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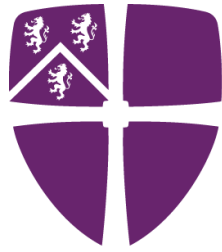
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Abstract:

The transition between primary and secondary school represents a significant step in the educational journey pupils' take, marking a period in which friendships can be altered, specialist subject teachers are introduced and new standards are set; all of which are issues that can be exacerbated within PE. This thesis explores pupils' experiences of the primary to secondary transition in PE, seeking to identify transitional issues affecting their engagement with the subject. Perspectives of teaching staff and external coaches are also investigated to recognise existing transitional practice in schools and potential areas of disconnect with pupils. An online survey was used to explore pupils' transitional experiences in PE, followed by four online interviews with secondary PE teachers and School Sport Partnership coaches. Data collected informs a series of practical recommendations designed to improve pupils' transitional experiences within PE. Whilst previous studies exploring transitional issues have been well-documented, few have sought to offer recommendations focused specifically on improving the transition in PE and pupil's engagement with it.

The work of Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999), outlining five bridges of transition, provided a framework to examine the transition, whilst Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital are used to explore the experiences of pupils' and staff. Thematic analysis of data collected allowed for findings to be separated into three areas: the importance of relationships in PE across the transition, physical considerations of competency, capability and fitness, as well as existing good transitional practice in schools. Findings suggest that, whilst there are a multitude of different factors influencing pupils' PE engagement, it is the aforementioned areas that are pupils' primary concern around the transition in PE that recommendations should seek to address. Acknowledging the wide-ranging nature of recommendations made to address multiple bridges of transition, future research should aim to investigate the effectiveness of these in practice.



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Bridging the gap: A qualitative study of pupils PE experiences and practices across the primary to secondary school transition

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List of Abbreviations:

ALCYP – Active Lives Children and Young People

CDS – County Durham Sport

COVID-19 – Coronavirus Disease

DCC – Durham County Council

GCSE - General Certificate of Secondary Education

KS2 – Key Stage 2

KS3 – Key Stage 3

OFSTED – Office for Standards in Education

OLTA – Organised Leisure Time Activities

PE – Physical Education

PESSPA - Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity

PES - PE and Sport

SES – Socioeconomic Status

SLA – Service Level Agreement

SSP – School Sport Partnership

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Chapter One:

Introduction

1.1 Importance of a Physical Activity in Children and Young People

An ongoing priority for schools and parents is ensuring that children and young people possess good general health and wellbeing. With this priority in mind, there can be little doubt lifestyles that are inclusive of physical activity are an excellent safeguard against poor health and wellbeing. It is important from the outset to acknowledge that physical activity is not solely responsible in determining the physical fitness of a child or young people (or, indeed, an individual of any age). Nevertheless, numerous studies have outlined that physical activity is vital to the physical, psychological and cognitive health of children and young people (Janssen and LeBlanc, 2010; Poitras *et al.*, 2016) and it is important to ensure that all aforementioned areas that combine to make up an individual's health and wellbeing are given adequate consideration.

There is a strong argument to support the idea that children who are physically active during their adolescent years continue to lead lifestyles inclusive of physical activity into adulthood. A number of studies have suggested high levels of adolescent physical fitness relate to positive adult cardiovascular health profiles (Boreham *et al.*, 2002; Janz, Dawson and Mahoney, 2002). Focusing specifically on physical health, Janssen and LeBlanc (2010) conducted a systematic review of the health benefits of physical activity and fitness in school-aged children. The study found how the dose-response relations witnessed in observational studies indicate that the more physical activity a child undertakes, the greater the health benefit and that even modest amounts of physical activity can have health benefits in children who are seen to fall in 'high-risk' categories, including being obese (*ibid*). With regard to mental health, Biddle *et al.* (2019), in a study reviewing physical activity and mental health in children and adolescents, suggests there have been significant recent increases in research activity concerning physical activity and depression, self-esteem, and cognitive functioning in young people. One such piece of research is an extensive review by Rodriguez-Ayllon *et al.* (2019) into the role of physical activity and sedentary behaviours in the mental health of pre-schoolers, children and adolescents. The researchers found significant associations between greater amounts of sedentary behaviours and increased psychological ill-being (e.g. depression) and lower psychological wellbeing (e.g. satisfaction

with life and happiness). These findings can be seen to emphasise the need for children and young people to lead lives inclusive of physical activity as a direct method to preventing ill-health and, fittingly, Rodriguez-Ayllon *et al.* (2019) concluded that physical activity interventions can generally improve adolescents' mental health. The advocacy of such an intervention to influence the health of children and young people more generally is especially relevant, as Gilchrist and Wheaton (2017) discuss how recent fears about rising levels of inactivity and obesity amongst children are increasingly driving the use of sport and physical activity-based interventions. Watson *et al.* (2019) also discuss associations between physical activity participation and classroom behaviour outcomes amongst primary-aged children, explaining that in addition to physical health benefits, physical activity participation has been shown to be associated with many psychological and social benefits, including improved social control and emotional regulation. The study speculates that the unique characteristics of sport participation, in a social context, may be behind such associations.

1.2 Physical Activity within the School Environment

Studies discussed thus far help to provide important context as to how physical activity can help children and young people improve all aspects of their health and wellbeing. In light of this, and in the context of this study, consideration will now be given to the role the school environment can play in helping shape children and young people that lead physically active lives. As Hirvensalo and Lintunen (2011, p14) explain when discussing physical activity in a life-course framework, "the positive experiences and wide range of sports skills acquired in childhood and adolescence could be seen as the preparation for lifelong physical activity" and there is perhaps no environment more relevant than schools, and particularly PE lessons, in which children and young people can acquire such experiences and skills. PE is often identified as a panacea for solving the 'problem' of physical inactivity, with a belief that a young person's positive relationship with PE will track into lifelong physical activity (Metcalfe, 2018). It is interesting to note how PE lessons specifically could be a significant influence over whether children go onto establish longer-term physical activity participation. Hirvensalo and Lintunen (2011, p16) explain that those who participated in physical activity from childhood to

adulthood recalled the importance of positive influences at school in becoming and staying physically active, including good teachers and friends. On the other hand, competitive PE classes, a lack of teacher support, peer pressure, identity conflict and generally negative experiences at school were the major barriers to physical activity. In addition, Gray *et al.* (2018, p157) suggests that “PE teachers are now responsible for the holistic development of pupils physical, social, emotional and mental well-being” and as such, can be identified as individuals of significant importance to this study.

As well as school-based physical activity having an impact on children’s long-term physical activity behaviours, there is also a range of research suggesting physical activity can directly improve children’s academic performance, as well as having other education-related benefits that would be welcomed by schools. Watson *et al.* (2017), in a systematic review of the effect of classroom-based physical activity interventions, suggests that classroom-based physical activity may provide an opportunity to increase school-based physical activity whilst concurrently improving academic-related outcomes and the idea that physical activity can improve pupil’s performance in other school subjects has been widely researched. Singh *et al.* (2019), similarly investigating physical activity interventions on cognitive and academic performance in children and adolescents, concluded that there is strong evidence for beneficial effects of physical activity on maths performance specifically. Reeves (2012), meanwhile, notes that higher levels of educational attainment are closely linked with increased levels of sporting participation, although it is important to acknowledge such correlation does not necessarily indicate causation.

Badura *et al.* (2016) makes the argument that physical activity outside of school can influence academic performance in suggesting that participation in organised leisure time activities (OLTA) was associated with higher school engagement, lower levels of school-related stress and better academic achievement, regardless of children’s’ gender and age. Badura’s finding of lower levels of school-related stress raises an important point that physical activity in children also helps to improve mental health, which more generally underpins why it could improve academic performance. Jewett *et al.* (2014) suggests that participation in sport and physical activity in schools may protect against poor

mental health in early adulthood and that policies to increase school sport and physical activity participation may be warranted as part of more general public health strategies to promote mental health. Indeed, all of the aforementioned studies help to provide compelling evidence that schools should endeavour to facilitate their pupils to be physically active wherever possible, with PE lessons offering the most obvious environment for schools to do so.

1.3 Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity Policy Context

Having outlined the health benefits of physical activity to children and the role the schools can play in providing an environment for children to be physically active, it is valuable to consider the wider physical education (PE), school sport and physical activity (PESSPA) landscape against which this study sits, including policies that have helped to shape this landscape over recent years. Lindsey *et al.* (2020) takes stock of Conservative-led PESSPA policy over the seven years between 2013 and 2019, writing that the period was generally one of relative continuity in PESSPA policies. However, the authors note that the end of this period was reached with renewed uncertainty to future policy, particularly with regard to the government's flagship PESSPA initiative of annual PE and Sport (PES) Premium funding for primary schools. Such uncertainty is noteworthy when placed in the context of how the funding has contributed to PESSPA since its creation. As Lindsey *et al.* (2020) outline, spending PES Premium on external coaches has become relatively easy for primary schools and has subsequently produced a market-based system of commercial providers offering PESSPA services.

Alongside these commercial providers, examples of School Sport Partnerships (SSPs) initially instigated under the previous Labour government remain in some areas of the country by offering services to primary schools under Service Level Agreements (SLA). With this in mind, the extent of dependency of primary schools on external providers raises questions about the quality and sustainability of PESSPA provision while the PES Premium funding remains in place, but especially if it may be discontinued (Lindsey *et al.*, 2020). Government commitment to funding for the 2020 – 2021 academic year came just a matter of weeks before pupils returned back after summer and it remains to be seen

whether the funding will continue into 2022, as the wider economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic becomes clearer. Whilst PES Premium funding focuses exclusively on primary schools, Lindsey *et al.* (2020) state that evidence is scarce on how the lack of policy impetus towards PESSPA in secondary schools has affected their provision since 2013. Indeed, the absence of detailed information from the government or other public bodies on PESSPA in secondary schools is itself characteristic of the government not utilising nodality policy instruments within the secondary sector (*ibid.*).

1.4 Educational Transitions: A Problematic Period

Whilst certain policies influencing the PESSPA landscape may come and go, transitions are a permanent and unescapable part of the educational journey every child will take. Educational transitions have long been identified by researchers as potentially problematic periods for some. From moving between nursery and school, the first significant transition a child will undergo in their educational journey, to those who choose to leave college to pursue higher education, transitions are an unavoidable part of the education system. Reay (2018) cites the work of Ball, Maguire and Macrae (2000) to help illustrate that young people's educational transitions need to focus not only on the processes involved, but also key contextualising aspects, in that time and place are pivotal to the ways in which transitions are experienced, but so also are wider dominant discourses and the broader social and political landscape. Although Reay's work considers the transition of working-class young people to university exclusively, the point being made can be applied to any educational transition.

A number of researchers have considered the primary to secondary school transition in recent decades. Galton, Gray and Ruddock (2003) outlines that there are physical, psychological and emotional maturational developments in children around the age at which they undertake the primary to secondary school transition, in addition to noteworthy changes in the curriculum between those two stages of education. It is perhaps in part because of this that previous research has been conducted specifically into the transition within the context of PE, given the subject is unique in the physical, psychological and emotional demands it places on children. Typically, however, studies have

tended to focus on singular issues relating to the transition, for example how a move to specialist PE teaching staff in secondary school or larger PE facilities in that stage of education may impact upon pupil experiences. To add to this, Hodgkin *et al.* (2013, p31) states “surprisingly the pupil voice has played a relatively small part in understanding transition arrangements, policy, practice and research related to the primary-secondary transition”. Seldom has research considered multiple aspects of the transition at once, whilst simultaneously focusing on the perspectives of pupils who undertake it. In light of this, it is important to state from the outset that this study is committed to listening to and understanding the voices of young people involved in the data collection process. In doing so, narratives can be identified that reflect well the lived experiences of those young people across the transitional period from primary to secondary school within the PE subject area.

1.5 Research Objectives

It is important at this point to explicitly state the research objectives of this study, which can be seen to be three-fold:

1. Explore pupils’ experiences of the primary to secondary transition within PE to identify transitional issues affecting their engagement with the subject.
2. Explore the perspectives of teaching staff and external coaches working across the primary to secondary transition in PE to recognise current transitional practice and potential areas of disconnect with pupils.
3. Offer practical recommendations addressing transitional issues in PE and any areas of disconnect between pupils and staff, with a view to improving the transition in PE for future pupils.

Whilst the primary aim of this study is to identify transitional issues within PE from pupils’ perspectives, it is important to recognise that this should in no way downplay the value of data collected from other individuals. Whilst remaining committed to listening to and understanding the voices of young people, exploring the unique perspectives of teaching staff and external coaches allows the study to more accurately reflect the transition within PE. Collectively, the views of pupils,

teaching staff and external coaches help to inform any practical recommendations made and in considering a range of different perspectives, those recommendations should stand the best chance of effectively addressing the issues they set out to tackle.

1.6 County Durham Sport

It is important to acknowledge the funding organisation that has helped to make the study possible. County Durham Sport (CDS) is one of 43 Active Partnerships in operation nationally, funded by Sport England, who work collaboratively to create the conditions for an active nation using the power of sport and physical activity to transform lives. County Durham Sport seek to create an in-depth understanding of the needs of the local community within County Durham, broker cross-sector partnerships, support the development of a welcoming and inclusive workforce, engage communities and share learning of what works locally. In particular, County Durham Sport focus their efforts on helping those who are inactive to start to become active, as well as considering underrepresented groups in society who will benefit the most from an active lifestyle. In light of this, this study can be seen to align closely with their efforts and helps to complement their ongoing work to facilitate positive change on a local level through sport and physical activity.

1.7 Thesis Structure

The remainder of the thesis will be structured as follows. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two offers a critical review of literature relevant to this research study, from both a theoretical and conceptual perspective. The chapter firstly explores how gender and socioeconomic status can influence pupils' involvement in physical activity alongside the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, whose theoretical concepts are drawn upon throughout the study. Focus then turns to the transition in which pupils' move from primary to secondary school, in which the work of Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999) is used as a starting point from which to explore the transition specifically from a PE viewpoint. Each of the Five Bridges are considered in relation to the transition within a PE context, as well as how school facilities may influence physical activity participation within schools.

Chapter Three outlines the methodological perspective of the study and includes discussion of ontological and epistemological viewpoints, as well as the qualitative approach to research taken in the study, given the aforementioned commitment to listening to and understanding the voices of young people. The two-phased approach to data collection with pupils and individuals working across the transition within PE is detailed within the chapter, alongside an explanation of how the data would be interpreted and subsequently analysed, in order to address the research objectives. Furthermore, ethical considerations of the study are detailed and a timeline of the study is provided, accounting for changes in approach made as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter Four presents the study's findings and discussion and is split into two key themes. Firstly, the Chapter focuses on the importance of relationships to pupils across the transition, including relationships with peers and teachers. Secondly, there is a discussion of an increase in pupils own bodily awareness around the age they undertake the transition and the role PE changing rooms and kit can play in pupils' development of such awareness. The Chapter ends with a discussion of existing good practice in the aforementioned areas that was discovered during the study.

Chapter Five provides conclusions and practical recommendations for both primary and secondary schools that may improve the transition within PE for pupils moving from KS2 to KS3. Conclusions seek to draw on the theoretical workings of Pierre Bourdieu, as well as the work of Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999) on the Five Bridges to Transition, in addition to other relevant literature around the transition in PE. Recommendations include, but are not limited to, consciousness-raising exercises with PE teachers around how their habitus may influence their delivery of lessons and the consequences this can have on pupils, as well as how 'reframing' secondary PE lessons may help to better engage pupils' post-transition and raise physical activity levels in young people.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Having set out both why physical activity is important to children and young people, as well as the role school play in helping their pupils to become physically active in the introductory chapter, Chapter Two will review literature that explores these concepts further. The Chapter will begin by introducing the work of Pierre Bourdieu and the theoretical concepts that underpin a Bourdieusian framework, which is used throughout this study. The Chapter will then explore how gender and socioeconomic status influence children and young people's physical activity participation around the age they undertake the primary to secondary school transition. Following this, literature directly relating to the primary to secondary school transition will be explored and, in particular, the work of Galton *et al.* (1999) around the Five Bridges to Transition. The Five Bridges will then be considered specifically in a PE context before, finally, consideration is given to factors that may influence pupils transition exclusively within PE.

2.1 Pierre Bourdieu: A Theoretical Overview

As has previously been alluded to, this study will draw upon on the theoretical concepts devised by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. To use Bourdieu's own words, "research without theory is blind, and theory without research is empty" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p162). Prior to giving consideration on how his work could help to make sense of the eventual findings in this study, it is important to provide context to the theoretical framework assembled by Bourdieu that has been widely used in various academic fields. Concepts such as practice, field, habitus and capital can all be used to inform any sociological analysis of sport and physical activity. These fundamental concepts, as well as many others, have been widely discussed since their inception, with sport and exercise being only one area in which the work of Bourdieu has proven influential.

2.1.1 Bourdieu's Conceptual Tools

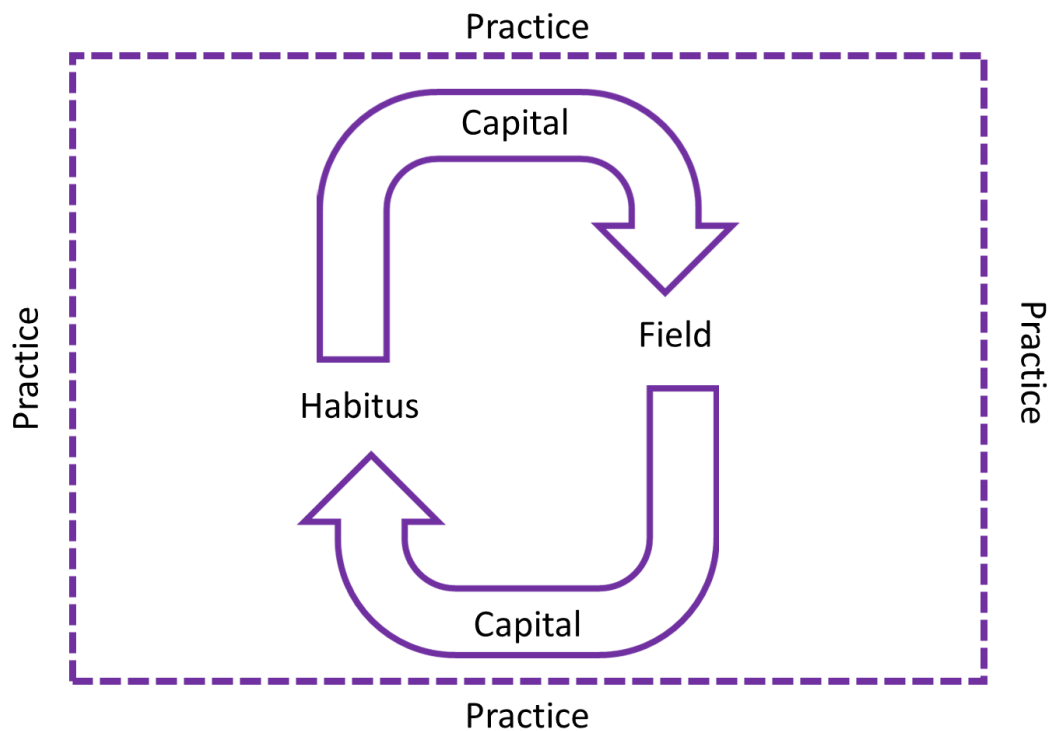


Figure 1: Interaction between field, habitus, and capital through practice (adapted from lisahunter, Smith, & emerald, 2015)

The above figure, adapted from a chapter by lisahunter, Smith, & emerald (2015) in a study that explores Bourdieu's conceptual tools, demonstrates the interaction between his most widely recognised concepts. In order to fully appreciate how Bourdieu's work can be used by sociological researchers, it is crucial that these concepts are outlined in detail and fully understood. Practice can be seen to be one of Bourdieu's most widely referenced concepts and one that was the focus of much of his own empirical work. Practice is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the habitus, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions (Bourdieu, 1990b). Bourdieu proposed that it is our taken-for-granted, recursive daily practices that reveal the visible, objective social phenomena that determine nature in our society (Hunter *et al.*, 2015). Whilst practice is accomplished without conscious deliberation and is not without purpose; it is both the result and the process by which field and habitus are evoked. Bourdieu argues that action or practice is linked to the reproduction of social structures and the maintenance and reproduction of unequal social relations (Dagkas and Quarmby, 2015).

Firstly, it is important to state that Bourdieu employed the concepts of field and social space to essentially replace the notion of society, as he believed all social space to be made up of many fields with their own distinct features (Hunter *et al.*, 2015). Thorpe (2009, p496) provides a simplistic, yet highly useful definition of field, referring to it as “a structured system of social positions occupied by either individuals or institutions engaged in the same activity”. Hunter *et al.* (2015) describe how different fields have their own objective structures, such as rules and conventions, that are represented by the individuals or groups within any specific field. Furthermore, these fields grow out of and determine the social positioning and actions of those individuals and collectives who identify with them. All fields contain people who dominate and those who are dominated, and this relationship of inequality causes a struggle within the field between those who wish to preserve it and those that wish to see transformation (ibid). The term field is necessarily a flexible one, given that new contexts are constantly arising whilst existing ones are being re-shaped. For example, Wiltshire, Lee and Williams (2019, p229) explain how “a school can be considered a field and so too can the subject of PE”. In a piece that is highly relevant to this study, Hunter (2004) makes clear that the field of PE is made up of a structured system of social relations between many different characters. These include: the educational authority, PE teacher educators, curriculum writers, health and sport professionals who have influence over curriculum and practices, individual school administrators, PE teachers, and PE pupils. Another further example of how different fields can meet in a certain setting can be seen in O'Donovan, Sandford and Kirk's (2014) study that focuses on changing rooms in PE. The study considers how a number of fields intersect in that specific context (e.g. schooling, physical culture, peer culture). However, field alone cannot and does not determine an individual's or group's actions. In reality, it is the relationship between field and another concept pertaining to Bourdieu: habitus.

The notion of habitus is perhaps Bourdieu's most useful tool for examining the generative basis of social practice (Hunter *et al.*, 2015). It refers to a set of acquired schemes of dispositions, perceptions and appreciations which orient an individual's or group's practices and give them meaning (Bourdieu

and Wacquant, 1992). A central element in Bourdieu's theorisations of the habitus is his emphasis on how the past is likely to play a role in informing the future. For Bourdieu, the habitus is the product of history as it is history that produces individual and collective practices. The 'system of dispositions' constitutes "a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future" (Bourdieu, 1977, p82 cited in Forbes and Maxwell, 2018). O'Donovan, Sandford and Kirk (2015) described how Bourdieu saw the habitus 'as society written into the body', which forms an unconscious basis for behaviour, thoughts, and emotions in every possible situation. Having now outlined the concepts of field and habitus as they were intended by Bourdieu, it is possible to begin to understand why participation in a certain sporting field (or any field) requires a habitus that matches (Stuij, 2015).

There remains one concept that connects both field and habitus yet to be explored. Indeed, the final concept that shall be discussed is that of capital. It is multidimensional in nature and there are many different types of capital that can influence the aforementioned concepts. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of capital could be seen to be complex and it is therefore necessary to breakdown the forms of it discussed widely in his work. Bourdieu (1984, p471 cited in Hunter *et al.*, 2015) defined capital as "usable resources and powers, the main forms being economic (income and monetary assets), cultural (skills and knowledge), social (connections and relations) and symbolic (status)". To recognise that Bourdieu's concept of capital goes beyond a solely economic form, to include social, symbolic and cultural forms, is important to fully grasp and understanding his application of the theory. It is therefore worthwhile expanding on the different aspects of the varying forms of capital described above and how they may influence an individual's or group's field and habitus. Firstly, given its relevance to this study, "social capital is defined by a network of lasting relations, a belongingness or connectedness with others in the field" (Hunter *et al.*, 2015, p13). Meanwhile, cultural capital can refer to the product of education and to the collection of elements such as skills and credentials that one acquires through being part of a particular social class. Sharing similar forms of cultural capital with others, for example a degree from a particular university or college, creates a sense of collective

identity and group position (e.g. “people like us”). Given the prominence of physical activity in this study, it should be recognised that Bourdieu saw physical capital as just another form of cultural capital. However, work by other academics, notably Shilling (2003), have since gone further in developing physical capital as a standalone concept. Symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1998, cited in Hunter, 2004) draws from any of the abovementioned capitals and is given value by a particular groups' perception of what is valued. Again, using an educational example, some young people may be perceived as good pupils by teaching staff and therefore afforded more symbolic capital than those not perceived as such. The accumulation of symbolic and material forms of capital can influence an individual's position in their field.

Bourdieu (1998, cited in Hunter, 2004) states that the more people have in common in a given social space, the closer they are and that they are distributed according to the volume of the different kinds of capital they possess, and according to the relative weight of the different forms of capital. Put simply, in some fields economic capital may have a superior weighting over other forms, whilst in others economic wealth may count for much less. The forces active in a specific social space help to define the capitals within it and their conferring power over it (Wacquant, 1989).

2.1.2 Bourdieu in Wider Sport and Physical Activity Research

Having provided an overview of Bourdieu's key theorisations, we turn to consider how previous academics have applied these whilst exploring sports-related issues and, particularly, sport and physical activity participation.

Stempel (2005) states that sociologists of sport seeking to systematically test Bourdieu's theories have tended to focus on demonstrating that sport operates as a type of cultural capital. This is likely to be because it comprises skills and knowledge, things necessary for successful participation in the sports and exercise field (Nielsen *et al.*, 2012; Stempel, 2005). For example, in the field of organised sports, possession of sporting capital can result in participation in a certain sport at a specific club because one has a 'sense of one's place' (Stuij, 2015). Similarly, for those with little to no sporting capital, no

participation is likely as they feel 'that's not for the likes of us' (Stuij, 2015). There has been concerns expressed that numerous academic studies have shown that lower socio-economic groups tend to be less active (Wiltshire, Lee and Williams, 2019) and in particular young people from low SES groups experience greater barriers to participation in sport (Dagkas and Quarmby, 2015; Dagkas and Stathi, 2007). Therefore, these groups can be seen to possess little of the capital required to participate in sport and exercise.

Ferry and Lund (2018) discuss how in the fields of both sport and education, the possession of capital and habitus influences an individual's lifestyles and choices, which in turn affects the social selection within these fields. It is through such examples that it is possible to see Bourdieu's theorisations at play; invisibly underpinning the workings in a part of society. They can be used to explain differences in people's perceptions of sport and physical activity. As previously discussed, people apprehend reality through the schemes of perception and appreciation of their habitus, so it therefore makes 'sociological' sense that different social groups do not agree about the profits expected from physical activity (Lalonde and Kurdy, 2002). The same authors explain how certain groups will seek external effects on the body such as a visible muscular development, whereas others will tend to seek internal profits; that is, physical and / or mental health benefits or disease prevention. Of course, sporting participation and physical activity can bring about both effects simultaneously. It is the prioritisation of each effect to the individual that is the key to understanding their respective reasoning for participation. Having already alluded to the role of social class in sporting participation, the following will consider the issue in greater depth, including exploration of how social class impacts on young people.

Social class is a set of social and economic relations that influence, dominate and dictate people's lives (Evans and Davies, 2006). Stempel (2005) states that the more dominant higher classes partake in strenuous aerobic exercise, moderate levels of weight-training and competitive sports that restrain violence and direct physical domination to draw boundaries between themselves and the middle to

lower classes. These class-based differences are then passed to the next generation through parental involvement in selecting which sports their young children are first exposed to, essentially ensuring the continuation of the dominant class over the lower classes. This is an important point to consider when exploring how children's habitus for sport and physical activity participation is shaped by social class. It is because of this process that habitus is not necessarily something that is chosen by individuals, but subconsciously adopted from a very young age. The process in which children acquire a sporting habitus largely is unconscious and resembles what Strandbu and Steen-Johnsen (2014) call "learning without agentic reflection". Stuij (2015) considers the socialisation into organised sports of young adolescents with a lower socio-economic status and discusses "the internalisation of sporting capital", suggesting that schools and external sports clubs are sites where this process typically takes place. Stuij (2015) uses Bourdieu in an attempt to demonstrate how young children of two divergent social classes obtain their habitus underlying their sports and exercise behaviour, reporting striking differences in the habitus acquired by the children, largely arising out of differences in the impact of socialising agents. The study found that children from parents of a higher social class find their habitus heavily influenced by their nuclear family, which explicitly controls and regulates the children's exercise behaviour. Meanwhile, children from a lower social class find their habitus influenced by the extended family, PE teachers and also peers, resulting in a broad range of less strictly ordered activities, undertaken at different places (Stuij, 2015). This could suggest that PE teachers in schools with a higher percentage of children from lower SES backgrounds may have greater scope to impact on their pupils than their counterparts in schools with children from more prosperous backgrounds. Whilst these findings may be difficult to generalise, they do provide a hypothesis that challenges the often-presumed importance of SES *if* sport socialisation takes place.

Stuij (2015) writes that the transmitting of life skills through organised leisure activities is part of what Lareau (2002) calls 'concerted cultivation', wherein the nuclear family is intensively involved in the reproduction of sports behaviour in a strict mode, and hence in the continuation of social structures (Brown, 2005; Cushion and Jones, 2012). Regular attendance at sports clubs is normal within this

group and this behaviour is unquestioned; it is fixed within the habitus of these children. Vincent and Ball (2007, p1068) theorise that working-class parents are less likely to think about their children as 'a project for development' as they are more concerned with everyday life, which is supported by Lareau's (2002) suggestion that working-class parents are focused less on the development of special talents in their children than those of higher social class. Both findings echo the work of Coakley (2006, p154) that states, "parental commitment to their children's sport participation is grounded in an emerging family habitus centred in the middle and upper-middle class of post-industrial societies". The main difference in the socialisation of lower and higher socioeconomic children is the degree of structure in their sport and exercise, which is predominantly determined by the aforementioned regulating agents, such as family members or teachers (Stuij, 2015).

Laberge and Kay (2002) write that the work of Bourdieu provides an interesting explanation as to why physical activity promotion strictly oriented towards health benefits mostly succeed among social groups perceived to hold a high volume of cultural capital. According to their position in the social structure, these social groups have internalised a distinctive ethic that leads them to find satisfaction in health-orientated activities. In relation to this study, it could be hypothesised that a potential reason for a decline in physical activity participation is that children start to become more aware of their social status around the time of transition and that as they move into secondary school, any feelings of equality that may exist in primary school begin to erode away.

Even when referring to the 'dominant' class, it should be recognised that divisions exist even within that itself. There is evidence to support a gendered 'ascetic vs luxury' divide between the culturally and economically dominated fractions of the dominant class (Stempel, 2005). The culturally dominant category tends to invest more energy in (feminine) fitness sports and the principle of strenuously working their bodies, whereas the economically dominant class invests comparatively more energy in (masculine) competitive sports (Stempel, 2005, p429). This notion warrants further investigation in

school-aged children in order to determine whether this is a reality, even at a younger age than perhaps Stempel had in mind.

Social class is historically a very durable structural phenomenon that can have lasting impacts on individual's health (Scambler, 2007). Wiltshire, Lee and Williams (2019) write that ephemeral policy changes and short-term (often school-based, extra-curricular) physical activity interventions are unlikely to reduce health inequalities because they do not deal with the social conditions that produce, and reproduce, durable classed dispositions that differentially position young people in relation to physical activities. Considering the evidence, school-based extra-curricular activities are in some respects counterintuitive, given that these opportunities may be more readily taken up by pupils of higher socio-economic status, only increasing the gap in activity levels. This in many ways further underlines the importance of PE lessons as perhaps the primary environment in which equality in physical activity participation can be pursued.

2.1.3 Bourdieu and Physical Education

Before drawing the discussion of Bourdieu to a close, it is valuable to concentrate on work related specifically to the work of Bourdieu and physical education in schools. Hunter (2004) remarks of how pupils who do not value PE arguably have less access to capital and less influence on the construction of this field. The reasons for not valuing the subject could be varied, from having previous negative experiences in PE, to simply preferring other subjects in school, although this is not something that Hunter discusses at length. The key takeaway is that for those who do not value PE in schools, it subsequently proves very difficult to remove the negative perceptions placed on them by others within the PE field who do value the subject. Hunter (2004) goes onto write that the discursive space of the good pupil in PE can be seen to be shaped by characteristics of competence, competition, comparison, display, skill, and fitness, through a sport discourse. From this we can deduce that to accrue physical capital in the subject of PE, a pupil may need to be able to recognise the discourses of sport and operate successfully within them. Hunter (2004) concludes that to not engage with the

aforementioned discourses will mean the pupil attracts a label of 'not good', which is reinforced publicly every time they participate in PE, or avoids participation altogether. Whether this 'not good' label is attached by teaching staff or fellow pupils is somewhat irrelevant in the context of the individual; what is important is that Bourdieu's habitus remains strong and enduring so that the label is very difficult to remove once attached. Even more difficult to change is the PE field itself. Any attempts to reshape the environment to better facilitate those 'not good' individuals en masse, without the necessary capital to do so, will be faced with stubborn resistance from those whose habitus closely match the field in question, such as specialist PE teachers. Failure to change the environment ultimately determines that the cycle continues, repeating as each school year passes.

McSharry's (2017) study into how female pupils experience and negotiate masculinist school sport examines gender inequalities in obtaining recognition in sport, as well as discrimination in accessing male-orientated sports, all through a Bourdieusian account of 'masculine domination'. Despite an increase in recent years of the visibility of women in the field of sport, the association of sport with perceived natural male characteristics such as muscularity, strength and aggression remain. Indeed, this can also be seen to be the case within PE, as Metcalfe (2018) states that school PE has historically reproduced elements of hegemonic masculinity through sport-based curricula which prioritise historical and stereotypical representations of masculinity. For most, it is a simple fact that more men than women play highly physical team sports, that men have an apparently natural propensity and ability to do so and that men's success in sport is more celebrated and honoured. McSharry (2017) believes that it is within this 'taken-for-grantedness' and unrecognisability that male domination is at its most powerful in Bourdieusian terms. With regards to PE in schools, McSharry writes that where girls participate in sports in schools, particularly male-associated sports, an array of physical and symbolic restrictions persist. Moreover, school-aged girls are often marginalised by PE curricula and practices, suggesting that for many a negative relationship with sport and physical activity has become embodied within one's habitus (Metcalfe, 2018). Physical barriers that some girls have to overcome in PE are something that Garrett (2004) acknowledged, stating that the types of activities that 'count'

in PE are frequently associated with power, aggression, strength and speed. Furthermore, a Norwegian study exploring how girls' identity construction in PE is influenced by current fitness and sport discourses also seeks to reinforce how gender inequalities are prevalent in school sport (Walseth, Aartun and Engelsrud, 2017). The authors state that girls often perceive their physical activity choices to be more limited than those of boys. Metcalfe (2018) suggests that young people may feel limited in their opportunities within PE because of their (mis)understanding of gender, based on an ideology of difference between one's sex as male or female. The consequence of this is that young people feel they cannot freely express their gendered habitus within PE (ibid).

McSharry (2017) further attempts to attribute at least some causation as to how what has been described above has come to be the reality within school sport. According to Brown (2005, p7) "dispositions embedded in games focused PE and the pedagogies employed to teach them place 'masculine schemas' at the heart of PE". When girls fail to pursue physical activities that to them appear to be naturally male orientated, they actually confirm and reinforce a pre-existing social order. McSharry (2017, p350) writes that "as girls watch boys' games from the side-lines, they effectively participate in their own subordination or, according to Bourdieu, serving as 'flattering mirrors' to the games of men". The irony is that girls may opt out because of their own perceived lack of ability, but by virtue of their disengagement they rule out opportunities to disprove their own perceptions (McSharry, 2017). Despite social movements and policies implemented to improve women's sport over recent years, entrenched views of what is 'right' for young women still exclude a sporty identity as a viable option within one's gendered habitus (Metcalfe, 2018). There is then, perhaps a need to continue the work of activist researchers to specifically target the development of conscious-raising strategies to bring gendered assumptions about sport and PE into young people's consciousness where they can be explicitly challenged (ibid).

2.1.4 Reflections on Bourdieu

Having discussed Bourdieu's theories, it would be easy to forget that the social structures mentioned can be altered and reshaped over time. Furthermore, engagement in physical activity is, in many ways, irreducible to explanations of individual agency or indeed structural constraints (Wiltshire, Lee and Williams (2019, p237). Bourdieu explained habitus as an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structure. Put simply, "it is durable but not eternal!" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p133). This should give hope to anyone wishing to reduce inequalities in physical activity levels in children and young people or, more specifically, adjust the way in which PE is delivered in schools to better engage children in sport and physical activity. Having said this, however, without addressing fundamental structural issues, the cultural norms and personal dispositions that have contributed to a well-established socio-economic gap in physical activity levels amongst children and young people, they more likely than not to endure through generations to come.

2.2 Influences on Children's Physical Activity

2.2.1 Gender Influences

A number of previous studies have found that gender can have a significant influence on children and young people's physical activity participation around the age at which they undertake the primary to secondary school transition. Knowles, Niven and Fawkner (2011) state longitudinal research has highlighted that the decline in physical activity is most apparent during the transition from primary to secondary school and that this decline is more prevalent in adolescent girls than boys. Gray *et al.* (2018, p158), meanwhile, writes that in a PE context, ensuring that girls have a meaningful and successful learning experience is particularly important given the substantial evidence to suggest that they are more likely to disengage from PE and physical activity as they move into adolescence. This statement is perhaps grounded somewhat in the findings of Mitchell, Gray and Inchley (2015) in discovering that the decline in levels of activity in adolescent girls is most evident across the transition from primary to secondary school. Other studies, including that of Whitehead and Biddle (2008), have also noted the tendency for girls engage in less physical activity than boys throughout their teenage

years. A Sport England report focused specifically on transitions facing young people found that boys are more likely to be involved in at least 60 minutes of physical activity everyday than girls across the primary to secondary transition, with no change in the percentage difference post-transition (Sport England, 2018). Importantly, in the context of this study, this indicates that the participation gap between genders in physical activity may already be established prior to children starting Key Stage 3 (KS3) in secondary school. This section considers this prospect, why it may be the case and how both primary and secondary schools could work towards narrowing the gender gap in physical activity participation.

