

An investigation to explore how Gentle Teaching can be embedded and sustained in a school culture.

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A thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of Education  
Canterbury Christ Church University

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In partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for  
The Doctorate of Education

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By  
Paul Gorham  
January 2023

# **‘An investigation to explore how Gentle Teaching can be embedded and sustained in a school culture.’**

**Author:**

Paul Gorham

**Abstract:**

*This thesis explores a humanistic intervention called Gentle Teaching and how a special residential school has attempted to embed this into its school culture. This thesis explores a range of concepts and as such a conceptual framework has been created to link each of these areas together. The conceptual framework is based upon Gentle Teaching, School Culture and Symbolic Interaction. Symbolic Interaction has been employed as a lens to explore the concepts of truth through the understanding of various factors that influence the understanding that people have regarding the meaning objects, interactions and words have for us. This is true still for the unique pupils within the school who express their own understanding of the school culture and what this feels like to them.*

*This thesis has a series of sub-research questions to ascertain if Gentle Teaching is a natural ability or if this can be taught/learned, it also seeks to identify if the recipients of Gentle Teaching are aware of the process and finally, how Gentle Teaching can be embedded within a school culture. A qualitative methodological approach is employed to gather data from adult staff participants and the views and opinions from the students within the school. This thesis contributes to a modern exploration of the Gentle Teaching pedagogy. This thesis also gains insight into the views and opinions of an often overlooked and marginalised group of students and offers an illustration of what Gentle Teaching can offer to other schools as both a pedagogical and behavioural approach that could become an alternative to less humanistic approaches.*

**Keywords:**

Gentle Teaching; Symbolic Interaction; School Culture; Pedagogy; Behaviour; Qualitative Research; Humanistic Approaches.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1.0 Chapter Introduction**

This thesis is a critical reflection and exploration of a humanistic based intervention called Gentle Teaching (McGee et al., 1987a), accounting for research into how this has been implemented within a special residential school for students with autism, challenging behaviours and learning difficulties. The school where this research has been based appears to have incorporated Gentle Teaching into its culture, however, this thesis looks in-depth at what it means to base a whole school culture on a relatively unknown intervention developed over four decades ago (McGee et al., 1987a).

### **1.1 What is Gentle Teaching?**

Gentle Teaching is discussed in greater depth in chapter 2 with a review of the relevant and associated literature, however, a concise explanation at this stage of the thesis will offer greater clarity to the study.

Gentle Teaching has been referred to as “A value-based framework for helping others” (Steele, 1995, p7); “An empowering approach to challenging behaviour” (Aylott & Sell, 1997, p442); “A behavioural intervention approach (Polirstok et al., 2003, p147); and “A non-aversive method for reducing challenging behaviour” (Jones & McCaughey, 1992, p853). However, when exploring deeper into Gentle Teaching an essence of a pedagogical approach begins to emerge. There are

suggestions that “Gentle Teaching is a pedagogy of mutual liberation” (Start, 2008) and Siepkamp et al., (2018) suggest that Gentle Teaching is a pedagogy “for nurturing and educating children, with or without special needs” (p.4). This thesis discusses Gentle Teaching from both the perspective of pedagogy and the perspective of behavioural intervention.

Gentle Teaching was developed in the late 1980s out of a need for an alternative way to support those with cognitive disabilities (Siepkamp et al., 2018). There was a perception at the time that many existing techniques focused on aversive methods often to elicit the compliance of behaviour (McGee et al., 1987a). This coincided with an acceleration in the general shift in disability rights particularly for those diagnosed with cognitive difficulties including dementia, autism and learning difficulties (Hoge, 2019). Although literature on disability and acts of parliament have a wide historic scope for example 1571 with the “Oxford and Cambridge Act” right up to more recent literature including the SEND Review (2022), I refer to movement from the medical model of disability to the social model of disability period in the 1970s and 1980s. McGee, who at the time, worked as a psychologist at the University of Creighton in Nebraska, identified a common theme with the service users that he saw, this theme included isolation and neglect of human contact (McCrovitz, 2021).

Gentle Teaching had a premise that ‘relationship’ was key to engaging people in life and learning (McGee et al., 1987a/b; Hobbs, 1991; McCrovitz, 2021). Research suggested that it is a basic human need to belong to a group, to be engaged in meaningful activities and to love and to be loved (Maslow, 2013). This coincides with three values of Gentle Teaching namely “Bonding, Communication and Value” (McCaughey & Jones, 1992, p854). From this initial work the “Pillars”



of Gentle Teaching were formed, and the “tools” were created (McGee & Menlascino, 1991). These consisted of four keywords from which the humanistic intervention was formed and four associated tools that everyone has access to which would make a difference in the lives of the children and young people.

**Four Pillars of Gentle Teaching**

Safe  
Loving  
Loved  
Engaged

**Four Tools for Gentle Teaching**

Hands  
Eyes  
Words  
Presence

McGee et al., 1987a

The four pillars link with basic human needs. There is the need to feel safe, not just from physical harm, but this also considers the importance of having enough information about the day and support in understanding the interactions with others. There is the need to be able to love someone, this is not love in the romantic sense, but to find pleasure in the company of another and engage in reciprocal relationships and mutual activities. Part of this also includes the need to be able to accept the love of another, again this is from a stance of interaction, trust, and compassion. Finally, the fourth pillar includes the need to be engaged. This sense of engagement is attuned to having fulfilment in life, the being and doing of ordinary activities that are part and parcel of life. This fourth pillar seeks to prevent discrimination either conscious or unconscious (Jones et al., 2014; Milen and Nicholas, 2017), we often see low aspirations for the young people themselves (Gaona et al., 2020; Giri et al., 2022)

The four 'tools' of Gentle Teaching were devised to enable the pillars to be used more effectively. These tools are almost a series of instructions or behaviours that people can adopt to support those people with cognitive difficulties. For example, our hands are used only to share value and support; touch is always positive and never used to force compliance. The words we use are uplifting, encouraging and kind; never to chastise or rebuke. Our eyes are warm and full of smiles; not used to judge, criticise, or pity. Finally, our presence is attentive and responsive to the person, we are with the person because we want to be there, unconditionally (Hobs, 1991).

Chapter 2 discusses Gentle Teaching in greater depth and introduces examples of how these skills can be used as both a pedagogical approach and a behavioural intervention. This chapter will also look at the differences and similarities with other interventions through a review of relevant literature and it will also provide an in-depth analysis and critique of Gentle Teaching.

In addition to Gentle Teaching this thesis will also be informed by Symbolic Interactionism in the context of a theoretical lens through which my methodological foundations are laid, and notions of truth and knowledge expressed.

## **1.2 What is Symbolic Interaction?**

Symbolic Interactionism is discussed in greater depth in chapter 2 however a brief description will be shared now to allow the structure of this thesis to be understood. Symbolic Interactionism is a Sociological theory that provides a framework to help us understand how society is understood through interactions with each other. Symbolic Interactionists think that people use "language and significant symbols in their communication with others" (Carter & Fuller, 2015, p.1); it is the use of symbols that has elicited the use of this theory within my thesis as this links

considerably with how the student participants in this study communicate and understand the world. Symbolic Interactionism has three premises about how information is formed and understood.

“Premise 1 – Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things.

Premise 2 – The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society.

Premise 3 – The meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person dealing with the things he/she encounters.”

Blumer (1969) p.2

This surmises that objects, symbols, words, and interactions have different meanings for each person that experiences them. Our collective understanding is often similar because of our social interactions, but there can still be some complex views on how these various stimuli are perceived and understood. This is elegantly summarised by Redmond (2015): “Symbolic interactionism is essentially about how the presence of symbols is fundamental to the existence of societies, our self-concept, and our minds” (p.2). Redmond discusses more how essential Symbolic Interaction is within behaviourism, especially with the perception of the functions that behaviours can pose. Symbolic Interaction is discussed in greater depth in chapter 2 with a historic perception of the theory and its uses in past research and within this thesis. I am informed by Symbolic Interactionism as both a methodological approach and as a form of pedagogy. Symbolic Interactionism is often used as a qualitative research approach (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013) but its use as pedagogy is relatively new, however, with the nature and abilities of the student research participants in this study, it works very successfully in enabling them a form of expression. Symbolic Interactionism has also been referred to as an ethnographic

practise and as such it is usually categorised into four types; open overt, open covert, closed overt and closed covert (Bryman, 2016), which has been considered within my methodological approach.

The final component of my conceptual framework includes school culture. My research is an exploration into the development and creation of a school culture based upon Gentle Teaching principles as such I explore the subtle differences between the commonly used terms.

### **1.3 What is School Ethos?**

The terms ethos, climate and culture are often used interchangeably (Solvason, 2005, Glover & Coleman, 2005) although there are some slight differences in definition. Some research suggests that culture is a set of shared beliefs and values (Deal & Kennedy, 1982), it has also been referred to as traditions, norms, and unwritten rules (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Climate has been defined as a perceived feeling of the school environment (Moos, 1979), whereas ethos is suggested to be more about how people work together (Glover and Coleman, 2005). Graham (2012) highlights that “many educational policies link ethos with leadership and governance” (p.342), which could almost suggest two or more separate directions within schools. For example, ethos to guide the leadership and governance, culture to declare the ‘unwritten rules, traditions, and norms’ (ibid) and climate to explore the perceived feelings of the building itself.

A whole chapter of this thesis is dedicated to school ethos and culture as this has important connotations to my research questions. Chapter 2 explores research surrounding ethos, culture,

and climate with a focus on demonstrating what makes an effective ethos or culture, which will in turn enable us to understand Gentle Teaching as applied in school culture.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

My thesis title 'An investigation to explore how gentle teaching can be embedded and sustained in a school culture' has been developed to show one school's attempt at incorporating Gentle Teaching as a school culture.

I created a series of research questions to enable me to address my overarching notion.

- 1) Is Gentle Teaching a natural ability? Can it be taught/learned?
- 2) What are the perceptions of Gentle Teaching for the students within a school that uses this approach?
- 3) How can Gentle Teaching be embedded and sustained within this school's culture?

The core idea is to identify and acknowledge if such an intervention can be embedded and sustained within a school culture. It is not my intention to determine how relatively effective this culture is through comparison with other schools; however, I do explore opinions from both the student body and staff, and I also look to see how deeply within the school's policies and procedures this intervention has permeated.

In addition to this overarching notion, I have developed three sub research questions to focus and direct my line of questioning. The first question seeks to understand how Gentle Teaching is transferred from one person to another as there do not appear to be any published training manuals or guides. As discovered from the review of the literature surrounding Gentle Teaching in chapter 2, this transference of skills and knowledge has been via word of mouth through an international movement of talks, conferences, and workshops (Gentle Teaching International, No Date Given). This question has importance within this study as much of the research suggests

that many of the skills and attributes of Gentle Teaching are within us all, the perceived difficulty is becoming an agent of change (McGee et al., 1987a; Hobbs, 1991). If this is the case, the focus is more on demonstrating and guiding people to use these skills and less on teaching them the skills in the first place. In terms of this thesis, the question will seek to address how staff are empowered to use the skills needed to ensure the school culture continues to develop and progress. This thesis has been influenced by my own understanding and feelings as an employee at the school. From my experience within the school and from my own research into Gentle Teaching this approach has shown to make a difference in the lives of children and adults with complex needs. There are some criticisms of Gentle Teaching that are discussed in chapter 2 but as it would be difficult for me to be as critical as someone without these experiences, I feel that this needs to be explained to demonstrate an element of transparency.

The second question was designed to determine the students' views of Gentle Teaching and include their voices in the research. This happened to be an exciting part of this thesis as it made me think about ways to gain their views in a meaningful way that did not cause confusion or anxiety to the student participants. This also involved quite a novel way of gaining consent and sharing the findings from the study. This question determined how the students perceived Gentle Teaching. My initial thought before embarking on this research was that the students might have seen Gentle Teaching as just another intervention done to them or on them.

Gaining the views of the students was not only important as it ensured that my research approaches were in line with the Gentle Teaching tools and techniques (McGee et al., 1987b), but this also became a critical part of this study adding to the body of knowledge. The students

in this school with their specific barriers to both education and life, generally tend to be underrepresented in research of this nature (Romanowycz et al., 2021; Warner & Cusack, 2016<sup>1</sup>). Often the reason for this underrepresentation is eliciting responses from pre-verbal, non-verbal students or students who choose not to speak. I overcame this issue with the use of Symbolic Interactionism as a lens. This enabled me to identify notions of truth from the varied communications with the students based on how they perceive the world. This again adds significantly to the body of knowledge as my research has developed a conceptual framework informed by Symbolic Interactionism which becomes both a methodological approach and, in this case, a pedagogical approach. I describe and explain both Gentle Teaching and Symbolic Interactionism in more detail later in this chapter before exploring the associated and surrounding literature in chapter 2.

The third research question was designed to focus on Gentle Teaching embedded into the school's process, procedures, and policies. This entailed a deep analysis of the school's documents to identify how far this had permeated with the use of mixed methods for qualitative data collections including classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the staff, and analysis of the students' views through a creative art project that has been discussed in a group interview setting. These methods would demonstrate simple recall of policy and procedural information when used alone but when all these methods are used together, and the results are triangulated with will examples of policy and procedure in practice the suggestion that the policy is further developed is shown. The school had included Gentle Teaching in all the important

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<sup>1</sup> Warner & Cusack highlighted the funding put into Autism Research at £10.4M in 2016 which is lower than funding in neuro-typical research areas.

policies this suggested that the use of the intervention was more than an add-on to the provision. This also develops an argument about what Gentle Teaching is in terms of whether it is identified as a behavioural intervention or a pedagogical approach. The school uses other interventions including TEACCH (Mesibov et al. (2004), PECS (Bondy & Frost, 2002) and The Zones of Regulation (Kuypers, 2011), however, these are only mentioned as interventions used to support the students, whereas Gentle Teaching is incorporated into the school culture. The discussions with staff demonstrate a level of understanding of the policies and procedures which varies with the length of service, this demonstrates aspects of both enacted and espoused understandings.

The sub-research questions are as follows:

- 1) Is Gentle Teaching a natural ability? Can it be taught/learned?
- 2) What are the perceptions of Gentle Teaching for the students within a school that uses this approach?
- 3) How can Gentle Teaching be embedded and sustained within this school's culture?

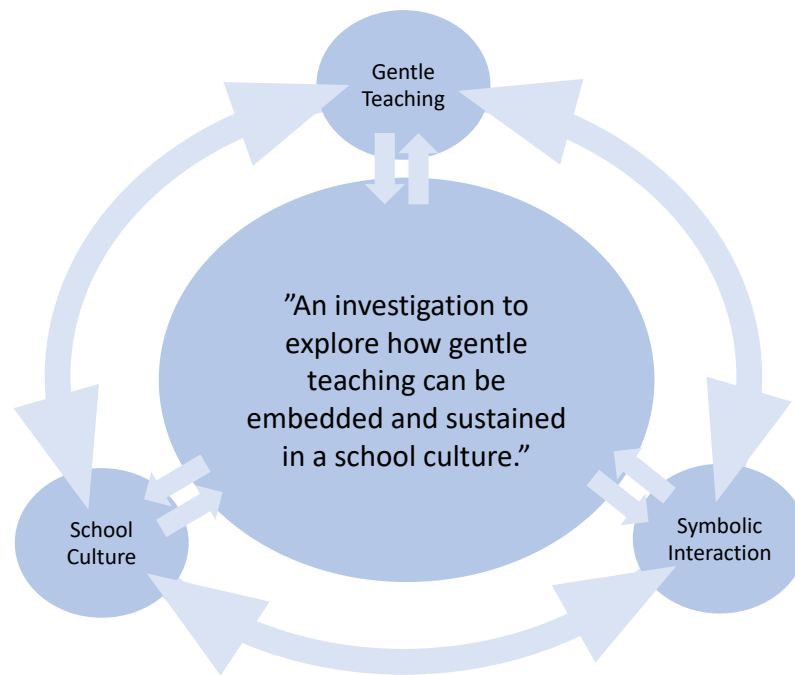
The following section will demonstrate how these research questions fit within my conceptual framework.

