how in this instance the validity of the research may be capricious as participants may not share their true perspectives. To ensure that as far as possible responses to questions are accurate, where appropriate, I asked participants to describe aspects of their practice to illustrate the points they made.

3.3 Research Paradigms

In order to determine the most appropriate methodology and research methods to enable the research questions to be addressed, Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that consideration must first be given to the research paradigm in which the research will be situated, as this will influence the methodology and methods to be used. It is evident within each research paradigm that different frameworks are used to

offer explanations of social phenomena, and that each is governed by predetermined underpinning assumptions that guide the research and method of enquiry.

3.3.1 The interpretivist approach

When considering the current research, my initial thoughts were that the research should reside within an interpretivist paradigm. The rationale for this is as explained by Denzin and Lincoln (2003) who suggest research that explores a given social phenomena such as pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon improving outcomes for disadvantaged children, should reside within an interpretive research paradigm. They emphasise that within an interpretive paradigm research questions seek to explore the interpretations, meanings and reasons associated with participants' actions. The aim of this research is to explore leadership behaviours in an attempt to understand how these influence pupil achievement. Cohen et al. (2011) further suggest research that acknowledges the subjective nature of human behaviour in given contexts should reside within an interpretive paradigm.

A limitation aligned to interpretative research concerns the truth and accuracy of human behaviour. Rex (1974) questions this, suggesting that researchers can never be absolutely sure that what is observed or explained is a true and accurate account. This links to Hellawell's (2006) notion of an insider-outsider perspective, in that participants may, depending upon their perception of the researcher, respond in a manner that they perceive to be expected of them rather than giving a true and accurate account of what they believe. Similarly, interpretations of

responses or behaviours may be influenced by researcher bias, that is as a practitioner researcher my prior knowledge and understanding of educational leadership within early years may influence how responses to questions are interpreted. Schotak (2002:77) argues that validity in qualitative research can be measured in terms of its application to reality that is, the extent to which descriptions of educational leadership are true of all cases of educational leadership in a given context. As this research is small in scale, questions concerning the validity of the findings could be raised, insofar as, it could be argued that descriptions of leadership in the participating settings may not be a true representation of leadership in all pre-schools.

Another limitation associated with the interpretivist approach to research concerns the power relations between participant and researcher. Bernstein (1974) advises that power relations and perceptions of inequality between participant and researcher could adversely impact upon the views held by participants, that is, participants may adopt the views of the researcher based upon their subject expertise. With regard to my position within the research, I was aware of the influence this may have had upon participants' responses to research questions, as a result I made a professional judgement and took responses to questions on face value and trusted that these reflect participants' views.

3.3.2 The positivist approach

Taking into consideration the limitations associated with adopting a purely interpretivist approach to the research and to enable a more comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors associated with the participating settings,

the research also involved an analysis of the settings' data. To further contextualise the participating settings' performances in relation to demographically similar settings in the locality and nationally, performance data within the public domain was retrieved and analysed. Punch and Oancea (2014) argue that analysing quantitative data allows direct comparisons to be made in what they argue to be, a logical and objective way. Therefore it was thought that the research should also reside within a positivist paradigm. However, it could be argued that there are several tenets associated with positivism that do not wholly apply to this research.

Firstly, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggest that within positivism it is assumed that reality is constant, observable and can only be understood in empirical terms, a view supported by Brundrett and Rhodes (2014) who suggest that within positivism reality can only be explained in an objective, scientific and rational way. Within the domain of early years, rather than being constant, reality is an ever changing landscape driven by political and curriculum changes therefore in this regard the ontological assumptions underpinning positivism cannot be applied to this research.

Secondly, when considering my position within research, within a positivist paradigm researcher positionality is as Brundrett and Rhodes (2014) explain viewed as being external to the research. This suggests that the researcher is required to be devoid of personal opinion, values and knowledge as these are seen to compromise the integrity of the research. It would be imprudent of me to disregard the epistemological knowledge that informs this research as Cohen et al. (2011) advise, to ensure research transparency this knowledge must be

accredited and that I, as researcher, must be aware of the influence that it could have upon both the research and research outcomes. Therefore with regard to my position within the research I am, as Hellowell (2006) suggests, both internal and external to the research process this is contrary to researcher positionality within positivism as suggested by Brundreth and Rhodes (2014).

With regard to data analysis aligned to positivism, data is subject to rigorous statistical analysis the primary objective of which is to, as Flick (1998:3) states, *'establish cause and effect relationships to allow generalisations to be made'*.

With regard to my research, I could argue that cause and effect relationships are explained in relation to the extent leadership behaviours (cause) impact upon pupil achievement (effect). Establishing cause and effect relationships between leadership and pupil achievement should according to Flick enable a consistent approach to educational leadership. However, given the complexity associated with the subjective nature of human behaviour it could be argued that simple cause and effect relationships cannot fully explain the influence educational leadership has upon outcomes of disadvantaged children. Leithwood and Sun (2012) explain that within educational leadership there are factors that are beyond the control of leaders such as environmental factors associated with the socio-economic status of families and individual differences in pupil abilities.

While this research will include an analysis of settings' data rather than applying inferential statistical techniques to the data, descriptive statistics were used to situate the participating settings in the context of other settings at local, regional and national levels. The research draws upon qualitative data gained from participants to explore the meanings, interpretations and reasons associated with

their actions. Denzin and Lincoln (2003), argue that positivist researchers do not concern themselves with meanings and interpretations assigned to actions, therefore in this regard the research is not conversant with the tenets of positivism. Contrary to the opinion of Denzin and Lincoln, Silverman (2007) argues that all research is interpretive irrespective of the type of data collected and level of analysis applied, suggesting that even data that is analysed by the most complex inferential statistical methods is subject to researcher interpretation.

To further my knowledge and understanding of research paradigms and to explore the possibility of locating the research within a single research paradigm consideration was given to a critical theory approach to research.

3.3.3. Critical Theory: An alternative Approach

Unlike interpretivist and positivist paradigms critical theory is as explained by Trip (1992), an idealised perspective wherein social inequalities are acknowledged suggesting that the ontological assumptions underpinning a critical theory approach are premised upon the '*principles of social justice*' (p13). Cohen et al. (2011) concur suggesting that the aim of critical theory research is to change some aspect of society to redress social injustice. With regard to this research, situating the research within a critical theory approach has enabled me to explore the extent to which educational leadership influences outcomes for disadvantaged children in order to create parity between them and their more advantaged peers. Creating parity between these two different social groups would transform the lives of children from low income families to enable them to eventually make a positive contribution to society. However optimistic this naïve view suggests that education

is the panacea for social inequalities, and while Field (2010) would agree, Berstein (1970) in Cohen, et al. (2011:35) argues that '*education cannot compensate for society*'.

Tripp (1992) also advises that the epistemology used to inform research within a critical theory approach is '*socially constructed*' (p13) that is, the epistemology used to inform research is culturally determined and as a result of changing political ideologies is variable over time. As such, Kincheloe and McLaren (2002:89) argue that the discontinuity associated with changing political ideologies highlights a limitation of critical theory approaches insofar as they '*lack specificity*'. The epistemology used to inform critical theory differs from that associated with positivism insofar as, within positivism reality is assumed to be constant and can only be explained in an objective and empirical way. Tripp (1992) further suggests that within a critical theory approach alternative perspectives are developed to explain social phenomena. Kincheloe and McLaren (2002:88) suggest that critical theory can therefore be explained in terms of a '*discourse of possibility*'. One could argue that in order to develop an alternative perspective the social phenomena explored must be interpreted differently therefore in this regard critical theory can also be aligned to an interpretivist paradigm.

The ontological assumptions underpinning critical theory are as Cohen et al. (2011) suggest externally determined, as the drive to create parity and reduce social inequalities is politically driven. In addition, the underpinning assumptions of critical theory can be described as being subjective in nature as they are as Cohen et al. (2011) further explain determined by the beliefs and values held by the political leader in power at a given time. Therefore, it would appear that the

ontological assumptions associated with critical theory resonate with an interpretive research paradigm, as it could be argued they are dependent upon a politician's interpretation of society.

With reference to researcher positionality within critical theory, Brundreth and Rhodes (2014: 17) assert that the researcher can never adopt a '*neutral*' stance to the research. On the basis of their involvement in the research the researcher is either internal or external to the research. That is, whether an observer or interviewer, the presence of the researcher may influence the behaviours and responses of participants. As with researcher positionality within an interpretivist approach this then questions the reliability of the research findings. Habermas (1984) argues that participant's verbal utterances and observed behaviours can be questioned as these are dependent upon how they are interpreted by the researcher. Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) also claim that within critical theory validity can be capricious as participants may not share their true perspective. When applied to the current research the epistemological knowledge held by myself can influence how I interpret responses to questions. For example, if a participant does not respond to questions in a manner that I expect of them I could then question the accuracy of the response given. However, in this instance participants were encouraged to illustrate the points they made by providing anecdotes from practice that would hopefully elicit new insights into leadership within pre-school settings and how this influences outcomes for disadvantaged children.

3.3.4. A Feminist approach to qualitative research

Given the limitations associated with interpretivist, positivist and critical theory approaches to research I sought to explore the possibility of locating my research within what Denzin and Lincoln (2003) describe as the '*fourth paradigm*'(p33).

Feminist approaches to qualitative research as explained by Usher (2000), argue that feminist researchers seek to remove social inequalities such as those associated with economically disadvantaged families and are therefore, by virtue, committed to '*social change*' (p28). In addition, Burgess, et al. (2006) assert that feminist approaches seek to provide a more holistic explanation of social inequalities by challenging social issues such as the achievement gap between children classified as disadvantaged and their more affluent peers. One could argue that in seeking to remove social inequalities the aims of feminist approaches are in alignment with those within critical theory. It could also be assumed that explaining social problems in relation to social inequalities rather than in terms of social injustice, feminist explanations merely redefine social issues.

With regard to the subject matter of my research and its relation to feminism, it is widely acknowledged that the early years workforce is a feminised workforce with less than 5% of the workforce being male (Laerve, et al., 2014), and that traditionally the care and education of very young children is seen to be the domain of women (Peeters 2013). In addition, as discussed previously in the literature review, Rodd, (1996,1997, 2001) reports that leaders of pre-school settings do not perceive themselves as being leaders, a view supported by Coleman et al. (2016), who assert that pre-school leaders are not afforded the same level of professional status as leaders of other educational institutions.

Grarock, and Morrissey (2013) suggest that the perceived lack of professional credibility held by leaders of pre-school settings was, in part, attributed to the fact that they felt that their early years qualifications were not valued in the same way that perhaps qualified teacher status was valued. These claims highlight inequalities of power, position and professionalism associated with the education and care of young children in pre-school settings and therefore resonate with the underpinning tenets of feminist research.

With regard to the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning this research and way these are enacted throughout the study, Mauthner & Doucet (2003) argue that as a researcher I cannot remain completely detached from the research process, as such, epistemological and ontological assumptions cannot be viewed in isolation from the research. They posit that the researcher, methods of data collection and subsequent data are both *'interdependent and interconnected'* (p144) and that this relationship provides meaning to the data.

Within feminism, the focus of the *'research relationship'* (Holloway 1997:70), that is, the relationship between the researcher and female participants is upon equality and professional parity. Holloway exalts that female researchers are, by virtue of their gender, in a better position to empathise with their female participants. Taking into consideration the views of Holloway (1970), to elicit open and honest responses to areas for discussion, I strived to create an ethos of professional parity between myself and my participants. This was achieved by having an informal discussion with participants prior to the interviews being recorded. During this informal exchange we shared our experiences of working within early years as both practitioners and leaders. This, I feel, enabled me to

empathise with participants and create a more relaxed atmosphere. Throughout the interview process I was mindful of the requirement to have mutual regard and respect for the participants (BERA, 2011).

Campbell & Wasco (2000) proclaim that within feminist research the link between emotion and knowledge is made explicit. As a researcher I can draw upon my emotions, and those of my participants, and openly acknowledge how these might help to provide greater insights into the experiences of pre-school leaders. During the informal exchange it was acknowledged by participants that my passion for leadership within early years was tangible. Similarly, the participants were openly passionate about their role and the influence they felt this had upon improving the lives of children, particularly as they served very disadvantaged localities.

The sharing of experiences helped to create a sense of belonging, as I was able to identify with some of the issues experienced by my participants and thereby hopefully dispel any power differences between the researcher and participants. However, it could be argued that while I made every attempt to create a research relationship based upon professional parity, in reality, it is argued this can never be fully achieved. Foucault and Deleuze (1977) suggest that this is because often academics are, by virtue of their specific area of expertise, viewed as being in a position of power. Hunter (2010) explains that interviewees may assume that as a researcher I have the power to '*help*' (p45), this view was echoed by one of the participants. During our informal exchange they explained that through this research, they felt I would have the 'power' to influence professional perceptions of pre-school leaders, and that this was her reason for participating in the research. This placed upon me, as researcher, a '*moral and ethical dilemma*' (Foucault and

Deleuze 1997:45), that left me no choice other than to explain to the participant, that at that time, I could not promise that this would be the case and hoped that this would not deter her from participating in the research.

One of the aims of this study was to explore how leadership was enacted in a range of pre-school settings from the perspective of the participants. The underpinning ontological assumptions guiding this study are premised upon the notion that reality is constantly changing, as such it is accepted that the realities of pre-school leaders differ depending upon the context in which leadership occurs. The research questions, methods of data collection and subsequent data analysis, were all informed by my previous experiences and belief that, pre-school leaders have the power to influence outcomes for young children. These experiences and belief were the catalyst to this research.

3.3.5 Paradigm dilemmas

My initial indecision regarding the choice of research paradigm appropriate to this research was, in part, fuelled by the controversies surrounding the debates concerning mixed methods approaches to research design. Howe (1988:10) identified the '*incompatibility*' previously associated with the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches within a single research study. Previous schools of thought as identified by Howe, appear to suggest that they cannot be integrated as they are two distinct and separate approaches, and that research will utilise either a qualitative or quantitative approach. Silverman (2007) argues that all research is interpretive, irrespective of the type of data collected and level of

analysis applied, suggesting even data that is analysed by the most complex inferential statistical methods is subject to researcher interpretation.

If all research is, as Silverman suggests interpretive, it could be argued that there is no distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. Morgan (2018) concurs, arguing that there is no distinction between the two and that quantitative and qualitative methods are inseparable. Morgan further argues that '*no study can be classified exclusively as quantitative or qualitative on the basis of data*' (p270). Hammersley (2018) vehemently refutes this position and exalts that the two approaches are distinguishable, although he acknowledges that there '*is some overlap in the features of some of the research in both categories*' (p257). Hammersley believes that combining methods can serve to strengthen the validity of a study as a greater level of triangulation can be applied. With regard to the current research, the views of Hammersley have influenced the approach taken insofar as the different data sets were treated as being distinct from each other. Subsequently, collectively they aim to strengthen the validity of the study and ensure that, as far as possible, the research was conducted without bias (BERA 2011).

3.3.6 An integrated approach to research methods

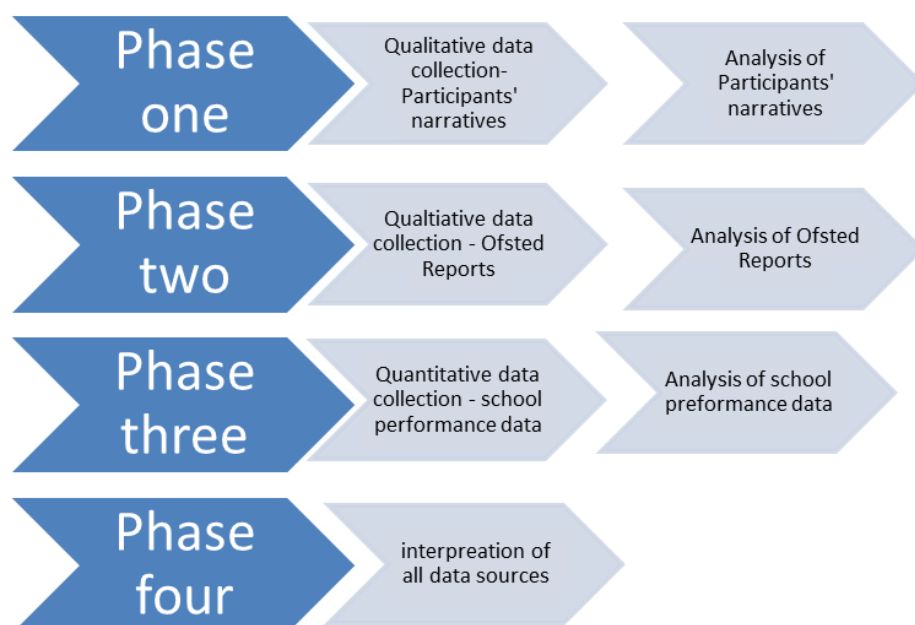
Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) acknowledge the complementarity associated with a mixed methods approach suggesting that '*methodological pluralism*' (p14) yields a higher level of understanding than a single methodological approach. Far from being complete polar opposites Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:15) assert that positivist and interpretivist approaches have commonalities, both paradigms

seek to provide explanations arising from data. Plowright (2011) further suggests that integrating methodologies allows the researcher to adopt a more reflective and reflexive approach to the research. Kington et al. (2011) concur and further suggest that integrating data sets helps to provide a more holistic explanation of the phenomenon explored.

To resolve my dilemma over which paradigm to situate my research in, I decided that adopting a topology of pragmatism would identify the most appropriate paradigm in which to situate the research concluding that a mixed methods approach would best suit my purpose. The following discussion provides justification for this decision. Cohen et al. (2011) acknowledge the limitations of adopting a single approach to research suggesting that integrating both positivist and interpretive approaches to research can provide greater depth to research data. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:18) argue that an integrated approach to research builds on the strengths of both approaches and thereby mitigates the weakness associated with an individual approach. Denscombe (2008:272) in his research into communities of practice cites many advocates of a mixed methods approach to research. Denscombe also supports a dualist approach to research suggesting that integrating both qualitative and quantitative data provides a more holistic explanation of the research topic. Integrating participants' responses with an analysis of the settings' data and Ofsted reports has provided greater insight into the contextual factors that may influence outcomes for disadvantaged children. With regard to the current research, adopting a practical and problem based approach to paradigm selection has enabled me to select the most appropriate paradigm/s in which to situate the research that resulted in a mixed methods approach to the research.

To guide the research design, consideration was given to Creswell's (2009) sequential exploratory strategy (p209) (see Figure 4 below). In this strategy qualitative data are, as explained by Creswell, used to assist in the exploration of a given phenomenon. Quantitative data in this instance was used to assist in the interpretation of qualitative data, to enable comparisons to be made between settings. Each data set within Creswell's sequential exploratory strategy is, in line with Hammersley's (2018) recommendation, treated as distinct and separate from each other. Adopting a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis has enabled me to garner evidence to ensure that the research questions are thoroughly addressed.

Figure 4: Sequential Exploratory Strategy



Adapted from Creswell (2009)

Holloway (1970) asserts that, in feminist research, the personal experiences of female researchers are important as they help to shape the way interviews are conducted and influence the way in which data is interpreted. Previously in section 3.3.4, I acknowledged how my subjective experiences influenced the

development of the research questions, data collection methods and interpretation of participant's responses. To minimise the influence that the different data sets might have on the way I conducted the interviews and the subsequent interpretation of the data arising from these, a phased approach (see Figure 4 above) to data collection and analysis was adopted.

In phase one qualitative data arising from semi-structured interviews were collected and analysed. Following this, in phase two each Setting's Ofsted report was retrieved and analysed. Phase three involved retrieving school performance data from the DfE website, analysing this to enable comparisons to be made between settings. In the final phase, to inform the discussion of the findings, all data sources were integrated to provide a holistic response to the research questions. It is worth noting that throughout the data collection and analysis process equal weighting was assigned to each data set. Adopting an integrated approach to data collection has, in the words of Kington et al. (2011:122), led to a *'reliable, thorough, meaningful and warranted'* approach to the study of pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Given that social phenomenon is socially constructed, often complex, multifaceted and prone to interpretation, Cohen et al. (2011) argue that the rigours of empirical statistical analysis associated with quantitative methodologies cannot adequately explain social phenomena in a given context. As a result, inadequate explanations arising from the application of inferential statistics to social phenomena can compromise the validity of the research. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) argue that validity as applied in quantitative methodologies can be overstated and therefore confusing when applied to qualitative methodologies. In qualitative research

validity is as Schostak (2002:77) suggest measured in terms of its application to reality.

With regard to external validity, Cohen et al. (2011) explain that this refers to the extent to which the research findings can be generalised. If the external validity of the research is compromised this could impact upon the extent to which the findings can be applied to other settings in similar contexts. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggest that in positivist research external validity is determined by the extent universal generalisations can be made in a broader context. Within the context of my research, it could be argued that external validity can be compromised as it is small in scale with a limited number of participants therefore this limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised. Within qualitative methodologies external validity is as Cohen et al. (2011) suggest determined by the extent to which research findings are transferrable and allow comparisons to be made.

Given the interpretive nature aligned to qualitative methodologies external validity can be threatened as it could be influenced by researcher bias. That is, as a researcher my own views and opinions may influence how I interpret participants' responses to questions. Similarly, if the truth and accuracy of participants' responses is questioned this too could negatively impact upon the external validity of the research. To minimise against the extent to which external validity can be compromised Punch and Oancea (2014) advocate the use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. If the validity of the research is compromised it can be assumed that this would negatively impact upon the reliability of the research. This is further justification for adopting a mixed methods approach.

Reliability and validity as applied to this research are best explained in relation to Lincoln & Guba's (1985) notion of *'trustworthiness'* (p290). This they explain in relation to the extent to which the findings arising from research make a valuable contribution to the research topic, in this instance, to the field of early years leadership and are, as Lincoln and Guba posit, *'worthy of paying attention to'* (290). In order to determine whether the findings arising from the research are trustworthy Lincoln and Guba advocate that as a researcher I must take steps to ensure that the research findings are *'credible'* (p301). One of the techniques used to increase the likelihood that the findings within research are credible is, as acknowledged by Lincoln and Guba, data triangulation.

My reason for using data triangulation was informed by the concerns regarding the reliability and validity of Ofsted inspections as discussed in Chapter 1.3.4, specifically those raised by Gaertner and Plant (2011). They argue that Ofsted inspections merely provide a 'snap shot' (p90) of practice and question the reliability of observations made by Ofsted inspectors on a given time and day. It was also suggested that Ofsted inspections do not take into consideration those external influences that provide the context for learning, influences such as childhood poverty and the impact this has upon children's development. Had I used the findings within Ofsted reports as the sole data source, the same concerns regarding the reliability and validity of Ofsted inspections might be raised against this research. Furthermore, given that I have openly acknowledged how my own subjectivities have influenced this research, it was felt that using several data sources would strengthen the validity of the research and bring added value to the study.

Data triangulation was applied to this research in two ways. Firstly, various data sets were used to provide a more holistic response to the research questions. Participants' responses provided an insight into the way in which leadership was enacted in the settings. The analysis of Ofsted reports provided a professional judgement on the effectiveness of leadership within each setting. I felt, that using Ofsted's judgements would give a more unbiased and objective view of leadership within the settings. Data regarding children's progress towards the ELGs was used to provide '*contextual validity*' (Lincoln and Guba 1987:305) to the study, the assumption being, if leadership was deemed by Ofsted to be good or outstanding this would be reflected in the setting's performance data. Secondly, the data collection process and subsequent data analysis was carried out sequentially (see Sections 3.3.6 and 3.4.4), this was to minimise any influence that each data set might have on my interpretation of participants' responses and thereby increase the validity of the research.

In respect of reliability, this is discussed in reference to the '*replicability*' of the research as explained by Cohen et al. (2011:199). That is, when replicated in a similar context the research would yield similar results. Within quantitative methodologies reliability is determined by the rigour associated with inferential statistical procedures that are consistently applied. Within qualitative methodologies reliability cannot be so easily determined. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016) reliability is measured in terms of the truth and accuracy of participants' responses and the extent to which research can depend upon this. To be assured of the reliability of this research, as a researcher I must be confident that the responses given by participants have not been influenced by my own knowledge and opinions. Rex (1974) advises that researchers must be

mindful of the caveats associated with the reliability within qualitative research as such, suggests that reliability can never be assumed.

Lincoln and Guba (1987) assert that reliability is a '*precondition for validity*' (p292) and as such further supports the trustworthiness of the research. The application of Creswell's (2009) sequential exploratory strategy to data collection and analysis ensures that the research methodology is reliable and replicable. Lincoln and Guba's concept of '*stepwise replication*' (p317), as applied to this research ensures that the research is reliable, insofar as, each data set is treated separately and distinct from each other in a sequential order to minimise the influence that each has on the other, and upon my interpretation of the participants' responses. Furthermore, initial judgements concerning the effectiveness of the leadership within the settings are made independently of the researcher, that is, they are determined by Ofsted inspectors and as such provide an element of objectivity to the research.

3.4 Methods adopted within the research

3.4.1 Sampling: Pre-school settings

Given that the research is situated within a feminist approach adopting mixed methods several strategies to select participating settings and participants were utilised. Firstly, the participating settings were purposefully selected. Cohen et al. (2011) describe purposeful sampling as a method used to target specific settings against a set of predetermined criteria. As the research aims to explore the influence that leadership within pre-school settings has upon pupil achievement in disadvantaged children it was necessary to select pre-school settings located in

disadvantaged communities. Cohen et al. (2011) explain that in this instance non-probability sampling could also be applied as settings could not be randomly selected in case they were not demographically similar. If participating settings were not demographically similar Punch and Oancea (2014) suggest that this could compound the research outcomes as it would be difficult to measure the extent to which the Dependent Variable of disadvantage influenced pupil achievement.

The settings selected were also in receipt of government funding to deliver early years education to three year old and four year old children, and to support disadvantaged two year olds. In addition, settings were selected on the basis of their accessibility to the researcher. For the purpose of this research four pre-school settings were selected on the basis of their relevance to the research topic. Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that a critical case selection process can be applied as it is necessary to ensure that the selected settings are demographically similar, that is they are located within areas of disadvantage. Furthermore, as the aim of this research was to explore leadership practices and how these influence outcomes for less affluent children, I felt that the most effective way to demonstrate this would be to make a comparison between leadership within pre-school settings that had been assessed by Ofsted to be either 'outstanding' or 'requires improvement'.

It could be argued, that to present a true comparison the setting sample should have been equally weighted. However, within the specific locality selected for this research, the opportunities to gather counter-weight evidence were limited, with only one pre-school setting being assessed as 'requires improvement'.

Nonetheless, I felt that the inclusion of this setting in the sample would, hopefully, provide valuable insights into those elements of leadership that might be missing from practice. Following this decision, I considered reducing the number of 'outstanding' settings to give a more balanced sample. However, given that previous literature (Aubrey, 2011 and Aubrey et al. 2013) acknowledges that leadership is variable across settings, to provide greater insights into the influence that pre-school leadership has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children, I decided to explore the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning practice across the four settings.

3.4.2 Setting contexts

Setting A

This setting offers full day care provision to children aged from nought to five years and receives funding to support the care, learning and development of disadvantaged two year olds and delivery of early education to all three and four year old children. They are registered with Ofsted to offer 52 full time equivalent places with 85 children on roll. As the setting is in an area of high disadvantage they are also in receipt of the early years pupil premium for all three and four year old. The provision was formally under the auspice of the LA and was part of the integrated services offered by the adjoining Children's Centre. However, in response to the LA's need to streamline services offered by the Children's Centre the day care provision was decommissioned. Subsequently, the provision is now delivered by a national charity and as such all formal connections with the Children's Centre have been severed. The Setting continues to be co-located on the same site as the Children's Centre and was last inspected by Ofsted in May

2015 under sections 49 and 50 of the 2006 Childcare Act (HM Government 2006) and received an overall grading of '*outstanding*'.

Setting B

Setting B is registered with Ofsted to deliver full day care provision to two, three and four year old children. It is in receipt of funding to support the care, learning and development of disadvantaged two year olds. The Setting is currently in receipt of funding to support 54 disadvantaged two year olds. Historically, the day care provision was, as with Setting A, under the auspice of the LA. It is co-located on the same site as a maintained nursery school (Setting C). In 2011, a new head teacher was appointed to the maintained nursery school. To address concerns regarding the previous quality of the day care the new head teacher in consultation with the LA, established a service level agreement (SLA) between the day care provision and the nursery school. As a result of the SLA, the day care provision only offers care, learning and development to disadvantaged two year olds. The delivery of early education to three and four year old children is the sole responsibility of the maintained nursery school.

Over time, the ownership of the day care provision has changed several times with the current provision being delivered by the same national charity as Setting A.

The Setting was last inspected by Ofsted in April 2016 under sections 49 and 50 of the 2006 Childcare Act (HM Government 2006) and received an overall grading of '*outstanding*'.

Setting C

Setting C is the only maintained nursery school within the LA that provides nursery education to 91 three and four year old children. The school recently received Government funding to support the delivery of the two Year Olds in Schools Project and works in partnership with a national charity (Setting B) to deliver care and learning to disadvantaged two year old children. The school works in partnership with the national charity to provide the core offer of integrated education and care for children aged from two to five years. The school is designated as a National Support School and offers training and continuous professional development to schools across the LA. The school was last inspected in 2013 under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (HM Government 2005) and received an overall grading of '*outstanding*'.

Setting D

Setting D is a nursery class offering nursery education to three and four year old children as part of a maintained primary school offering education to children aged between three and eleven years. The school has 261 children registered on roll and offers 25 nursery education places to three and four year old children. Within the nursery (pre-school) 50% of children are eligible to receive support from the EYPP.

The school is led by a governing body that supports the head teacher in the strategic leadership of the school. Following the resignation of the previous head teacher in June 2016 a new head teacher was appointed in January 2017. The

new head teacher was previously the deputy head teacher and early years lead overseeing both nursery and reception class provision. The school was last inspected in January 2017 under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (HM Government 2005) and received an overall grading of '*requires improvement*'.

All settings are located in areas of high disadvantage within the LA.

3.4.3 Sampling: Participants

Participants within the settings were selected on a critical case basis. Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that, critical case selection can be applied, as it is necessary to ensure that participants within the selected settings were in a leadership position and have the appropriate knowledge to enable research questions to be answered. Selecting participants on a critical case basis can be problematic especially within a small setting where the anonymity of participants could be compromised. In the participating settings leadership teams are relatively small subsequently it will be obvious to the team who will be participating in the research. Participants selected were:

- Nursery manager of a PVI day nursery (Participant 1A)
- Nursery manager of PVI day nursery located on the same premises of the maintained nursery school identified below. (Participant 2B)
- Maintained nursery school head teacher (Participant 3C)
- Deputy head teacher with responsibility for pre-school provision in a maintained primary school (Participant 4D)

All of the aforementioned participants are responsible for leading pre-school provision within their setting.

3.4.4 Data collection

During semi-structured interviews qualitative data in the form of participants' verbal responses to areas of discussion identified in the interview guide (see Appendix 3) was collated using a Dictaphone. Gubrium and Holstein (2003:26) explain that interviews inform us of the '*nature of social life*' suggesting that responses collected during interviews provide us with an insight into how individuals perceive their environments. In this instance, participants' responses provided an insight into how leadership within pre-school settings influences the educational achievements of less advantaged children. This may appear to be a relatively simple process. However, Gubrium and Holstein emphasise the importance of interviewer objectivity throughout the interview, they argue that the validity of the interview findings can be compromised if the interviewer unwittingly influences participants' responses. Hellowell (2006) explains this in terms of interviewer positionality within the research. While I may be viewed by the participants to be external to the research, my prior knowledge and experience of early years practice could influence both my interpretation of the responses given and to some extent, the responses given by the participants. Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) suggest that as a researcher I must be mindful of the fallibility of participant responses.