Trend (2007, p199) states that “clearly there are more girls than boys for whom PE has emerged as a source of anxiety”. Mitchell, Gray and Inchley (2015) explain that much of the research that has been conducted specifically exploring girls’ participation in PE and physical activity has highlighted potential psychological factors that could impact upon their desire or motivation to take part. It is, therefore, important to address any potential issues with psychological underpinnings as to why girls are less physically active than boys across the transition from primary to secondary school.

It would appear that body image and physical appearance have been an ongoing concern for school-aged girls. Spencer, Rehman and Kirk (2015) reviewed literature about how gender norms are understood in relation to the health-related behaviours of physical activity and nutrition in adolescent girls and found that they did not discuss health as a priority, rather defining it in relation to body size. Furthermore, they indicated that appearance, particularly being seen as “slender” was important to them and described ideal bodies using the words ‘thin’ and ‘pretty’. Walseth, Aartun and Engelsrud (2017) considered how existing sport and fitness discourses influence girls’ identity construction in a secondary PE setting. Although the study focuses on Norwegian pupils, it provides an excellent example how such discourses can influence pupils’ concepts of both the ideal body and their choices of activities in PE. Some of the girls in the study reported having negative bodily experiences and exercised without enjoying it, expressing discomfort with the idea that other people were judging

them in the process. Indeed, these individuals often assumed a passive role in PE lessons, expressed dissatisfaction with their body and also displeasure at wearing fitted clothes (uniforms) in lessons. They also voiced deep concerns about their body that seemed to have a significant impact on their sense of identity, social behaviour and engagement in PE lessons more generally. To add to this, Allison, Bird and McClean (2017) acknowledge that negative comments, understandably, may exacerbate girls' worries about their weight and body image. Quite clearly, body image and factors associated with the concept is of great concern to numerous girls within the PE environment. However, simply identifying this does not provide answers as to how such concerns may be countered, or greater still, alleviated altogether. Hall (2000) argued that identity constructions are always influenced by powerful social discourses. Girls' construction of their body seems to be embedded within the dominant beauty and fitness discourses, along with the body ideals that these discourses reproduce, such as being seen to be 'thin' and 'slender', as previously discussed. The idea that girls' concerns over their body image may prevent participation in PE and wider physical activity presents a significant challenge to those teaching PE.

It is important at this point to note that such concerns do not exclusively effect girls. Tischler and McCaughtry (2011), exploring marginalised boys' perceptions of PE, found that concerns amongst children aged 11 to 13 included: having the wrong body shape; having less coordination; and being slower, weaker, less athletic, less fit, and more subdued. Additionally, Brooks and Magnusson (2006) discovered team sports can be a particular concern for some boys in secondary school, with direct physical or verbal abuse being perceived as a likely repercussion for those not displaying masculine physical prowess. Spencer, Rehman and Kirk (2015) similarly found that adolescent boys rated strength and masculinity as important features to succeed in PE. Nevertheless, it would appear that body concerns impact far fewer boys than girls in PE and wider physical activity across the transitional period, based on the substantially greater amount of literature addressing the latter gender.

Alongside from anxiety related to body image, there are other sources of significant anxiety that negatively impact upon girls in secondary PE lessons and wider physical activity. Mitchell, Gray and Inchley (2015, p600) discovered that “many girls compare their ability with other, more ‘sporty’ pupils, resulting in feelings of inadequacy and lower perceived competence”. Furthermore, verbal bullying or general teasing can also induce crippling competence anxiety amongst girls in PE lessons (ibid). The narratives of teasing relayed by the pupils in PE lessons were most often linked to ability and girls have stated that simply the *potential* for teasing made them feel under pressure and anxious, particularly in the context of team games where mistakes were felt to be more public and more salient in relation to winning and losing (Hills and Croston, 2012, p596). In academic terms, the aim of wanting to avoid failure can be referred to as pursuing mastery avoidance goals which link to the desire to avoid performing more poorly than others do and have been shown to have consistently deleterious effects on performance outright and particularly on motivation (Darnon *et al.*, 2007). Lyngstad (2010, cited in Walseth, Aartun, and Engelsrud, 2017) cited several techniques that girls are known to adopt in PE lessons to become invisible or avoid participation, particularly in team sports. These tactics typically involved girls positioning themselves in ways that made it difficult for teammates to pass the ball to them in certain sports, thus avoiding failure or drawing attention to their lack of skill. It is not difficult to envisage how consistent behaviour in this manner could lead to continued stagnation or decline in performance to the point of eventual dropout. What is highly relevant to this study, however, is that gender differences in perceived competence, along with mastery-approach, performance-approach and mastery-avoidance goal adoption, appear to be established by the time pupils leave primary school, and these differences therefore remain during Year 7 and beyond (Warburton and Spray, 2008, p172). The majority of the aforementioned studies in this section relate to secondary school pupils. However, the findings of Warburton and Spray (2008) would suggest that solutions to overcome competency anxiety in girls should be considered for *both* primary and secondary school pupils. In light of this, competency anxiety in PE in primary aged children would perhaps be an area worthy of further research.

In addition to perceptions around body image and physical competency, gender can also be seen to influence pupil relationships across the primary to secondary transition and these relationships can be seen to impact upon physical activity participation. Pratt and George (2005, p19), in a UK-based study, found that in boys, “as the end of primary school approached, closer and more supportive friendships evolved, suggesting a shared realisation of entering the unknown and the need for peer support”. The authors also found, however, that the opposite occurred in girls and that instead of using the opportunity to secure closer friendships with girls who were now known to be going to the same secondary school, any peripheral relationships were legitimately broken off (ibid). If this phenomenon is widespread amongst pupils in the period approaching transition to secondary school, this may be advantageous to boys in allowing them to settle more quickly with established friendships entering into KS3. Further to this, Knowles, Niven and Fawkner (2011) state that girls typically feel comfortable in their physical activity environment in primary school working with their peers and this something that does not always translate into secondary school. Both findings are of particular significance in PE as Gibbons (2014) found that feeling connected to and trusting those around you in PE lessons is important because relatedness is a strong predictor of intrinsic motivation, especially among girls. Nonetheless, Gibbon states that relatedness has received less attention in the research literature than competency and autonomy therefore it is possible further research could help to provide clearer pathways to create PE environments that better facilitate strong relationships between female pupils.

The work of Mandigo *et al.* (2008) makes clear that, although boys and girls have the same basic needs, social and cultural factors may mediate how individuals react to the same environment and also to each other within the same environment. It is important, here, to acknowledge the bigger picture and consider literature surrounding the gender inequality in physical activity in the years following the transition from primary to secondary school. Hirvensalo and Lintunen (2011, p16) found that “participation in sports and exercise activities moves closer to gender equality once individuals enter adulthood, where presumably they have greater choice and autonomy with respect to leisure-time

activities". In a study considering gendered trends in young people's participation in active lifestyles, Metcalfe and Lindsey (2020) show a gendered trend for young men to choose competitive team sports (played with other individuals), and young women gym and fitness activities (activities that tend to be carried out individually). Furthermore, research by Metcalfe (2020) found that during the first COVID-19-induced national lockdown within the UK in 2020, girls were found to enjoy the freedom of autonomy in their physical activity. If, therefore, greater choice and autonomy of physical activity can influence girls' participation rates, this is worth considering how practical changes could be made in schools earlier to narrow the gender gap in participation rates currently seen when moving from KS2 to KS3. Ensuring any changes are grounded in research is especially important and, relevant to this study, Sproule *et al.* (2011) acknowledges that pupil-centred pedagogies have already been found to have greater scope to provide individualised learning experiences closely aligned to the abilities and needs of the learner.

A final point of consideration with regards to how gender may influence the primary to secondary school transition, in a PE context, is whether mixed or single-sex PE lessons are more beneficial to participation. Mitchell, Gray and Inchley (2015, p594) state that "generally, research suggests that girls prefer single-sex PE lessons, as boys are often perceived to be too strong or too aggressive". Indeed, studies focusing on the topic do generally appear largely supportive of single-sex lessons. However, another school of thought exists that advocates mixed-gender PE lessons as a method for improving physical participation rates amongst girls. In their 2012 study, Hills and Croston introduce the idea of 'undoing gender' within PE. The investigative focus in the study is mixed-gender PE lessons within one secondary school. Findings suggest that whilst some girls expressed a belief that boys were generally better at PE than girls, others challenged what the authors describe as a 'widely held assumption'. Several girls enjoyed the opportunities to interact with boys and in some cases felt uneasy about the segregation that occurred when boys and girls had separate PE lessons in secondary school. Gray *et al.* (2018) offer the point that separating boys and girls in PE could limit the social learning opportunities for both genders and only further serves to reinforce gender stereotypes within PE.

Further research involving more school case studies would be required to evaluate whether “undoing gender” in secondary school PE could be effective in raising physical activity participation rates amongst girls more generally. It could certainly, however, be seen to merit further research in an area that has up to now has lacked viable, effective solutions. Related to this point, literature related to successful interventions exclusively targeting girls is somewhat scarce, but not non-existent. In their systematic review of physical activity interventions aimed solely at increasing girls’ participation in sport, Allison, Bird and McClean (2017, p218) stress “the importance of consulting with girls about physical activity; the importance of encouraging girls to try new sports and sustain participation; the need for relatable, healthy role models in the media; and the role of the coach”. Both specialist secondary and non-specialist primary teachers of PE could bear this in mind in their own attempts to increase physical activity participation amongst girls in school.

2.2.2 Socioeconomic Influences

Gender is not the only factor that can be seen to have a significant influence on pupil’s physical activity participation around the primary to secondary school transition age. The socioeconomic background of an individual is another key factor known to influence physical activity habits and is therefore something that must be considered within the context of this study. When discussing pupils socioeconomic background, it is important to acknowledge the role that families can play in influencing their children’s physical activity behaviours. Dagkas and Quarmby (2015) indicate that the fields of family, schooling and peer culture contribute to an individual’s disposition towards physical activity, whilst Rhodes *et al.* (2020) discuss how families are important for the support and promotion of healthy movement behaviours of children and young people (Rhodes *et al.*, 2020). Morley *et al.* (2015) discovered that high and middle SES children significantly outperformed low SES children for total, fine and gross motor skills at primary school age and there is little evidence to suggest that this is a statistic that improves as pupils progress into secondary school. The 2017/18 Active Lives Survey (Sport England, 2018, p23) found that children from the least affluent families are less likely to enjoy being active. Fairclough *et al.* (2009) explains that weekends represent the longest weekly period

available for family leisure time and higher SES parents are most likely to have the financial means and free time to provide their primary-age children with social and economic support to access sport and physical activity. This finding suggests that families with greater economic resources have more opportunities to access sport and physical activity, as well as for more freedom in what activities they partake in. This is particularly noteworthy in the context of Sport England's (2019) Active Lives Children and Young People (ALCYP) survey that found in Years 5 and 6 in primary school, more children do 30 minutes or more physical activity every day outside of school (27%) than when at school (22%). Considering such evidence, any gap between primary-aged children in physical activity participation will only be increased by the socioeconomic status of their family. Whilst the findings of the ALCYP survey will be explored in greater depth later in this chapter, it is perhaps now worth exploring further influences relating to SES that impact on physical activity participation in children outside of school.

A particular point connected to SES and physical activity provision that captures the attention relates to membership of sports clubs. Pot *et al.* (2016), in a study based in the Netherlands, found that membership to sports clubs is more common in higher SES groups, but that if children with lower SES participate in organised sports, then the socialisation process in them is similar to that of children with a higher SES. This supports the notion that socialisation into sports and physical activity is relatively independent of SES and as such, is a barrier that can be overcome. Pot *et al.* (2016) evaluates that parents are ultimately the key to sport and physical activity participation in children. As SES also influences adults sporting participation (Eime *et al.*, 2015) children from lower SES backgrounds will inevitably suffer from circumstances out of their control. However, given the complexity of factors that can play a role in determining how likely a child is to participate in sport and physical activity, it would not appear appropriate to fully support the conclusion drawn by Pot *et al.* (2016), but rather to acknowledge that parental influence is one key influence, rather than the most important one.

Given that some children may miss out on physical activity experiences outside of school, this potentially places more pressure on schools to ensure that their pupils are given equal opportunities

in sport and physical activity, as it is likely that school is the only time equality in this regard can be an achievable reality. Fairclough *et al.* (2009) states that efforts should be made to address inequalities in the prevalence of sedentary behaviours and sport participation by making physically active pastimes more attractive, accessible, and relevant to all families regardless of SES. If such efforts can start to be made within the school environment, it would seem likely that this will have a positive impact upon children and young people going forward.

2.3 The Primary to Secondary Transition and The Five Bridges

As alluded to in the introductory chapter of this study, research concentrating on the primary school to secondary school transition is not a new phenomenon, nor are consequential findings that the transition is an area where disruption in pupil's learning is likely. As such, the transition is an issue that has been highlighted on numerous occasions in recent decades, which is perhaps the clearest indicator that it is an issue of great complexity in which straightforward solutions are in short supply.

In 1980, Her Majesty's Deputy Senior Chief Inspector of Schools in Scotland used the elaborate metaphor of a pantomime horse in describing attempts by primary and secondary schools to achieve both progression and continuity in pupil's education (Boyd, 2005). Like a pantomime horse, primary and secondary schools would like to be moving in the same direction but found it difficult to get their legs moving in rhythm, not helped by the fact it was dark inside the costume (Boyd, 2005). The transitional process is a significant step in any child's education and can be a source of discontinuity within the educational system (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000; West *et al.*, 2010). The metaphor of the pantomime horse clearly illustrates that, even in the 1980s, clear communication between primary and secondary schools was seen as paramount to improving the transition across all school subjects.

Around the turn of the new millennium, Galton *et al.* (1999) found that studies from around the UK suggested that approximately 40% of pupils experience a "hiatus in progress" whilst moving from primary to secondary school. Recognising the implications that such a statistic may have on pupils, the aforementioned authors worked to provide a framework which schools could use to improve the

transition between primary and secondary school. Galton *et al.* (1999, p28-29) first outlined five headings related to the transition that they argued should be addressed to fully facilitate an effective transition for pupils. These headings can be seen to be expanded on by Barber (1999), who likened the divide between primary and secondary schools to a muddy river and suggested that school should work collaboratively to build bridges to enable a smoother crossing. Collectively, these works formed the Five Bridges of Transition and the development of these bridges can be seen to be critical to supporting a smooth transition from primary to secondary school. The Five Bridges are outlined below:

1. The Personal and Social Bridge (children's friendships and relationships)
2. The Bureaucratic Bridge (liaison between primary and secondary schools)
3. The Curriculum Bridge (to ensure continuation, not repetition in learning)
4. The Pedagogy Bridge (children's adjustments to different teaching styles)
5. The Management of Learning Bridge (children's adaptation of learning styles)

The fact that there are five bridges to consider only serves to reinforce the complexity of the transition from primary to secondary school. Interestingly, Galton and McLellan (2018) analysed how transitional practises in schools have developed since the original studies introducing the Five Bridges, only to find that, despite the earlier works of Galton *et al.* (1999), most areas had regressed to little or no practise at all. Galton and McLellan (2018) found that current practices in schools more closely resembled the reality in schools in the 1970s, falling well below the highpoint of transitional practise around the turn of the new millennium. Currently in schools, fewer pre-transition visits take place, retesting of children post-transition has been widely reintroduced and great emphasis is placed on a fresh start, rather than a natural progression between primary and secondary. Table 1 is adapted from Galton and McLellan's (2018) study that helps to provides a more visual, chronological overview of their findings with regard to the progress and regression of transitional practises from the 1970s to the time of the study.

Table 1: Practice Relating to The Five Bridges of Transition in Galton and McLellan (2018)

Transitional Bridges / Time Scale	Practice 1975-1980	Practice in 1997-2000	Practice 2017 Onwards
1. Bureaucratic Bridge	Occasional meetings between headteachers. Transfer of pupil records. Post-transfer testing by secondary schools.	Regular head meetings. Fewer records exchanged. Visits to Y6 classes by Y7 coordinator. Computerised data transfer.	Almost no contact between headteachers. Fewer pre-transfer visits to secondary schools. Post transfer testing re-introduced.
2. Personal and Social Bridge	Brief visit to transfer school.	Summer Induction days. Several parents' evenings. Use by Y6 of transfer school facilities (ICT, PE, drama). Buddy system between Y6 and Y7 pupils using email.	Summer induction day mainly used for administrative purposes and taster lessons. Little contact with present Y7 cohort. No prior use of transfer schools' facilities.
3. Curriculum Bridge	No activity.	Summer Schools.	Emphasis on a fresh start with some summer school activity.
4. Pedagogy Bridge	No activity.	More teacher contacts with peer observation. Some instances where teachers take over classes in the visiting school.	No activity.
5. Management of Learning Bridge	No activity.	Some post-induction programmes on themes such as Learning to learn.	Post-induction days now an extension of previous summer induction.

Table adapted from Galton and McLellan (2018)

The need for the Five Bridges should not downplay the fact there are, in many respects, huge practical differences between the primary and secondary school environments. Even Maurice Galton has himself recognised these differences and, to a certain extent, encourages pupils to embrace them, arguing that a certain degree of discontinuity is needed to mark children's 'status passage' (Galton, 2000, cited in Dismore and Bailey, 2010). However, considering the wider context, this quote can be seen to merely reflect that *some change* is inevitable across the transition, or using Barber's (1999) muddy river analogy, there is indeed a river to cross. Galton would generally argue that there remains a greater requirement for schools to build bridges to allow for this crossing to be as smooth and as straightforward as possible for pupils.

Having introduced the Five Bridges to Transition framework, previous transitional research will now be explored with consideration to the framework, before examining more closely research specifically

around the transition within PE. Knowles, Niven and Fawkner (2011), conducting a study examining factors related to the decline in physical activity behaviour in adolescent girls during the primary to secondary school transition, outlined that the transition represents a major-life event for many children and is characterised by a shift towards larger class sizes, unfamiliar peer groups and specialist subject teachers. Such changes in the educational environment can be seen to have significant effects on pupil's self-esteem, confidence and perceptions of competence when demonstrating both academic and physical ability (ibid). Interestingly, however, Jindal-Snape and Miller (2008) state that for schools that have specific transitional programmes in place, they are often based solely on the transmission of administrative and organisational procedures, rather than personal, social, emotional or physical attributes alluded to in the previously mentioned transitional study by Knowles, Niven and Fawkner.

2.3.1 The Bureaucratic Bridge

The Bureaucratic Bridge is potentially a significant influence in shaping the primary to secondary transition. Considering literature in relation to this bridge, it may be that lack of communication and dialogue between primary and secondary PE teaching staff is a more accurate reflection of current practice amongst schools. Capel, Zwozdiak-Myers and Lawrence (2004) analysed questionnaires from 80 secondary schools and 299 primary schools, with particular reference to PE. In those teachers that did engage in cross-transition dialogue, the highest percentage exchanged information through written documentation, followed then by discussion at cross-phase liaison meetings. The type of information discussed was generic information about the curriculum, rather than information about specific PE content covered or information about individual pupils, such as levels of attainment or ability. Furthermore, Capel, Zwozdiak-Myers and Lawrence (2004) found that even the information that was passed on, that might be used for pastoral purposes, was used by only a small number of teachers to plan for continuity and progression in the PE curriculum. There are potentially numerous reasons as to why cross-transition information may be disregarded by teaching staff, but one appears

more prominently in literature focused on primary to secondary school transition, and also specifically in PE. Evangelou *et al.* (2008) reported that interviews with local authority officials revealed that secondary schools did not appear to trust the data on pupils provided by primary schools, and this subsequently led to retesting of pupils once they arrived in secondary school. One possible reason for this is that secondary teachers, specialists in their chosen field, may not want to rely on assessments of pupils undertaken by non-specialist primary teachers (Capel, Zwozdiak-Myers and Lawrence, 2004). Indeed, it appears to be a widely accepted assumption that primary teachers are unable to develop sufficient expertise in the range of curriculum subjects they are expected to teach, notably in the PE subject area (Griggs 2007; Carney and Winkler, 2008). It is likely to be because of this that primary school staff teaching PE receive little support from their secondary counterparts and are often viewed as insignificant in providing initial physical education experiences to young children (Rainer and Cropley, 2015, p445). Morgan and Bourke (2008) state that high quality PE is largely dependent on the interaction between the teacher and the pupil and that, worryingly, there is a distinct lack of training and confidence of many primary generalist teachers to teach PE in the UK. Furthermore, it is often the case that the only time PE will be highlighted with regards to transition is when a pupil, or pupils, are of exceptional standard (Rainer and Cropley, 2015, p451) which only helps to reinforce any notion that PE in secondary school is primarily for those gifted in sport and physical activity, and not to improve the health and wellbeing of pupils more generally.

Having identified areas that may be having a negative impact across the transition, it is only appropriate to consider literature that may serve to improve them. ESTYN (2004, cited in Hodgkin *et al.*, 2013) suggests that one way to improve continuity between KS2 and KS3 would be classroom observations that would target both primary and secondary school teachers, requiring them both to teach in the phase that comes before or after their own. The motive behind this recommendation is clear; by making staff teach in the Key Stage that comes either directly before or after their usual age group, they may be able to better appreciate the others' role, which could in turn foster a new level of respect between the two stages of education. Whether this is a natural outcome of the

recommendation, however, is certainly not guaranteed. Furthermore, in practice, implications such as cost and time could have an impact on whether such a recommendation could be implemented effectively to improve the primary to secondary school transition. Nonetheless, at the very least it could serve to reveal how well each member of staff understood the other stage in the transition. Rainer and Cropley (2015) found that many primary school teachers were unaware of what was taught in KS3 PE and suggested that, similarly, secondary school PE teachers had little understanding of the primary PE curriculum which led in some cases to an “us and them” mentality that could be damaging to the transition process. Interestingly, the study found that “secondary PE teachers were the major protagonist and very much influenced and encouraged this divide, often not valuing or recognise the work delivered by the primary PE teacher” (Rainer and Cropley, 2015, p458).

Whilst administrative and organisational transition programmes address the Bureaucratic Bridge outlined within the Five Bridges framework, it is likely that such programmes are ineffective without schools paying adequate attention to the development of the other bridges. Building upon this point, ESTYN (2004, cited in Hodgkin *et al.* 2013) states that the best transition policies include well-developed arrangements between primary and secondary schools which establish pastoral links for meeting pupils personal and social needs. This raises the question of whether or not the Five Bridges are equally important. Although Galton *et al.* (1999) stated that all bridges should be developed to ensure an effective transition, the question as to whether they require equal attention is something that neither author addressed with clarity. This leaves the possibility that, in practice, certain bridges require greater attention than others and this is something that can be explored through the findings of this study.

2.3.2 The Personal and Social Bridge

Whilst the balance between how much attention each bridge should receive can be debated, what can be said with greater certainty is that to neglect the Personal and Social Bridge of transition when developing transitional programmes will likely limit their effectiveness and overall impact. At a time

when friendships and the peer groups are becoming increasingly important in the development of the adolescent, the transition between primary and secondary school often serves to disrupt, alter or sever them altogether (Mizelle and Irvin, 2000). A somewhat inevitable consequence of this is that some children develop anxiety across the transitional period. Of course, it is worth stating from the outset that certain levels of anxiety could be seen as expected and do not always have to be interpreted in a negative sense. Zeedyk *et al.* (2003) states that although transition to secondary school can result in anxiety for children, it is often accompanied by feelings of optimism and anticipation of new opportunities that await – a combined status characterised as ‘anxious readiness’. This interpretation is supported by Topping (2011) in finding that there are dual pupil perceptions of the transition – it is exciting but challenging, yielding a mix of optimism and anxiety. However, such feelings of excitement will not be universally shared by all children and the move will prove especially daunting for some, particularly where feelings of anxiety overshadow any feelings of excitement. It is in these cases that transitional programmes could be considered crucial in ensuring any consequences of anxious feelings do not arise and, if they do, they do not persist into something that becomes a longer-term issue. Interestingly, Lucey and Reay (2000) found that for most children anxiety is not only an inevitable consequence of the primary to secondary transition, but central to the development of effective coping strategies that can be used more generally, a point that supports the acceptance of certain anxiety levels. Nonetheless, reflecting on the literature above, transitional programmes that emphasise the Bureaucratic Bridge, through exclusive focus on administrative and organisational procedures (connected to evaluating children’s academic performance), inevitably run the risk of creating a post-transitional environment where anxieties both thrive and persist.

With this in mind, it is worthwhile taking time to consider a transitional strategy, specifically addressing the Personal and Social Bridge, that may be able to reduce children’s anxiety levels and tackle other transition related issues. Mentor schemes with pupils who have recently experienced the primary to secondary transition have been a principle focus of previous research. Topping (2011) recommended that schools develop a structured series of peer interactions with older pupils as a

transitional intervention for new Year 7 pupils. Pupils who had a structured series of peer interactions with older pupils at transition displayed fewer failing grades and missed fewer days of school than those who did not participate in such a programme, and females particularly benefited (Cognato, 1999, cited in Mizelle and Irvin, 2000). Although this does not necessarily provide evidence that children's social and emotional wellbeing improved through mentoring, this could be inferred by association as a direct consequence through the improved academic results and lower rate of absences. Parsons *et al.* (2008) conducted an evaluation of a peer mentoring programme based on staff and pupil surveys and visits to eight case study schools with several noteworthy findings. Of staff co-ordinating the transition in schools, 63% thought that the programme had improved pupils' confidence and self-esteem and that the vast majority of mentees were pleased to have a mentor, found their mentor helpful, and thought that the relationship with their mentor improved over time. Pupils reported that being mentored had improved their attitudes towards school and increased their confidence. The study suggested mentor and mentee matching seemed to be most successful when pupils were put together according to similar interests and hobbies or similar personality characteristics. An additional finding, impacting on mentors rather than mentees, was that a large majority (87%) believed that their role positively changed them in some way; including increasing their confidence and helping them talk to people more easily. Evidence that mentor schemes across the transition can help both new pupils and existing ones and can result in increased confidence is potentially a very important finding in the context of this study, as confidence is a factor known to influence sport and physical activity participation, something that will later be considered in greater depth.

2.3.3 The Curriculum Bridge: PE across Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3

In England, an Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) report published by the Department for Education (2013) reported that insufficient time was allocated to PE as a subject area to enable all pupils to achieve and meet all National Curriculum PE requirements, thus raising questions as to how

much quality PE pupils receive. Watson *et al.* (2017) states that whilst schools provide an ideal setting to promote children's physical activity, adding physical activity to the school day can be difficult given time constraints often imposed by competing key learning areas. Ultimately, the Department for Education (2020) states that it is up to schools to determine how much time is devoted to PE in the curriculum, but departmental guidance recommends that they should provide pupils with a minimum of two hours curricular PE per week. Previously, two hours of PE weekly had been a specific target for schools in England to achieve.

With regard to the aims of the national curriculum for PE in KS2 and KS3, there is not a great deal that separates them. The Department for Education (2020) states that the national curriculum for Physical Education at both KS2 and KS3 aims to ensure that all pupils:

- Develop competence to excel in a broad range of physical activities.
- Are physically active for sustained periods of time.
- Engage in competitive sports and activities.
- Lead healthy and active lives.

The extent to which these aims work coherently together is debatable and could be perceived to be counterintuitive. The third aim revolves around competitive sports which may mean, by implication, pupils associate PE lessons with competition and not necessarily leading healthy, active lives as the fourth aim outlines. This is due to the fact that leading a healthy and active lifestyle, inclusive of physical activity, does not necessarily require involvement in competitive sport. Gilchrist and Wheaton (2017) state that competitive sport may not be the best way to engage young people in physical activity, although the authors do accept alternative pedagogies to engage children remain largely uncharted. In light of this, it may be that this is an area that warrants further research.

With respect to continuation across Key Stages, at KS3 emphasis is placed on furthering physical development and skills learned in KS2. There is, however, a specific area lacking in continuation in which primary schools and secondary schools do not share the same responsibility, that being the

requirement for primary schools to include swimming in the PE curriculum. By the end of KS2, primary schools are expected to have taught their pupils to swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres and ensure they are all able to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations. However, not all pupils making the transition leave primary school able to do this. ALCYP survey data from 2018 shows that 77% of Year 7 children meet government requirements, meaning nearly one in four cannot (Sport England, 2019). The lack of curriculum continuity in this area means that some pupils find themselves with no opportunity, within the education system at least, to be able to achieve the primary school objectives after the transition. Indeed, the ALCYP survey demonstrates that the figure only increases very slightly to 81% by Year 11 (ibid). Although the ALCYP survey perhaps acts as a good indicator of swimming competency in children leaving primary school, it is difficult to accurately evaluate how many pupils leave primary school having met the swimming targets outlined above. Primary schools are required by the government to publish data on their swimming attainment levels in relation to PES Premium, although a worryingly low amount actually do so in practice. Lindsay *et al.* (2019) found that of 423 primary schools sampled, only 79 (18.7%) provided accurate details of pupils meeting national curriculum swimming requirements, as was obligatory for 2017/18 reporting.

Other than swimming in the primary stage of education, both primary and secondary schools have relative freedom in what sports and activities they deliver in lessons. At the turn of the new millennium, Capel and Piotrowski (2000) stated that the PE curriculum offered in primary schools depended largely upon the interests and expertise of the generalist teacher employed and that this determined that pupils' experiences of primary PE was substantially different depending on which primary they had attended. Little appears to have changed in the two decades since Capel and Piotrowski's study, as Duncombe, Cale and Harris (2018) write that primary teachers' low levels of confidence in PE have been acknowledged by a number of authors and a lack of teacher preparation and confidence often leads to poor PE curriculum coverage. It is likely, therefore, that pupils are moving to secondary school with contrasting knowledge and experiences within PE. For pupils who

may have received less substantial PE provision in primary school, secondary school may offer the chance to catch up with pupils who experienced more comprehensive PE provision. On the contrary, the progress of other pupils could potentially be subject to stagnation or regression, if they are to cover sports and skills already experienced in primary school. Bailey and MacFadyen (2000, cited in Kirk, 2005) explained research suggests that there is huge variation in the quality of children's experiences, both across schools and also within schools. In the years since, there is little to suggest this does not remain the reality in schools, particularly with regard to the market-based system of commercial providers offering PESSPA services in primary schools, as discussed in the introductory chapter. With increasing pressures on the primary school curriculum and on non-specialist teachers, it could be considered highly unlikely that primary schools can offer the kind of quality PE experience needed in the 5–11 age range that can significantly influence continued participation, as well as offer the resources needed if we hope realistically to improve participation levels that may form a base for lifelong participation (Kirk, 2005).

2.3.4 The Pedagogy Bridge and The Management of Learning Bridge

The final two bridges outlined by Galton *et al.* (1999) can be seen to be closely related and as such can be discussed together. However, there are subtle differences between the two bridges and it is important that they are not confused and are addressed separately in practice. For clarity, the Pedagogy Bridge refers to the adjustment pupils' make in response to the new teaching styles they are exposed to in secondary school, whilst the Management of Learning Bridge refers to the adaptations to way in which pupils learn and what schools can do to support these adaptations.

Firstly, the perceived importance of PE can be seen to influence pupils' responses to new teaching styles. Donnelly *et al.* (2017) writes that the perceived importance of PE and its contribution to children's academic success has varied considerably over the history of the modern educational system. Although other subject areas may be considered more important than PE within the school curriculum by school staff, this should not overshadow the fact that the subject can be a particularly

important influence on pupils' overall transitional experiences. Dismore and Bailey (2010) explain that PE is likely to be an especially significant context for intra and interpersonal negotiations during the transition, since it embodies many of the sites of such negotiation, for example gender, sexuality, physique, assertiveness and success. It is important the potential for experiences in post-transition PE lessons to influence pupils outside of the subject is overlooked, but rather carefully considered by teaching staff. If, as Donnelly *et al.* (2017) suggests, pupils perceive PE to be generally less important than other school subjects, this may alter the way they approach to the subject, as well as negatively influence their attitudes towards physical activity outside of the classroom. Topping (2011) stated that secondary school pupils frequently saw the first years after transition across all subject areas as less important [with no formal exams] and did not necessarily appreciate that working hard then could have benefits later down the line. The very fact that PE is a subject without any compulsory examinations at any point in secondary school could be an innate part of the 'problem'. In secondary school, if PE is considered by pupils not to be as serious or as important as other subjects such as mathematics and English, there is clearly an inherent risk of it becoming a subject that pupils do not value. If PE does fall into such a void, one can certainly appreciate why some pupils may feel there is little to motivate them to engage with it and wider physical activity, as well as why they may negatively alter their style of learning within the subject.

An Australian-based study considering school transitions found that the value a school places on physical activity will heavily influence its pupils' perspectives on it (Wright and Lavery, 2010). The only caveat to the study is that it considered elite, or private, secondary schools alongside state schools. Nonetheless, the schools in Wright and Lavery's study placed immense value on physical activity as contributing to the wider goals of the school and set up structures and resources to support this accordingly. The effects of such investments and expectations were then strikingly evident in the ways the young people from these schools talked about physical activity and the place of it in their day-to-day lives. Crucially, "physical activity was inculcated as a 'disposition' essential to a 'normal, full life'" (Wright and Lavery, 2010, p250). Naturally, it can be assumed that the elite schools may have had

more extensive resources available to enable them to make this a working reality within their school environments. Nonetheless, the way in which placing value on physical activity in school can influence pupils' wider attitudes is something both primary and secondary schools could benefit from and by raising the profile of the subject, secondary PE teachers may be able to positively influence the way in which their pupils adapt to their teaching post-transition.

2.4 Other Factors Influencing Transitions in PE

2.4.1 Physical Literacy to Sport Specialisation: A Transitional Shift

Having raised the possibility that pupils may struggle to value their PE lessons through a perceived lack of importance of the subject in comparison to other school subjects, it is worth exploring further the characteristics of PE lessons that pupils *could* value. To do this requires an evaluation of what characterises the subject not only in secondary school, but also the stage of education directly previous to it. The following will outline how for some pupils, the transition from primary school to secondary school PE marks a clear shift from fun-based activities to more skills-based, specialist sports and will consider how this shift may impact upon attitudes towards wider physical activity in and outside of school. Dismore and Bailey (2010, p187) explain much of the research surrounding the PE curriculum and what school teach within lessons draws attention to what children perceive as a progression from 'fun and games' within primary PE lessons to a more skills-based learning approach in secondary school PE. Kirk (2005, p246) concurs, stating that "most children's first experience of specialist [PE] teaching is when they move to secondary school. It is plausible that pupils entering KS3 believe secondary school PE is too specialist for them and this subsequently alienates some individuals, damaging physical activity participation rates". Côté's (2003) work suggests it is important to allow young people to experience a sampling phase during their sporting careers and that the major motivation for these 'samplers', is fun and enjoyment, rather than competitive success. It is important to note that such reference to 'sporting careers' was not written in relation to PE lessons specifically, but the general point can be seen to fit well within the context of literature covered thus far. Samplers

should 'play the game' more than they practise drills and skills, since this links with their principal interest in having fun (Kirk, 2005, p249). On this evidence, it may be that the transition from primary school to secondary school PE, characterised in part by a shift to more structured sport, may come too early in the development of some pupils, ultimately leading to the disengagement of some. Kirk (2005, p246) goes onto make the wider point that "schools continue to practise PE in a form that first appeared in the 1950s, characterised by short units of activity with a lack of accountability for learning and little progression of learning". There is little to suggest the PE landscape has witnessed significant change since Kirk's study and, therefore, the evidence remains in suggesting that this traditional form of PE is "not meeting the needs of many young people entering Key Stage 3" (ibid).

It would appear that, on the evidence considered thus far, teaching staff on both sides of the transition face obstacles to overcome to ensure that their pupils respond positively to any activities they experience in PE. This is perhaps not unexpected, given the recognised complexities of the transition. Gray *et al.* (2018, p168) describes instances where tasks set for pupils in secondary PE lessons were either too easy or too difficult, thus resulting in a negative affective response and reduced task effort. This balancing act can be seen to create a major challenge for teachers to identify, or, empower pupils to identify, an appropriate level of challenge within PE lessons. In exercise and sports, the principle of 'just right' has been acknowledged for decades (Straker, Mathiassen and Holtermann, 2017). On this evidence, it would appear that to ensure pupils respond positively to PE lessons, teachers must aim to satisfy a goldilocks paradigm, wherein activities are not too easy, nor too difficult, whilst also serving to be fun and engaging. It is likely that if this could be achieved, positive attitudes towards physical activity could be fostered and maintained by pupils over a sustained period of time. If, however, like those in the case of the pupils that are the focus of the study from Gray *et al.* (2018), activities fall outside of the above-mentioned goldilocks zone, then there is a danger that pupils will respond adversely and adopt negative attitudes towards their PE lessons and, subsequently, wider physical activity.