### **1.5 My Conceptual Framework**

As part of my thesis, I have developed a conceptual framework to display and explain how my research is organised and developed. There have been several versions of this visual representation culminating in the one you see in figure 1. I feel that this now shows that no single component is greater than the others and that no one component proceeded or precedes the other two. There is research to suggest that conceptual frameworks “are products of qualitative processes of theorization” (Jabareen, 2009, p.50), these are used to “describe or represent a set of interrelated concepts or ideas” (Ivey, 2015, p.145). This visual representation



clearly shows how my concepts are related and to add further clarity this section will demonstrate how the concepts relate to each other in greater detail.



*Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework*

Each of the components, while worthy of research, links to and builds upon each other within this thesis to strengthen and add clarity to the overarching research question. Each of the three components; School Ethos, Gentle Teaching and Symbolic Interactionism, could be used independently of the others to address the overarching questions, but I feel that this mixing and merging will offer a cross-referencing and triangulation effect. Varpio et al. (2020), give a slightly different definition to the term 'Conceptual Framework', they suggest that this is more of a "justification for why a study should be conducted" (p.990). They highlight three conditions, including, what is already known about the topic; identifying gaps in the phenomenon and outlining the methodological process that will be involved. This alternative viewpoint continues

to connect with my study as the literature review is based on all three components of the study which has enabled me to demonstrate what is already known about the three topics. The research question demonstrates a gap in understanding surrounding this intervention, and the methodological perspectives are also contained within the element that focuses on Symbolic Interactionism and within my methodology chapter.

### **1.6 Gentle Teaching link with Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic Interaction is mentioned only once in the literature I have explored surrounding Gentle Teaching (McCrovitz, 2021). I had already begun to connect Gentle Teaching and Symbolic Interactionism when I first embarked on this research path from my understanding of both the topics. An example of this in practice could be the meaning that some people who have experienced aversive behavioural modification treatment attribute to physical support as negative. By aversive behavioural modification treatment, I mean any form of punishment or negative conditioning (Skinner, 1938). This is a fair assumption as much of the literature suggests physical support being used to force compliance and in extreme situations, as a form of punishment (McGee et al., 1987a). In Gentle Teaching, new neuro-models are being developed to show that physical touch is a positive gesture (McGee, 1999). Guided through a Symbolic Interactionism lens, we can see new meanings are given to stimuli that link with the four pillars and subsequently the four tools of Gentle Teaching (see appendix XXXIV). For example, they will begin to associate hands and physical touch with respect, guidance and even affection.

### **1.7 Gentle Teaching link with School Culture**

As discussed, Gentle Teaching is both a behavioural intervention and more importantly it is a pedagogy of “liberation” (ibid). The pillars and tools enable this to be accessible to those who want to support other humans with complex needs. Gentle Teaching has been described as a “cultural change” (McGee et al., 1987a, p.37) which, if possible, would make an excellent nurturing ethos to be adopted by schools and care institutes.

### **1.8 School Culture link with Symbolic Interactionism**

The link between School Ethos and Symbolic Interactionism can be multifaceted; this thesis addresses not just our understanding of a school ethos but also how this is perceived by the students themselves. Again, by applying a Symbolic Interactionist lens, we bring influence from previous experiences and social interactions to enable us to understand what is meant by the term ethos. This should be very different for the students in the school due to the levels of social interactions they have. What I am trying to convey is that not all participants within this study understand school ethos in the same way which is why the views and opinions of the students are fundamental to this work. Where some research would have us believe that ethos and culture are usually used synonymously and often concerning a perceived feeling (Solvason, 2005), it would support a suggestion that the meanings attributed to this ‘feeling’ also change depending on how involved the person attempting to understand this is.

## **1.9 Researcher Positionality**

This thesis is practitioner-based research in so much as the problems identified for research arise from issues within the practice and as a researcher, I have been within the field observing, questioning, and finding patterns. Murray and Lawrence (2010) identify four characteristics within Practitioner-Based research:

- 1) The problem or concern derives from and informs the concerns of the educators.
- 2) Enquiries are led by discussion with practitioners.
- 3) Practitioners are from a range of methodological and theoretical perspectives.
- 4) The process of enquiry leads to the development of technical competence.

Murray & Lawrence (2010) pp.9-10.

These four premises are demonstrated through this thesis, for example, the issue under investigation will directly inform those practising within the school. The staff (including myself) and the students are involved in the discussions and a range of approaches can be used to explore if Gentle Teaching can be implemented and sustained within a school culture and the result is the development of technical ability and knowledge.

There is evidence to suggest that qualitative research tends to often reflect the personal values of a researcher, it is sometimes an unconscious process through the analysis of data and the related development of ideas (Dean et al., 2018). However, there are also suggestions that the same researcher might explore data differently dependent upon mood and even time of the day (ibid).

I have approached this thesis with the belief that knowledge or truth is created through a series of meanings that are associated with everyday objects, actions, or interactions. I also believe

that this knowledge or truth does develop, grow, and change based upon the acquisition of new meanings or through shared adaptations of meanings through the social process. My positionality is thus informed by Symbolic Interactionism. However, as to my stance from either 'insider' or 'outsider' positionality, I would argue that I am approaching this from both stances, interchanging with various aspects of my research. There is research that suggests that 'insider' or 'outsider' when viewed as opposites is a made-up construct (Herod, 1999). There is much debate about this dichotomy however Holmes (2020) is concerned with "how it is possible to present information accurately and truthfully" (p.5). The notion of truth is particularly interesting in this thesis as with the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, the understanding of truth is based upon the meaning ascribed to something. This thesis will provide examples and evidence to build perceptions of how the information has been presented and an interpretation of what it means.

### **1.10 Gentle Teaching, the School and Me**

The reader needs to understand the connections that I have with both the school and Gentle Teaching; this will enable me to explain how I have moved from a school leader to a researcher to enable this thesis to be completed. According to Murray and Lawrence (2010, p.43) "declaration of known interests" is one of the control measures that can reduce bias in a practitioner-based enquiry such as this. While it is impractical to suggest that all bias can be removed from a study, especially a qualitative study which often relies on discursive comments over control variables; by the nature of my presence within the research, bias is implied and has been addressed and valued as part of the research process and it is suggested to be an integral part of qualitative research (Galdas, 2017).

It is important to talk about the school, as it is the uniqueness of this educational establishment and therefore the research in this unique setting that is one aspect of my contribution to the body of knowledge. For example, the school is a local authority maintained out of the borough educational establishment and offers a range of both day placements and residential placements, including a children's home. It is a special school for children and young people with some very complex needs including autism, learning difficulties and severe challenging behaviour. It is a regional school offering placements for approximately 26 different local authorities from across the country. The school has received a range of accolades from Ofsted (2009, 2013, 2018, 2021) to EFQM (European Framework for Quality Management), from liP (Investors in People) to UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) and is a recognised centre for Communication and Interaction through SSAT) (The Schools, Students and Teachers network).

This is a list of attributes which is by no means exhaustive; the point which I am hoping to make is that there are very few<sup>2</sup> schools like this in the country. By this I aim to highlight the physical attributes which make this school different rather than providing a non-critical reflection about how it feels to work in this establishment. Where some schools have similarities in the provision they offer this school tends to enrol students with needs so challenging that a secure hospital provision is the next and only alternative placement. This school actively seeks to support children and young people to come out of hospital provision back into schools through the

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<sup>2</sup> Only 10 results were shown when selecting the following filters: local authority maintained, special school, children's home, ASD, and Outstanding Ofsted rating. Using the Gov.uk school search website.

nurturing approaches it provides. This school also differs in terms of the ‘feeling’ one might have when entering the building. It has often been said that it feels like a family (Ofsted, 2009).

### **1.11 My Contribution to the body of Knowledge**

I argue that I have contributed to the body of knowledge in four specific ways. Firstly, my thesis explores some relatively unexplored topics both in terms of the specific nature of the needs represented by my participants and through the exploration of an intervention that has not been researched in much depth since its conception. Secondly, I feel that my thesis employs the lens of Symbolic Interactionism uniquely and insightfully. This is used as both a theoretical lens and in the case of this thesis, a pedagogical approach.

More specifically, this thesis provides insights to Gentle Teaching as both a natural skill that can be possessed by people but also that there are some skills and techniques that can be taught. Gentle Teaching can be seen as a value-based approach and while I believe that some people are naturally more caring, compassionate and rights driven than others, this does not suggest that people are unable to change. Gentle Teaching is described as having “a focus on a mutual change process” (Kress, 2017, p.47) which asks for the teacher to change to meet the needs of the students which can be a difficult concept for some people to grasp.

This thesis also provides insight into how the often-marginalised voices of students with multiple challenges and severe needs can be heard through a combination of Gentle Teaching and Symbolic Interactionism that goes much further than the Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP)

process in place presently. The processes involved with Gentle Teaching provides a platform for communication and expression from the students with cognitive disabilities and Symbolic Interactionism provides a process for analysing this expression.

This thesis demonstrates insights into how the lens of Symbolic Interactionism can be used uniquely as both a theoretical and methodological lens and a pedagogical approach that can be used in some complex educational cultures. This will enable others to analyse their own school cultures through Symbolic Interactionism as a tool for organising the research methods. This will also enable the results to be explored in terms of the truth represented when a Symbolic Interactionist lens is used.

Finally, this thesis provides an exploration and an illustration of what Gentle Teaching can offer and how it can be embedded into a special school culture in terms of an alternative to behaviourist approaches. There are examples within this thesis that could be taken to influence other schools' cultural development to enable the building of a model of education that is built upon mutual trust, mutual respect and gentleness that results in a feeling of safety not just for the students but all staff and visitors.



## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.0 Literature Review Introduction

In this literature review, I explore and convey the importance of the main concepts within my research focus. This is broken down into three elements that feature most extensively within my research. These are Gentle Teaching, Symbolic Interactionism and School Ethos. Explicit links are made that join together Gentle Teaching, Symbolic Interactionism and School Ethos. For this thesis, the three elements are inseparable. These form a conceptual map that, allows each part to build upon one another, strengthening the research, then, each element is addressed in turn, beginning with an in-depth exploratory review of Gentle Teaching.

This section aims to provide the reader with a chronological background of Gentle Teaching. This is furthered with an analytical perspective on Gentle Teaching to focus on the theoretical underpinning and reasons for its creation. For this study, Gentle Teaching will be viewed as a pedagogy. The basis for this stems from Watkins and Mortimore (1999, p.3) who consider pedagogy as “the conscious activity of one person designed to enhance the learning in another”. As described in the introductory chapter, Gentle Teaching enables people to build a series of techniques, skills and methods to teach adults and young people with cognitive disabilities; in some cases, this includes associated behaviours that challenge. This chapter draws assumptions from the literature on how Gentle Teaching differs from other pedagogy and how similarities with other approaches have been adapted to meet potential gaps in provision.

## Gentle Teaching

### 2.1.1 Gentle Teaching: the early years

Gentle Teaching (GT) was founded in 1987 as an approach to help those with Challenging Behaviour associated with intellectual or cognitive disabilities (McGee et al., 1987a). It is considered a method for “reducing challenging behaviours” which then enables the development of “bonding and interdependence’ through ‘gentleness, respect and solidarity” as suggested by McCaughey and Jones (1992, p.7). This definition, although it might give a clear objective to the outcomes of Gentle Teaching, does very little to provide us with the theoretical underpinnings for the method. Research from Steele (1995) tends to focus more on Gentle Teaching as a behaviour management approach which would lead us to look towards a behaviourist underpinning of Gentle Teaching. As the founders of Gentle Teaching all had backgrounds in behaviourism in various institutions in the United States of America (McGee et al. 1987a) I decided to add an exploration of the links between Gentle Teaching and behaviourism to the lines of enquiry within my research to further address these areas.

The four founders of this pedagogy comprised John McGee who worked with children and adults with severe challenging behaviours at the University of Nebraska Medical Centre, Frank Menolascino who was a professor of Psychiatry and Paediatrics at the University of Nebraska College of Medicine, Daniel Hobbs who was a special education teacher for children and adults with multiple disabilities, also at the University of Nebraska Medical Centre and Paul Menousek, who was an Assistant Professor of Medical Psychology at the University of Nebraska Medical Centre (McGee et al., 1978a). These founders were looking for an alternative process or method

for supporting those individuals with whom they worked and with whom they served that was not based upon the "punishment practices prevalent in caring and teaching" (ibid, p.21.) that had been witnessed being used for these individuals.

The term 'punishment practices' seems alarming, especially in the context of modern care and teaching institutes, but there were various practices that would be considered punishment both by today's standards as well as some in the late 1980s. McGee et al. refer to the use of "cattle prods and stun guns" as the most severe practices but they also address the use of "time-out, overcorrection and spraying ammonia in a person's face" (1987a, p.21). With the proponents of Gentle Teaching strongly opposed to practices that could be seen as a punishment, it could be assumed that this was the reason why alternative practices were developed. This does not suggest Gentle Teaching's departure from behaviourism, as behaviourism itself is not built entirely or exclusively upon punishment. McGee et al. merely attempt to make a strong statement to disassociate themselves from what they perceive as a movement known to include practices that they consider punitive. McGee et al. suggest that punishment is "incoherent and inconsistent" with the ethical values that many of us have, "it places technology above our traditional convictions and dehumanizes both the caregiver and the person with special needs" (1987a, p.162).

It is appropriate to locate Gentle Teaching within a behaviourist episteme as it shares some similar themes, for example, reward and sanction are mentioned in both behaviourism (Skinner, 1985) and Gentle Teaching (McGee et al., 1987a). However, in Gentle Teaching, the former is preferred in terms of the reward naturally inherent in human interactions and there is no or little

mention of sanctions. Skinner (1985), often cited on the topic of behaviour, makes an interesting comparison between cognition and behaviour. He suggests that cognitively, behaviour begins with the person; they think then act, which suggests that the action is led by external or internal stimuli of some kind. Behaviourists look at “the antecedents in the environment” supporting the notion that the “environment selects the behaviour” (Skinner, 1985, p.291). Gentle Teaching, as explained later in this chapter, puts some impetus on environmental management to reduce behaviours that challenge.

Gentle Teaching is a behaviourist approach developed for the shift in paradigm which enables it to fit with current trends. For example, Jones and McCaughey (1992) report that there have been intense debates over the years “concerning the ethical, moral, legal and philosophical issues concerning the use of aversive procedures” (p.853). Gentle Teaching could be this argument for change.

Originally defined as ‘a non-aversive behavioural intervention strategy’, Gentle Teaching was said to employ an ‘ignore-redirect-reward model’, reported as a result of a study of ‘73 people over five years’ (McGee et al, 1987a). There is a distinct focus on relationship development and ‘unconditional value sharing’; McGee suggests that:

“Unlike contingent value-giving, where the person has to earn the reward, unconditional value-giving is when carers use words, touch and gestures unconditionally to praise and uplift the person with severe behavioural problems”.  
(McGee 1990, p.68).