With regard to researcher positionality within feminist research specifically in regard to power relations between the researcher and their interviewees, Limerick, et al. (1996) recommend that rather than trying to maintain a neutral stance as suggested by Brundeth and Rhodes (2014), throughout the interviews power relations are reversed. That is, throughout the interviews feminist researchers strive to create parity between the researcher and their interviewees

as such, every effort is made to break down perceived barriers of power and authority held by the interviewee.

Gubrium and Holstein (2003) argue that as the interviewee has the knowledge to inform the research they, rather than the researcher, should hold the power. In addition, Gubrium and Holstein suggest that when in the role of interviewer the researcher should be sensitive to the feelings and opinions of the interviewee. Sprague (2016:151) concurs, suggesting that within feminist research interviewees should not be objectified, that is, researchers should not view the interviewee as merely a repository of answers to questions. Also, Sprague explains how the interviewee's perception of the interviewer might influence the way in which they articulate their responses, suggesting that they may speak differently depending upon whether they view the interviewer as being on the same professional level as themselves or not.

In addition, to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere in which to conduct the interviews in line with the views of Limerick et al., when visiting the private day care provision my attire was very informal as I felt that to attend the interview in smart business dress could possibly fuel perceptions of power and status between myself and the interviewees.

Interviews were conducted on the premises of the participating settings at a predetermined mutually convenient date and time. As the interviews took place during normal working hours to minimise disruption to service delivery, the interviews were held in the sensory room and in order to create a more relaxed

and informal atmosphere in keeping with the tenets of feminist approaches to interviews I sat on the sofa with the interviewee. To ensure that participants' responses were relevant to the research questions, I decided to follow the format associated with semi-structured interviews and developed an interview guide (see Appendix 7). Participants were still given the opportunity to recall their experiences in their own words and in their own time, this resulted in more discursive responses to areas for discussion.

The sequence of data collection and analysis as identified in Figure 4 (see section 3.3.6.) was, I felt, integral to the validity and reliability of the research design. I wanted to minimise any influence that Ofsted judgements and school performance data might have upon the data analysis process. I did not want prior knowledge of the effectiveness of the leadership within the settings as judged by Ofsted, and as demonstrated by children's performance toward the ELGs, to influence the way in which the interviews were conducted or my subsequent analysis and interpretation of the participants' responses. It was for this reason that a phased approach to data collection and analysis was adopted within this study. Developing a phased approach to data collection enabled me to prioritise the order in which data was collected and analysed (see Figure 4, section 3.3.6). Creswell (2009:207) explains that the priority assigned to each data type is dependent upon the motives of the researcher. In this instance, my motive was, to minimise the influence that Ofsted judgements and school performance data had upon both the interview process and interpretation of participant's responses to areas for discussions.

Prior to commencing the data collection process I considered the use of observation as means to further triangulate the findings within the research. However, after careful consideration I decided against this method of data collection. My reasons for reaching this decision are three-fold. Firstly, I felt that being an observer of practice within the settings would be too intrusive. Holloway (1997) explains that to be a '*complete observer*' (p111) the researcher must become invisible to their participants. Becoming invisible in pre-school settings is difficult to achieve. In my experience, as a visitor to settings, I found that children were often drawn to me, as they are to all visitors. They wanted to engage me in conversation, say what they see and ask what I was doing. This often distracted me from the job in hand and drew attention to me thus making it difficult for me to remain inconspicuous. Also given that leadership within early years is complex (Day et al. 2011), I thought that it would be difficult to capture every aspect of leadership without carrying out multiple observations.

Secondly, and more importantly, I did not want to give the impression that I was yet another professional judging practice within the settings. I was concerned that participants might view my motives for observing their practice with scepticism, and feel that I was judging their practice. Furthermore, I questioned whether I would be able to refrain from making professional judgements while observing practice, however unintentional this was. Thirdly, as I was drawing upon the findings within the setting's most recent Ofsted inspection report, I felt that this aspect of data collection had been addressed, albeit it from the perspective of another professional. Throughout their inspections, Ofsted inspectors observe all aspects of pre-school practice and make professional judgements regarding the effectiveness of leadership within the settings. However, it could be argued, that

judgements are highly subjective as they are informed by the subjective experience of individual inspectors and their interpretation of pre-determined criteria. Furthermore, they do not take into consideration contextual factors, such as childhood poverty that could influence children's outcomes therefore, it could be suggested, that they are not a true reflection of leadership within the settings. Nonetheless, as discussed in Chapter 1.3.4 they are the force that drives quality improvement in schools (Ofsted 2017).

Brundreth and Rhodes (2014) suggest that good research practice involves sharing the interview guide with participants prior to conducting the interview. However, when carrying out the interviews for my initial study participants' responses to areas for discussion were often tangential that is, participants were pre-empting the response to the subsequent question rather than staying focused on the question at hand. This I felt that was the result of sharing the interview guide with participants prior to the interviews taking place. In view of this, I decided that for this research rather than share the interview guide prior to the interviews taking place I allowed each participant a few minutes prior to recording their responses to read the interview guide and consider their responses to questions.

3.4.5 Adopting a feminist approach to data collection

In adopting a more discursive approach within the interviews I am, in essence, allowing interviewees to tell their own story. Fraser (2004), suggests that adopting an '*interviewee orientated*' (p185) approach to interviews redresses any perceptions of power inequalities held by the interviewee explaining that in this

instance, the interviewer adopts a more passive role throughout the interview.

Gubrium and Holstein (2003) describe this as a '*redistribution of power*' (p37) that serves to elicit more honest and open responses to discussion areas.

More traditional approaches to interviews advocate researcher objectivity throughout the interviews. However (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003) explain that within feminist research researcher subjectivity is encouraged. Cotterill and Letherby, (1993) caution that '*conscious subjectivity*' (p75) can be problematic especially when the researcher shares similar experiences to those of the interviewee. While sharing similar experiences will enable me to demonstrate empathy I must ensure that this does not cloud my judgement. As the interviewer I subsequently become the narrator of the interviewee's views that is, I construct what Borland (2013:63) describes as a '*second level narrative*', and as such I am charged with the responsibility to ensure that my narrative is closely aligned to the original piece. Hunter (2010:44) advises that every effort should be made to ensure that interviewee views are presented in a '*coherent and meaningful way*' rather than being tailored to meet the researcher's agenda. Therefore, as a researcher I must be aware of my knowledge and experience and the influence this might have upon my interpretation of participants' in-depth responses to areas for discussion.

3.4.6 Data Analysis

Phase one: Participants' in-depth responses

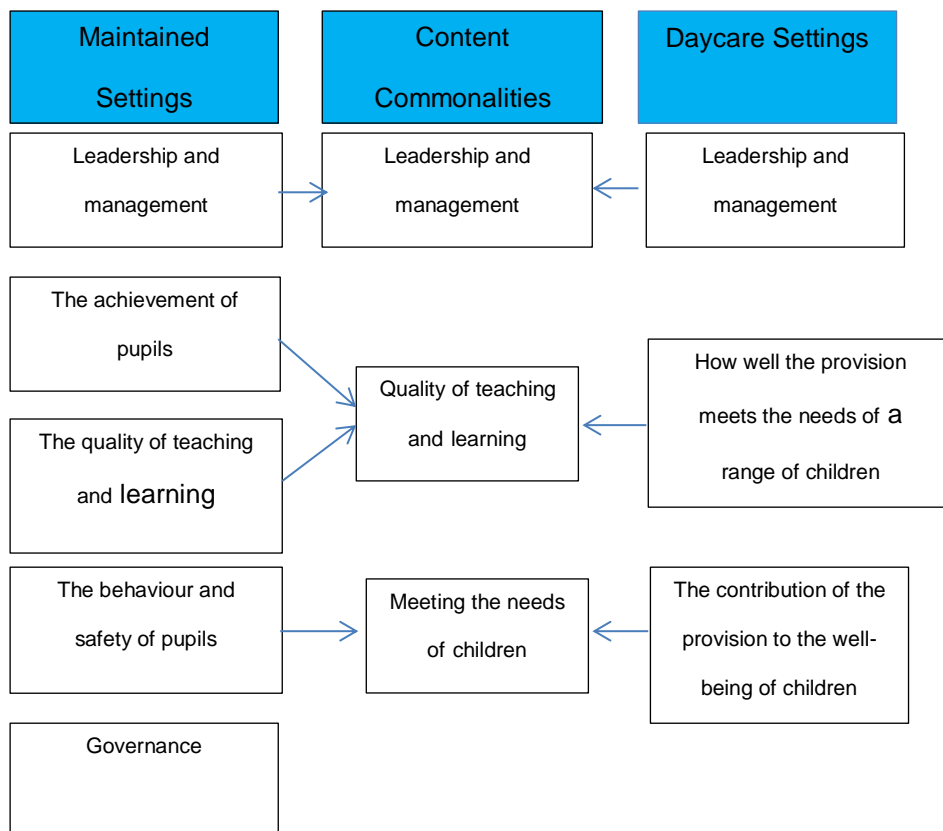
Initial thoughts concerning data analysis ebbed and flowed from thematic analysis, content analysis and grounded theory approaches. Finally, following much

deliberation I decided that '*content analysis*' (Cohen et al. 2011:428) of interview transcripts was the most appropriate technique to apply. However, before this could occur audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim. It was thought that using an audio recorder would be the most efficient way to record participants' responses as it allowed me time to concentrate on the interview rather than being distracted by note taking. Before recording the interviews I explained to the interviewees that I was going to use a Dictaphone to record their responses to questions and asked if they were comfortable with this. Each participant explained that they were happy for me to record the interview nevertheless I discreetly placed the Dictaphone out of sight so as not to inhibit the conversation.

Phase two: Ofsted Reports

In addition to the participants' in-depth responses to areas for discussion, the settings' Ofsted reports were also scrutinised to highlight any differences in the leadership practices within each of the settings. Despite the fact that all early years settings are inspected against a common assessment framework, the way in which information concerning the judgements made during the inspection is presented within the reports varies, depending upon setting type (see Appendix A and C). While the headings within the reports differ in terms of the phraseology used, the content of the reports address common areas. For the purpose of this study, the findings within the Ofsted reports were recorded against three main headings; leadership and management, quality of teaching and learning and meeting the needs of children, see figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Content of Ofsted reports aligned to common headings



Each Ofsted report was read and examples from practice, as identified by Ofsted, were highlighted against each of the three headings (see Appendix 3b). It is worth noting that for the purpose of this study judgements made regarding the Governance of maintained settings were not considered. The rationale for this is, as discussed in Chapter 1.3.3, because pre-school provision within the PVI sectors is not required to establish a constituted governing body.

Phase three: Setting performance data

With reference to the analysis of settings’ performance data retrieved from the DfE website, Punch and Oancea (2014) explain that analysing quantitative data enabled direct comparisons to be made in a logical and objective way. Descriptive statistics are used to situate the participating settings performance in the context of other settings locally and nationally. In line with the tenets of a mixed methods

approach to research numerical data were, where appropriate, integrated with participants' in-depth responses to, as Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggest, provide a greater level of understanding of the context of the participating settings.

3.5 Role of the pilot study

Prior to carrying out this study I conducted a pilot study, the role of which was, as Holloway (1997) explains, to test the research methods and iron out any potential problems associated with these. This proved to be a very valuable part of the research process. The main influence that the pilot study had upon this study was upon the data collection process and the findings arising from this. Following the initial interviews I found that Participant 4D's responses to areas for discussion, as identified on the interview guide, to be stilted and scant. Given that I wanted to adopt a more discursive approach to data collection specifically in regard to participants' responses as is conversant with feminist approaches to data collection, I modified the interview guide for the main study in the hope that it would elicit more meaningful responses from the participants, (see Appendices 6 & 8).

Despite the limitations of Participant 4D's data, the decision was made to integrate the findings from the pilot study into the main study, this decision resulted in a re-analysis of the participant's interview transcript. While it is acknowledged that the weight of evidence within this research, is primarily based on the commonalities in practice across the three settings judged as being outstanding by Ofsted, I argue that including the findings gained from Participant 4D has provided valuable insights into those elements of practice that might be missing from settings judged by Ofsted to 'require improvement'. Integrating the findings from the pilot study into the main study has added another dimension to the research, insofar as, it

has enabled comparisons to be made across settings classified by Ofsted as being outstanding and requires improvement. The contribution that the findings from the pilot study have made to this research, is that they have helped to provide greater insights into the influence that leadership has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children across a range of settings.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Within each paradigm consideration is given to the various aspects of good research practice that ensure that the research undertaken adheres to the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) ethical guidelines. The following discussion will address various aspects of good ethical practice in relation to this research.

BERA (2011) requires that researchers have mutual respect and regard for individuals participating in research and that every attempt should be made to ensure that the research is conducted without bias, discrimination and maintains the dignity of all involved. Every attempt should be made to ensure that the anonymity of participants is retained. However as discussed previously, where participants are part of a small team in a relatively small setting anonymity can sometimes be difficult to maintain. Additionally, as I will be drawing upon the content within each setting's most recent Ofsted report I am mindful that this too can compromise the anonymity of both the settings and participants. Ofsted reports are in the public domain that is they are published on both the school's website and via the DfE and therefore accessible to all. To ensure that as far as possible the anonymity of both the settings and participants is retained, an alpha-

numeric coding system has been used in reference to both settings and participants.

Another ethical issue that needs to be addressed is that concerning confidentiality. BERA (2011:5) states that '*voluntary informed consent*' must be gained from participants prior to their participation in the research. With regard to this research informed consent was sought from each participant prior to the interviews being carried out. Documentary evidence was collated from each participant and retained on file, (see Appendix 6). Documents will be stored electronically in a password protected file accessible only by me. The file will be deleted once the final thesis is published.

When considering the confidentiality of participant responses all participants were informed that their responses to questions would remain confidential and that any direct quotations used from interview transcripts would be anonymised. However, as discussed previously should participants wish to discuss their responses with other participants this is again beyond the control of the researcher and as such it must be assumed that each participant entered into the exchange voluntarily. Participants were also informed that their responses to interviews would be made available to University examiners.

In line with BERA (2011) guidelines participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research within a given timescale. This was made clear in research documentation provided to each participant, (see Appendix 4). Ethical

clearance was sought from the university ethics committee prior to the research being progressed, (see Appendix 1).

3.7 Chapter summary

The ontological assumptions underpinning the research and epistemology used to inform the research were taken into consideration to determine the research paradigm in which to situate the research, concluding that the most appropriate paradigm for my research is as Denzin and Lincoln (2003:33) describe the '*fourth paradigm*' a feminist approach. As identified in the discussion above this research resonates with several tenets associated with feminist research. That is, it is concerned with social inequalities in regard to outcomes of disadvantaged children and those more fortunate and identifies issues regarding power relations within a feminised workforce associated with early years. Furthermore, it exposes a possible tension between the lived experiences of participants and those held by the researcher and the way this might influence the interpretation of qualitative data. Therefore, I felt that adopting a feminist approach to my research would help to provide a deeper understanding of pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children.

The approach adopted informed the methodologies to be used and subsequent methods to be deployed. The methodologies utilised within this study enabled qualitative data to be collected from participants during semi-structured interviews. In addition, school data were analysed to contextualise the participating settings in relation to other settings locally and nationally.

Writing this chapter also provided an opportunity for me to reflect upon the learning gained from implementing my initial study that resulted in revisions to the interview guide to give more discursive responses and the timing of interviews to minimise any possibility for corroboration between participants. Also, in line with the tenets within feminist approaches to research I ensured that when carrying out the interviews a more relaxed and informal approach was adopted. This, I felt, would yield more in-depth responses to areas for discussion that would hopefully provide valuable insights into how leadership within pre-school settings influences outcomes for young children.

Perhaps it is worth noting that leading experts in the field of educational research include Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison, who together have written extensively on the subject of research methods used in educational research and, as such, I felt that this chapter could not be written without talking their views into consideration.

The next chapter will present a phenomenological exploration of pre-school settings leaders' core values, in conjunction with an analysis of performance data and the settings' latest Ofsted reports to clarify how pre-school leaders ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged children are met within their setting.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

4.1 Chapter structure

In this chapter the main findings arising from the analysis of; participants' in-depth responses, Ofsted reports, and performance data, are presented. Each data set is

analysed and presented separately although as the data analysis progressed where appropriate, in line with the tenets of a mixed methods approach to research, the findings are discussed in an integrated manner. That is, numerical data is integrated with qualitative data to as Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggest provide a greater level of understanding of the context of the participating settings.

4.2 Data analysis

Qualitative data were analysed in accordance with the principles of content analysis (CA). Cohen et al. (2011) define CA as a data analysis technique that enables researchers to make sense of written data in a systematic way to allow inferences to be drawn from participants' responses and Ofsted reports in a meaningful context. This was carried out by the application of a coding system that ensures transparency, is replicable and reliable. Gray (2014) explains that the coding system allows for greater levels of analysis to be applied to the text. When conducting the initial study I trialled the use of NVO10 as a means to identify themes within the transcripts. However, I found this process to be time consuming and generally felt that analysing the content of participants' responses manually was more productive as it presented an opportunity for me to reflect upon the interviewee's responses. As a result, I was able to begin to relate the findings back to the research questions discussed in chapter one.

Halcomb and Davidson (2006) outline the benefits of verbatim transcription arguing that it facilitates researcher proximity with the data and provides an audit trail of analysis. Fasick (2001) counters this argument warning of difficulties inherent within verbatim transcriptions such as inaccurate transcription and problems with coding information. Transcribing audio recordings of participants' responses to areas for discussion does not take into account non-verbal

communication that as Argyle (2013) explains can often influence how responses are interpreted. To minimise against this Flick (1996) recommends that where possible verbatim transcriptions should be cross-referenced with actual recordings. To check the accuracy of the recordings Participants were given a copy of their interview transcript and recorded interview. As no feedback was received from the participants I was confident to assume that each transcript was a true and accurate record of the interview.

Hunter (2014:44) recommends that the '*researcher's agenda must not take precedence and influence the interpretation of research data*'. Therefore, in order to protect the integrity of the participants' responses I was fastidious in ensuring that I transcribed every word verbatim. However, this proved to be a very lengthy process especially as I had decided to adopt an '*interviewee orientated*' approach to the interviews (Fraser, 2004:185), allowing participants the time to tell their stories that I felt was in keeping with the principles of feminist interview techniques as described by Gubrium and Holstein (2003) in chapter 3. While the transcription of participants' in-depth responses proved to be time consuming undertaking this task provided me with an opportunity to reflect upon the interviews. This reflection also aids researcher's proximity to the data (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006). In the following section the findings from all data sets are presented under discrete headings.

4.3 Analysis of participants' in-depth responses

As discussed in section 4.2 above, in line with the principles of content analysis as described by Cohen et al. (2011) a coding system was applied to the participants' responses , this allowed inferences to be drawn from the data in a meaningful

context. Prior to analysing the content of participants' responses I prepared a grid (see Appendix 3) to identify key components of each research question these were then coded. As I analysed each transcript the codes were used to identify content. The grid also served as an aide memoir when analysing the transcripts. When completed, the grid then provided an opportunity for me to observe commonalities between settings and make links to theory and literature this will be discussed more fully in chapter 5.

As I was drawing upon data from one of the participants in my initial study (Participant 4D), I found that I had to re-analyse her interview transcript. In my initial study I used a transcription service convenient as this was at that time. Doing so confirms the views of Halcomb and Davidson (2006) that manual transcription of participants' responses aids researcher proximity with the data. Also, it soon became apparent that this Participant's responses to topics for discussion were not as in-depth as those of the participants within this study (see Appendix 6). This, I feel, was the direct result of modifications made to the interview guide following the initial study and also from adopting a more feminist approach to conducting the interviews as suggested by Gubrium and Holstein (2003). I did consider re-interviewing Participant 4D but felt that as she was familiar with the topic areas this would influence her responses to areas for discussion.

The focus of the next section is upon the analysis of the participants' in-depth responses arising from semi-structured interviews. The findings will be discussed in relation to the three research questions as identified above.

4.3.1 Research question 1 (RQ1) - To what extent are pre-school leaders aware of the outcomes relating to child poverty in the communities they serve?

The three components identified within RQ1 are:

Key component - RQ1a	Key component - RQ1b	Key component - RQ1c
Data and information settings use to identify issues relating to child poverty,	How data informs practice,	Outcomes of poverty.

The findings are presented for each key component.

Key component RQ1a: Data and information used to identify issues relating to disadvantaged children

Within each setting a range of information and data was used to identify issues relating to disadvantaged children. This includes children’s personal data gleaned from parents during home visits, information from the integrated two year old checks carried out by health visitors and baseline assessment data. Participant 3C stated that they “... *glean information about the children, say their speech, about the home environment, siblings, and problem issues within the family that might impact upon the children.*” In addition, Participant 1A stated that “*we use information from other professionals, such as children centre staff, social workers, Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), early years team*”.

Participants 2B and 3C also explained that they used demographic data retrieved from the Acorn data base. Acorn data is compiled by analysing important social factors such as; housing, employment, crime and behaviour, and family composition. This data is then used to develop community profiles that can be

used to identify issues relating to specific communities as explained by Participant 2B *“because we’re in an area of high disadvantage we look at area data, the Acorn data and things like that.”* Participant 4D further explained that *“we look at the families’ circumstances, work circumstances, what benefits they’re on”*.

To ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable children are met two participants made reference to the LA vulnerability audit as a means to identify those children who, although not deemed to be economically disadvantaged, were identified as being vulnerable for example children from single parent families. Participant 3C explains that the *“vulnerability audit which identifies anything that might impact on the children. If they score highly on the list we look to see what interventions we need to put in place.”*

Key component RQ1b: How data informs practice

Section 2 of the EYFS (DfE 2017) acknowledges the value of on-going observation and assessment as a means to provide a holistic view of children’s development and plan their next steps in learning. This places a statutory duty on pre-school leaders to ensure that *‘on-going assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process’* (p13).

An analysis of the participants’ responses regarding this aspect of practice revealed that in settings A, B and C leaders explicitly stated that they use observation and assessments to monitor children’s progress...

“Using this data we can see where the dips are, and that works really well for the children.” Participant 1A

“We analyse the baseline data every six weeks.” Participant 3C

“We have an on-line tracking system and every child is analysed termly.”

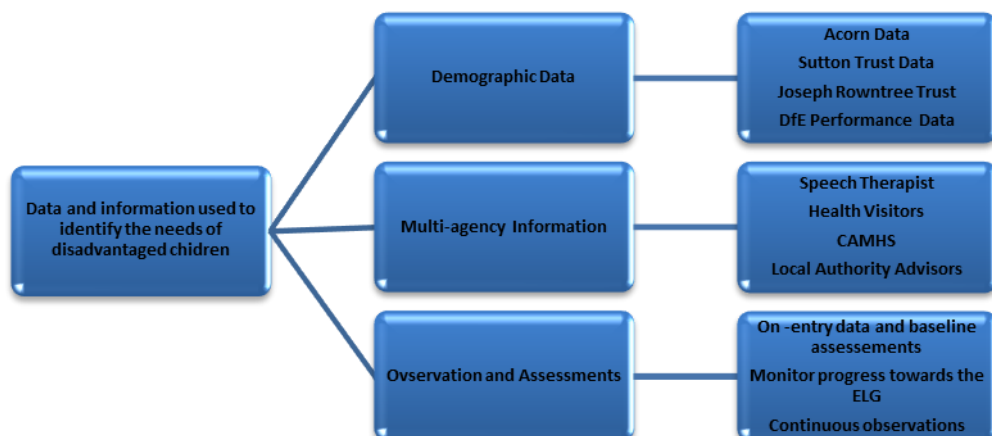
Participant 2B

These responses correspond with the observations made during Ofsted inspections where Ofsted inspectors stated that *‘Assessment is thorough and used as a tool to measure pupil performance’* (Ofsted 2013:5) and that *‘Assessments are precise and checked closely to ensure that gaps in learning are quickly identified’* (Ofsted, 2016:3).

With reference to Setting D, while it was stated that *“We look at when they come in their on-entry data with gaps and how, how wide the gap is.”* (Participant 4D), no explicit reference is made to observations and assessments being used to measure children’s progress and plan next steps in learning. From this it can be assumed that the use of observation and assessment as a tool to inform children’s progress is not embedded within practice as recommended by Ofsted (2014), this could be the reason why it was noted that *‘leaders were unable to provide an accurate picture of assessment and a detailed analysis of outcomes for the different groups of children in nursery...’* (Ofsted 2017:8).

Figure 6 below identifies the range and type of information settings used to identify the issues relating to child poverty in their localities. Drawing upon information from a range of sources as identified below, provides a more holistic view of the outcomes of poverty and facilitates the identification of the most vulnerable children.

Figure 6: The range of data and information used by settings to identify issues relating to child poverty



Key Component RQ1c: Outcomes of disadvantage

To ensure that the needs of disadvantaged children are met at the earliest opportunity pre-school leaders should be aware of the outcomes relating to child poverty in the communities they serve. All settings identified a range of issues relating to poverty these include:

Developmental delay: Participant 1A stated that *“Children aged 2 and 2 and a half years came in presenting as 18months.”* In addition, Participant 2B stated that *“They have a much lower baseline particularly in communication and PSE [personal, social and emotional development].”* Participant 3C stated that *“By far the lowest achievers are the pupil premium.”* Participant 4D stated *“They have low starting points.”*

Social and Emotional development: This area of developmental delay was not only noted by Participant 2B above, it was also noted by all other participants that

“Another area for these children is managing relationships and emotions and feelings,” Participant 3C.

Poor Educational Attainment: In all settings participants explained that disadvantaged children do not achieve at the same rate as their more advantaged peers *“Even though they progress there is always that gap, obviously we try to close that gap but we find it very difficult to close it completely”* Participant 3C. *“You often find that the gap is, is quite vast in some cases”* Participant 4D.

Lack of Opportunity: All participants identified that children from disadvantaged families did not have the same opportunities as their more advantaged peers. Participant 1A stated that *“A lot of children don’t have the experiences to build on, for example some families have never been to the seaside.”* Participant 2B also confirmed that *“A lot of our children lack experiences, not only the children but the parents too.”* This relates to the views of Field (2010) and Ridge (2011) (chapter 2) who argued that disadvantaged children were at risk of social exclusion because families cannot afford enrichment activities such as visits to the seaside or theatre.

From the responses given all pre-school leaders in this instance identified a range of issues associated with childhood poverty in their setting.

4.3.2 Research question 2 (RQ2) - What measures do pre-school leaders take to ensure that the needs of the most disadvantage children in their settings are met?

The two components identified within RQ2 are:

Key component – RQ2a	Key component – RQ2b
RQ2a – Resources to support disadvantaged children	RQ2b- Strategies used to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children

The findings are presented for each key component.

Key Component RQ2a: Resources to support disadvantaged children

All four settings are registered to deliver early education to three and four year old children and as part of this provision they are eligible to receive the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) to address the gap in educational achievements between disadvantaged children and all other children. When asked what resources the settings had to support children from low income families, leaders in settings A, C, and D stated that they were in receipt of the EYPP. However, participants also identified that the allocation received per capita was relatively small.

Participant 1A *“...we get the EYPP money – so the pupil premium that comes in for the three and four year olds”*

Participant 3C *“We have the EYPP which is about £300 which isn’t a lot.”*

Participant 4D *“The EYPP funding is less than the ordinary pupil premium”.*

It is interesting to note, Setting C is registered with Ofsted to deliver early education to three and four year old children and by virtue, eligible to receive an allocation of EYPP to support disadvantaged children. However, the delineation of service provision as identified in the SLA agreement between Setting C [maintained nursery school] and Setting B [private day nursery] is such that *“The nursery school are the sole provider of the nursery education, they receive the funding for this”* Participant 2B. This was confirmed by Participant 3C *“the nursery school is the sole provider of nursery education I mean we are teachers and that is our area of expertise.”*

In addition to the EYPP, settings A and B receive Government funding to support the care and learning of disadvantaged two year olds. However, while Setting B is in receipt of funding to support disadvantaged two year olds, this funding is allocated to the maintained nursery school as the registered provider for the two year olds into schools project and as such the funding is devolved to the day care provider. Both participants explained that they did not view the two year old funding as additional funding in the same way as the EYPP. Participant 2B stated that *“With regard to the two year old funding for disadvantaged children, this is not additional funding as such it is funding for them to attend the nursery.”* Participant 1A also confirmed that *“We literally just get the funding for them to attend nursery for 15 hours a week.”*

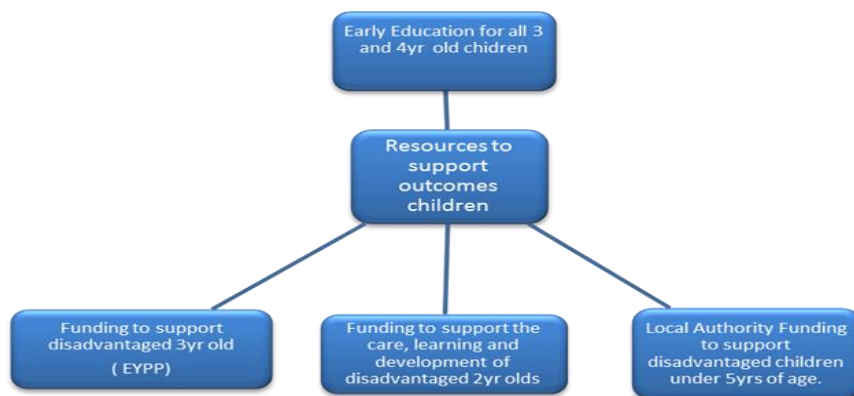
Participant 1A also explained that they were able to utilise funding from the LA to support children under 5 years. However given that there are a large number of children within the LA requiring additional support accessing this funding was *“difficult”*. This supports the findings of NECPAG (2015) who reported that the LA ranked seventeenth out of twenty wards in the North East with the lowest level of relative child poverty rates, with 35.6% of children within this particular ward living in poverty. Participant 3C explained how she often had to make decisions to support children irrespective of a child’s eligibility to receive support from the EYPP and stated,

“We have a young mum who is a single mum and doesn’t tick all the boxes for early years pupil premium, but allowing her children to access full day provision with a free school meal has enabled that mum to go to college and better herself. Her child was previously a funding two year old”

In this instance it would appear that the head teacher has aspirations for both the children and parents alike that is conversant with the traits of transformational leadership as identified by Bass (1990).

Given the high level of disadvantage in this particular ward Participant 1A highlighted the frustrations and difficulties associated with the limited availability of funding to support disadvantaged children, stating *“I don’t see why one child’s needs should be prioritised over another”*.

Figure 7: Resources to support disadvantaged children



Key component RQ2b: Strategies used to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

During discussions regarding the strategies used to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children, Participants identified a range of strategies and approaches to maximise the most efficient use of the funding to improve outcomes for children from low income families these included:

Human resources - With regard to the funding to support disadvantaged two year olds, in all cases this funding was used to contribute to staff salaries to ensure that the setting adheres to the statutory child- staff ratios that as Participant 1A

explained “*Is 1:4 one member of staff to four children.*” In settings C and D Participants explained that a portion of the EYPP funding was also used to employ additional staff to support all children. Similarly, Participant 1A explained “*We don’t identify say communication (although it is an issue with our children) or maths as an area, rather we contribute towards the cost of an additional teaching assistants to support those children*”. In Setting D Participant 4 stated that “*We put a lot of money into adults.*” Given that one of the main areas of developmental delay identified was language and communication leaders felt that investing in additional staff was the most efficient way to support children’s language development as it was felt that adults model best practice

Aligned to the employment of staff was training and development. Continuous professional development (CPD) of staff was also given priority, “*We look to training, CPD, colleges to ensure that staff know what they are doing is right*” (Participant 2B). Participant 4D also stated that staff access specific training such as “*Early Talk Boost*” so that they could support language and communication development.

Targeted Support: To further support children’s development the EYPP was used to purchase intervention strategies that focus on specific areas of development such as communication and language such as Early Talk Boost.