In comparison with other subjects in the curriculum, PE has received little attention in terms of its impact on pupils across the primary to secondary transition (Hodgkin, 2018). Although it is not possible to offer any definitive answer as to why this might be the case, it could be hypothesised that the earlier discussed issue of PE's importance within the wider school curriculum has influenced this somewhat. Nonetheless, when considering the primary to secondary transition with a specific focus on PE, it is important to fully understand the current landscape and to accurately do this, quantitative data from recent research is required. As such, the following analyses data from Sport England's (2018) Young People and Life Transitions report. The report considers what are described as the three key educational transitions within England: primary to secondary, secondary to sixth form and sixth form to university. The report states that each transition appears to have a small, short-term negative effect on physical activity participation (p6) but does not offer reasons as to why this may be the case. With regard to the primary to secondary transition, the study found that Year 7s participation in physical activity early in the school year is lower than Year 8s which accounts for a period of adjustment, but that participation does increase throughout the remainder of Year 7. However, participation never returns above pre-secondary levels, determining that Year 6 currently marks the peak of children's physical activity participation. The report goes onto state that "the transition to secondary school is not a major upheaval" (p9) which, although is perhaps a practical judgement, is a questionable statement given the clear drop-off in physical activity participation that occurs across the transition. It should be noted that comparative to the later years studied, the drop-off between primary and secondary school is less dramatic and that Sport England's (2019) ALCYP survey found that children in Years 9-11 were the least likely to be physically active every day. However, the importance of the primary to secondary transition should not be downplayed, especially as Basterfield *et al.* (2016) explains that "perceived barriers to sports participation change rapidly in childhood and adolescence", in which the transition is a key site of development from the former to the latter. Whilst quantitative statistics do clearly help to indicate the presence of a problem, they are not as suitable in understanding why such a problem exists in the first place. This reinforces the need to understand the

primary to secondary transition from pupil's perspectives, as they could have a lasting impact on their experiences within PE in secondary school.

The ALCYP survey that covers the 2017/18 academic year also discovered that although children are participating in less physical activity after starting secondary school, those that are participating are getting more of their physical activity in school time than they were whilst in primary education. As has already been mentioned in this chapter, in Years 5 and 6, more children do 30 minutes or more physical activity every day outside of school than when at school. However, the survey's findings showed that this statistic is reversed once children move to secondary school, as in Year 7 and Year 8, the percentage of children achieving the same 30 minutes or more physical activity jumps to 37% (up 10%) in school time, compared to just 23% (up 1%) outside of school. This means that whilst less children are physically active overall post-transition, those who are physically active rely more on secondary schools to provide it. The ALCYP survey report acknowledges that "both environments, in and outside of school, play a critical role in the overall activity levels of children and young people". Yet this data raises both the possibility that primary schools could do more to help their pupils be active during school time and the question as to whether secondary schools could do more to promote and encourage physical activity outside of school. As previously mentioned, it is important not to read too deeply into purely quantitative statistics and offer reasons as to why they may present as they do. However, the figures outlined above offer reasons as to why further research into how primary schools and secondary schools could work collaboratively together to tackle an important issue that directly impacts upon the health and wellbeing of their pupils.

2.4.2 School Facilities and Pupils Physical Activity Participation

One final area that may warrant consideration whilst examining the primary to secondary school transition in a PE context is that of school facilities. Rainer *et al.* (2012) carried out a study seeking to identify challenges to providing high-quality PE lessons at primary schools from the perspective of headteachers and subsequently found that many cited inadequate facilities and funding as major barriers to doing so. Reasons the headteachers provided for not meeting the weekly two-hour

aspiration for PE focused mainly on the great demand on facilities. Many headteachers highlighted the fact that teaching staff often only had access to indoor facilities, such as a Sportshall, that were usually compromised as they are multi-purpose areas used by other curricular topics, as well as being the school dining hall. The authors found that due to such inadequate facilities, some primary schools are forced to use external venues for physical activity, regularly including playing fields funded by local authorities, sports centres and even secondary schools that incurred a financial cost for both the hire of the facility and transportation of the children. Furthermore, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic that has seen, at times, widespread closures of sports facilities, it can only be assumed that any primary school with such arrangements may have only further suffered in terms of having adequate facilities to provide their pupils with quality PE and physical activity provision.

It is important to remember that PE lessons are not the only environment in which children can be physically active in school hours. Haug *et al.* (2010) describes how a small number of studies have examined the impact of the wider school environment on pupils' activity during recess and lunch breaks. One of these small number of studies come from Knowles, Niven and Fawkner (2011) stating that time available at break and lunch recess provides an opportunity to increase physical activity in school time, but as pupils progress through the school system across the transition, there is a trend towards less time to be physically active during break and lunch times. Generally, however, this can be viewed as potentially an important area lacking in research as children can actually acquire up to 40% of their daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) during school break times (Ridgers, Stratton and Fairclough, 2006). Furthermore, studies have found that increasing the number of permanent outdoor play facilities in schools may offer a cost-effective and sustainable option for increasing physical activity in young children attending those schools (Hallmann *et al.*, 2012; Nielson *et al.*, 2010).

When considering the differences between primary and secondary school facilities, it is important to acknowledge how the actual design of facilities can impact on children's physical activity participation

both in PE lessons and in periods of free play. Harrison *et al.* (2016, p40) writes that “it is likely to be a combination of social, cultural, and physical environmental factors that are most effective in promoting physical activity in school and that changes to school policy must be backed up by a supportive physical environment to maximize their effectiveness”. The work of Harrison *et al.* (2016) is particularly important in this area and the study notes that there is evidence that changes in the environmental supportiveness of schools between primary and secondary settings are associated with changes in physical activity behaviours. The transition to adolescence, which happens to coincide with the move from primary to secondary education, is seen as key point at which to intervene in children’s physical activity participation (Cale and Harris, 2006). However, Harrison *et al.* (2016, p40) found there were “considerable differences in the sport and play facilities recorded at secondary schools compared to primary schools”. These differences are not described as either positive or negative, however, and this is perhaps a wider acknowledgement of the fact that children’s physical activity habits change as they move through their adolescent years. Interestingly, De Meester *et al.* (2014) found in a study of Belgian schoolchildren that their weekday step count increased if the quantity of schoolyard facilities was higher at secondary than primary schools. Harrison *et al.* (2016) deemed this finding particularly noteworthy, given the fact that work on activity promotion through the design of school grounds has focused predominantly on primary schools. This is evident through a review of the role of school playgrounds in children's physical activity which included 33 papers, of which only two were set in secondary schools (Broekhuizen, Scholten and de Vries, 2014). This is clearly indicative of an area perhaps fundamentally lacking in research; if secondary school playgrounds are a vital area in which children are physically active, more should be known about how to best utilise them effectively. In the limited work that does exist in this area, Harrison *et al.* (2016, p40) states that very few bright markings on play surfaces or playground equipment such swings or slides were recorded at secondary schools in comparison to primary schools, but secondaries had much greater numbers of sports pitches and courts. It is of course entirely plausible that the timing of young people's MVPA changes as they move through school and that break times and lunch becomes a less important time for

physical activity. Nonetheless, there is insufficient research to determine how quickly these changes occur. It could be that in the initial secondary school years, children would still prefer playgrounds that resemble their primary schools' more closely and this is contributing to inactivity, although without adequate research such theorising is merely based on speculation.

Whilst considering the design of facilities and spaces in which children can be physically active, it is important to recognise how facilities may appeal differently to individual pupils and, particularly, different genders. Research has shown how spaces can become gendered and made to appeal to a specific sex, sometimes unconsciously. In a United States-based study, Sallis *et al.* (2001) found that area type, size and fixed outdoor equipment explained for 59% of the variance for boys and 42% for girls' non-curricular physical activity. Meanwhile, Harten, Olds and Dollman (2008) studied the effects of gender, motor skills and play area on the free play activities of 8 to 11-year-old primary school aged children in Australia. They found that there were very clear differences in gender preferences for different spaces available during school break periods, with boys dominating large grassed areas and girls the playground yard. The researchers observed that, in their free play time, boys tended to partake in games which required large areas whereas girls typically played games requiring much smaller spaces. This is supported by Haug *et al.* (2010) finding that the perceived availability of areas for soccer fields increased the odds of boys taking part in sports in Norwegian pupils, aged 13. Harten, Olds and Dollman (2008) theorised that these different play styles may reflect divergent socialisation or could be underpinned by physical gender differences wherein boys learn to feel more at ease with their bodies and take up more space, while girls tend to "shrink and enclose themselves" (p392). It is further evidence that supports the notion school facilities are a factor that can significantly impact upon children's physical activity participation within school and warrants at least consideration in the context of this study. The fact the previously mentioned studies in this area all originate from abroad in no way reduce the impact of their findings and is merely indicative of lack of research in this area within the UK to date.

2.5 Literature Review Conclusion

To summarise, this Chapter has offered a critical review of literature relevant to this research study from both a theoretical and conceptual perspective. A range of literature has been outlined that explores how both gender and socioeconomic status can influence children's involvement in physical activity. Furthermore, the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has been covered, identifying and explaining theoretical concepts that are to be drawn upon throughout the remainder of this study. With regard to the transition that children make from primary to secondary school, the important work of Galton *et al.* (1999) has been identified as a platform from which to build this study around. The Five Bridges to Transition are useful in that they are not tied to a specific subject area, but can be adapted to address the needs of a particular subject across the transition, which in the case of this study is PE. Each of the Five Bridges have been considered in relation to the transition within a PE context, as well as how school facilities may influence physical activity participation within schools. This focus on school facilities is important given the way in which Chapter Four explores the role that PE changing rooms can play in shaping pupils secondary PE experiences. Overall, this Chapter helps to detail the complex process of transition pupils make between primary and secondary school in PE specifically, which has laid the foundations that allows this study to effectively address certain issues that may help to improve the transition for future pupils.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This methodology chapter is separated into two distinct sections. In the first instance, the methodological perspective of the study will be detailed, including discussion of ontological and epistemological viewpoint and the value of a qualitative approach to research within this field. Then, beginning with a timeline of this study, this chapter will explain the of data collection process that was undertaken, the process of interpretation and analysis of such data and how it can help to address the primary research objectives of this study. Ethical considerations for the study are also addressed within this chapter.

3.1 Methodological Perspectives

It was important to conduct a detailed exploration into the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the study and this subsequently resulted in a commitment to a qualitative approach to data collection, the significance of which will be outlined at a later point. Indeed, every research method is embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world and ways of knowing that world (McKenzie, Powell and Usher, 1997). An emphasis on ontology and epistemology is particularly necessary because all research methods are informed, either knowingly or unknowingly, by these concepts (Smith and McGannon, 2018), as will be discussed in the following.

3.1.1 Ontology

Grix (2002) outlines how ontology is the starting point of all research studies, after which one's epistemological and methodological positions logically follow. This statement provides a neat framework in which to explore the following in relation to this study. Blaikie (2000, p8, cited in Grix, 2002) explains that "ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality". In the case of this study, research aims dictate that efforts must be orientated towards examining PE in pupils around the time of the primary to secondary school transition. Grix (2002) go onto describe how examples of ontological positions are those contained within the distinct perspectives of objectivism and constructivism. Broadly speaking, the former is an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social

actors whereas the latter is an alternative position, asserting that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors (Grix, 2002). Light (2011, p370) writes that “constructivist perspectives on learning see it as being a process of adapting to, and fitting into, a constantly changing world”. From this perspective learning arises from an individual’s engagement in the world through language, perception, motor action and bodily senses with learning being an interpretative process of meaning making. Social constructivism, arising from the work of Vygotsky, sees learning as a collective process spread across an individual’s world and, from this perspective, learning is essentially an ongoing social process with understandings and capabilities emerging from social interaction with and within a group (Cobb, 1996). This study can be seen to take a constructivist viewpoint, given that the views individuals hold about the transition are not objective, but are socially constructed and given meaning by others involved in the process. In order to explore how these socially constructed views are shaped in the first place, we must know what and how we can know about issues prevalent to the transition.

3.1.2 Epistemology

Saunders *et al.* (2012) explains epistemology is a branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and what constitutes acceptable knowledge in the field of study, essentially referring to what individuals, researchers, can find out and know about the social world around them. Bryman (2016) asserts that epistemological assumptions can be regarded as a question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline and that the central issue of epistemology in social science is the question whether the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles and procedures as the natural sciences. The research process of a study can be seen to help dictate which line of argument is sustainable in answering that question, as epistemological assumption can be seen to be associated with the nature of knowledge and the methods through which that knowledge can be acquired. There are two epistemological assumptions that merit discussion in this respect: these are positivism and interpretivism. Broadly speaking, the former is an

epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond. The latter, on the other hand, can be seen as an epistemological position that is predicated upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2001, p12, in Grix, 2002). Indeed, the epistemological approach in this study would be that of an interpretive approach. Interpretivism is also often associated with the view of phenomenology, as it is a philosophy that refers to the way in which humans make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher should set out preconceptions in his or her grasp of that world (Bahari, 2010). Because of this, interpretive approaches encompass social theories and perspectives that embrace a view of reality as socially constructed or made meaningful through actors' understanding of events (Putnam and Banghart, 2017).

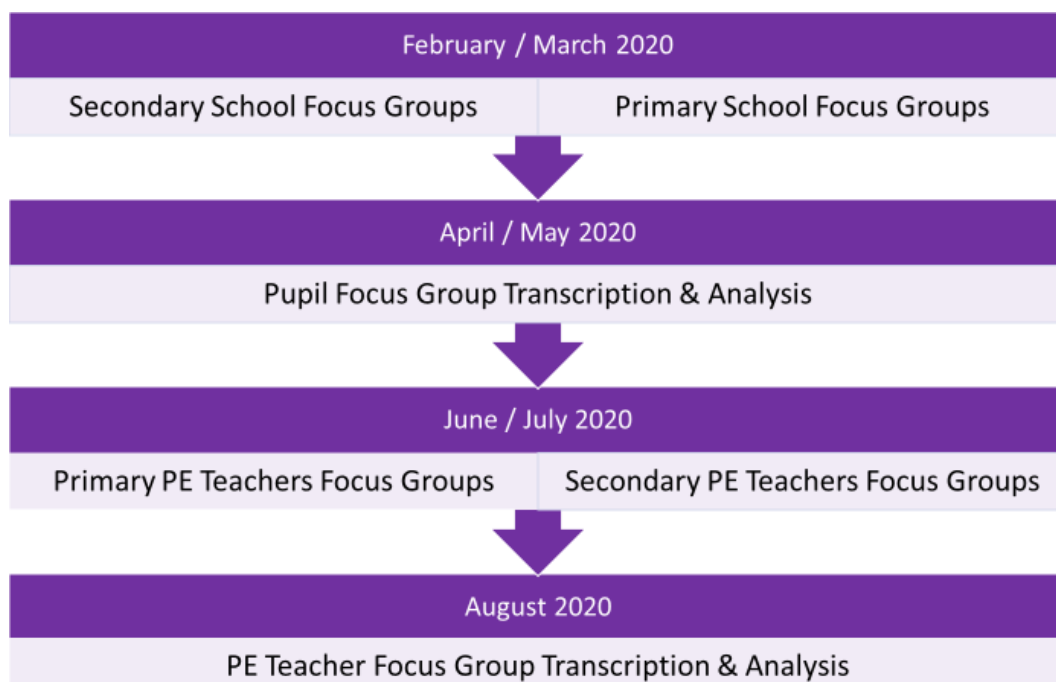
3.2 Study Method

Once the ontological and epistemological viewpoints of the study had been established, focus turned to the methodological approach and how the researcher could go about collecting data and acquiring knowledge relevant to their research question. In light of the aforementioned epistemological approach, qualitative research methods were chosen as the best approach to data collection in the case of this study, given its commitment to the voices of young people, as well as the potential to discover qualitative responses from young people that would prove both insightful and original. Bickman and Rog (2009) write that although qualitative researchers are concerned about representation and accuracy in the data they collect, they primarily assess the quality of their observations in terms of the degree to which they accurately reconstruct the realities of the participants in a study. In the context of this study, quantitative data alone could be seen to lack depth and the capacity to do this and therefore would not allow the researcher to offer a significantly new contribution in this field of study.

In order to address the planned research aims, data collection was separated into two distinct phases. Phase one was primarily concerned with pupils' experiences of the primary to secondary transition within PE, whilst phase two concerned the views of teaching staff involved in the transition, giving them the opportunity to offer their own perspective of the primary to secondary transition in a PE context, as well as reflect upon findings made in phase one.

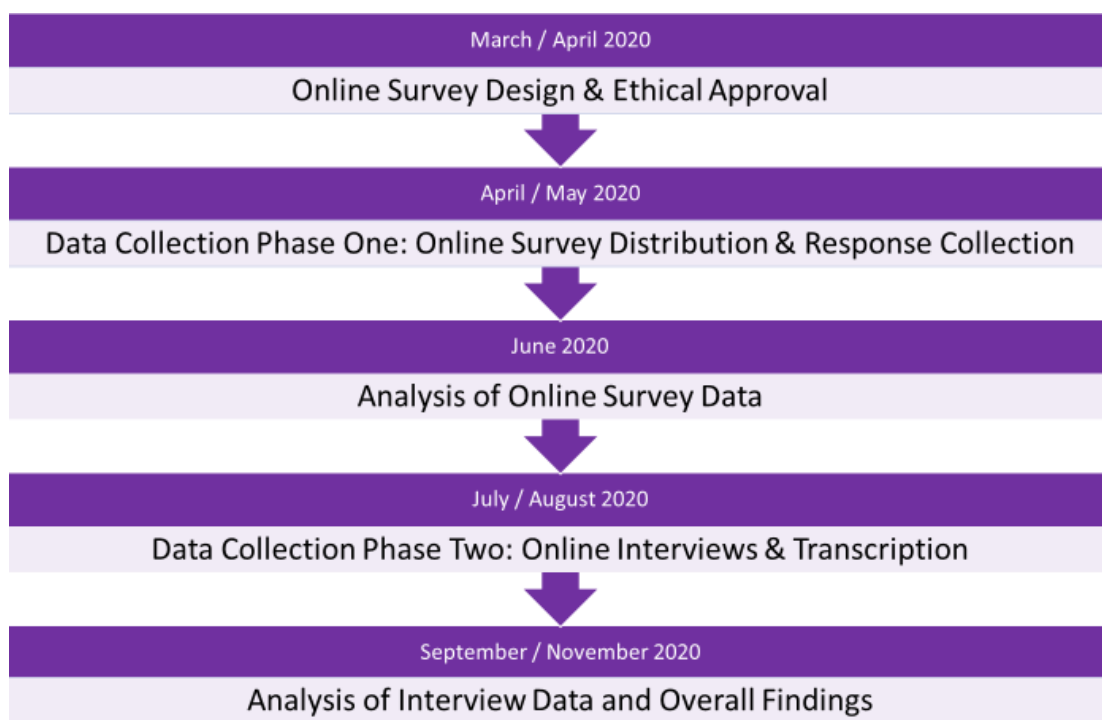
The methodology of this study was significantly altered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that began in early 2020. Originally, plans had been made to conduct focus groups with both Year 6 pupils in primary schools immediately prior to their transition in the summer of 2020, and Year 7 pupils already in secondary school to explore views *across* the transition. The methodological timeline that had been originally planned can be seen below:

3.3 Methodology Timelines: Original and Actual



The methodological plan had to change suddenly in March 2020, around the time the original first phase of data collection was scheduled, as it became difficult to organise visits to schools given their reluctance to admit external visitors with concerns over the transmission COVID-19. By March 23rd 2020, visits were made impossible due to a nationwide lockdown that saw an indefinite closure of

schools. The decision was made quickly to create an online survey to collect data during the lockdown period as this would prove to be the best way to keep the study on track, respecting established deadlines. This decision was balanced against the uncertainty of how many responses an online survey would generate in unprecedented circumstances. With Year 6 pupils at that point facing a highly uncertain transition to secondary school, the decision was made to target the survey at Year 7 and Year 8 pupils who had already experienced a ‘normal’ transition within the last two years that should still be fresh in their memories. With hindsight, the move to an online survey proved to be a wise, if somewhat inevitable decision, under the circumstances as both primary and secondary schools did not see a return of pupils anywhere close to full capacity for the remainder of the academic year. The graphic below provides a more accurate visual of how the study took place.



3.4 Data Collection Phase One: Year 7/8 Pupils

Phase one of data collection saw an online survey, created using Google Forms, distributed to Year 7 and Year 8 pupils in England. It is important to state from the outset that there was uncertainty around how many pupils an online survey could reach in a period of national lockdown and was therefore

designed to be shared as widely as possible, as opposed to collect a representative sample. The survey was initially piloted by the children of two members of Durham University's Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences. Each child was in either Year 7 or 8 at the time of data collection. This was to ensure the survey worked appropriately in terms of both its content and technical functioning prior to a wider release. The pilot was successful in that the researcher felt the responses provided would allow for adequate analysis if they were to be repeated on a larger scale and the survey itself functioned as expected on the Google platform. As a result of the pilot, no changes were made to the survey and the two pilot responses were retained to be included in the final total of respondents. Following the pilot release, participants were recruited more widely predominantly through two means: advertising the survey on social media and contacting secondary schools directly inviting them to distribute the survey to their pupils within the target age range.

With regard to social media advertising, a link to the survey was firstly shared on Twitter by Durham University's Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences (@DUSportExSci) and this served as the primary source of social media advertising. The original tweet was shared over 50 times by various individuals and originations following the account. In addition to this, those with access to the account directly reached out to university graduates known to be working in secondary schools as this was deemed to be an effective way to ensure responses amongst the targeted age range. A number of these graduates worked outside of the North East of England and there is a high probability that responses from participants outside of the region could be traced back to the aforementioned graduates sharing the survey with their pupils.

In terms of contacting individuals directly, the Subject Professional Development Advisor for PE within Durham County Council (DCC) shared the survey to all 41 secondary PE leads within County Durham. Furthermore, the researcher and other members of the department also shared the survey link outside of Twitter by contacting individuals they knew personally working in schools, typically via email or text. This was considered a more effective way to ensure responses than sharing the survey

generically on social media and this generally appeared to be true in that many of the respondent's postcodes were in areas certain individuals that had been contacted worked. The above is an example of a non-probability sample, something that Fielding, Lee and Blank (2017) explain can also be referred to as a convenience sample that occurs when the probability that every respondent included in the sample cannot be determined or it is left up to each individual to choose to participate in the survey. Once the survey is posted online or individuals have shared the survey link, pupils have a choice as to whether to participate or not. Crucially, responses from convenience samples can be useful for identifying issues, defining ranges of alternatives or collecting other sorts of non-inferential data (Fielding, Lee and Blank, 2017) and this is particularly important in the case of this study. The data from the survey, particularly the issues identified, would help to inform phase two of the data collection process.

To address the aims of the study, the survey was designed for pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 that had experienced the transition directly from a primary school and KS2 learning to a secondary school and KS3 learning within the past two years. It is acknowledged that this system of transition is not universal within England and that some schools operate with a middle-school system. In order to avoid any confusion, the introductory information in the survey made clear that any pupils that had not experienced a transition directly from a primary school to a secondary school should not complete the survey. The survey featured questions that were listed under the following three main sections:

1. Pupils' PE experiences in both primary and secondary school.
2. Pupils' transitional experiences.
3. Pupils' attitudes to physical activity and exercise.

The above sections were subject to much deliberation through numerous discussions between the researcher and their supervisors before being finalised. The opening section (not including the questions around informed consent) was designed so that participants could recognise the survey did not solely focus on secondary school PE, despite the fact it is aimed at current Year 7 and Year 8

pupils. It was important participants understood the survey related also to primary school PE and, specifically, the transition between the two stages of education. Encouraging participants to think back to their primary school experiences of PE would allow them to begin to recognise some similarities and differences between their past PE experiences and current ones. Furthermore, all questions in this section (with the exception of one) were non-compulsory, required open-style answers and were framed to promote positive responses from participants. This was in recognition that not all pupils will have had positive experiences in PE in school. Bickman and Rog (2009) explain that open ended questions can generate in-depth information, which may lead to reconceptualization of the issues under study. A more detailed explanation of this can be seen in Table 2.

This section was the most substantial in terms of participants were asked to contribute with all three questions allowing for up to three separate responses. All questions related specifically to the transition between primary and secondary education in the context of PE and were purposely ambiguous in what they asked so that participants did not feel restricted in what they could respond. These responses could then be considered thematically, in part using the work of Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999) surrounding the Five Bridges to a successful transition.

The researcher felt it was important to be able to analyse the survey population in terms of how they felt about physical activity. A concern prior to the survey being released online was that potentially only pupils who had positive experiences in PE during their education would respond to an optional online survey on the subject. Indeed, convenience sampling is generally assumed to have a higher likelihood of generating a biased sample (Fielding, Lee and Blank, 2017). Although including a section evaluating participants attitudes to physical activity would not necessarily help to encourage young people with negative PE experiences to participate, it would help to show whether there was substantial bias within the survey sample that enjoyed physical activity and had only positive PE experiences in school. Questions in this section were derived from the annual Sport England's (2019) ALCYP survey so that findings could be compared with the data tables that have a category for Year 7

and 8 pupils – the same as target audience for this study. A detailed overview, explanation and justification to the questionnaire can be seen in Table 2 on the following page.

Table 2: Explanation and Justification for Questionnaire Content

No.	Question	Style of Answer	Explanation / Justification
Pupils' PE Experiences in Both Primary and Secondary School			
1	What do you feel is good about PE lessons in primary school?	Open	<p>This question was positioned first in the survey (after informed consent questions) for numerous reasons. Firstly, it was designed so that participants understood this was not a survey solely focused on secondary school PE, despite the fact it is aimed at current Year 7 and Year 8 pupils. It was important they understood this survey was also related to primary school PE and specifically the transition between the two stages of education. By encouraging participants to think back to their primary school experiences of PE, it would allow them to begin to recognise some similarities and differences between their past PE experiences and current ones. This may be the first time they have really thought about this in any great detail. Furthermore, by framing the question so that it specifically asks what participants liked about primary PE, the survey opens with a positive question so to avoid alienating participants who did not always have a positive relationship with PE and who still may not have in secondary school.</p> <p>In terms of analysis for this question, it would be valuable to explore how many participants associate primary PE lessons with “fun, enjoyment and games”. Certain literature, including in the work of Kirk (2005) and Dismore and Bailey (2010), outlines how it is the regression of these in secondary that is a significant contributing factor to why pupils dislike PE post-transition.</p>
2	What do you feel is good about PE lessons in secondary school?	Open	<p>Closely tied to the opening question, the second question of the survey asks participants what they now like about PE in secondary school, again maintaining the positive framing of questions and also somewhat mirroring the transition to secondary through the order the questions are asked. Continuing to focus on the work of Kirk (2005) and Dismore and Bailey (2010), it would be expected that less participants associate secondary PE with “fun and enjoyment” as lessons have more of a skill-based focus to them that includes less games – something pupils are known to like. With this in mind, participants may find this question more difficult than the previous one.</p> <p>Nonetheless, it would be useful to understand what some pupils enjoy about secondary PE considering the end goal of providing recommendations to help to reduce the drop-off in participation post-transition.</p>

3a	Do you prefer PE lessons in primary school or secondary school?	Primary / Secondary / No Difference	This appeared to be the most logical place for this question to follow on from the previous two and it was hypothesised that a majority of respondents would opt for primary school given the known drop-off post-transition. However, should this not be the case this would indicate that perhaps pupils who enjoy PE were those completing the survey which in itself would be an interesting finding.
3b	Please explain your response to the question above.	Open Answer	<p>Like the opening questions, the responses to this open question could also tie into the work of Kirk (2005) that suggests PE in secondary is more skill-based and less revolved around fun.</p> <p>It was interesting to see how the participants frame their answers to this question. Essentially, they could choose to include their answer to Q1 or Q2 in their response by saying they prefer a particular stage because it includes something they really like. Alternatively, this question also allows participants to include negative reasoning for the first time and it would be noteworthy if a high number of participants chose one stage largely through their dislike of the other. It is of course also possible that for some participants, PE in primary and secondary is no different. This could mean they equally like, or dislike, PE lessons and that the move has not changed their experience of PE in school. This is why it is important to give participants to explain their reasoning and justify their answer.</p> <p>Answers to all of the opening three questions could at some point lead into a discussion as to the actual purpose of PE, what the subject aims to do in schools and works best in terms engaging pupils in PE lessons and wider physical activity.</p>
Pupils' Transitional Experiences			
4	What do you feel are the biggest differences between PE lessons in primary school and secondary school? Please list three, in order of importance.	x3 Open Answers	<p>This is the first question in the survey that drew upon the work of Galton <i>et al.</i> (1999) and the Five Bridges that are said to be key to successful transition. Of the open answers' participants provide, common themes could be identified and placed under one of the Five bridges for further discussion. This allows for careful analysis as to which of the bridges, if any, are more important in terms of helping pupils adjust to PE specifically in secondary schools as the original Five Bridges work is not subject specific.</p> <p>For this question specifically, it was anticipated that the focus would be on the curriculum bridge, pedagogy bridge and management of learning bridge – given the question is specific to the actual 'lesson'. Something that is not covered within the bridges is facilities. Rainer (2012) discusses how it is often the case that inadequate primary school</p>

			facilities can be a barrier to children receiving high quality PE lessons. It would be interesting to see if this is something that arises in pupils' responses and how facilities interact with pupils experiences of PE.
5	What did you experience during the move from PE lessons in primary school to secondary school? Please list up to three.	x3 Open Answers	<p>This question was intended to be subject to initial analysis using the Five Bridges (Galton <i>et al.</i>, 1999) as described above.</p> <p>Additionally, Rainer and Cropley (2015) discuss how secondary PE teachers deliver lessons through a prescriptive approach which allows little opportunity for experiential learning, unlike in primary. This point is heavily associated with the pedagogy bridge. Sproule <i>et al.</i> (2011) also suggests that pupil-centred pedagogies have greater scope to provide individualised learning experiences that are closely aligned to the abilities and needs of the learner. It was therefore interesting to see if respondents reinforce these thoughts in their answers, perhaps indicating that they would welcome a change in teaching style, at least initially, to what is typically seen in secondary schools.</p> <p>There was also scope for pupils to mention initiatives such as transition events and sports festivals that have been discussed in literature, with varying degrees of success. Rainer and Cropley (2015) stated that transition in PE is "often considered adequate through hosting of a sports day, delivered as a token gesture in the last few weeks of the summer term which ultimately exposed the fact PE is viewed as an inconsequential subject area and unimportant during the transition process".</p> <p>Having three open answers allows for a potentially wide range of responses that will help to identify the most common themes.</p>

6	How could schools support future pupils in the transition between primary and secondary school PE?	x3 Open Answers	<p>This question essentially builds upon the one previously in that it asks participants to offer suggestions as to how schools could improve the transition for future pupils. One again it will be analysed alongside the Five Bridges framework (Galton <i>et al.</i>, 1999). Having just provided an answer as to what could have helped them personally adjust, they should be able to then adapt their answer to what could help everyone. In some cases, they may simply reword their answer slightly. However, unlike in the previous question, they will be able to discuss experiences of their friends and other pupils they know of. This could be useful if they have had a fairly smooth transition but know of someone who has not.</p> <p>It is important to explain within the question that the participants can also include ideas of what primary schools could do to improve the transition. Rainer and Jarvis (2020) suggest that children are lacking in fundamental movement skills when leaving primary and therefore it is possible that pupils may focus more on what the earlier stage of education can do, rather than the stage they are currently in.</p>
Pupils' Attitudes to Physical Activity and Exercise			
7a	I enjoy taking part in exercise and sport	Likert Scale 1-5	Questions 7a – 7e are derived from the annual Sport England ALCYP Survey (Sport England, 2019). Findings can be compared with the data tables that have a category for Year 7/8 – the same as target audience for this study. This will enable the researcher to analyse the attitudes towards physical activity and exercise of the overall population responding to the survey.
7b	I feel confident when I play exercise and sports	Likert Scale 1-5	See above.
7c	I find exercise and sport easy	Likert Scale 1-5	See above.
7d	I understand why exercise and sport is good for me	Likert Scale 1-5	See above.

7e	I know how to get involved and improve my skills in lots of different types of exercise and sports	Likert Scale 1-5	See above.
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The survey was open for responses for exactly one month between late April and May 2020. It was decided the survey would be open for an initial three-week period, with a view to extend by one more week if a substantial number of responses were being received towards the end of week three, as was the reality. The survey had to close after four weeks in order to allow for adequate time for data analysis in line with pre-set deadlines. There was an initially high response rate in the first week the survey was open and further pushes on social media in the following weeks helped to maintain a steady rate of responses up to the closure of the survey. Fielding, Lee and Blank (2017) suggest that a problem that can present itself with online survey's is the difficult to identify multiple submissions from the same individual, for reasons that are either innocent or deliberately done to influence the survey results. There were four responses that included the same postcode. In two of these instances, responses were exactly the same and therefore the duplicate was deleted by the researcher. However, in the other two cases where the postcode was the same, responses were different throughout the survey. The researcher made the decision to keep these responses as they felt it was more likely a result of siblings from the same household completing, rather than a deliberate attempt to influence survey results. Overall, in the period the survey was open for participants to complete, 227 responses were received. Of those, 114 identified as male, 110 female, two preferred not to say and one identified as non-binary. The Office for National Statistics (2019) estimates that in England, 51.2% of 12- and 13-year olds are male and 48.8% female, meaning that the study is highly representative of young people in Year 7 and 8 by gender. Furthermore, of the respondents to the survey, 126 were in Year 7 (56%) and 101 in Year 8 (44%).

Participants were asked to state their home postcode in the introductory stage of the survey. Given the survey was distributed on social media, it was important to know where the participants responding were based. 92% of participants were situated within either Tyne and Wear, County Durham or Cleveland, all areas within the North East of England. There were, however, responses recorded in eight other counties in England, while two respondents did not know their home postcode when completing the survey.

3.5 Data Collection Phase Two: PE Teachers and External Staff Working in Schools

The second phase of data collection involved four online interviews with individuals with experience working with pupils across the transition in PE and included:

- Two female secondary school PE teachers, within County Durham.
- Two school sport partnership coaches, one male and one female (from different SSPs), within County Durham.

All individuals were invited to take part in their online interview directly through their school or organisation. Importantly, online interviewing is, in today's world, increasingly valued in and of itself as a valid and legitimate research method (Fielding, Lee and Blank, 2017) and researchers have stressed the importance of seeking a methodological approach that replicates as closely as possible the normal processes of qualitative, face-to-face interviewing (James and Busher, 2006, p405). Various discussions between the researcher and their supervisors as to who and how many individuals should be interviewed online in phase two of data collection. The primary aim of the online interviews was to gain an understanding of teacher's perspectives around the transition and to allow them to reflect on some of the findings in phase one of data collection. However, access to teaching staff at the time of recruitment was severely limited given the COVID-19-induced disruption in schools. In light of the fact teachers would have very little time to dedicate to an external study, the decision was made to also invite other staff working in schools with involvement in PE and school sport to interview. Not only would this help to ensure an adequate number of online interviews could take place to conduct meaningful analysis, but a further perspective could be explored outside of full-time teaching staff. In areas that have a school sport partnership, their coaches work across a variety of schools on a daily basis which allows them to offer a unique perspective that is not based on experience in just one school, as is the case for school teachers.

The researcher contacted a number of secondary schools via email to invite a member of the PE department to take part in an online interview for the study. Some schools were contacted using email

addresses displayed on their website, whilst others were contacted on the basis that the researcher had a personal contact with a member of staff working in the school, a further example of convenience sampling that was evident in phase one of data collection. This was deemed appropriate under the circumstances, with the likelihood of those schools without a direct contact to the researcher accepting invitations perceived to be very slim. The two schools accepting the invitation to take part in the study originated from the researcher's personal contact with the school. For context, the two schools had received different OFSTED ratings at the time of their last inspections, with one receiving a 'good' rating and the other 'requires improvement'. The school rated 'requires improvement' had 1,234 pupils, 16.9% of which were eligible for free school meals. In comparison, the school that received 'good' at their last OFSTED had 801 pupils, 30.5% of which were eligible for free school meals. The national average for secondary school pupils eligible for free school meals is 14.1% (Department for Education, 2019). Two separate School Sport Partnerships (SSPs) within County Durham were approached to invite a member of their coaching staff to take part in an online interview. Both organisations accepted the invitation and passed on contact details of the employee they felt would be best placed to contribute to the study on their behalf. Both individuals had experience working *across* the transition with primary and secondary aged pupils and one had previously worked as a secondary school PE teacher in North East England before joining the SSP.

Fielding, Lee and Blank (2017) write that there has been a somewhat limited academic assessment of the advantages and limitations of synchronous (real-time) online interviews. They can be complicated to set up and researchers planning to generate data in this way must begin by selecting an appropriate software package (*ibid*). It may somewhat likely that more research in this area will take place as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic that has seen a surge in the use of online video conferencing software. All interviews in this study were held using the online video conferencing software Zoom as they could be recorded using the record feature that is freely available on the software. Recordings began upon receiving the direct consent of the participants and were used for purposes of subsequent transcription and analysis. The four interviews lasted between 25 and 35

minutes each and followed a predetermined interview schedule designed by the researcher. Fielding, Lee and Blank (2017) suggest that online interviews follow conventional interview etiquette closely, as well as procedural research ethics protocol, where the researcher begins by providing a brief introduction to the research project, an explanation of the interview procedure and also a general overview of the questions included in the interview. Interviews with teachers (see Table 3) followed a slightly different interview schedule than those individuals working for SSPs (see Table 4). It was intended that all interviews followed a conversational style, rather than a structured question and answer format. The purpose of this was to allow interviewees to discuss what they felt was most relevant to the transition within PE and not be restricted in their responses. Both interviews with school teachers and SSP coaches began with an open and accessible question to try and encourage the conversational style the researcher hoped to achieve throughout.