Gentle Teaching was seen as an alternative option to the ‘punishment practices’ that were used in the United States of America and increasingly in Europe. McGee, often the spokesperson for

the movement, described Gentle Teaching as, “based on a posture that centres itself on the mutual liberation and humanization of all persons”. He continues to describe the pedagogy as one of “human solidarity that leads caregivers to teach bonding to those who attempt to distance themselves from meaningful human interactions” (McGee et al. 1987a, p.18).

It would be prudent to explore the purpose of Gentle Teaching from an educational perspective to ascertain if this approach will enable learners to meet age-related expectations or if it should be used as a social inclusion tool. The vast majority of the Gentle Teaching literature discusses the main principles of social change, community inclusion and relationship development (McGee, Menolascino, Hobbs & Menousek, 1987; McGee, Menousek & Hobbs, 1987; Conneally, 1989; McGee & Gonzalez, 1990; McCaughey & Jones, 1992; McGee, 1992; Steele, 1995; Webber, 1995; van de Siepkamp, 2010). There is little or no mention of academic progression save for skills linked to participation, engagement and bonding. Gentle Teaching is focused on “the reciprocal teaching-learning process rather than the mere elimination of disruptive or destructive behaviours” (McGee et al. 1987a, p.113). Hobbs (1992) offers some clarity with regards to the nature of education as a result of Gentle Teaching. He talks about “teaching” not from an educational perspective associated purely with the classroom environment, but “the process of teaching we are engaged in all the time” (ibid, 1992, p.8). There is a link between behaviour and learning which has featured highly in the past with papers like the Steer report that suggests “the quality of learning, teaching and behaviour in schools are inseparable” (Steer, 2009, p.34). If on this premise, behaviour is inseparable from learning then Gentle Teaching as a behavioural tool will also support the development of learning, not as a curriculum replacement but more as an underlying ethos or approach to interactions.

### **2.1.2 Gentle Teaching and the relationship to behaviourism**

In one article published in 1989, we can see from the author's opinion that Gentle Teaching attempts to distance itself from behaviourism. Connelly reports that McGee suggested "behaviourism represents a carrot and stick philosophy of control" and that "people are only rewarded for their deeds or actions [within behaviourism]" (Connelly, 1989, no page numbers). At one-point McGee is reported to have said that "behaviourism is harmful both because of its practices and its underlying philosophy" (ibid). With his negative opinion on behaviourism, one can see why he championed a new philosophical approach to behaviour management and in turn relationship building.

This disdain for behaviourism is notable in the conflict between Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) and Gentle Teaching (GT) over the years. There is a period in the early 1990s when proponents for both Applied Behaviour Analysis and Gentle Teaching would pitch debates and arguments in academic journals. McGee openly disassociates himself and Gentle Teaching away from behaviourism and shows disapproval of the non-humanistic approaches to challenging behaviour with the suggestion of alternative interventions like Gentle Teaching (McGee et al., 1987a).

There are disagreements between Gentle Teaching and Applied Behaviour Analysis. Supporting literature suggests that the "antagonists of behavior analysis have themselves been keen behavior modifiers" (Cuvo, 1992, p.873), suggesting that some elements of Gentle Teaching have in the past been aversive (ibid), however, this could be as tenuous as using past research on behaviourism to act as a starting point. The conflict between Applied Behaviour Analysis and

Gentle Teaching increased with each suggesting the other employs more aversive approaches (Jones and McCaughey, 1992). The argument given by Jones and McCaughey is based upon the tenuous difference in their opinions of aversive treatment. In respect of Gentle Teaching, Jones and McCaughey suggest that often interaction itself can cause self-injurious behaviours to be displayed which they call aversive, but they make no distinction between this and purposeful aversive approaches that include restraint or punishment (ibid).

Lovaas, on the other hand, is usually “synonymous with applied behavior analysis” (Smith and Eikeseth, 2011, p.375) is reported to have ‘emphasized positive reinforcement’ but also on rare occasions employed more aversive approaches including “electric shock” and “slaps on the thigh” (ibid, p. 376). It can be seen why McGee et al. (1978a) tried so hard to separate themselves, especially seeing that Lovaas was open with the interventions that he applied concerning behavioural modification.

For an intervention or movement that attempts to distance itself from the general view of behaviourism, they weaken its arguments when they openly refer to the type of operant conditioning in terms of 'reinforcers'. McGee states that "the first pedagogical objective in GT is reward teaching systematically and consciously, teaching the goodness and reinforcing power inherent in verbal and tactile praise" (McGee, 1985, p.9). Gentle Teaching has attempted to distance itself from Applied Behaviour Analysis rather than behaviourism in general. Evidence of this can be seen in how distinct or dissimilar the component features of Gentle Teaching are to other behaviourist interventions commonly used. This highlights some gaps in the current interventions that have caused a new approach to be developed. It also demonstrates how some

of the social changes in the perception of disability prompted the move from aversive to non-aversive approaches.

There have been more modern changes in how students that exhibit challenging behaviours are supported, although some of these demonstrate how quickly policy changes within education. For example, one advice document from the Department for Education highlights the use of "seclusion and isolation rooms" (DfE, 2016, p.12), however, the tone has changed with a guidance document that now indicates that "<isolation> should only be considered in exceptional circumstances" (Ofsted, 2021, p.10). There are some discrepancies within the policies themselves, the Children's Home Standards (2015) elaborates in greater detail about restrictive practices including, physical, chemical, and environmental restrictions. There is an underlying suggestion that these should not be used unless necessary and if they are used then records must be kept. The Children's Home Standards (DfE 2015), predate the Ofsted guidance document however it appears that there is a stronger stance within the Children's Homes Standards due to the deprivation of liberties that children could face having greater impact within a home environment over an educational establishment. There are some concerns with these documents, for example, the DfE 2016 advice is written for mainstream schools although it does specifically mention Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Special Schools, the emphasis is focused on "sanction" (ibid, p8.) and has no mention of behaviour as a form of communication. On the other hand, the Ofsted (2021) guidance does mention communication as a function of behaviour and this guidance also refers specifically to "children's liberty" (p.7) and the "European Convention on Human Rights" (p.11). It appears that Gentle Teaching held the rights and liberties of children



and adults with cognitive disabilities as a priority well before policies were developed with similar areas of focus.

### **2.1.3 How Distinctive is Gentle Teaching and from What is it Distinct?**

I have addressed Gentle Teaching in terms of how it is seen within behaviourism and educational pedagogy. It is important to identify the level of distinction between the approaches that are already being used for pedagogy before I can say that Gentle Teaching was developed due to a lack of alternatives or to fill a niche in provision. In the following section, I analyse critically the distinctiveness of Gentle Teaching.

For this process to be effective, differences and similarities of other pedagogical approaches have been critically analysed to evidence the purpose of the development of Gentle Teaching. Gentle Teaching has some similarities with other approaches to pedagogy which includes behaviour management and, at its most fundamental level, communication development. For example, Discrete Trial Training (DTT) shares several characteristics with Gentle Teaching including techniques designed to skill the teacher in delivering accurate and understandable “prompts, cues and responses” (Smith, 2001, p.86). The distinction between these two approaches is in the behaviourist approach (operant conditioning) to correct wrong responses. Both DTT and GT allow for ‘consequences’ and reinforcers. Gentle Teaching focuses this reinforcement on positive reward through human interaction whereas Discrete Trial Training invokes the removal of that interaction through looking away from the participant and the “removal of teaching materials” (ibid). There is an element of “ignoring <behaviours>” in Gentle Teaching, but this is defined as ignoring the negative action or behaviour, not the learner and therefore not the interaction

between caregiver and care receiver (McGee et al, 1987a, p.89). The distinction between the two, in this case, is the prominence of human interactions as part of the pedagogical process.

The term consequence is a word that many people associate with “negative or aversive stimuli” (Rabideau et al., 2018, p.42), however, the authors defend the use of this term concerning DTT by referring to consequence as “the outcome or feedback immediately following the behaviour” (ibid, p42). Whichever way this term has been explained, it remains a negative response to the actions of a learner. It is this negativity that provides the distinction between DTT and GT. In Gentle Teaching, there is a necessity to communicate feelings of “acceptance, affection, tolerance, warmth and respect” (McGee et al., 1987a, p.40) which is not apparent in the DTT approach.

Other interventions around the same time include, but are not limited to, the following: Lovaas Model (Lovaas, 1987), Treatment and Educating of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) (Mesibov et al., 2004), Functional Communication Training (FCT) (Carr and Durand, 1985), Intensive Interaction (Nind and Hewett 2001), Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) (Frost and Bondy, 1994) and, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) (Fossett and Mirenda, 2007). It is relevant to compare similar interventions, particularly ABA as there is research separating both ABA and Gentle Teaching which adds to the argument on the distinctiveness of Gentle Teaching. Some of these interventions are seen as part of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) or at least feature within the ABA approach. Discrete Trial Training is suggested to be a “commonly used procedure in ABA”

(Rabideau et al. 2018, p.35) whereas Lovaas the developer of the Lovaas program employs the ABA principles and techniques as part of his program (Lovaas Institute, No Date).

Similarly, TEACCH shares some of these main principles. Particularly, the close working relationships between parents and carers, adapting the intervention to meet the needs of the individuals and making use of structured teaching sessions (Van Bourgondien and Schopler, 1996). Three factors are included in the TEACCH principles, “organization of the physical environment, arrangement of activities and organization of the materials” (Virues-Ortega et al., 2013, p.941), which bear striking similarities with the Gentle Teaching techniques, but with slightly different definitions.

According to Frost and Bondy (2001; 2002), Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is an instructional system, which aids the teaching of communication through the exchange of graphic picture symbols. The system was developed to help children to communicate their needs by making requests and to develop some conversational language in children with delayed or absent speech. Although widely used in many schools for children and adolescents with communication needs there is “limited knowledge or research into its efficacy” (Frost & Bondy, 1994, p.16). Two suggestions for this limited research include the notion that many studies that were based on participants' infancy were not repeated in older children and that sample sizes were considered small (Tincani et al. 2006).

There are six phases in the PECS intervention, phase one where children are taught to “initiate communication”, phase two “expands the use of pictures”, phase three “mak[ing] specific choices”, and phase four, which entails “build[ing] simple sentences”, phase five “answer[ing]

questions”, and finally, phase six learning to “comment about items and activities”. (Andersen, 2010, p.73). These phases are hierarchical, and it is expected that children will progress through the system at their own pace once they have mastered each phase. However, Andersen does highlight that this approach does not work for everybody, and it has limitations that depend on adults ensuring that the correct symbols are contained within the communication books.

PECS (Frost and Bondy, 2001) is relevant in terms of Gentle Teaching as the use of visual systems is given high regard. Hobbs illustrates various ways to “map out life’s events” and he makes specific reference to the use of “graphic pictures, photographs [sic], words and symbols” (Hobbs, 1991, p.8). Although there is an expectation to provide clear expectations for the learners, through a Gentle Teaching approach, the emphasis is down to the teacher in terms of preparation and use of visual resources, whereas in PECS the responsibility lies with the learner to take responsibility for the use of the visuals. In PECS it is expected that the young person will select symbols by removing them and then hand them to an adult as a process of developing requesting language (Frost and Bondy, 2001). In Gentle Teaching, the visuals represent time, direction and order equally as a form of communication, but there is no expectation that the learner will develop speech as a result of these symbols (McGee, et al. 1987a).

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) which includes PECS is an approach that is continuing to develop with the changes in technology. AAC is categorised as:

“Aided (e.g. voice output communication aids (VOCA), also known as speech generating devices (SGD) and light tech devices such as symbols boards) and unaided (e.g. manual sign systems). Aided communication systems can be further separated into those where communication is dependent on the selection (of for example a symbol on a board) and exchange-based systems where symbols are given to a communicative partner, an act considered functionally equivalent to speaking a word or phrase”.

(Sigafos et al. 2017 p.72.)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication is still in a state of constant change: with the adapting and development of alternative communication tools and methods based on technological progress, its conception is more recent than Gentle Teaching. However, AAC continues to work with the Gentle Teaching principles, values, and techniques. This cannot be linked to supportive literature due to the lack of current up-to-date information or studies into the use of Gentle Teaching, but it is surmised that these newer and more varied forms of communication would successfully lend themselves to supporting the transference of information about daily life and expectations for the recipients of Gentle Teaching.

Intensive Interaction is another intervention worthy of exploration to distinguish how it differs from Gentle Teaching. Intensive Interaction (II) “is a technique of communication with people who do not use words” (Hutchinson & Bodicoat, 2015, p.437). This technique employs a series of actions that are designed to develop interactive qualities through the use of eye contact, facial expressions, vocal mirroring and joint focus of activities (Nind & Hewett, 2001). Like Gentle Teaching, Intensive Interaction is individually tailored to the children or learners and focuses on developing mutual enjoyment between the facilitator and child (Nind & Hewett, 1994). The goals of both are different in terms of their principal actions. While Gentle Teaching holds human interactions at the very heart of its purpose and its “goal is to teach bonding” (McGee et al., 1987a, p.16), the process through which this is established and developed is very different. Gentle Teachers might employ some Intensive Interaction techniques to begin to establish the connection with the learner, but the purpose is to teach that human interaction is good, safe and mutually rewarding. Intensive Interaction in itself could go some way to develop this, although

it is participation in society and a meaningful flow of life that separates the two distinct approaches. Whereas with Intensive Interaction the teacher steps into the learner's world (Hewett, 2012), in Gentle Teaching, the learner is brought into the world and society (Hobbs, 1991).

Gentle Teaching talks about models of interaction, referring to the "educational model" and the "clinical model" (McGee et al., 1987a, p.112). The goals referenced in the educational model according to McGee et al. (ibid) include the "accumulation of skills and independent functioning" which are more observable within the Intensive Interaction pedagogy. However Gentle Teaching is not positioned within either of these models, instead, the "Interactional Model" is presented. Within this model, the goals of "reward, equity, bonding and interdependence" (ibid) are identified. On this basis alone the two approaches are distinct from each other.

Functional Communication Training (FCT) is a method within the field of Applied Behaviour Analysis (Tiger et al. 2008) and it has features that resemble some of those within Gentle Teaching. The intervention itself is designed to allow "underlying causes of behavior to be identified and replace this behavior with some form of appropriate communication skill" (Battagila, 2017, p. 32). For example, if a child without functional language screams during some planned educational activity, the assessment would be designed to determine the function of the scream. If the function is determined to be for 'escape' or for the want of a better expression, 'seeking the end of the activity', then the practitioner can teach the young person to say 'finished', or in the case of those without speech, to touch-point a 'finish' symbol.

This example of FCT is not explicitly referred to in Gentle Teaching in the same terms but it is considered and used under the term 'Errorless Learning'. This 'errorless learning' serves to 'facilitate participation, decrease frustration and highlight value-giving' (McGee and Menolascino, 1991). Following the principles, values and techniques in Gentle Teaching will enable the learners to develop functional ways to communicate that are based on mutually trusting relationships. Gentle Teaching employs a technique called 'ignore, redirect, reward'. This is designed to ignore problematic behaviour to avoid giving it value and redirect to a more suitable and socially acceptable alternative. It is said that these components can only be used in conjunction with each other and not separately. The fundamental principle is to "ignore and redirect' so that 'reward' can be given" (McGee et al., 1987a, p.87).