Supporting families: In addition to supporting specific areas of children’s development participants in settings A, B, and C explained that families do not necessarily have the resource to provide children with enriching life experiences such as going on outings or to the theatre, therefore felt justified in using the funding to support extra-curricular activities as explained by Participant 3C “*we*

find that a lot of our children lack experiences and not only the children but the parents too". So we have visits to the theatre or the art gallery and we do that regularly and don't charge". Similarly Participant 1A explained that they "Take children to the seaside".

Regarding the expenditure of the EYPP, contrary to the views of Participant 1A, who stated that *"It is not about buying resources for all the children, it is about meeting that child's needs with their allocation."* Participant 3C explained that they used the EYPP to support vulnerable children who were not necessarily economically disadvantaged and therefore not eligible to receive EYPP stating that *"We use the pupil premium to fund lunches for those children, so we don't have to charge for lunch and that helps the families massively ..."*

In addition, parenting programmes were also delivered to disadvantaged families for example Participant 3C stated *"We ran parenting programmes like the school and family nurture programme targeted at EYPP children and their families"*.

Participant 3C explained that to encourage those parents who did not have the confidence to participate in formal parenting programmes to engage in their child's learning, they also *"thought out of the box to deliver fun activities to get the parents engaging with the nursery"*.

4.3.3 Research question 3 (RQ3): How is leadership enacted in the sample of pre-school setting?

Research question three (RQ3) seeks to explore how leadership is enacted in a sample of pre-school settings. Given that Bush (2011) ascertains that professional practice can be enhanced by our understanding of leadership theory RQ3 is

concerned with the relationship between leadership praxis and practice that is, it examines how pre-school leadership is underpinned by theories of leadership and how these are *'acted out in practice'* (Open University 2001:24).

The two components identified in RQ3 are:

Key component – RQ3a	Key component – RQ3b
RQ3a Leadership approaches adopted within the settings	RQ3b- Policy informed practice

Key component RQ3a: Leadership approaches adopted within settings

The analysis of responses to RQ3a revealed that four main approaches to leadership were adopted within the settings. These are:

Bureaucratic leadership

In line with the principles of bureaucratic leadership as previously discussed by Bush (2011) (chapter 2.8.1), each setting has a hierarchical structure in place although these differ according to setting type (see Appendix 2). Within each structure overall accountability and responsibility for the organisation is held by those at the apex of the hierarchical structure that is, in settings A and B this lies with the nursery managers, and in settings C and D accountability lies with the governing body. Not only do the organisational structures differ between settings, it is also apparent that leadership is enacted differently in each setting. Participant 1A stated that *"I'm the manager and lead the nursery and I'm responsible to make sure the service is safe."* However while elements of bureaucracy are evident within Setting A, at times a more collegiate approach to leadership is adopted that is, Participant 1A actively encourages her staff to challenge her practice by telling staff that *"I'm your manager but don't be afraid to challenge me either."*

Within Setting D it is evident that a more bureaucratic approach to leadership is adopted. Participant 4D acknowledged that “*The Head teacher closely monitors by looking at the data all the time to check that what we're doing has had, had impact and things.*” Also with regard to identifying children who require additional support, this too is the domain of the head teacher. This information is then shared with other members of the team “*And then obviously that's then filtered to the teams that we have, so it would then be fed back to, for example, the reception team that's made up of the teacher and two HLTAs [Higher Level Teaching Assistants]*” (Participant 4D). With regard to Setting C, the comments made by Ofsted Inspectors, specifically those relating to decision making suggest that elements of bureaucracy are also evident as ‘*pertinent decisions made by the head teacher...*’ (Ofsted 2013:6). The fact that staff do not appear to be involved in decision making within these two settings is in keeping with the tenets of bureaucratic leadership, that is, decision making is identified as being a top down process (Bush 2011).

Distributed leadership

As discussed in the literature review (chapter 2.9), delegating responsibility for specific subjects or educational phases underpins the principles of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005). In all settings characteristics associated with distributed leadership as described by Spillane (2005) are evident that is, in all settings responsibility for specific areas of practice are delegated to members of staff with appropriate expertise. Participant 1A states, “*I use the staff's' knowledge cos they're on the floor all of the time*” further stating “*that is the main thing, that the staff take ownership of the nursery.*” Similarly Participant 2B acknowledged that “*I have a full time deputy who is room based she line manages the staff in the*

baby room. I also have other members of staff who are room leaders.” Also, Participant 3C explained she employed an additional member of staff who has an additional responsibility as early years lead practitioner *“who isn’t a qualified teacher (QT) but she does have considerable experience of managing nurseries... we each bring something different to the table both have strengths and together we have in-depth knowledge”*. As discussed in the literature review (chapter 2.9) Heikka et al. (2013) acknowledge that distributing leadership practices based on staff’s expertise within pre-schools specifically instils in staff a sense of empowerment and value.

With regard to Setting D, within the Ofsted report (Ofsted, 2017:3) reference to *‘phase leaders’* is made, therefore this suggests that leadership responsibilities are delegated across the staff team in keeping with the tenets of DL. However, as identified above, Ofsted Inspectors also reported *“leaders do not check that their actions are making a difference”* (p3). As discussed in chapter 2.9 Hallinger and Heck (2010) imply that distributed leadership is only effective if staff with delegated leadership responsibilities have the skills and expertise to fulfil their roles.

Ofsted Inspectors also identified within Setting D, that there was an apparent lack of challenge from leaders that is not conversant with the principles of distributed leadership as identified by (Spillane, 2005), who acknowledges the importance of interactions between leaders and those they lead. With regard to distributed leadership specifically in relation to leadership within pre-school settings Heikka et al. (2013) also emphasises the importance of interactions between leaders as contributing to effective leadership within pre-school settings.

Instructional leadership

The third leadership theory evident within the responses to RQ3a was that of instructional leadership. Blasé and Blasé (2004) as discussed in chapter 2.9 highlight the importance of continuous professional development (CPD) as a tool to enhance teacher performance, they argue that this improves student outcomes.

In all settings the value of CPD was acknowledged for example, Participant 1A stated that *“we look to training, CPD, and colleges to ensure that staff know what they are doing is right.”* Similarly Participant 2B explained that she valued CPD as a means to improve staff performance stating *“I believe in continuous professional development, staff are always on training.”* In view of the integrated service delivery associated with Setting B and Setting C, the nursery head teacher (Participant 3C) explained that joint training involving both staff teams was important. She felt that this was a way to ensure that the pedagogical ethos within the nursery school was mirrored in the day care provision *“We have joint training etcetera to ensure that as far as the pedagogy is concerned this comes from the teaching staff which is then carried through into the day care via the Day care manager”* (Participant 2C). Within Setting D, CPD was viewed as a high priority that leads to improved pupil outcomes *“...we spend a lot on staff training we see that as a real way of improving children’s outcomes and progress. Um, so staff training is a massive part...”* (Participant 4D).

Another salient feature associated with instructional leadership is as Bush (2011) explains staff supervision. Participants 1A and 2B explained that while they like to

distribute leadership responsibilities based upon the expertise of staff they ensure that as managers they are kept apprised of progress within the delegated areas of responsibility. They explained that together the supervision and regular team meetings provide a communication framework that serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it provides an opportunity for staff to keep managers apprised of progress towards targets and day-to-day organisational objectives and secondly, it provides an opportunity for staff to receive support, advice and guidance. *“We have regular one to ones and supervision sessions, team meetings and room meetings”* (Participant 1A). *“On a day to day basis it is about being available, being sympathetic, managing staff effectively by doing peer observations and one-to-one supervisions”* (Participant 2B).

In settings C and D there was no evidence within the participants’ responses to suggest that supervision formed part of the communication framework to support staff. Rather, in Setting C the emphasis was placed upon daily reflection meetings and joint meetings with the day care staff to ensure continuity of quality across the two provisions, *“Downstairs [said in reference to the day care] she has a member of staff who leads on the wrap-around care and when we have daily reflection she is released to attend these meetings”* (Participant 3C).

Transformational leadership

In addition to the three main leadership theories identified above the findings within the Ofsted reports for settings A and B highlight characteristics associated with transformational leadership as described by Bass (1990) (in chapter 2). In

these two settings leaders were described as being *'inspirational and visionary'* (Ofsted, 2015b:3, Ofsted 2016:1).

From the findings presented for RQ3a it would appear that in this instance no single theory of leadership can adequately explain leadership within the participating settings. Rather, the findings suggest that several theories collectively provide a more holistic explanation of leadership within the sample of pre-school settings. The findings also support the views of Bolden (2011) who suggests that leadership is a social process and not just the remit of one person. As such it could be argued that leadership enactment in pre-school settings is complex, this will be discussed more fully in chapter 5.

Key component RQ3b: Policy informed practice

In settings A and B, Participants 1 and 2 described how national policies were interpreted by those in a strategic position within the voluntary organisation and then disseminated to settings. *"All of our policy guidance documents are generic documents compiled by Head office which are disseminated to settings across the country they are based on national policy"* (Participant 2B). Also Participant 1A explained that *"Head office also works for the Department for Education so she keeps us informed of what is happening, of the trends and initiatives, and Serious Case Reviews"*. Both settings also receive advice and guidance from the Local Authority *"we also follow guidance by the Local Authority's early years advisors ...so we are really well informed"* (Participant 2B).

In Setting C all policies regarding practice were read and understood, *“We do consider national policies but it is about what works for early years pedagogy and ethos”* Similarly, with regard to practice initiatives *“sometimes it is not appropriate for children at this age”*. In Setting D, Participant 4’s response to RQ3b was simply *“No”*. My reaction to the stark response from Participant 4D was to explore how good practice was shared. Participant 4D explained that social media was a more effective medium through which to share good practice than policy guidance documents stating *“Twitter is another good one, and... Facebook, you know, you like a page so then you get the notifications and it comes up this article...”* The apparent lack of engagement with policy and practice guidance documents demonstrated by Setting D could contribute to the reported inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning as noted by Ofsted (2017b:2).

The analysis of participants’ responses to RQ3b suggests that in this instance early years policies are not consistently applied to practice. Also, it would appear that within the participating settings at times there is a dissonance between policy and practice. Rather than consistently using policy documents to inform practice, leaders in this instance modify their practice to ensure that the children in their care receive education and care that is appropriate to them and their circumstances and that a realistic approach to practice is adopted.

4.4 Findings within Ofsted reports

This section will present the findings within the Ofsted reports for each setting. As this research seeks to explore how pre-school leadership influences outcomes for disadvantaged children the Ofsted reports for settings graded as *‘outstanding’* and *‘requires improvement’* were scrutinised. This enabled comparisons to be made and aspects of good practice to be identified. The findings within the reports will

be presented against three main headings, leadership and management, quality of teaching and learning, and meeting the needs of children.

4.4.1 Leadership in Pre-school Settings

The following discussion relates to research question 3 that is *how is pre-school leadership enacted in a range of pre-school settings?* Within the context of this study the way leadership is enacted refers to, those actions pre-school leaders take to ensure that the needs of children within their settings are met, and the systems they have in place to monitor and evaluate children's progress towards the ELGs.

In settings A, B and C this aspect of the nursery provision was deemed by Ofsted inspectors to be '*outstanding*'. In Setting A it is reported that '*managers and leaders are inspirational*' (Ofsted 2015c:3). Ofsted inspectors also suggested that staff demonstrated a passion for their work and that they had a '*clear and focused vision*' (Ofsted 2015c:1). This was also reflected in Setting B where it is recorded that the management team '*ensure that the excellent staff team share their vision*' (Ofsted 2016:1). As noted in the literature review (chapter 2.5) this confirms the findings of Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2006) who assert that a key characteristic of strong leadership is the development of a shared vision.

With regard to Setting C, it is noted that '*pertinent decisions made by the head teacher have raised staff expectations*' (Ofsted, 2013:6). There is no reference made to the senior leadership team being involved in decision making in this instance. Therefore this suggests that the head teacher in this regard, adopts a

bureaucratic (Bush 2011) approach to her leadership as she appears to exercise a unilateral approach to decision making. This is also conversant with the principles of instructional leadership as described by Robinson et al. (2008).

It is also reported that leaders within settings A, B, and C ensure that peer observations are carried out regularly to identify staff's strengths and weaknesses and that continuous professional development (CPD) is given priority. In addition, the reports state that the staff teams are '*highly qualified*' (Ofsted 2015c:1' Ofsted 2016:2). This relates to the work of Leithwood and Mascall (2008) (chapter 2:9) who suggest that the more capable staff are the more effective they are in their teaching and that this has a positive impact upon pupil achievements.

It is interesting to note that in Setting D the leadership and management were deemed to '*require improvement*' (Ofsted 2017c:1). It is recorded that '*leaders do not check that their actions and those of subject and phase leaders are making a difference*' (Ofsted 2017c: p1). If leaders do not check that the actions of subject and phase leaders are making a difference this can negatively impact upon outcomes for children. This is confirmed by Ofsted inspectors who reported that '*too few pupils, in particular the most able and disadvantaged are challenged or supported effectively*' (p1). In Setting D it was also noted that the process for monitoring the use and effectiveness of intervention strategies was the domain of the head teacher and deputy head teacher "*...the Head teacher and I, look together at what, you know, what our allocation is, then we use our data*" and that "*...Um, we identify groups of children, um, and then we look at where, where's best to target the money and what we can use it for*" (Participant 4D).

To summarise, an analysis of the leadership and management element of Ofsted inspection reports for the participating settings highlighted that the way in which pre-school leadership improves outcomes for disadvantaged children is largely dependent upon the way that leadership within pre-school provision is enacted. This will be discussed more fully in chapter 5.

4.4.2 Quality of teaching and learning

The following discussion will present an analysis of the quality of teaching and learning in all settings as identified within their respective Ofsted reports. This section relates in part to the research question 2 *'What measures do pre-school leaders take to ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged children in their settings are met?'*

With reference to settings A, B and C, the quality of teaching and learning was noted by Ofsted to be *'outstanding'* (Ofsted, 2015b, Ofsted 2016, Ofsted 2013). In all three settings the importance of assessment as a tool to both measure children's progress and plan next steps in learning was acknowledged. Ofsted stated that *'Assessment is thorough and used as a tool to measure pupil performance'* (Ofsted 2013:5), and that *'Assessments are precise and checked closely to ensure that gaps in learning are quickly identified'* (Ofsted, 2016:3). The ability to assess children's learning effectively contributes towards improved outcomes particularly among children from low income families (Ofsted, 2013:5).

Unfortunately, this was not the case in Setting D where the quality of teaching and learning was deemed to *'require improvement'* (Ofsted 2017c). In this instance it was observed that *'leaders were unable to provide an accurate picture of assessment and a detailed analysis of outcomes for the different groups of children in nursery...'* (p8). This negatively impacts upon outcomes for children as leaders are unable to effectively plan for next steps in learning. Subsequently this *'prohibits some children from reaching a good level of development'* (p8).

With regard to children's learning, the learning environments in settings A, B, and C were observed to be conducive to learning. It is reported that they are well resourced with a range of exciting activities that serve to *'ignite children's curiosity and desire to learn'* (Ofsted 2015c:1). In Setting D it is recorded that while the learning environment provides opportunities to build children's confidence and develop their gross and fine motor skills it is *'not rich in literacy and numeracy opportunities as a result children are unable to fully flourish'* (Ofsted 2017c:8).

4.4.3 Meeting the needs of children

Ridge (2011) suggests that poverty negatively impacts upon all areas of cognitive development especially among children in their earliest years. A result of this is, as Ofsted (2015a) highlight, children from disadvantaged backgrounds enter pre-school at a lower developmental age than their more advantaged peers. The Ofsted reports for all settings identified that children start pre-school with lower than average development. In Setting D it is reported that *'a sizeable proportion of children start the early years with skills and knowledge that are lower than typically expected for their age'* (Ofsted 2017c:8). Therefore if pre-school leaders are to

ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged children in their settings are met they must be aware of the outcomes relating to child poverty in their localities.

The following section examines the extent to which each setting meets the needs of children from low income families as identified in their respective Ofsted reports.

Consistently, in settings' A, B, and C, this aspect of practice was judged to be *'outstanding'*. Ofsted inspectors reported that:

'All children make excellent progress in all areas of learning' (Ofsted, 2015b:1).

'All children achieve extremely well' (Ofsted 2016:3).

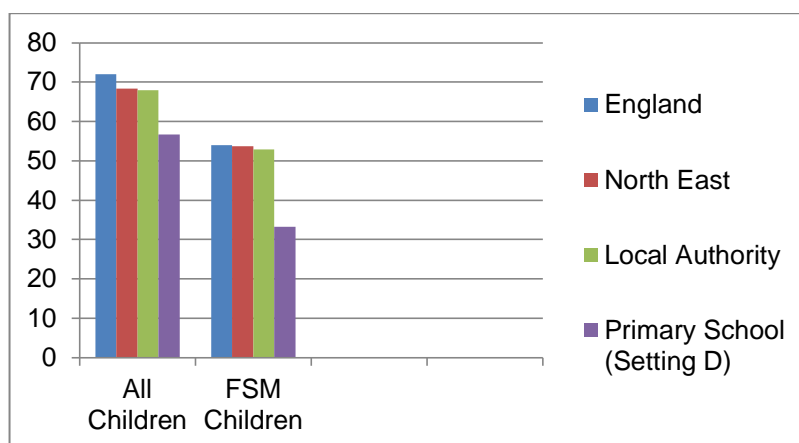
'Achievement of children is outstanding they make excellent progress in all areas of learning' (Ofsted, 2013:1).

In addition, it is reported that in these settings children are well prepared for transition into the next phase of their learning that is, they are *'...well supported to be ready for their next steps in learning, including the move to school'* (Ofsted 2016:3). With regard to outcomes for children in Setting D, Ofsted inspectors identified that this aspect of practice *'requires improvement'* (Ofsted 2017c:7). Within the early years specifically it is recorded that *'too few make rapid progress enough to catch up with their peers'* (p8).

Within Setting D, children transition into the reception class within the primary school subsequently it is interesting to note that children's progress towards the ELGs at the end of their reception year when compared to all children nationally, regionally, and locally, is appreciably lower (see Table 9 below). The gap in children's performance is even more apparent for disadvantaged children at all levels. However, the disparity between the performances of children from low income families nationally and those within the primary school in which Setting D is

located is even more noticeable, with only 33.3% of disadvantaged children reaching a good level of development compared with 54.4% nationally. The gap in the educational performance of children from low income families could be attributed to the influence that poverty has upon children’s development as confirmed by Ridge (2011), who asserts childhood poverty impacts upon all areas of cognitive development.

Table 6: Progress towards the ELGs in the primary school in which Setting D is located

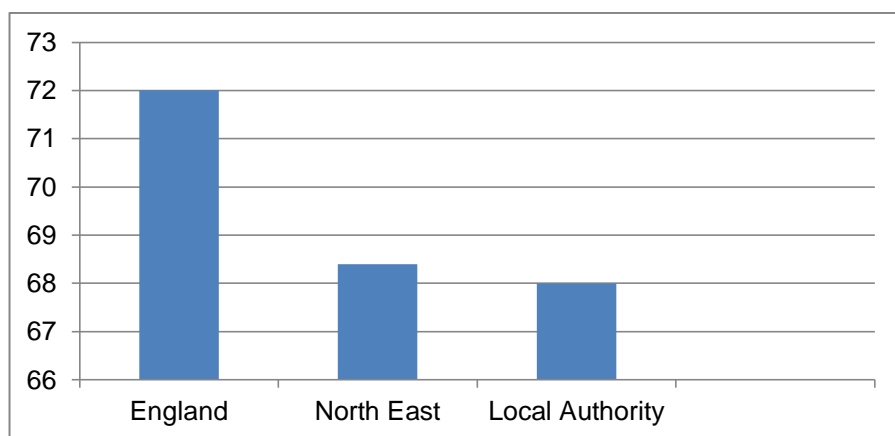


Taggart et al. (2015) explains that there is strong evidence to suggest that the benefits of early years provision particularly on children from disadvantaged backgrounds is long lasting. This is confirmed by Ofsted (2017c:7) who stated that *‘In key stage 2, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching age-related expectations in all subjects was well below others nationally’*. Children’s progress towards the ELGs is assessed at the end of the reception in their respective primary schools. As children within settings A, B and C transition into a range of primary schools it has not been possible to compare their performance with those in Setting D.

4.5 Findings: performance data

In reference to the analysis of performance data, analysing quantitative data will as Punch and Oancea (2014) highlight enable direct comparisons to be made in a logical way. Descriptive statistics were used to situate the local authority's performance in the context of other local authorities regionally and nationally. In the final term of the year in which children reach the age of five years (reception class), each school must complete a Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) for each child and submit this to the Local Authority (LA). This information is then submitted to the Department for Education and published annually. Given that children's progress towards the ELGs is not formally assessed until the end of the term in which they reach the age of five years it is not possible to make a performance comparison at the pre-school setting level. Therefore for the purpose of this research a comparison has been made between children's performance towards the ELGs within the LA against regional and national performance.

Table 7: Early Years Foundations Stage Profile results 2016 showing the percentage of children achieving a good level of development at the end of reception.



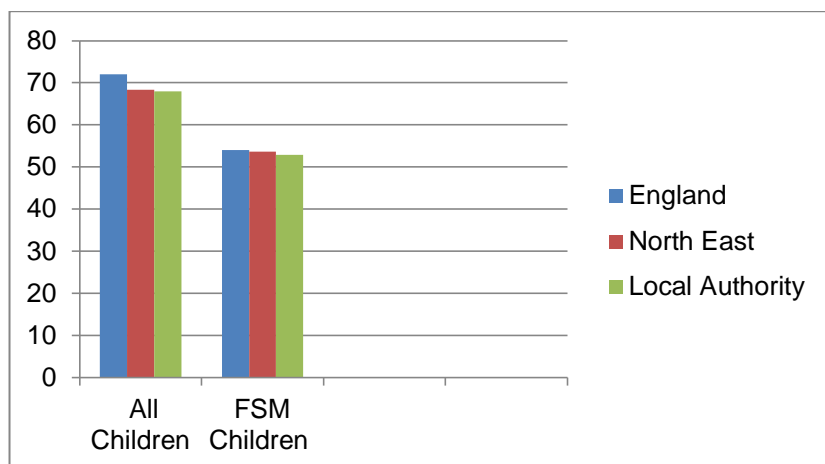
Adapted from Ofsted (Ofsted 2017b)

Table four illustrates the percentage of children achieving a good level of development across all ELGs in England, the North East of England and within the

LA. A good level of development as described by DfE (2016) relates to those children achieving expected levels of development. While it appears that performance towards the ELGs within the local authority is lower than that at both regional and national levels the differential between the LA's performance and regional performance is less than half a percentage point (0.4%) therefore the LA's performance could be deemed to be broadly in line with regional performance. Similarly, the differential between the LA's performance and national performance is only 1.3% therefore while the LA's performance is comparably lower it could be argued that the differential is not appreciable, therefore the LA's performance can be deemed to be also broadly in line with national performance. Alternatively, it could be argued that even though children's performance towards a good level of development within the LA is relatively comparable to the national performance it is still not in line with expected levels of development (Ofsted 2015b).

With respect to disadvantaged children and their progress towards the ELGs within schools, including pre-schools, disadvantage is measured in relation to a child's eligibility to receive free school meals (FSM). The North East Child Poverty Action Group (NECPAG, 2015) highlight the educational achievement gap between less advantaged children and their more advantaged peers. It is evident from the table below that by the end of the reception year when children are aged between 4 and 5 years old the achievement gap exists.

Table 8: Percentage of Children achieving a good standard of development at the end of reception including children eligible to receive FSM (2016)



Adapted from Ofsted (2017b)

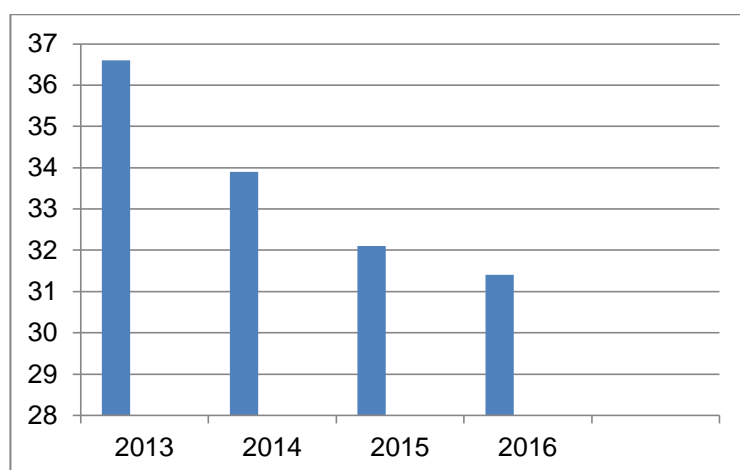
When compared with all other children those in receipt of FSM do not make the same level of progress towards the ELGs. This is reflected at national, regional and LA levels. Within England 72% of all other children achieve a good level of development compared to 54% of children eligible to receive FSM. This differential is apparent regionally, that is 68.4% of all other children compared with 53.7% of FSM children and 68% of all other children compared with 52.9% of FSM children within the local authority. When compared with national statistics for all other children, disadvantaged children within the LA perform notably lower than the national average with a differential of 17.4%. Therefore the number of children from low income families achieving a good level of development across all the ELGs is not comparable with all other children.

Whilst the progress towards achieving expected levels of development is lower among disadvantaged children there is less variation between disadvantaged children at all levels. Within England 54% of FSM children achieve a good level of

progress compared to 53.7% at regional and 52.9% at LA level. The differential between national performance and LA performance for disadvantaged children is 1.5% therefore the performance of less advantaged children within the LA is comparable with national levels. Alternatively, it could be argued that even though disadvantaged children's performance towards a good level of development within the LA is relatively comparable to the national performance it is still not in line with expected levels of development (Ofsted, 2017b)

As identified in Table 8 the gap in educational achievements between less fortunate children and their more fortunate peers still persists. However, during the period 2013 to 2016 the achievement gap narrowed by 5.2% (DfE, 2016) as illustrated in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Narrowing of the achievement gap between 2013 and 2016



Adapted from Department for Education (2016)

4.6 Chapter summary

To conclude, this chapter presents the findings arising from an analysis of the content of three data sets, EYFS performance data, Ofsted reports of the latest

inspection for each setting, and participants' responses obtained through semi-structured interviews. From the findings three main areas for further discussion have been identified:

- I. Leadership as a means to mitigate the impact of childhood poverty on young children's development and learning
- II. Meeting the needs of disadvantaged children
- III. Leadership enactment in pre-school settings

The following chapter discusses the outcomes of the findings above within the context of the three research questions framing this study and within a broader framework of social inequality especially in relation to outcomes for young children. The findings will also be discussed in relation to previous literature discussed in chapter 2.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Chapter structure

This chapter will discuss the research findings in relation to the research questions to determine the extent to which these have been answered. This will be done by making connections between the findings identified in chapter 4 and the literature discussed in chapter 2. This discussion does not aim to hypothesise that effective leadership of pre-school settings is the panacea to ameliorate the impact of child poverty on children's outcomes, rather it is to provide greater insight into the influence that pre-school leadership has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children. In order to provide this greater insight Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) advocate that the findings are discussed in an integrated manner. Therefore, where appropriate, reference will be made to all data sets performance data, Ofsted reports and participants' responses.

The ensuing discussion will be framed against the three research questions underpinning this research. As the study is comparative in nature the findings will be discussed in relation to settings that have been graded by Ofsted as '*outstanding*' and '*requires improvement*'. This will enable comparisons to be made and examples of good practice identified that collectively contribute to improving outcomes for young children. In addition, any implications for practice will be identified and recommendations made.

5.2 Discussion of findings

5.2.1 Research Question 1: To what extent are pre-school leaders aware of the outcomes relating to child poverty in the communities they serve?

As discussed in chapter 2, Pugh (2010) asserts that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are at greater risk of poor outcomes. To ensure that the needs of disadvantaged children are met Carpenter et al. (2013) recommend that schools (including pre-schools) should collect a range of data and use this data to influence outcomes for vulnerable children. Therefore a key strand of this study was to identify the information and data pre-school leaders used to help highlight the issues relating to child poverty in their localities. This research question links to the third aim within the CPS, that is, to understand the child/family in the broader context of their communities. This forms the basis of the first research question. While at first sight the research question appears slightly reductionist, there are three key components embedded within. When explored collectively these provide a comprehensive response to the question. The three components embedded in the first research question relate to:

- a. The types of information and data consulted to identify issues relating to disadvantaged children
- b. The use of information to inform practice
- c. The impact that disadvantage has on outcomes for children.

The following discussion will address each component identified above.

Information and data used to identify issues relating to child poverty.

An analysis of participants' responses revealed that those leaders in settings rated as '*outstanding*' by Ofsted (Ofsted 2013, 2015b, 2016) consulted a range of information and data to help identify the issues associated with child poverty in their localities (see Figure 6, chapter 4). Also, it was identified that in these

instances pre-school leaders used this data effectively to plan next steps in children's learning and development (Ofsted, 2013, 2015b, 2016). This relates to the findings of Coleman et al. (2016) who explained that where Children Centres were successful in improving outcomes for children and their families, centre leaders used evidence and data from a range of sources to help inform the services they provided to families. Rather than using information, data and funding to inform a range of services pre-school leaders within this research only use these to help inform next steps in children's learning and development.

Setting D was graded as *'requires improvement'* by Ofsted (Ofsted 2017c). From the responses given and observations made by Ofsted Inspectors it could be argued that while leaders collect appropriate data to identify issues relating to disadvantage, they do not appear to use this data in a meaningful way to plan next steps in learning. An analysis of the Setting's performance data (Table 7, chapter 4) supports this argument. It was identified that in Setting D disadvantaged children performed less well than other disadvantaged children within the local authority, regionally and nationally. Ofsted (2017c) reported that the quality of teaching and learning within Setting D *'requires improvement'* that is, it did not provide opportunities for *'children to flourish'* and that leaders were unable to *'provide an accurate picture of assessment and a detailed analysis of outcomes for the different groups of children in nursery...'* (p8). It could be argued that this is a contributing factor to disadvantaged children in Setting D performing less well than other less fortunate children.

The use of information to inform practice

To ensure that learning and development is progressed in a meaningful way to improve outcomes for young children pre-school leaders have a statutory

responsibility as set out in the EYFS (DfE 2017), to ensure that assessment forms an integral part of their provision. To ensure that children are ready for school leaders must use information and data gleaned from observations and assessments to plan next steps in children's learning. Ofsted (2013) posit that the effective assessment of children's learning contributes to improved outcomes particularly for disadvantaged children. This highlights the importance of good quality teaching and learning.

When considering the quality of teaching and learning in the participating settings an analysis of the content of the Ofsted reports for each setting revealed a variance in quality between settings. In settings A, B and C the quality of teaching and learning was deemed by Ofsted to be '*outstanding*' and as such disadvantaged children made good progress towards the ELGs. In Setting D the quality of teaching and learning was deemed to '*require improvement*' (Ofsted, 2017c) and as such it was highlighted that children did not make good progress towards the ELGs. These findings support the views of Melhuish (2004) (discussed in chapter 2.4), who advocates that good quality early years provision can be an effective intervention strategy to improve outcomes for children living in poverty.

It was also reported that in Setting D leaders did not make effective use of information collated through observations and assessments subsequently this '*prohibited some children from making good progress*' (Ofsted 2017c:8). This relates to the work of Leithwood and Mascall (2008) discussed in chapter 2.7 wherein they claim that the characteristics and capabilities of leaders can

negatively impact upon outcomes for pupils. If leaders are unable to effectively observe and assess children and then use this information to plan next steps in learning this could leave children at risk of poor outcomes. The performance data for Setting D (see Table 7 chapter 4) confirms this view as children's performance towards the ELGs at the end of their reception year was lower than disadvantaged children locally, regionally and nationally.