Table 3: Teaching Staff Interview Questions and Justifications

Category	Question	Justification
Introductory Comments from Researcher		
Opening Question	What would you say is the main aim of PE in Year 7 and 8, the immediate years after transition from primary?	Some pupils have picked up on secondary PE being much more competitive than primary lessons, where fun seemed to be the overriding aim of the subject. Others noted a clearer focus on skills in secondary and it is worthwhile exploring if teaching staff are aware of this and whether this is intentional or not (<i>perhaps more likely to be so given the specialist nature of PE in secondary</i>).
Pedagogy Bridge / Management of Learning Bridge (Adaptation to Learning)	Many pupils discussed secondary PE being a significant step up from primary school both physically and mentally. Is this noticeable to you when working with Year 7s and Year 8s and, if so, do you adapt lessons in any way?	This question will explore whether teachers recognise that for some pupils, primary to secondary transition is a substantial step up and if they have anything in place to help accommodate pupils perhaps finding this difficult.
Social and Emotional Bridge: Friendships	Do you see a difference in children who arrive from smaller feeder schools? (e.g. more rural primaries with less children, compared to urban primaries with strong links to the secondary).	Purposely quite an open question, differences could be in friendships or in ability if the more rural primaries have less access to SSP events.
Transition Days	<p>i) What transition events, before Year 7s arrive at secondary in September, would usually be held in PE if any (in a typical year)?</p> <p>ii) What are your school doing this year to help Year 7s, given they will have been out of a regular school setting for nearly six months when they arrive?</p>	Transition days, particularly ones involving current secondary pupils, are known to be well received to pupils and this was seen in the online survey.

Curriculum Bridge	Do you allow pupils any degree of freedom to choose their sports in Year 7 or is there a structured list of sports that teachers follow?	Many pupils noted that they would appreciate greater freedom in choosing which sports they do in PE and that this could help them engage better as they move away from preference of prescriptive teaching seen in primary.
Bureaucratic Bridge: Schools Communication	Do you have any formal contact with primary teachers prior to pupils arriving in September (traditionally and in COVID times)?	Studies have suggested a lack of formal communication between primary and secondary teachers (in any subject) may not help pupils across the transition and it would be worth exploring whether this is something teachers are aware of and / or do something to combat.
Bureaucratic Bridge: Schools Communication	How do you establish classes in Year 7 and 8? At what point (if any) are pupils placed in ability sets?	Many pupils have pointed out that they prefer to be grouped with others of similar abilities in PE so to avoid those 'good at sport' dominating. Interestingly, this may point to pupils recognising a lack of capital in PE and their inability to change the PE field. Instead, they desire to be with others in a similar position and create a new field. It will be interesting to explore this with teaching staff.
Pedagogy Bridge / Management of Learning Bridge (Adaptation to Learning)	In your experience, how do new secondary school pupils adapt to secondary PE facilities and equipment?	Pupils have picked up on secondary facilities being considerably bigger, with some making clear a desire to have a tour before lessons, perhaps in a transition day event. It is worth exploring how aware staff are of the possibility of pupils being overwhelmed by the size of secondary school in the period immediately after transition.

With SSP coaches working across both primary and secondary schools, their questions could be considered to be less specific than those outlined for teaching staff in Table 3. However, using certain themes that had emerged from the online survey, it was hoped they could offer a different insight into the transition from their unique position.

Table 4: School Sports Partnership Interview Questions and Justifications

Potential Questions (No set order after Q1)	Justification
Introductory Comments from Researcher	
Working with pupils on both sides of the transition, what are your immediate thoughts as to why there is often a drop off in physical activity participation once pupils move to secondary school?	A generic question to open the interview given there are fewer specific questions to ask SSP coaches. The answer to this question will likely inform which questions follow.
Do you notice a difference in pupils who work regularly with the SSP in comparison to those that do not, particularly around the time of transition?	Often pupils arrive at secondary with varying primary experiences and the SSP could play some part in that. Therefore, it would be interesting to see if this is something the SSPs pick up on themselves.
When working with individual primary schools, do you notice a difference in their PESSPA provision and if so, where do you think these differences come from?	There is the possibility to discuss PES Premium funding and whether this impacts on pupils and the transition (e.g. if schools spend any money particularly on transition or if any spending unintentionally better prepares certain schools).
What sports do you find get the best reception with pupils across the transition, maybe traditional ones or ones they haven't tried before.	Sporting availability was something that came up in the online survey regularly with some pupils displaying an appetite for new sports whereas others prefer to stick to ones they know they enjoy.
Do you feel there is a difference in the kinds of sports boys and girls enjoy across the ages of transition?	It is worthwhile exploring whether SSP coaches recognise different genders may prefer different kinds of sports and if they are aware of this what do they do about it.
What would you suggest is most important when trying to improve sports participation across and beyond the transition in schools?	Likely to be the final question to allow the SSP coaches to summarise their thoughts and offer a final suggestion as to what they feel would best improve the transition in their unique position of seeing both sides regularly.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval to carry out the study was sought, and subsequently granted, by Durham University's Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences before the data collection process began. In any research study, particularly one involving school-aged participants, ethical procedures must be handled with the utmost care to both to protect the individuals participating and the researcher themselves.

In phase one of data collection the introductory information displayed on the first page of the survey outlined the aims of the study for prospective participants and responsible adults. Within this information, issues of consent were addressed, making it clear that any pupil wishing to complete the survey must first seek approval from a responsible parent or guardian. Prior to the opening questions in the survey being revealed, both the participant and responsible adult must have confirmed they give their consent to participate. Tigges (2003) suggests that opt-out parental consent is a common method for anonymous surveys with young people, particularly in school-based settings. Furthermore, evidence suggests that opt-in parental consent can produce a smaller and more skewed sample than opt-out consent (ibid). The researcher also considered the possibility of any participant finding elements of the survey content to be sensitive to them. In light of this, with the exception of the section containing consensual agreements, no question in any of the three sections within the survey was compulsory and participants could skip any question should they have found themselves in a position where they did not feel comfortable providing an answer. All responses were anonymous and confidential in that no individual could be directly identified using the data the survey required.

In phase two of data collection, interviewees were provided with an information sheet explaining the study and what the online interview required of them. Participants were informed that at no point would they be identifiable in the study and that where appropriate, pseudonyms would be used. Furthermore, the researcher again asked for consent to record the interview when online with the participant prior to the interview commencing.

3.7 Data Analysis

It was important to have a clear strategy for data analysis in place to allow research aims to be effectively met once data had been collected. When dealing with qualitative data, thematic analysis is a search for patterns and subsequent themes that emerge as being important to a specific issue, where such emerging themes become the categories for analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In a critical review, Alhojailan (2012) explains that thematic analysis is particularly appropriate when researchers aim to examine data in order to discover common themes and thoughts from more than one participant. Green and Thorogood (2018) echo this sentiment, acknowledging the usefulness of thematic analysis for identifying typical responses to questions posed to a group to gain a fundamental awareness of important issues. This could involve subtle differences within certain responses, but also striking commonalities that transcend particular questions. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity for researchers to move beyond calculating unambiguous words or statements (Green and Thorogood, 2018), something that was to be imperative to this study if there were to be any significant exploration into why participants hold the perspectives they do. As such, a thematic analysis of the survey data was deemed to be the most appropriate approach to gain an awareness of the most important issues to young people across the transition in PE, as well as reflecting upon the perspectives of teaching staff. Comparison of the two datasets would be something that would be paramount to achieving the overall objectives of the study.

3.7.1 Coding and Categorisation

Thematic analysis essentially allows for data to be coded and categorised into themes according to the similarities and differences within it. The process used to achieve this consists of three interlinked stages: data reduction, data display and data conclusion-drawing/verifying (Alhojailan, 2012).

The main purpose of coding in thematic analysis is to make connections between different parts of the data that will allow the researcher to review the whole of the data by identifying its most significant meanings (Alhojailan, 2012). Data reduction is fundamentally the process of selecting,

simplifying, and transforming the data into a form that conclusions could be drawn from and subsequently verified. It was anticipated that within the questionnaire results in phase one of data collection, issues identified across different questions would be able to be linked under specific overarching themes and, as such, this was where a clear understanding of the data reduction process was imperative, in order to ensure the most prominent themes to the study were established.

Once the data reduction process had been completed and initial themes identified, the stage of data display helped to organise the data by arranging concepts and thoughts. Appropriately displaying the data in a range of different ways and in conceptual clusters allowed for exploration into any similarities, differences, and interrelationships.

Having displayed the data in a variety of ways, it was important to then attempt to draw conclusions from it. Whilst doing so, attempts could be made to group similar data, or establish categories of information that could fit together. Simultaneously, this helped to build a level of conceptual coherence and consistency, used to explore the validity of the findings so that they fitted the theoretical framework of the study. The stages of data drawing and display did not become separated from data reduction, given that they are complementary. In the first instance, this did not signal the end of the thematic analysis process. The researcher chose to repeat the process numerous times in order to better refine the data and themes that had emerged.

3.7.2 Inductive v Deductive Coding

There are two main approaches to coding data that can be taken while carrying out a thematic analysis. An inductive approach involves allowing the researcher to determine themes from the data itself, whilst a deductive approach involves the researcher coming to analyse the data with some preconceived themes they would expect to find reflected there, based on any existing theory or knowledge (Alhojailan, 2012). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) illustrate how a hybrid approach using both inductive and deductive coding can be effectively utilised whilst conducting a thematic analysis. Using this approach, researchers can use a predetermined template to code the data, whilst

simultaneously allowing for new themes to emerge directly from the data. In the case of this study, the Five Bridges of school transition, as earlier outlined by Galton *et al.* (1999), provided a useful template for coding responses related to the transition in PE section of the survey. The Five Bridges are listed once again for ease:

1. The Personal and Social Bridge (children's friendships and relationships)
2. The Bureaucratic Bridge (liaison between primary and secondary schools)
3. The Curriculum Bridge (to ensure continuation, not repetition in learning)
4. The Pedagogy Bridge (children's adjustments to different teaching styles)
5. The Management of Learning Bridge (children's adaptation of learning styles)

With regard to analysis, it should be noted that in some instances there is a requirement to move beyond the summaries of participant accounts that a singular focus on central themes can provide (Green and Thorogood, 2018). Qualitative researchers looking exclusively for patterns of meaning to identify central themes can, on occasion, run the risk of omitting the contradictions and complexities that are inherent to data. To use Sparkes and Smith's (2014, p126) phrasing, these outliers, although still related to central themes, can at times be 'ironed out'. To combat this, Phoenix and Orr (2017) discuss how researchers can use multiple forms of analyses in their work, a process Clarke, Craddick and Frost (2016) suggests is increasingly commonplace within the field of sport, exercise and health research. The aforementioned hybrid approach to thematic analysis significantly reduces the chance that any important exceptions may be omitted by the researcher. Overlooking exceptions is problematic because it can overshadow the confidence held in one's thematic findings (McPherson and Horne, 2006). Ensuring that this did not become the reality in this study was particularly important, given the aforementioned commitment to listening to and understanding the young people at the centre of the research. For clarity, Phoenix and Orr (2017) conclude that these exceptions do not refer to exceptional individual responses within samples, rather those occasional fragments of stories that do not 'fit' with the recurring storylines emerging as key themes. By

employing the hybrid approach advocated by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), this study heeds Phoenix and Orr's (2017) urge to avoid discounting diversity, anomalies or exceptions and deems identifying central themes to be the first, rather than final, step of analysis.

3.7.3 Data Analysis in Practice

The first stage of the data analysis involved the lead researcher immersing themselves in the survey data, working through responses to each section of the survey sequentially.

For the qualitative questions relating to participants PE experiences, the researcher analysed what participants enjoy in PE across *both* primary and secondary school, in order to help form a comprehensive picture of the participants' collective experiences. From there, responses were broken down further to consider the differences in what participants enjoyed in the different stages of education (e.g. the fun factor of lessons was valued in primary PE; the diversity of sports in secondary). Constructing a detailed picture of what participants enjoy and value across the transition in PE helped to provide important context to the subsequent section of the questionnaire that focused specifically on the transition itself.

For the open-style questions relating to transitional experiences, the researcher firstly focused on extracting responses that related to one, or multiple, of the Five Bridges set out by Galton *et al.* (1999). These Five Bridges can be seen to be crucial to a successful transition in schools across *all* subjects and not exclusively within PE. In order to analyse the answers to open questions, they must be grouped into a relatively small number of categories and this requires the development of a coding scheme (Krosnick, 2018). Gibbs (2007, p45) explains that "inevitably, qualitative analysis is guided and framed by pre-existing ideas and concepts" and whilst the Five Bridges are not specific to PE, or indeed any subject area, they provide an extremely useful model to begin to explore participants responses. Concurrently, the researcher removed any data they felt did not align with any of the Five Bridges, whilst being mindful not to fully discard that data which could at a later stage prove relevant as an exception that is in some way connected to key themes identified.

The final section of the survey considered participants attitudes towards physical activity with five Likert-style questions, sourced from Sport England's annual ALCYP survey (Sport England, 2019).¹ Krosnick (2018) explains the length of scales in Likert-style questions can impact the process by which people map their attitudes. A trichotomous scale (e.g. like, neutral, dislike') may be problematic for a person who has a moderately positive or negative attitude. Therefore, a moderate point on both the positive and negative side would solve this, giving individuals who want to report neutral, moderate, or extreme attitudes the opportunity to do so. The Sport England (2019) survey provides a world-leading approach to gathering data on how children engage with physical activity and a breakdown of results includes a section specific to Year 7 and 8 pupils. This means not only could the results of this section help to provide an overview of the participant population and account for their collective attitudes towards physical activity but could also be compared to a survey with a much larger sample size, helping to evaluate how generalisable the results of this survey are. Furthermore, the researcher could view responses on an individual basis to explore individual narratives of certain participants. For example, if one participant had a particularly positive or negative attitude towards physical activity and exercise, the researcher could view their responses to other questions in isolation from the participant population and determine whether such responses were similar to others holding similar attitudes. Below outlines an overview of the five Likert-style questions within the Sport England survey (2019) and compares their findings to this study.

3.7.4 Quantitative Statistics Compared with Sport England's ALCYP Findings

Sport England (2019) only report where a child strongly agrees with a statement as evidence of positive feelings towards it. For example, when a child strongly agrees that they enjoy taking part in sport, they describe that child as enjoying sport and physical activity. As such, the following considers that response in both this study and that by Sport England (2019).

¹ Sport England's (2019) survey focus on attitudes towards sport and exercise, rather than physical activity per se. However, the research feels that in the context of this study, these attitudes can be used interchangeably.

Enjoyment:

This study found that 51% of Year 7 – 8 pupils strongly agreed that they enjoyed taking part in exercise and playing sport. This is broadly similar to Sport England’s findings that 45% of Year 7 – 11 pupils strongly agree to the same question.

Confidence:

This study found that 33% of year 7-8 pupils strongly agreed that they felt confident taking part in exercise and playing sport, with 32% of Year 7-11s feeling the same in Sport England’s study.

Competency:

Just 21% of pupils in this study strongly agreed they found taking part in exercise and playing sport easy, with a similarly low 18% of Year 7-11 pupils reporting the same in Sport England’s study.

Understanding:

Interestingly, 86% of Year 7-8 pupils in this study strongly agreed that they understood why taking part in exercise and sport is good for them in comparison to the 65% of Year 7-11 pupils that strongly agreed in Sport England’s study.

Knowledge:

Finally, 46% of Year 7-8 pupils in this study strongly agreed that they knew how to get involved and improve their skills in lots of different types of exercise and sports. This compares with just 36% of Year 7-11 pupils in Sport England’s study.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

This chapter seeks to discuss pupils' experiences across the primary to secondary transition within the PE subject area and can be seen to focus on three overarching themes, the first being the importance of relationships. For young people, the development of social capital, formed through peer networks, can be of vital importance for their social position and hierarchy, often seen as critical for young people navigating their space in their social world (Metcalf, 2018). Across the transition these peer networks are subject to substantial change and modification, at a time that Mizelle and Irvin (2000) state friendships are increasingly important to adolescent development. Under this first central theme of relationships, the following subthemes are explored:

- Pupils' friendships with their peers
- Pupils' relationships with PE teaching staff
- Pupils' development of self-awareness through PE changing rooms and compulsory PE kit

Across these subthemes, there are close links with the social and emotional bridge, one of the key Five Bridges already identified that schools should consider when planning for a successful transition.

The second overarching theme within this chapter focuses on a range of physical considerations that teaching staff should account for across the transitional period in PE, including:

- Pupils' physical competency and capabilities in PE
- Pupil's physical fitness across the transitional period

Finally, a third overarching theme considers existing good practice that was identified in the data collection phase of this study. Practices covered take into consideration the two former overarching themes whilst also addressing other issues raised within both the survey and interview data. Each section within this chapter is driven predominantly by explicit references to the online survey and interview data, whilst also allowing for scope to build on the more interpretative suggestions made in that data in the later Conclusion and Recommendations Chapter.

4.1 The Importance of Relationships in PE across the Transition

4.1.1 Pupil's friendships with their peers

Numerous pupil responses referred to peer friendships across the open-style questions included in the online survey. When asked which stage of education pupils preferred PE in, one Year 7 girl selecting primary school did so because: "I got to do more group work with my friends". Indeed, this was not a response in isolation in the survey results. Many pupils discussed how they felt that primary PE environment is much more conducive for working with friends within lessons than secondary school. This was to a certain degree anticipated, given Mizelle and Irvin's (2000) earlier point about how secondary school brings a much larger group of children together from different schools and, in doing so, can disrupt or altogether sever existing friendship networks pupils have. One Year 7 boy wrote:

"I have been separated from my close friends [in secondary] and sometimes it can be hard to work as a team when you are around newer groups of people".

The theme of friendships was most prominent in response to the question asking what was important for the move to secondary school PE lessons and a response from one Year 7 girl helps to demonstrate that pupils' priorities in PE are very much orientated towards who they are able to work with and their control over this:

"I remember wondering if we would be able to pick our own groups so that we would be with our friends".

In addition to this, one Year 7 boy was more explicit in expressing their desire to work with friends from their primary school in lessons, simply stating:

"It was important that I moved into secondary school PE with friends [from primary]".

It is, of course, important to recognise that such friendship-related concerns will likely exist across all subjects and will inevitably vary from pupil to pupil in terms of how prominent that concern is in their

own mind. However, concerns are potentially magnified in PE given that the subject is likely to require pupils to have more interaction, both verbally and physically, with their classmates than other subjects do. PE is a lesson with many unique aspects that could cause pupils concern, particularly if they find themselves without peers to support them; one example being that pupils do not have to get changed in front of their peers for maths and English lessons. This aspect of PE is something that will be considered in greater detail in due course.

Unique elements of PE can mean it stands out to pupils as being different to other curricular subjects taught in schools and this notion is only likely to be reinforced should pupils be placed in different classes than their other subjects. Of the two secondary PE teachers interviewed in this study, one stated that their pupils are in different classes for PE than other subjects, whilst the other interviewee did not address this issue explicitly. It is therefore difficult to judge whether this practice happens on a widespread basis. It is, however, important to consider the consequences of this in light of the survey data. One Year 8 girl, when asked what is important to them in the PE transition, wrote in their survey response that:

“I thought it was important for you to know someone in your class from other lessons e.g. English, science etc”.

In schools that do take pupils out of classes that they are familiar with in other subjects, staff could be unknowingly exacerbating issues surrounding friendships within lessons. Although it has been noted that it is difficult to determine precisely how widespread such practice is in schools, below are three statements from the online survey that reflect well the point above:

“[it was important] that I would still have familiar faces to talk to during [secondary PE] lessons” (Year 7, Girl).

“At primary school I knew everybody and what they were good at but at secondary I did not know anything about them” (Year 7, Boy).

“Having good friends in classes [was important across the transition]” (Year 7, Boy).

If pupils are to remain with the same classmates for all other lessons, they could well have much more of an opportunity to understand the strengths and weaknesses of these classmates, develop friendships with those pupils originating from different primary schools and essentially discover where they 'fit in' within that class. This is something that would prove to be much more difficult if they are separated from their 'usual' classmates solely for PE lessons. Separate PE classes potentially make it very difficult for pupils to develop strong friendship bonds with other pupils and this could be considered to be a highly significant finding in the context of the survey data that demonstrates these bonds play an important part in shaping pupils PE experiences post-transition.

In contrast to the online survey results, in which the word 'friend' appeared in 38 unique pupil responses, teaching staff working across the transition seldom discussed the issue during interviews. Only once across all four online interviews did any of the participants mention the word friend and in this individual case, the secondary PE teacher was fairly dismissive of the importance of peer relationships:

"I think the fact that we group them [based on ability] means they can't always clique themselves ... in those first few weeks those friendship groups from primary school change anyway".

This suggests an apparent disconnect exists between pupils and staff which may be damaging to the transition within PE. If teaching staff are dismissive, or simply unaware, of the importance and value pupils place on peer friendships when moving from primary to secondary school in PE, the teaching environment they help to shape is less likely to be conducive for new and old friendships to flourish. Even if the secondary teacher is largely accurate in stating friendships groups change in the first few weeks of secondary, and there is no way to measure the accuracy of their statement given its subjective nature, the fact remains that friendships are seemingly very important to pupils and this leaves questions as to what schools may or may not be doing to ensure their pupils have the best environment to form new friendships post-transition. Leaving friendships to form without any kind of

facilitative intervention may lead to significant anxieties amongst some pupils. Some respondents to the online survey offered suggestions as to what schools could do to better support friendships across the transition within PE. Two Year 7 pupils, both girls, advocated allowing pupils themselves to choose the groups they work with in PE, initially at least, to allow for a more comfortable transition:

“Let them be with their friends at the start then gradually separate them so they aren’t just on their own straight away”.

“Maybe let us be around friends so we are comfortable”.

In addition to these suggestions, one Year 8 boy was more detailed in his recommendation for secondary PE staff looking to facilitate forming friendships:

“On the first day of PE in secondary school, they [teachers] should host team activities like cricket or badminton (duos) to help pupils’ bond with their classmates and create more friends which will impact on the performance of the class”.

It is noteworthy that this particular pupil suggests that teaching staff should have something in place on the very first day to allow pupils to make the best possible start forming the bonds that so many of them find important in PE. It is also interesting that this individual is of the opinion that team sports and activities are the best way to encourage better friendships in PE. Further analysis of the survey data showed that this individual had very positive attitudes towards sport and exercise, suggesting that making friends in PE may have been a relatively straightforward task for them. Subsequently, their recommendation to teaching staff may not necessarily be endorsed by others with less positive attitudes towards sport and exercise, who may have historically found forming friends within the subject difficult.

One SSP coach on interview implied that ‘sporty’ pupils, those that are considered more gifted and talented in PE, may find it easier to form friendships once they have made the transition to secondary

school as they have potentially met their future classmates at inter-schools' events they attend predominately based upon their sporting merit:

“I think the sporty ones at primary school, they have probably have met the other sporty ones [from local primary schools] from competitions and festivals”.

Although there is no way to determine whether the Year 8 boy in question in the latest survey quote is particularly gifted or talented in PE from the survey data, it is possible to consider their attitudes towards sport and exercise. The pupil in question strongly agreed with all statements relating to physical literacy, with the only exception being that they only agreed that they found sport and exercise easy. These responses perhaps increase the likelihood that this pupil would be considered 'a sporty one' by the SSP coach and it is therefore possible that should the pupils' recommendation be carried out in schools, it would only serve to create an environment valued by those who share positive attitudes towards sport, exercise and physical activity those who are gifted and talented. While it should be acknowledged that simply meeting other pupils at competitions and festivals does not necessarily translate into forming friendships, either at the time of meeting or in the future, it is nonetheless an example of these pupils having the opportunities to effectively gain a head start in forming friendships over their classmates who have subjectively been deemed to be less gifted and talented by primary teaching staff.

4.1.2 Pupils' relationships with PE teaching staff

Relationships that pupils form in PE with their peers, as has been considered previously, are not the only form of relationship that can be seen to influence pupils' experience within the subject. Indeed, this subsection examines the relationships that pupils share with their teachers and the impact this relationship can have, beginning by considering initial introductions pupils have to PE teachers and the subject more generally. The importance of effective introductions in secondary PE was something that became clear from the online survey data. Introductions can be used as quite a loose term and

this subsection discusses both personal introductions from staff themselves, as well as the introductions staff give to new sports that pupils may not have played before.

Firstly, in respect of more personal introductions staff make to their new secondary pupils, one Year 7 boy stated that the most important thing when moving into secondary PE was:

“Having a nice introduction from the teachers” (Y7, Boy).

It would be assumed that this would be a reasonable expectation from all pupils across all subjects. However, the survey results also show a belief, from some pupils at least, that making a good first impression on the teachers themselves is equally important in order to develop a strong relationship. As one Year 8 girl said in their response to what was important when moving to secondary PE:

“Making a good impression on the teacher” (Y8, Girl).

In relation to Bourdieu, the PE ‘field’ can be seen to be dominated by pupils with high amounts of capital within the subject (Hunter, 2004). It is interesting that even in the period immediately after transition, this pupil and others that gave similar responses are themselves aware that ‘making a good impression’ will allow them to acquire more capital from teachers, even if this awareness is somewhat unconscious to them. Bearing in mind pupil’s lowly position within the official structure of a school, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, cited in Noble and Watkins, 2003) state that it is not surprising that pupils quickly learn the advantages associated with ‘playing the game’ in the school context. One Year 7 girl, also in response to the question asking what was important when moving to secondary PE, wrote:

“[it is important that] teachers give a chance to all pupils, not just the gifted ones” (Y7, Girl).

Although this individual does not explicitly state that a difference between primary and secondary PE teachers is that the former is more likely to ‘give all pupils a chance’, it feeds into an important issue already covered by academics that may influence staff relationships with their pupils. Morgan and Bourke (2008) write that non-specialist primary teachers often lack confidence and qualifications to

teach PE lessons to pupils, whilst secondary PE teachers are known specialists in the subject who are typically very good at sport, enjoy it and are confident in teaching it. The notion that people are socialised into choosing a specific profession has previously been an area of interest in research into PE specialists, with Morgan and Hansen (2008) explaining that there is a clear relationship between personal school experiences in PE and a teacher's practice in their implementation of the subject. The authors suggest that non-specialist, primary teachers who had poor PE experiences themselves make more effort to ensure this is not the case for their current pupils, but this effort focuses on ensuring pupils are not left out, rather than trying to improve their skills and knowledge in the subject. This is an important point that will be returned to in a later subsection specifically focusing on pupil's physical competency within PE.

However, as we focus on relationships, the aforementioned authors indirectly imply that secondary PE teachers with positive experiences are less likely to be aware of, or focus on, pupils with low physical competency and may be able to relate more to pupils that share a similar habitus to them in relation to PE. The actions of teachers are rarely arbitrary or accidental; nor are they always a reflection of preferred ways of thinking and acting; they have an origin and a history and are almost always inevitably constrained by the school and subject cultures of which they are part (Evans, 2004). Essentially, PE teaching staff in secondary schools may act favourably towards pupils who are gifted and talented and share a passion for sport at the expense of other pupils who are not and do not.

Another quote supporting the aforementioned Year 7 girl who wanted secondary PE teachers to give all pupils a chance comes from a Year 7 boy, in their response to what would help to improve the transition in PE:

“Don't pick favourites depending on their sporting talent from the first day” (Year 7 Boy).

This comment also supports the view that pupils feel they have to perform well from the very first day in order to help establish a positive relationship with their secondary PE teacher. Furthermore, secondary PE teachers may be subconsciously demonstrating this behaviour through their habitus,

making it even more difficult to change. Ultimately, the consequence of this is that pupils with less sporting capital within secondary PE than their more favoured classmates will struggle to transform that environment, or field, to better support their own personal learning needs. In reality, it is debatable as to what level of power any individual pupil has to do this by themselves. This only seeks to reinforce and underline the importance of this study and others like it, with young people's voices at its heart, to ensure all perspectives are considered and that the status quo is fairly challenged where necessary. PE teaching staff being drawn to gifted and talented pupils was something that could be seen primarily during staff interviews for this study and the following extracts are reflective of this. One SSP coach made clear how talented primary pupils have the opportunity to make themselves known to secondary staff long before they step foot in secondary school as Year 7 pupils:

“The School Sport Partnership did an indoor rowing competition around October, November time and when the Year 6s came up it was nice to see they already knew most of the Year 7s. They were the superstars in primary who had obviously got the eye of the secondary PE teacher and had been selected to do that, so that was quite nice”.

This statement is revealing of the fact that secondary PE teachers can be on the lookout for talented sports pupils that may one day join their school and is a further reflection of how they may naturally relate to those pupils that could mirror their own habitus. Events taking place before pupils reach Year 7 can be seen as a further opportunity to allow staff to form relationships with talented individuals, something which will only be advantageous to those pupils if they do indeed go onto join that particular secondary school. The same SSP coach went onto discuss how the talent pool in PE can become diluted in secondary school, as the number of pupils dramatically increases in comparison to primary PE lessons:

“The half decent ones that made the primary teams, when they get up to secondary there is another 50 of them at their level from all the other primaries, so when they only select eight or ten to make the [secondary] team, you have got 20, 30, 40 others who were probably half

decent but didn't make the 'A' team... you do lose pupils who probably were quite talented and good sports people, but because of the life in secondary school they just kind of get lost a bit in the system".

If pupils believe school teams are a priority of secondary PE staff then, given teams that will inevitably include the pupils that are best at PE, they risk alienating others pupils who either have no interest in competitive sport or are simply not deemed good enough to be selected for a team. This is a point that is supported by one Year 8 girl in her response to whether she preferred primary or secondary PE:

"In my set [in secondary], you only seem to be rewarded if you are the best and only the best. We are told that those who work hard and turn up to practice will make teams and get awards but still some of the hardest working people are getting pushed aside for the sake of those who are naturally talented. The aim at competitions seem to be to win and not to give each pupil amazing opportunities and life-long memories within the subject."

The SSP coach concurred with the point that competitive sport is high on secondary PE teachers' list of priorities when stating:

"I think the priorities at secondary school are the football league, the netball league which will start in week three or four back in September, so teachers have got to get straight into that".

This once again reinforces the inherent risk that secondary PE staff unconsciously form stronger relationships with pupils who are talented in sport, passionate about PE and willing to engage in competitive opportunities at the expense of other individuals who do not share some or all of those qualities. There was, however, recognition from one teacher on interview of the importance of the relationship between pupils and PE staff in ensuring that children are engaged not only in PE lessons, but wider physical activity:

“Some of it comes down to the teacher, that they love the teacher they have and so they really enjoy it because of that ... I was talking to a parent recently who has a boy in Year 8 and she said that he was really worried about the PE because he’s not particularly sporty, you know he likes his exercise but he is not a footballer or a cricketer, he’s not on a team he and doesn’t go to any clubs, but he really gels with his PE teacher and it was one of those where it came to be one of his favourite subjects”.

The level of awareness about the value some pupils place on a strong bond with their PE teacher in secondary school from this PE teacher was refreshing, although seldom seen in the interviews conducted. It is also possible that awareness alone is not enough; awareness must translate into some form of action in order to ensure that pupils who could potentially benefit the most from greater interaction with their PE teachers have the opportunity to do so.

4.1.3 Pupils’ development of self-awareness through PE changing rooms and compulsory PE kit

Having considered pupil’s relationships with their peers and their teachers up to this point, discussion will now focus on the ‘relationship’ pupils have with their own bodies within PE as many researchers have considered the importance of the body in terms of young people’s construction of themselves (Holroyd, 2002). Adler and Adler (1998, p207) allude to this identity work when they suggest that “through interacting with their peers, and by judging themselves against the standards and behaviours of peer norms, people forge self-conceptions that lie at the core of their being”. This quote helps to justify why the following falls under the wider relationships theme within this study, given that there is significant overlap between the field of peers and friends in relation to pupils own bodily awareness. An earlier reference to changing rooms standing out in PE as different to other subjects here becomes the focus of discussion.

Whilst importance of the relationships that pupils share with their peers and teachers was not significantly discussed by those staff interviewed, there was comparatively more discussion that recognised how pupils across the transition, in arguably the most developmental phase of their lives,

become more aware of their own bodies and their constructions of self. Paechter (2003) examines how in PE lessons the body is explicitly used, displayed and talked about. One site in which this is particularly relevant is the PE changing rooms and this received substantial attention in the online survey. In changing areas, pupils' bodies and behaviours are both scrutinised and disciplined by their peer groups, with public and negative labelling for those unwilling or unable to conform to group norms (Paechter, 2003). Across the 227 responses from participants to the online survey, there were 14 unique references to changing rooms across various questions and this helped to illuminate the large differences pupils' experience between getting changed in primary school and secondary school PE lessons. As one Year 7 girl simply stated in response to one question:

“In secondary schools we have changing rooms and in primary we got changed in the cloakroom” (Y7, Girl).

Changing rooms in PE are an integral part of the social space for the subject and have been covered in previous studies using the theories of Bourdieu (Bramham, 2003; Paechter, 2003; O'Donovan, Sandford and Kirk, 2015). However, while O'Donovan, Sandford and Kirk (2015) discuss how changing rooms in PE can be a 'taken-for-granted space, possibly viewed as a somewhat sterile environment' by secondary PE teachers, this did not ring true for those interviewed for this study. One secondary PE teacher on interview, when asked what was the first issue that comes to mind with regard to the transition, stated that:

“It's in the changing rooms, lining up to get changed where there are 120 other pupils. Instead of getting changed in a classroom or in the toilets like in primary school [they have a changing room], it is managing that, what happens in the changing room and actually they have only got five centimetres to get changed in and have to look after all their own stuff ... it is just the setup is different”.

From this it can be seen that although secondary schools have designated changing areas for PE, this does not necessarily correlate to pupils having a better experience. As the secondary PE teacher

acknowledges, space is often limited in such changing rooms and this can prove troublesome for pupils, although this is not something within the control of PE teachers:

“the changing rooms in the new sports hall are not as big as we would like them to be. We have got no control now really over the number of pupils that come down. In older year groups they come down in [classes of] twos and threes so it is much more manageable because it’s just more space in the changing room as they get bigger. It is just managing that behaviour, and, in some cases, the anxiety pupils might have about what it means to be getting changed amongst a bigger group of people”.

Holroyd (2002) discusses how the exposure of bodies within PE means that pupils, particularly girls, often feel the need to engage in personal 'body work' in order to conform to the norms and ideals that are promoted and reinforced within their respective peer groups. These issues will only be magnified in the small changing rooms described in the quotes above. Holroyd (2002) states girls use their gendered bodies to position themselves in relation to peers within the school context; additional pressures, such as PE changing rooms, serve only to reinforce the centrality of the body to the girls' experiences of the field of school. Whilst Holroyd’s study focused primarily on girls, this study found that such concerns transcend gender. As one Year 8 boy mentioned in their response to what they remembered as being important when moving from PE in primary to secondary:

“[in secondary school there is] less space to get ready and I sometimes feeling intimidated by others”.

To the same question, one Year 7 girl also responded:

“I didn’t like communal changing and showering areas”.

These pupils reported that they did not enjoy or feel confident when taking part in physical activity in response to the survey’s questions on attitudes towards sport and exercise. Both statements are clear in showing that, for some pupils, the changing rooms used for secondary PE lessons are a source of

anxiety and worry. Moreover, these statements were not exclusive to one gender. These emotions were acknowledged in the latter part of the most recent quote from one of the secondary PE teachers interviewed. Although the teacher was clearly aware that some pupils would find getting changed for PE lessons a source of anxiety, they did not offer any suggestions on how they do actually manage this in practice. Whilst simply identifying the issue is a step in the right direction, understanding the reasons as to why it happens in the first place can be seen to be crucial in order to help alleviate the problem. O'Donovan, Sandford and Kirk (2015) describe how changing rooms are a site of juncture between a number of core fields within PE, creating a highly-charged transitional space which facilitates processes of bodily comparison, surveillance and self-regulation – processes that have already been touched upon earlier in this section. Within the changing room context, the body represents a significant resource for pupils, thanks both to its visibility and relevance within this particular space and the capacity it offers to accumulate and consolidate physical capital (ibid). The reverse would also apply in that such exposure could have lasting negatively consequences for those individuals who feel worse about themselves after taking the opportunity to compare themselves to their peers, perhaps for the first time meaningfully.

It is therefore probable that for the pupils in this study who spoke of feeling intimidated by others getting changed, the process of comparing themselves to others has led to them having a negative PE experience before their teacher had delivered any lesson content and irrespective of their sporting abilities. Of the 14 individuals who discussed changing rooms at any point in their survey responses (11 of which were female), there were mixed results to the latter questions exploring attitudes to physical activity. Some, including the two individuals whose quotes were previously used, reported that they did not either enjoy or feel confident in physical activity, whereas others reported the opposite.

Not all individuals mentioning changing rooms did so in a way that would suggest they were referring to them in a negative sense. When the researcher considered only the responses that explicitly

referred to changing rooms in a negative sense, of which there were six, it was evident that none of those individuals agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed or felt confident taking part in sport and exercise. Although the small sample size would not make it possible to claim an association exists between negative attitudes towards changing rooms in PE and not enjoying or feeling confident in physical activity, it can be suggested as a specific area that would merit further study.

Discussions around the body and changing rooms are also related to the issue of a compulsory PE kit or uniform in secondary schools, another significant theme that emerged from the survey data. There were 51 unique references to the word's 'kit' or 'uniform' across the online survey responses, with 25 of those from girls and 24 from boys. A considerable number of pupils opined that compulsory PE kit or uniform was an important feature of secondary school PE and that this was a substantial change from what had been expected of them in primary PE lessons. Responding to the question asking what was important moving from PE lessons in primary to secondary school, a number of survey participants recognised a clear shift towards compulsory PE kit, best demonstrated through the following simple response from Year 8 boy:

“We didn’t have a compulsory PE kit at primary school, but we do at secondary school” (Y8, Boy).