The major and discernible difference between Gentle Teaching in comparison to the other approaches discussed is the change in social perspectives on the acceptable treatment of others. The difference could be as simple as the disapproval of punishment. Punishment practices were seen by the proponents of Gentle Teaching as any form of aversive approach that did not put the individual at the very centre of the work.

"It is a pedagogical process that rejects cruel and cold practices and focuses on teaching the value inherent in human presence, human interactions, and human reward. It recognizes that all teaching is a community act. If we punish one person, we punish all; if we start to create justice for one, we start to create it for all."

McGee, (1987a), p11.

In the original literature by the four developers, there is a major focus on the goals of Gentle Teaching; one of these that permeates this, and other literature is the drive to "teach bonding". McGee et al. (1987a, p.15) highlight the importance of developing a sense of bonding as they

suggest that "bonding either has never existed or has been diminished for any number of personal, social or psychological reasons". It is, therefore, necessary for the Gentle Teacher to demonstrate the intrinsic reward of human interaction and interdependence.

There are no concrete connections between Gentle Teaching and similar interventions, not enough to safely suggest that Gentle Teaching was developed to replace these or in fact to fill a gap in provision. It is, however, reasonable to suggest from this review that Gentle Teaching does contain many components of other practices and interventions. It is the goal of human interaction and interdependence that appears to make that distinction between Gentle Teaching and other similar methods of the time.

This leads the research to focus on the changes in culture and society to provide a rationale for the creation of a separate, although not completely distinctive, pedagogical approach to support and aid these learners. The next section will analyse these concepts in greater detail.

#### **2.1.4 Gentle Teaching: Cultural Perspectives and Differences**

It is necessary to investigate cultural perspectives that have been factors in the development of Gentle Teaching. I further focus on how those cultural differences have caused Gentle Teaching as it was known to develop and change as it was introduced into Europe and specifically within the United Kingdom. An in-depth analysis of the differences in general cultural perspectives between the United Kingdom and the United States of America would be a vast endeavour, it would possibly be more practical and relevant to focus on the cultural differences concerning how these nations perceive disability, particularly disability within education provision. Jones suggests



that “school systems were founded as part of a process of nation-building” (2010, p.43), which offers a good reason to focus the review of cultural perspectives concerning the topic of education systems.

There is research to suggest that there are at least nine different views or models of disability, these include:

“The Moral or Religious Model, The Medical Model, The Social Model, The identity Model, The Human Rights Model, The Cultural Model, The Economic Model, The Charity Model, and The Limits Model”.

Retief and Letsosa, 2018, pp.2-8.

Within this section, I will look at two models of disability: the medical model and the social model.

I focus on these two models as I feel the dichotomy between these two models is the greatest and most apparent with reference often made to their "opposed views" (Goldiner, 2022, p2).

Petasis (2019), alludes that the medical model of disability was the predecessor of the social model, although he also suggests that a “biopsychosocial model” (p.42) is also in existence, albeit

a mixture of both the medical and social models. These will be defined to provide a foundation for the understanding of how cultural differences have been influenced by perceptions of

disability. The social model of disability focuses on both environmental and social barriers that exclude disabled people from mainstream society, separating impairments from disabilities.

Disability is a social construction whereas impairment is a ‘biological characteristic of the body or mind’ (MacKay, 2002, p.161). The medical model tends to look at the person in terms of a deficit

or removing the cause of or fixing the impairment (Bingham et al. 2013). These will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter, but it is important to address how these terms will be used at

this stage.

I will endeavour to identify relevant differences in educational or related social care changes between the two nations by addressing the most prominent developments in policy from the period when Gentle Teaching was being developed ending with current literature. The literature on Gentle Teaching came to light in 1987 however, Rodgers (1975) talks about 'Empathic' relationships and mentions listening attentively to his clients as an alternative and new process to those already established for psychotherapy purposes. He mentions this in terms of a new approach called "Rankian Training" (ibid, p.2). This could potentially be a very early movement that lead to Gentle Teaching as there are some very close resemblances and nuances, particularly with the notion of using relationships between the caregiver and the client to unlearn destructive behaviours. The Rank theory is said to be based on "client-centred therapeutic relationship, present-moment interactions, process and time limits" (Stein, 2010, p.129) as a method for social work. Although Rank's ideas did not seem to be widely accepted in America although he was credited as the "father of humanistic psychology and psychotherapy" (Herink & Herink, 2015, p.1506). Rank is said to have influenced Rodgers, particularly the notion of "therapeutic relationship" (de Carvalho, 1999, p.132) which has some close links with parts of what Gentle Teaching looks like now. There appear to be no citations of Rodgers in the core literature surrounding Gentle Teaching despite there being some very strong links with the themes. It could be that Gentle Teaching happened to develop around the same time as Rodger's developments within psychotherapy which would fit with the perspective changes in disability rights.

Hurst (2003) suggests that there were "no organized disability rights movements, either at the international level or the national level" in place before 1980 (p.572). This was despite the UN

Declaration of Mentally Retarded Persons in 1971 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons in 1975. However, she does identify that some medical and rehabilitation establishments were concerned with the provision of care for those with disabilities and particular impairments. Hurst continues to suggest that momentum had been growing among people with various impairments since the 1960s but the Disability Rights Movement was suggested to be born from this, and in the USA “the concept of Independent Living” (p.572) began to grow in 1970. Scotch (1989) suggested that by the late 1980s "over 300 centres had been established in the United States" (p.394), as part of the independent living movement. This period directly links with the beginning of the use of Gentle Teaching which at that time was based within institutions like hospitals and rehabilitation centres with an emphasis on teaching and demonstrating how to support these individuals to lead more independent lives (McGee et al., 1987a).

This literature demonstrates a positive correlation between the Disability Rights Movement in the United States of America and the introduction or conception of Gentle Teaching. The remainder of this chapter will look at the similar rights movements in the United Kingdom and the links there might be for the differences or similarities in educational policy, theory and practice between the two nations.

Particular, but not exhaustive references will be made to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) and the Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978) relating to England, Wales and Scotland as these two documents coincide with the period of the development of Gentle Teaching. I will then refer to literature from both nations that are more modern including the American Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2005) and the SEND Code of Practice (2020) to develop an argument about how the nations have developed specific pedagogical approaches like Gentle Teaching generalised through these governmental policies and acts.

Focus on both the ADA and the Warnock Report will demonstrate comparisons between the two nations' approaches to disability and any incongruities will provide a basis for identifying reasons why an intervention like Gentle Teaching could have developed and altered in its suitability between different cultural perspectives.

There are some observable differences between the two documents which do provide some evidence that demonstrate the cultural differences, particularly in terms of education. The Warnock report brought about a change in how disabilities were perceived within education in the United Kingdom. Although the report identified the need to continue with some descriptive terms, these were made more appropriate and began to move away from a deficit model of disability. The term "educationally sub-normal" was not to be used anymore and was replaced with the term "special educational needs" (Warnock, 1978, p.43). The move towards a social model of disability became more apparent with the view that the deficit lies with the "social and cultural environment" (ibid, p.43) and not the child. There is more of a focus on giving those deemed as having an educational disability appropriate support or provision to enable them to access the curriculum or reduce the effect that the impairment has upon their learning.

In comparison the ADA refers to disability in terms of a deficit, referring to "physical or mental impairments that substantially limit one or more major life functions" (ADA, 1990, p.7). The ADA

simultaneously seeks to “eliminate discrimination” (p.5) but yet throughout the document there are references to how the environment and in turn society can make changes to make accessibility more apparent. This document addresses disability in general in the United States of America and does not focus on education as the Warnock report has. However, the succeeding act, No Child Left Behind (2001) does specifically focus on raising academic attainment for those with disabilities. This document appears to group a variety of minorities under the heading of “disadvantaged” (ibid, p.15.). Within these categories, the following are included:

‘Limited English proficiency children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children and young children in need of reading assistance’

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), (2001), p.16.

The term ‘disadvantaged’ in the NCLB act can be likened to the United Kingdom’s term ‘special educational needs’ with the only difference being for whom these terms encapsulate. For example, in the United Kingdom, Special Educational Needs (SEN) covers impairments that prevent even attainment in comparison to non-SEN peers, there is mention of non-disability factors including “disadvantage in social terms” (Warnock, 1978, p.36), although these are not broken down further into groups or categories of need like in the NCLB.

The Warnock report is more focused on the social model of disability than the NCLB through the way that it talks about providing support to give similar if not equal opportunities to non-disabled peers. In contrast, the NCLB expects all learners to make similar progression as identified by the requirement for standardised testing of all schools that includes no less than 95% of disadvantaged pupils. From this outlook, it can be said that Warnock attempts to level

the field where NCLB seems to suggest fixing the concerns with “sanctions and rewards” for underachieving schools (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001, p.22).

By exploring the rationale behind the more prominent educational policy amendments in both nations, it will be apparent to see the development of Gentle Teaching arising out of policy change as an institution for societal development. The introduction of the 1944 Education Act (Butler), although mentioning and acknowledging the existence of children with disabilities, also sought segregation with those disabilities considered severe to be educated in special schools (Education Act, 1944). The Warnock report moved from the segregated education system to an integrated system that would see more young people with special educational needs “integrated into mainstream education” (Jones, 2003, p.97). The term ‘inclusion’ was not featured until 1994 when the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) referred to “the inclusion of students [with special educational needs]” (Jones, 2003, p.196). The important fact to note is that the Salamanca Statement steps beyond the integration of having people with SEND in the same schools as those without similar diagnoses, just simply with the statement that “the fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children learn together” (UNESCO, 1994), p.11).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001) was introduced to raise attainment across schools in the United States of America. Rather than offering support to include young people with SEND it identifies that “all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education” (ibid, p.15). The extra support to enable inclusion within the state school systems is limited to an “Individualized Education Plan (IEP)” (ibid, p.44). These IEPs are counted towards the school’s attainment which in essence includes all in the data collection thus creating more

emphasis on teaching all within the school. This act was repealed and superseded by the 'Every Student Succeeds Act' (Alexander, 2005). There were numerous changes but the important difference to note that relates to this study is the changes in assessment between the two acts. Although both acts identified compulsory standardised assessments, the latter act allowed for amendments to be made for those with SEND (ibid, p1827). Assessment is a relevant focus of discussion as there have been some fundamental changes in how students and young people are assessed academically. In mainstream education in England, the obligation to 'level' students was removed in 2014 with the National Curriculum Attainment Targets being withdrawn and assessments relying on standardised tests like the SATs (Standard Attainment Tests) which were performed at the end of some major Key Stages. However, Special Education schools were using P Levels (Performance Levels) for those students and young people working below National Curriculum level 1, which although less than perfect, did give some indication as to progression and attainment. In (2016) the Rochford Report (DfE) brought about the end of these levels enabling schools to create their tools to measure progression. In conjunction with this was the "Engagement Model" (DfE, 2018) which produced data related to 7 aspects of engagement but only for those students and young people working in non-subject specific learning which equated to old P Levels 1 to 3. Those working at higher levels but still below the National Curriculum Level 1 were provided support through the Pre-Key stage 1 standards and Pre-Key stage 2 standards. However, these tend to overlook some students and young people working below National Curriculum levels in other key stages as it is specifically focused on young people with PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties) and SLD (Severe Learning Difficulties) (Hinchcliffe, 2022). This literature does not identify the need for the use of Gentle Teaching within schools,

however with the notion of 'engagement' is very much linked and intertwined with Gentle Teaching, for example, McGee and Brown (2009) suggested "Engagement means...being an active participant in one's own life." (p.14). Engagement is very much needed within all schools.

There have been some more recent developments within Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in the United Kingdom. A consultation period was provided to elicit views and opinions from professionals including both local and national leaders, parents and carers, advocates and others who work in the SEND sector, but for the first time, there was a call for contributions from children and young people with SEND (DfE, 2022). The White Paper related to this consultation will be used to create a "national SEND delivery plan" (ibid, p.79) which is due to be published towards the end of 2022. These proposals seek to develop a series of national standards across both education and the care sector, there are also plans to make the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process more simplified and uniform across all local educational authorities. These proposals are also set to address "culture and practice in mainstream education" (DfE, 2022) and reform Alternative Provision (AP) with a focus on early intervention. There are some similar themes in the United States of America IDEA website which also discusses funding provisions across the country.

I am not able to speculate as to why Gentle Teaching is more widely used in the United States of America in comparison with the United Kingdom and I have yet to find literature supporting this diversity, however, the point of the argument is that a few schools have begun to use Gentle



Teaching in England and this thesis has been created to explore the value of this approach within a particular type of school.

### **2.1.5 Gentle Teaching – Has the Need Arisen for Change in Social Perception?**

In this section, literature is explored surrounding why Gentle Teaching was developed from a perspective of change within the social perception of disability. There are two main theories of disability which are discussed within this chapter (see section 2.1.6). I refer to both the Medical Model of Disability and the Social Model of Disability (Hogan, 2019). Each model has its advantages and disadvantages, however, there is an increasing movement to depart from the Medical Model which has often been referred to as a deficit model of disability as it tends to focus on what is lacking or missing from the person (Forhan, 2009; Bingham et al, 2013) From exploring just, the language used within the two distinct models, it can easily be seen why the Medical Model has been scrutinised. The disparity can be seen best when using the terms deficit (Medical) and difference (Social) to identify the two theories. When talking about autism, Lowndes (2018) uses these two terms to explain how autism should be viewed with such vigour that the subsequently developed training programme by the Autism Education Trust (AET) features these as core phrases. Although this is specifically directed towards autism it can be applied to all disabilities and this has been growing in momentum. Lawson and Beckett (2021) suggest that from the early 1980s the social model of disability had been gaining momentum and they also cite that this movement crossed both “geographical and disciplinary divides” (p.349). This research is based in the United Kingdom, but it could be fair to suggest that this movement could have been more established in the United States of America around the beginning of the creation

of Gentle Teaching in 1978. There is no evidence to suggest that the new outlook was a result of Gentle Teaching, it is more likely a coincidence, however, the reasons for the change were very firmly fixed within the Gentle Teaching research.

Changes in perception like this should not be imposed without taking into account the thoughts and feelings of those most affected. Within this movement, there has also been another equally important movement taking place and this is in the form of self-advocates which will be discussed in the next section.

### **2.1.6 Gentle Teaching – Self-advocates' Views**

Expanding on the previous section regarding social change, there has also been a change within the disability community itself. There has been an increase in self-advocates. By Self-Advocates I refer to those with physical or cognitive disabilities or differences who also have the ability and capability to provide a voice or opinion relating to their rights. This does presuppose that the views and opinions of the self-advocates with the ability to share are sometimes generalised as the voice and opinion of those who are unable to express themselves. It would be reductionist to create two groups, those with the ability to self-advocate and those without the same ability, as each person regardless of ability, is unique and therefore their outlook and needs are variable. Some research suggests that the social model of disability tends to ignore the “embodied reality of individuals” this model cannot become a “grand theory of disability” (Manago et al., 2017, p.176), however, the Social Model of Disability is said to offer pieces of the puzzle for the understanding those with disabilities and the challenges they face (ibid). Some self-advocates reject the notion of the Medical Model of Disability with ideas that interventions have been

developed or created to fix them, although the term fix is not particularly helpful in this context. Some self-advocates go further to suggest that they do not need any interventions to be part of society; instead, they feel that society should change to fit in with their needs and views (Herlbutt and Chalmers, 2002).