When trying to make the link between the impact of leaders on outcomes for children one must exercise an element of caution. While Leithwood and Mascall argue that the characteristics and capabilities of leaders can negatively impact upon outcomes for children, Leithwood (2010) highlights difficulties in making this link. Leithwood reported that there were extenuating factors such as the S.E.S. of families, and characteristics of individual teachers that were beyond the control of leaders that collectively impacted upon outcomes for children, a view supported by Mistry and Sood (2017). One could argue that a limitation with Ofsted reports is that they do not make reference to some of those extenuating factors as explained by Leithwood (2010) that are beyond the control of leaders that may influence outcomes for children. In light of the inherent difficulties associated with making claims of impact as outlined by Leithwood and Mascall (2008), rather than making claims of impact the aim of this research was to explore the influence pre-school leadership has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children.

The impact of poverty on children's development

All settings irrespective of their Ofsted grading used information gleaned from a range of professionals to identify issues relating to child poverty that is, all settings identified that disadvantaged children entered pre-school with lower than age

related developmental expectations. For example, Participant 1A stated that children enter pre-school with *“lower starting points”* a view confirmed by Participant 2B who stated that *“They have a much lower baseline particularly in communication and P.S.E. (personal, social and emotional development).”* These findings concur with previous research discussed in chapter 2.3. For example, Ridge (2011) identified that child poverty negatively impacts upon all aspects of children’s cognitive development. Engle et al. (2011) expanded upon this arguing that child poverty negatively impacts upon children’s holistic development that includes not only their cognitive development but their social and emotional development, health and well-being, and that these impacts were evident from a very early age.

With reference to the impact that child poverty has upon the educational achievements of disadvantaged children specifically in relation to their performance towards the ELGs as identified in the EYFS (DfE 2017), an analysis of performance data revealed that child poverty negatively impacts upon children’s educational outcomes. These findings are in line with evidence from previous research discussed in chapter 2 (Duncan et al. 1998, Noble et al. 2006, Cheung et al. 2007). The findings also highlight that the gap in educational achievements between children living in poverty and all other children is evident from an early age. Table 6 (chapter 4) illustrates that in 2016 the percentage of disadvantaged children achieving a good standard of development at the end of their reception year was lower than more advantaged children. It could be argued that the continued gap in educational achievements between children classified as being disadvantaged and their more advantaged peers is attributed to the fact that, children from low income families enter pre-school at lower starting points than

their more affluent peers and also children achieve at different rates as was identified by all Participants.

To summarise, if pre-school leaders are to influence outcomes for children from low income families they must be aware of the impact that child poverty has upon children's learning and development. More specifically, they must be aware of the impact of child poverty on the outcomes for children in their localities. With regard to research question 1, it would appear that in those participating settings graded as '*outstanding*' by Ofsted pre-school leaders were extremely aware of the impact that poverty has on disadvantaged children in their localities. They identified and used a range of data to inform their practice to plan for next steps in children's learning and development. In Setting D that was graded as '*requires improvement*' (Ofsted 2017c), this was less so. While leaders identified germane information regarding the outcomes of child poverty in their localities they did not appear to use this information effectively to plan next steps in children's learning and development. As a result, it was reported that disadvantaged and the most able children were not supported effectively in their learning (Ofsted 2017c).

From the discussion above, it has been identified that pre-school leaders draw upon a range of evidence and data to identify the issues relating to child poverty in their localities as recommended by Carpenter et al. (2013). If pre-school leaders are aware of the issues relating to child poverty they can then positively contribute to outcomes for children from a very early age. However, to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged children are met pre-school leaders should not merely be aware of the issues relating to child poverty they should use evidence and data

effectively to plan next steps in learning to improve outcomes for children from low income families in their setting.

5.2.2 Research question 2: What measures do pre-school leaders take to ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged children in their setting are met?

As highlighted earlier in this study, the gap in educational achievements between the different groups of children continues to persist (see chapter 4 Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6). As such this discrepancy continues to be at the forefront of political discourse to the extent that successive governments have, in an attempt to narrow the achievement gap, continued to invest financial resources to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Research question 2 (RQ2) explores how pre-school leaders in the participating settings ensure that the needs of disadvantaged children are met. There are two key components of practice identified within RQ2, these relate to:

- a. The use of resources to support disadvantaged children
- b. Strategies used to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Each of these components will be addressed in the following discussion.

RQ2a: The use of resources to support disadvantaged children

All schools, including pre-schools, in England registered with Ofsted to deliver early education to three and four-year-old children are eligible to receive funding to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. Figure 7 in chapter 4 shows the

various funding streams accessed by the participating settings. To ensure funding contributes to improved outcomes Levačić (2008) recommends that funding expenditure is linked to school improvement. While it is not a statutory requirement for pre-school settings within the private and voluntary sector to have a School Improvement Plan (SIP), they must demonstrate through the settings Self- Evaluation that they are improving outcomes for children living in poverty through the effective use of specific funding such as the EYPP, and place this information in the public domain.

In relation to the use of the EYPP, it was discussed in chapter 2.9 that Roberts et al. (2017) identified differences in the way settings made decisions regarding the expenditure of the funding. They identified that in smaller settings front-line staff were involved in decision making. The findings within this study concur with Roberts et al. as Participant 2B considered the views of her staff when determining how best to utilise the funding. In larger, more formal settings, Roberts et al. found that the decisions regarding funding expenditure were the domain of the senior leadership team. The analysis of the participants' responses support the findings of Roberts et al. as senior leaders in settings C and D adopted a more strategic view when making decisions about funding expenditure linking this to the SIP, this also supports the views of Levačić (2008). In addition to linking funding expenditure to the SIP, Carpenter et al. (2013) highlighted that where schools used local demographic data to identify the needs of children more children benefited from specific funding. The analysis of participants' responses revealed that in those settings graded as '*outstanding*' by Ofsted pre-school leaders used local demographic data to establish the needs of disadvantaged children in their localities. This supports the findings of Carpenter et al.

In determining how best to utilise specific funding streams settings can opt to either use the funding for the most eligible children only or they can combine the different funding streams with the general school budget. An analysis of the participants' responses highlighted that the way in which settings used the different funding streams varied. Those settings in receipt of funding to support disadvantaged two year olds subsumed this funding into the overall budget and in all cases this was used to support the employment of staff. An explanation for this could be that the allocation of funding for disadvantaged two year old children was relatively small as such it did not cover the staffing costs to enable them to meet the statutory adult child staffing ratios for children of this age, "*because the ratio for two year olds is 1:4*" (Participant 1A). Therefore, it could be argued that combining this funding with the overall budget was the most effective use of the funding.

Regarding the most effective use of the EYPP, an analysis of the findings revealed that settings adopted a two-pronged approach to ensure that disadvantaged children receive the most appropriate support to improve their outcomes. Firstly, leaders used the funding to support the specific needs of eligible children that is, they used information from their observations and assessments of target children to identify gaps in their learning and development. Using funding in this way enables only those eligible to receive support from the funding and benefit from it. This relates to the notion of vertical equity as explained by Monk (1990) in chapter 2.9. Secondly, leaders also used the funding to employ additional staff who would support all children irrespective of their eligibility to receive support. This concurs with the findings of Roberts et al. (2017) and also relates to Monk's (1990) notion

of horizontal equity. Monk explains that rather than limiting support provided by the funding solely to eligible children horizontal equity is applied when all children irrespective of their eligibility benefit from the funding.

It would appear that when making decisions regarding the most appropriate use of resources such as the EYPP to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children, pre-school leaders may be faced with a moral dilemma. When two year old children from low income families reach the age of three they become eligible to receive their entitlement to free early education. However, Roberts et al. (2017b) identified that not all disadvantaged two year old children are automatically eligible to receive support provided by the EYPP when they reach the age of three years, even though they may require additional support to bring them in line with age-related expectations. Given the high level of disadvantage in this particular ward Participant 1A highlighted the frustrations and difficulties associated with the limited availability of funding to support disadvantaged children stating *“I don’t see why one child’s needs should be prioritised over another”*.

Melhuish (2004) and Taggart (2015) explain that impacts of child poverty such as educational attainment can be long lasting. This suggests that the impacts of child poverty may continue to be present when children transition from one educational phase to another. If children at two years of age are identified as being disadvantaged and subsequently are eligible to access care and learning funded by the disadvantaged two year old funding, Melhuish and Taggart’s views suggest that those early impacts of child poverty could still be present when children reach the age of three years. Therefore, rather than subjecting pre-school leaders to the potential moral dilemma of having to *“prioritise one child’s needs over another”*

(Participant 2B), to ensure continuity of support indicators of disadvantage should be consistently applied to the various funding streams to ensure that outcomes for disadvantaged children continue to improve in line with their more advantaged peers.

The findings within this study contradict those of Roberts et al. (2017) who established that early years providers would have liked more explicit guidelines regarding the expenditure of the EYPP. Participants in this study felt that the guidelines for expenditure of the EYPP afford leaders some flexibility in its use. To make funding guidelines more explicit would remove this flexibility and perhaps place more of a moral burden on leaders insofar as, they would have to prioritise funding expenditure to those eligible children only. Also, more explicit guidelines may stifle leaders' creativity and innovation when trying to meet the diverse range of children's needs. Currently the flexibility within the funding guidelines enables leaders to think "*out of the box*" (Participant 3C).

From the discussion above, it would appear that rather than adopting a single approach to determine the most effective use of the EYPP leaders used a dual approach, that is, they used the funding to support eligible children and also to support all vulnerable children irrespective of their eligibility to receive support. Pre-school leaders in this instance felt that they had a moral obligation to ensure that the needs of all vulnerable children were met and explained how at times this subjected them to a moral dilemma when prioritising the use of funding. The discussion above not only identifies implications for both policy and practice, it also revealed a moral dimension to leadership specifically in relation to the influence this has upon outcomes for young children thus contributes to the growing body of

discourse associated with pre-school leadership, thereby helps to '*shape how we think about leadership*' Western(2013:150).

It has been identified that all settings, irrespective of their Ofsted grading used the EYPP to support both eligible children and all those identified as vulnerable irrespective of their eligibility to received support from the funding. Having determined how best to use the EYPP that is, whether to apply vertical or horizontal equity (Monk 1990), pre-school leaders must then decide what strategies they should commission to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged children are met, this is the focus of the following discussion.

RQ2b: Strategies used to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children

To ensure that children are ready for school, Allen (2011:46) emphasised the importance of early intervention in children's learning and development as a means to improve outcomes for children living in poverty. Therefore, to achieve good outcomes, intervention strategies used in pre-schools must be effective. Abbott et al. (2015) suggest that the needs of disadvantaged children are met through a range of strategies that focus upon raising attainment. An analysis of the findings relating to the second component of RQ2 highlight how different strategies were used to ensure that the needs of children from low income families were met, and support the views of Abbott et al. (2015). Many of the strategies used to improve outcomes for children living in poverty were informed by the information and data leaders used to identify issues relating to disadvantage in their communities and by the effective use of data obtained through observations and assessment of children.

It is worth noting that it is beyond the scope of this research to measure the impact of specific strategies used to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

However, as I have used the settings' Ofsted inspection grading to make comparisons between settings it could be argued that in those settings where the quality of teaching and learning has been deemed to be '*outstanding*' (Ofsted, 2013, 2015b, 2016) the specific strategies used were considered to be effective in improving outcomes for less affluent children. Similarly, it could be argued that in Setting D as the quality of teaching and learning was deemed to '*require improvement*' (Ofsted 2017c) the strategies used were ineffective as '*children did not make good progress*' (p8). With this in mind, it could be inferred that I am inadvertently making a judgement about the impact of specific strategies on outcomes for children from low income families. That said, it is not the intention of this research to offer an impact evaluation of specific strategies. Rather, the ensuing discussion will identify the strategies used and explore the extent to which the findings in this research relate to previous research and add to the growing knowledge of pre-school leadership.

Human resources as a strategy to improve outcomes

One of the main strategies used to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children was the employment of additional staff. A primary area of developmental delay identified by all participants was communication and language this echoes the findings of Engle et al. (2011) and Ridge (2011). Leaders in this instance felt that using EYPP to fund additional members of staff would be the most efficient way to address this issue. They felt that staff would be able to engage in meaningful interactions with children, and facilitate interactions between children, and thereby

help to improve children's communication skills. This resonates with the findings of Roberts et al. (2017) who identified that leaders used the funding to support the employment of additional staff as they felt that language and communication difficulties often '*prohibited some children from learning*' (p25).

However, Leithwood and Mascall (2008) explain that if responsibility for specific intervention strategies is distributed to staff the effectiveness of the intervention is dependent upon the skills and capabilities of those staff employed. Therefore it could be argued that if staff did not have the underpinning skills and knowledge to effectively support children with speech and language difficulties this could have a negative impact on children's outcomes in this area. An analysis of participants' responses identified that an element of the EYPP was used to support the continuous professional development (CPD) of staff. For example, when specific interventions such as '*Early Talk Boost*' (Participant 4D) were used staff training was commissioned to ensure that staff had the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement the strategy and thereby provide more effective support to all vulnerable children irrespective of their eligibility to receive support. It could be argued that when faced with restricted funding criteria investing in staff development could be viewed as a means to help alleviate any instances of moral dilemma experienced by leaders when trying to meet the needs of all vulnerable children especially where children have similar needs.

Targeted support

In addition to using funding to support the employment of human resources, it was identified that the participating settings also used funding to commission

intervention strategies to target specific areas of developmental delay such as language and communication. As identified above, Setting D funded the implementation of *'Early Talk Boost'* (ICAN, 2017) that is an intervention strategy aimed at three and four year old children with language and communication difficulties. This involved funding staff training however, despite the fact that staff in Setting D received training specifically to support the implementation of Early Talk Boost it was noted by Ofsted (2017c:8) that too few children *'make rapid progress enough to catch up with their peers'*. It could be inferred from this judgement that perhaps in this instance attendance at training alone did not necessarily equip staff with the skills to ensure children progress in this area of their development. Interestingly, it was also noted that in Setting D *'leaders do not check that their actions and those of subject and phase leaders are making a difference'* (Ofsted 2017c:1).

With regard to monitoring children's performance, in Setting D the responsibility for this lies with the head teacher (HT) and deputy head teacher (DHT). While class teachers enter data onto the tracking system, it would appear that the analysis of this and subsequent target setting for individual children remains the domain of the HT and DHT. The outcomes of the analysis are then shared with the necessary staff *"And then obviously that's then filtered to the teams that we have, so it would then be fed back to, for example, the reception team that's made up of the teacher and two HLTAs. But then that conversation is then shared. This is what we've noted, the headlines from the data, this is what we've noticed, ... this is what the barriers are, this is what's working well and what we need to improve, and these are our next steps and then that's shared with the rest of the team"* (Participant 4D). Therefore, in light of Participant 4's comments it could be argued that senior

leaders in this instance do check that the actions of subject and phase leaders are making a difference. If appropriate staff are not directly involved in the analysis of tracking data and subsequent target setting for individual children, they are not being given the opportunity to develop these skills or understand how their actions are making a difference, and it is this element of practice that Ofsted refer to when making their judgements. This further emphasises the point Leithwood and Mascall (2008) make regarding the capabilities and skills of leaders and the impact that they have on outcomes for disadvantaged children.

It would appear that the actions of senior leaders as identified above resonate with the principles underpinning '*controller leadership*' (Western 2013:158), in that they do not appear to be providing staff with sufficient knowledge to implement intervention strategies effectively. Withholding knowledge whether intentional or not, could as demonstrated above, prohibit staff from making valuable contributions to school improvement. Rather than creating a knowledge sharing ethos it could be debated that leaders' actions in Setting D perpetuate perceptions of power and control insofar as, those with the knowledge are perceived to have the power to control. Subsequently it could be argued that leaders in Setting D are not motivating staff to take ownership of intervention strategies as they are not distributing full responsibility for the implementation of intervention strategies to teaching staff.

If staff and leaders do not have the necessary skills to be able to monitor and evaluate the impact of strategies on children's learning this could negatively impact on children's outcomes Ofsted (2017c), confirms this view. They report that in Setting D '*leaders were unable to provide an accurate picture of*

assessment and a detailed analysis of outcomes for the different groups of children in nursery... as a result children *'did not make good progress'* (Ofsted 2017c:8). In settings A, B and C Ofsted observed that *'Assessment is thorough and used as a tool to measure pupil performance'* (Ofsted 2013:5) and that *'Assessments are precise and checked closely to ensure that gaps in learning are quickly identified'* (Ofsted, 2016:3), as a result in those settings deemed as *'outstanding'* by Ofsted (2013, 2015b, 2016) all children made excellent progress. This relates to the work of Mulford et al. (2007), Robinson et al. (2008), Day, et al. (2011), Sun and Leithwood, (2012), and West, (2010) discussed in chapter 2 who acknowledge the influence that leadership has upon outcomes for children.

In view of this discussion it could be recommended that rather than focusing solely on equipping staff with the skills and knowledge to enable them to implement the strategy, training to support specific strategies should also provide staff/leaders with the necessary skills to enable them to effectively assess and monitor children's progress pre and post implementation. That said, the Early Talk Boost programme incorporates a tracking system to monitor children's progress throughout the implementation of the programme. Leaders can use the tracking system to assess children before they commence the programme, throughout the programme and at the end of the programme. However in view of Ofsted's findings it is questionable as to whether in this instance staff had a sound understanding of how to use the tracking system that further supports the recommendation above.

Supporting families

Leithwood (2010) as discussed in chapter 2.7 identified a range of factors that influenced educational outcomes some of which he argued, were beyond the control of head teachers (leaders). Leithwood explained how family circumstances

such as the S.E.S. of the family could negatively influence educational outcomes for children from low income families. Participants recognised that disadvantaged children's family circumstances often prevented them from accessing enrichment activities enjoyed by their more advantaged peers. While leaders acknowledged that the family's S.E.S. was beyond their control they felt that they were justified in using the EYPP to provide opportunities to children that would benefit their schooling that their families would otherwise be unable to afford. For example Participant 3C explained "*we find that a lot of our children lack experiences and not only the children but the parents too. So we have visits to the theatre or the art gallery and we do that regularly and don't charge*".

It was also identified that in some instances the EYPP was used to support vulnerable children who were not eligible to receive support from strategies funded by the EYPP, even though they had previously been eligible to receive support from the disadvantaged two year old funding. Participant 3C explained how she offered a free lunch to non-eligible children whom she considered to be vulnerable despite the fact that their families were technically not deemed to be economically disadvantaged when measured against the EYPP eligibility criteria. It could be argued that using the EYPP to support the family as a whole was not appropriate use of funding as it is not targeted at the specific learning and development needs of eligible children as Participant 1A explained "*It is not about buying resources for all the children, it is about meeting that child's needs with their allocation*". That said, Participant 1 appeared to contradict her own view as she also stated that "*We deliver intervention groups for both targeted groups and all parents*".

With reference to Participant 1A's contradictory view discussed above, this could have been the direct result of my enquiry into the use of the funding to support non

eligible children with similar needs as eligible children insofar as, the Participant may have felt obliged to provide the response she thought I would like to have heard, rather than providing a more truthful response. This directly relates to Grubrium and Holstein's (2003) view as discussed in chapter 3.4 concerning the fallibility of the interviewee's responses especially when as a researcher I may have unwittingly influenced the participant's responses. Given that Participant 1A had previously expressed her frustrations and dilemma at having to "*prioritise one child's needs over another*" perhaps she felt that she needed to respond to my question in a manner that reflected this dilemma.

In relation to supporting parents, pre-school leaders have a statutory responsibility as outlined in the EYFS (DfE 2017) to establish effective partnerships with parents. To facilitate this, it was identified in settings A, B, and C that EYPP funding was used to directly support parents. Participant 3C stated "*We ran parenting programmes like the school and family nurture programme targeted at EYPP children and their families*". Participant 3C explained how she felt that supporting parents in this way helped to instil confidence in parents to enable them to engage with their child's learning, this concurs with the findings identified in Roberts et al. (2017:29). Also, it could be argued that using the EYPP directly to support parents and families positively contributes to improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and subsequently improves their educational outcomes.

From the discussion above, it would appear that settings in this instance used a range of strategies to support children living in poverty compatible with the findings of Roberts et al. (2017), and confirms the view of Abbott et al. (2015) discussed at the beginning of this section. The discussion also explains how pre-school leaders

extended this support to other vulnerable children and families who were not eligible to receive support on the basis that they felt this would contribute to improved outcomes for those children in the longer term. Supporting both children and their families in this way, is in line with recommendations within the CPS (H.M. Government, 2011), specifically those regarding the need to support families to enable them to overcome barriers to employment, or training leading to employment.

While there were commonalities between settings regarding the type of strategies used, there appears to be variance in the extent to which the needs of disadvantaged children were met across the settings. That is, in those settings deemed by Ofsted to be '*outstanding*' pre-school leaders put in place appropriate measures to ensure that strategies were effective and that children's learning progressed in a meaningful way to secure improved outcomes at the end of the EYFS. This relates to the work of Robinson et al. (2008) (chapter 2.7) who suggest that effective leaders have appropriate resources in place to ensure improved outcomes for children.

The discussion highlights that in settings A, B, and C, observation and assessment formed an integral aspect of practice. Leaders in these settings used the information gleaned from observation and assessments to effectively plan next steps in learning. They also ensured that the effectiveness of intervention strategies was regularly monitored and evaluated, as a result Ofsted observed that in these settings children made '*excellent progress*' (Ofsted 2013, 2015b, 2016). Unfortunately, this was not the case in Setting D, as they received an Ofsted grading of '*requires improvement*' (Ofsted 2017c). It could be argued that in this

Setting observation and assessment was not embedded within practice and intervention strategies were not monitored or evaluated effectively as a result, children '*did not make good progress*' (Ofsted 2017c:8), this suggests that it is naïve to assume that intervention strategies will automatically improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. Therefore, leaders should ensure that training to support specific strategies also equips staff/leaders with the necessary skills to enable them to effectively assess and monitor children's progress pre and post implementation. This relates directly to the notion of instructional leadership as discussed by Blasé and Blasé (2000) in chapter 2.9 as it acknowledges the value of continuous professional development as a means to improve professional practice.

5.2.3 Research question 3: How is pre-school leadership enacted in the sample pre-school settings?

As previously discussed in chapter 2, Duncan et al. (1998) suggest that early years education mitigates the effects of childhood poverty however, Melhuish, (2004) expands upon this and argues that it is the quality of early years education that determines the extent to which outcomes for young children are improved. Sylva et al. (2004) acknowledged that strong leadership was a defining factor of good quality provision Woodrow and Busch (2008) concur, suggesting that strong leadership in pre-school settings was crucial if the social inequalities between disadvantaged children and those more fortunate were to be addressed. While both Sylva et al. and Woodrow and Busch make reference to the phrase strong leadership this does not appear to be clearly defined within their studies. Therefore it could be suggested that the authors assume that perhaps there is an unspoken common understanding of the phrase. The third research question

(RQ3) builds upon the work of Duncan et al., Melhuish and Woodrow and Busch and seeks to explore the way in which leadership is enacted in the participating settings. In line with the approach taken for RQ1 and RQ2, two elements of practice have been identified in RQ3 these are;

- a. Leadership approaches adopted within the settings,
- b. Policy informed practice.

RQ3a: Leadership approaches adopted within the participating settings

As discussed in chapter 2 (2.9.1) the Open University (2001:24) suggests that the relationship between education theory and practice is highlighted by the way a *'theory is acted out in practice'*. From the findings identified in chapter 4 it is apparent that within the context of the participating settings more than one theory of leadership is acted out in practice. An analysis of the participants' responses and Ofsted reports identified characteristics associated with four main leadership theories. The following section will discuss each of these theories and the extent to which they can be applied to leadership within the sample pre-schools settings.

Bureaucratic Leadership

The analysis of the participants' responses and Ofsted reports revealed that characteristics associated with bureaucratic leadership as described by Bush (2011) (chapter 2.9) were evident within the settings. Each setting's organisational structure is hierarchical in nature that is, those with the highest level of responsibility and accountability are positioned at the apex of the structure as is conversant with bureaucratic theories of leadership. However the organisational structures differ according to setting type. With regard to settings A and B, the

overall accountability for these settings was held by the voluntary organisation. However, the day to day management of these settings was the responsibility of the setting managers. Within settings C and D, overall accountability for the provision resided with the governing body, with the day to day management of the school being delegated to the head teacher and senior leadership team.

In addition to the hierarchical organisational structure of each setting, the findings also revealed that at times leaders adopted a bureaucratic approach to their leadership. For example, Participant 4D explained how the head teacher and deputy head teacher took sole responsibility for identifying the needs of disadvantaged children and for monitoring the use and effectiveness of intervention strategies, and that this information was then *“filtered to the teams that we have, so it would then be fed back to, for example, the reception team that’s made up of the teacher and two HLTAs [Higher Level Teaching Assistants]”* (Participant 4D). Adopting a bureaucratic approach in this instance appears to have had a detrimental influence on pupil achievement as Ofsted (2017:1) report that *‘too few pupils, in particular the most able and disadvantaged are challenged or supported effectively’*, Ofsted also report that *‘phase leaders were unable to provide an accurate picture of assessment and a detailed analysis of outcomes for the different groups of children in nursery...’* (p8).

As discussed in chapter 2.9, Greenfield (1973) argues that a weakness associated with bureaucratic approaches to leadership is that leaders in this instance do not take into account the impact that individuals within the organisation have upon goal achievement. This would appear to be the case in Setting D as senior leaders did not take into consideration the views of leaders and practitioners within

the pre-school when identifying the needs of disadvantaged children, nor did they appear to involve pre-school leaders in the monitoring and evaluation of intervention strategies. As a result it was identified that '*too few [children] make rapid progress enough to catch up with their peers*' (Ofsted 2017:8). An analysis of children's performance at the end of the reception year confirms these findings as children in Setting D performed less well than other less fortunate children locally and nationally (see Table 7, chapter 4.5). If responsibility for children's performance is not delegated to those working directly with children this can negatively influence children's performance as identified above. This view resonates with that of Hallinger and Heck (1996) (chapter 2.9) who highlight that effective leadership cannot take place in isolation of the interaction between leaders and other staff members. This was confirmed by Ofsted (2017c) as the leadership and management in Setting D was deemed to '*require improvement*', this affirms the view of Hallinger and Heck (1998).

It has been argued above that adopting a bureaucratic approach to leadership as identified in Setting D can negatively impact upon children's outcomes and render leadership less effective. However, the findings also suggest that adopting a bureaucratic approach to leadership can at times have a positive influence upon staff. In Setting C, Ofsted (2013:6) noted that '*pertinent decisions made by the head teacher have raised staff expectations*'. The head teacher's apparent unilateral approach to decision making is conversant with the traits of bureaucratic leadership as described by Bush (2011) insofar as, decision making in this instance appears to be top down. It could be argued that raising staff expectations can, in turn, have a positive impact upon outcomes for children as in Setting C

'Achievement of children is outstanding they make excellent progress in all areas of learning' (Ofsted, 2013:1).

With regard to the extent to which a bureaucratic theory of leadership can be applied to leadership in pre-school settings within the context of this research, it would appear that elements of bureaucracy are evident, within each setting the organisational structure is hierarchical in nature with those at the apex of the structure having overall accountability for the provision. While it has been demonstrated that adopting a bureaucratic approach to leadership can negatively influence outcomes for children the findings also suggest that the effectiveness of bureaucratic leadership is context specific, and therefore it is acknowledged that when the need arises a more bureaucratic approach to leadership is both appropriate and necessary.

Distributed Leadership

Further analysis of the findings within participants' responses and Ofsted reports revealed that characteristics associated with distributed leadership (DL) as described by Spillane (2005) were evident within the participating settings. In all cases leadership responsibilities were distributed across the senior leadership teams. Within settings A and B these were delegated to the deputy manager and room leaders with some members of staff taking responsibility for specific areas of the curriculum. Similarly, in settings C and D leadership responsibilities were delegated to phase leaders or curriculum leaders. However, as previously discussed in chapter 2.9 Spillane (2005) argues that DL is not merely concerned with the distribution of leadership tasks rather, it is argued that DL is underpinned

by effective communication between leaders and those who are led that is, effective DL is dependent upon the interaction between leaders and between leaders and staff. Within Setting D, Ofsted reported that “*leaders do not check that their actions are making a difference*” (Ofsted 2017c:3), subsequently this apparent lack of interaction between leaders had a negative influence on outcomes for children as Ofsted (2017c:8) report that ‘*too few [children] make rapid progress enough to catch up with their peers*’, subsequently the leadership within Setting D was deemed by Ofsted to be less effective. This resonates with the views of Hallinger and Heck (2010) who argue that DL is only effective if those with delegated responsibilities have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles effectively, Heikka et al. (2013) concur, arguing that this is specifically apropos within pre-schools. The reason for this could be attributed to the fact that, it is not a mandatory requirement for pre-school leaders to hold a leadership qualification and therefore it could be assumed that perhaps leaders in this instance may not have the necessary skills to fulfil their roles effectively.

Within settings A, B and C leaders were confident that those with delegated leadership responsibilities had the underpinning skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles effectively. Participant 3C explained that the early years lead practitioner had “*considerable experience of managing nurseries... we each bring something different to the Table both have strengths and together we have in-depth knowledge*”. As a result leadership in these settings was ‘*outstanding*’ (Ofsted, 2013, 2015a and 2016). Within Setting D this was not the case as Ofsted recorded that ‘*leaders were unable to provide an accurate picture of assessment and a detailed analysis of outcomes for the different groups of children in*

nursery... (Ofsted 2017c:8), as a result the quality of teaching and learning within Setting D was also deemed to *'require improvement'*.

With reference to the extent to which DL can be applied to leadership within the context of this research, it is evident that all aspects of DL can be equally applied to leadership within the participating settings. That is, it has been demonstrated that in those settings graded by Ofsted to be *'outstanding'*, leadership responsibilities were delegated across the leadership teams, also leaders ensured that those with additional responsibilities had the underpinning skills and knowledge to effectively fulfil their roles, and that the interaction between leaders and between leaders and other members of staff was based upon effective communication.

Within Setting D this was less so, while leadership responsibilities were delegated across the leadership team the interaction between leaders and other staff was not considered by Ofsted to be as effective as it could be. In addition, it was noted that staff with delegated responsibilities did not have the underpinning skills and knowledge to effectively fulfil their roles. Heikka and Waniganayake (2011) emphasise that in the correct circumstances DL serves to empower staff and that this empowerment instils in staff a sense of value. Therefore, by virtue, it could be argued that delegating leadership responsibilities to those who do not have the skills or underpinning knowledge to fulfil their roles effectively only serves to disempower and demotivate staff and therefore in these circumstances leaders should ensure that interactions between staff and other leaders are meaningful.

Instructional Leadership

Characteristics associated with instructional leadership (IL) were also evident within the participating settings. Blasé and Blasé (2000) explain in chapter 2.9 that the primary focus of IL is to equip teachers (practitioners) with the skills and knowledge to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively. This they explain is done through a framework of support and guidance through which leaders adopt the role of critical friend to provide constructive feedback, model good practice and offer suggestions for improvement. Other features of IL as identified by Blasé and Blasé include CPD and staff supervision.

In reference to CPD, all participants acknowledged the importance of CPD as a means to improve outcomes for children and all invested time and financial resources to ensure staff had access to training to improve their skills and knowledge. Participant 4D stated “*we spend a lot on staff training we see that as a real way of improving children’s outcomes and progress...*”. It is interesting to note that in Setting D despite this investment Ofsted (2017c:8) report that ‘*children did not make good progress*’ subsequently the teaching and learning within Setting D was deemed by Ofsted to ‘*require improvement*’. In view of this, it could be argued that attendance at training alone does not always guarantee that staff will have the skills and knowledge to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively and that if IL is to be effective other support systems must also be in place.