It is not possible to interpret from this quote alone whether this individual feels compulsory kit is a positive or negative requirement to them, just that they felt strongly enough to recognise the shift as important. Indeed, one secondary PE teacher interviewed was very aware that this matter was prominent in the minds of their pupils in the initial, post-transitional weeks:

“it’s the basic stuff like making sure they have got the right kit and making sure they know what kit to wear, making sure that their kit is labelled and that on their timetable they know where to come and get changed.”

What is particularly interesting is that whilst this teacher acknowledges PE kit as something that will be a consideration to pupils starting secondary school, they also note that to them, this is the 'basic stuff'. Teachers expecting pupils to present themselves in an 'appropriate' manner for PE lessons was something that was reflected in responses to the online survey, as one Year 8 girl stated that:

“Having the right attire [was important after moving to secondary school]” (Y8, Girl).

It is here that a possible disconnect between teachers and pupils exists in that secondary PE staff see wearing PE kit as a fairly standard requirement for lessons that is easy to adhere to, whereas for pupils, particularly in the period immediately post-transition, wearing a specific kit or uniform is new, unfamiliar and a potential cause of anxiety impacting on their overall PE experience. O'Donovan, Sandford and Kirk (2015) state that for many pupils, school uniforms are often far from the 'ideal' image that counts for physical capital within the peer group and that PE uniforms are even further from that mark. Whilst many PE teachers may hold beliefs about how pupils should present themselves for lessons, young people are actually navigating their own completely separate identities within PE. One Year 8 boy, when asked what schools could do to help the transition in PE, wrote:

“inform pupils of the changing procedures before they get to secondary school”.

This implies this individual was not informed of the expected procedures by teaching staff before starting secondary and consequently felt underprepared when they first arrived. Holroyd (2002) found that a lot of the pupil's dissatisfaction with a compulsory school uniform (of which PE kit is part of) appeared to stem how they felt it positions them as subordinates within the field of school generally, identifying them in a collective group as 'pupils', which runs directly against them trying to find their own identities. This has led to some academics speculating over whether compulsory PE kit in secondary school remains a worthwhile requirement, given it is unlikely to be empowering to pupils in lessons. O'Donovan, Sandford and Kirk (2015) write that the extent to which such justifications for institutional schooling in the changing room are in the pupils' interests, or even in the interests of PE should be considered, given that the values supported by teachers in this context are disconnected

from the values espoused by pupils. If anything, the requirement is a source of divide between pupils and teaching staff given the conflicting value placed upon it.

However, it is important to equally consider the potential negative impacts that could arise from making the wearing of PE kit non-compulsory in secondary schools. In her well-balanced discussion on the issue, Holroyd (2002) outlines some positive elements attached to the existence of a compulsory uniform in schools, such as reducing complicated decision making for pupils on a school morning or decreasing competition between peers. By allowing pupils to wear whatever they want to for PE lessons, schools would effectively risk making PE a pupil fashion show, predictably offering certain pupils the opportunity to acquire more physical capital than they would be able to by having to wear a standardised uniform. Responding to what was important to them when moving to secondary school PE lessons, one Year 8 boy wrote:

“Having to buy lots of kit like football boots, plus indoor and outdoor trainers and full kit”.

The postcode data that this pupil provided revealed that they lived in an area ranking among the 20% most deprived areas in England (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019). Nonetheless, whilst their response does not reveal whether they and their family personally found having to purchase such items financially burdensome, it helps to highlight the prospect of pupils from lower socioeconomic backgrounds being less able to purchase clothing seen to be more desirable or fitting of the considered ‘ideal image’ within their peer groups. As is particularly evident in the case of the aforementioned pupil, having to purchase only compulsory kit for secondary PE is already a concern to some pupils. These concerns would likely only be intensified if pupils were able to wear different clothing to each PE lesson, as it may promote a continued competition amongst pupils to best fulfil perceived ideals on a regular basis. Subsequently, pupils not able to live up to perceived ideals may then find themselves outcast amongst classmates which impacts upon their friendships within the subject, demonstrating the interconnected nature of the issues covered in this discussion. Like with many of the issues surrounding the transition in PE, there are certainly no straightforward

solutions that suit all parties. However, given how compulsory PE kit is a long-established feature of the subject in the majority of secondary schools and that 'fields' are notoriously resilient to change, it would appear likely any attempt to alter this would be met with resistance.

To summarise, relationships with a range of different actors within the PE field will impact upon how pupils' experience the subject pre and post-transition. It can be accepted that some pupils will be influenced to varying extents by different actors within the subject. For example, one pupil's relationship with their classmates may have more of a bearing on their overall PE experience than their relationship with their PE teacher, whilst for one of their classmates, the relationship with staff members may be more significant. What can be collectively recognised is that poor or negative relationships within one or more of the areas covered could be seen to significantly increase the likelihood of an individual having a negative experience in PE, which could subsequently lead to them being less likely to partake in physical activity both within and outside of school. Positive relationships can be seen to be fundamental to individuals continued participation in physical activity and should teaching staff fail to recognise this or fail to facilitate an environment where pupils can create and develop strong relationships, there is an inherent risk of pupils failing to engage with the subject from the very outset of their secondary school journey. Pupil responses within the online survey demonstrate how important relationships are with both peers and teaching staff and this should be a key consideration for all parties involved within the PE transition, particularly primary and secondary PE teachers. Reflecting upon Hirvensalo and Lintunen's (2011, p14) earlier quote that "positive experiences and wide range of sports skills acquired in childhood and adolescence could be seen as the preparation for lifelong physical activity", strong relationships within PE can be seen to be an essential element of those experiences that can form part of the building blocks for a lifelong, positive experience with sport and physical activity.

4.2 Physical Considerations: Competency, Capability and Fitness

As was outlined at the beginning of this chapter, this second overarching theme focuses on a range of physical considerations that teaching staff should account for across the transitional period in PE, including:

- Pupils' physical competency and capabilities within PE
- Pupil's physical fitness across the transitional period

It should be made clear from the outset that physical competency and capabilities refer to pupil's skills within PE, whereas the second subtheme of physical fitness refers specifically to their cardiovascular fitness which may impact on how able they are to carry out such skills. While the two are linked, it is important to distinguish them and recognise that they are not interchangeable. Indeed, a pupil may be highly competent in PE but be physically unfit. Meanwhile, another may be lacking in physical competency but be very physically fit.

4.2.1 Pupils' physical competency and capabilities within PE

On the issue of physical competency, there was a consensus amongst the four school-based staff interviewed that some pupils were arriving at secondary schools without the necessary skills to be able perform in PE to the level staff would expect. One SSP coach, who in their role worked across both sides of the transition, said:

“We need pupils to be able to apply skills and understand why we are putting these things into context through a game or an activity and they just don't have it [in Year 7]”.

The coach speaks as if this is an issue that is widespread and ingrained in the pupils they work with, within County Durham. They went on to provide a recent example of this issue in practice:

“[this year] I did two lessons a week with a Year 7 class and it was the lowest level of PE children that I have worked with. The majority of them have gone through all of primary and basically been allowed to just float along or not take part. I would be very surprised if they

have been properly challenged in PE because where I started with them, it was like I was starting at maybe Year 3 or Year 4 level and they were Year 7s”.

Clearly in the case of this class, the coach would have welcomed a more substantial focus on pupil's skill development in PE prior to moving to secondary school. Furthermore, their discussion of pupils being allowed to “not take part” in PE suggests that many of the under skilled pupils they make reference to are disillusioned with the subject prior to joining secondary school, perhaps leaving little hope of a shift in attitude at the beginning of Year 7. Continuing to focus on skills within PE, a number of pupils responding to the online survey commented on how skills-based learning was a much more prominent feature in secondary school PE lessons, compared with what they had experienced in primary school, as the three statements below help to demonstrate:

“We get introduced to more skills in a sport in secondary school than I did in primary school”
(Year 8 Girl)

“The biggest difference between primary and secondary school is that we extend our skills further in secondary” (Year 8 Girl)

“We get the chance to develop our skills in a variety of different sports and activities each lesson [in secondary school] and sometimes play matches with the skills we've learnt” (Year 7 Girl)

It is worth noting that all three girls quoted above either agreed or strongly agreed with all questions relating to positive attitudes towards sport and exercise. Once joining secondary school pupils for the first time have the opportunity to compare PE lessons in the two stages of education. Although the quotes above are not explicit in stating how much skill-based learning in primary PE lessons these individuals experienced, they certainly go some way in acknowledging that there is a distinct increase in secondary school. In response to the question asking what schools could do to help pupils' transition in PE, a further Year 7 girl simply suggested that primary schools could: “teach us basic skills used for

majority of sports". This pupil strongly agreed that they enjoyed sport and exercise, but neither agreed or disagreed that they found sport and exercise easy, suggesting an issue with their perceived physical competency.

Further support in the dataset for a shift in primary PE focus to better prepare pupils for the transition came from two girls, one in Year 7 and another in Year 8. The former, when offering suggestions as to what could help improve the transition, stated: "in Year 6 they [primary PE teachers] could do harder things before we go into Year 7". This girl disagreed that they found sport and exercise easy and did not agree nor disagree that they enjoyed sport and exercise. The latter girl, in responding to the same question, stated that: "the last year of primary PE could be harder and [the teachers should] not treat them, [their pupils], like babies". By comparison, this pupil strongly agreed with all questions relating to attitudes towards sport and exercise. Set in the context of numerous references to suggest a marked increase in skill-based learning in secondary school, it is possible to infer that many pupils may, post-transition, begin to realise that they do not possess the skills required to be successful in secondary PE lessons and this can become a source of frustration to those pupils. A Year 7 boy also stated that they would welcome a more progressive approach to primary PE, stating in response to the same question: "in primary over the different years 3, 4, 5 and 6 they should progressively make it harder". However, it is important to note that the word 'harder' in this sense could also refer to the level of physical fitness required to undertake the activities set out by teachers and not necessarily the level of skill required in lesson. The consequences of secondary PE teachers failing to effectively adapt lesson delivery for some pupils they receive from primary schools lacking in physical literacy will be discussed in detail shortly.

4.2.2 Pupil's Physical Fitness across the Primary-Secondary Transition

In many ways, if starting secondary school marks the period where some pupils begin to feel they have been underprepared by primary PE lessons and that they do not possess the necessary skills to succeed in secondary PE, this can be seen to be part of pupils' wider development of a new level of

consciousness relating to their own personal fitness and physical capabilities within the PE post-transition. This newly found consciousness also appears to be a direct result of secondary PE lessons placing pupils under increased physical demands when compared to their primary experiences. Warburton and Spray (2008) identified that secondary teachers are known to promote new criteria or standards by which pupils judge their competence immediately after transition, often making pupils feel less able to meet these standards and in turn, less competent than when participating in PE at primary school. There is then, a need to explore both pupils' newly found awareness of their physical capabilities and the apparent change in the physical pedagogy that is behind it. When asked about the biggest differences between primary and secondary PE lessons, one Year 7 girl responded:

“in primary PE it is a more relaxed environment, whilst in secondary PE they want to push you to your limits”.

This pupil positively agreed that they understood why sport and exercise is good for them, but did not enjoy taking part and disagreed that they felt confident and that they found it easy. However, it is not possible to determine to what extent, if any, the transition has influenced her responses. Indeed, another response from a Year 7 boy supported the view of the previous girl, in which they simply answered:

“the level of stamina needed is greater in secondary PE”.

This pupil strongly agreed with all attitude related questions in the survey. Indeed, these responses, and others from further respondents to the online survey, supported the notion that in secondary school pupils become more aware of their own physical fitness because they are increasingly pushed in lessons. One SSP coach, with previous experience as a secondary school PE teacher in North East England, recalled a personal experience of how pupils can be physically tested immediately upon starting secondary school PE:

“in the first week of secondary school, the Year 7 pupils were swimming and they all lined up and jumped in the deep end. If they got to the end of the pool in one piece they were in the top set, if they got halfway and splattered about they were in the middle set and if they sank straight to the bottom they were the bottom set ... it was literally sink or swim”.

The coach did not specify exactly when this took place and there is certainly no evidence to suggest that this kind of physical assessment is used widely in secondary schools. However, the example itself provides a clear visualisation of how pupils may be given very little time, if any, to adapt to the much more challenging physical environment of secondary school PE. In some cases, this environment can be seen to have led to pupils taking on greater responsibility for their own physical fitness, something they perhaps had not done until that point. When asked what was important across the transition period in PE, one Year 8 boy replied: “Keeping your health up outside of school”. This response implies that, for this pupil at least, there is a post-transitional realisation that PE lessons alone are simply not enough to maintain adequate levels of fitness or, at least enough fitness to be able to participate effectively in secondary PE lesson. Indeed, simply partaking in two hours of PE per week will not enable a new secondary school pupil to hit the Chief Medical Officers’ Physical Activity guidelines (Department for Health and Social Care, 2020). Another individual responding to the online survey, a Year 8 boy, shared this outlook in stating:

“Keeping fit because of the changes in lessons is important for secondary PE”.

Of the Five Bridges of Transition, the pedagogy bridge is particularly relevant in this context, especially given this Year 8 boy’s reference to a ‘*change in lessons*’ in their response. There were 52 unique references to secondary PE lessons being ‘harder’ than primary and this figure does not account for other references to this point including words of similar meaning (e.g. more difficult, challenging and tougher). The volume of pupils commenting, both positively and negatively, on how secondary school PE lessons presents a step up in physical demands allows us to consider this to be widely held perspective amongst pupils responding to the online survey. It should, however, be noted that there

were many pupils who enjoyed secondary PE and the challenges that came with it. One Year 7 girl stated they had a positive experience in secondary PE lessons because “secondary PE staff push you so that you work harder”, whilst two Year 7 boys revealed they preferred secondary PE because “lessons push you to your limits” and “teachers push you to see you reach your peak fitness”. Each of these pupils strongly agreed that they enjoy taking part in exercise and sport later in the survey when asked about their attitudes towards physical activity. However, it is important to recognise that not all pupils responding to the survey shared their desire to see secondary PE staff physically push them during lessons. One Year 8 boy suggested that secondary PE teachers should “make Year 7 and 8 easier as pupils can do harder lessons if they choose GCSE PE” (which pupils would not start until Year 10).

In light of these statements, it is possible to understand how pupils who are not used to being physically challenged in their primary PE lessons may come to struggle in secondary PE lessons, which could in turn quite easily place them into a state of disengagement with the subject when starting secondary school. Without the necessary intervention from secondary PE teachers, this could prove very difficult to change. For such interventions to take place, secondary PE teachers must therefore be able to recognise when pupils’ are physically ill-equipped for their lessons and how their pupils feel about this. One thing that makes these pupil’s statements even more significant is how they contrast with the views staff shared on interviewed. One Year 7 girl spoke about how she already had expectations that PE lessons in secondary school were going to be more difficult than in primary school, writing:

“I knew it wasn’t going to be as easy”.

Though this pupil did not expand upon why she believed secondary PE lessons were not going to be easy, it is possible that her predetermined mindset may have shaped her actual secondary PE experience. Furthermore, it runs completely counter to what one secondary PE teacher interviewed considered pupils’ pre-transition expectations to be:

“I think the thing is when they are learning something new, when they get to Year 7 and 8, they expect it to be easy and they expect to pick it up straight away”.

This statement supports the existence of a significant disconnect between some pupils and PE staff working across the transition around the issue of pupils’ physical competency and capabilities when arriving at secondary school. Although it is not possible to generalise findings from a small number of online interviews to consider whether such a disconnect is widespread in secondary schools, the findings in themselves are noteworthy. Furthermore, although not directly asked during the interviews, none of the staff interviewed took a moment to consider the possibility that secondary PE lessons were generally aimed above pupils’ capabilities for their age or were too difficult for pupils arriving in Year 7. On the contrary, the blame was pinned firmly on primary schools for not adequately pushing pupils in PE lessons, subsequently leaving them unprepared for the physical demands of secondary PE. To add to one SSP coach earlier, stating that in their experience the majority of primary pupils have been allowed to ‘float along or not take part’ in PE, one secondary PE teacher stated on interview:

“There are definitely primaries that do PE better than others. When we get the new Year 7s in September, you can just look at them in the first few lessons and know which primary they have come from, or maybe choose out of a couple. There are some primaries that just don’t really care about PE or maybe aren’t sure on how to go about teaching it and unfortunately it really shows to people like us”.

It is through statements such as this that staff working with secondary-aged pupils in PE effectively exonerated themselves of responsibility (either consciously or unconsciously) over pupils who assert that secondary PE is too physically demanding. This is a reality that has been documented in previous transitional studies, with Rainer and Cropley (2015) explaining that primary PE teachers often receive little support from their secondary counterparts, are viewed as insignificant and that, with a poor

understanding of the primary PE curriculum, secondary PE teachers are the main protagonists in creating an '*us and them*' mentality between the two stages of education.

Given the acknowledgement from secondary teaching staff that pupils can arrive at secondary school below the level at which they would ideally like them to be at, it would be hoped that teachers and coaches adapt lessons to allow pupils to firstly reach that point before then looking to progress them further. In a conversation discussing what the main purpose of PE lessons are, one secondary PE teacher (not the interviewee giving the immediately previous quote), stated:

“Because it is *PE, physical education*, education is in there. You have got to have that element of: what do they know now? What can they do now that they could not do before? It's not physical activity, it's not just go in there and play a game and don't think about it, it's got to have some type of education in there”.

This teacher goes some way to acknowledging that secondary PE staff must assess the pupils they receive and teach accordingly, rather than delivering lessons to a universal standard. If these adjustments are not made and lessons are delivered to pupils at an idealistic level, many pupils below such a level may find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to successfully bridge the gap in PE between Year 6 and Year 7. By failing to adapt lessons where required, staff run the risk of pupils becoming disheartened at their inevitable shortcomings and ultimately becoming disengaged with PE. Irrespective of whether they feel primary schools are failing to prepare children, the secondary teacher interviewed above speaks of a more important duty to progress children within PE, even if it is to below the level they would ideally like. Communication and co-operation between both stages of education is crucial to ensuring an effective transition for pupils in relation to the bureaucratic bridge and any unnecessary focus on attributing blame will only guarantee little progress will be made in this area.

4.3 Existing Good Practice in Schools

Whilst a central aim of this study is to identify transitional issues in PE by listening to young people with recent experience of moving from primary to secondary school, it also seeks to identify existing good practice that could be utilised more widely by schools. The need for effective communication between the two stages of education with regard to both the bureaucratic and curriculum bridge has already been made clear. This subsection considers existing good practice and potential solutions to the issues identified that could improve those bridges.

One secondary PE teacher agreed that more needs to be done to improve the transition in PE and that for them, the curriculum bridge should be a primary area of attention:

“Secondary school PE teachers maybe don’t know enough about the primary school curriculum; we need to be more aware of what they have done in their primary set up so we can build upon it, not regress from it”.

Interestingly, this teacher spoke of how they and the PE department had already taken steps to address this issue and discussed how a primary PE teacher had recently spent time observing their secondary lessons:

“We had one of the primary PE teachers from [school anonymised] come into school every Friday morning and they were watching the Year 7s lessons. They were watching what processes we put in place, how we group the pupils, what skills we do with them. The plan was that they would come in for about four or five weeks and then I was going to go into their school and see some of their PE lessons so I would get a little bit more of an understanding about what skills they have covered, how they organise it in groups, what is different between the two [stages] that we can make smoother for the transition.

Such observations have historically been discussed as a potential way of improving the transition, notably in ESTYN (2004, cited in Hodgkin *et al.* 2013). By developing a firmer understanding of both

sides of the transition, primary and secondary staff will ultimately be better prepared to teach their respective stage to deliver a more balanced transitional experience to children. Furthermore, it would be hoped that a natural by-product of these observations would be an improved relationship between staff and a strengthening of the bureaucratic bridge, by removing any prospect of an *'us and them'* mentality emerging. Of course, this cannot be guaranteed as observations could have the very opposite effect in solidifying views that staff already hold about the other side of the transition. However, with observations there is at least the chance of changing perspectives, something that could not be said if they do not take place at all. Naturally, there are implications such as cost and time that would impact on such strategies being applied effectively across the transition. For the individual interviewed for this study, the observations were cut short through no fault of their own:

“They didn’t do their last week [before Easter] and I didn’t get into the primary school before we had to break up (due to the COVID-19 outbreak), but that’s something we could look to do next year as well”.

Another secondary PE teacher also openly discussed their personal desire to help primary teachers in the subject but cited lack of time within the school day to do so:

“I personally would love to be able to help them out a bit more because there are [primary] teachers that I know would really like to be able to learn from us and how we do things but there just isn’t the time within school to do that sort of thing and I think you would do very well to find any teacher happy to give up their time outside of school for that, voluntarily anyway”.

The abrupt end to the arrangement the first secondary PE teacher had in the 2019/2020 school year could obviously not have been foreseen when they were first planning the exchange. However, it is perhaps a strong reminder of how difficult such arrangements are to facilitate and maintain over long periods; the fact that there is no firm agreement for the arrangement to be continued annually indicates that it may not be a priority for staff or their school leaders. One SSP coach acknowledged

that for numerous reasons, there is greater focus on primary schools to better prepare pupils for secondary school, particularly as secondary staff do prioritise other matters:

“Well the big thing of course is the funding [PE and Sport Premium] which is only given to primary schools. In a previous system, the money was given to secondary schools and you released a secondary member of staff to work in a primary and it was a bit more of a joined-up approach, whereas now the primary schools get £17,000 to £18,000 and it’s up to them to spend it on what they want. So, there is a bigger focus on the primary school age... secondary schools find it harder to get out as there is a lot more demand on curriculum time”.

The SSP coach went on to mention one way in which some primary schools had used parts of their funding to improve pupils’ physical competencies across the transition, discussing how it was their role within the SSP to deliver “bespoke transition packages in primary schools”, in place of timetabled PE lessons. Within these sessions, the coach explained “when I work with Year 5 and 6s, I talk to them about when you get into Year 7 and I structure my lessons based around what a Year 7 lesson would look like”. Giving primary pupils an early introduction to the levels at which secondary PE lessons are delivered in a setting familiar to them could be particularly beneficial to many young people. The motivation behind such sessions are that once pupils arrive at secondary school, they will have an existing awareness of the demands that will be placed upon them during PE lessons. Using Bourdieu’s concept of field, then, these sessions could be seen as advantageous in that they give pupils a better understanding of the rules of the game prior to making the transition, leaving them more prepared for the move and less likely to feel shocked, overwhelmed and physically incompetent. When questioned about how many schools receive such transitional sessions in the area they serve, the SSP coach was unsure of the exact number but revealed that “some schools take it up, some schools don’t”. This implies that some primary schools see value in the sessions, whilst others do not.

4.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter firstly focused on issues relating to relationships pupils have within PE, including with peers and teaching staff, that in various ways influence their experiences within the subject. Furthermore, pupil's physical competency, capabilities and fitness across the transition has been considered, as well as existing good practice within these areas and potentially new approaches that could help to improve such elements in pupils of transition age. Although the solutions discussed through the data collected focus on primary schools and what they can do to improve pupils' physical competency across the transition (with the one exception of the teacher observations involving secondary staff), this is not to say that primary schools generally should be held accountable for shortcomings in this area. As has been made clear through the bridges that are applicable in this area, it falls upon both primary and secondary schools to create the best possible transitional environment for pupils in PE. Whilst this would be expected across all subjects, PE potentially magnifies and exacerbates pupils' transitional anxieties and this helps to underline why the subject perhaps requires specific attention in relation to the transition.

Although secondary schools do not benefit from the same PES Premium funding that primary schools receive, they do benefit from trained specialists within the subject who should, in theory at least, be more able to adapt lessons to suit the needs of their pupils and whole classes to a greater degree than primaries would. However, as this chapter has alluded to, secondary PE staff must be able to recognise when it is appropriate to adapt lesson content in light of pupils joining Year 7 underprepared for the physical demands the subject places upon them. Ultimately, it can be seen to fall upon both stages of education to recognise their respective strengths and to best use those strengths to facilitate a transitional environment within PE that helps pupil's alleviate anxieties and form friendships, whilst improving their physical competency and fitness to progress in the subject.

Chapter Five:

Conclusions and Recommendations

Phoenix and Orr (2017) maintain that looking for patterns of meaning within data to identify central themes is a common form of analysis within qualitative research in sport, exercise and health. In light of this, this study has fundamentally sought to listen to and understand the voices of the young people that reflect the lived experiences of pupils across the transitional period in PE from primary to secondary school, in order to identify key themes and offer potential approaches that can be used beneficially in the future. The findings in this study clearly identified that there are firstly, both potential areas of significant disconnect between pupils and secondary PE staff post-transition, that can be viewed within the context of the Five Bridges set out by Galton *et al.* (1999), and, secondly, issues that can be addressed by both primary and secondary schools that would potentially improve the transition within PE for future pupils.

Within the data, two overarching themes were identified as having the most influence over pupils' physical activity participation across the transition: relationships and physical considerations of competency, capability and fitness. Both were overarching in that there were subsections explored within each of them, owing to the overall complexity of transition from primary to secondary school in the PE context. Phoenix and Orr (2017) remain convinced of the need for complexity to continue being identified, understood and communicated – both in and out of academia - and this is especially the case in the field of physical activity. In keeping with this study's embracement of the work of Bourdieu, the subsequent conclusions will reflect upon the transition pupils make from the field of primary school PE to the field of secondary school PE and will follow the process chronologically, examining how habitus may influence pupils' experiences. Certain elements of the conclusion can be seen to relate to the school transition work of Galton *et al.* (1999) and the theorisations of Bourdieu more explicitly than others, but it should be noted that this does not necessarily determine that they are more important to the issue in question. As Davey (2009) writes in their own study exploring narratives of transition, habitus is a slippery concept and there is doubtless a risk of seeing habitus as both everywhere and nowhere. Whilst habitus can offer a means to work with a more tangible conceptualisation and is promising at a conceptual level, it is perhaps not fully realised in practical

application (ibid), therefore justifying the need at certain points to consider the findings of this study in a more practical sense.

From the outset, it is worth acknowledging that pupils' secondary school PE experiences are likely to be shaped, to varying extents, by their primary school PE experiences. In Bourdieusian terms, Abrahams and Ingram (2013), exploring the Chameleon Habitus and university students' negotiations of multiple fields, state that in using habitus we consider all new experiences to be mediated by perceptions laid down through past experience and can therefore consider students' perceptions of new experiences in the education field only in relation to their previously internalised perceptions, as generated by their originary field. However, it is also important to be mindful that the movement into a new field (which in the case of this study is the field of secondary school PE) offers a short window in which an individuals' habitus can be altered and adapted, given Bourdieu discusses habitus as something that is not static. Abrahams and Ingram (2013) use Bourdieu to explain that when the habitus encounters a new field there is a 'dialectical confrontation', at which point there can emerge a 'cleft habitus'. Ingram and Abrahams (2015, p140) state that "a cleft habitus comes about when the habitus encounters a new and contradictory field, causing an internalisation of divided structures". Whilst Bourdieu's discussions would suggest that a cleft habitus is always negative, Abrahams and Ingram do not share such a view, believing it can enable individuals to become adaptable and provides them with a unique position between two fields (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013). While this study did not explicitly collect data from current primary school pupils or teaching staff, it remains possible to draw conclusions in this area for reasons outlined in the Methodology Chapter.

5.1 Primary School Conclusions

Firstly, the findings of this study support those of previous academics (Kirk, 2005; Dismore and Bailey, 2010) in that many pupils find primary school PE lessons to be largely fun and enjoyable, with little emphasis or focus specifically on skill-based learning from their non-specialist primary school teachers. Data collection uncovered instances where teaching staff were concerned that some pupils

starting secondary school possessed low levels of physical competency, to the detriment of their secondary PE experience in ways that were initially explored within the Findings and Discussion Chapter of this thesis. Whilst a small number of pupils discussed how a lack of skill-based learning in primary may be the root cause of these cases, one SSP coach interviewed was explicit in identifying primary PE lessons are being inadequate to prepare pupils for the transition to secondary PE.

This can be seen to be part of a wider phenomenon wherein decisions made by non-specialist primary PE teachers can have a significant bearing on their pupils PE experiences long after they leave Year 6. The aforementioned SSP coach raised the spending of the annual PES Premium funding given to primary schools. The SSP coach was responsible for the delivery of bespoke transitional sessions in PE for local primary schools as part of an SSP package those schools could buy into to better prepare pupils for secondary PE lessons. Although the effectiveness of these sessions could not be judged during an interview, they in theory would certainly have the potential to improve any skills deficit across the transition in the area the SSP operates, but only if universally delivered to all primary schools feeding one secondary school. If only a select few schools chose to spend their funding on transitional sessions, the SSP could, indirectly, actually increase and widen any skills deficit in the local area. Although all primary schools within the area the SSP operates in had an equal opportunity to purchase the transitional sessions, the coach stated that not all primary schools do. This resulted in some pupils missing out on the opportunity to improve their physical competency before starting secondary school, based on their primary school's decision of how to best and most effectively spend their annual PES Premium allocation. Effectively, pupils receiving the transitional sessions are offered a head start over pupils whose schools did not opt to purchase the sessions, meaning that those pupils may have a greater capacity to improve their physical competency within secondary PE lessons. As a result of this, there may be two pupils arriving in a secondary school PE lesson from different primary schools who have the potential to be very similar in terms of their actual physical capabilities. One pupil may have attended a primary that invested heavily recruiting an external coach to deliver a series of transition sessions, whereas the other benefited from neither of these things. If a secondary PE

teacher immediately grouped their pupils in terms of their physical competency, the latter pupil would be likely to be placed in a lower set, which in turn may not only prevent them from reaching their full potential, but also damage their confidence and discourage them from further participation in sport and physical activity. It is, therefore, possible to speculate over the longer lasting impact of a decision made in primary school, that can have a knock-on effect across the transition. One way to reduce this impact would be to improve communication between primary schools and secondary schools and, in recognition of this, is a recommendation relevant to both stages of education that will be covered in greater detail later in this chapter.

Indeed, the bespoke transitional sessions were one of two areas considered to be existing good practice affecting primary schools in some way that were discussed with interviewees, the other being lesson observation exchanges between primary and secondary PE teachers. It is not for this study to judge the potential effectiveness of either, but what can be said is that they are highly school-specific in the way that they target schools on an individual level. In practice, both could be seen to be difficult to implement to positively impact a large number of pupils in multiple schools. The lesson observation exchange described by one secondary PE teacher on interview only features one primary and one secondary PE teacher, whilst in reality secondary schools can take in pupils from a large range of primary schools. Likewise, the SSP coach was the only coach on their respective team delivering the bespoke transitional sessions. It should be stated that the interviewee did not make it clear whether they were the only coach trained to deliver the sessions or if all SSP coaches could, should demand from local schools significantly increase. However, if the former is accurate and there was an increase in demand, it appears likely the SSP would not have the capacity to immediately cater for all primary schools. Notwithstanding these possible limitations of both methods, it may however be that in practice, this highly localised way of improving pupils' physical competency across the transition in PE is the most effective and should be scaled up to reach as many children as is practically possible, without negatively impacting upon the quality of what is being offered. Nonetheless, through these two examples discussed with individuals working across the transition it is possible to see how primary

schools PE and the decisions staff take at that stage of education can impact on pupils' attitudes and performance in secondary PE lessons, something that recommendations made later will account for.

5.2 Secondary School Conclusions

Attention now turns to secondary school PE specifically and issues that occur post-transition. As one SSP coach discussed on interview, pupils who were identified as gifted and talented in primary school PE lessons may find they no longer hold such status when judged, by both themselves and teaching staff, against pupils from other primary schools in secondary PE lessons. An unavoidable consequence of the transition, in any school subject, is that pupils will always have to undergo the process of discovering where they fit in within their new classes, or field, once joining secondary school. It is at this point there is the potential for a pupil to develop a cleft habitus, referenced earlier through the work of Abrahams and Ingram (2013). Within PE, the criteria against which pupils are judged, both by themselves and teaching staff, often allows for a fairly immediate verdict on competency and capability. It is conceivable that a pupil whose perceived physical competency is good when leaving primary school can find it lowered considerably and quickly when introduced to new classmates in PE, as this alters their previously established standard of good and bad physical competency. This point helps to demonstrate how even pupils who in primary school PE lessons had a habitus closely aligned to that particular field are not guaranteed to find themselves in the same position once in secondary school. A pupil who had previously considered themselves good at PE in primary may take part in secondary school PE thinking that "this place is not for the likes of me", because that particular field is not congruent with their habitus. In possessing a cleft habitus the pupil though may experience, simultaneously, feeling a sense of belonging (they use to think they were good at PE) and being out of place (they no longer consider themselves to be good at PE in their new secondary class). Whilst the subject itself remains the same in name, certain factors within the subject have changed which help to clearly distinguish two separate PE fields across the two stages of education.

This is an important point to consider, given a number of pupils within this study felt that physical competency had a significant bearing on how secondary PE teachers treat their pupils and how pupils with perceived low physical competency were less likely to be treated favourably by secondary PE teachers. Pupils in this study recollected instances in which secondary PE teachers made somewhat immediate assessments around physical competency in very early in Year 7 and, considering the above, this practice is likely to only increase the likelihood of a pupil developing a cleft habitus. Although the survey data does not allow for a definitive judgement to be made on pupils in this study, it is possible that it is because of these feelings that some pupils strive to avoid failure in PE lessons and experience significant motivational difficulties within PE, as considered by Warburton and Spray (2008). In addition to this, certain pupils expressed thoughts that secondary PE lessons are designed by teaching staff with gifted and talented pupils in mind, a direct consequence of which is that pupils with lower physical competency feel they are offered very little opportunity to catch up to their more physically competent peers.

In light of these point, and reflecting on the work of Bourdieu, a case can be made to suggest that the PE field in secondary schools that principally supports pupils that are seen to be 'sporty' and passionate about physical activity. This environment can be seen to be largely self-sustaining and highly resistant to change (Hunter, 2004). The processes through which relevant capital can be acquired by pupils is limited within this environment, which when combined with the power PE teaching staff have over their pupils, nullifies any chance of pupils themselves changing the PE environment to better suit their own individual needs. It is, then, with a degree of inevitability that this environment can lead to the most physically competent pupils (a small minority) arriving at secondary school continuing to progress and improve through Year 7 and beyond. It is also likely that pupils' falling below the standards initially expected and desired by secondary PE teachers will continue to struggle to break through the metaphorical glass ceiling hanging above them.

Even in cases where secondary PE staff *do* provide pupils with opportunities specifically designed to positively impact on physical competency, Rainer and Cropley (2015) take the view that this may already be too late in the day to alter competency, motivation and attitude to physical education, therein suggesting that more needs to be done at primary level, where children are most naturally motivated and enthusiastic (Haydn-Davies, 2005) to better prepare pupils for the transition. The findings of this study would certainly support the case for greater emphasis to be placed on developing physical competency in primary PE lessons.

Also connected to the notion that secondary PE teachers deliver lessons to best cater for pupils with a habitus similar to their own is how the concept of competition, in various forms, can dictate how staff treat their pupils. PE lessons featuring elements of competition were certainly not a priority for pupils in this study. Yet, as one Year 8 girl wrote in her online survey response, “the aim [in PE] seems to be to win...pupils only seem to be rewarded if they are the best and only the best”. Any emphasis on competition within PE post-transition is certainly an area of potential disconnect between pupils and secondary staff that could have a lasting impact on pupils’ PE experiences and, as such, is considered in the practical recommendations this study provides.

In keeping with this study’s commitment of listening to the voice of young people, it is important to recognise and understand that the process of transition occurs at a highly sensitive developmental stage for pupils, in which there are many influences on the individual. Considering external influences on pupils’, it is known that existing relationships from primary school can be altered or completely severed in more extreme cases when arriving at secondary school (Mizelle and Irvin, 2000). The findings from this study indicate that the importance of peer friendships within PE is a further area of potential disconnect between pupils and staff, which in turn may play a part in determining how likely a pupil is to remain engaged in the subject. There appeared to be a strong desire from pupils to be able to work in friendship groups or self-selected teams with familiar faces in Year 7 PE lessons and this was a priority for many pupils. In contrast, secondary teaching staff did not appear to prioritise

facilitating an environment within PE lessons that would help their pupils develop both new friendships and maintain existing ones. Rather, the secondary PE teachers interviewed were unconcerned and felt that pupil friendships would naturally grow over time, without any form of direct intervention or support from teaching staff. Recommendations to follow therefore take into consideration this area of potential disconnect and its likely consequences, in order to stand any chance of effectively improving the transition within PE for pupils.

Internal influences that can impact upon pupil's PE experiences also came to light during data collection that must be accounted for when providing recommendations. Such internal influences relate to how pupils become generally more self-aware of their own bodies within PE amongst their peers' post-transition. The two subthemes that emerged during data collection in which these internal influences were most obvious were 'changing rooms', used both before and after PE lessons in secondary school, and compulsory 'PE kit', a common feature of most secondary school PE lessons. Similar to how mixing with new classmates in secondary school PE can alter a pupil's perception of their own physical competency, getting changed for PE in newly designated changing rooms can see individuals begin to judge themselves against new standards and behaviours, which can in turn alter their perceptions of themselves and not always for the better. Quarmby, Sandford and Elliot (2018, p21) argue that "the changing room can be viewed as a separate sub-field of PE since the power dynamics and hierarchical structure of the field differs". With this point in mind, it is important that PE teachers are able to grasp the complexity of the PE field and how various sub-fields within the subject can influence pupils' PE experience. Indeed, like previous studies from Paechter (2003) and O'Donovan, Sandford and Kirk (2015), this study discovered examples of pupils for whom changing rooms presented a very real sense of anxiety.