Whilst this could be considered a positive move, I do feel that it is quite subjective, and it does not quite feel right to have the views of others expressed for them based on the personal experience of those who are more able. There is a substantial body of literature on student/pupil voice (see UN, 1992; Cunningham, 2020; Jones and Bubb, 2021.; Warren, et al., 2021.; Moore, 2022) and while this issue cannot be addressed with this piece of research there is merit in the consideration of the language used throughout this work. It was therefore an aim to ensure that the language used was person-centred, respectful and celebrational of the differences inherent within us all.

In summary, Gentle Teaching has similar components as some other intervention methods of pedagogical approaches, many of these have been addressed within this chapter. For example, the use of visual systems from PECS; the use of structure from TEACCH, and the interactions from Intensive Interaction, to summarise just a few approaches. Gentle Teaching appears to be a collection of various methods and tools with the mind to create a holistic system for teaching; with this regard it could be considered a pedagogy, however the goal of Gentle Teaching is not to develop academic skills but skills of human bonding and interaction (McGee et al., 1987a).

## Symbolic Interactionism

### 2.2 Section Introduction

This section builds upon the conceptual framework (see appendix II) and gives the reader some understanding of the nature of symbolic interactionism and how it lends itself to this study. Information from this chapter will develop some vital links between what symbolic interactionism offers as a theoretical perspective in terms of its strengths and perceived limitations.

I have already explained that the three components within my conceptual map are interlinked and combined to strengthen the research and they also act as a tool to provide a clear focus and direction for this study. This trinity includes Gentle Teaching; Symbolic Interactionism and School Culture. These three core concepts of this study not only link together synergically but there are overlaps between the areas covered. For example, Gentle Teaching within this study is about creating a culture of Gentleness within a school. This provides the link between Gentle Teaching and School Ethos. Also, Symbolic Interactionism binds these two together as this determines how one sees the truth about what meaning objects, stimuli and interactions have for us. This is pivotal as our truth will explain our understanding of the principles involved with developing an effective school culture. There is some research especially by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943, cited in Maslow, 2013) to suggest that there are fundamental needs that all humans need to live and function, this can also be applied to learning. There is more recent literature that supports this notion of safety and fun that corresponds to an increase in educational success (Bianco et al., 2003.; Griffiths, 2012.; Sanner and Bunderson, 2015.; Tews et al., 2017.)

### **2.2.1 What is Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic Interactionism is said to be difficult to define in terms of a theoretical perspective within sociology (Meltzer et al.,1975). Although more recent research has suggested that Symbolic Interaction is a useful tool to be implemented in the classroom to enable students to form their self-concepts (Waldbuesser, 2019) that would suggest that its current use as a theoretical perspective has become clearer and used within a variety of different fields of research. For example, there are examples of Symbolic Interactionism being employed in the design and architecture industry to understand the relationships between building design and reflected meanings from those living in or near the buildings (Molana and Adams, 2019). While some sociologists see this as a unitary set of principles, there have been many variations regarding the opinions of the core concepts of Symbolic Interactionism over time (Aksan, et al., 2009). This chapter explores some of these variations and provides us with some understanding of what differences there are and the reasons for these changes over time since the development of Symbolic Interactionism. This information will provide a basis for this study and become a guideline to be followed to keep focused on the most relevant variation throughout the study.

Symbolic Interactionism has three major assumptions:

- 1) 'Humans respond to objects on the basis of the meaning that objects possess for them'
- 2) 'Meanings come from communication between people'
- 3) 'These meanings are modified through communication and interpretation' (ibid).

Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, p.460.

This could be explained as me seeing a rock as a paperweight whereas someone else could see this as a decorative feature for a garden. The meaning that I get from the rock is represented to me in terms of its physical representation and how I could implement this rock usefully. However, in a conversation about the rock, my perceptions can change, and I might associate the

rock completely differently following this conversation, for example, if my communication partner has discussed other equally useful qualities that this rock possesses. The meaning that is given to the object is dependent upon a range of reasons and this might not be the case for similar objects or even the same object on a different day or occasion. These are just some examples of how one object can be perceived differently and therefore the meaning that it has is related to these factors. Regardless of the school of thought, these tend to be universal assumptions that are present within Symbolic Interactionism (James, 1918.; Blumer, 1969.; Mead, 2015.).

This theoretical perspective poses a very interesting lens through which to look at interactions as it determines that one must first decide on what the actor perceives from stimuli, then decide if that meaning has developed from a communicative relationship, and then one must acknowledge that this again can change through the interaction with others. What makes this most interesting is the notion that there is no single truth, the truth is pertinent and personal to each perceiver. This begins to make the task of answering a series of research questions a vast endeavour, but the basis behind symbolic interactionism and how this translates into a methodological perspective can be seen through the need to gather evidence from a range of sources and triangulate meaning (Wiley, 2014). This also means that this research will not conclude with absolute answers but highlight the truth from how I perceive the stimuli suggesting that should the same research be performed by another researcher the outcomes could be different. This does have implications in terms of validity and reliability but from a Symbolic Interactionist point of view, this is acceptable and expected (ibid). In terms of my study, I feel

that I have addressed this validity and reliability implication through the cross-referencing of multiple qualitative data sets, this is explained in greater depth within the methodology chapter.

### **2.2.2 Historic Perspective of Symbolic Interactionism**

To gain a clear perspective on Symbolic Interactionism, it will be necessary to briefly explore the more notable theorists behind the works as this will also demonstrate the personal affectations they made to the overall theory. This is due to the subtle changes in the field over the years from its earliest form of pragmatism to how it has developed into its present form. Although there are many theorists, this chapter will analyse three of the more notable theorists all of whom have played a part in the development of Symbolic Interactionism.

#### **John Dewey – 1863-1952**

Dewey was a philosopher and psychologist, and he was a member of the Chicago School, he is most known now for his work on educational reform (Hildebrand, 2018). His work 'Experience and Education' shows some underlying links with what we see today as Symbolic Interactionism. He suggests that the belief that "all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative" (Dewey, 1938, p.25) which is his nod to how meaning is different dependent on the concepts of Symbolic Interactionism. He is suggesting that although the experience can be a vehicle for education when there is someone to link these experiences to fact or meaning, the experience itself is not necessarily educational. Even at this point in his collective works, he has identified that the truth is discovered through the meanings that are derived from certain stimuli, he describes this by suggesting that not only

can truths be discovered, but there is a possibility that mistruths can also be discovered and believed.

Dewey also developed his Theories of Motivation that were considered to ignore the role of social interaction (Meltzer, et al. 1975). This theory is linked to stimulus and response. He talks about the 'child-candle instance':

“Interpretation would say the sensation of light is a stimulus to the grasping as a response, the burn resulting is a stimulus to withdrawing the hand as a response and so on.”

Dewey, 1896, p.358.

This is a very early example of how truth is gained from the perspective of the beholder through the analysis of the meaning that the stimuli hold for the person. In this case, the process is seen as an internal factor based upon the motor response which Dewey refers to as the 'Reflex arc'. Dewey also looks at 'habit', this becomes an important feature in his work as he felt that this provided an indicator to look at changes in his thought processes. (Meltzer, et al., 1975). The term Habit features highly within the works of Dewey along with the terms, 'instinct' and 'self'. These will be looked at in greater depth later in this chapter.

### Herbert Blumer – 1900-1987

Blumer was a member of the University of Chicago sociology department from late 1920 to early 1950. He was also the secretary of the American Sociological Association for many years (Wiley, 2014). This shows that Blumer had quite an influence on the development of American Sociology as well as being an important figure within the Chicago School. Blumer, one of the later Symbolic Interactionists, developed and added to some of the earlier works, however, he did develop his ideas within the movement which differ from earlier ideas; I refer specifically to the terms,



'meaning, emotion and situation'. Blumer discusses "meaning" (Wiley, 2014, p.302) almost as a growing and developing entity particularly when there is a social presence. He suggests that the meaning gained from experiencing an object is resolute but with the influence of another opinion, the confidence and trust in one's understanding wavers. This is quite an important factor in understanding the meaning given to objects, actions or other stimuli as there would have always been some influence from another experience. Blumer offers caution with understanding the influence that 'emotion' can produce on the perceived meaning. He is very careful to separate "the meaning of an emotion and emotion as a meaning itself" (ibid, p.304). To find the meaning of emotion, one is left to discover its cause which can often be assigned to an object. For example, when someone is angry, the cause of this anger is often an object, an unmade bed or a chore. However, Blumer suggests that often this emotion is the meaning itself, for example, fear caused by a phobia. It is often this emotional response that is located within a situation. This suggests that meaning is influenced by emotion which in turn is situational; not only can the meaning of an object, action or stimuli be different to the perceiver, but the emotional response will also be different. This means that there are many variables behind meaning which makes Symbolic Interactionism such an interesting theoretical lens through which to explore human behaviour.

Blumer talks about applying Symbolic Interactionism to fieldwork (ibid, p.305). Suggesting ways to engage with the study, he said that two distinct things need to be involved in the field study. Firstly, he suggested putting oneself in the position of those being studied and secondly, he identified the need to ensure that the whole group is captured in the "collective act". These continue to be the main research techniques within Symbolic Interactionism when employing

field research as a data set. Blumer also suggested that there are “no fixed field-work techniques” (ibid, p.305), instead opting for any method or technique that will leave rise to the information that is needed, which included observation-only, speaking to the participants of the study or both.

### George Herbert Mead – 1863-1931

Mead was a member of the Chicago school for thirty-eight years and as such he was considered one of the founders of Symbolic Interactionism (Reynolds, 2003). Contemporary undergraduate sociology students are still taught that George Herbert Mead was the founder of the symbolic interactionist tradition (Plummer, 1996). Martindale (1981) suggested that it was Mead above all other interactionists who raised Symbolic Interactionism to a higher level of theoretical sophistication through the transformation and restructuring of the inner theory.

Much of Mead's work was about education and educational reform with a focus on the mind (Mead, 2015). This is where there is a significant overlap with Dewey's reflex arc as Mead talks about the mind as being selective in the way that it uses previous experience to determine the nature of the stimulus attended to (Bittner, 1931).

This introduction to the theorists shows the historic development of Symbolic Interactionism and some of the subtle nuances that created sub-variants of the theory. The following section will address some of these variations of Symbolic Interactionism and link these to this thesis.

### **2.2.3 Symbolic Interactionism and the Varieties**

There are several varieties of Symbolic Interaction (Meltzer et al. 1975) all with subtle differences. A brief analysis of the more disparate variations will be discussed to provide clarity and

positionality in terms of this study and how the chosen variation will be applied to others.

Warshay, (1971) identifies eight distinct varieties of Symbolic Interactionism the theorists behind the variations and the core differences between them all:

“(1) the Blumer school, emphasizing the more subjective aspects (Blumer, the early Strauss); (2) the Iowa school, stressing self-theory and a positivistic methodology (Kuhn, McPartland, Couch, Stewart, Garretson, Mulford, Salisbury); (3) an emphasis on interaction with de-emphasis on language (Rose, Becker, Stone, Stryker, the later Strauss, Lemert); (4) a role-theory view with a cognitive emphasis, within a moderate scientific tradition (Gross, Biddle, Newcomb); (5) the ‘dramaturgical’ school, featuring the intricacies of role and self manipulation (Goffman, Klapp, Duncan, Messinger); (6) a field-theory version combining Mead, Lewin and Lundberg (Coutou); (7) an ‘existential’ brand (Pfautze, Bolton); (8) ethnomethodology, stressing the complexity and fluidity of the web of social life, with a humanist-participatory methodology (Garfinkel, Cicourel)”.

Warshay (1971) p29.

These differences all tend to focus on the methodology as the main variant although Meltzer and Petras (1970) suggest that most commentators identify two main schools of symbolic interactionism, the Chicago school and the Iowa school. In terms of this study, it is more prudent to focus on the subtle differences between these more notable schools. It is these two variations where significant importance arises within my study and the decision for me to narrow down my theoretical lens to marry the theory with my topic of study.

The subtle differences between the two main schools of Symbolic Interactionism can be summarised in terms of the progenitors’ research and work in the field, that is, Mead and then Blumer within the Chicago School and Kuhn within the Iowa School. The Chicago school remained faithful to the work of Mead and is said to have employed a traditional ‘Meadian tradition’ (Meltzer et al, 1975). The Chicago School’s concepts were based on the premise that the actors “create and recreate experiences based from one experience to another” Carter & Fuller (2015,

p2). On the other hand, the Iowa school is said to have developed through the work of Kuhn and stems from a scientific background and is said to view interaction and behaviour as purposeful acts that are formed from preceding events in the “context of projected acts” Katovich et al., (2003,p125). Meltzer et al, (1975) remind us not to be overly reductive when separating the two schools, suggesting that there are “substantive and methodological” differences that can be illustrated through the progenitors’ work. To establish the differences between the two we must look to those who influenced each school.

The Chicago school was said to have a “pure science” (Farris, 1967, p.130) attitude and that this school would debate whether “natural and cultural sciences” (Musolf, 2003, p.97) needed alternative methodologies. There are three suggested intertwined topics that demonstrate the methodological divergence. Meltzer et al. (1975) identify these as the “merits of phenomenological and operational approaches”, “appropriate techniques of observation”, and “the nature of concepts best suited for the analysis of human behaviour” (ibid. p.57). Both progenitors of the two schools are interested in analysing human thought and interaction, however, the approaches that they take are quite different. Mead tended to opt for a methodological approach that allowed the researcher to get “inside the actors” world (ibid) and see the behaviours take place as a consequence of the meanings derived from the interactions with the various stimuli. Kuhn advocated for a more scientific approach where his writings repeatedly called for a “standardised, objective and dependable process of measurement” (Hickman and Kuhn, 1956, p.224). Mead rejected this idea and his argument against this provides another methodological divergence. Mead is opposed to 'variables' within the social inquiry, suggesting that these variables cause “static, stimulus-response” human behaviour (Meltzer et

al, 1975). This caused a further debate about the nature of human behaviour and whether “human behaviour is free or determined” (ibid, p.61). With the differences in views on the nature of human behaviour, Kuhn developed his technique for data collection.

As part of his efforts to formalise and standardise this process, Kuhn developed a technique called the ‘Twenty Statement Test’ (TST) which he hoped would provide a way of turning the concepts of Symbolic Interactionism into variables to enable the “testing of empirical propositions” (Meltzer et al, 1975, p.59). This is the core difference between the two schools, the empirical goal of the Iowa School is to bring Symbolic Interactionism towards a scientific methodology over theoretical perspectives within the Chicago School. Kuhn (1960) argued the validity of this approach in two respects, firstly the process of logic contained within the test and secondly, the results of the test are correlatable with individual behaviours. While the concept of empirical testing stands in opposition to the subjective meaning of truth that is associated with Symbolic Interactionism, this was Kuhn’s way to make Symbolic Interactionism more scientific. My position, like those from the Chicago School of thought, is based on the qualitative nature of the study rather than reducing actions and behaviours to numerical figures. The following section addresses some other core features of Symbolic Interactionism including Habit, Instinct, Emotions and Self. Looking at these features it would seem almost impossible to accurately assign some figurative element to the observations seeing that there are almost limitless responses to objects, stimuli, and interactions. Kuhn’s reductionist desire to create numerical data from these features sets him apart from other theorists.

#### **2.2.4 Habit, Instinct, Emotions and Self**

There are theorists within Symbolic Interactionism that direct attention and emphasis on Habit, Instinct, Emotions and Self. For example, Dewey (1922) refers to Habit, Instinct and Self whereas Mead (2015) uses slightly different terminology, like Motivation and Emotion. With these themes featuring evidently within the body of literature and by some of the more prominent theorists, it would be imprudent to overlook what these themes mean within the theory and if their application has an impact on this study. Just from the words themselves, one can picture how these could influence the meaning associated with interactions, for example, instinct would suggest that there is little cognitive application and more of a reaction, whereas emotion would almost suggest that meaning could fluctuate moment to moment. The following chapter section will address each of these and the associated literature.