Blasé and Blasé (2000) also explained that in addition to staff training, regular supervision between leaders and staff was an important feature of IL, as it is through this process that leaders and staff become reflective and reflexive

practitioners. Participant 1A explained that supervision had a dual purpose and that it involved two-way communication that is, it provided an opportunity for staff to keep leaders apprised of the day-to-day operational aspects of their role and to seek advice and guidance when required. The analysis of participants' responses highlight that while regular supervision formed an integral part of leadership practice within the PVI settings there was no evidence to suggest that supervision was embedded within the maintained settings (settings C and D). However, while there was no evidence that supervision formed part of leadership practice within Setting D, Participant 3C explained that they had "*daily reflections*" that provided an opportunity for staff to come together to reflect upon the days events to ensure continuity in quality of provision.

All participants explained that they had annual appraisal and performance management processes in place. However, it could be argued that these do not provide an opportunity for meaningful reflection to take place as issues may arise throughout the academic year that might impact upon practice and therefore need to be addressed in the here and now. Also children's progress may vary throughout the academic year therefore this needs to be discussed on a regular basis. If children's progress is not regularly monitored this could negatively influence their performance as identified in Setting D (Ofsted 2017c:8). Heck, et al. (1990) argue in chapter 2.9 that IL has a positive influence on educational outcomes however, as demonstrated in the discussion above the effectiveness of IL is dependent upon the necessary systems and processes being in place to ensure that the correct guidance and support is given and that staff have the skills and underpinning knowledge to fulfil their roles effectively.

Day et al. (2011) highlight the complexity associated with educational leadership attributing this to the diverse range of tasks that it encompasses. Mestry et al. (2014) concur and argue that the complex nature of educational leadership poses many challenges for leaders particularly those within pre-school settings. One of the challenges identified by head teachers within Mestry et al.'s study that influenced the practice of IL was the conflicting demands placed upon their time. Head teachers in this instance explained that this prevented them from dedicating time to instruct and directly support staff and other leaders. It could be argued that it is for this reason that there appears to be certainly within Setting D, an over reliance upon training as a means to improve practice and subsequently improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Transformational Leadership

Characteristics associated with transformational leadership were also evident within the participating settings. Bass (1990) as discussed in chapter 2.9, explains that leaders adopting a TL approach to their leadership inspire and motivate their teams through a process of influence and that it is through this influence that leaders gain commitment from their teams. Ofsted noted that in settings A, B, and C leaders were *'inspirational and visionary'* (Ofsted 2013:1, 2015b:3, 2016:1), as a result as identified above, the leadership and management in these settings was deemed to be *'outstanding'*. In setting D, while Ofsted (2017c:1) noted that *'leaders have successfully created a positive ethos for the school with children's well-being firmly at the core'* this does not appear to translate across all aspects of the school as the leadership and management, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, outcomes for children and early years provision were all deemed to *'require improvement'* (Ofsted, 2017c). That said, Ofsted also noted that in Setting

D the head teacher '*has shared her vision with staff and governors*' (2017c:1) however, as Ofsted suggested that the leadership in Setting D was not as good as it should be, it could be argued that the leader's vision in this instance has yet to be realised.

When considering the quality of teaching and learning in Setting D, as identified above this has been deemed by Ofsted (2017c:8) to '*require improvement*' as it is considered to be '*too variable*' across the key stages this includes the early years provision. TL as described by Bass (1990), is premised upon the process of influence however, Darling-Hammond (2000) argue that one factor that is beyond the control of leaders is the influence that individual teachers have upon pupil achievement. Therefore, it could be debated that the variability of teaching within Setting D is beyond the influence of the head teacher. Caldwell and Spinks (1992) disagree they argue that it is through the process of influence that leaders gain the respect and commitment from those they lead to such an extent that they feel morally obliged to give of their best. That said, it is worth noting that at the time of the Ofsted inspection the head teacher in Setting D was relatively new to post and subsequently it could be suggested that her influence had not yet permeated across the whole staff team and that this accounted for the variation in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

The discussion of TL above has highlighted the influence that leadership has upon outcomes for children insofar as, it has been noted that in Setting D children do not make good progress towards the ELGs. Ofsted (2017c) stated that this lack of progress was a result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They further noted that this was a reflection of leadership within the

Setting in that they deemed it to require improvement. It is recommended that to ensure improved outcomes for disadvantaged children, leaders adopt a TL approach, as it is through this that they will develop the capacity to influence the teaching, learning and assessment in their settings and thereby help to ameliorate the impact that disadvantage has upon outcomes for young children.

With regard to RQ3a, it would appear that pre-school leadership is enacted in a variety of ways in the participating settings this confirms the view of Aubrey et al (2013). This variation could be attributed to the complexity of educational leadership as explained by Day et al. (2011) and as such it could be argued that no one theory of leadership can adequately explain the leadership practices adopted within the participating settings. For example, state funded pre-schools must adhere to the curriculum frameworks determined by Central Government therefore to some extent a bureaucratic theory of leadership can be applied. It has been observed that leadership responsibilities for curriculum areas are distributed across the senior leadership team in alignment with the leadership practices identified in Spillane's (2005) theory of DL. In addition, a TL style can also be applied to pre-school leadership as leaders can through their influence appeal to children, staff and parents, and influence school performance. Therefore it could be argued that the combination of leadership theories identified provide a more holistic explanation of leadership in early years and further emphasises its complexity as identified by Mestry et al. (2014).

RQ3b Policy Informed Practice

The final aspect of leadership to be discussed concerns the way in which pre-school leaders use policy to inform their practice. As identified in chapter 1.4.2, over the last two decades successive governments have, in an attempt to eradicate child poverty and improve outcomes for disadvantaged children, considerably increased their focus on the early years, resulting in a wide range of policies and curriculum guidance being introduced (see Table 5 in chapter 1.4.2).

The ever changing political landscape associated with early years practice has according to Robertson and Hill (2014) highlighted the complexities faced by pre-school leaders in the 21st Century. These complexities they argue arise because the *'translation of ideology is by no means assured or straightforward'* (p170).

Participant 3C confirms the view of Robertson and Hill as she explained that *"sometimes it is not appropriate for children at this age"*. An analysis of the participants' responses reveal that leaders in those settings deemed by Ofsted to be *'outstanding'* (Ofsted 2013, 2015b and 2016) were well informed of policies and curriculum guidance however, the extent to which leaders used the policies to inform their practice varied across the settings. In settings A and B it appears that national policies are interpreted by the organisation's head office and then disseminated to all settings. Participant 2B explained that *"All of our policy guidance documents are generic documents compiled by Head office which are disseminated to settings across the country they are based on national policy"*

This suggests that in this instance policies are unified and used in a consistent way across all of the organisation's provision. However, Participant 3C explained *"we do consider national policies but it is about what works for early years pedagogy and ethos"* therefore in recognition that the needs of children differ in

the different settings, in Setting C policies are modified to ensure that children receive the correct support to ensure their needs are met. It would appear that in these settings national policy is used to some extent to inform practice and as a consequence it could be argued that this contributed to improved outcomes for children in those settings.

With regard to Setting D, it appears that leaders in this instance have little or no regard for national policy, when asked if they use national policy to inform their practice the response given was simply “no” (Participant 4D). Participant 4 explained how she and her staff used various forms of social media to share good practice and glean new ideas *“Twitter is another good one, and... Facebook, you know, you like a page so then you get the notifications and it comes up this article...”* As noted previously, children in Setting D ‘do not make good progress’ (Ofsted 2017c) and all aspects of practice are deemed to require improvement. The apparent lack of engagement with national policy and practice guidance documents and over reliance upon social media could, account for the variability in the quality of teaching and learning as observed by Ofsted, as information retrieved from social media may not be from a reliable or credible source. While it is recognised that the DfE use twitter and FB as a platform to inform providers of the various policies and practice guidance documents it was not made clear within Participant 4D’s responses that social media was used in this way. If it was, it could be inferred that practitioners in Setting D did not recognise that they were using policy to inform their practice.

With reference to curriculum guidance, as explained in chapter 1.4 all state funded pre-schools have a statutory obligation to have regard to the EYFS curriculum

guidance (DfE 2017) and ensure that all children (including disadvantaged children) achieve the ELGs at the end of their reception year. Sun and Leithwood (2012) identified that there was a correlation between the S.E.S. of families and educational achievement insofar as, they argue that the S.E.S. of families can negatively impact upon pupil achievement. An analysis of school performance data confirms this correlation as it has been demonstrated that the gap in educational achievements at the end of the reception year between children classified as disadvantaged and their more affluent peers still exists (see Table 6 in chapter 4.5.3).

All of the participants identified that children living in poverty enter pre-school at lower starting points than their more advantaged peers Ofsted confirms, stating '*a sizeable proportion of children start the early years with skills and knowledge that are lower than typically expected for their age*' (Ofsted 2017c:8). Yet, despite this difference, the EYFS advocates that all children achieve the same outcomes at the end of their reception year. It could be suggested that the persistent gap in educational achievements is exacerbated because of the low starting points of disadvantaged children, in that, children from low income families have a greater distance to travel than their more advantaged peers to achieve the ELGs at the end of their reception year. This further exposes the tension between the rhetoric of policy and the reality in practice and as such it could be argued that because of this tension, a sensible and rational approach to teaching, learning and assessment, that is context specific, should be adopted across all settings to ensure improved outcomes for disadvantaged children.

The previous discussion highlighted a tension between the rhetoric of policy and the reality in practice in that there is an expectation that all children irrespective of their backgrounds achieve the ELGs at the end of their reception year. However, as discussed in chapter 1.4 embedded within the EYFS is the notion of equality for all children in that it is acknowledged that all children have access to the same opportunities. As discussed in chapter 1.4, Robertson and Hill (2014) draw the distinction between equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes, arguing that rather than promoting equality of opportunity the EYFS promotes an ethos of *'social elitism and inequality'* (p167) as the loci of leaders attention is upon EYFS outcomes rather than equality of opportunity. Robertson and Hill further highlight the pressure that an outcome based approach to curriculum delivery places upon leaders as they strive to ensure that all children, irrespective of their starting points, achieve the ELGs at the end of their reception year.

In addition to the pressure placed upon pre-school leaders identified above, in section 5.2.2 I discussed how the EYPP was introduced to narrow the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers, highlighting the moral dilemma experienced by leaders when determining how best to use the funding to support vulnerable children. It was explained how this dilemma was the result of inconsistencies in the indicators of disadvantage identified in the various funding streams and by the lack of clear guidelines regarding its expenditure (Roberts et al. 2017b). These inconsistencies in policy criteria further highlight the tension associated with policy implementation and further support the view of Robertson et al. (2014:170) that *'the translation of ideology is by no means assured or straightforward'* this in turn further highlights the complexity of pre-school leadership.

It could be further debated that, the complexity of pre-school leadership is exacerbated as a result of the many influences that impact upon children's outcomes that are beyond the control of leaders. Influences such as those located within Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological model (see Figure 3, Chapter 2.10) have a long lasting effect on children's future prospects as they *'limit opportunities for children in later life'* (Davis and Sanchez-Martinez , 2015:24). Given that, societal influences such as child poverty, and frequent changes to early years policy are beyond the control of leaders, it could be assumed that these factors only serve to demotivate pre-school leaders. However, leaders in this study demonstrated a passion for their role and felt that they were not only morally obliged to meet the needs of all children but they also had aspirations for their families as a whole. Participant 3C explained how, in an attempt raise the aspirations for one particular family, she provided free school meals for the children.

"We have a young mum who is a single mum and doesn't tick all the boxes for early years pupil premium, but allowing her children to access full day provision with a free school meal has enabled that mum to go to college and better herself (Participant 3C).

In addition, pre-school leaders also provided opportunities for children and their families to participate in enrichment activities that they would not normally be able to afford. For example Participant 1A explained how they took children to the seaside or as Participant 3C stated *"we find that a lot of our children lack experiences and not only the children but the parents too. So we have visits to the theatre or the art gallery and we do that regularly and don't charge"*. The actions of Participants 1A and 3C resonate with the definition of poverty underpinning this

research that is, 'Poverty is *more than income; it is about a lack of opportunity, aspiration and stability.*' (HM Government, 2011:12) as articulated by Field (2010).

Table 5 in chapter 1.4.2 identifies the numerous policy developments and changes to curriculum guidance that have been introduced by different governments.

These changes highlight the fluidity of the early years landscape, and the ever increasing demands placed upon pre-school leaders as they strive to accommodate these changes in their practice. Given the ever changing political landscape associated with early years, it is recommended that all pre-school leaders ensure that they are kept apprised of policy developments relative to their practice. However, Mukherji and Dryden (2014) caution that frequent changes do not always result in the desired outcome as they are not given sufficient time to be embedded in practice and therefore it is recommended that a business like and rational approach to policy implementation is taken. The frequent changes to policy and practice identified in Table 5 further highlight the tension betwixt early years policy and practice.

5.4 Chapter summary

From the discussion above it would appear that the extent to which the needs of children, including disadvantaged children, are met is strongly linked to leadership within pre-school settings. The discussion also reveals the moral dilemma faced by leaders when trying to meet the needs of all vulnerable children within the confines of restrictive funding criteria. It also has drawn out the tension between the rhetoric of policy and policy implementation within the sample of pre-school settings, and locates the findings within the context of the Child Poverty Strategy

(H.M. Government, 2011) and the definition of poverty as articulated by Field (2010) underpinning this research. Comparisons have been made between leadership practices within settings that have been deemed by Ofsted as, 'outstanding' and 'requires improvement'. In making these comparisons the following recommendations for practice have been identified.

5.5 Recommendations for practice

- 1) Pre-school leaders should consult a range of information and data to identify issues relating to child poverty and then use this data to effectively plan for next steps in children's learning and development.
- 2) Indicators of disadvantage should be consistently applied across funding streams to support disadvantaged children.
- 3) Leaders/practitioners should attend training to equip them with the skills to enable them to effectively evaluate intervention strategies and monitor children's progress throughout the implementation of strategies.
- 4) Leaders should ensure that interactions between them and their staff are meaningful and be aware of the impact that their leadership style has upon their staff.
- 5) In recognition that no one style of leadership suits every situation, leaders should modify this according to the context of their practice.
- 6) Leaders should ensure that their vision for good quality teaching and learning is clearly articulated and understood by all staff.
- 7) Leaders should ensure that they and their staff are well informed of policy developments relative to their practice and use this information to inform practice.

- 8) Leaders should adopt a practical and realistic approach to policy implementation and not assume that a one size fits all.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Chapter structure

Given that feminist research as described by Usher (2000) seeks to redress social inequalities such as those associated with the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers, it was hoped that my research would provide new insights into pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon outcomes for young children from disadvantaged backgrounds, thereby contribute to the growing body of discourse relating to leadership within pre-school settings. In addition, it was hoped that new insights would help to improve the professional status of pre-school leaders to create parity of esteem between them and leaders of other educational establishments.

This chapter is organised into three main sections that discuss various aspects of this study. Firstly, it will explore the extent to which pre-school leadership influences outcomes for disadvantaged children and offer a vision of strong leadership within the context of pre-school settings. Secondly, I will reflect upon the methodological issues I encountered throughout the data collection process and the limitation of the sample size. The final section will discuss the dissemination of the research findings.

6.2 Defining pre-school leadership

The intention of this study was to explore the influence that pre-school leadership has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children, and thereby provide greater insights into the possible link between leadership in a sample of pre-school settings and improved outcomes for young children. The findings arising from the

analysis of participants' responses to the three research questions underpinning this study, along with the content of the most recent Ofsted inspection reports for the participating settings, and the settings' performance data have revealed that there is a strong link between improved outcomes for disadvantaged children, and indeed all children, and leadership in the participating settings. It has been established that where leadership was deemed by Ofsted to '*require improvement*' children performed less well than in those settings where leadership was considered to be '*outstanding*'. Therefore, it can be concluded that within the context of this research, the extent to which outcomes for children living in poverty are improved is dependent upon the effectiveness of leadership in the participating pre-school settings.

Throughout this study I have made reference to the term '*strong leadership*' as identified in previous literature for example Sylva et al. (2004), Aubrey (2013), Ofsted (2015a). However as noted, within literature this term does not appear to have been defined or discussed other than to suggest that it is synonymous with good quality pre-school provision and difficult to define. Ofsted (2015a:11) cited that '*excellent teaching needs strong leadership*' and explain that strong leaders are visionary. However, the findings within this study suggest that visionary leadership does not always result in good quality teaching or improved outcomes for disadvantaged children. Rather, it has been demonstrated that if visionary leadership is to be effective leaders must articulate their vision for good quality teaching and learning, and ensure that it is clearly understood and shared by all staff. Where this has not been the case, Ofsted identified that the quality of teaching was variable between staff and subsequently children did not make good progress (Ofsted 2017c).

With reference to the term pre-school leadership, many well-known early years researchers have explained how the term pre-school leadership is difficult to define, see for example Rodd (1996 - 2001), Saraji-Blatchford and Manni (2006), Woodrow and Busch (2008), Pugh (2010), Aubrey (2013), Heikka et al. (2013) and Coleman et al. (2016) to name but a few. The difficulty in reaching an agreed definition of leadership could be hampered because the term itself is abstract in nature and therefore difficult to visualise. This relates to comments made by Rodd (2001) who argued that leadership was difficult to define because it was interpreted differently by different people and subsequently it was difficult to develop a conceptual framework. Moreover, Aubrey et al. (2013) argued that the variability of leadership within settings also rendered the term difficult to define. If a general consensus of opinion concerning definitions of pre-school leadership has not been reached and a shared vision for pre-school leadership agreed and disseminated, this could account for the variability of leadership practices within settings as identified by Aubrey et al. (2013), and possibly explain why within existing literature the term strong leadership does not appear to have been clearly defined or explained. If, as has been demonstrated within this study, albeit small in scale, that there is a strong link between pre-school leadership and improved outcomes for young children surely this justifies the need for an agreed definition and vision of strong leadership among professionals and academics alike.

In recognition that an agreed definition of pre-school leadership has not yet been established I will return to the working definition proffered in my introduction. Here I defined pre-school leadership as representing the way in which pre-school leaders ensure that the needs of all children are met. Rather than identifying a

single aspect of practice for me, the phrase encompasses all aspects of practice, however variable, that collectively contribute to improving outcomes for young children. Aubrey et al. (2013) acknowledge the variability of practice within early years settings, therefore for me, the definition of pre-school leadership proffered in my introduction celebrates this diversity and acknowledges that one size does not fit all. The findings within this study have highlighted how within those settings graded as '*outstanding*' by Ofsted (2013, 2015c and 2016) leadership practices varied between settings. For example, in all settings there was variation in the way in which policies were used to inform practice, that is, in settings A and B a uniform approach was adopted. In Setting C in recognition that settings have unique features a more practical and rational approach was used. Similarly, there were differences in the way funding was used to support children from low income families. Despite this variability disadvantaged children in those settings made good progress resulting in improved outcomes.

Whilst this study has highlighted the variability of leadership practices within the participating settings it has also identified commonalities of practice within settings deemed by Ofsted to be '*outstanding*', that collectively contribute to improving outcomes for young children. The ensuing discussion will focus upon those commonalities in practice that will provide the basis for a proposed conceptual framework for pre-school leadership.

6.3 Contribution to new knowledge: A conceptual framework

Given that existing early years literature acknowledges that good quality early years provision is underpinned by strong leadership, one of the primary aims of

this study was to generate further debate and discussion within the field by proposing a conceptual framework that identifies essential aspects of practice associated with the notion of strong leadership. As identified within chapter 2 research surrounding the phenomenon of pre-school leadership is scarce and difficult to locate (Heikka et al. 2013:31). Earlier research relating to early years leadership primarily focused upon the characteristics associated with leaders, rather than, upon the influence that early years leadership has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children. Subsequently, it could be argued, that the literature stock relating to early years leadership was not rich enough to provide the foundation for the development of a conceptual framework specifically relating to leadership within early years. This small scale comparative study set out to provide greater insight into the phenomenon surrounding pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children that would provide the basis for the development of a conceptual framework for early years leadership.

The conceptual framework below highlights those aspects of practice that have been informed by the findings arising from this research. An explanation for each component of the framework is offered below. However, it is worth noting that there is no hierarchical order associated with the components within the proposed conceptual framework. Each aspect of practice identified is equally important if leadership is to influence outcomes for children living in poverty.

Figure 8: A conceptual framework depicting the relationship between ‘strong leadership’ and improved outcomes for disadvantaged children



6.3.1 Visionary Leadership

One of the characteristics associated with transformational leadership as described by Bass (1990) is the ability of leaders to have a vision for the future of the organisation. That is, leaders have clear ideas for organisational improvement and are able to articulate their ideas and aspirations to all staff thereby ensure a consistent approach to service delivery within their organisation. With regard to pre-school provision, visionary leadership requires that leaders have a clear

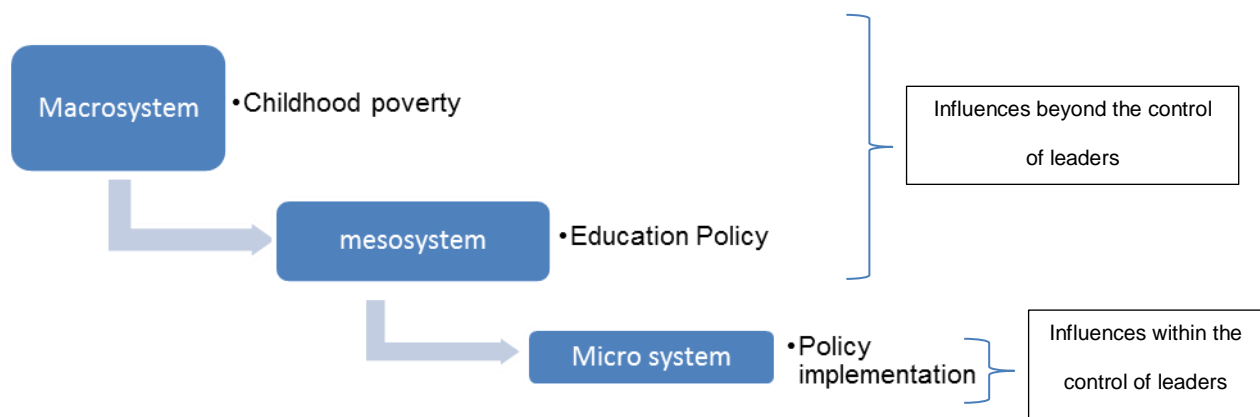
understanding of what constitutes good quality pre-school provision. Given that within English pre-schools the quality of provision is determined by the Ofsted regulatory system, in order to continually improve their provision pre-school leaders must have a clear understanding of the requirements of Ofsted. The findings within this study highlighted that in '*outstanding*' settings pre-school leaders were '*visionary and inspirational*' (Ofsted 2013:1, 2015b:3, 2016:1) and as a result children made good progress. As identified within the findings Ofsted (2017c) acknowledged that the new head teacher in Setting D had a vision for improvement within the Setting although it was identified that this had not been realised across all aspects of practice. Subsequently less affluent children did not make good progress.

If pre-school leaders are to influence outcomes for disadvantaged children they must have a vision of the communities they serve. That is, they must raise their heads above the parapets of their organisations and get to know their communities, and understand the issues associated with disadvantage that impact on children's learning and development. In order to understand the communities they serve pre-school leaders should not only, as Coleman (2016) suggest consult a range of information and data to explore the issues relating to disadvantage in their communities, they should use this information to ensure that the needs of less fortunate children are met. As noted above, in Setting D there was no evidence to suggest that leaders used information from a range of sources to inform their practice. Subsequently, it was identified by Ofsted that children from low income families did not make good progress in line with their peers (Ofsted, 2017c). These examples illustrate the need to include the concept of 'visionary leadership' in the proposed conceptual framework, and acknowledge that this vision must be clearly articulated and shared by all staff.

6.3.2 Policy informed practice

As discussed in chapter 2.10, Leithwood (2010) and Sun and Leithwood (2012) identified that there were factors such as, child poverty and educational policy development that were beyond the control of leaders that influenced outcomes for children. Drawing upon Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological theory (chapter 2.10) in relation to policy implementation within pre-schools, it could be argued that factors located within the macro system influence those within the mesosystem. Subsequently, factors within the mesosystem influence policy implementation within pre-schools. As such, those factors that influence pre-school practice located within the macro system and mesosystem are beyond the control of leaders. The implementation of educational policy within pre-school practice is directly under the control of pre-school leaders, and is therefore located within the microsystem.

Figure 9: Theorising policy implementation using Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory



Adapted from Bronfenbrenner's (1986) Ecological Theory

Theorising policy implementation in relation to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model highlights the importance placed upon pre-school leaders to get to know the communities they serve. Broader societal issues such as child poverty influence policy developments these, in turn, influence pre-school practices. In view of the ever changing political landscape associated with early years, leaders must ensure that they are kept apprised of policy developments and revisions to statutory guidance documents and use these to inform their practice. Table 5 in chapter 1.4.2 illustrates the fluidity of the early years landscape, as with each newly elected government or departmental minister political ideologies changed resulting in changes to statutes and guidance documents that impact on the way in which early years services are delivered. However, as discussed in chapter 1 Robertson and Hill (2014) highlighted the tension often associated with the rhetoric of policy and the reality of its implementation in practice arguing that at times the translation of policy into action was not straightforward.

This tension can be related to pre-school leaders working within the confines of a curriculum framework such as the EYFS (DfE, 2017) that is outcome driven. As Ridge (2011) explains, disadvantaged children enter pre-school with lower levels of cognitive development than their more advantaged peers. Therefore as discussed in chapter 1, it could be argued that it is unrealistic to suggest that all children reach the same outcomes at the end of their reception year especially as children living in poverty have a greater distance to travel to achieve the same goals as their peers. As Robertson and Hill (2014) explain this could place undue pressure on pre-school leaders as they may focus on the outcomes within the curriculum framework rather than meeting the holistic needs of disadvantaged children. Therefore in recognition of the uniqueness of settings, rather than

adopting a dogmatic approach to policy implementation, it is recommended that pre-school leaders use policy in a realistic and rational way, and tailor their provision to ensure that the needs of all children are met.

6.3.3 Good quality teaching and learning

As has been demonstrated in the sample pre-schools, the quality of teaching and learning determines the extent to which outcomes for disadvantaged children are achieved. That is, in the '*outstanding*' settings teaching and learning was underpinned by accurate observation and assessment that was used to measure children's progress and plan next steps in their learning and development. Staff in these settings had an accurate picture of assessment for each child. Where this was not the case (Setting D) less advantaged children did not make good progress in line their peers.

In '*outstanding*' settings the learning environment provided opportunities for learning across all areas of the curriculum. Within these settings, practitioners scaffold children's learning to provide support and challenge to improve their progress towards the ELGs. In Setting D this was not the case, the learning environment lacked resources to support numeracy and literacy and this hindered children's development as that they did not make good progress. Therefore if teaching and learning is to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children as identified in the proposed conceptual framework above, leaders must ensure that this is underpinned by accurate observation and assessment of children's progress and supported by a well- resourced learning environment to enable children to progress their learning and development holistically. As with previous

discussions, this highlights the influence that leadership has upon outcomes for children.

6.3.4 Meeting the needs of all children

As discussed, the findings in this research highlight that in all participating settings a range of strategies were used to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged children were met, this corresponds with the findings of Abbott et al. (2015). However, as discussed, the extent to which strategies improve outcomes for children is dependent upon several factors. Firstly, in accordance with the recommendations within the CPS (H.M. Government, 2011) (see Chapter 1.3.6), pre-school leaders must get to know the communities they serve, that is, they must consult a range of information and data to identify issues specific to their communities that impact on children's learning and development, and then use this information to inform the strategies used to meet the needs of children. In addition, strategies used must be informed by information and data from previous evaluations of strategies, and information gleaned from observations of children's needs. Secondly, each strategy should be evaluated throughout the implementation process to ensure that it is achieving the desired outcomes. Thirdly, leaders should ensure children's progress is effectively tracked and monitored and that they facilitate this by providing opportunities for staff to develop the necessary skills to ensure that children are making good progress towards the ELGs.

Allen (2011) (see Chapter 1.3.6) emphasises the importance of early intervention as a means to improve outcomes for young children, therefore, strategies aimed at

improving outcomes for young children must be effective. It has been demonstrated that in Setting D the effectiveness of strategies was not monitored or evaluated and as a result children did not make good progress. Therefore, it could be argued that it is naïve to assume that strategies alone will improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. Leaders must ensure that the necessary systems are in place to monitor and evaluate both the strategy and children's progress. To ensure that strategies are successfully implemented, staff must have the underpinning skills and knowledge to implement them and to track and monitor progress. This relates to the final component within the proposed conceptual framework – skills focused practice.

6.3.5 Skills focused practice

Finally, the findings within this study highlight that in all settings leaders acknowledged the importance of CPD as a means to ensure that practitioners have the underpinning skills and knowledge to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively. Training to support the implementation of intervention strategies was commissioned by leaders to ensure that practitioners implemented these effectively. This supports the work of Heck et al. (1990) and Blasé and Blasé (2000) (chapter 2.9) who identified the positive effect that instructional leadership (IL) has upon improving educational outcomes for children as it is viewed as a means to ensure that practitioners are competent in their roles.

Also with regard to the distribution of tasks, Hallenger and Heck (2010) argue that if leadership tasks are to be distributed across the team leaders must ensure that those with delegated responsibilities have the skills to carry out their tasks

effectively. Therefore the delegation of tasks should build on the strength and skills of practitioners this will, as Heikka and Waniganayake (2011) suggest, instil in practitioners a sense of value and belonging. It is for this reason that I felt it necessary to include skills focused practice as a component of the conceptual framework. The discussion above has provided the justification for the inclusion of the various aspects of practice associated with leadership that collectively contribute to improving outcomes for disadvantaged children.

The focus of the next section will be upon the limitations of the various data sets and the methodological issues encountered during data collection.

6.4 Methodological reflections.

6.4.1 Scale of the research

It is recognised that a potential critique of this research is that it is small in scale and therefore of limited scope. However, as discussed throughout it was not the intention of this research to make broad statements and sweeping generalisations concerning the way in which pre-school leadership influences outcomes for children. Rather it was, in light of the scarcity of existing research, to provide greater insights into this phenomenon. It could also be argued that the relatively small scale of this research compromises the reliability of the findings that is, concern may be expressed in relation to the extent to which they can be applied to other similar settings or confirmed by other researchers. With regard to data transfer, data would only be apposite when applied to schools within a similar context and therefore cannot be generalised. Richie and Lewis (2003) argue there are no clear guidelines outlining the conditions in which generalisation can be applied. Therefore, it can be assumed that the findings from this small scale

research can be generalised, as it could be deemed that they are representative of disadvantaged schools that are demographically similar.

To elicit greater insights a mixed methods approach to data collection was adopted. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) acknowledge the complementarity associated with a mixed methods approach to data collection and argue that it yields a greater level of understanding. This was facilitated by analysing three different data sets' school performance data at the end of the foundation stage, Ofsted reports of the participating settings, and participants' responses. The following discussion will offer a critical reflection on the use of these data sets.

6.4.2 Limitations of the data sets

A further critique of this study could concern the extent to which it enables comparisons to be made across settings. The study claims to be comparative, yet there is an unequal weighting in the number of settings being deemed as outstanding and requires improvement. Therefore, it could be suggested that this imbalance does not enable a true comparison to be made. However, I have argued that despite the limited availability of counter evidence, the study enables comparisons to be drawn on two levels. Firstly, the study has revealed valuable insights into those aspects of leadership that are lacking in Setting D compared to those within Settings A, B, and C. Secondly, when exploring the variability of practice (Aubrey 2011) across the three outstanding settings, commonalities in practice were identified (see 6.3 above). These have enabled the development of a new conceptual framework that identifies the link between pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon outcomes for disadvantaged children.