Although it is not possible to say such feelings of anxiety do not present themselves at all whilst pupils are still in primary education, it is perhaps unlikely due to their familiarity with classmates and lack of designated changing areas for PE (respondents to the online survey in this study discussing primary

changing all referred to informal changing in classrooms or, in some cases, cupboards). It is likely newly designated space for changing within PE at secondary school, with unfamiliar classmates, that happens to coincide with pupils developing self-awareness of their own bodies, both facilitates and accelerates bodily anxieties in pupils. Therefore, this relatively ungoverned and unregulated space, that sits outside of the purview of teachers (O'Donovan, Sandford and Kirk, 2015) can be seen to have the potential to negatively impact on pupils' PE experiences before any physical activity has even taken place.

5.3 Five Bridges to Transition Conclusions

The following considers the Five Bridges to Transition and draws together the findings of this study in relation to each of the bridges. Table 5 can be seen to summarise these conclusions, as well as outlining general recommendations which are built on thereafter.

5.3.1 The Bureaucratic Bridge

As the Bureaucratic Bridge focuses on communications between primary and secondary school staff, there are no pupil perspectives to be considered across this bridge. However, there were factors affecting the bridge that were explored within the data collected in this study. It was found that secondary PE staff can be made aware of which pupils are perhaps talented in PE through contact with not only primary PE teachers, but SSP coaches who regularly coach pupils across the transition. In one example discussed in this study, SSP coaches were hosting an event for primary pupils at a secondary school, giving secondary PE teachers prior knowledge of which pupils may be particularly talented in certain sports prior to them starting Year 7.

On a positive note, this study did find evidence of transitional lesson observations between PE teachers from one primary and one secondary school. Considering these points and the need to address the Bureaucratic Bridge, it is perhaps desirable that primary and secondary schools that see a significant number of pupils make the transition between them should attempt to establish regular

communications between their PE staff. Indeed, a set of collaborative recommendations including lesson observations, staff networking and transition days will be explored in the following recommendations section.

5.3.2 The Personal and Social Bridge

There were a number of responses in the data collected that indicate this is a significant bridge from the perspective of pupils' making the transition from primary to secondary school in PE. Many pupils commented on their preference to work in groups with their friends' post-transition, particularly if these groups contain at least some familiar faces from primary school. Furthermore, pupils could be seen to enjoy the freedom of selecting their own groups to work in during PE, which could perhaps be because this given them an element of control over their environment. In light of these points, secondary PE teachers should consider ways to facilitate an environment in PE that allows both new and existing friendships to flourish. Allowing pupils agency over which groups they work in during PE lessons, rather than relying on ability sets determined by teaching staff themselves, could help to improve this transitional bridge.

Pupils' friendships with their classmates was not the only factor that could be seen to fall within the Personal and Social Bridge. Some pupils commented on how first impressions on secondary PE teachers can go on to influence their experiences in the subject. There was a feeling amongst some pupils that those with habitus more closely aligned to secondary PE teachers were treated differently to pupils' whose habitus perhaps did not align. With this in mind, there is possibly a need to make secondary PE teachers more aware of the potential for them to exhibit bias in their teaching and how this can impact on pupils' experiences in PE. Habitus and consciousness-raising strategies for secondary PE teachers is one recommendation that is explored in detail in the recommendations section to follow.

5.3.3 The Curriculum Bridge

Pupils responding to the online survey in this study outlined a clear transitional shift in PE that sees secondary PE teachers introduce a level of skills-based learning that pupils have not experienced in primary school, a period in which the subject is widely defined by elements of fun and enjoyment. This shift was somewhat supported by one secondary PE teacher on interview who, when discussing the main purpose of PE, explained the emphasis placed on *education* within physical education and the need to clearly measure pupils' progress within the subject. The same individual also expressed an awareness that more needs to be done amongst secondary PE teachers to better understand what pupils are taught in primary school PE to allow them to build on their experiences at secondary school, rather than regress from them. The secondary PE teacher had already taken steps to address this gap in understanding across the transition by taking part in a series of transitional lesson observations to better understand the primary PE curriculum. The section to follow discussing collaborative recommendations between primary and secondary PE teachers can be seen to address the Curriculum Bridge and includes the potential for more schools to consider and trial transitional lesson observations witnessed in this study. It is acknowledged that this is something that would perhaps be more likely to happen with a strengthened Bureaucratic Bridge between the two stages of education.

5.3.4 The Pedagogy Bridge

In relation to the Pedagogy Bridge, which considers the adjustments pupils have to make to adapt to different teaching styles post-transition, a number of pupils discussed how secondary PE teachers push and challenge them in the subject in ways they have not experienced in primary school. These challenges could be seen to be related both to pupils' physical competencies within PE and general physical fitness levels. An SSP coach on interview discussed bespoke transition sessions that they offered to primary schools in the area in which they operate, where they deliver activities to primary-aged pupils that are actually designed for pupils' post-transition. As has been mentioned previously, it is not for this study to determine the effectiveness of these sessions. Additionally, no pupil

responding to the online survey discussed these sessions, although this may be because the SSP in question did not work with their respective primary school. However, the following recommendations section will consider how effective bespoke transition sessions could be in improving the Pedagogy Bridge, if delivered in a range of primary schools in one area feeding a single secondary school. It is worth, once again, acknowledging the potential danger that these sessions could widen any 'skills-deficit' amongst pupils' if not universally taken up by a group of primary feeder schools. Indeed, this danger could be mitigated if secondary PE teachers could be made aware of which pupils have benefitted from these sessions prior to transition, something a strengthened Bureaucratic Bridge could facilitate.

5.3.5 The Management of Learning Bridge

There were few issues raised during data collection for this study that could be connected to the Management of Learning Bridge, relating to pupils' adaptation of learning styles post-transition. However, one issue that has not been discussed in the previous four bridges is that of compulsory PE kit in secondary PE and the anxiety changing rooms can cause some pupils. Whilst it is perhaps contentious as to whether these issues fall specifically under this bridge, they can certainly be seen to impact on how some pupils adapt to PE lessons in secondary school. Furthermore, the significance of these issues and how they impacted on some pupils was not always seen to be fully appreciated by secondary PE teachers and this marked an area of potential disconnect between the two. One pupil in this study requested that future pupils making the transition in PE are given more information on changing procedures prior to joining secondary school. With this example in mind, it is perhaps that providing pupils with more information on issues known to influence their PE experiences, prior to making the transition, could help them to better adapt to learning in the subject in Year 7 and beyond. Whilst there are no recommendations in the following section that directly address the Management of Learning Bridge, it is not to say that in practice it is less worthy of consideration. This is simply a reflection of the fact that the data in this study led to greater discussion of the preceding four bridges.

Table 5: The Five Bridges to Transition with Study Findings and Recommendations

Transitional Bridges	Study Findings	Existing Practice Identified	General Recommendations
1. Bureaucratic Bridge	Teaching staff can be made aware of talented pupils through SSPs hosting primary level events at secondary school and through conversations with primary teachers delivering PE.	Evidence of transitional lesson observations between PE teachers from one primary and one secondary school.	Primary and secondary schools attempt to establish a network between PE staff, perhaps facilitated by a neutral other with school sport interest (SSP coach, Active Partnership Employee)
2. Personal and Social Bridge	Pupils like to work in groups with friends. Some pupils find it hard to work in groups of new people and prefer familiar faces around them whilst trying to make new friends. Pupils enjoy the freedom to pick their own groups in PE lessons. Many pupils feel it is important to make a good first impression on their secondary PE teacher. Being around new classmates in PE changing rooms can cause anxiety amongst some pupils.	No activity identified during data collection.	Secondary PE teachers consider ways to facilitate an environment that allows new and existing friendships to flourish. Allowing pupils agency over which groups they work in during PE, rather than ability sets, would help improve provision related to this bridge.
3. Curriculum Bridge	Secondary school sees a focus on specific skills and sports in PE which is a move away from the elements of fun and enjoyment defining primary PE for many pupils. There is a perhaps a greater emphasis on <i>education</i> , in physical education. Awareness from one secondary PE teacher that more needs to be done to understand the primary PE curriculum some pupils can build on it in secondary, rather than regress.	As above, transitional lesson observations in which teachers were able to witness what the other stage of education was delivering during lessons.	More schools consider and trial transitional lesson observations, as identified in this study. This practice could be facilitated by the establishment of a teacher's network, as recommended above.
4. Pedagogy Bridge	Some pupils feel secondary PE teachers challenge pupils in ways they had not experienced in primary school, both in terms of physical competency and physical fitness.	SSP coach offering bespoke transition sessions to primary schools.	If bespoke transition sessions, as outlined by the SSP coach in this study, could be provided to range of primary schools in one area, feeding one single secondary school, they may be effective in

			addressing low physical competency amongst pupils starting secondary school. There is, however, a danger that these sessions could widen any 'skills-deficit' and if not universally taken up by a group of primary feeder schools, secondary PE teachers should be made aware of which pupils have benefitted from these sessions prior to transition.
5. Management of Learning Bridge	A small number of pupils stated they would like more information around certain issues in PE that they felt would have better prepared them to adapt to the subject in secondary school.	No activity identified during data collection.	No recommendations made in light of little data collected relating to this area.

5.4 Study Recommendations

Considering the findings of this study, and those of previous studies considering primary to secondary transition, it is possible for the researcher to offer potential recommendations that seek to improve the transition from primary to secondary school within the PE subject area.

As has been identified in this chapter up to this point, key themes impacting on the transition in PE cover issues that affect both the primary and secondary stage of education separately, as well as together. In fitting with the chronological approach taken in the chapter, recommendations will firstly focus on what primary schools may be able to do to better prepare their pupils for secondary school, before attention turns to secondary schools and what could be done to better support pupils once they transition into Year 7 and beyond. Finally, joint recommendations will be outlined, in which opportunities for the two stages of education to work together more closely and coherently to improve the overall transition process in PE for pupils. The need for a collective, collaborative approach between primary and secondary schools is something that this study has embraced from the outset, particularly through its use of the Five Bridges to Transition (Galton *et al.*, 1999) which will also be reflected upon. By accounting for areas in which each stage of education can separately improve upon, as well as offering joint recommendations, it is the ambition of the researcher that this study can effectively address numerous transitional issues that reflect well the complex field of PE across the primary to secondary transition.

As previously acknowledged, it is still possible for this study to draw conclusions and offer recommendations to primary schools despite no current primary-aged pupils or primary teachers taking part in the data collection process. This is largely due to the fact the pupils that were involved in data collection for this study had recently (within the last two years) been primary school pupils themselves and were able to recall their primary PE experiences. Furthermore, the School Sport Partnership coaches interviewed both worked across the stages of transition, offering key insight into the primary stage of education.

5.4.1 The Importance of Skill-Based Learning in Primary PE Lessons

The practical recommendation that seems most obvious within this context, considering both the responses of the young people to the online survey and the SSP coach interviewed, would be for primary schools to provide more skill-based learning in their PE lessons with the specific aim of improving pupils' physical competency prior to moving into Year 7. Whilst there may be a tendency for teachers to only beginning to address this in pupils' latter primary school years, it is worth clarifying that this study suggests that an increase in skill-based learning would be beneficial across *all* years in primary school. Developing physical competency should not be seen to begin at any one point in time (e.g. immediately prior to transition), but should instead be considered throughout the educational journey every child takes. Warburton and Spray (2008, p172) suggest that future research designed to capture changes in children's sense of competence and goal adoption in PE should be conducted during the primary school years and it would certainly appear, based on the findings of this study, that the best opportunity to positively impact both on the actual and perceived physical competency of children is in primary school, before they transition to secondary school. If this could be done effectively, it could help to ensure less pupils develop a habitus that does not fit with the field of secondary school PE and reduce the likelihood of some pupils developing a cleft habitus.

The researcher acknowledges and accepts that teaching staff delivering primary school PE lessons are not necessarily subject specialists and therefore cannot be expected to deliver the same level of quality skill-based learning as secondary PE teachers, trained specifically to deliver the subject to pupils. However, there are currently unique opportunities available to primary staff to further develop their teaching ability and to build confidence to deliver PE lessons. As has been referred to on numerous occasions already, primary schools are in a fortuitous position in that they currently receive £320 million for PES Premium funding, which is guaranteed to cover at least the 2020/2021 school year and roughly works out at each primary school receiving £18,000 (Department for Education (2020)). Primary schools are given this funding with direction to make additional and sustainable

improvements to the quality of the physical education in schools, while spending guidelines attached to this funding outline five key indicators to help primary schools understand what the money can be used for (Department for Education, 2020). Two indicators specifically guide primary schools to use their funding to, firstly, increase confidence, knowledge and skills of all staff in teaching PE and sport and, secondly, to provide a broader experience of a range of sports and activities offered to all pupils. These indicators, primarily through their flexibility, would certainly support schools using their PES Premium allocation with the specific intention of allowing non-specialist primary PE teachers to deliver lessons incorporating more skills-based learning to help prepare them for life after Year 6, whether this be through external training or with the help of qualified coaches and specialists. If this could be done universally, where all primary staff are receiving the same training, this would help to alleviate some differences in primary PE provision.

The bespoke transitional sessions offered to primary schools by one SSP coach within this study could be a valuable tool if used more widely in primary schools with access to this form of coaching. It is accepted, however, that not all primary schools will have an SSP available to them offering such sessions and it has previously been discussed how these sessions could actually widen any skills-deficit amongst pupils in a local area if not universally taken up. Further teacher training and SSP sessions are similar in the sense that the fewer primary schools taking up the opportunities, the lesser its impact will be across an area. Often, instability can be seen to characterise primary PE, predominantly because of what might be termed a 'knowledge vacuum'. This is created when a well-trained, experienced member of PE staff in primary leaves with remaining staff ill-equipped to fill the gap left by the preceding staff member. This is an all-too-familiar scenario one SSP coach commented on during their interview:

“There are many schools that have a specialised member of staff whose role is to teach PE throughout the school, which in a sense is good because they see everybody, but if they leave it means there is nobody in the school that has taught PE for three or four years. So, one

person has kind of been trained up and if that person left the school there is a massive hole for that school”.

In light of this, pursuing a universal approach to both upskilling teachers and delivering transitional sessions to primary schools, in an area of significant size, may be the most effective way to ensure that such situations are not prevalent. Further research to evaluate the effectiveness of the transitional sessions could be highly beneficial to understanding whether they could be used more widely to improve primary pupils’ physical competency. Whilst there is no guarantee at present the PES Premium funding will continue to be awarded in the long-term, primary schools should look to use the funding whilst it is available to them and this study has identified an area that would appear to be worthy of investment that falls under one or more of the five key indicators set out by the Government.

It is worth remembering that one of the stronger elements of primary PE appears to be that pupils regularly find lessons to be fun and enjoyable and, as such, any recommendations should be designed to ensure this remains the case. The principle reason that this study considers the primary to secondary transition is because there is recognised drop-off in physical activity participation post-Year 6, implying that prior to starting secondary school pupils are more engaged. The above recommendation regarding more skill-based learning in primary school PE should not be employed in place of activities that many pupils consider fun and enjoyable, but interwoven into lessons to compliment them with an overall view to enable pupils to feel more physically competent moving into secondary PE lessons whilst continuing to enjoy the subject.

5.4.2 Reframing Secondary PE Lessons

Recommendations for secondary schools are more substantial than those provided with primary schools in mind. It is important to make clear from the outset that this does not reflect a need for secondary schools to do more than primary schools to improve the transition within PE. Rather, data collection in this study focused specifically on current Year 7 and Year 8 pupils, as well as two

secondary school PE teachers, a natural consequence of which was that there were more issues relevant to secondary schools the researcher identified that subsequent recommendations could positively impact on.

Reflecting on the findings of this study, the first secondary-specific recommendation is offered is largely complimentary to the primary-specific recommendation outlined above. Secondary school PE teachers could potentially design their PE lessons for Year 7 pupils to be more sympathetic to the fact that some pupils moving from primary school may be below (in some cases, significantly below) what they would both desire and expect from a pupil of that age. Particularly in cases where secondary schools receive large amounts of pupils from a number of different primary feeders, there may be significant variation in the physical competency levels of those pupils and lessons that are initially aimed below what might be expected for Year 7 pupils could prove beneficial in allowing pupils to catch up. This approach could be seen to be more 'class-orientated', removing the aforementioned glass ceiling for pupils that – through no fault of their own – have been left ill-equipped for the physical demands of their secondary school PE lessons. Pupils in this study demonstrated a strong appetite to work in groups with friends within PE lessons and explicitly advocated teachers offering more team building opportunities in Year 7 through which pupils could bond with their classmates and create more friends. By contrast, there were no pupil responses that expressed support for ability sets post-transition. Indeed, avoiding placing pupils in ability sets or groups immediately post-transition is something this study supports, given that some pupils may have a greater capacity to improve their physical competency upon arriving in secondary school (for various reasons) and placing them in a certain set or group could inhibit and stunt their improvement.

It is imperative that secondary school PE teachers do not interpret these recommendations as allowing the least physically competent pupils to dictate what activities feature in lessons in the year, and indeed, years, immediately after transition and subsequently what the already more physically competent pupils can achieve within their PE lessons. This study has recognised how secondary PE

specialists may naturally relate better to the latter mentioned pupils through their habitus and if the above recommendation is perceived in such a way, there is a danger that it may simply be disregarded or overlooked. To expect any immediate, revolutionary shift in the delivery of secondary PE lessons would be unrealistic and, as such, the following seeks to outline practical ways the above recommendation could be implemented, with the highest chance of success, using resources that are currently available to staff.

A recent report from the Youth Sport Trust states that young people do not always see or access the wider benefits from taking part in competitive sport (something echoed by pupil responses in this study) and that designing competition around the process to achieve set outcomes, rather than focusing on the outcome as a singular measure of success, can help to develop children and young people's character and life skills (Youth Sport Trust, 2019). In light of this, one way in which secondary school PE teachers may be able to improve their pupil's physical competency would be to include more participation-based activities in lessons, whilst removing any unnecessary emphasis and focus on competition, something that Rogers and Lapping (2012) advocate in their work on recontextualising 'play' in education settings. Personal, skill-based activities that allow individuals to measure their progress in physical activities against their own past performance could encourage progression whilst also retaining a more personal level of competition that would be reflective of an individual's ability and not encourage direct comparison with others.

Indeed, there does appear to be a small but growing evidence base to support this. In 2019, 10 School Games Organisers (SGOs), NGBs and one Lead Applicant (the individual responsible for organising County-wide School Games events) in England utilised the findings from Youth Sport Trust research and undertook an action research pilot through Sport England's National Lottery investment through the School Games. Following the pilot, a free, interactive resource aimed at 'reframing competition' was developed considering innovative, alternative ways practitioners could deliver competition to engage more children and young people (Youth Sport Trust, 2019). The findings of this study certainly

support the notion that reframing competition could help to retain and re-engage pupils in PE post-transition. Altering the way in which competition is framed and delivered offers a fairly simple solution to what is in reality a complex, historical issue and further research would be required to thoroughly evaluate whether this reframing competition within secondary PE lessons is effective at addressing issues covered in this study. Crucially, however, the reframing competition recommendations are grounded in research (Youth Sport Trust, 2019) that, like this study, has found a need to adapt traditional competitive activities for school-aged children in sport and physical activity. The recommendation therefore warrants at least consideration from secondary PE teachers looking to improve their pupils' physical competency within PE post-transition.

5.4.3 Habitus and Consciousness-Raising Strategies for Secondary PE Teachers

The final two secondary-specific recommendations targeted at secondary PE teachers focus on raising awareness of their habitus and how it can unconsciously influence their teaching, as well as pupils' development across the transitional period and how certain sites within PE can trigger anxieties that impact on their PE experience post-transition.

Secondary school pupils in this study discussed instances in which they felt that secondary PE teachers had favourite pupils in lessons and how this, in some cases, negatively impacted upon their own experience of the subject. Indeed, through a Bourdieusian lens, this study has illuminated the potential for secondary school PE teachers to demonstrate an unconscious bias towards pupils that are more physically competent in PE, passionate towards the subject and who generally share a habitus' that is closely aligned to their own. It can, therefore, be argued that there is a need to make secondary PE teachers generally more aware of the potential for them to exhibit unconscious bias in their teaching, how pupils may be able to pick up on this and the negative impact that it could have on their secondary PE experience. There is no pre-existing resource, to the best knowledge of the researcher, specifically aimed at doing so. Perhaps this is not unexpected, given that an individual's habitus is characterised by both stubbornness and perseverance. As Chambers (2005, p333) writes,

“the concept of habitus draws our attention to the ways in which norms are imprinted on our bodies, so that it will take more than a simple act of will or a consciousness-raising class for us to resist or alter them”. Chambers (2005) work discusses at length masculine domination, radical feminism and change, all concepts inherently linked to the work of Bourdieu and it is the strategy of consciousness-raising that merits consideration in light of this study’s findings. Chamber’s affirms that consciousness-raising sits well with Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, despite his own scepticism about its efficacy. Furthermore, the strategy complements habitus well, since habitus forges the link between individual experience and social structure that consciousness-raising investigates (Chambers, 2005, p335). This is supported by the work of Reay (2015) who similarly outlines that the concept of habitus enables links between individuals’ inner emotional worlds and external social and structural processes.

Bourdieu contends that any change in consciousness can require change in the underlying social structures – a point that Chambers accepts does have some force (p334). However, consciousness can play a role in this process, and can prompt or hasten changes in underlying social structures (Chambers, 2005, p334). Raising consciousness to change social structure can therefore be considered a realistic prospect, helping to justify consciousness-raising as a strategy worthy of consideration in the context of this study. It is important to note, however, that Chambers asserts that “the symbolic transformation entailed by consciousness raising is not enough; institutions must also change and consciousness-raising can be the important first step that prompts such wider institutional change” (p337).

Taking the case Chambers makes into account, it could then be recommended that in the absence of any pre-existing resource to address the issue raised by pupils within this study, secondary PE teachers undertake some form of consciousness-raising exercise during their initial teacher training to avoid their habitus impacting upon their pupils in a way that would inhibit their participation in physical activity. This element of training could be considered that ‘first step’ to achieving PE lessons in which favouritism caused by teachers’ habitus is eradicated. Given the process in which habitus is formed, it

could be suggested that the most effective time for this exercise is before individuals have any experience teaching pupils directly. Effective training in this area by the institutions equipping new teachers with the skills they need to teach the next generation of pupils would certainly go some way to help to raise awareness of the issue surrounding favouritism and why it may occur, whilst also providing guidance as to how best avoid it becoming a reality, thus ensuring new teachers consciously seek to avoid appearing to favour certain pupils in their lessons. To bring to a close consideration of Chambers' work, it is worth considering how a consciousness-raising exercise may be developed to achieve the aims outlined above. Chambers advocates that "one way of encouraging a change in habitus is to encourage interaction between fields so that individuals become aware of new options" (p340). With this in mind, it could be suggested that during their initial teacher training, individuals are in some way presented with views from pupils who do not enjoy PE and why this is the reality for them. This could be effectively done in the form of hypothetical case studies rather than personal interaction with current pupils. This would allow would-be PE teachers the opportunity to explicitly consider such views and would constitute Chambers' advocacy for interaction between fields.

5.4.4 Increasing Awareness of Pupil Development in Secondary PE Teachers

A further issue that would appear to merit further awareness amongst secondary PE teachers is the developmental phase that new secondary pupils will or will be already be going through, and how certain unique elements of PE (changing rooms, compulsory kit) can exacerbate anxieties inherently linked to this developmental phase. It would not be possible to provide a set of recommendations that would completely alleviate pupils' anxieties in this developmental period. As established in the literature review chapter, certain transitional anxieties are to be both expected and welcomed (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003; Topping, 2011). However, whilst accepting that the state of 'anxious readiness' outlined by Zeedyk *et al.* (2003) will very much be the reality for some pupils, the findings of this study have demonstrated a requirement to consider how secondary PE teachers may address cases where pupils' fear and anxieties within PE far overshadow any feelings of excitement and positive

anticipation. Given the inevitability of pupils' anxieties, it may be that raising PE staff's awareness of how certain sites within the subject (like those outlined in this study) can increase anxiety levels can better prepare them to react to the issue as and when they are confronted by it, rather than preventing it outright. The advantage to knowing and understanding the nature of pupils' anxieties within PE across the transition is that PE teachers could be trained specifically to effectively manage them. Eschenbeck *et al.* (2018) states that extensive research exists on coping in children and adolescents. Whilst it is not within the remit of this study to cover specific strategies that could be used to address pupils' anxieties in great detail specifically, the preceding Findings and Discussion Chapter has identified specific sites within PE across the transition that are likely to trigger anxieties in some pupils and this could be seen as a significant starting point.

Fabian and Dunlop's (2007) paper, outlining outcomes of good practice in transition processes for children entering primary school, states there are several ways to theorise early childhood transitions. These include: seeing transitions as a 'rite of passage' where a new uniform and other paraphernalia marks the change to a new setting; as a 'border-crossing where physically going between two domains or cultures marks a border between two worlds; or as 'rites of institution' (Bourdieu, 1990) where it is necessary to transpose the 'symbolic capital' gained at home to school. Indeed, this study has specifically used the works of Galton *et al.* (1999) to demonstrate how the transition represents a gap in pupils' education that must metaphorically be bridged. However, on a practical level, how the transition is theorised is not necessarily important to PE staff. Davey (2009), using Bourdieu's concept of habitus to explore narratives of transition, explains that transition can provoke questions on the formerly taken-for-granted. It is the general point of how entering into a new field within PE can trigger pupils' anxieties that PE teachers must first fully understand, if they are then to be expected to consider strategies to manage those anxieties. If PE teachers are not aware of an issue affecting their pupils, they cannot be expected to address such a problem.

In their paper, Fabian and Dunlop (2007) highlight the possibilities for children themselves to be agents of change during transitions, rather than subjects of transition factors outside of their influence. This possibility serves this study well given its commitment to understand pupils' perspectives of the transition. In the context of this section, the example of being required to wear a compulsory PE kit would certainly be considered something in which children have no agency over. Therefore, if PE teachers can actively be seen by their pupils to work to address sites that trigger anxieties, whilst also trying to implement coping strategies to manage these anxieties where necessary, it is likely less pupils will feel subjects of transition factors that are outside their influence, which in turn would help to improve the transition within PE. It is strongly suggested that further research seeks to understand better the specific sites within PE across the transition that can trigger anxiety in some pupils and to investigate further as to why this may be the case. It would be hoped that such research would to allow for more targeted coping strategies to be developed and which subsequently could be deployed by PE staff.

Finally, one recommendation that would be considered secondary-specific that was outlined in the Literature Review Chapter of this study is that of mentor schemes that may be able to reduce children's anxiety levels and tackle other transition related issues. Mentor schemes, in which pupils who have recently experienced the transition engage in a structured series of peer interactions with new pupils, were not explicitly discussed during the data collection for this study. This does not, however, downplay their potential importance as a strategy that secondary schools could use. It could be this form of facilitated peer interaction that allows new secondary pupils to develop new friendships which, as this study has shown, is a priority for pupils across the transition. Given that previous literature has identified the transition to be of particular concern to girls (Trend, 2007) and the statistics that outline the period sees a more dramatic decline in girl's physical activity, it could be that these mentor schemes are best tailored specifically to girls' post-transition.

5.4.5 Collaborative Recommendations: Lesson Observations, Networking and Transition Days

Previous recommendations have been both primary-specific and, more latterly, secondary-specific. However, as this study has made clear throughout there is a point at which the two stages of education must be considered not as two separate entities, but as one more general continuation of learning to ensuring a smooth transition for pupils within PE.

As discussed in the Findings and Discussion Chapter, there were examples of existing good practice taking place that were discovered during data collection for this study, including an instance where a secondary school PE teacher had made weekly visits to a local primary school to witness their PE delivery. Crucially, this form of transitional lesson observation was not designed to better educate the non-specialist primary PE teacher, but for their secondary counterpart to improve their own knowledge of primary PE lessons that could in turn better inform their teaching for early KS3 pupils. Although in that particular case the primary teacher could not later visit the secondary school due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it stood out as an example of two teachers working collectively with the joint ambition to bridge the transitional gap with regard to pupils' learning experiences in PE between their respective schools. With regard to the Five Bridges to Transition framework, this practice can be seen to address both the Bureaucratic and Curriculum Bridges. If secondary PE teachers can work to better understand the standards to which primary lessons are being delivered, and how physically competent pupils are in meeting those standards, they will be better placed to ensure their own KS3 lessons are delivered to a suitable level. Thus, by opening lines of communication between the two stages of education, school staff can help to make the transition within PE more of a gradual progression for pupils, as opposed to a giant leap or a fresh start. In light of this, the first joint recommendation to be made as a result of this study would be for more primary and secondary schools to consider and trial such transitional lesson observations. Considering the logistics for such trials, typically, secondary schools will have feeder primary schools from which they annually receive a large number of primary pupils and it is perhaps advisable that these schools work collaboratively to facilitate such lesson

observations. A somewhat unintended benefit to this practice would be primary school pupils would have the opportunity to meet a secondary PE teacher who may at some point in the future be *their* teacher. As one Year 7 girl states in an online survey response:

“PE teachers from secondary could visit primary schools to share some knowledge, so it doesn't seem as overwhelming and surprising when they [pupils] transition”.

The practice of transitional lesson observations could make initial introductions and relationship building in secondary school more straightforward, given an existing level of familiarity between pupil and teacher.

A second area of existing good practice uncovered in this study, that could actually benefit from improved communication between primary and secondary PE teachers, was the example of an SSP coach delivering bespoke transitional sessions to some (but importantly, not all) local primary schools. If secondary PE teachers could be made aware of which new Year 7 pupils have effectively been given an early introduction to the secondary PE ‘rules of the game’ and which pupils may therefore have greater capacity to catch up, they would be much better placed to fairly assess their new cohort. Whilst this study does not support assessing pupils based upon their physical competency early in secondary school post-transition, it is accepted that this is, and will likely continue to be, the working reality for some secondary PE teachers. Therefore, if secondary PE teachers can make their assessments with a greater understanding as to why certain pupils may be less physically competent than others, or generally less prepared for the demands of secondary PE lessons, they will at least do so in the knowledge that some pupils may have further scope to improve than others. This reasoning behind any assessment could also be explained to pupils themselves in the hope that it may reduce feelings that they are themselves not good enough, but that they may be behind other pupils for reasons outside of their control.

Building upon this, the earlier idea to establishment of a more general network of communication between secondary schools and their more substantial primary feeders could be beneficial in

providing secondary PE staff with as much prior knowledge of their soon-to-be new pupils as possible, so that their overall teaching is better informed. In practical terms, a small number of network meetings across an academic year would enable for this to happen and would not be seen to be too burdensome or time consuming for teaching staff. Areas of discussion could involve identifying which primaries had focused on, or invested in, upskilling teaching staff to deliver better quality PE lessons or used external coaches (e.g. SSP) to deliver sessions specifically aimed at improving pupil's physical competency. Network meetings could also provide secondary school PE staff the opportunity to better inform primary schools of what pupils should expect in PE post-transition. Indeed, if such network meetings were to take place, it would be important to ensure that dialogue flows both ways and that both stages of education work in partnership with one another. It may be that in reality, an individual that is neither connected to the primary or secondary school should join meetings to help moderate and facilitate discussion. This could be in the form of an SSP coach working with both stages of education (if available in the area), an Active Partnership representative for children and young people, or any other individual with insight into children's physical activity in an education-based setting.

A final recommendation that demands collaboration between primary and secondary schools is that of transition days and how they could be used to help bridge the gap between primary and secondary PE for pupils. Within data collection for this study, there were a handful of references from pupils to transition days and how they may be able to improve the transition for future pupils. One Year 7 girl wrote in a response she gave to the online survey "give pupils PE lessons on transition days", whilst another stated "let them choose what sport they would like to try during transition days". Finally, one Year 7 girl raised the idea of a transition week, rather than just one day. However, the small number of responses on this topic in the data collected did not warrant significant discussion in the previous Findings and Discussions Chapter. Nonetheless, the idea of primary school pupils visiting their soon-to-be secondary school certainly has merit in addressing the issues that were raised in the aforementioned Chapter.

A significant amount of previous research has outlined the potential benefits of transition days (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Evangelou *et al.*, 2008). In particular, Zwozdiak-Myers (2002) identified a number of ways in which knowledge can be exchanged, curriculum continuity planned and children prepared for transition through transition days. Arranging visits to secondary schools and organising sports festivals may help to improve continuity and communication between primary and secondary schools, strengthening both Bureaucratic and Curriculum Bridges. Associated benefits of transition days are recognised to include a smoother transition for pupils and better communication between teachers, maximising learning potential and increasing levels of motivation and interest, as well as making pupils feel both more at ease and confident (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2002). However, one study issues a note of caution, identifying sports festivals as a specific example of how the importance of PE across the transition can be neglected. Rainer and Cropley (2015, p458) write that transition in PE is “often considered adequate through hosting of a sports day, delivered as a token gesture in the last few weeks of the summer term which ultimately exposed the fact PE is viewed as an inconsequential subject area and unimportant during the transition process”.

In view of previous literature and pupil responses to the online survey, the researcher would support the use of transition days on the condition they are designed to focus specifically on the issues raised within this study and are not offered as a ‘token gesture’ at the end of the school year. If delivered correctly, transition days could be genuinely useful in developing pupil relationships with their new secondary PE teachers prior to the transition, whilst providing those teachers with a unique opportunity to understand better the physical competency of those pupils. In theory at least, this should allow for a significant amount of time to prepare and if necessary, adapt, lesson content for the following academic year. Building on the suggestion of one pupil within this study, who advocated more than just one transition day, it would perhaps be worthwhile for transition days to be held on numerous occasions throughout the academic year for pupils in Year 6. This could help to make the transition to secondary PE feel more of a gradual process, as opposed to one big step to be taken at

the end of the year. Generally, the more opportunities pupils and teaching staff are given to prepare themselves for transition, the smoother the transition in PE is likely to be.

5.5 Summary of Recommendations

The previous section provided a series of primary and secondary-specific recommendations, as well as a number of joint recommendations that require the collaborative efforts of both stages of education. It should be acknowledged that in reality, it would be unrealistic to suggest that any system or network put in place could allow secondary PE teachers to fully comprehend and understand what their new Year 7 pupils have experienced in their primary PE lessons and how each individual pupil has interpreted those experiences. Pupils arriving in secondary PE lessons will ultimately have had an array of very different primary PE experiences which, in turn, is known to impact upon both their actual and perceived physical competency, as well as the development of their habitus within the field of secondary PE. However, it is hoped that the practical recommendations provided can be utilised in attempts to improve the primary to secondary school transition for future pupils within PE.

5.6 Areas of Consideration for Further Research

To conclude, this study has recognised that transitional issues in all subjects, not exclusively PE, are both historical and complex. All recommendations provided above are based upon the findings of this study and previous academic literature, but would require further research to evaluate how effective, if at all, they are in practice and whether they can help to address the issues raised in this study. One area for further study that has previously been mentioned is the need to better understand how specific sites within the PE field across the transition can trigger pupil anxieties. In addition to this, further research would do well to consider the effectiveness of the bespoke transitional sessions offered by the SSP coach interviewed for this study, or similar sessions designed to improve primary school pupils' physical competency prior to their move into secondary PE. A study designed to measure both pupils perceived and actual physical competency in PE before, during and after any such intervention would allow for a more accurate judgement as to whether they are effective and can be

successful in their aims. If these sessions were proven to be of considerable merit, it would be strongly anticipated that more primary schools would consider such interventions for future year groups prior to making the transition. Moreover, further academic investigation into the concept of reframing competition specifically in PE lessons would be of benefit to PE teachers and PE practitioners alike. Most importantly, the continued use of recommendations and interventions that are grounded in thorough research is paramount to ensuring effective progress is made in any area, not least in improving the transition within PE.

Finally, the impact COVID-19 had on this study is minuscule compared to the potential damage inflicted on young people's ways to stay physically active both in and outside of school and it is hoped that PE teaching staff and other individuals with influence over young people's physical activity can utilise these recommendations to enable more children to be physically active, at a time when it has perhaps never been more important.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview One Transcript – Secondary School PE Teacher

Interview Transcription: [REDACTED] (2pm - 08/07/20)

Code: Researcher = R, Interviewee = SPE1

Interview Length: 35 min 16 sec

R: Right well the first question is, if I say transition to you, what is the first thing that comes into your head? In terms of working with the new year sevens, what kind of issues would you pick out as being the most important?

SPE1: I think it's for them the numbers. They usually come from a small school where there is maybe one or two classes and they are used to doing PE with those students and with their peers and they have just done PE with them with their peers for maybe five years. So, when they get to secondary I think one of the biggest issues is the numbers. We might have half a year group coming down at the same time so there is five classes on and I think it's because that initial busyness, it's in the changing rooms, lining up to get changed, there is one hundred and twenty other students there for them and so I think really it's about making that process ... instead of getting changed in a classroom or getting changed in the toilets where they would normally get changed in a primary school, its managing that, what happens in the changing room and actually they have only got five centimetres to get changed in and I have got to look after all my own stuff, I don't have a chair now where I can put all my things, that's not my seat or my table and so it is managing what happens in the changing rooms, managing the transfer into lessons when they are not with a group of peers that they normally know erm and it's just the setup is different. It's sort of managing their behaviours and their expectations within the first couple of weeks. We always, always, within the first lesson or two, we always ... it's the basic stuff like making sure they have got the right kit and making sure they know what kit to wear, making sure that their kit is labelled and that on their timetable they know where to come and get changed. So one of the things that we changed last year that worked really well for year sevens and eight is that they ... cos previously if they had been doing an activity in a gym or they were out on the court they would get changed in one of the changing rooms and if they were going to be in the sports hall or on the other field or the track they would get changed in a different changing room and that, now that we have more coming down together we have given them a permanent changing room so they always line up in the same spot and they always have the same teacher to register them for that lesson and then they go into the changing rooms and they keep that changing room for the entire year and that has just helped a lot of the students that struggled with the transition from primary to secondary not just for PE, giving them that this is my space this is where I go for that lesson it means that you know for PE they know exactly where they are going to, they know where they are going to get changed and erm it just helps alleviate some of those issues. Ideally ...