Starting with Habit there are subtle nuances between Dewey and James. Dewey refers to Habit as an “acquired predisposition to ways or modes of response and not to particular acts” (Meltzer, et al. 1975, p.17). Here Dewey is identifying that Habit is inbuilt and is created through a series of actions. This is almost our definition of habit, the repetitive actions causing almost non-cognitive responses. We might see this as an activity that has been practised so frequently that it almost needs no further thought but Dewey suggests that this is not these repetitive acts themselves but more of behaviour associated with some types of stimuli. However, he does state that habit is built within the social order and not within the individual. James also discusses Habit and shows a distinction between wild animals and domesticated animals and humans. He suggests that where wild animals' habit appears to be “implanted at birth” (James, 1918, p.50), for domesticated animals and humans, this is a result of education. The importance here is that

Habit has a significant influence over the meaning that we derive from objects, actions, and other stimuli; to attempt to ascertain the meaning someone is getting from stimuli, we must look at 'habit' in conjunction with emotion, instinct, self, and social aspects.

Instinct will become an important aspect of the study as it concerns what skills are naturally developed within the survival instincts. James talks about instinct in terms of animals and how they have instinctively used the resources at their disposal, for example, the silkworm spins thread and also how animals have a natural avoidance of fire for the preservation of life. This concept can be developed further to look at how Gentle Teaching can be seen as a learnt skill, a natural in-built survival skill or in fact if there are levels of the two that can be used in determining its overall relevance and purpose. This opinion is not shared by Mead, he reminds us that we can sometimes become confused between "impulse" and "instincts" (Mead, 2015, p.337). He identifies "hunger and anger" (ibid) as impulses as these are modified and adapted from a series of life experiences. Mead tends to object to the term instincts altogether as this terminology is adapted to lower animal forms, the only exceptions he offers are "suckling [of an infant]" and "anger reactions of very young infants" (ibid, p.349). This could have a considerable influence on this study. I will not reduce all behaviours exhibited by the younger participants of this study down to instinctual reactions or stereotypically place all young people with autism in the same category but some of the pre-lingual expressive behaviour could be related to instincts. This will be carefully addressed within the analysis and discussion chapter to highlight reactions to stimuli that could be seen as instinctual rather than purposeful, cognitive and relative expressions towards knowledge or understanding.

Following on from instinct and habit there is a need to discuss 'Emotions' concerning the body of literature on Symbolic Interactionism. There is some evidence to suggest that one of the flaws in Symbolic Interactionism is the lack of emphasis and consideration of "emotions" (Meltzer et al, 1975). In the past, there has been regard given to "sentiments, such as shame and embarrassment" (ibid, p.120) but very little attention has been drawn to anger, love or hate. For evidence of these emotional feelings, we need to refer back to James. It is James who gives a clear distinction between emotion and instinct. He suggests that emotional responses tend to end in the person's own body whereas instincts linger in the relationships towards the object (James, 1918). He describes this in terms of memory, where one could have been angered by an insult, recounting, and reflecting on such tends to make that feeling stronger and last longer. He also suggests that emotions such as the internal interoceptive feelings of sorrow or guilt, manifest themselves physically within the self, which tends to support his notion of internal cessation.

Francis and Adams (2019) identify three core concepts linking emotions with Symbolic Interactionism, they suggest that emotions enable effective relationships. Their premise is that people enter into relationships with people that "share their cognitive and affective meanings for situations and sets of role relationships" (p.255). They also highlight the link between emotions and the influences these have on salience and behaviour. Through this, they suggest that people 'enact identities' that have positive meanings towards them and in turn avoid identities that cause "negative affective meanings" (ibid). Lastly, Francis and Adams suggest that people try to "reaffirm valued (prominent) and salient identities and that the experience of discomforting events causes the experience of negative emotions" (ibid). This literature



highlights how emotions can affect the significance that people have to a variety of stimuli, actions and events. This also shows us that the meaning these people give to the variety of stimuli, actions and events can be altered due to their emotional connection. This is a notion that could make the analysis of fieldwork more interesting as the observer will need to develop some understanding of the emotional status of those being observed.

Mead spent lots of his work within Symbolic Interaction looking at the self and the significance that this has on the way people derive meaning from stimuli, actions and events. Mead talks about the development of the self, suggesting that this was not present at birth “but arises in the process of social experience and activity” (2015, p.135). Mead sees the self as a distinct part of the body but somehow separate. The body does not experience itself as a whole but what it senses is understood by the self. Self is said to offer Symbolic Interactionists “theoretical and empirical openness for radical interpretations” (Weigert & Gecas, 2003). Features of the self are said to include, “empiricity, historicity, reflexivity, agency and constructivity” (bid, p285), suggesting that there is more openness and freeness in the experimental sense. This is probably the most important feature of Symbolic Interactionism as it begins to allow one to accept how and why the meaning of objects, stimuli and interactions are different for those perceiving them. Thinking about the evidence that has been cited about self, emotions, habit and instinct, it is obvious to see that these are vastly different to everyone and it is these differences that mould and tailor the meanings gained. I understand something because of past emotional feelings towards the perceived stimuli, the same is true because my ‘instincts’ and my ‘self’ have been developed over the years through the experiences I gained. It is only really through the social

aspect that people feel or think more similarly, it is almost a social convention to believe and think.

### **2.2.5 Symbolic Interactionism a Methodological Position**

Symbolic Interactionists from all schools of thought employ the same methodological techniques to gather data on aspects of human behaviour (Herman-Kinney and Verschaeve, 2003). They suggest four main methods are commonly used by Symbolic Interactionists, these include “field methods/ethnography/participant observation, interviewing, life history methods and visual methods” (ibid, p25). The suggested differences are reported by Meltzer et al, (1978) who identify that Blumer and Kuhn had differences in methodological opinion. For example, Blumer is said to have argued for a “distinct methodology in the study of [human] behaviours” (ibid, p.57), whereas Kuhn is juxtaposed with the idea of “unity between of method in scientific disciplines”. Where Blumer wanted an approach to make society more understandable, Kuhn opted for a method to enable society to become more predictable. These differences are said to have three interconnected topics that demonstrate the divergence.

“(1) the relative merits of phenomenological and operational approaches; (2) the appropriate techniques of operational; and (3) the nature of the concepts best suited for the analysis of human behaviour.”

Meltzer et al., 1987, p.57

While both Blumer and Kuhn sought to understand the thought processes of humans during their interactions with each other, with their environment or with other stimuli, how they came to these conclusions through their distinct operational approaches and process produced the differing opinion. This was also how there came about these two distinct and separate schools of Symbolic Interactionism. Kuhn with his operationalised key ideas of Symbolic Interactionism

and opted to “reconceptualise or abandon” those methods and concepts that he deemed “non-empirical” (ibid, p.43). Blumer focused on a term called “Sympathetic Introspection” as a tool for “critical qualitative enquiry” (Gunderson, 2017) on which he based his methodological assumptions. This is considered to be different from Kuhn’s processes as it requires the researcher to imagine themselves in the same situation as those being studied (Meltzer et al. 1987), and is not a shared concept that fits in with Kuhn’s notion of behaviours being predictable. Both approaches can be considered empirical research as they base facts on observation and experience, however, Kuhn appears to attempt to make these observations and experiences measurable and thus move from qualitative to quantitative methodology (ibid) and thus the methodological dichotomy is presented.

House (2018) discusses the apparent dichotomy; however, she argues that these two approaches are located on a “continuum” (p.7) and suggests that seeing them this way elevates the need for the dichotomy argument. She does provide a simple overview of the two approaches suggesting that “qualitative research is to understand human behaviour” whereas “quantitative research is to explain human behaviour” (ibid). In the case of this research, the purpose is to attempt to understand the participants rather than explain the products of their behaviours.

#### **2.2.6 How is this Theory Relevant to this Study?**

Symbolic Interaction offers an excellent lens through which to view this study, not just in terms of the notions of truth that are linked to the theoretical perspective but also in how the related methodological processes have been developed to allow data to be captured and measured. It is worthwhile to be in the field observing the participants and attempting to link their knowledge

or truths to the experiences gained from specific stimuli or interactions. As there could be a multitude of versions of truth the application of multiple data collection methods will allow greater insight and reflection enabling ever-tightening analysis to speculate reasoning and understanding behind the actions of the participants. Also, the associated interactionist view on truth links very well with how the young people within this study develop an understanding of the world around them. If we take Autism as a series of differences, which include “impaired communication and social interaction” (Gebauer et al., 2015, p.8) amongst others to base this argument upon we can already see links with the core Symbolic Interactionists' notions of how truth is perceived from meanings gained from what information is acquired from these social interactions (Blumer, 1996). There is evidence that those with autism, process sensory information differently (Kern et al., 2007) which again will mean that the understanding gained from interactions, actions and other stimuli will be different for everyone.

It also seems quite fitting that a theoretical perspective such as Symbolic Interactionism, which was developed and created in America can be used as a lens for exploring Gentle Teaching which itself is an American development. Meltzer et al, (1975) describe “Symbolic Interactionism as an almost predictable product of American society and culture” (p.56). This simple fact could also prevent some incongruities between cultural perspectives by employing Symbolic Interactionism and Gentle Teaching. Martindale suggests that “culture is a system of generalized symbols” (1964, p.494), which would indicate that different cultures have their own understandings of different symbols. While it would be safe to assume that any cultural bias inherent in employing a predominantly North American theory in the United Kingdom would not be present in influencing the various meanings that the participants derived from the interactions, stimuli or

objects; there could be something to say for the limited use of Symbolic Interactionism in the United Kingdom.

### **2.2.7 Symbolic Interactionism – the Critiques and Criticism**

There have been some criticisms of Symbolic Interactionism, some of which I will endeavour to allude to provide some justification as to how I believe that the approach continues to be fit for purpose and how these issues can be overcome. Meltzer (1972) describes some issues with both theory of Mead and the methodological approach used. One suggestion is that the framework that Mead produces is too vague, and fuzzy and that it is not used consistently as is becoming of a scientific explanation. Meltzer adds to this suggesting that the theory as produced by Mead has some omissions and, in some places, ignores some important human features like the “emotional and unconscious elements in human conduct” (ibid, p.21). This is supported by Brittan who also suggests that Symbolic Interactionism has in the past played down or “ignored” the importance of the “unconscious and emotive factors as they influence the interactive process” (ibid, pp.190-204). Brittan furthers this by also suggesting that Symbolic Interactionism is “guilty of unwarranted demotion of the psychological” and that it has “robbed human needs, motives, intentions and aspirations” (ibid, p.190). These seemingly harsh criticisms of Symbolic Interactionism are linked to Mead’s overuse of the approach as a methodological approach, the fact that Symbolic Interactionism is being applied today is a testament to its usefulness which does seem to reflect that although the fundamental principles are the same its application has changed since Mead’s work was created.

Symbolic Interactionism is based upon the notion that truth is gained through the association that a person perceiving stimuli creates some object of value in the object or interaction they have just perceived, however, this tends to neglect to focus upon the unconscious elements of social interactions (Brittain, 1973). Brittain also refers to “obsession with the meaning” and the “over-emphasis on the situation” as potential criticisms of the theory. The demotion of psychology refers to how motives and intentions have “over-symbolized” and how they have been “deluded into treating human needs as if they were merely expressions of culturally defined categories” (ibid, p.192) this is to suggest that there needs to be a clear separation of the individual needs and the social facts. Britain suggests that there is a danger of seeing psychological and social variables as identical if we believe that society is interpreted the total of everybody’s definition.

Regarding “the obsession with meaning”, Britain argues that the issue is relevant if we “completely assent to symbolic determinism” (ibid, p.194), he suggests that through this we have swapped one form of ‘social determinism’ for another. This suggests that we should not dissociate symbols from the real world, the symbols are not a substitute for the real world and the experiences gained therein. This is concisely summarised by Harrel (1967):

“The knowledge of relationships requires symbols but the fact that some relations are persistently described by man in time and space suggests that relations are not only symbolic events but real events as well.”

Harrel (1967), p.126.

It would appear that a concern with Symbolic Interaction is that there can be an over-focus on the associated meaning with the observed interactions and that this can sometimes distract from the actual focus or even undermine the real-life raw meaning that could be present. In

this argument, Britain suggests that there is an assumption that interactionists seek meaning in the interactions exhibited by the actors in terms of their outward behaviours. Britain argues against this suggesting that we can only talk about external behaviours and not the thoughts or feelings that create the behaviour internally (ibid).

Other criticism includes suggestions that Symbolic Interactionism fails to take into consideration some social implications. It is suggested to have a “distorted view” of social life (Huber, 1973a, p.275) and that it “ignores or has a faulty conception of social organisations or social structures” (Gouldner, 1970a, p.379). Both these criticisms suggest that this concern is due to the methodological sensitivity to Symbolic Interactionism and how this could be biased by the researcher's social understanding. The following section will address some of these criticisms and how I overcame them to create a minimal negative impact on my research whilst being guided by my theoretical perspective.

### **2.2.8 Symbolic Interactionism - What are the Limitations and How to Negate these?**

As previously indicated some possible criticisms of Symbolic Interactionism, however, I feel that these have been significantly addressed with my methodological approach so as to cause no significant impact on my thesis. There are those as previously stated who feel there are insufficient methods for data collection, I have overcome this by employing a range of data collection tools all of which are identified within the Symbolic Interactionism theory which extends Symbolic Interaction from a theoretical lens to a methodological process. This, I have done, not only to negate this suggestion but also as a method for cross-referencing and developing a robust system to ensure that no important data is neglected. Another issue that

arose frequently was the divergence of the two schools of Symbolic Interactionism: Blumer's Chicago school and Kuhn's Iowa school. There were some other schools of thought, again with subtle differences. The reason why I focus so intently on Blumer and Kuhn is that this bears the most obvious relationship to the methodological dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Blumer suggested that "methodologically" ...it is the researcher's obligation to take the stance of the person they are studying (Carter and Fuller, 2015, p.1), whereas Kuhn took a different view opting for a more scientific approach including the reduction of variables and laboratory conditions (Kuhn, 1964).

### **2.2.9 Section Summary**

This final section in this chapter demonstrates my positionality. I intend to understand the human behaviour at the heart of my study, and I have no intention to explain human behaviour, in keeping with House's (2018) ideas on the differences between the two approaches, I opt for a qualitative perspective with multiple data collection tools to aid my understanding at the heart of my research question. This whole chapter has been organised to review, explore and critically analyse the literature from the core components of my thesis. This chapter has demonstrated some topics that have been considered and followed throughout the study. For example, the notion of Symbolic Interactionism working as both a theoretical lens and methodological perspective has impacted the type of data collected and the methods for data collection. The following subchapter looks at school culture in greater depth and allows these themes to be drawn together.



## School Ethos and Culture

### 2.3 Section Introduction

This section will address the third and final part of my conceptual map which is the school ethos. As already stated, each part of my conceptual map builds upon other elements and strengthens the research. The other elements that have been discussed in this chapter include Gentle Teaching which is the pedagogical approach employed by the school. Symbolic Interaction is the theoretical perspective through which all data and literature are analysed, and, finally, school ethos. This thesis seeks to explore the impact that Gentle Teaching has had either positively or negatively upon the school's ethos and culture and to determine if this pedagogical approach has been accepted as part of the school's ethos and culture. This chapter will explore the subtle differences between the terminology that is often employed to discuss the general feel of a school, it will also address the importance of school ethos and culture; how these have been measured in the past from previous research and related literature and what these features mean concerning this study.