School performance data

The primary reason for analysing school performance data was, that it does, as Punch and Oancea (2014) explain, enable direct comparisons to be made between settings. In this instance, a comparison was made between children's progress towards the ELGs at the end of their reception year in settings graded by Ofsted as being '*outstanding*' and '*requires improvement*'. However, as identified in chapter 4.3, children within the participating settings transition to different primary schools within the LA, therefore it has not been possible within the confines of this research to explore individual children's achievement at the end of their reception year. Rather, using data retrieved from the Department of Education a comparison has been made between disadvantaged children's performance and all other children within the LA and those regionally and nationally. As this study adopts a mixed methods approach to data collection that includes an analysis of each settings Ofsted report it could be argued that, in making their decisions regarding the extent to which settings meet the needs of children living in poverty Ofsted have analysed children's performance towards the ELGs at the setting level therefore this comparison has been made, albeit indirectly.

Ofsted reports

In addition to the analysis of school data the content of the most recent Ofsted reports for each setting was analysed this enabled further comparisons between settings graded as '*outstanding*' and '*requires improvement*', and allowed recommendations for practice to be made. However as discussed in Chapter 2.6 one must be mindful of the potential limitations of Ofsted reports as Case et al. (2000) discuss how practitioners '*get ready*' (p612) for the inspection therefore, it could be argued that practices observed during the inspection may not necessarily

be a reflection of everyday practices within the setting. Gaertner and Plant (2011:90) also question the reliability and validity of Ofsted inspections, they argue that the inspection merely provides a '*snap shot*' of practice therefore it could be assumed that they are not an accurate picture of the everyday classroom practice.

Another point worthy of discussion concerns the timing of the Ofsted inspections within the participating settings. The earliest inspection (Setting C) was in 2013 compared to Setting D that was carried out in 2017, during this timeframe several changes to the regulatory system have been made see table 5 (chapter 1.5.2). This is of particular interest when making comparisons between settings A, B, and C as all these settings were awarded '*outstanding*' by Ofsted (2013, 2015 and 2016). Given that the outcomes of the inspection for '*outstanding*' settings are valid for five years this could have implications for this study in that it could be argued that a direct comparison between Ofsted inspection reports for Setting C and settings A and B cannot be made. To counter this argument, it could be further debated that using school performance data does as Punch and Oancea (2014) explain allow direct comparisons to be made. In addition, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) highlight the complementarity associated with a mixed methods approach to data collection therefore it could be further argued that collectively the different data sets used with this study enable direct comparisons to be made between settings.

Another limitation associated with use of Ofsted reports is that relating to confidentiality. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that as far as possible, the anonymity of the participating settings is upheld, realistically I cannot fully vouch that this can be maintained. As discussed, Ofsted reports are held

within the public domain and therefore accessible to all participants as such, it could be relatively easy to trace the Ofsted reports and findings within this study back to each setting. This is specifically pertinent to the setting graded as *'requires improvement'* (Ofsted 2017c) as there are a limited number of settings with this category within the LA and less so within the locality of the participating settings. It is for this reason that an alpha-numeric coding system was used when discussing the findings within this study.

Despite the potential limitations associated with Ofsted inspections, it must be acknowledged that within the English pre-school education system Ofsted are, as discussed in chapter 1.3, the force to drive quality improvement in schools (DfE 2017). Ofsted reports arising from the inspection are held within the public domain. Subsequently, these are the reference points used by parents to inform their setting/ school choice. With regard to the findings within this study relating to the extent to which settings meet the needs of children, school performance data confirms the views of Ofsted. Therefore it could be argued that Ofsted reports are a reflection of practice in this instance.

Participants' responses

The third and final data set analysed was the participants' responses to areas of discussion throughout the interview process. As discussed in chapter 3.4 a feminist approach to conducting interviews as described by Cotterill and Letherby (1993), was adopted this elicited a more discursive approach to the interviews, thus allowing the participants to tell their stories. However, I found adopting an *'interviewee approach'* (Frazer 2004:185) throughout the interviews to be very time

consuming as I felt that I could not interrupt or terminate the interview until participants had finished telling their stories as a result, the duration of the interviews ranged from forty five to ninety minutes. Subsequently, this resulted in very lengthy interview recordings and given that I had opted to transcribed the interview recordings myself, I also found this to be very time consuming. That said, as I transcribed each interview recording I was able to reflect on the interviews this then placed me in greater proximity to the data as Halcomb and Davison (2006) suggested it would.

With regard to the differences in the duration of the interviews, it could be argued that this disparity did not create a level playing field between participants. However, the differences in time taken to conduct the interviews arose because Participant 3C gave a very comprehensive narrative of her leadership roles prior to taking up her position in Setting C. Given that I had adopted a feminist approach to the interviews I did not feel that it was appropriate to interject or terminate the discussion. That said, at the end of each interview participants were asked if they had anything further to add, this provided an opportunity for each participant to elaborate upon their responses. Had participants taken up the offer for further comment this would have extended the duration of their interviews, therefore it could be argued that each participant was treated equally.

Upon further reflection of the interview process, as discussed in chapter 3.4.2, during an informal exchange between myself and Participant 1A prior to conducting the interview the Participant disclosed her reasons for participating in my research, informing that she hoped that the findings would help to improve the professional status of pre-school leaders. This declaration placed upon me as a

researcher a '*moral and ethical dilemma*' (Foucault and Deleuze 1997:45), while it was hoped that this research would inform wider policy and practice within early years at that stage I could not guarantee that this would be the case, therefore I felt that I had to declare this from the outset and hope that the participant would not withdraw from the research. This relates to the views of Foucault and Deleuze (1977) insofar as, they argue that academics can be viewed as being in a position to influence policy and practice.

6.5 Implications for practice

Apart from contributing to my own knowledge and understanding of pre-school leadership and the influence this has upon outcomes for young children, the findings from this research have broader implications for both my own practice and that of pre-school leaders. Firstly, with regard to my own practice, the findings will help to inform the content of leadership programmes I teach at both graduate and post-graduate level and will contribute to increased leadership discourse specifically in relation to early years.

It has been argued that pre-school leadership is difficult to define and that the variability in leadership practices within pre-school settings makes it difficult to develop a conceptual framework. However, the findings arising from this research have enabled aspects of leadership practice to be identified that collectively contribute to improved outcomes for disadvantaged children. As a result it has been possible to propose a conceptual framework to illustrate the relationship between strong leadership and improved outcomes for young children (see Figure

8 above). It is envisaged that this framework will help to inform leadership practice within pre-schools.

The findings from this research along with those of previous studies discussed in the literature review have enabled recommendations for practice to be made (see chapter 5.5). These recommendations have been shared with participants and comments regarding their relevance have been requested. Feedback received has been very positive with the suggestion being made to disseminate the findings further. Given that anecdotal evidence gleaned from pre-school leaders I teach has led me to believe that pre-school leaders have had little or no training in leadership, and in response to Participant 1A's recommendation to disseminate the findings further, it is my intention to work collaboratively with pre-school leaders and perhaps other academics to develop a leadership toolkit that can be used by pre-school leaders within the PVI. Once the toolkit has been developed this will be piloted with pre-school leaders I teach. To keep the pilot scheme to a manageable size I hope to recruit 20 pre-school leaders to participate in the pilot programme. Following a favourable response, the toolkit will be made available to all settings. To minimise development costs this will be accessed electronically in the first instance.

Additionally, I hope to disseminate the findings from this research by presenting at both early years conferences and wider educational leadership conferences such as British Educational Leadership and Management Association (BELMAS). I have been invited to present the findings from this research in a workshop at the annual BELMAS conference in July. Also, I hope to submit articles to journals

such as *Early Years: An international Journal of Research and Development* and the *Journal for Management in Education*.

6.6 Conclusion

This comparative study highlights the complexities associated with pre-school leadership and offers insight into the interrelationship between outcomes for disadvantaged children and leadership within a sample of pre-school settings. It has contributed to new knowledge by opening the door to further debate and discussion through the proposal of a conceptual framework that identifies aspects of practice apparent in '*outstanding*' settings that, collectively, contribute to improved outcomes for children classified as being disadvantaged.

To ensure that the needs of disadvantaged children are met, aspects of good practice identified in '*outstanding*' settings have enabled recommendations for leadership practice to be made (see Chapter 5.5) that contribute to improved outcomes at the end of the E.Y.F.S. In addition, the phrase strong leadership has been explored and discussed in relation to the extent that pre-school leadership influences outcomes for children.

The study also revealed a tension between the rhetoric of policy and its implementation in practice. Pre-school leaders explained how they were, at times, faced with the moral dilemma of having to prioritise children's needs when working within the confines of restricted funding such as the EYPP. Furthermore, theorising policy implementation in relation to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model highlighted the importance placed upon pre-school leaders to get to know the

communities they serve. It was identified that broader societal issues such as child poverty influence policy developments these, in turn, influence pre-school practices.

An analysis of performance data and Ofsted inspection reports has demonstrated that in '*outstanding*' settings children made good progress towards the ELGs at the end of the EYFS. Where a setting was deemed to '*require improvement*' it was evident through the setting's performance data that disadvantaged children did not make progress in line with children in neighbouring '*outstanding*' settings. An analysis of participants' in-depth responses to areas for discussion arising from the interviews, combined with the analysis of Ofsted inspection reports, have identified that in Setting D aspects of leadership were missing. Therefore it is argued, that in this instance, leadership was less effective and as a result children did not make good progress in line with disadvantaged children in the sample of outstanding settings. Therefore, based upon the body of situated evidence presented, it can be concluded that there is a strong connection between pre-school leadership and outcomes for young children.

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Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance



From Dr Louise Westmarland
Chair, The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee
Email louise.westmarland@@open.ac.uk
Extension 52462

To Rose Envy
Project title Investigating Early Years Leadership and Tackling the Effects
of Child Poverty in Pre-schools: A comparative Study

Memorandum

HREC Ref HREC/2015/2097
AMS ref xxx
Submitted 28 January 2015
Date 29 January 2015

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, has been given a favourable opinion by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Please note that the OU research ethics review procedures are fully compliant with the majority of grant awarding bodies and their frameworks for research ethics.

It is important that where it is necessary to make any substantial changes to your research, that you inform the HREC so they can be reviewed and logged. These, and any question(s) relating to your application and approval, should be sent to Research-Rec-Review@open.ac.uk quoting the HREC reference number above. We will endeavour to respond as quickly as possible so that your research is not delayed in any way.

At the conclusion of your project, by the date stated in your application, the Committee requires a final report to reflect how the project has progressed, and importantly whether any ethics issues arose and how they were dealt with. A copy of the final report template can be found on the research ethics website - [http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human-research/human-research-ethics-full-review-process-and-proforma#final report](http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human-research/human-research-ethics-full-review-process-and-proforma#final%20report).

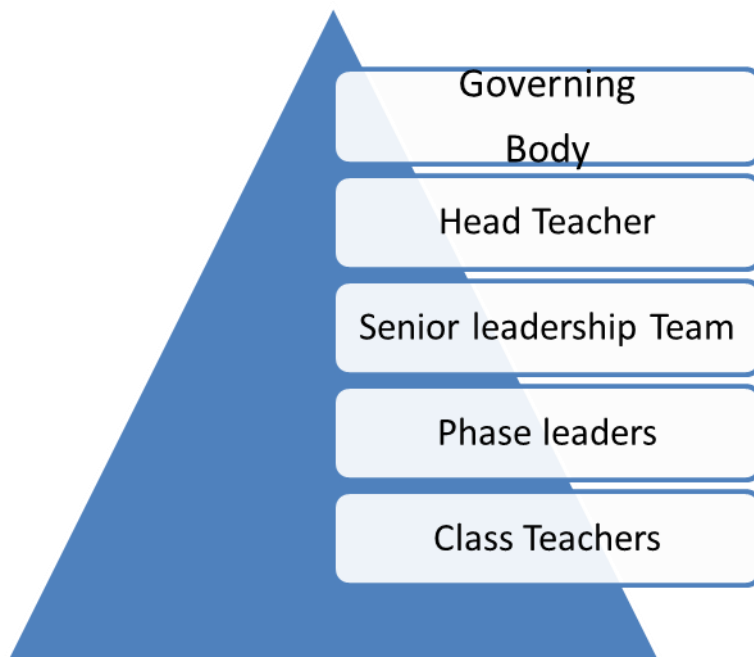
Kind regards,

Dr Louise Westmarland

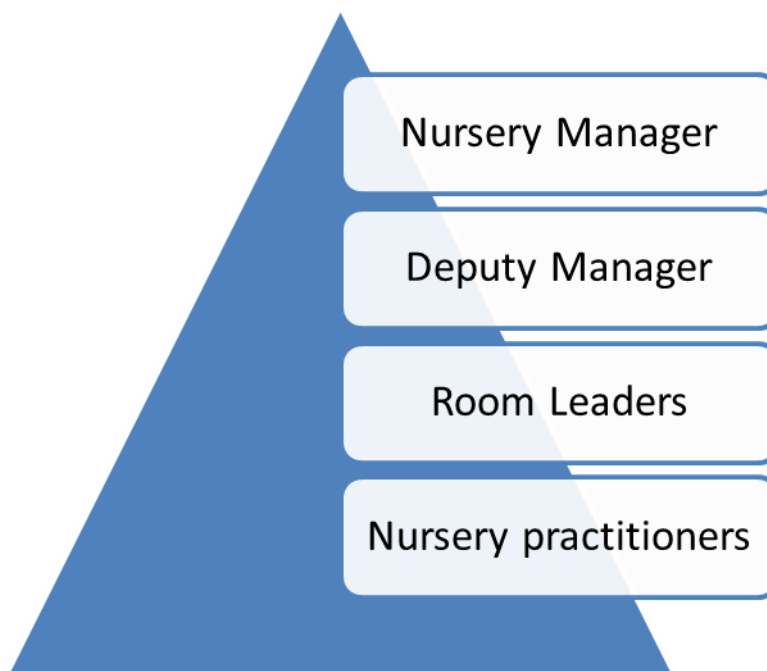
Chair, OU HREC

Appendix 2: Organisational Structures within the Sample Settings

1A: Leadership Structure within Setting D: English Primary School and Setting C: Maintained Nursery School



1B: Leadership Structure in Settings A and B: Private Day Care



Appendix 3a: Content analysis grid – participants’ responses

Setting	Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research question 3
	<p>RQ1a - type of data and information settings used to identify issues relation to disadvantaged children in their localities</p> <p>RQ1b -How data is used to inform practice</p> <p>RQ1c - issues associated with poverty</p>	<p>RQ2a – Resources to support disadvantaged children</p> <p>RQ2b- Strategies used to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children and how they deployed – targeted children or all children</p>	<p>RQ3a Theoretical approach adopted by the setting Influence this has upon outcomes for children. Link to Ofsted Reports</p> <p>RQ3b Policies used to inform practice</p>
Setting A	<p>RQ1a -Children’s personal data RQ1a- Information from multi-agencies</p> <p>RQ1b -Observation and assessment – identify gaps in development /learning RQ1b- Base-line assessments</p> <p>RQ1c –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - developmental delay - Speech and language - Lack of experiences - seaside - Poor educational attainment 	<p>RQ2a - EYPP for three & four year old Two year disadvantage funding Additional funding from LA utilised for children under five yrs – limited amount ‘too many’ children in the LA requiring support (link back to Performance data for LA)</p> <p>RQ2b- two year funding – limited amount – subsumed into general funding for the setting to support running costs.</p> <p>RQ2b- EYPP – used to support individual children’s needs, bespoke resources for each child– relate to Monk’s notion of Vertical Equity.</p> <p>RQ2c- Conflict between provision and business needs</p>	<p>RQ3a Effective communication</p> <p>RQ3a Collaboration, discussion ,collective - ‘staff have ownership’ – distributed leadership</p> <p>RQ3a CPD given priority / supervision– link to instructional leadership</p> <p>RQ3a Delegate responsibility to room leaders</p> <p>RQ3b HQ provides policies reflecting national policies- disseminated to all staff.</p>
Setting B	<p>RQ1a- Children’s personal data RQ1a -Home visits RQ1a –two year development check RQ1a - Area data – demographic data (Acorn data) RQ1a LA vulnerability audit</p> <p>RQ1b - Observation/ assessment – baseline assessments</p> <p>RQ1c - Developmental delay – communication, RQ1c social and emotional development. – much lower baseline – poor educational attainment</p>	<p>Two year disadvantage funding – EYPP but only if nursery school is oversubscribed</p> <p>Two year funding use to support running costs – as limited amount.</p> <p>When allocated three – four yr old funding this is used in conjunction with school – to benefit all – horizontal equity</p> <p>ECAT Targeted support using existing expertise – SENCO etc</p>	<p>RQ3a Value CPD, led by example , supervision – link to instructional leadership</p> <p>RQ3a Hierarchical structure - bureaucratic leadership</p> <p>RQ3a Delegate responsibility to room leaders – distributed leadership</p> <p>RQ3a Provision fully integrated with nursery school (Setting C)</p> <p>RQ3a Demarcation of provision – recognition of different professional expertise</p> <p>RQ3b Policies disseminated from head office / LA guidance</p>
Setting C	<p>RQ1a - Children’s personal data RQ1a - Baseline assessments RQ1a - Vulnerability audits RQ1a - Demographic data</p> <p>RQ1b – baseline assessment / observation</p> <p>RQ1c - Developmental delay – communication RQ1c - Social emotional development Rq1c - Children lack everyday experiences i.e. theatre RQ1c Poor educational attainment</p>	<p>RQ2a- Additional funding received from LA to retain QTS</p> <p>RQ2a- EYPP</p> <p>RQ2b- Used to support employment of TA</p> <p>Support outings Vulnerable children Provide free lunches</p> <p>RQ2b- Used to support all children – horizontal equity</p>	<p>RQ3a Joint training</p> <p>RQ3a pedagogical leadership – link to instructional leadership</p> <p>RQ3a Formal structure in place</p> <p>RQ3a Reluctant to relinquish control when absent – link to bureaucratic leadership – Foucault power relations?</p>

Setting	Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research question 3
Setting D	<p>RQ1a - Children's personal data RQ1a - Eligibility to receive free school meals RQ1a -Demographic data – fathers in prison</p> <p>RQ1c - Developmental delay RQ1c - Language and communication RQ1c -Social and emotional development RQ1c - Differences in parenting values RQ1c – poor educational attainment</p>	<p>RQ2a- EYPP</p> <p>RQ2a - Staff -</p> <p>RQ2b- Targeted support RQ2b - Early Talk Boost</p>	<p>RQ3a Monitoring and evaluation driven by HT – Autocratic approach – bureaucratic leadership</p> <p>RQ3a Staff not involved – information disseminated to staff – link this to Ofsted report</p> <p>RQ3a Value of CPD – Instructional leadership</p> <p>RQ3b Don't use policy documents – prefer use of social media RQ3b Research based evidence and focus groups in the LA</p>

Appendix 3 b: Content analysis grid - Ofsted Reports

Ofsted report	Leadership and management	Quality of teaching and learning	Meeting the needs of Children
Setting A	<p>They adopt a clear and focused vision</p> <p>Managers and leaders are inspirational and invest highly in the whole staff team</p>	<p>Children's curiosity and desire to learn is ignited by the extensive range of activities and experiences that staff provide to build upon and enhance their prior learning across all areas.</p> <p>Constant evaluations and dedication to continued improvement ensure that children benefit from a learning environment that is of the highest quality</p> <p>Constantly listen to children and value their contributions.</p> <p>The quality of teaching is outstanding</p> <p>Staff skilfully question</p> <p>Children's progress is monitored at every level to ensure that any gaps in individual or groups of children's learning are swiftly identified and supported</p>	<p>Key persons form exceptional bonds with their children. Children's preferences for particular members of staff are fully supported. Furthermore, key persons complete all care routines with their children so that the maximum time is spent with them during their day</p> <p>support children exceptionally well</p> <p>any gaps in individual or groups of children's learning are swiftly identified and supported</p>
Setting B	<p>Identify strengths and any areas of weakness in the nursery.</p> <p>Carry out regular and purposeful supervision of staff</p> <p>The excellent staff team shares their vision, determination and passion.</p>	<p>Staff interact with children extremely well to skilfully promote their learning and development</p> <p>Assessments are precise and checked closely to ensure that any gaps in learning are quickly identified and supported</p> <p>well-equipped play areas to inspire children's learning</p> <p>All children achieve extremely well. Challenging experiences provide children with excellent opportunities to explore resources, develop their own ideas, listen and concentrate</p>	<p>With detailed and precise care planning, help to provide every child with the specific support they need.</p> <p>Staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding children</p>
Setting C	<p>The headteacher is inspirational. Staff and governors share her clear direction for the school</p> <p>Pertinent decisions by the headteacher have raised staff expectations, increased children's independence, creativity and opportunities to think for themselves</p> <p>Assessment information is shared enabling all staff to have a good understanding of how individual children are progressing and where additional support or challenge is needed</p>	<p>Teaching is outstanding</p> <p>Assessments are regular and there is a clear overview of the progress of all children and of individuals</p> <p>children make rapid progress in all areas of their learning</p> <p>Assessment is thorough and is used very successfully as a tool to measure individual progress.</p>	<p>Children are safe and happy at school</p> <p>The achievement of all children is outstanding</p> <p>have a good understanding of how individual children are progressing and where additional support or challenge is needed</p> <p>The school works with a wide range of external agencies to support those children and their families whose circumstances make them vulnerable.</p>

Ofsted Report	Leadership and management	Quality of teaching and learning	Meeting the needs of Children
Setting D	<p>Senior leaders do not reliably check that their actions or those of subject and phase leaders are making a difference</p> <p>Leaders have not yet devised sufficiently accurate and robust assessment systems</p> <p>Leaders carefully consider how best to spend the school's pupil premium funding. They do not, however, evaluate its effect rigorously enough</p> <p>Staff feel empowered by leaders to use pupils' interests to create projects that aim to excite and enthuse.</p> <p>The headteacher has quickly and successfully established a positive ethos and shared her vision for improvement.</p> <p>Leaders carefully consider how best to spend the school's pupil premium funding. They do not, however, evaluate its effect rigorously enough.</p>	<p>Leaders have not devised efficient assessment systems. Pupils' progress and the attainment of groups of pupils are not captured with sufficient detail or accuracy</p> <p>The quality of teaching is too variable</p> <p>Teachers are not consistent in their approach to pupils' work</p> <p>Adults in the early years do not promote the basic skills of reading</p> <p>Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning remain across key stages.</p> <p>The academic curriculum, however, is not yet tailored effectively to meet the needs of all groups of pupils, particularly with regard to reading</p>	<p>progress and attainment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and the most able, remain too variable</p> <p>There is a blurring of lines between those pupils who are low-attaining and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This leads to variation in the support offered and, consequently, variable rates of progress for some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities</p> <p>Staff are equipping pupils with a range of moral, social and personal skills and beginning to develop pupils' understanding of core British values.</p> <p>The support and resources secured are not having the maximum impact on reducing differences between disadvantaged pupils and others, across subjects.</p>

Appendix 4: Consent Letter

CONSENT FORM (PRE-INTERVIEW)

Title of Project: Investigating Pre-school leadership and Tackling the Effects of Child Poverty in Pre-schools: A comparative Study

Name of researcher: Rose Envy (MA, BSc (Hons) PGCE LTHE)

1. I have read and understood the information sheet dated, for the above study and was allowed the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study.
2. I recognise that my participation in the study is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research up until February 28th 2016 without giving reasons and without any of my rights being affected (e.g. legal rights) by contacting the researcher using the details on the information sheets I have been given.
3. I recognise that my anonymity will be preserved and full confidentiality in regard to my participation in the research will be maintained. If necessary any data from me will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research.
4. I understand that the recordings of the interview and transcripts of data will be retained by Rose Envy and will not be used for any purpose other than for the research described to me in the information sheet already provided. I have been informed that all tape recordings and interview transcripts will be stored within secure premises and on computer files accessible only to Rose Envy and will be destroyed after 5 years.
5. I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I request this.

I consent to this interview being audio-taped yes no

Name of interviewee

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 5: Initial Study Interview Guide

Interview Schedule:

Questions

Participant:

Role in the organisation:

Length of time in this post:

1a. With regard to the pupil premium (PP), do you think that this has provided greater levels of support for disadvantaged children than previous initiatives?

1b. Thinking more specifically about the early years pupil premium (EYPP), do you feel that this covers support for those children most in need of it, if not where does it fall short?

1c. Do you think that this short fall is the result of an issue with the funding itself or is it more to do with your current system for prioritising its use?

1d. Can you describe the process used to monitor the expenditure of the EYPP?

Considering those children who are eligible to receive support from the EYPP:

2a. It is stated in the School report that there are 25 children on the nursery register, how many of these children do you have on the EYPP list?

2b. We know that those children who are in receipt of free school meals (FSM) are eligible to receive support from the EYPP, do you use any other information or data to identify children who could be eligible to receive support that are not accessing FSM?

With regard to intervention strategies funded by the EYPP, in the School report it states that the funding will spent on an early intervention programme 'Early Talk Boost'.

3a. Can you tell me what factors influenced the decision to use this particular intervention strategy and who is involved in the decision making process?

3b. Thinking more broadly, how do you think this intervention improves children's achievement in readiness for school?

3c. Given that the school has a responsibility to monitor children's progress in relation to narrowing the achievement gap between children supported by EYPP and those not supported, can describe the system you have in place to facilitate this?

4a. With regard to policy documents or practice guidance documents that you may have consulted to inform your practice in relation to the EYPP, which of these have you found most relevant to inform your practice?

4b. In what ways have these policies or guidance documents help to shape the provision for children in your nursery and can you give me any examples?

Is there anything further you wish to add?

What happens next?

You will be given a copy of the interview transcript and interview recording to verify as a true and accurate record of our discussion. Also, I will let you know of any direct quotations that I will use in research report.

Appendix 6: Interview transcript from initial study

Z00000001

[Start of recorded material 00:00:00]

Interviewer: Just ignore it, so I'm just going to go through the first, the first few questions and if you just answer them, and then if you just, we'll just have a discussion.

Participant D: Yeah, right.

Interviewer: So really it's just, um, just your name, your role in the organisation and your length of time in post to start.

Participant D: [REDACTED] and one of my responsibilities is Early Years Lead. Um, and I've been Deputy Head for 11 years.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Now I'll just go through the questions, [REDACTED], and if you can just share your thoughts with me about some of the topics. So the first, the first set of questions are really with regard to the Pupil Premium. Do you think that the Pupil Premium has provided greater levels of support for disadvantaged children than previous initiatives and initiatives such as the Extended Services Premium that we got through? Do you think you get greater levels of support or ...?

Participant D: I think you do. I think it gives schools a greater level of responsibility and I think you can manage it more yourself. I think the Pupil Premium's allowed people to be a bit more creative rather than being this is what the money is for, it's not ring-fenced in any way.

Interviewer: Right.

Participant D: Um, you can use it on lots of different things, so I think it has provided greater levels of support, um, for children that are from disadvantaged areas, I do.

Interviewer: Right, right, so thinking about that specifically, about areas people ... do you think that the level of support that you get through the funding covers the support that's required for those children from disadvantaged backgrounds?

Participant D: I think, I think the Early Years Pupil Premium funding is less than the ordinary Pupil Premium funding and I don't think that's necessarily a good thing, because I know from our point of view our children, we're trying to make up for often a shortfall in parenting, things like that. So there's a lot of things. It's not just about what we can put in for the children's point of view; it's about the family as a whole. So I think there's a, a case to have the same level of Pupil Premium funding for Early Years and –

Interviewer: Across the school.

- Participant D: Across the school. I, I don't understand particularly why it's lower for, for Early Years. But I do think it does enable us to give a little bit more support and put maybe some extra things in for, specifically for Early Years than maybe necessarily wouldn't have been able to do.
- Interviewer: Right, right, yeah, yeah. So if you think there is a shortfall, which I think is what you've alluded to, do you think that shortfall is an issue, the, the funding itself, i.e. the, the allocation per capita, or do you think it's more to do with the system that the school has for prioritising its use?
- Participant D: I think a little bit of both. I think that there's a bit of a shortfall moneywise and I would like to see it more evened out. But then I think as well we put a lot of our Pupil Premium funding into extra adults in Early Years, um, and actually we've done that right across the school so really that's no different to ... I'm not sure there's necessarily a, a shortfall in the way that we're using it.
- Interviewer: Right.
- Participant D: I think we sort of very much see it as, uh, we're a school that goes from three to 11, so although our Pupil Premium funding initially before the Early Years one was just for, you know, reception up over, it has impacted on nursery because we have used.
- Interviewer: So the resource from that has been shared.
- Respondent Yes, has been shared and we've seen it as a whole because we recognise that it, the low, low starting points tend to be in Early and things like that. Um, does that answer that? I don't know whether I've answered that.
- Interviewer: I think it does, I think you did. The shortfall is there but it's a shortfall in amount of allocation they give out and that limits the type of resource that you can use.
- Participant D: I think yeah, I think it does, yeah. I mean it's a hard one really, but I don't necessarily think we have difficulty with prioritising, I think we just, there are so many priorities and I think it's trying to pinpoint well where are we going to get the biggest gain.
- Interviewer: Yeah, right.
- Participant D: So maybe the, there is a case for putting a little bit more in lower, but we, we, we still put a lot in lower down. So you –
- Interviewer: So if, if, if you say you put a lot in lower down, are you saying that you have the Pupil Premium but also that you can use further funding to support the interventions with that or ...?

Participant D: Yes, we do in a way. But I mean, you know, we spend a lot on staff training, we see that as a real way of, of improving children's outcomes and progress. Um, so staff training is a massive part of that. Research and keeping up to date, so it's all about there's lots of things that go into making that, but we do use Pupil Premium funding for ensuring greater levels of support, for example, in the nursery.

Because one of our key areas is language development; we're only going to get that with real people. So we put a lot of money into adults and one of the key priorities is the prime areas of learning, language in particular, modelling that we do. So –

Interviewer: So right, yeah, yeah, that's good. Yeah, and can you ...? So you've got all this interventions in place and you've got, you, you know, like you're spending the Early Years Pupil Premium, can you describe the process that's used to monitor that and what your involvement is in that?

Participant D: I mean we, you know, [REDACTED] and I, the Head teacher and I, look together at what, you know, what our allocation is, then we use our data. We talk to the staff. Um, we identify groups of children, um, and then we look at where, where's best to target the money and what we can use it for.

So for example, we're looking at sort of our Early Talk Boost and things like that, so then we source, right, well how much is it going to cost and then, you know, what, um ... And we've used the Sutton Trust information where we've used, you know, like what's going to have the greatest impact and, you know, looking at costings and things like that, so it's things that'll have high, high impact.

Interviewer: Right.

Participant D: Um, and we, and what we do is we track the children, so we'll look at what we're spending and we'll track the children to see how successful those added expenditures been.

Interviewer: Right, so, and, and that's, so is, are you and [REDACTED] together, um, monitor the expenditure of that?

Participant D: Yes, it's more [REDACTED], that side of it, I have to say. That's more [REDACTED] domain to, to monitor the actual expenditure of it. Um, but I do, I am brought in to sort of know that right, we've, we've got this which we, you know, a Pupil Premium, and we're using some for this, we, you know, and whatever. But I'll go with things, oh that can we use Pupil Premium for this, we've seen a gap here or we've identified something.

And the rest of the staff can do that as well. If they come up with something that, you know, we see is worthwhile or it's going to have an impact, then we will use it. But [REDACTED] closely monitors by looking at the data all the time to check that what we're doing has had, had impact and things.

Interviewer: Good, that's great. So the next set of questions is really is, is to do with, um, support and how you identify those children. So if you consider the children who are eligible to receive, um, support from Early Years Pupil Premium, is there in the school report that there, there, there are 25 children on the nursery register, so how many of those children actually receive support from the Early Years Pupil Premium, how many?

Participant D: Well we've got, there's now 24 in nursery. I don't know, there must be one has, one's left. So we've got 24 and out of those 24, 12, um, are currently classed as Early Years Pupil Premium. So we've got half of our children in nursery are, you know, are Pupil Premium. So what that means for us is, you know, we're very much focused on those and then they're very closely monitored, so we can check.