R: It's interesting that you say that, obviously part of my research was to do an online survey with students and the kind of changing rooms and new facilities came out quite a lot. There was kids that kind of said they were really good, having that special place for PE and there were others that kind of said they were quite intimidated with that kind of atmosphere so it's interesting that you say you have kind of picked up on that.

SPE1: Yeah obviously the changing rooms in the new sports hall are not as big as we would like them to be. We have got no control now really over the number of students that come down. In year seven and eight we have them come down as a class of [inaudible], a group of five classes or a group of four classes erm and yet in older year groups they come down in threes and twos so it's much more manageable to have them in a group of three or a group of two cos it's just more space in the changing room as they get bigger. So, it's one of the issues that we have when we have such a lot of students coming down. So, what will happen is erm there will be two groups getting changed in the bottom changing rooms, three in the gym changing rooms and then one class has to split between the two but there is enough supervision to just pop into the changing rooms and check that everything is alright. Once they have changed and have come out and lined back up again, or they go and sit on a bench in their working area erm until everybody is ready to start. But yeah, that's one of the main things, it's just erm evening the path between primary and what they are used to and an environment that is sort of familiar to them, because [redacted] is a very large school set over five different buildings and it might even be they are so used to getting changed in one changing room they don't actually know where the gym is because they have not been there yet so erm it's just managing that behaviour and in some cases the anxiety students might have about what it means to be getting changed amongst a bigger group of people as well, yeah.

R: Okay, erm, one of the things there you say, a lot of new kids come from a lot of different schools. Do you see a kind of a difference ... do you notice kids who come from smaller feeder schools, are you aware of pre-existing friendship groups, are there kids who maybe don't have friends who have come from smaller [primary] schools and have struggled with that, or is that not something you ... is it more a case of kids who enjoy sport will find friends anyway ...?

SPE1: Yeah, it's not something we have a programme for or a ... we don't ... sometimes we are aware if there might be an issue in PE but then generally it will be an issue for the child around school in general not necessarily just in PE so we might be made aware of it because of that. There is less of that now where there is just one or two students from schools they tend to come from larger groups because they all come down in mixed ability groups and mixed gender groups so we find that's not so much of an issue because if they are only coming down and it's only them from that school they are going to understand that it is going to be the same in maths and in chemistry and in biology so it will be the same across the school so it doesn't really have a different impact for PE. I think the fact that we group them means they can't always clique themselves because in those first few weeks those friendship groups from primary school change anyway.

R: Right, okay, that is interesting. I guess on the same subject, are there any kind of transition work ... first of all is there any kind of transition work you would do usually with year sixes and kind of this summer obviously has been a bit chaotic, so is there anything you have put in place to help with the transition from year six kids who haven't been in school since March?

SPE1: Erm, yeah erm, so it's not year six, it's more year five. So in the summer term erm once the year elevens and thirteens have left and there is more space and timetable then we do a transition activity morning so they will come from all of the other local primaries, they get bussed in and they do erm ... they are split into two groups so they will do some science and they will do some PE erm so we tend to do some climbing with them because as soon as you go in the sports hall it's the first thing that they see literally straight away and they are in awe of it and they want to get on it and it's an activity they probably haven't been able to do in primary school. So we will do a climbing sessions with all of the year fives and they will

remember that and then in the October or September time we will have a year six open evening, so at open evening we always have climbing wall going, we have got badminton and we have usually got other activities going as well and it's interesting that they came down in the summer in year five and they want to come back on and are always really keen to have another go at the climbing wall. When they come in in year seven it means that the environment is already familiar to them cos they will come up to you and say I had a go on the climbing wall when I was in year five, or I did that when I was in year five do you remember I came to the open evening and I got right to the top. So, they do remember the opportunities that they had in year five. With year six I think it's more what they have done with the school sports partnership. So, we don't necessarily run the events, we staff them in that our BTEC students will lead the activities and help out but its more things like the indoor athletics tournaments that we host but don't necessarily run but the year sixes will come down for that. Indoor athletics is a good one cos we do a year seven and eight competition as well so it bridges the gap between the activities they have done in primary and then continue to do in secondary.

R: Right, because one of the things I picked up on in my online survey research that I did was that the kids coming up, you say the BTEC students help out, is there any cases of the younger students, maybe the year sevens and eights, that they might have already known from primary school, is there any way that they get involved? Some of the research that I have done suggests that year sixes coming up appreciate familiar faces, I don't know if that is anything that you have been involved with?

SPE1: We had erm ... it's not something yet, it tends to be more the sixth formers because then they can use it towards their sports leadership hours and so on and if we are going to use some of our better year sevens and eights we would need to be getting them out of other lessons to facilitate that, so that would be something that we would have to look at and obviously at that time erm there is a bit of a pull on lessons regarding assessments and missing lessons for other activities, but it is something we could look at if your research found that it is beneficial to the fives and sixes coming through. What we have done this year, although the programme didn't quite get finished before we had to break up [due to COVID], we had one of the school PE teachers from I think from [feeder primary] came in, Josh, he came into school every Friday morning and he was watching the year sevens lessons, so he was watching what processes we put in place, how we group them, what skills we do with them and then obviously my plan was that he came in for about four or five weeks and then I was going to go into his school and see some of his PE lessons as well so we would get a little bit more of an understanding about what skills they have covered, how they organise it in groups, what is different between the two that we can make smoother for the transition. I think that would be a really good way of helping smooth that process where we can. I didn't get into ... he didn't do his last week [before Easter] and I didn't get into the primary school before we had to break up, but that's something we could look to do next year as well.

R: That's absolutely something that has come across in my research, the bridge between, or the communication between PE teachers obviously like yourself, specialist PE teachers and the primary staff who aren't as familiar with PE as their specialist subject. Do you get any kind of information about the kids you receive, so not necessarily the way PE is taught in primary, more the actual kids themselves? One of the SSP interviews that I have done came out and said that they are aware of the good kids, the kids that really are sporty and it tends to be those kids who stick out. Is there any kind of way you can find out about a whole class, obviously with such a large group coming from different schools that might be difficult...?

SPE1: No, well it used to be ... we did used to get a list of sorts from primary schools that considered gifted and talented students. That has sort of peated out a little bit and I don't think we have received that information over the last couple of years. It is worthwhile knowing but I think those gifted and talented students really stand out within the first four weeks anyway. We tend to find out two different types of students, we find out about those who are anxious and nervous about PE who have come up with no hope or there might be some issues there from home regarding medical issues that they have in PE erm or if there are areas like regarding changing that we need to accommodate them separately or differently, we would find out about that. Erm we would find out about, we used to find out about gifted and talented but not so much over the last couple of years and obviously definitely not this year there has been no data come through at all. But you know it's difficult to because what one primary school might consider them to be gifted and talented might be very different to another primary school. What are they using as their grading and definition of gifted and talented? Is it just that they are a remarkable footballer in one area or is this X Y or Z, are they multitalented but not exceptional. So we used to do baselining so our first three weeks we have done it differently and we have had it where the students carousel around members of staff so we could compare the whole year group and we could pick out yep they are pretty good at this they could do athletics and we do football or ball handling skills and we might do a bit of netball just so that we could see their team work. We have also done where you would move around the carousel with your group and the thought was that we could try and perhaps use that baseline information to measure progress.

R: Was that for ability sets just to put them in classes of ability?

SPE1: Yeah but then you see the opportunity and it depends very much on how many students you get down and how its best to grade them and there was just too many variables trying to put one hundred and twenty students into five ability classes after perhaps only seeing them for four weeks in three different activities when they might just be struggling to settle into locking the house, getting the bus, getting into school on time, tying their tie and just finding their feet and the fact they haven't excelled in PE yet is not because they can't it's just because there is so much else for them. So, we scrapped the baseline testing to give them more lesson time across the different activities. We are doing one less activity this year so that we can creep in a few more skills to get that higher skill level for a new activity, so they still get assessed at the end of each activity block.

R: Okay, do you think that ... imagine you are a child who has been put in a lower ability set, do you find that you get a negative reaction if you place children in the lower sets so to speak? Do you find that kind of has a knock-on effect in terms of them going forward or is it the kids who are already disengaged, once they arrive at secondary do you see essentially the drop off that I am investigating really and do you think ability sets plays in to that a bit?

SPE1: We don't have ability sets in year seven ... we have had this year but that was at the request of the SEND coordinator cos we had a group of really low ability, high need students who needed longer time to get changed because they just physically couldn't cope with the environment erm they needed to go in earlier because they had maybe you know a few coordination and dexterity issues where they needed longer time to do a tie up and do their laces. So, we had four mixed ability groups and then we had a lower group, but that initially was at the request of the SEND coordinator an ideally, I would be like no the students who you have said can't cope were actually... give them a chance to cope and they can rather than saying they automatically need it. There was a few who I said they definitely don't need to be

in there, they might struggle with their maths but they are absolutely fine in PE and we fought our corner and said no they are going into one of the mixed ability groups. Likewise, there was some who we felt would be working at their level if we put them in that group erm so they had erm a group of about fourteen, fifteen so there wasn't many in the class, they got a bit more individual attention and the work that they were doing was much more set up for their level. So things like when they started doing badminton and playing with the shuttle cos that is really hard with hand eye coordination, they were playing with a balloon because they could see the balloon, it was falling much slower and they were able to coordinate the striking action erm so they just enjoyed their lesson more because they weren't feeling like they were under pressure or they didn't get the chance to participate because there was twenty six in the other groups so there was no stigma attached to them, they had no idea really that their PE was any different, it was just that they were allowed to get out of lessons five minutes earlier to get changed and erm they didn't see anything different with it. In year eight we use the assessment grades from year seven to put them into mixed gender groups because they have done mixed PE, mixed gender in year six, year five six, they will have continued that in year seven but then by the time you get to year eight erm I personally feel that they need that ... they then start to better in single sex groups than mixed gender groups. So, we have an upper girl, an upper boy, a lower girl and a lower boy and then a lower mixed group so the year sevens can continue to move up in that group and still enjoy their lesson and progress.

R: Okay. That's interesting that you say there enjoy, because one of the big things that has come out in my research is that they [students] see primary school as this very enjoyable kind of fun orientated lesson and then when they do join year seven, possibly because it is more specialist, you get the specialist teachers and facilities, but they see it as a lot more kind of only for the *good* students who are good at sport erm there was a few suggestions that it is too competitive erm and obviously as a PE teacher who is probably good at sport, how do you feel about that?

SPE1: Erm, well, it's strange because we have been having meetings this week ... I was on a Zoom call with inspire sports who are a primary private company who go in and deliver all the school sports they are based in Norfolk erm but they have said very much when you go back after COVID the emphasis is on fun and enjoyment because their lifestyles will have changed dramatically over the last six months so we have just been ... the main focus for all core groups, GCSE has got a very different ethos to it erm but you would expect if they have chosen GCSE that they are going to be enjoying it, the ethos is on fun and enjoyment. For the first six months all we want them doing is being active an enjoying the lesson erm we will obviously be teaching the skills because they will need those erm but it is all based on fun. So, we have just been having discussions about when we go back in September how to ... are they going to get changed, what fun activities are they going to do keeping them you know slightly socially distanced with minimum equipment erm but that is where you rely on the teacher's knowledge and experience and ideas and creativity to keep it fun. I know you are looking at transition erm but some of the activities, because they have maybe come from school, primaries with more limited facilities, because we can then offer climbing, table tennis, badminton, activities that they haven't had the chance to do before some of them find that they are having fun because they are doing something different. Some of them have thought about how PE is going to be but then actually really enjoy it. Some of it comes down to the teacher, that they love the teacher that they have and so they really enjoy it because of that. I was talking to a parent this week, she works in school and she's got a boy in year eight and she said that he was really worried about the PE and he was a little bit because he's not particularly sporty, you know he likes his exercise but he is not you know a footballer or a

cricketer he's not on a team he doesn't go to any clubs but he really gels with his PE teacher and it was one of those where it came to be one of his favourite subjects so ...

R: I guess it kind of comes down to essentially what is the aim of PE, obviously for you as a secondary PE teacher what would you say for year seven and year eight, even up to year nine, what is the fundamental aim of PE? Is it to encourage exercise, is it to breed competitive sports people, where do you see it? You have obviously got the curriculum to go around, but what do you personally feel is the aim of PE in those kind of years?

SPE1: Because it is PE, physical education, education is in there. You have got to have that element of what do they know now, what can they do now that they couldn't do before erm and it's not physical activity, it's not just go in there and play a game and don't think about it, it's got to have some type of education in there. Right well, I know the rules, I'm still not very good at a smash shot but I can tell you what lines are in and out, they have got more knowledge, you know even if they are improving their social skills, communication skills that's all education lessons that they will take in life in future, do you remember when I asked you to lead a warm up and you struggled a little bit but you got better and better at it, when they go into work they might be asked to lead a team and they won't think about it, they won't think oh I did a warm up in year seven but they will have started to actually develop that confidence to be able to do it. Erm so yeah for me it's about education, it's not necessarily physical skills but it's being able to demonstrate that they are improving themselves as individuals, whether its knowledge of fitness, or knowledge of rules so that they can communicate better or have a little bit more confidence when they are working as part of a team.

R: Yeah that's interesting because some of the things that have come up and obviously a lot of what you have just said there, the education, you are kind of forced in some ways to teach those kind of things. One of the ideas that has been floated around is that if you do two hours per week [of PE] then you could have one kind of like you have said skills based and one kind of hour just in terms of getting people active, not necessarily focusing on the skills and that that might retain more people, or young people in sport. Would you see any kind of potential for that, or personally do you feel what you have just said there before is the best way to go about it?

SPE1: I think that for year seven and eights still we want education, erm by the time ... because they take their options very early now, they take their options half way through year eight erm when they come into year nine there is a little bit of a year that they are still not making their own free choices they are still not giving an activity and taking a racquet and off you go and play for an hour, there is still that element of teaching and education there. Erm because there has to be because if you give them too much free time in year nine they will switch off erm so when they come into year ten and year eleven there is a little bit more right you know you really enjoyed your bench ball should we do three four more lessons of bench ball erm and it's a bit more of a negotiation well you enjoy this so we will just do more of this working on the skills side of it becomes secondary its more about in core its more about being active and having fun and developing some you know of the other skills rather than right lets practice our dribbling it becomes less about that and less about learning new skills cos we often say well I haven't taken it at GCSE and it gives me a bit of a break from erm other GCSE subjects. Now our other, it might be interesting for your notes that our year sevens and year eight hours for physical education have dropped from four to three over a fortnight for the last two years. So, all students now get three hours of physical activity or PE, rather, over a fortnight up until year eleven which is their GCSE exam year then they get four. They get four: two in week one

and two in week two. They are the last year to go through that programme so then in 2021 from September they will all have three hours, so the year sevens are getting less than other year groups had when they were in year seven.

R: Right that is interesting, erm, so is that kind of just to do with the pressures of other subjects, more, other subjects taking more time away from PE?

SPE1: Yeah, timetabling issues, its timetabling yeah. One thing that we are going to introduce to erm, you know you talk about activity erm because we do want to raise activity, well two things really. One, due to timetabling constraints and the school has grown erm and we need more time in the day to get students through lunch because there just is not enough time. They can't leave site, everybody has to eat, everybody has a plate now, no one has a box, they can't eat outside so everybody is eating in the dining hall, so we need more time for that so we have gone to a split lunch which means it has a knock-on effect for lunch time clubs. So, the only clubs really feasibly we think we are going to be able to run are those who come after school. So, what we are going to do is produce a, like a coffee card stamp, so they will get two stamps from members of staff for their PE lessons, they will get two stamps every time they come and do an extracurricular club and then there is four stamps that they need to get filled in from activity they do at home. So, if they go for a bike ride with their parents, a parent can initial that, if they go to a swimming club, their coach can initial that so they have got to do thirty minutes of activity so they can't just go for a five-minute jog and then get it stamped they have got to do thirty minutes. There is three levels, bronze, silver and gold so when they get one coffee card stamp full they move up to the next level and then next level and then the idea is that we will have some sort of honours board of who has got them and then there will be some recognition for them when they get the gold award and it's just a way of ... for us its two fold because year sevens we don't know if they are top class tumblers or a brilliant table tennis player, sometimes you don't find out enough about them until it's too late and then it's also a way of encouraging them perhaps so you still need one more but it's got to be an extracurricular, why don't you come back to netball so erm...

R: No that is certainly a good initiative erm and it kind of ties in with incentivising some things. I guess the only other thing I would ask you is, I think we have already kind of covered it with the climbing wall and those kind of things but do you see kind of a better reception for new sports essentially, is it the kind of sports they haven't done before, are those the ones that are better received in the early years?

SPE1: Erm [long pause]

R: Or is it the traditional football, netball, do you see that kind of already in year seven or do you kind of get them and you can leave an impression on them?

SPE1: I would say it is a bit of a mix really.

R: That is possibly part of the problem.

SPE1: Pardon?

R: I said that is possibly part of the problem in that you have got so many kids and you can't please everyone I guess...

SPE1: Yeah, I think the thing is when they are learning something new when they get to year seven and eight, they expect it to be easy and they expect to pick it up straight away. Yeah

like volleyball, when we introduce volleyball at year nine some of them find it very very difficult. They can do all the skills you can get them to do it themselves they can do it against a wall straight backwards and forwards and put them in a game and then there is no volleying goes on whatsoever. But they expect it so that they should have it and they get a little bit disheartened when they haven't. Year seven are always a bit more receptive to learning new activities. By the time it gets to sort of year nine and ten they just want to do the things they enjoy, you know, they are not that keen to pick up new things.

R: So, do you see the enthusiasm there in year seven, do you see that kind of drop away.

SPE1: Yeah that drops away yeah erm but I mean I had year thirteen BTEC yesterday and I said ... we were talking about sedentary lifestyles and I asked and went through the government recommendations for exercise per week and out of a class of nine only three of them had done it and they are BTEC sport, so you know, what is the rest of the sixth form going to be like if there is only three who have met it.

R: Yeah exactly.

SPE1: You know, I have got... one of my erm notes was that although we have seen increases in cycling and increased walking over the last three or four months, walking is not enough. When I speak to my year eights because I am a year eight tutor oh what have you been doing and they will be like I have been walking, I have been for a walk, and I am like that is great, it's better than nothing but what are their activity levels, how hard are they going to find PE when they first come back you know so err I don't know.

R: No, it's definitely something that came out in my survey the physical demands of year seven compared to what they have done [in primary] and that is not necessarily something secondary schools are doing wrong it might be that primary schools and below are not ingraining the need for physical activity early enough, but it is certainly something that is interesting. Erm ...

SPE1: Secondary school PE teachers, sorry, just maybe don't know enough about the primary school curriculum, because the primary school curriculum is very strict isn't it and very rigorous about how they assess and what skills they are supposed to do and in what order so erm maybe that is what needs to happen we need to be more aware of what they have done in their primary set up so we can build upon it not regress from it.

R: No definitely and I think there is obviously the issue in primary schools of external coaches, they don't have the specialist PE. Obviously now they have the premium funding guaranteed for the next year, they do probably rely too much on external coaches erm so it is kind of hard to judge what the kids have done in primary school and they arrive at secondary with such a range of abilities and a range of different experiences. Erm but no it's all very interesting. So, I guess I have no more questions that I need to cover, but is there any kind of final thoughts from yourself on anything that we have discussed or is there anything else you would like to add?

SPE1: No, I think erm some primary schools are better than others, I think seeing the year fives coming in there is definitely some schools who place more of a priority on PE than others and that comes down to leadership in the primary schools and we can't change that erm so some kids will come in and will all have a water bottle when I am doing a climbing session I will have been in touch and told them what they need to bring and they will all come in in PE kit of sorts, you know like their red shorts and white collared t-shirt and they will bring a water bottle and all have suitable kit on and others will have come in and they are still in their uniform and I'm

like they can't climb cos they are wearing shoes and that to me is because they haven't pushed it enough that it is an important day that they are out of lessons because they are going to go to [REDACTED] and do some things they are not really bothered about what they are doing.

R: No exactly. Okay [REDACTED] that has been brilliant, I will just stop the recording there because we have got plenty.

Appendix 2: Interview Two Transcript - Secondary School PE Teacher

Interview Transcription: [REDACTED] (2pm - 19/07/20)

Code: Researcher = R, Interviewee = SPE2

Interview Length: 29 min 39 sec

R: Right well first of all thank you for taking the time to speak with me today at what is obviously the end of a very different summer term and well err second half of the year in all honesty. I guess the first thing I want to ask is pretty much an open question, what is kind of the first thing that comes to mind when I ask you to discuss the transition from year six to year seven in PE?

SPE2: Yeah, no problem at all. I think for me honestly it is just a combination of so many little things that might seem so insignificant but when you add them up they just can overwhelm some kids. It can be such a new setting to some kids and I think some can build it up in their minds for quite some time before they actually start, especially those who maybe quite enjoy primary and having their circle of friends there and they might find it all a bit much when there is all the talk of moving to *big school*. Some of the kids have siblings and they sometimes hear things that gets passed on in primary, a bit like Chinese whispers, which a lot of the time is just myths and things that are completely untrue, but it does all have an impact no matter how small. I think when they first arrive we have a chance to put their mind at rest and those first few lessons with them are important. You can usually see who are the more confident ones, the bubbly ones who aren't shy or afraid to speak, so often it's a case of picking out ones that are more introverted and just making sure they are happy with everything or not overly concerned with anything.

R: When you say it's obvious who are the most confident ones, what do you mean by that and how like do they show that confidence? Is it like you said just in terms of speaking to staff or does it also tie into how they perform in lessons as well?

SPE2: Erm well I think there is an element of that in that if they know they are good at sport and good at PE they are not likely to be shy about that. Sometimes though there are kids who have two left feet and they are still the most vocal in lessons, so I think it's also down to their character and who they are as an individual and not just their ability and how they perform.

R: Okay that is interesting. Do you find there is a difference in students coming from different primaries? I don't know how many primaries you deal with in terms of feeding the school but from speaking to other secondary staff and people working across the transition there is certainly a debate around some primaries better preparing students and that maybe influencing the confidence of some...

SPE2: Oh yes absolutely, absolutely. I am quite lucky in that I have over the years been able to visit some of the primaries and there are definitely ones that do it [PE] better than others. When we get the new year sevens in in September sometimes you can just look at them in the first few lessons and know which primary they have come from, or maybe choose out of a couple. There are some primaries that just don't really care about PE or maybe aren't sure on how to go about teaching it and unfortunately it really shows to people like us. I personally would love to be able to help them out a bit more because there are [primary] teachers that I know would really like to be able to learn from us and how we do things but there just isn't the time within school to do that sort of thing and I think you would do very well to find any teacher happy to give up their time outside of school for that, voluntarily anyway.

R: Just quickly on that point, is there anything that you do, or maybe your department do, to kind of link up with primaries to maybe discuss the transition or maybe the children that are coming up and starting in year seven?

SPE2: Erm not with teachers I wouldn't say no. Obviously we have the open evenings which is the first time really we get to see kids that might be coming up but obviously not all of them do eventually end up coming to [REDACTED]. In that respect it would be pretty pointless in taking too much notice in the kids because there isn't really anything we can judge them on. Usually it's just a case of setting up the table tennis in the sports hall, having a member of staff on the climbing wall and showing them what they can look forward to if they do join, it's as much about us selling ourselves to them as anything. We don't have any official links with primaries maybe in the way you would imagine as we have gone through quite a long period of restructuring and I think maybe the priority has been on the kids we have rather than the ones we don't as bad as that might sound.

R: No of course I understand where you are coming from there, just to be clear there isn't anything like transition days as such where you might take in year sixes for a day or something like that.

SPE2: Not really no. I mean I can understand why some schools do them but with us the focus has been so much on results given our OFSTED performance so as a department it might not look great if we were setting time aside for primary pupils who might not even end up at [REDACTED]. Being honest though I do remember a time where the school did try them a long time ago and I'm not sure they have that much impact on children anyway. Usually if anything does happen it's just the one day or a one-off thing and kids will forget that over the summer holidays anyway, so I don't really think we are doing the kids a disservice in that sense.

R: Fair enough, I guess kind of related to this is whether you think that the kids you receive in September are well prepared for secondary PE. I mean on average on a year to year basis not necessarily the last cohort of year sevens you have got, but just in general because that is one thing a few of the staff I have talked to have brought up.

SPE2: It's a tricky one I think because honestly some year groups are just so different. I don't think you can say on average kids are like this or like this, it's just a bit of a lottery to be honest. Our current year sevens are pretty good actually err I don't remember having many issues with them at all. I think the last kind of problem year was a few years ago so our current erm current year nines I think were a bit of a nightmare to be honest...

R: A nightmare in what respect if you don't mind me asking, in terms of their ability or do you mean more behaviour...

SPE2: Just a bit of everything really, I mean there are some nice kids in the year group don't get me wrong, there are some really lovely kids in there but in general they have the reputation amongst staff as the bad year group and I think there is always one in every school. Maybe in some respects it was connected to that in PE they just weren't very good so they thought well this isn't for me so I'm going to mess around for an hour and make the teachers life hell which I fully imagine is the goal of certain students. Once you kind of have that relationship with kids it's really hard to change I think, once they know you have marked their card they kind of get it into their head that that's it for life, or at least until they leave school.

R: That's an interesting point you make in that the bad behaviour might in some ways be connected to their ability, or if they at least think they are no good at it and how that is them kind of set then. So,

I guess the obvious follow up for me is what do you kind of do in that situation, to maybe change it as best you can or at least manage it going forward?

SPE2: Yeah, it's certainly something we as staff do try to change, but like I say it's one of those things where it's pretty engrained into them. I guess one thing we do try to do is mix up which teachers they get for lessons certainly as the years go by. It's not like they will have the one teacher from the first lesson they have in year seven to the last lesson they have before they leave, so there is diversity in that respect and they can have better relationships with some teachers than others. Of course, the flip side to that is they know staff talk to each other, especially in a small department like ours, so they know that their reputation with one staff member will probably carry through to others. I think that they think that we have a naughty list or something in the staff room with their names on it when really, we all respect the students on an individual level. Of course, if there have been problems with one member of staff then we will know about that, but I guess it's then even more important that it doesn't become a subject issue, rather than the issue of a single staff member if you know what I mean.

R: Yeah of course, I think it's really interesting that you say that kind of those first impressions stick. When students do first arrive could you give me a bit more of a picture of those first few weeks and those first few lessons. I know some of the other staff I have spoken to have mentioned things like changing rooms and new facilities being a bit new for kids, maybe them having difficulty finding their way around if it's a big campus and also finding lessons themselves a bit different in terms of how challenging they are so I guess if you could maybe draw me a picture almost of those first few weeks and what you have in place to deal with any issues maybe?

SPE2: Yeah sure. I wouldn't say the size of the school is a major issue, although it is obviously bigger than the kid's primaries it's not a massive secondary and there are certainly bigger ones than ours within the area. Going back to what we were saying before about how they forget things they might hear in transition days etcetera, the first thing we do is kind of get them all together and just tell them kind of what we expect going forward and lay out the ground rules. If we can start them off with good habits it will hopefully make everyone's lives easier and it's also a chance for them to ask us anything. Once that's done we will just make a start on whatever sport we have got down first in the timetable, whatever that might be. Ideally it will be something outside with the weather being reasonable in September err so maybe football on the field or rugby and then once that first term is over we will have to move inside with something like basketball or volleyball.

R: Just on that if I can, maybe something like volleyball some kids might not have played before, do you see kids respond better to maybe new sports they haven't tried before or like you say starting with football, do you find they prefer things they know and have played before...

SPE2: It's a mix I'd say generally. Most of the lads will love their football and play it all year if they could, there are always those sports that are universally loved I think and especially where we are football is one of those up in the North East isn't it. The one thing that is always new is the rock climbing and we are lucky to have that, going back to the open days we have that is always something we like to show off as kids haven't usually been on one before unless their parents have took them or something like that. Although we got the new build when lots of schools were getting them however many years ago the sports hall isn't massive but the rock climbing is certainly a winner with the kids. In year seven it's not something you can really pick them out on, like in most sports there are kids who are clearly the best but with the

climbing you don't get that with it being totally foreign to them. Usually the best to them is the ones who are brave enough to go to the top first time around and they don't really care about the technical stuff or which route they have taken to get there, it's just getting up in the first place so for the rest of the day they can go around boasting they managed to get up and touch the sports hall roof.

R: So, you wouldn't say they are overly bothered about ability then, or is that just maybe in the climbing where things are a bit new to them?

SPE2: That's certainly the case for climbing but I wouldn't say they aren't bothered about ability because at the end of the day that's how they judge themselves and they know that's how we assess them. Maybe some of them who thought they were good in primary get a little bit of a shock now they are in a much bigger pool of kids I guess and it's a case of them going from a big fish in a little pond to a small fish in a much bigger pond, it's that talent pool getting much bigger or erm more diluted in a way and that can have an effect on some of them. Some of them will have some catching up to do depending on where they have come from. So, one lad might look to be quite far ahead of his peers in terms of their development and another might be lagging behind a bit when really the pair could be closely matched in a couple of years just depending on which schools they have come from and it does take time to balance out, it is certainly not an immediate thing. I think at the end of the day there is always going to be those kids who know they are naturally good and they will always know that and have done long before they reach us. We don't tend to assess them in great detail in the first year anyway it has to be said, it's not like other subjects where they are prepped from exams from the moment they come through the doors, but we as staff are able to judge them over the course of the year so as they do progress through the school we are able to put them in classes that best suit them. The same applies to the ones that aren't as good, they know who they are and it's difficult sometimes to engage them if they are completely against the subject. I guess it is much easier for us as staff to deal with the ones who want to enjoy the lesson and learn and develop that's for sure.

R: So, you say there about kids who know they maybe aren't the best in their class, what do you do to try and get around that issue?

SPE2: Well there is only so much we can try, we haven't got magic wands that we can wave as much as that would be helpful with some kids. It's a two-way thing and sometimes you can push and push and just get nothing back and you feel like you are hitting your head against a brick wall sometimes. I think though on a serious note it's those kids we have to be really careful with and maybe be a bit cute about how we engage them in lessons whether that's by taking out competition from whatever they are doing so we don't compound their failures or shortcomings if you like, but it's then balancing that against the kids who do enjoy the competition or games, particularly at the end of lessons. It's much much easier in later years when we can separate the good from the bad, hopefully that doesn't sound too harsh but when they are grouped like that it's much easier for us as staff.

R: No I think that's really interesting how you speak about erm the removal of competition because that is something I have looked at in quite a bit of detail. There are studies out there that would support that and it's all about making them feel confident in their environment isn't it. What would you say the balance of kind of competition and just enjoying lessons is to the classes you teach, I guess more generally what is the purpose of PE in your opinion which I know is probably not an easy or short question, but if you could maybe offer a few points connected to that if you could..

SPE2: Ha yeah that certainly is a big question isn't it. Err I mean erm in short, we have competitions outside of lessons don't we, it's not just like we teach four or five lessons or whatever and that's it, PE is more than that. We have got the extra-curricular stuff and the teams going on after school for the ones that are interested which I guess takes a bit of the pressure off us to make lessons competitive. Lessons are lessons at the end of the day so as much as the kids would love to play a match of football for a full hour or whatever it just can't happen so we have to make sure we are developing them in whatever sport and moving them on in terms of what they can do. Like I said just now, it is better when we have an idea of who can do what but that is impossible just after transition and I don't think a first lesson assessment would really be fair would it? So, it's about being adaptable I guess and us as teachers dealing with whatever we have got in front of us and that's the key really, being able to manage everyone. I think being able to accept there is no perfect way to do it and realise we probably will make mistakes somewhere along the line. Sometimes we get overlooked I think as PE teachers, we get looked at like we aren't really teachers or that it isn't a real subject because there aren't any books and pens and paper, it's just a chance for kids to burn off a bit of energy and help them concentrate in other subjects when really I think sometimes we have one of the most challenging jobs in the school. I have to say I would love to see some of the other staff handle thirty plus kids in the sports hall last thing on a Friday because they would then realise it's not as easy as they probably think.

R: Haha yeah I know exactly where you are coming from and I think that is a massive issue generally, you know, PE being overlooked and not given the same attention as maybe maths or English. Just there you mentioned how many kids you get in a class which is something we have touched on already but just how different do you think kids find it when they move up to secondary, particularly in the area of friendships and mixing with new kids? Do you see friendships surviving from primaries where they have come from the same school or not so much?

SPE2: Well I think for kids in this area its either a case of they come here to [REDACTED] or they go down the road to [REDACTED] so there are cases were they will probably lose some of their mates but we never really get situations in year seven where they don't know anyone at all, that only happens if they are coming from outside the area which wouldn't really happen at the transition time you're looking at. I think it's not so much the friends they have from primary but the ones who are similar ability to them because that is who they will kind of be drawn to. Even if they are good mates in other lessons you might have one lad who is really good at one sport and his best mate from maths might be a bit useless so I personally find they naturally pair up with someone their own ability once they have a rough idea of who that might be. Of course, that doesn't happen straight from the off and there can be those awkward first few weeks and that's where maybe their primary mates will have a role to play but really they soon realise they are all in the same boat and its quite natural how the bonds develop as the lessons tick by.

R: You say how they are all in the same boat and how they realise that pretty quickly, do you think that some kids naturally find it easier to make friends maybe if they are one of the more gifted ones in PE or maybe not necessarily gifted but confident in themselves and just generally more outgoing?

SPE2: Maybe there is something to that err definitely yeah. Confidence comes from ability doesn't it so yeah, I think the ones who are better become the go to kids in any class, whether that is in PE or any subject. I think everyone has a talent and obviously there are kids who are good at pretty much everything you throw at them but they are a rare breed aren't they. Maybe back in the time I was at school there would be much more stereotyping going on

where you might have the really sporty kids who would be great in PE and everyone would look up to them in that respect but they would then be useless in other subjects and at the same time there might be the typical geeky kid who would be terrible at sport but a whizz in maths or physics or whatever. I mean year seven they are still finding out about themselves aren't they, discovering who they are and what they like and what they don't like so I think friendships can change not just in year seven but in the years after that too, year eight year nine etcetera. Just because you love something in year seven doesn't mean that's you set for the rest of school and I think year nine is the year where we see a big change in kids. If they hadn't found distractions outside of school before then they usually have by the time they reach nine and honestly you would not believe the changes in some kids, even ones who up until then have been as good as gold.

R: Okay, just whilst you mention older kids, is there any interaction between the older ones and the new year sevens to help ease the transition or to give them the chance to pass on any experiences or knowledge in PE?

SPE2: Not particularly no. I think that some schools with sixth forms are able to do qualifications in leadership and sometimes might use events and such things with younger students, whether that's year sevens or not I don't know, but with us not having a sixth form it's just a case of them leaving in year eleven and that's it for us, so the only time the year sevens will maybe interact with the older years in PE is on sports day, but even then they obviously won't be competing against each other. We are lucky in that we have [local athletics track] just down the road, literally less than a mile away so we always head over there in the summer term, usually around now if it wasn't for COVID, but yeah that's the only real situation where you will have lots of year groups together in PE that I can think of off the top of my head anyway.

R: Okay that's fair enough. We have covered quite a bit already which is great and I only have a couple more areas on my list that I'd like to ask you about if that is alright. I think one of the main things that came out in my online survey data was not necessarily doing PE itself and the sports but also some anxiety around changing rooms and that sort of thing, particularly when they have come from primaries without those facilities and they are used to using a classroom and stuff. Do you see any of those anxieties and if so do they carry through into the lessons and how would you deal with them?

SPE2: There are always kids who are a little nervous around that sort of thing I think and I wouldn't say it's just year sevens either. Maybe as you say there is that initial change of how things are done in year seven but I wouldn't really say nervousness is down to the transition, it is more dependent on the children themselves, going back to our conversation on confidence and that sort of thing. Right the way through school you find that they are growing up and their bodies are changing and they start comparing themselves against their mates and that's just natural and nothing to do with PE so I wouldn't say it impacts too much on their performance. For example, you might have one of the most talented most gifted kids in terms of sport or a certain activity and they might be way behind their mates in terms of their development. In that case they might feel a bit like they are behind, a bit smaller than their friends or whatever and they can still be known as one of the best in the class, so no I wouldn't say there is much of a link in that respect. Maybe in the more physical sports it could be a bit of an issue, like erm rugby for example, you might find the bigger lads wanting to throw themselves around a bit more and maybe the more scrawny ones trying their best to stay out of their way but that's always been the case its part and parcel of sport really.

R: In that respect is there anything you do to prevent those bigger kids making lessons less enjoyable for the smaller kids, like so they don't feel overwhelmed?

SPE2: Oh yeah, we wouldn't let the big one's pair up with someone way smaller than them because it just wouldn't work, but I mean more in the sports like rugby in general, there is going to be physicality involved and the kids need to realise that. We always say to the kids who are a bit soft in that department, the ones that are afraid of getting hurt, that really if they try and avoid it there is actually more chance of getting hurt. The best way is to just get stuck in and embrace the sport and the physical nature of it, it's all part of character building as well that will set them up for later in life, if they are used to shying away from things they don't like then they won't get far so I think it's important we really instil that work ethic in them from an early age.