This chapter looks at literature surrounding school culture and ethos to determine what the difference is between the two terms, and, what impact this difference will have on the study. The answer to this problem has a significant impact on the study, as at the very heart of this work is the culture that the school has built through the development and implementation of a pedagogical approach called Gentle Teaching. The approach is designed to strengthen and build relationships between caregivers and children/adults with cognitive disabilities (McGee et al., 1978) and to act as a foundation for all who work within the school. The culture that has been created by the school feels unique, this has been commented on by visitors to the school,

including external assessing agencies like Ofsted, Investors in People (IIP) and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). The research theme is to explore how the humanistic intervention called Gentle Teaching can be embedded and sustained within a school culture. As such an important element within my conceptual map, it seems only appropriate to analyse the relevant literature to explore previous research for similarities and differences in approaches to ascertain the creation and development of whole school ethos or cultures.

In addition to the difference between culture and ethos, I also discuss the research addressing the importance of school culture, what makes a good school culture and more importantly how one can identify if the culture has been accepted and is followed by all staff, and if this unified approach is important to the overall strength of school culture. There is evidence to suggest that the relationship between espoused values and enacted values in terms of their relative alignment is a good overall indication of how this ethos is accepted and followed by the staff thus making it more effective (Schuh and Miller, 2006.; Howell et al., 2012.; Gopinath et al., 2018.) This line of questioning will be addressed in greater depth as it has the potential to provide a formula for measuring the impact of the established practices within the school and in terms of answering the proposed research questions.

### **2.3.1 School Culture or School Ethos, What is the Difference?**

The terms ethos and culture, along with “spirit, climate and ambience” have been used interchangeable and according to Solvason (2005, p85) “without appropriate definition”. Solvason suggested that when the Department for Education made recommendations for schools to develop subject specialisms, they identified that this would change the “ethos of the school”,

however, the author suggests that this term ethos is related more to a “feeling” that the organisation will have and that the DfES did not offer guidance on what this ethos would entail (ibid). Solvason explains further to offer her thoughts on the definition of culture, suggesting that “ethos is the product of the culture of the school” (ibid, p.85). I believe this statement will offer a great starting point to research the relevant and associated literature.

Deal and Peterson (1999) also suggest that the terms “culture and ethos” are interchangeable, however, they offer a more involved argument identifying culture as a more concise and appealing way to allow staff to understand the establishment of unwritten rules, expectations and normal operations. This is supported by Solvason when she suggests that “culture has solidity where ethos is more elusive” (2005, p.86.). In the school in this study, the culture has been turned into a series of written rules and expectations, with the research suggested by Deal and Peterson in mind would this still be considered a culture? According to Graham (2012), the term “school ethos” is generally credited to the work of Rutter et al. (1979). This was during a study of school effectiveness that found positive experiences described by students which were unexpected considering the socio-economic background of the students. In this study, Rutter et al. identify that individual student behaviour is less important in terms of how they contribute to the “broader school ethos or climate” (1979, p.55), which seems to suggest that collective behaviour has more of an impact than that of the individual. In terms of the school in this study, there is more importance placed upon the behaviours of the staff as these directly influence the young people within the school and the nature of behaviour with regards to how this is presented in the young people is considered at its most fundamental purpose of expression and communication.

Glover and Coleman (2005) also report on the interchangeability of the terms relating to school culture. However, in their paper they look at culture, climate and ethos; with a mind to determine if these are interchangeable or distinctive concepts. Glover and Coleman's research is based on continuing professional development (CPD) and how this has developed over the years from a standard didactic approach based on whole-school training to more bespoke in terms of need. They identify the development of the school culture as one of these needs and highlight the importance that this type of CPD offers. This is an important avenue of further research for this study as the school at the centre of this study employs a series of CPD to upskill staff in various areas, one of which is in the development and practice related to Gentle Teaching; the concept at the heart of the school culture. In the same research Glover and Coleman describe a global cultural difference in the terminology. They suggest that in American and Australasian literature "climate is more frequently used as a descriptor of school environment" (ibid, p.252). In the United Kingdom and Europe, the term culture is more widely used and the term ethos is used "as a descriptor of social dynamics either in place or as a component of the broader term culture" (ibid). This is also an important avenue of research that should be addressed in greater depth as it links an American-imported approach which in terms of this study relates to Gentle Teaching being employed in a school within the United Kingdom. This highlights some issues in terms of the assumed difference between ethos and culture between the two nations, which demonstrates a potential incompatibility. This will be addressed later in this section.

Donnelly (2000) offers an additional perspective on the term ethos. She suggests that this term can also fall into two distinct areas that relate to a positivist or anti-positivist views. In her

definition, she discusses the positivist view of ethos as “something which prescribes social reality” (p.135). On the other hand, the anti-positivist view of ethos is “something which is more informal emerging from social interaction and process” (p.136). This adds yet another dimension to the discussion at hand which needs to be addressed in terms of the theoretical perspective being employed within this study. It would seem most relevant to position the definition in line with the theory. As Symbolic Interactionism has its basis within an interpretive episteme it would not naturally link with positivism, as such within this study this definition will not be employed. The anti-positivist description seems more in keeping with the overall research within this study, Donnelly suggests that this is “located in the realms of social interaction, provides an important insight into the lived reality and outward expression and support of the ethos” (2000, p.150). This offers a fitting perspective that links social interaction to the forefront of ethos and culture and again this supports the school’s position on the rationale for the creation of the culture in the first instance.

The following sections in this chapter will address; ethos as a product of culture suggesting that culture leads to ethos, the development of culture through the implementation of CPD, the culturally significant differences between the terms and how these link with the pedagogy and the theoretical perspective links with this study. The information gained from other research in these areas allows assumptions to be made in this study which is supported through the field studies to directly relate to the proposed research questions at the heart of this study.

### **2.3.2 What is Important About School Culture/Ethos?**

Peterson and Deal (2000) highlight the importance of school culture as a “key for successful performance” (p.7). They suggest that this needs to be followed by all staff and at the very heart of what each staff member does to enable this to become effective. They also suggest that a school without “heart and spirit nourished by cultural ways the schools becoming learning factories devoid of soul and passion” (ibid). This is a refreshing way to look at school culture and this is also apparent in the school as the culture that is being established is one of ‘gentleness’. There is also evidence that suggests these cultures do not happen overnight and that it can take time to build these, and they are usually developed by the “formal and informal leaders” (ibid, p.8) who reinforce and support the values of the school and traditions. Peterson and Deal, also identify that schools with “weak and unfocused” (ibid) cultures tend to fail as the result of a lack of information and concern from leadership. I would like to see that culture is the responsibility of all that work within an institution or organisation, and that although led and initiated by leadership, it is the individual that decides to follow and accept this as the norm. While the school at the heart of this study continues to be accountable to all its stakeholders in terms of its performance, its key performance indicators are just as unique as the school itself. For example, the school publishes its ‘statement of purpose’ on the website and the whole school vision is most prominently positioned to be viewed first, this is built around the four pillars of Gentle Teaching (McGee, et al, 1987a) and even as one progresses through the document there are links back to the vision. For example, in the expression of ‘the intent of education,’ it highlights the aims of developing “valued individuals”, “engaged learners” and “safe citizens” (see appendix XXXVI) all of which link back to the school vision and culture. This does presuppose that there is

greater importance given to these attributes than grades or levels which can make the acknowledgement of success more abstract. For example, how will the school identify when its pupils have become valued individuals, engaged learners and safe citizens, these outcomes are much more qualitative than the more ordinary attainment levels. School leaders continue to monitor these outcomes that they hold in high regard through reflective practices.

Peterson and Deal write that being reflective can support the leadership to shape the culture and reduce the negative patterns that emerge over the process.

“Although not all cultural aspects are easily shaped by leaders, over time leadership can have a powerful influence on emerging cultural patterns. Being reflective can help reinforce cultural patterns that are positive and transform those that are negative or toxic.”

Peterson and Deal, (2000), p.10.

This seems to suggest that when an institution or organisation begins to change its culture, in this plan there should be some element of reflective practice to identify the subtle changes and reinforce the successful elements and transform the negative views, opinions, actions; or at the very least to monitor the changing culture over time. The school at the heart of this study employs a process of continued reflective practice with time put aside each week to analyse individual practice with the aid of video reflection (see appendix III) and termly supervision and performance management (see appendix XXXVII) to track this process, with the emphasis on self-reflection and development rather than refocusing this back on the school culture. Reflective practice is not a new notion, Dewey (1938) talks about reflective practice as a process of careful consideration, that being said many workshops and CPD days have been used to address the aspects of the

school's vision in terms of how this relates to the daily practice of all employees across the school in all departments.

Another paper makes the important suggestion that while cultures “almost always endorse the values and beliefs of some subgroups” (Sabanci et al., 2017, p.31) they also tend to neglect other subgroups which can cause some conflict. This is supported by Montana and Charnov, who suggest that the individual that does not agree with the “group behavioural norms” (2000, p.385) tends to conflict with the whole institution or organisation. This leaves us to question how we can get *all* employees to agree and follow the culture as the increased percentage of staff accepting and understanding this that will arguably increase the prevalence and strength of the culture. There is some evidence to suggest that if a school's culture is not explicit then culture will develop, evidence suggests that “multiple members of the school community will decide spontaneously to behave in such a way that learning, civility, good character and flourishing are optimised” (Bennett, 2017, p.12). This same research goes on to suggest that there needs to be a “clear and detailed sense of purpose and strategy” and that a “vague notion of how the culture should be” (ibid, p.26) is not enough. This also raises the issue of those who cannot or do not want to follow the cultural identity of the institution. What is to happen to these individuals? They could be excluded, perhaps due to incompatible belief systems as opposed to stubbornness or failure to understand the principles. This raises further issues if this situation were to be transposed into the school at the centre of this study. Firstly, Gentle Teaching does not seek to make anyone a pariah or outcast. Secondly, which does encompass school cultures outside of this study too, there has to be a point where the confines of the approach are set and no longer



available for compromise. To address this the school's interview process at all levels and departments is based on identifying compatible values within the applicant and how closely linked these are to those of the schools. (Bennett (2017), suggests that aspects of not adhering to the set culture should be followed up through "retraining existing staff, recruiting new ones, or moving unsuitable members into different positions", he goes further to suggest "losing staff, as well as recruiting" (p.33). This is the extreme end of the scale. However, a school culture should not be too difficult or complex to follow.

Hodgkinson (1983) identifies a threefold process that is involved in a cultural transformation. This goes from a 'transrational level' where values are conceived through the understanding of beliefs, ethical understanding and moral opinions. Through the 'rational level' where these values are considered to be instilled within the social norms and become the expected standards; and finally, to the 'Subrational Level' where these values are experienced and become personal preferences. This could become an additional way to decide if the cultural expectations have been fully developed and at what level of the developmental process the school is in presently. It would also be advantageous to attempt to establish at what stage in Hodgkinson's cultural transformation process the confines of the culture are agreed upon and set.

### **2.3.3 What Makes an Effective School Culture/Ethos?**

When looking at school ethos or culture, it is important to identify the factors that make an effective ethos/culture. Gruenert (2000) stated in a research paper about changing school culture, six factors that contribute to the collaborative nature of a school. He makes links between the effectiveness of overall school collaboration and the strength of school culture. These six factors include; Collaborative leadership, which he suggests is the extent to which

managers maintain collaborative links with staff; Teacher Collaboration, the level at which teachers engage with each other that furthers the school vision; Professional Development, the level at which teachers value the continued and professional development provided by the school; Collegial Support, the level of effectiveness of which teachers work together; Unity of Purpose, the level at which staff work towards the school vision; and, Learning Partnership, which measures how all groups work together including parent, teachers and pupils. The author does not suggest that the sum of these values identifies the total effectiveness of the cultural approach, but he does suggest that these highlight issues within the school culture. Some of the elements, although not expressly identical have been included in the methods of data collection within this study.

Alternatively, to ascertain the effectiveness of a school ethos/culture we could look at the impact that various interventions have on the school and its young people, however, these tend to be linked to individual school priorities and local educational commitments, for example, in areas of high socio-economic deprivation the priority might be towards attendance, whereas other areas and schools might focus on raising Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) results or general attainment. One paper has suggested ways to measure the impact of the school culture, for example, Karadag and Oztekin-Bayir (2018) have produced a model that is reported to show this impact. They look at areas such as “self-awareness, transparency in relations, balanced processing and internalized ethical viewpoint” (p.46). These outcomes tend to focus on an ethos that is driven by the leadership team. Whilst this paper recognises that the leadership’s contribution within the institution needs to adapt to meet the goals, it suggests that ‘Authentic Leadership’ is a potential process for the realisation and achievement of these goals and the

paper did find a positive correlation between the “authentic leadership behaviours” and school culture (ibid, p.65). This research seems to link effective leadership with effective school culture, but other literature sees the factors for effective culture in other aspects of school structure and organisation.

One paper makes some recommendations for components that, when included within school structures and processes, are considered to affect the overall feel of school culture, although the authors Lee and Louis, link school culture with school improvement suggesting that “organisational learning and professional community” are core underlying elements in the culture of a school (2019, p. 85). Organisational learning is suggested to be “important” because it links student learning with effectiveness in other sectors (Marks et al, 2002). This is far removed from the ‘Authentic Leadership’ research that puts the cultural change with the leadership, and this paper suggests that those at all levels within the school can contribute to the development of the culture/ethos through the collective development of practice. The notion of the professional community is meant to be the development of practice through shared experiences both in teachers' classrooms and from that knowledge gained when observing colleagues teaching.

Other suggestions about culture and ethos identify that respect and trust are equally, if not more, important to the overall concept of the development and sustainability of effective school culture (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). These authors do not suggest that these factors themselves are sufficient to form a culture or ethos, but instead suggest that these elements are considered vital in the development and sustainment of effective culture. It would appear from the literature that

has been provided within this chapter that there is not a single method or element that creates an effective school culture, but these are multifaceted and a mixture of various components that are often linked to the priorities of the school. There is research suggesting that measuring the impact of school culture is impractical (Schien 1992). Without a formula applied by each school and in equal measure, it would not be possible to allow comparisons between schools to be made to ascertain which school culture is the most effective.

Elements of trust and respect as discussed in this chapter, can be seen in the culture of the school at the focus of this research and these practices or values feature highly within the Gentle Teaching pedagogy.

#### **2.3.4 Values - Enacted or Espoused?**

There is research from around the globe about the congruence of enacted and espoused values in the development of secure and long-lasting institutions or organisations (Schuh and Miller, 2006.; Howell et al., 2012.; Gopinath et al., 2018.) Much of this research is based in the world of business, but this can be applied to schools despite their non-profit approach. However, the term profit could be applied to the accumulation of knowledge and learning as opposed to financial gain, which makes an interesting and relevant thread for discussion. This section will look at how the enacted/espoused values link with the development of ethos or culture and how this has been taken from one sector to another. This section will demonstrate relevant literature to highlight how business and education overlap with how they create a climate for all to succeed for employees and stakeholders alike. This will also provide a basis for determining how the

school at the heart of the study has developed its culture and how this has benefitted all relevant parties.