We look at when they come in, they're on entry data with gaps and how, how wide the gap is. 'Cause you often find that the gap is, is quite vast in some cases, so we've got 12 at the moment, so half our nursery children. So obviously they will go up through, through the school that has Pupil Premium and Ever 6, yeah.

Interviewer: Great, great, so you've got 50% of children in nursery who are eligible. We know that those children who are in receipt of free school meals are the eligible children. Do you use any of the information or data to identify children who possibly could be eligible, say that you know the family that are eligible but they don't receive free school meals?

Participant D: Well, when they enter nursery part of our entry we do, um, wellbeing indicators. So we look at things like family members in prison, um, still using dummies, bottles, brought to school in a pushchair, um, nappies, toileting and things like that. Um, single parent families, bereavements, a lot of mobility, moving around and things, you know, houses and, you know, maybe nurseries. So we look at all those things and we, and we just, we look at which children possibly are vulnerable.

And because sometimes the ones that are ... there are some that aren't in receipt of free school meals are eligible for, for funding but are, are very vulnerable or have specific needs that ... or gaps that we need to, to address.

Interviewer: So if, if you've identified vulnerable children who you think could benefit from Pupil Premium, would you involve those children in any interventions that you put into place?

Participant D: Yeah, we would. Obviously, you know, we will prioritise those children that are eligible for the funding, but yes, we do include those, because you have to. We're there to teach all children, not just -

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Participant D: So I think those, those children that aren't Pupil Premium do benefit and that, and I think that's probably why the gap isn't closing as, as much, because it ... they are moving but then so are these. And it's -

- Interviewer: So, so and that's been born out previously with research that the, that the, the gap, children are achieving but those more [elder] children are, are achieving as well, so the gap doesn't ... and doesn't evidence that.
- Participant D: Yes.
- Interviewer: That's good, yeah. So we know that children who are eligible to receive those. You've, you've just said you used other data, okay. So with regard to the ... I think you've partly answered this one, um, [REDACTED], with regard to interventions. Do the interventions funded by, um, EYPP, you've identified Early Talk Boost. So can you tell me what factors influence the decision to use that particular intervention and who was involved in that decision making process?
- Participant D: The Early, the Early Talk Boost came from, um, information we found about Talk Boost, which is for reception and Key Stage 1. We're at, um, I went to be trained on using Talk Boost in reception, um, and we, we really loved it and we felt it had a really positive impact. It gives you a, an assessment at the start and then an assessment at the end, so you can see how far the children have come. We just have felt that it had a really high impact.
- It's with a group of four children, um, for three times a week, a half-hour session each time. And we just felt that it was really important and really useful, so then we looked into what might, or what comes before, before Talk Boost and it was Early Talk Boost. And it was just at that point being developed, so I looked into it with the local authority and things. And, um, and we're, we're registered for the training and things, so the local authority have trained one of their advisors so that they can deliver it, um. And it's from a ... It's from ICAN.
- Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.
- Participant D: And they, and obviously they, they have fantastic results for communication and language and things. So we, it's just a ... because communication and language is such a massive issue for us, and we felt that Talk Boost had had such an impact in reception and in Key Stage 1, we've now rolled that out into year 1 and 2, um, year 1 this term and then the year 2 next term. So that more children are going to have a, you know, be affected by Talk Boost in a positive way. We felt well let's do the Early Talk Boost in nursery years, another thing to promote the language.
- Interviewer: Yeah, that's great. So I think you've already answered some of the next question as well about how, if we can unpack something about it, so how do you think that that particular intervention, Early Boost, improves children's achievement and readiness for school? So particularly talking about the Early Years children here.
- Participant D: Well, I think, you know, I think it just, we all know that the prime areas are the things that we've got to get right, so I think they're our key focus when we're looking, because if they can't speak properly then they're not going to be able to, you know, if they don't understand language they're

not going to be able to access things when they get into year 1 and then, and then up over then.

So I think when they've got the language skills it means that they can just access a broad range of, of, of the rest of the curriculum basically. So it's making sure that they've got a good understanding of language, they can use language, they like to find out new words and things like that, that they can speak clearly and audibly.

And I think because a lot of our children come in with very delayed speech and language, we need something extra to ensure that they catch up or are nearer age-related expectations than they would have been if there was no intervention in place. So I think it does improve their readiness for school and their readiness for year 1.

Interviewer: Insofar as they have greater access.

Participant D: They do. They, they, you know, you can, they can just access things much more easily, you know, which is obviously the prime, the three prime areas that are the building blocks for, for the rest of their schooling, isn't it, and their learning and things.

Interviewer: That's great, thank you. And again, going back to the monitoring, when you've talked about monitoring the funding, expenditure of the funding, we can change that focus now and talk about, um, monitoring children's progress specifically in regard to narrowing that achievement gap between those children who are supported and those who are not supported. Can you describe the system that you have in place to facilitate?

Participant D: Well, all of our, all our class teachers, um, do tracking data, so for example in nursery and reception we do entry and then three other times of the year when it's tracked formally. So they put it onto our tracking data and then we can see groups, and then we also do, we look at boys achievement, we look at the SEM, we look at Pupil Premium as one of our groups that we analyse in more detail.

So we would look at where those children are and their distance travelled and obviously, you know, their achievement isn't linear and it doesn't go from one box to the other each time. We understand that. But it, what we do is, we had a Pupil Progress meeting, so we will look and say right, well these year children that have done Early Talk Boost, these are the children that we've identified, this is where they were on entry, this is where they are now in December, these two have moved but these haven't.

Right, why do we think ...? And we have a conversation and a reflection about well where, you know, why haven't these moved, what can we – else can we do to ensure that that happens and why have these two made the progress, what's different about those.

So it's looking at where it has worked and where it maybe isn't working so well, right, is there anything we can ... are there any other barriers to

their learning? Is it not just the language, is there something else? Right, can we put something else in place? And I think we have those conversations about individuals and about groups.

Interviewer: Right, so who, who's involved in those conversations?

Participant D: [REDACTED].

Interviewer: The Head teacher?

Participant D: Me and the member of staff who involves. And then obviously that's then filtered to the teams that we have, so it would then be fed back to, for example, the reception team that's made up of the teacher and two HLTAs. But then that conversation is then shared. This is what we've noted, the headlines from the data, this is what we've noticed, the ... this is what the barriers are, this is what's working well and what we need to improve, and these are our next steps and then that's –

Interviewer: It's a team effort.

Participant D: Mm, it is. And I think in Early Years, and I think that model's right the way through now, but I think in Early Years it's vital, it won't work if it isn't like that. Because there are so many different adults working with children in Early Years in a team, it's never just one person. Everybody needs to know.

Interviewer: That information?

Participant D: Yeah.

Interviewer: Very good, thank you. And then with the other, this is looking more at the policy side of things, [REDACTED] You've got the Pupil Premium, so are there any policy documents or practice guidance docs, documents that you, you may have consulted. Which of these have you found to be most relevant? I know there is a thing that the Early Years, the Pupil Premium, the Early Years Pupil Premium toolkit. Have you had access, do you access or ...?

Participant D: No.

Interviewer: You haven't really, that's fine. Um, so how would you, so if you haven't really just, um, consulted the practice guidance or policy documents, that's fine. How do you then go about finding out examples of good practice that you can perhaps share or model?

Participant D: Do you mean good practice as in what people, other people have done?

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Participant D: I do a lot of research.

Interviewer: Right.

Participant D: I use the key, uh, I find that a really good resource. It signposts you to lots of different ... While I was on the Ofsted website and they do a lot of research and things and research papers. ICAN, they, they do a lot of research, you know, evidence-based research things on language and things. There's lots. The, the local authority, I'm in touch with the consultant there; they signpost you to things. You get the bulletins.

Interviewer: Right.

Participant D: And their VLA and things like that, and you use all those things. Um, Twitter is another good one now for feed, you know, getting information about what other people are doing, so I think yeah, I think these –

Interviewer: So it's much broader than just [overtalking] guidance and [overtalking].

Participant D: It is, it's much, it's way broader than that, you know. It's things like Facebook, you know, you like a page so then you get the notifications and it comes up with this article, you know, might interest you when you click on it. And it's, it leads you somewhere and you can forward it onto colleagues, you know. You can re-Tweet it so that it goes onto your colleague's page and, and things like that, so we use a, a lot of that social media side of it, the internet, just invaluable.

Interviewer: Yes.

Participant D: We also have cluster meetings, um, with other reception and nursery teachers in, in the, in similar, you know, in our cluster, which is similar, you know, area to us. Um, and we, one of the things on the agenda is about sharing good practice and so we talk about interventions, strategies we've used, um, for Pupil Premium, specific bought-in interventions, you know.

And I think they're becoming much more useful now because a lot of them are more evidence-based research now, so I think they're much more useful and we can say, well, actually this is the impact it's ... using concrete, um. And I think, I think the interventions, the bought interventions, if you like, have moved on a bit now. I think they were a bit stuck at one time but I feel like sort of lately they've moved on. And things like the Talk Boost, I think have, I mean I think they're really excellent resources.

Interviewer: Mm, and do you think just, just to add to that, when you say that you haven't really consulted, um, the, the guidance documents, that, that's fine. Do you think that the methods that you just discussed provide you with a more rich base for sharing examples of good practice, for developing practice, in that way?

Participant D: I think they do. I think they're a more current way of doing it and I think you can get to a lot more people a lot quicker. I think from like a school point of view, you know, we can, we can share things with staff a lot quicker rather than having a single policy document where you, you know, I just think it's a more up-to-date way of doing it, yeah.

I think you can do much more, much quicker, and I think it, I think this is where the devolved leadership side of it comes in. Because staff will go to [REDACTED], so to, to me, and, and say I found this, I was looking for something on the internet and I found this research or I found this program, these schools are using it, do you think it might be worth looking at. So I think other staff then, it doesn't then all come from you, look at it and I think other people are looking as well. So I think –

Interviewer: That's great, that's lovely. Is there anything else that you've got or had or anything that you think I haven't covered?

Participant D: No, that's fine.

Interviewer: Well, what'll happen now is, um, we'll obviously send the recordings off, just transcript, and you will get a copy of the transcription and then you can see whether it's been a true record of our conversation. Okay?

Participant D: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's great, thank you.

Appendix 7: Revised interview guide

Interview Schedule:

Questions

Participant:

Highest level of qualification held:

Role in the organisation:

Length of time in this post:

- 1) Please briefly explain the background and context of the setting.
- 2) Please can you tell me about the relationship you have with the children's centre
- 3) Change of focus now. Please can you tell me about the leadership within the setting, what does this look like?
- 4) Thinking now about disadvantaged children. What information or data do you use to identify any issues relating to disadvantaged children in the setting that might impact on their outcomes?
- 5) Please can you explain the resources the setting receives to support disadvantaged children?
- 6) With regard to the two year old funding – How is this used to support disadvantaged children?
- 7) Now thinking about the early years pupil premium. Can you explain how this funding is used to support eligible children?
- 8) With regard to policy documents or practice guidance documents that you may have consulted to inform your practice in relation to disadvantaged children, which of these have you found most relevant and can you give an example from practice.

Is there anything further you wish to add?

What happens next?

You will be given a copy of the interview transcript and interview recording to verify as a true and accurate record of our discussion. Any direct quotations that I will use in research report will be anonymised.

When transcribing the interview discussion, if there are any areas which I would like to explore further may I arrange to revisit the setting.

Appendix 8: Interview Transcript Participant 3

Role: Nursery Head teacher

Name:

Highest level of qualification (BA (hons) QTS)

Length of time in post: 9 yrs

Interviewer: Please briefly explain the background and context of the setting.

Interviewee:

The nursery school was established in 1929 and at that time was highly respected by the local community, the reputation spread by word of mouth. In 2004 the school was build using Sure Start funding and became a Sure Start nursery for 0-3yrs olds and a nursery school. The SS nursery had their own separate nursery staff which were employed through the council. The head teacher at that time was paid an extra allowance to oversee the SS nursery provision.

In 2009 I was appointed as Head teacher, prior to my appointment I was informed that the SS provision was to be put out to tender and that a national provider was interested in taking over the nursery. This concerned me because as far as the parents were concerned the SS nursery and the nursery school were one and the same. So for the first two years of my appointment we worked with the national provider put a legal agreement in place to ensure that the SS nursery was an integral part of the nursery school, and that I would be involved in all elements of the provision, from recruitment of staff to the quality of provision offered. The legal agreement identifies that the nursery school is the sole provider of nursery education I mean we are teachers and that is our area of expertise.

Before the SS nursery was established children attending the nursery were from the affluent area of community rather than from disadvantage local community. The transition period was very challenging, and the nursery environment changed from being very

homely to being more 'schoolified' as the provider removed all the homely furniture etc from the nursery. As a result we lost some of the families and children as some children became upset due to both the changes in staff and the changes to the environment.

However, we were very adamant that we wanted to work together, but we had our standards and ethos to maintain. We had a strong governing body who supported us so we had to try to put mechanisms in place to help the partnership. It got better but didn't really improve until the nursery manager left and we appointed a new manager.

The new manager was from an education background, she wasn't a Qualified Teacher but for many years she worked as a classroom assistant, so she had lots of education experience. Everything that was in place before, the settees, ornaments etc all returned to give the homely feel we wanted, so that was a right start. Parents had left but interesting enough, although families left the nursery the numbers in the nursery school didn't decrease. When the new provider came in we got families from outside coming in and they then realised we were separate and the nursery was there.

We appointed a new deputy and when that manager left we appointed the deputy as the new manager, she is a qualified teacher and we run as one now, it's fantastic. It was very difficult in the beginning but we have moved on now.

Interviewer: In terms of the governing body are the providers on the governing body?

Interviewee: Yes, the manager is on the governing body, at first she came on as a parent governor which was good. Previously we were a bit reluctant to invite anyone from the company on board as the relationship wasn't great, but we always invited them to give them an update, so they always had a slot on the governing meeting. And that was primarily because in the early days we had concerns about the provision and in the governing body meetings we had to discuss how we were going to inform the local authority of this. That was quite challenging at that time. We could have gone through Ofsted, but what would that do for the relationship, which was difficult enough.

So at first the new manager's child came to the school so she came on board as a parent governor, and when her term of office was up we invited her to become a co-opted governor and this works really very successfully because she can give us plenty of feedback.

Now the context of the setting children wise, yes we did lose numbers particularly the babies, but as the two year funding has come about, the provision is filled with two year old funded children, and those children often stay with us and come to the nursery school. When I first came here we had 70% children from the affluent area of Low Fell but now it is around 30% affluent children with over 50% from the local area, so really the catchment area has changed quite significantly in that respect.

Interviewer: So why do you think that, is it because of the way in which affluent families view the provision or it is because more childcare has been developed.

Interviewee: At the same time when the previous provider left a new [REDACTED] nursery was built and we did lose some parents to them, but then they came back for the nursery education. The majority of parents were very supportive and put a petition forward to support the nursery. Also with regard to our more affluent parents, we attract affluent parents who have empathy for poverty and want their children to go to a socio-economically mixed school. They are happy for their children to attend a more diversity setting, they want their children to experience that diversity.

Interviewer: Please can you tell me about the relationship you have with the Day care, you already told me a bit about this so can you explain this in a nutshell

Interviewee: The provision now is seamless and our relationship is incredibly strong. I think that is definitely the leadership. I mean the girls in there hold me up here (gesticulates raising hand) it's funny isn't it and really there is no need for them to do to but they do. They want to impress, and we'll have a joke, it's strange isn't it because you have two

communities on your site. You had the previous Children's Centre staff who were paid for by the LA on teaching assistants pay, terms and conditions, and then you have the teachers in the nursery. The CC staff looked up to the teachers and felt that O well there teachers they're better than us. And really that wasn't necessarily the case, in fact it was outstanding, as when I first came here I spent a lot of time in there and it was equally as good as downstairs [school]. Even in the staff room, the teachers would sit at the table and they would sit on the chairs. It is not like that now, I hasten to say. Now we are definitely operate as one team. We are a very reflective team across the provision. Her staff work in my nursery and if [REDACTED] sees something in the nursery she will say oh [REDACTED] I notice this and ask me what I think about it, and similarly I can go in there anytime. Which is good because for a period of time before I was banned from there. So totally seamless, the parents see us as seamless as well which is really good.

Interviewer: Change of focus now, and again you have alluded to this in your previous two responses. Please can you tell me about the leadership within the setting, what does this look like? How is the leadership reflected across the two settings.

Interviewee: As far as the nursery school is concerned we have 10 governors on the governing body, then there is myself the head teacher and I have an additional teacher with a TLR, and an early years lead practitioner who isn't a QT but she does have considerable experience of managing a nursery in Hong Kong and Australia. She is very knowledgeable. So as far as the leadership team goes we have school staff and nursery staff without QTS we each bring something different to the table both have strengths and together have in depth knowledge.

As for the day care, there is the nursery manager, who has QTS but she chose not to pursue teaching rather decided to manage day care settings, and they have a deputy manager. We have joint training etc to ensure that the ethos as far as the pedagogy comes from the teaching staff is carried through in the day care via [REDACTED]

Interviewer: Ok so you have described the leadership structure across the two settings, can you explain how your leadership behaviour or leadership practices look like in terms of delegation.

Interviewee: Ah right, as far as delegation goes, obviously [REDACTED] has her staff and she delegates to the deputy who is a room leader. Downstairs she has a member of the staff who leads on the wrap-around provision and when we have daily reflection she is released to attend these meetings. She also has level 3 practitioners working downstairs also. With me I have the TLR and early years lead, so there is delegation there. With regard to practice if my staff wanted to know anything they wouldn't necessarily as me they might go to [REDACTED] and vice versa. And there is the regional manager for the day care who visits the day care about once a half term. We have an NQT who is also very good.

If I was out and my early years lead was present then I'm not nervous because she is part of the leadership team, but if I had to go out and the early years lead wasn't in then I would ask the Local Authority if one of EYs advisors could come to me here and work from here. If [REDACTED] and her deputy are out [REDACTED] would tell her staff that I am here if they need anything. So there is that mutual respect there.

Interviewer: Now thinking about the support for disadvantaged children, please can you explain the resources the setting receives to support disadvantaged children.

Interviewee: From the nursery school's perspective, I sit on the Schools Forum who is very supportive, we also have representation from the PVI sector. The changes to the National Formula meant that we were given an additional sum for QTS and that is across all settings, because private providers struggle to pay additional costs for graduates, you can't pay graduates on minimum wage. I also get additional support cost for the running of the nursery school. So the money that comes into the nursery is not just for the children it goes towards me supporting other schools across the Borough.

As far as disadvantaged children are concerned, we have the EYPP which is about £300 + which isn't a lot but it gives me about £6000 extra. We have an action plan for the use of the EYPP, and we look at the data to see what the issues are. We don't identify say communication (although it is an issue with our children) or maths as an area, rather we contribute towards the cost of an additional teaching assistant to support those children, and we find that a lot of our children lack experiences and not only the children but the parents too. So we have visits to the theatre or the art gallery and we do that regularly and don't charge. The third area we target is vulnerable children, we keep all of the two year old funded children that come up from the day care on EYPP even though they might not be entitled to pupil premium. That's because we felt that those children were still needy, in fact we saw them as being more needy because the families may not necessarily spend their income in areas that they should so we keep those children on our vulnerability list. Interestingly, what we find is that, particularly the two year old funded children are not very good attenders. Obviously there is no requirement for PVI settings to keep a record of attendance, but for school we have to, so [REDACTED] now keeps a register of attendance also. Even though we were told that it is not a requirement because it is non statutory provision. But I'm not bothered about it being non statutory this because does make a difference. We see the difference if a child comes in one or two days a week and those who come in five days a week. We want to see these children so while we might not see them five day a week, we thought we would offer them 3 full days instead, and that has a massive impact as they are here all day. We use the pupil premium to fund lunches for those children so we don't have to charge for lunch and that helps the families massively and that is covered in our additional support funding. If I can give an example, we have a young mum who is a single mum and doesn't tick all the boxes for early years pupil premium, but allowing her children to access full day provision which a free school mean has enabled that mum to go to college and better herself. Her child was previously a funding two year old. So that was

lovely, so we look at individual children. Obviously [REDACTED] gets the two year old funding so she will be able to tell you a bit more about that.

Interviewer: So that funding is devolved to [REDACTED]

Interviewee: Yes that's right, but if I'm over-subscribed which I was last year, Helen will take three year olds and if she hasn't got space for additional two year olds I will take them with their key worker in the term of the child's third birthday. So there is that cross over if you like. Were registered to take two year olds and I have three at the moment. So we work as one.

Interviewer: With regard to policy documents or practice guidance documents that you may have consulted to inform your practice in relation to disadvantaged children, which of these have you found most relevant and can you give an example from practice.

Interviewee: Yeah it's an interesting one. So if we take something like our behaviour policy, it is very much a conflict resolution approach, that is we don't use the Charlie Taylor check list which is the national guidance for SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training) and I hear all about that National Guidance at my SCITT but then they [students] come here and I say we don't use reward systems, we talk to the children to help them resolve their issues. That is because sometimes it is not appropriate for children at this age to use Charlie Taylor check list. Students will ask us why it is so quiet and why we don't have many issues, and we say that if a child is fighting over a toy, for example that is not a behaviour issue, at two years of age that is normal behaviour so we talk to the children we get down on their level to help them resolve the problem. We do consider National Policy but it's about what works for early years pedagogy and ethos. But there again that comes from national guidance and national research for example we looked at the EPPE (Effective Provision for Pre-school Education) findings. And also one of our governors works for the Commissioner who send me policy guidance etc, so with all the changes around early years and childcare I am reading a lot around that. It is important to ensure

everyone understands about the early years so I get involved in national groups around that. So I think that we are at the forefront of those developments.

Interviewer: Disadvantaged children, what information or data do use to help identify issues relating to disadvantaged children

Interviewee: home visits, parents induction pack, glean information about the children, say their speech, about the home environment, siblings, problems issues within the family that might impact on the children. Baseline assessments, vulnerability audit, which identifies anything that might impact of the children. If they score highly on the list we look to see what interventions we need to put in place. So we look at things like EAL, eligibility for EYPP, ethnicity, girls and boys etc, development, Socio economic status. We analyse the baseline data every 6 weeks in terms of all the different groups. By far the lowest achievers is the pupil premium and this is significantly so and boys. Another area for these children is managing relationships and emotions and feelings. It used to be communication but this is much better now because of upstairs [day care provision]. We do think that actually any child can be disadvantaged. We also draw upon Acorn Data, Sutton Trust data.

Interviewee: Is there anything further you wish to add?

Interviewee: Well in relation to the integrated education with day care, we see day care and education as all learning but we have got distinct parts of that, we do treat the breakfast club as different to the education and then they can have the wrap-around at the end of the education session. I think when the 30hrs comes into play that might muddy the waters a little because the Government document say that all children will be entitled to 15hrs education and then some children will be entitled to an additional 15hrs of childcare that is actually stated in the document. So [REDACTED] and I have talked about this and we are just going to keep our existing arrangements, we will deliver the 15hrs education and she will deliver the 15hrs of childcare, it works for us.

Appendix 9: Debriefing Sheet (Post-Interview)

Investigating the Influence of Pre-school leadership and Tackling the Effects of Childhood Poverty in Pre-schools

Thank you for taking part in the interview

The information you have provided will be used to form part of a written report and possibly academic papers that will be published via academic journals. To this end, the information you have provided will be treated in confidence and dealt with anonymously. The information you have provided will only be identified with the pseudonym (false name) that you and the researcher have agreed upon.

Only the researcher and university examiners will have access to the information you have provided for the purposes of this study. Following completion of the research project the audio recording containing your information will be destroyed.

As indicated when you gave your consent to undertake the interview, you have the right to withdraw the information that you have provided. Should you wish to withdraw this information from this study then please contact the researcher using the e-mail address listed below.

If later you have any queries regarding your participation in this research please get in touch with Rose Envy using the e-mail address below

Many thanks for your help in this way

Rose Envy

Rose_Kcc@hotmail.co.uk

Appendix 10: Setting A Ofsted Inspection Report

Inspection date **21 May 2015**

Previous inspection date **11 April 2012**

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range	Outstanding		1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of	Outstanding		1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early	Outstanding		1
The setting meets legal requirements for early years settings			

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision is outstanding

- Children's curiosity and desire to learn is ignited by the extensive range of activities and experiences that staff provide to build upon and enhance their prior learning across all areas. As a result, all children excel in their learning and

development, make outstanding progress and are very well prepared for the next steps in their learning.

- The highly qualified staff team are truly passionate about the work they do. They adopt a clear and focused vision to provide the very best care and learning opportunities for children. Their constant evaluations and dedication to continued improvement ensure that children benefit from a learning environment that is of the highest quality.

- Children are highly valued. Staff constantly listen to children and value their contributions. Large 'reflection' books capture what children like and dislike and 'planning' books enable children to express their thoughts and ideas for their future learning.

- Children are extremely happy and settled with a team of devoted and caring staff. The exceptional praise, encouragement and support that children receive ensure that they develop high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. As a result, children are eager to learn and very keen to try out new activities confidently and independently.

- Partnerships with parents are superb. Staff work together with parents at every opportunity to share children's learning. Regular newsletters and to and fro books ensure that parents are fully informed of the themes that children are engaging in. Activity home-link sheets ensure parents can extend children's learning at home.

- Key persons form exceptional bonds with their children. Children's preferences for particular members of staff are fully supported. Furthermore, key persons complete all care routines with their children so that the maximum time is spent

with them during their day. Therefore, their emotional well-being is nurtured exceedingly well.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

enhance the already excellent 'mini explorer' sessions for parents, to provide them with even more opportunities to learn about the themes that children are engaging in, such as healthy eating, and how these can be further extended at home.

Inspection activities

The inspector toured the nursery.

The inspector held a meeting with the special educational needs coordinator and the manager of the nursery.

The inspector held discussions with staff and children throughout the inspection.

The inspector observed children during their group time activities and during their freely chosen activities.

The inspector took account of the views of parents and carers spoken to on the day of the inspection.

The inspector conducted a joint observation with the manager of the nursery during a spontaneous activity.

The inspector viewed a range of documentation, including children's learning files, staff training records, evidence of suitability checks, policies and procedures, risk assessment records and the provider's self-evaluation documents.

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Inspection findings

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend. This is outstanding

The quality of teaching is outstanding. Staff support children's experience of being lost in a shop by teaching children about keeping themselves safe. They skilfully question children's understanding of when to dial 999. Children act out calling the emergency services from the office. They eagerly pretend to call for an ambulance because they have hurt their leg. Other children explain that they need to call the police because they have lost their mummy. Visits from the police enhance this learning even further. Children develop their physical skills when making walkie-talkies. They happily tell others that they are used to call for help. Children confidently count to 12 when sticking on their numbered buttons, pointing competently to each number as they do this. Children have lots of fun making mud pies in the mud kitchen outdoors. Staff skilfully question children about the ingredients in their pie. They further enhance children's play as they ask children to create a recipe book to note these down. As a result, children develop excellent literacy skills.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children is outstanding

Children develop an exceptional understanding of each other's similarities and differences, for example, when sharing photographs of their families and when talking about the colour and length of their hair during group time. Children make seamless moves between rooms. Key persons support children exceptionally well. They take children into the older room for short periods to begin with, and gradually build this up as they become settled. They prepare children for their move to school through creating a pretend classroom, and talk to children about the

school routine and expectations. **Children develop exceptional independence skills.** They eagerly serve their own food at mealtimes and actively help to tidy away resources. Children have outstanding opportunities to manage their own risks.

They enjoy wearing a high visibility vest and select a clipboard and pen to go around the setting to complete their own daily risk assessment. Children enjoy creating tally charts to identify which healthy fruits each child likes and they enjoy exercising outdoors.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years

provision is outstanding

Managers and leaders are inspirational and invest highly in the whole staff team. Mentors are in place to support new staff and regular one-to-one sessions identify what staff do well and what needs to be improved. Training is a key focus within regular staff meetings to further enhance staff's already excellent knowledge and skills. Staff work together exceptionally well, observing each other's practice and strengths to create a very diverse and dynamic team. **Children's progress is monitored at every level to ensure that any gaps in individual or groups of children's learning are swiftly identified and supported.** **Children are safeguarded exceedingly well.**

Recruitment is robust and ensures that all staff are highly skilled and suitable for their role.

Inclusive self-evaluation accurately identifies how the nursery can improve even further. Staff have correctly recognised that there is scope to enhance further the 'mini explorer' sessions held for parents, for them to hear about nursery themes and to support children's learning at home

Setting details

Unique reference number

Local authority

Inspection number

Type of provision Full-time provision

Registration category Childcare - Non-Domestic

Age range of children 0 - 17

Total number of places 52

Number of children on roll 99

Name of provider 4 Children

Date of previous inspection 11 April 2012

Telephone number 0191 438 2739

Setting A was registered in 2011. The nursery employs 12 members of childcare staff. Of these, all hold appropriate early years qualifications at levels 2, 3 and 4, including the manager who holds an appropriate level 6 qualification. The nursery is open Monday to Friday, for 51 weeks of the year. Sessions are from 8am to 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language.

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection date **29th April 2016**

Previous Inspection date **12th June 2012**

The quality and standards of the	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
early years provision	Previous inspection: Good		2
Effectiveness of the leadership and management	Outstanding		1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding		1
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding		1
Outcomes for children	Outstanding		1

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision is outstanding

Children are very keen and eager to learn. Staff interact with children extremely well to skilfully promote their learning and development. They have comprehensive knowledge of each child and successfully use children's interests to provide fascinating learning opportunities.

Children are extremely well looked after. Excellent deployment of highly qualified staff, along with detailed and precise care planning, help to provide every child with the specific support they need. This includes children who have special educational needs or disability.

Children's emotional well-being is exceptionally well fostered. Staff, parents and teaching staff from the nursery school on site work in very close partnership. This helps children to be fully

prepared and relaxed about the move to nursery school. Parents contribute fully to their children's learning and celebrate their successes.

The management team carries out regular and purposeful supervision of staff. This helps to ensure that the excellent staff team shares their vision, determination and passion.

The management team and staff implement highly effective methods to evaluate the strengths and any areas of weakness in the nursery. They involve parents and children in the process to make sure their views are listened to and used to make changes.

Staff are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their ongoing pursuit of purposeful training and the benefits this brings to children's learning. Recent training on mathematics has led staff to plan enhancements to resources and to use more mathematical language around sizes.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

implement planned actions to strengthen the excellent settling-in procedures for all new children.

Inspection activities

The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.

The inspector completed a joint observation with the nursery manager.

The inspector held a meeting with the nursery manager. She looked at relevant documentation, such as the nursery's self-evaluation and evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

The inspector spoke to a small selection of parents during the inspection and took account of their verbal and written views.

Inspector

Inspection findings

Effectiveness of the leadership and management is outstanding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding children and are secure in their knowledge of the procedure for monitoring and reporting concerns. They take highly effective steps to ensure all areas of the nursery are suitable and children remain safe. Staff make the most of available funding and have worked on a joint project with the school nursery to develop a parents' room. Group sessions are offered and parents can also organise their own groups in the room. Staff have introduced home visits to enhance the settling-in process for two year-old funded children and have plans to extend this to all ages. Families are welcomed into the nursery. Grandparents are invited to come in and read stories to the children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

Staff have excellent knowledge of children. Assessments are precise and checked closely to ensure that any gaps in learning are quickly identified and supported. Staff provide very well-equipped play areas to inspire children's learning. Babies and toddlers listen, look and have a go with rapt attention during their activities. They take great delight in their physical abilities as they

climb the stairs and come down the slide in the room. Staff model play and communication extremely well, which successfully supports the development of the youngest children. Young children use their senses to explore frozen blocks of coloured ice and are interested in how they feel and smell. Older children play exceptionally well and love being busy. In the garden they are excited to hunt for hidden dinosaurs. Staff successfully help them to learn about number as they work out how many are left to find and match the found dinosaurs to written numbers. Positional language is introduced as they talk about where they found them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

Children are extremely happy and settled and their behaviour is exemplary. Staff are highly skilled and sensitive in helping them to understand how to manage their own behaviour. Staff fully promote children's independence and understanding of good hygiene throughout the daily routine and activities and children display high levels of confidence.