R: I guess that comes back to the purpose of PE question and what the overall aims and outcomes of the subject are, so would you say that character building is part of that?

SPE2: Yeah definitely, I mean it probably isn't on the curriculum as such but really, it's the only subject that offers that kind of thing isn't it so I do think it falls on us as PE teachers to really develop the kids in that respect. If you think about it PE will be the only sport that some kids do all week, whether that's because they aren't really interested in sport or they don't have the opportunities outside of school for whatever reason, so I think it does fall on us to deliver a proper sporting experience to the kids that goes beyond what the curriculum says, so if that is the kind of character building stuff we are talking about then great, but it's about getting them into good habits and showing them the value of sport, even if they aren't necessarily that bothered. You have to go in and think if I can go above and beyond in my lessons then I have done the best I can and that's really all that can be expected I think and you just hope the kids respect that and give one hundred percent back.

R: No absolutely. I think one of the final things I wanted to discuss was skills and how much of the lessons you teach involve skill-based activities so to speak. A lot of kids said on the online surveys that there was a big shift from primary PE being very fun based to secondary being quite structured around having to do skills and learning technique so I don't know what you thoughts on that would be...

SPE2: Yeah, I can certainly imagine that is something that would come up talking to the younger one err I think erm it's something that is fairly well accepted as a bit of a fact. It comes down to the difference between us as PE teachers very much by trade here at [REDACTED] and the ones down in the primaries who aren't specialists in sport, that will be the difference essentially in terms of what is being taught. I think we'd be doing something wrong if kids weren't coming out and saying that secondary has more skills stuff and so on.

R: But do you think that that skills stuff possibly reduces the element of fun in the lessons when compared to primary?

SPE2: Well maybe but that is not something we can really change, I guess what it boils down to is do we want PE to be a very much fun and games session or an actual lesson where kids can learn skills. At the moment we probably do have that disparity between primary and secondary that could be better balanced but it's very difficult to do without talking to primaries and even then we can't really impact what they do in those conversations, the change would have to be on a much larger scale. It is a tricky one because I know what you are getting at and there is nothing worse than thinking kids are coming up to secondary and thinking oh well the fun has gone from PE its actual hard work from now on because hard

work can be fun, it's just the mindset they have when they come and it's difficult to break that straight away. Maybe by the later years they have kind of learnt that and those kids obviously weren't included in your study, but that's not to say everyone above year eight is crazy about working hard in PE, but you can see what I mean.

R: How do you kind of structure your lessons then, do you have a set template for all lessons across sports or do they differ? Like is it a case of first five to ten minutes for changing and getting into the sports hall or onto the field or wherever, next ten introducing lesson objectives and aims and so on or is it more flexible than that?

SPE2: Well having been teaching as long as I have it's a bit like second nature really, but I guess you could say they follow a certain structure in that we always try and get them changed within the first ten minutes which is not always easy, then we will try and run through learning objectives because they are important and there is a real push for them within the school at the moment and then probably into the skills stuff we have just been talking about. Any games usually come towards the end and it depends how they have been progressing through the lesson to be totally honest with you. If they have been well behaved and are doing well then we might move them into games quicker than we usually would or the opposite applies in that if they just are not getting it then we will have to continue with the drills and so on. It depends on the sport we are doing as well because like in football and things there are so many drills you can do whereas in dodgeball its usually pretty much straight into games. I think it changes as we go through the year as well, it's much more relaxed maybe in a typical summer term compared to the start of the year when things are quite regimented. So, to answer your question there is structure there maybe if it doesn't seem that way to the kids, because it is just second nature by the time you get to the point where you've been teaching for however many years. I think the only major difference would be OFSTED because I can assure you when we get the dreaded call then things change pretty quickly to make sure we are seen to be hitting all the boxes and those learning objectives are bang there.

R: So, I guess what you are saying is that secondary staff with the experience they have are probably better at structuring their lessons, but at the same time kids might appreciate that unstructured feel of primary where it feels less like a lesson as such?

SPE2: Yeah maybe, I think that would be probably true in some cases yeah.

R: Okay it's all interesting stuff. I think I have covered pretty much everything I had down on my list of things to get through, so I guess without taking up too much of your time, is there anything else you would like to add about the transition, how it works or just anything in general you think might be worth talking about in relation to the study?

SPE2: Err not off the top of my head other than I think that the transition is just a really complex period of lots of little things, there is no one thing that makes it a problem area for some kids and I think if you could make a list of all of those things then you would be in a good place going forward to help kids. I don't think it's something you can fix for everyone, there are always going to be issues working with kids of any age and you can please everyone so I think what I would say to you is that try and avoid doing that, don't think you can improve the transition for every single kid in one go because that just wouldn't be achievable, focus maybe more on the kids that really seem to struggle or if one issue maybe crops up more than any other then try and work around that, otherwise you will end up pleasing nobody.

R: No, I think you are spot on I don't think there is that magic bullet and maybe that is where people have gone wrong in the past. There are certainly issues that have cropped up more than others across my research and to be fair some of that has shaped what I have tried to ask you today so I can assure you everything you have said will be useful or helpful in some respect.

SPE2: No absolutely that is good to hear, I am just glad to be able to help you out at short notice and offer some of my experiences I guess.

R: Yeah it is absolutely appreciated and I bet you are looking forward to a long summer break before whatever comes in September.

SPE2: Well we have had that long break already with the lockdown but hopefully by then we will be nearing some normality but I won't be holding my breath that's for sure.

Appendix 3: Interview Three Transcript - School Sport Partnership Coach

Interview Transcription: [REDACTED] (10am - 10/07/20)

Code: Researcher = R, Interviewee = SSP2

Interview Length: 27 min 32 sec

R: Right so I guess the first kind of question is pretty general. What are your views on the transition? You obviously see a lot of primary school and secondary school kids, erm, why do you think there might be a bit of a drop off when they do arrive in secondary?

SSP2: I mean I think its ... I think every school, primary school is not the same obviously so in every catchment area, it isn't the same so if I take for example the transition, well not transition, but the type of children that are probably going into places like Durham Johnson, they are children from, a lot of them are from you know quite good backgrounds, their parents have invested quite a lot quite heavily in sports so it's kind of in their culture and in their schools they are very proactive in trying to develop the children in as many clubs. Whereas if you go to other school in County Durham, I will not obviously mention any, it's the type of catchment area, the children might have not had the opportunity, it's certainly not in their culture in their household that sport and physical activity is important so the only type of experience that those children might get is this minimum of one hour, two hours of curricular PE per week, whereas we know within primary schools a lot of the time children are only getting an hour timetabled and that is including changing and getting them to wherever they have to go and the teacher setting things up erm god there is so many reasons for it as well it's how good is the physical education within that primary school are the teachers having a role to play in it or are they just bringing a random coaching company in and children are going to have been developing some physical skills but they are not getting that holistic physical education experience which is delivered by erm ... there is the best obviously practices when you have got the coaches or specialist PE teachers like obviously working alongside PE teachers to upskill them so that when they lead you would think that erm that would work for them. Some schools also, transition works well because the secondary schools invest within the primary schools, so particularly with the children you maybe get to year six and even before ... secondary schools are trying to get in there to show the year sixes this is what we need you to be at to come into key stage three, are you key stage three ready. So, there is not one thing, there is definitely not one thing ... there is definitely not one thing, it comes down to the kind of culture within the primary schools and the culture kind of within the home as well.

R: Okay. Do you think the more work you do with kids, so obviously some schools you will go into more than others, do you think that those kids have an advantage going into secondary school?

SSP2: Absolutely. I am slightly different to maybe your coaches or your specialist PE teachers that might just be focused in on primary, cos obviously I am secondary as well. I am very much, when I work with year fives and sixes everything that I do is ... I talk to them about when you get into year seven I need you ready, this is what I need you to do and I structure my lessons based around what maybe a year seven lesson would look like. Also, within my timetable in the summer terms schools can actually buy into the SLA to get their children ready, so I go in and do kind of a bespoke transition package in primary schools, some schools take it up, some schools don't. But really, it's when they hit year five and six as long as they have had some

kind of good culture within the primary schools, year five and six, particularly year six is just really getting them key stage three ready. They come up to us in secondary and it's like...

R: Yeah that's something that has come out in the online survey that I did, a lot of kids felt that secondary school PE is much more difficult in terms of physical and mental erm...

SSP2: Absolutely.

R: There was a lot coming out that said that they weren't kind of ready essentially erm and this was not just in County Durham this was nationwide, we got about 250 responses so it is not just of a localised thing either, so what do you, I guess what do you feel could be done to essentially bridge that gap erm, does it lie with the staff or maybe it is something the students themselves could do outside of school, what would you feel?

SSP2: I mean I think like the big big picture I really feel that schools like primary schools and secondary schools there should be such a huge focus of the children coming up, as much as they can to the secondaries so maybe each year group three times per year or two times per year to get the idea of what the big school is like to start with ... they are in awe sometimes when they come up of space and facilities erm and getting as many of the PE teachers into the primary schools as often as we possibly can and then when they are in year five or year six, in an ideal world I would have the PE specialists in there getting them absolutely ... I don't really like the word drilling them but getting them kind of its mentally as you said it's not just physically, physically it's a big problem, they don't think like a games player, they don't think like a gymnast. It's almost as if they sometimes are doing things because that is what they have always been told to do and I'm like well you know a chest pass is fantastic but in secondary school I am not going to be spending an objective of my lesson to demonstrate and apply a chest pass you know. Like the amount of primaries I go into and I see them standing in twos giving it this [motions passing ball between one another] ... you know we need to be able to apply and understand why we are putting these things into context through a game or an activity, they just don't have it.

R: You mention there, the kind of different facilities in secondary schools being well better in a lot of places erm, do you think kind of primary school facilities erm have any impact, is there any kind of way you would see if you could improve those erm...

SSP2: Absolutely. So, I don't like to name schools but I am in so many primary schools and some primary schools you go in and yes, their hall is slightly, it is an okay size but for thirty-three kids it's not great if you are wanting to do invasion stuff and that. But it's okay sized and these kinds of schools tend to have heavily invested on their outdoor use so they might have running tracks, you have got a football field you know they have got a good solid foundation on the yard that is safe for the children to actually take part in games. I mean you will know yourself the amount of primary schools you go in and the yard might be on a slant or it is all gravelly and the kids, as soon as you try and get them to dodge and change direction they are like splat over erm so schools that I see PE flourish more in is in schools that have got good facilities and to be fair they have got no real ... any school that does have good facilities in primary are really kind of letting the kids down if they are not really getting their kids to the best that they can be within PE, there is not really any excuse. Then there is some schools that you go in and the hall is the size of my living room and they have got nothing, they have got a little yard out front and that is it. They transition and go into secondary and they are like what on earth.

R: Okay. Erm, slightly kind of different question. Do you feel that you can get more enthusiasm working with year five and sixes because one of the things that came out was year five and six, they find that PE lessons, or working with yourself quite fun, and when they come and arrive at secondary they ... possibly because they have got specialist teachers, they see it as more kind of skills based and more of a lesson than a fun kind of experience.

SSP2: See, I would say that I am ... that's why I differ a lot from like coaching or ...I am not ... I'm the fun MC, fun coach like yeah, I am there, I'm Mrs loudy, I'm the PE teacher from the secondary school and I kind of hammer the year five and sixes. They enjoy it, they do enjoy it but my lessons in year five and six are very very secondary based.

R: So, would you like to see more of that with different people.

SSP2: Absolutely. Even simple things like with year five and six, like taking away the physical skills. I need six groups and I want you to set that up and they look at us and say nothing and then they come up to us in secondary and I am like listen the first two weeks is about routines and me saying right we need a group of six of you do do do do do and this is what I want set up there, you have got five minutes go set up I want you playing go and they are like hmm. But when I go in, particularly with the year sixes in primary, I am different to what you would ... I am not let's have a great fun time for twelve lessons I am there and I do push them. So I am slightly I would say ... Andrew at the partnership is quite like that as well cos he specialises and obviously Andrea White as well erm at Durham Johnson where there is three teacher specialists but very different, I am not like all let's all have a great time, I want them to enjoy it, fundamentals are learning.

R: So is it kind of getting through to the kids that they can push themselves, they can work hard in PE and enjoy it as well, because there are obviously going to be kids who really enjoy sport anyway, kind of that, kind of the people below that they might enjoy physical activity but not necessarily join a club outside of school sport, it is possibly them kids that are being lost over the transition...

SSP2: Absolutely.

R: Is it kind of getting them to enjoy working hard essentially, and knowing that they can do that?

SSP2: Ah-ha it's that resilience you know it's really that resilience in them as well and as I always say to all year five and sixes, I don't care whether you can do twenty backflips and the person next to you can do ten log rolls only, if they are log rolls and they are putting one hundred percent effort into their log rolls and showing me the best they can be and that they can do it and they are listening to feedback and they are developing it, I am just as delighted in that child as I am in this child flipping. But that is the culture thing because some some children think well I am not good at sports so a lot of the time they are just allowed to float along in primary.

R: Right, okay.

SSP2: And sometimes I feel like a lot of children are pandered to like literally they fall on their knee or something and it's like the teachers are running after them and I am like, come on, we'll be fine or they don't like to take part in PE, well they are going to be taking part in my lesson and it is just trying to show them that you can give them different roles and very gradually, they get them. But I have been teaching secondary, I will not mention any names, erm, one of my ... I did a double lesson a week with a year seven class and it was the lowest level of PE children that ... I only had twenty-one in my class which isn't a lot at all erm and

the majority of them have gone through all of primary school and basically been allowed to just float along or not take part, they have never been ... I would be very surprised if they have been properly challenged in physical activity or PE because where I started with them, this group it was like I was starting at maybe year three and four level with them and they were year sevens. Lovely kids, absolutely lovely kids but unbelievable. I don't do gymnastics, I don't do it and I'm like you do. So, there is a lot of work needed to be done.

R: Do you think that work should start earlier in primary, I guess that is kind of what you are saying, not necessarily blaming primaries or secondaries for the kind of drop off, there is obviously lots of things going on.

SSP2: Oh, absolutely yeah.

R: But would you say there is more that needs to be done in the primary schools essentially to get ready for that transition.

SSP2: Definitely. I mean within the primary it's great that they ... all that money is there and this physical activity is going on or this coach coming in or this fun day out for this and it's amazing like ah god I would love to think that I had that money but I just don't think that been invested in transition. I know that I am really lucky because I pushed it with my partnership am like no I want transition as part of this because I see it all the time so I am lucky, I think I have got nine schools that I going to be focusing on transition with, but there is probably another twenty odd schools that really need that transition.

R: And that is the difference isn't it the gap between transition...

SSP2: Ah-ha it's the gap and it's not primaries fault and it's not secondaries it's just a combination of secondary don't have time to go in you know. I mean I am just in a fortunate position that I am brought in by the partnership so I am lucky that I can actually stipulate to [SSP Manager] I want transition as part of this package so these schools are lucky that they can kind of get me in for this. Some schools ... and the PE teachers as well in the secondaries, we all want more transition, we all want more time with the year sixes. We want the money to release us to go and do that because all the money is obviously based in primary.

R: In a world where that kind of money, obviously there was a bit of speculation as to whether it was going to get carried on into next year [2020/2021], thankfully it has, but probably in the not too distant future, if the money dried up, would you envisage a further drop in participation across that age group do you think?

SSP2: I think so because the secondaries don't have time or staff to give to go in. Quite often, I mean I have been fortunate enough to kind of work across the two ways that partnerships work so I originally was a PE teacher within a secondary school but I was released two days per week, you know how it was all these like partnerships and my job for them two days was my nine feeder primary schools, they had all of my attention and those nine primary schools knew me at secondary school inside out and they knew me as the face of the secondary...

R: The kind of familiarity...

SSP2: It's a good thing that the primaries have got their own money now but it is sad because we have really lost that kind of trying to work together.

R: Absolutely. It is one thing I have looked at quite a lot and it's a very valid one. Kind of, not of topic but, do you kind of see a difference in the sports you deliver, obviously you have got your traditional

kind of football, netball, do you feel kids receive them well or do they kind of enjoy new sports that they haven't tried before?

SSP2: Is this at primary?

R: Kind of at both levels really.

SSP2: Kind of both well, primary school we kind of advocate kind of your teaching invasion games through a core task, then the teacher might select hockey as the kind of activity that they are going to base that core task on. So, in primary we try and teach broadly and we don't say you are doing ... there is none of your going to do a six-week block of football or you are going to do a six-week block of rounders, no you are doing a six-week block of striking and fielding, based on this core task.

R: Okay.

SSP2: And secondaries, a lot of secondaries obviously with assessment, a lot of the time we spend doing things like this ... just some of the ones ... I put it down [looks through notes]. I have got so many diaries going on now because I am so busy with this paperwork, I have got everything open. So, like in secondary, for example one of the secondaries I work with we focus in on developing technique, achieving personal bests, creating performances, problem solving and teamwork and tactics and strategies. After we have got that heading then we kind of work with the children of the class as much as we can and what kind of activity and sports will be practising. So, when we are creating performances we would go down gymnastics, trampolining route erm but gone are the days a lot of the places to say we are doing six weeks of football or we are doing six weeks of netball. Sometimes in secondary we need that because netball like they come in with no rules no knowledge therefore you can't get your school teams in place or your intraforms you have got going on a lot of the time, so at time you do need to teach the full activity erm but we are trying to kind of put things under umbrellas now rather than it's all about you being a footballer, it's all about trying to look at the big picture of the child rather than saying just because you are a top class netball player doesn't mean to say you are like the best PE student.

R: Yeah, no I think that's important as well, kind of the bigger picture...

SSP2: Like the holistic, yeah, the bigger picture and we have that argument with parents don't you like, they are on the county team for that and I am like that's fantastic but actually creating performances or like we have got things we need to work on and develop you know so it's just trying to get that out its cos physical education is such a holistic huge big thing. It's not just he's a footballer so he's great at PE, I mean you hear that all the time in primary schools. But they're like he is fantastic in PE, spot on football captain and I am like that is brilliant and so many good things but it's trying to get John to start thinking outside the box and trying to challenge himself in different ways because you are not really challenging Josh or what did I just call him, John or Josh, in football you have kind of got to try and challenge them in different ways.

R: Okay. Do you think there is a difference between, obviously in primary school you have got erm mixed gender PE and in secondary, not necessarily in year seven all the time as some schools are different erm, where do you see kind of the gender differences start to really appear and kind of effect PE? Obviously with you working in primary and secondary...

SSP2: I would probably say year eight. When they do come into year seven a lot of the time they still do because we usually get them in two sets, so say you have got a full year seven cohort, we will get them one half of the year group and the other half of the year group go to say English and Maths and then we will get another part of the year group. So when we get that half a year group, we tend to have done our own assessment, that is another thing when you go into secondary, we put the children through all these strands that I am talking about, your developing techniques, we do our own assessment for probably the first three of four weeks we have with the year sixes and we put them through and we can kind of place them in the right setting if you like within PE.

R: Yeah. That is one thing that is quite important erm kind of the ability levels cos it has kind of come out that a lot of kids respond well when they are placed with people of a similar ability but obviously that differs across sports. But then there are some that kind of feel, when they are put in those lower ability sets kind of they don't respond well to that they think well, I am not as good as set one or set A erm and they kind of lose interest. How would you feel, what is the best way to kind of mitigate against that?

SSP2: I totally, I totally get that, it is like in everything you know, I was rubbish at English, I was in like set four or whatever it was and you know I was like I am never going to be good at English but I think that a lot of it comes down to how the teacher kind of encourages and motivates that group, say for example my little year seven nurture group that I had in my last secondary school, all the other children were in a girls group or a boys group in their sets and I had the mixed ability and mixed gender erm little kind of bubble group if you like and it's just like you know we are a team, we are all just with each other here we are going to give it our best and you know it's really, you just need to go that real real extra mile to keep that little group and bubble together. And sometimes it's positive because they feel less threatened because they are way from the ones that can tackle you down on the ground when you are playing rugby with them and this bubble group just could not cope with that. But when they are with each other they can do things like that and they do get more success. It's a difficult one.

R: No, absolutely, what you have said there about kind of being with the same kind of ability. Obviously, it is an interesting debate.

SSP2: It totally is. No its just wherever you place them, you have just got to be able to stretch and challenge them but let them flourish at the same time so you don't want to make it ... whatever you do you don't want to try and put a huge negative impact on it because it is all about, even if they are in the top group, they can be stretched and challenged just as much as my little nurture group can but in a different way and probably a different personality and way you would approach teaching that group to that group.

R: No, absolutely.

SSP2: It's difficult because they are teenagers and you know, everything is about how they look and how they are perceived and it ...

R: Do you see a difference moving from year six to seven, obviously it is only a few weeks over the summer holidays, but once they do arrive at secondary school, do you see kind of a personality change.

SSP2: I see a huge, they think they are like top dogs in primary school, they absolutely think that like they know it all and you know they are *I'm too cool for school* and that and honestly

you see when they come in in year seven they are like little wee lost ... they are so timid and as the year goes on you see it start to build up because they find their little feet and they know kind of where and what place they fit into but you massively see a difference from ... I mean the conversations you have with primary teachers are like ahh the wee year sixes have gone I couldn't do any more for them honestly, kind of had enough in one way but I am like they are like little wee lost lambs like they don't say boo to a goose, they don't do anything, but as the year goes on then they do find their own feet. I would always, always say by summer term in year eight they change, that's the year they properly ... that is when PE in secondary starts getting difficult. Year nine is a tough, tough year for those children we have spoken about that are not like love PE, PE is everything to them, that is the hardest, that is a slog that.

R: Yeah, and that is interesting that you say that because you think that well, I am doing transition work and this is year nine but it's kind of goes back to year seven, year eight and that kind of age. There is even evidence to suggest that it is a little bit earlier that kids need to be engrained with the why physical activity is good for them erm, it just happens that my project is funded around the transition. There is so many different things, erm, we have covered quite a lot there in twenty minutes and I don't want to take up too much of your time. I guess is there just kind of anything else that you feel that is important that we haven't necessarily covered or would you like to add anything else?

SSP2: No, there is just so many little things that contribute I mean I don't think you will ever get a definite answer.

R: No, exactly.

SSP2: I have probably not helped you for your masters because probably everyone is saying these kinds of things. Erm but it's that old link between primary and secondary I think that would mean a huge difference. If there was anything I would say that link between primary and secondary and really making it a positive and regular link.

R: Okay.

SSP2: I think that would make a massive difference.

R: Okay ... transition days erm ...

SSP2: Not even just one offs just throughout the year just every I don't know every second or every third Friday afternoon the PE teacher from the secondary is in with the year sixes that whole year and it is like they are coming up and kind of know what to expect.

R: Yeah and it is possible that they use the funding as well for primary schools to possibly do something like that, that is certainly something I will look at in terms of my final report and giving it to County Durham Sport and seeing where we can go.

SSP2: Yeah, I mean I would ... I just feel that both sides are missing out on so much and I know that that is primary and I know that is secondary but it is meant to be an easy transition but it is not an easy transition within PE, it is probably easier within maybe maths or English because the same kind of methods that you would use or they are in a classroom they are in their seat but PE is just so vast.

R: There is a lot going on as well in changing rooms and facilities, all the things that I covered in quite a lot of detail but, no, that has been really helpful.

SSP2: Ha, yes changing rooms are another nightmare.

R: Absolutely. Okay I will stop the recording there.

Appendix 4: Interview Four Transcript - School Sport Partnership Coach

Interview Transcription: [REDACTED] (2pm - 06/07/20)

Code: Researcher = R, Interviewee = SSP1

Interview Length: 25 min 27 sec

R: What are your general experiences working with kids across year six and year seven? What stands out to you?

SSP1: Right, well, I'm in the lucky position in that I have been a primary school teacher, was then a sports coordinator then became a secondary teacher and now I've gone back into kind of school games organising things so for me I think the massive difference is when you get to secondary school as a year seven secondary PE teacher its very very different to your primary class where you see them every day. The majority of the children take part in primary and they have got no choice but to do the lesson and then when you are kind of doing after school activities you have got your class in front of you, you can encourage them, you can take them to the hall and kind of do that. When they get to year seven the big difference is there are obviously a lot more pupils and the year group might be split up into four or five different classes, often male and female classes separately, different teachers so you don't see all the pupils. The after-school stuff is a bit more hit and miss because pupils have either got other things on, they suddenly become too cool for school when they get to year seven and just a lot of other things going on. You end up with a kind of core group of pupils in year seven and eight who are your kind of go to students who are dead keen, love sport, will do anything for you and will join in with any sport. But you do lose quite a few pupils who probably were quite talented and you know good sports people but because of the life in secondary school they just kind of get lost a bit in the system erm so it's quite disappointing when you speak to primary staff and they say how's little Jonny doing in secondary school and oh well he's off with another set of lads and he doesn't kind of join in or take part in sport so that can be quite a disappointment I think.

R: Is there anything in terms of the SSP with what you do now that sees you try and engage kids maybe before they leave to secondary to make sure that doesn't happen, or are you kind of focused on the kids that are engaged in terms of your SSP role?

SSP1: Yeah, well the big thing of course is the, what just got announced yesterday, is the funding [PE and Sport Premium] which is only given to primary schools. Now in a previous system the money was given to secondary schools and you released a secondary school member of staff to work in a primary school, so the funding was kept in the secondary er and was spent on events and things and was a bit more of a joined-up approach, whereas now the primary schools get seventeen eighteen thousand pounds and it's up to them to spend it on what they want. So, there is a bigger focus on the primary school age erm, secondary schools find it harder to get out, there is a lot more demand on curriculum time erm certainly as they get older they are all doing GCSE's or BTECs er and to take a group of ten students out of school for an afternoon of sport is virtually impossible for secondary schools. So in terms of the SSP our calendar is primarily focused on primary erm kind of we go from infant year one year two focused on competitions but also on participation events, multi skills festivals erm I think throughout the calendar there is an opportunity for every pupil in the school to come out to at least one event per term so if you have a switched on primary coordinator they kind

of look at the calendar and pick events throughout the year to engage the whole school so that everyone can come out to an event.

R: Obviously, just quickly there, you speak about the primary funding. Do you see a difference in the way primary schools use that funding as obviously some kind of will be involved in the SSP. So, do you see a difference in primary schools and their provision, the way they use that [funding] in terms of engaging kids?

SSP1: Yeah, err that is a valid point because err as err company or as a business you are trying to promote your work in schools. So, we have got the core of schools that you know kind of buy into the whole programme of coaching, staff CPD, gifted and talented, leadership, all sorts of things and then there is the competition calendar which they can dip in and out of when they like. Other schools' kind of go themselves and use the money to sometimes pay for a member of staff to be the kind of PE person in that school. So there are schools that have a specialised member of staff whose role is to teach PE throughout the school which in a sense is good because they see everybody, but if they go it means that there is nobody in the school that has taught PE for three or four years and one person has kind of been trained up so if that person left the school there is a massive hole for that school. Other schools' kind of buy in coaches to deliver various sessions with the money. It could probably be checked and verified a little bit more in terms that it has got to be spent on PE related things you know and not a load of English books or whatever. But yes, certainly school's kind of, the switched-on coordinators know what they are doing and have got to report back, they do have to report back I think if you look on every school's website there is a section where they report it...

R: They are supposed to aren't they.

SSP1: They are a bit hit and miss, you read them and think well what does that five thousand mean it's very vague five thousand pounds of coaching, two thousand pounds for something else erm so it can look a little bit vague but from having nothing it's a massive boost for PE and at least the profile of PE has been increased.

R: So obviously that was announced yesterday or the day before, that that funding would continue. In a world where that kind of stopped, that money dried up, would you see kind of issues with kids in primary and then moving to secondary, with that have a knock on for their provision of sport. Would you envisage more of a drop off in sports participation?

SSP1: Yeah I think that would have definitely created a big issue I think some of the programmes that we do are based around kind of mental wellbeing and health, erm so we are kind of had to prepare in case the funding didn't exist erm so we were kind of encouraging schools to look at their other budgets in school PHSE and kind of wellbeing funds to try and you know, staff training erm so there certainly would have been opportunities to get services but in terms of competition and getting pupils out, paying for the bus to get them there and equipment and things that would have made a massive difference. We have been to youth sport trust conferences and school games organisers are there and they always show the same, I don't know if you have seen the graph but the graph goes up and up year three four five and six and then there is just that massive drop year seven off the cliff face where it just kind of erm I don't know whether it's their interest or the opportunities just kind of disappears massively.

R: Obviously, you say about the money use to be more related to secondary whereas now its primary so that's possibly why in some circumstances it is. One of the things that came up in terms of when I

was doing my online survey with the children was the availability of sports and what sports they play. One of the things I wanted to ask you was do you see a different reception for the sports that kids enjoy in year six, obviously you are working with primaries more, do you think the kind of sports that you deliver has any impact on them going forward?

SSP1: Yeah, I guess maybe in primaries its more the kind of the participation, you know you might have a ... you will have the natural, the football the cricket the rounders the netball will always go on. Often secondary schools are a little bit stuck in their ways in terms of there is a year seven football team, there is a year seven cross country team, there will be a netball competition, so there are kind of clubs connected to sport but there might not be the kind of come and have a go dodgeball fun club or come and play badminton erm...

R: So obviously there you have said fun, do you think once they get to secondary school that kind of fun element is not removed totally but there is less of a focus on that?

SSP1: I think it drops off doesn't it. The age that they are they are a bit more savvy and a bit more cool, you know. So, running round playing tig ...

R: Less tradition kind of games?

SSP1: Yeah, I guess they don't ... break time in secondary school isn't ... you might get a group of lads maybe playing football on the AstroTurf or something but there is no kind of you know getting the ball out and just playing with it or skipping or whatever. Secondary school it just would not happen. Another big difference I think is the lunchtime provision in secondary schools. Lunchtimes have been massacred, twenty-five minutes, thirty-five minutes maximum erm so the kind of lunch time activities have really been cut down, that is a massive difference. You used to get an hour and have a couple of clubs going on at lunchtime where now that very rarely happens. I guess another thing for secondaries would be the schools hours, a lot of pupils were bussed in so quarter past three or whatever the busses come the majority of the kids jump on the bus and go home and they are kind of stuck you know, parents can't come and pick them up erm unless they live locally erm whereas your primary school chances are everybody lives round the corner so it's much easier isn't it, they can stay behind for an hour and do an after school club.

R: Yeah that is another point as well, where places are. Do you see a difference in the schools that are more urban based working regularly with the SSP than maybe rural schools?

SSP1: In terms of in secondaries or ...

R: Well in both, but primaries if you work more with them, but in both ...

SSP1: Yeah it kind of depends on the area so our area is kind of [REDACTED], we have kind of [REDACTED], there not really big cities like [REDACTED], so the schools tend to be based in the little villages in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], [REDACTED], all kind of little primaries in that area. When they go to the secondary schools of which there are only five erm they have to travel unless you are the next-door primary school you have got to get on a bus to get to the secondary school.

R: Do you think that has an impact in terms of the friends they make maybe when they go to secondary school? If they have not gone in a large group, if there is just one or two from one primary, do you think that will have an impact?

SSP1: Yeah that could, I guess if there is only like ten kids in year six and they are all going to that school you are going to mix up with other pupils erm but I think the sporty ones obviously you know at primary they have probably have met the other sporty ones from competitions and festivals and things in year five and six and they get up to year seven, from our point of view its quite nice to do, we did a rowing competition, indoor rowing, October November time and when the year sevens came up it was nice to see they knew most of the year sevens cos they were the superstars in primary school who obviously got the eye of the PE teacher and had been selected to do that so that was quite nice. Thinking about it I think the transport might be quite a big thing you know, if you haven't got parental support, so if you are a decent footballer or netballer your mam can't drive you get the bus to school you cannot stay behind for an hour at an after-school club cos you have to get the bus back.

R: Yeah

SSP1: I mean I don't know if that kind of thing came out in your research ...

R: Yeah, a little bit, but actually the point you said earlier there the kind of kids who are more engaged with sport kind of possibly have more of a better relationship with the PE teachers and then there are possibly those that don't who liked sport but were not necessarily as good as others in their class. Do you think that has an impact on them going forward in secondary school where its less about fun and more about competition, so once they arrive at secondary school do you feel they think they have to be good at sport to be involved in it? Is there that kind of element at play?

SSP1: Well I think most secondaries would have like the first couple of weeks there would be the kind of netball trials the football trials. You would have a PE lessons where you do XC and they would all head off and the first ten lads and the first ten girls to finish they would be straight on a list written down somewhere you know who wants to come to the football trials that's always a big event for year seven boys and the netball trials would be the same for girls erm and the half decent ones that made the primary school team when they get up to secondary there is another fifty of them of their level from all the other primary schools so when they only select eight or ten to make the team you have got twenty thirty forty others who were probably half decent but didn't make the A team as such. Big schools will have an A and a B and a C team possibly but there is probably a lot of them who then disappear out of the system.

R: Do you think that the element of competition, once you get to secondary school, could be a reason for a lot of the drop off? If in year seven and year eight there was less of a focus on competition and more of a focus on maybe like primary, having fun, do you think you would see more people retained in sport?

SSP1: Yeah. Definitely. I think the priorities at secondary school, you know the football league, the netball league will start week three week four when you are back in September so you have got to kind of get straight into that and the sports hall athletics will be in November so you have got to be bang on straight into those. We have looked and you will note when you come to county school games meetings err a big talk about reframing competition and certainly how the school games needs to look at participation events. You have got your sports for county finals and there is probably a time and a place for all of those but actually should the school games be an opportunity for pupils who don't get a chance to compete, so we are trying to have a ... I think there was a year seven dodgeball event which may still be in for next year's school games and we were aiming to get the secondaries to select pupils who had not

competed before, so not your footballers or your netballers or your cricket team, it had to be a different set of pupils and when they got there it wasn't a kind of full on dodgeball massacre competition with people getting blasted all over the place, it was supposed to be more of a fun kind of event possibly a carousel of little activities and then some games which obviously would get competitive cos your throwing a ball at somebodies face it's going to get competitive.

R: Very true

SSP1: But it wasn't all out winning points and what have you so looking at values like honesty and in terms of if you hit you put your hand up and you're out and you're not waiting for the umpire to see and tell you that you are out. And kind of team work things I think that ... it's a big shift from what people have always known, your secondary schools have always known there is a rugby competition, there is a netball competition, there is a cricket competition and you bring your best team and you compete against the others. So by any amount that then narrows the pyramid in that you are bringing the best kids erm but it would be nice to widen that and have a ... for primary schools we have a change for life kind of festival where smaller schools are invited and there is a carousel of activities and they have a bit of skipping and a bit of fitness we did a bit of quidditch last year but maybe for year seven particularly that would be a nice thing where they can still come along and you can bring along your none sporty or not, well they have to like sport in some sense, but not the A team, your first pick elite sports people in year seven. So, the others then get a chance to represent the school, they go to a county final they get the t shirt and it is a nice experience for them.

R: To be fair we have covered quite a lot in what I think is about twenty minutes. I think one of the final things I wanted to say is that in terms of transition do you see any kind of transition events? You say you have worked as a primary teacher before the SSP stuff, do you think the kind of primary school students visiting secondary schools and having that experience to meet the teachers meet the year sevens, do you think that plays a role in a smooth transition?

SSP1: Yeah definitely I think probably more from the secondary point, it was excellent to get them. We would have a couple of events over the year and in the summer term we would have a couple of big over two or three days where they would all come in and do a carousel of subjects in the secondary school so when we got them down for PE it was a real big eye opener for us in terms of what we were getting and again you probably thinking well you know one two three they are going to be super elite athletes and they are going to be in every team possible but you see the keenness of them at year six when they come up and they are wanting to please and they want to take part.

R: So, do you think that will be a big thing now with kids not having the ability to transition, obviously they have been out of school since march through to September.

SSP1: Yeah, I think that will be a big miss this year cos they haven't had, unless they did them early on in the year. As an SSP we don't see that but as a secondary school that is a really big opportunity missed. They will have had virtual tours and will have been sent transition work for maths and English no doubt, but I am not sure how much PE stuff there is. We used to have time in secondary school where we would go down to a primary school in the summer term and do lessons with the year six cohort that were coming up to the secondary school and that was really interesting to kind of do a couple of session of different sports, a bit of athletics a bit of throwing and catching and kind of almost not grading them but giving them a gold

silver and bronze label so you kind of knew when they were coming up its sometimes easier to teach them if they are of a similar ability. When I was at a secondary school in Newcastle, the first week of school the year seven pupils were in the swimming baths and they all lined up jumped in the deep end and if they got to the end in one piece they were the top set, if they got half way and splattered about they were in the middle set and if they sank straight to the bottom they were the bottom set and it was all based on swimming because you had to teach, you had three hundred kids, you had to teach them in ability in terms of their swimming ability which might not mean football or netball ability but for swimming lessons it was literally sink or swim. But I don't know how much time... I had to go in once ha, I had to dive in the deep end and save some poor lad who said he could not swim. Yeah that was a classic Baywatch moment erm but I think the secondary staff don't get as much opportunity to do that now to see them coming up. It's changing that focus of it being a competitive sport in secondary because they are looking for school teams from September.

R: Well that's pretty much everything I had in terms of the interview topics, I guess is there anything else you would add that you feel is relevant that we perhaps haven't covered or is that kind of everything ...

SSP1: No, I think that's it, I think that's kind of view we have at the minute. I think there definitely needs to be a slight change in focus at secondary level, but it will be interesting to see what your findings are.