Children help to prepare healthy foods and talk about how to safely handle the foods and tools. Children access the indoor and outdoor environment and learn how to move in a wide variety of ways. Children's curiosity grows as they hunt for and observe worms and take part in activities in the forest area, such as bear and dinosaur hunts. Children gain an awareness of cultural festivals and have an excellent understanding of similarities and differences between themselves and others.

Outcomes for children are outstanding

Children have a wonderful time and thoroughly enjoy their learning activities. All children achieve extremely well. Challenging experiences provide children with excellent opportunities to explore resources, develop their own ideas, listen and concentrate. This helps children to be highly

motivated to join in. They are very well supported to be ready for the next stages in their learning, including the move to school.

Setting details

Unique reference number	
Local authority	
Inspection number	
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Day care type	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare
Age range of children	0 - 4
Total number of places	54
Number of children on roll	122
Name of provider	
Date of previous inspection	12 June 2012

Setting C was registered in 2011. The nursery employs 16 members of childcare staff. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and above, including the manager, who has early years professional status and qualified teacher status. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The nursery supports children who have special educational needs or disability.

Inspection date 29th April 2016

Previous inspection date 12th June 2012

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
Effectiveness of the leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding	1
Personal development, behaviour and welfare		Outstanding	1
Outcomes for children		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision is outstanding

- Children are very keen and eager to learn. Staff interact with children extremely well to skilfully promote their learning and development. They have comprehensive knowledge of each child and successfully use children's interests to provide fascinating learning opportunities.
- Children are extremely well looked after. Excellent deployment of highly qualified staff, along with detailed and precise care planning, help to provide every child with the specific support they need. This includes children who have special educational needs or disability.
- Children's emotional well-being is exceptionally well fostered. Staff, parents and teaching staff from the nursery school on site work in very close partnership. This helps children to be fully prepared and relaxed about the move to nursery school. Parents contribute fully to their children's learning and celebrate their successes.
- The management team carries out regular and purposeful supervision of staff. This helps to ensure that the excellent staff team shares their vision, determination and passion.
- The management team and staff implement highly effective methods to evaluate the

strengths and any areas of weakness in the nursery. They involve parents and children in the process to make sure their views are listened to and used to make changes.

- Staff are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their ongoing pursuit of purposeful training and the benefits this brings to children's learning. Recent training on mathematics has led staff to plan enhancements to resources and to use more mathematical language around size

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- implement planned actions to strengthen the excellent settling-in procedures for all new children.
-

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The inspector completed a joint observation with the nursery manager.
- The inspector held a meeting with the nursery manager. She looked at relevant documentation, such as the nursery's self-evaluation and evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.
- The inspector spoke to a small selection of parents during the inspection and took account of their verbal and written views.

Inspector

Inspection findings

Effectiveness of the leadership and management is outstanding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding children and are secure in their knowledge of the procedure for monitoring and reporting concerns. They take highly effective steps to ensure all areas of the nursery are suitable and children remain safe. Staff make the most of available funding and have worked on a joint project with the school nursery to develop a parents' room. Group sessions are offered and parents can also organise their own groups in the room. Staff have introduced home visits to enhance the settling-in process for two-year-old funded children and have plans to extend this to all ages. Families are welcomed into the nursery. Grandparents are invited to come in and read stories to the children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

Staff have excellent knowledge of children. Assessments are precise and checked closely to ensure that any gaps in learning are quickly identified and supported. Staff provide very well-equipped play areas to inspire children's learning. Babies and toddlers listen, look and have a go with rapt attention during their activities. They take great delight in their physical abilities as they climb the stairs and come down the slide in the room. Staff model play and

communication extremely well, which successfully supports the development of the youngest children. Young children use their senses to explore frozen blocks of coloured ice and are interested in how they feel and smell. Older children play exceptionally well and love being busy. In the garden they are excited to hunt for hidden dinosaurs. Staff successfully help them to learn about number as they work out how many are left to find and match the found dinosaurs to written numbers. Positional language is introduced as they talk about where they found them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

Children are extremely happy and settled and their behaviour is exemplary. Staff are highly skilled and sensitive in helping them to understand how to manage their own behaviour. Staff fully promote children's independence and understanding of good hygiene throughout the daily routine and activities and children display high levels of confidence.

Children help to prepare healthy foods and talk about how to safely handle the foods and tools. Children access the indoor and outdoor environment and learn how to move in a wide variety of ways. Children's curiosity grows as they hunt for and observe worms and take part in activities in the forest area, such as bear and dinosaur hunts. Children gain an awareness of cultural festivals and have an excellent understanding of similarities and differences between themselves and others.

Outcomes for children are outstanding

Children have a wonderful time and thoroughly enjoy their learning activities. All children achieve extremely well. Challenging experiences provide children with excellent opportunities to explore resources, develop their own ideas, listen and concentrate. This helps children to be highly motivated to join in. They are very well supported to be ready for the next stages in their learning, including the move to school.

Setting details

Unique reference number

Local authority

Inspection number

Type of provision

Day care type

Registers

Full-time provision

Childcare - Non-Domestic

Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register

Age range of children	0 - 4
Total number of places	54
Number of children on roll	122
Name of provider	
Date of previous inspection	12 June 2012

Setting B was registered in 2011. The nursery employs 16 members of childcare staff. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and above, including the manager, who has early years professional status and qualified teacher status. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The nursery supports children who have special educational needs or disability.

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Inspection dates **6–7 November 2013**

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Parents are highly appreciative of all that this nursery offers. One view, reflecting the thoughts of parents, refers to children who are ‘happy, supported, safe and well taught’ in a school where ‘staff can be praised and best practices recognised’.
- **The achievement of all children is outstanding.** Improvements to how children learn have had a very positive impact on children’s independent learning and their understanding of letters, sounds and numbers.
- Whatever their starting points, **each child receives the appropriate care and support they need to make excellent progress in all areas of learning.**
- **Teaching is outstanding** because staff reflect on the day together and make sure that learning moves on quickly from their observations of what individual children show they can do.
- The outside environment is particularly exciting and provides wonderful opportunities to investigate, explore and question the natural world.
- Behaviour and safety are excellent. As they play and carry out tasks, children learn to take measured risks as they use different tools safely.
- Children have secure and caring relationships with staff and this helps them to grow into confident and independent learners.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to learning. Children are encouraged to reflect upon new situations they encounter as they play together and make friends.
- **The headteacher is inspirational.** Staff and governors share her clear direction for the school. Raising the quality of teaching has ensured that children’s interests and assessments determine their next learning needs.
- **Assessments are regular and there is a clear overview of the progress of all children and of individuals.** The progress of specific groups of children is not as clearly demonstrated.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector over two days. The inspector visited nine learning sessions or parts of sessions. The headteacher took part in a joint observation with the inspector.
- Separate discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body, the manager of the day-care centre on site and a representative from the local authority. The opinions of eight members of staff were also considered from their questionnaire responses.
- The inspector observed the school's work, looked at children's learning journals, data on children's progress, planning and monitoring documentation, and information relating to the welfare of children and safeguarding.
- The inspector considered 20 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). She took account of the results of the school's own questionnaire to parents, as well as a letter from a parent and discussions with parents at the start of the school day.

Full report

Information about this school

- This nursery school offers placements for 91 children. Most children access their 15 hours entitlement by either five morning or afternoon sessions.
- Most children enter the nursery when they are three-years-old and transfer to reception classes in neighbouring schools in the term before their fifth birthday.
- Most children are of White British heritage. About a quarter of children come from different ethnic backgrounds and most of these children speak English as an additional language.
- At present there are no children with special educational needs supported at early years action. Few children are supported at early years action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The nursery shares the building with a national day centre with which it has a close working partnership to provide wrap-around care. The day care centre was not part of this inspection and will be inspected separately.
- Recently the nursery has received Government funding for the two-year-olds in schools project and works with these younger children in partnership with the day-care centre.
- The headteacher and staff provide examples of excellent practice to other schools in the local area.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Use assessment data to record the progress of different groups of children on a regular basis and be able to demonstrate the proportions making expected or better than expected progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- From starting points that, for most, are below those typical for their age, children make rapid progress in all areas of their learning. By the time children move to reception classes in a range of neighbouring primary schools, all reach the expected levels for their age and a good proportion attain at higher than expected levels.
- Children develop considerable confidence and independence as they make choices of where to play and learn. Children's social skills develop very well in every aspect as they learn how to work and play together happily as they share and take turns. They learn about responsibility as they help their teacher in small tasks, for example, when they give out drinks to their friends, or take a message.
- Communication and language skills develop quickly. Adults constantly extend children's knowledge of words through questions encouraging them to reflect and explain their thoughts and ideas. Good opportunities for children to engage in role-play and share stories help their understanding that text has meaning.
- Staff constantly refer to the sounds letters make and children are encouraged to develop their reading and writing skills through mark making using paint, chalk, pencils, felt pens and mud sticks. Almost all recognise their name and many write their name using the initial letter. Some make a very good attempt at writing it all. As children become ready for further challenge, they work in small groups to learn how letters and sounds link to make words.
- Children are challenged to develop their physical and creative skills. Indoors and outside, a wide range of activities encourage children to build their strength, coordination and balance. They become skilled at climbing and building using large apparatus. They cut and fix in a variety of ways, as when children constructed rockets using scissors, tape, sticky plastics and glue. They are encouraged to use their imagination to create pictures, investigate sounds and tell their own stories using different resources.
- Children become increasingly good at recognising and using numbers to 10 and sometimes further. They are able to use their counting skills for example, to accurately correspond one item with one number. The more-able children readily identify one more or less than a number. Teachers constantly draw attention to shape and measures through children's play as they talk about where to place objects or how long objects have to be to fit a space.
- Children who are disabled and those who have special educational needs, those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, or those who are at any early stage of speaking English as an additional language have additional support, which ensures that these children make similar progress to other children.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Staff work very successfully as a team to provide exceptional learning. This is because teachers constantly record the abilities of each child, which they use to prepare for the following day's activities. They consider appropriate resources, how to extend activities to provide additional challenge and new activities to develop children's interests.
- For instance, discussions about the birds and the colder weather promoted a discussion about feeding the birds. As a result, the following day small groups of children made bird feeders using cones, lard and seeds. As they worked they talked, increasing their vocabulary, their understanding of what birds needed to eat to stay alive and developed their fine motor skills as they wrapped the wool around the cones and twigs to hang them.
- Children arrive ready to engage with whatever is on offer. With their parents they 'sign in' and quickly become involved in the activities on offer. As parents depart, children begin well-organised sessions in which they are encouraged to make choices about what and how they learn. There is always time to consider, and talk through, their experiences with their key

workers who listen and respond to their findings, prompting new vocabulary and ways to express thoughts and ideas.

- Both indoors and outdoors, children show high levels of concentration as they complete their chosen tasks. As they retell the story of Goldilocks together, make diva lamps, shine torches on different surfaces, or cut up fruit for their snack, children concentrate for long periods of time on the activity and this improves the quality of their learning.
- The outside area provides children with different environments and activities to learn in, from the mud kitchen to the forest school. Children investigate every nook and cranny turning up stones and leaves and discussing together what they find. Talking is central to learning and staff probe children's learning as they ask just the right questions to further their understanding and challenge their thinking.
- **Assessment is thorough and is used very successfully as a tool to measure individual progress.** Notes are constantly taken and used in children's learning journals to chart their progress. All information is fed back through daily team meetings to determine where more support is needed or to increase challenge and this is why **all children progress so well.**
- Parents greatly appreciate the learning journals because they can share with their child the progress they make. They also find the home/school books to be a good link, especially for those children who attend the day-care centre, and say they help them know what their child has been learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children **are safe and happy at school.** Parents are unanimous in their support of this. There is no evidence of any bullying and children are taught to care for and to look after one another.
- Children obviously love their time in nursery and attend regularly. They enjoy all of the different activities and learn responsibility as they help to tidy up. They are encouraged to be independent and make every attempt to put on their boots and waterproofs when they go out to play in the water, on bikes and trikes or make pies in the mud kitchen.
- Simple rules of hygiene are introduced as children are encouraged to use the toilet and to wash their hands independently afterwards or before working with food.
- Safe risk-taking means that children learn to judge what is safe for them in their work and play. They use various tools including scissors to cut different materials, real knives as they chop up their fruit for their snack and garden tools when they are digging and planting in their forest school.
- Relationships with staff are very positive and children feel secure. A number of children are looked after by day-care staff and the handover between nursery and school at the beginning and end of sessions is quiet, calm and seamless.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The strengths of the last inspection have been built on with much greater emphasis to use what children have learnt to inform teaching plans. Changes to the way in which key workers plan together have been crucial to improved progress. Detailed discussions identify what changes need to be made for the following day. This has resulted in **all children making consistently good progress and a good proportion who make outstanding progress.**
- Together, staff work to make sure all children have the same opportunities and there is no discrimination. **Assessment information is shared enabling all staff to have a good understanding of how individual children are progressing and where additional support or challenge is needed.**
- Data records clearly show the progress of individuals and all children. However, for specific groups of children, such as boys and girls, those with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language, the records do not show well enough the proportions making expected, or better than expected, progress.

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- The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Regular monitoring of teaching and safeguarding ensures that children are safe and have the best access to learning. Outcomes of monitoring are fed back to staff and this, together with wider discussions about performance, identify appropriate professional development linked to the needs of individuals and the school. Salary progression is clearly linked to performance.
 - The curriculum has been developed to widen children's experiences and make best use of available space. Pertinent decisions by the headteacher have raised staff expectations, increased children's independence, creativity and opportunities to think for themselves. The outside area and the forest school make the best use of the outside environment and these are supplemented by well-chosen local visits and visitors to the school. The constant promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness permeates every aspect of school life.
 - Parents are seen as having a crucial part in their children's learning and the school makes every effort to share their expectations for each child. Relationships are honest and every attempt is made to help parents to contribute to learning. The school works with a wide range of external agencies to support those children and their families whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
 - Links with the day-care provision, which provides wrap-around care for children, are very good. There are increasing opportunities for staff to work together and provide for children and their families.
 - The school is well supported by the local authority which works closely with staff on a regular basis. The local authority makes good use of the expertise of the headteacher and her staff to demonstrate best practice in local primary schools, and of those further afield.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is strong. Governors understand well the strengths of the school and what it needs to do to improve further. Individual roles and responsibilities are linked to individuals' expertise and governors make regular visits, or check documents, to ensure that best practice is sustained. Governors are confident to question and challenge and provide excellent support for the headteacher. They know how the recent money from the government for the two- year-olds project in school is being used and keep a pertinent eye on all finances to secure best provision, rewarding good performance when appropriate. Safeguarding practices are thorough, well documented, well monitored and more than meet statutory requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number

Local authority

Inspection number

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	
Headteacher	
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2011
Telephone number	
Fax number	
Email address	

Appendix 13: Setting D Ofsted Inspection Report



Inspection dates	26–27 January 2017
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not devised efficient assessment systems. Pupils' progress and the attainment of groups of pupils are not captured with sufficient detail or accuracy. This means that provision and resources are not channelled appropriately.
- Senior leaders do not reliably check that their actions or those of subject and phase leaders are making a difference. Too few pupils, in particular the most able and disadvantaged pupils, are challenged or supported effectively.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. It has not been good enough over time to enable pupils to make consistently good progress, especially with regard to reading.
- Staff do not use time productively. Inefficient to-ing and fro-ing between classes means that valuable teaching and learning time is lost. In lessons, learning slows as pupils wait for adults' direction.
- Teachers are not consistent in their approach to pupils' work. Expectations in terms of the quality and presentation in pupils' books vary across classes and subjects.
- Adults in the early years do not promote the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics with enough intent. Children have insufficient opportunities to practise and apply their skills.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has a candid view and understanding of the school's performance. Her determination and actions to secure improved teaching and learning are beginning to bear fruit.
- Leaders have successfully created a positive school ethos with children's well-being firmly at the core. Consequently, pupils feel safe, are happy and their social and emotional needs are well met.
- Pupils' attendance is good. Leaders are diligent in tackling any rare instances of regular absence.
- Leaders have established a varied and enriching curriculum. Pupils are inspired to appreciate and learn about the world around them. A sense of awe and wonder is promoted.
- Pupils behave well. Staff, parents, carers and pupils are confident of strengthening behaviour under the headteacher's watchful eye.
- Leaders use the primary physical education and sport funding effectively. Pupils can access a wide variety of activities indoors and outside, to keep fit, informed and healthy.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - addressing inconsistencies in teaching and learning rigorously
 - raising expectations and standards in reading across key stages
 - devising accurate assessment systems that capture the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils so that challenge and support is targeted appropriately
 - systematically ensuring that leaders' actions are making a difference to the rates and extent of pupils' progress
 - holding subject and phase leaders stringently to account for the progress of all

groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and the most able.

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching across key stages, including the early years, by:
 - making sure that all available teaching time is used effectively to promote learning
 - developing greater challenge and pace in lessons, paying particular attention to the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged
 - raising teachers' expectations in terms of the quality and presentation of pupils' work in books across the curriculum
 - giving pupils more opportunities to read regularly with adults and respond in depth to high-quality texts
 - offering children in the early years more opportunities to practise and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding in reading, writing and mathematics.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher, new to post in January 2017, has correctly identified and begun to tackle the most pressing areas requiring improvement. Revised reading strategies and new phonics and spelling programmes have been implemented. The profile of reading has been raised. Pupils' current progress in reading, however, remains a weakness because leaders do not systematically check that their actions are leading to improvement.
- Leaders have not yet devised sufficiently accurate and robust assessment systems. They are therefore unable to use information skilfully to ensure that timely support and challenge is in place for all groups of pupils. As a result, progress and attainment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and the most able, remain too variable.
- Some subject and phase leaders are relatively new to post. They have begun to check more regularly on the quality of teaching and learning. They have not, however, sufficiently challenged and supported staff to address the variance in practice and standards of work that pupils produce. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning remain across key stages.
- Leaders carefully consider how best to spend the school's pupil premium funding. They do not, however, evaluate its effect rigorously enough. Consequently, the support and resources secured are not having the maximum impact on reducing differences between disadvantaged pupils and others, across subjects.
- Leaders enrich the curriculum in an effort to inspire, engage and inform pupils. Pupils' experiences are broadened through carefully selected educational trips and visitors, including author visits. Staff feel empowered by leaders to use pupils' interests to create projects that aim to excite and enthuse. Pupils in key stage 2 talked passionately about their studies of World War 2, and others found facts about the ancient Mayan culture absorbing. The academic curriculum, however, is not yet tailored effectively to meet the needs of all groups of pupils, particularly with regard to reading.
- Leaders use the additional money for special educational needs responsibly. Staff have support, training and regular updates from the inclusion manager and other specialists. Pupils failing to make progress are identified quickly in partnership with parents and other agencies. Occasionally, there is a blurring of lines between those pupils who are low-attaining and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This leads to variation in the support offered and, consequently, variable rates of progress for some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders' work to promote children's rights, respect and responsibilities is evident across the school. Pupils display tolerant and respectful attitudes and behaviours to each other and adults. They talk with empathy and understanding about others' cultures and viewpoints. In this way, staff are equipping pupils with a range of moral, social and personal skills and beginning to develop pupils' understanding of core British values.
- The headteacher has quickly and successfully established a positive ethos and shared her vision for improvement. An honest, inclusive approach has earned her the full

backing of staff, parents and governors. From this position she is well placed to challenge and support whole-school improvement moving forward.

- The local authority has responded promptly to the school's weaker outcomes for pupils in 2016. Governors, the headteacher and subject leaders have access to specific training and guidance; the local authority's English, mathematics and early years consultants are already working in partnership with the school. Links with other schools have been brokered. A steering group has been established to ensure that regular checks are made on progress against the school improvement plan. These measures are augmenting leadership capacity.
- Leaders and managers have promoted the value and importance of good attendance effectively. They follow up any absences and poor punctuality diligently. Consequently, no groups of pupils are unfairly hampered by poor attendance.
- Leaders and managers ensure that the additional funding for sport and physical education is used effectively. Pupils taste a wide menu of invigorating sporting activities such as fencing, archery, hockey, dodgeball, dance and golf. Active, healthy lifestyles are effectively promoted.
- Leaders, including mentors, provide effective support for newly qualified teachers. Induction procedures and appropriate professional development opportunities equip teachers with a suitably informative and positive start to their teaching career.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a frank view of the school's performance and, having been disappointed with pupils' outcomes in 2016, fully accept the findings of the inspection. Their reflective, candid approach leads them to ask challenging questions of school leaders. Commitment to continual improvement is evident.
- The chair of the governing body is ambitious for all pupils. She is mindful of weaker aspects of the school's work as well as its strengths. Along with other governors, she has welcomed the setting-up of a steering group with local authority partners in order to drive rapid improvement. The priorities of the steering group are the right ones, with reading, the most able and disadvantaged pupils high on the agenda.
- Governors meet regularly with staff to discuss the work that they are doing. They visit frequently to see the school in action and gauge for themselves its effectiveness. Records demonstrate that governors are not slow to give praise where due or voice concerns where they arise. In this way, both staff and pupils have effective critical friends.
- Governors fully understand the link between teachers' pay and performance. They engage a local authority's adviser to ensure that the headteacher's performance is also managed in a fair, transparent and comprehensive manner.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that staff have regularly updated training. Adults are familiar with the most recent information and amendments to statutory guidance regarding the protection of pupils. These measures contribute effectively to the school's ability to keep pupils safe and free from harm.

- The large majority of pupils spoken with said that they feel safe in school. All staff believe this is the case and most parents who expressed their opinions agree. One comment by a parent encapsulated the prevalent view: 'the school promotes a safe and inclusive education using innovative approaches'.
- Several leaders and governors have been trained to give meticulous consideration to the suitability of adults working with children. This means that employment processes are tight, adhering to the principles of safeguarding and safer recruitment.
- Adults are interested in the welfare of children and their families. As one parent put it, 'teachers and staff care about my child, as if she were their own.' Staff work hard with external agencies to serve the community well. Vulnerable pupils' needs are managed with both industry and consideration. Seeking to widen the palliative aspect of this role further, leaders are in the process of securing the services of a family liaison officer.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistent across key stages. As a result, not all pupils make the progress that should be expected of them. In particular, disadvantaged pupils and the most able are not reliably challenged or supported to improve rapidly.
- Teachers do not plan sufficiently challenging work for the most able pupils. In English lessons, for example, reading 'journals' and specific spelling and grammar work aim to kindle a depth of thought about the texts and language that pupils are using. Too often, though, pupils complete work quickly, finding it easy. Progress stalls as they wait politely for additional work, saying that they are not sure what to do next.
- Some adults make every minute count. These teachers use time effectively to squeeze out every opportunity for learning, in class-based lessons and outside. Too often, however, this is an exception rather than the rule. The pace of learning in some year groups is too slow and pupils make little progress.
- Pupils engage in lots of moving about across the school day. While intended to make sure that pupils get to the right place to access teaching and learning matched to their needs and capabilities, movement is poorly organised and orchestrated. Valuable teaching and learning time is lost.
- Pupils' workbooks show that some pupils are making good progress. Books are neatly presented and work is of good quality. Whether extended writing, science or topic work, some teachers instil high and consistent expectations in pupils. Not all teachers, however, insist on pupils making their very best efforts across subjects in this manner.
- Some pupils read frequently with adults. Pupils' books, reading records and teachers' logs show that these pupils are developing a love of reading, good levels of fluency and a range of comprehension skills. These pupils are also beginning to understand the significance of reading in all areas of the curriculum. Nevertheless, not all pupils have equal opportunities to read regularly and respond to high-quality texts with adults.
- Staff understand the potential contextual constraints of urban living. They actively seek to enhance pupils' learning experiences. To this end, pupils plant fruit trees, cook outside, go on trips to the forest, grow vegetables, look after pets and make dens. Bringing the outdoors alive and instilling a sense of awe and wonder is developing

pupils' spiritual awareness and equipping them with additional interests and skills for later life.

- Teachers usually articulate the sounds that letters make accurately. There is still a lack of consistency in ensuring that pupils do too. Too few pupils reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' comments about their work in mathematics, making progress as they do so. There is evidence of a rich diet of mathematics topics being presented and increasing application of reasoning and problem-solving in pupils' work across the curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils like their school and feel happy and well looked after. They say that playground buddies and members of the pupil council listen to them carefully and consider their views. Adults help them if they have worries, and they appreciate the 'worry boxes' they can use if they need help or want to talk.
- Pupils are able to discuss a variety of ways to keep themselves safe. Teachers have equipped pupils with knowledge and understanding about 'stranger-danger', e-safety, railways and road safety as well as the dangers of water and fire.
- Pupils value their meetings with the safeguarding governor who consults with them about their feelings of safety in school.
- Pupils' physical health is of prime importance to school leaders. A wide range of after-school and lunchtime clubs ensure that pupils' physical needs are well met. In addition, class projects promote the importance of healthy eating and keeping fit.
- Staff work well with external agencies and families to make sure that pupils' welfare needs are met. The majority of parents find adults in school approachable and helpful, saying that teachers 'gladly listen to parents' when they have questions or concerns.
- Pupils feel confident that bullying is not an issue in their school. They are in no doubt that any misbehaviour will be dealt with firmly and fairly by adults. Pupils can discuss bullying and the forms that it may take competently, understanding how it might affect others.
- Pupils work hard to please staff. Strong, positive relationships abound. Friday assemblies build on pupils' positive attitudes to learning; becoming a 'VIP' is a highly sought-after accolade. Pupils are proud of themselves and each other when nominated and named in the 'golden book' or receiving a 'pen licence'. Pupils demonstrate confidence that their good efforts will be recognised.
- Pupils' understanding of how to be a successful learner is underdeveloped. Despite pupils' willingness to learn, not all are able to express how or what they need to do to improve.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils live up to the school's guiding principles of 'responsibility, respect and compassion'. They enjoy the roles and responsibilities that the school affords them and show respect for the school's rules, environment and each other.
- Behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils listen and respond respectfully to adults' instructions. They hold doors open politely and wish visitors a good day. Playtimes are active, cheerful affairs.
- Pupils want to be in school. They like to be on time and their attendance is good. Very few pupils are hindered by regular absence. Leaders have well-documented and carefully executed procedures in place to ensure that any absences are promptly followed up.
- In lessons, even where pupils lack challenge and have to wait for further guidance or resources, they follow school rules, and attitudes remain positive. Low-level disruption is rare.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors, although mindful of their duty to use the pupil premium funding wisely, do not check carefully enough to see if it is having the intended effect. This means that differences between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and others remain variable over time.
- In 2016, too many disadvantaged pupils did not make good progress. In key stage 1, differences between disadvantaged pupils and others widened in reading and mathematics. In key stage 2, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching age-related expectations in all subjects was well below others nationally. Differences were particularly stark in reading, with none reaching a depth of learning. In science, only half of the disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 reached age-related expectations.
- Too few of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, reached a depth of learning in 2016, particularly in reading and writing. Most pupils who read with inspectors did so fluently, using and applying skills of inference and deduction effectively. The frequency with which pupils read with adults, however, varies. This leads to variable outcomes, as some have too few chances to practise their skills, test their understanding and discuss texts in depth.
- Variability in teaching means that progress for current cohorts is inconsistent. Progress for the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils, in particular, remains patchy.
- Attainment in phonics, although improving, has been below national averages over time. Leaders' emphasis on developing teaching and learning in this area means that current pupils are beginning to benefit. Teachers now model and articulate sounds more carefully and correctly.
- Most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make small steps of progress in keeping with their identified needs. Extra support and interventions are put in place to address pupils' requirements. The current inconsistencies in assessment and teaching mean that some pupils in this group make slower than expected progress.

- Pupils' attainment in key stage 1 has broadly matched others nationally over time. In 2016, in key stage 1, the proportion of pupils reaching and exceeding expected standards in writing and mathematics remained in line with national averages. These strengths are indicative of pupils' capabilities.
- Girls in key stage 2 in 2016 did particularly well in mathematics. The proportion of girls reaching age-related expectations and acquiring a depth of learning exceeded national averages.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- A sizeable proportion of children start the early years with skills and knowledge that are lower than typically expected for their age. Although children have up to five terms in Nursery and a year in the Reception class, too few make rapid enough progress to catch up with their peers nationally and achieve the early learning goals in reading, writing and mathematics. This means that children are not well prepared for the demands of the key stage 1 curriculum. Over time, the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development has remained below national averages.
- Leaders were unable to provide an accurate picture of assessment and a detailed analysis of outcomes for the different groups of children in Nursery and Reception. The extent to which progress had been made by current and past cohorts was unclear. This is limiting leaders' ability to tackle the underlying issues that are prohibiting some pupils from reaching a good level of development.
- The Nursery environment is well equipped in terms of outside and indoor resources to build confidence and develop gross and fine motor skills. Children enjoy listening to daily stories and talking about, as well as choosing, books to take home. The environment overall, however, is not rich in literacy and numeracy opportunities. This means that vital knowledge, understanding and skills in mathematics, reading and writing are unable to fully flourish.
- The Nursery is housed in a separate building to the main school which is situated across the road. Adults use the opportunity of entering and exiting the main school building to teach children about the importance of road safety and high visibility.
- Teaching and learning in Reception is of variable quality. While children are happy and enjoy the wide array of activities that are available, the focus on improving academic skills and abilities within reading, writing and mathematics is unconvincing. Too often, children drift from area to area unsettled and fidgety. A lack of guidance and challenge about what children are expected to do means that progress is too slow for too many.
- Early years staff have strong, positive relationships with children. Adults use this rapport to build children's readiness to learn. Questioning skills and verbal interactions in small groups or on a one-to-one basis are enabling. Adults speak and listen to children respectfully, building banks of spoken vocabulary and developing early language skills well. In this way, children's confidence and abilities in communicating and making their feelings known are effectively fostered.
- Links with families are good, and staff actively forge beneficial partnerships through open days, parent workshops and family learning days. Children are happy and well looked after. Welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number

Local authority

Inspection number

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	261
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	
Headteacher	
Telephone number	
Website	
Email address	
Date of previous inspection	20–21 September 2011

Information about this school

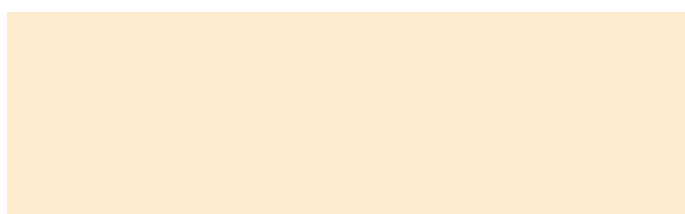
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the impact of the pupil premium funding spend on its website.
- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for support through the pupil premium, is well above average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British Heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receiving support is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities or an education, health and care plan is below average.

- The school met the government's floor standards for primary schools in 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed across classes and key stages. During day one of the inspection, observations were conducted jointly by the lead inspector and the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, phase and subject leaders, as well as governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, scrutinised their work and talked informally with pupils during breaktimes. The views of pupils were also considered during more formal discussions with inspectors. The 22 responses made by pupils to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire were taken into account.
- A wide range of the school's own information and documentation was studied, including the self-evaluation, improvement plans and records of the checks made on teaching and learning. Information about the performance management of staff and safeguarding practices was also examined alongside policy documentation.
- The opinions of staff were taken into account via 19 responses made to Ofsted's questionnaire and through formal and informal discussions.
- The 11 views expressed by parents in the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, were examined. Comments from parents communicated via free text and in face-to-face discussions during the inspection were also considered.

Inspection team



Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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