One theory suggests that enacted values tend to explain behaviours within the organisation and that these are not usually understood explicitly by either the institution or the individuals who work within the organisation (Schuh and Miller, 2006). They continue to suggest that espoused values tend to be considered the essential elements and it is these that are often formulated into strategic plans and mission or vision statements. Mission statements tend to be more visually appealing and are designed to be shared with all individuals to allow collective participation and adherence.

Many schools highlight the 'vision statement' in a variety of different ways, which is similar to the business sector, which has company credos. These credos are a statement of intent that set out to highlight the company's aims in terms of its corporate responsibility to consumers and employees (Gopinath et al., 2018). Unlike the credos of businesses, many schools opt for shorter and easier-to-remember statements, often a series of keywords to share their values. The school at the heart of this study offers three keywords "Nurture, Teach and Sustain" which can be open to some interpretation and as such are supported by a more involved vision statement document (see appendix XVIII). This notion then leaves one thinking if any perceived weakness of school culture or ethos is then due to the lack of understanding of the vision statement, or if it is the disparity between the espoused or enacted values. Howell et al. (2012) suggest that there is a problem with many models for measuring the congruence between espoused and enacted values, they suggest that perceptions or understanding of the institution's values quite often do

not reflect the actual values themselves. This study has provided a comparison in the methodological approaches to measuring not only the congruence between espoused and enacted values but also to gauge the level of understanding of the values themselves. The findings related to this aspect directly relate to the research questions posed in this study, particularly regarding research question three, "Can Gentle Teaching be embedded and sustained within a school's culture". For example, all staff should be able to identify the values within the vision document which will give some indication to gauge if this culture has been embedded, comparing this with the length of service will produce some evidence to ascertain if this culture is perceived by the staff at differing lengths of service and thus demonstrate if it has been sustained.

In addition to how well the values are understood, there is also research regarding how the behaviours of leaders to follow the values have an impact on how they are incorporated into working life by other staff. Gopinath et al. refer to the term "behavioural integrity" (2018, p.280) as an indication of the difference between words and action, or if what is said are followed through with action. This suggests that for the congruence to be more closely aligned, there then needs to be evidence that the vision is being followed by those perceived as the creators, whether that be the school management team or corporate leaders. There is a suggestion that people are more concerned with the compliance of promises or the vision than the need to do the right thing (Simon, 2002), which seems to allude to the notion that staff are willing to follow the rules if the leaders do too. Although in the school in this study, it would be suggested that 'doing the right thing' is the ethos as it is based upon the values inherent in human nature. Putting

this into context, the 'right thing' could be better described as doing something respectfully or compassionately.

One study that was written almost a decade before Simon's notion of management leading the change in values, suggested that some leadership organisations view the process of change as happening from an individual perspective. The research suggests that leaders give the tools, means and processes needed to build the values or culture, but leaders and line managers continue to need to use persuasion and encouragement methods to implement these changes. Kabanoff et al., (1995) highlight that it is often achieved through "seeking to encourage employees to comply with requirements rather than simply expecting it" (p.1098). Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), suggest that for employees, in this case, teachers and educators, to be motivational there is a need for them to believe that they are capable of "accomplishing these goals" (p. 206) that are present within the culture of a school. They also suggest that "transformational leadership had very strong direct effect on teachers' work settings and motivation" (ibid, p223). The school at the heart of this study has also been through a process of transformational leadership using the European Framework for Quality Management Model (EFQM) at the same time as developing its Gentle Teaching-focused culture. The EFQM model "focus[es] on meeting the needs of customers and stakeholders, empowerment of staff, clear communication and improving the links between strategic planning and operations" (Cartmell et al., 2011, p.209), which enables companies to reflectively develop policies and practices to meet the needs of those they serve.

The school at the heart of this study has weekly processes (see appendix III) which could be seen as prompts for discussion about the reflective nature of the engagement with the pupils but as there is a heavy focus on linking these meetings to institutional values this could be portrayed as a compliance tool. There is also a strong possibility that this process will highlight areas in training and understanding which could be developed through the process of continual professional development. Research by Raven (2014) suggests that “reflection had become an integral component of their day-to-day practice” (p.776) and this research highlight the benefit that reflective practice can have in enabling people to see their “strengths and weaknesses” (ibid) which demonstrates support for the use of reflective practice for self-improvement.

### **2.3.5 Developing Culture through the Continued Professional Development Process**

It has recently been argued for school professional development planning to link closer to that of career-stage development of teachers, suggesting that the neglect to address this, or overlooking the need for staged development, can have a detrimental effect on the whole school culture (Furner and McCulla, 2019). In this research, the authors present evidence that shows an example of the focus that teachers in the study had at stages in their careers. For example, between years one and three teachers were suggested to be developing their classroom management strategies. In years four to seven, there had been a shift from classroom to teaching practices where the authors reported that teachers at this stage enjoyed discussing and learning from expert teachers. The final reported stage is referred to as ‘expert teachers’ which included eight years and more experience of teaching. This group were considered to be adaptable, flexible and able to manage change. The research suggested that teachers at this level were “interested in using research and proven pedagogies skilfully” (ibid, p.511). It also suggested that



the extent to which the values and ethos were understood was directly linked to the career level progression of the teacher inasmuch as newer teachers had a lower understanding of the school's values than those with more experience (ibid). This would seem feasible, as the longer staff had been in the school, the greater the level of exposure to the embedded values through the policies, procedures and interactions with peers and colleagues. However, the literature does not identify a change in school culture or ethos and how this would affect those at different career stages. It is most likely that both new teachers and expert teachers would find adapting to this change easier. It would also be fair to suggest that when new to the profession, teachers would most likely be focused on implementing the skills, knowledge and understanding that they gained during initial teacher training (ITT). Furner and McCulla, suggest that for this culture to be effectively shared there needs to be "explicit conversations" to "make transparent and affirm the key values on which the school is operating and how they are embodied in its ethos and culture" (2019, p513.). This suggests that school-based employees needing to be told specifically about the ethos of the school is surprising, but it does concur with the research as stated by Furner and McCulla and supports the notion that the longer staff have been exposed to the values and ethos the more they seem to be understood. It also suggests that there is more to the ethos development than the school's mission statement being displayed around the school. This gives the appearance of an almost natural development that has been seeded and tended to by the school leaders.

Although this literature discussed school ethos development through natural career progression, it does not address specific training designed entirely around the school ethos. There is very little literature that focuses directly on using school INSET days or CPD to encourage whole-school

engagement with the school ethos or culture, however, there are some tenuous links with outcomes or products of school ethos or culture. For example, a paper by Schipper et al. (2020) looks at using the development of lesson observations to promote the professional school culture. Other papers look at different products; Nooruddin and Bhamani, (2019) look at the development of the leadership team to increase achievement; Buli-Holmberg et al., (2019) address collaboration to develop the school curriculum and Arthur et al., (2010) discuss using postgraduate professional development to address various aspects of school culture.

The examination of the literature surrounding how some schools have used CPD or INSET will enable a comparison to be made with the school at the centre of this study, which has developed its unique ways to encourage all staff to engage with and believe in the corporate values of the school. One research paper (Schipper, et al., 2020) addressed the staff's feelings and opinions of the school's use of Professional Development (PD). The school decided to address the professional development of staff through the implementation of lesson studies. The findings from this quantitative study of eight schools found that the implementation of lesson studies as part of professional development increased the perceptions of the school's professional culture as well as the perceptions of the school conditions and teacher self-efficacy (Schipper, et al., 2020). Although this demonstrated that CPD was used to explore the school culture, it does not indicate if this allowed the culture to develop or change as it was just the perceptions staff had regarding the culture that was recorded. This study did highlight the importance of collaborative and collegiate working in terms of professional practice.

A study by Arthur et al., (2010) does link more closely to the development and sustaining of school ethos, however in this research, a sample of teachers were interviewed, and they were unable to link the CPD that they were undertaking to the school's values and ethos. One participant felt that the research that she had undertaken as part of her postgraduate professional development was not able to impact the school or influence the culture as she suggested that "no one seems interested" (ibid, p.481). This same research paper continues to suggest that there is a link between the person responsible for organising the CPD across the schools, for example, if this was led by a school leader, it was more aligned with the school priorities whereas a non-leader could focus more on needs and desires of individual teachers. It could be that there is some sort of consensus between teacher focus for CPD and that of the leadership team to find CPD that best meets the needs of the students or links with the school development plan. However, there was insufficient evidence to support this claim with the sample size and the types of schools that were studied. This does, however, provide supportive evidence that school priorities influence the type and the direction of the CPD, which could be used to develop and sustain the school ethos or culture if this were apparent in the School Development Plan (SDP) as a priority. Reeves et al. (2003) suggest that there can be some limitations to using CPD to elicit changes in school culture. They cite that there can often be a gap that can be difficult to bridge between the establishments' "cultural norms" (p.21) and those being promoted on the course, which can prevent these practices from being imported into the school setting. This would suggest that care needs to be taken when finding the correct format and type of CPD to make this bridging of gaps easier and more focused towards the needs and requirements of the school as set out in the SDP.

There is research that directly reviews the correlation between CPD and the development of a school-wide culture. One paper suggests that CPD has been used in some situations to develop a culture of 'learning and leadership' (Bates and Watt, 2015). They suggest while the encouragement of CPD programmes for certain staff groups is effective the downside is that these are often limiting as the individual groups take it upon themselves to develop the school in silos rather than a collective workforce. This research continues to suggest that this silo learning tends to ignore the development of 'a wider culture of learning across the school' (ibid, p45.). This paper continues to offer suggestions as to types of CPD that could be implemented within a school, interestingly they highlight a form of 'peer review', which is a reflective process of self-evaluation and development. Reflective Practice has been directly linked to CPD in one paper, Martinez (2022) suggests that "Reflective Practice is defined as an approach to continuous Professional Development (p.88)". This process of shared reflection entails the collaborative focus on an issue or problem with a mind to identify solutions and see these solutions in action on a continual circle. The author does suggest that this process can include evidence from videos, journal or even written accounts of actions or interactions in the classroom, there is also a very high regard suggested towards collegiate working and shared experiences with other professionals in the classroom.

There is often a perception that Teaching Assistants (TAs) work with those students who 'are experiencing the most difficulties in school' (Collins and Simco, 2007, p.199). These difficulties are often linked to Special Educational Needs or English as an Additional Language; however, this paper is made in reference to mainstream education. This thesis is focused towards a very different school and as such the ratio of staff to students is much greater, in most cases 1:1. This

by fact determines that the teacher and the teaching assistants all work with the students that are perceived to have the most difficulties. The difference between this school and mainstream could be seen in how the class teacher acts as a 'learning mentor' and delegates teaching activities to be delivered by the classroom assistants with oversight from the pedagogically trained professional.

### **2.3.6 What Does this Mean for my Study and How does it Fit in?**

The literature discussed and analysed in this chapter has identified various key components and issues regarding school culture and ethos, from which terms to use to describe the feeling of a school, to how these individual cultures can be assessed in terms of their effectiveness. Within this review, these issues have been considered in terms of this study and some components have been incorporated into the research methods as part of a whole and varied collection of both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. This will be addressed in greater depth in the Methodology chapter. However, it is useful to highlight which of the discussed components have been used and how they are suited for this study, and the rationale for these.

In terms of this study, the phrase 'culture' will be used to describe the feel and the collective direction of the school. It seems more fitting as the school at the heart of this study refers to its own 'Culture of Gentleness' to describe the vision and position of the school. As already discussed, some research identifies the ethos as a product of the culture (Solvason, 2005), so to analyse the ethos of this school would be to identify what makes up the culture and these could be numerous and subtle nuances. This study will look at the culture as a whole through the feelings and thoughts that both the employees and students express. There has also been

literature cited that suggests that a culture is based upon unwritten rules and expectations or norms (Deal and Peterson, 1999), as this study demonstrates the school has produced a series of documents to enable the staff to follow the culture. Deal and Peterson have not suggested that having these rules identified prevents the term from being used. If we look at other research, the written rules or expectations, in this case, can be likened to a corporate vision statement or business credo (Gopinath et al., 2018) which are present in many schools for clarity and directionality.

Some literature discussed levels through which the transformation of a culture can be measured (Hodgkinson, 1983). While this study has not been designed to ascertain the point at which the transformation of the culture has been achieved, it continues to remain relevant to the study and has been incorporated into the methods used for data collection. This is not being used exactly as suggested by Hodgkinson, as the school in this study began its transformation over ten years ago, and although there are still staff present when this transformation began, it would be difficult to eliminate much of the bias in this direction of historical data would provide. For example, the methods employed by the school for expressing corporate culture have developed and adapted over the years, based on the organisation of the school in terms of the changes in the cohort, educational policy, and social changes. This research has been incorporated loosely into this study by including the length of service in the school within the data collection, and while the terms used by Hodgkinson will not be used, the notion of how accepted the culture has been identified. In addition to these levels, there is also literature surrounding the six factors that contribute to the collaborative nature of a school (Gruenert, 2000). Again, these factors have been implemented within this study although not exactly as suggested by Gruenert. For example,

he talks about Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Collegial Support, Unity of Purpose and Learning Partnership, while these are important factors within this study, some are more poignant than others due to the unique organisation of the school. Leadership within the school is a large team considering the number of pupils on roll and being a residential school the partnership with parents is different, being such a geographical distance from parents. Also, collegial support is varied between departments and classes, as each class has some level of autonomy to organise their team within the limits of the school policies. This also links again to the need for a set of written rules to ensure that each team follows the school's vision. It will be apparent that some of these factors have been incorporated into the methods in variations on Grunert's research. There is evidence (Waldron and McLeskey, 2010) to suggest that a more collaborative approach to school improvement supports the needs of the students better, they suggest that "when fragmentation occurs, the capacity of the school to address student needs is diminished" (p.69). This supports the need for a whole school uniformed approach to developing its culture.

The final element of this literature that supports my study has a focus on the terms 'enacted and espoused' values, for it is the difference between these two terms that will show how closely the school's culture is followed and embedded. It is this that will enable the research questions to be answered and bring all the parts of the study together. Although the literature provided in this chapter does suggest that a greater alignment between espoused and enacted values will indicate well-established and thriving school culture, it has also identified a potential issue which relates to how well the organisations' vision has been understood by all within the institution. It is this element that plays a crucial part in this study in determining if the vision is understood and

accepted and various tools have been developed within the data collection methods, not only to ascertain the level of understanding across the school, but also to evaluate how this vision has been shared and developed.

### **2.3.7 Section Summary**

This sub-chapter has explored a variety of literature on school culture and ethos: from the use of terminology to the very makeup of school culture and what makes this important to the running and success of a school, and how this can be influenced. There will be some themes that will continue to run throughout this thesis which will be discussed in some detail within the methodology chapter. These themes will include how well the present culture of the school is understood; how this information is gained: and how staff recognise and learn to embrace the culture. This thesis also looks beyond what the culture means to the staff, and seeks to explore the culture from the perspective of the students, seeking to identify if there is a pattern or links between the two groups of perspectives.



## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

#### 3.0 Methodology Introduction

I refer to my conceptual map (see appendix II) around which the whole research is situated and with which it is supported. This chapter adds to this map, as it links together the methodological approach taken and the theoretical lens that I have chosen to observe and focus the work. It is this chapter where I explore the choice of methodological approach concerning my research questions. I also draw in the rationale for data collection methods with an analysis of the associated limitations and how I have addressed these. I refer to my theoretical lens throughout this chapter to establish the important links to notions of truth within the research.

The thesis title 'An investigation to explore how Gentle Teaching can be embedded and sustained in a school culture' has been created to explore and analyse the pedagogy that has already been implemented into this school's culture. My study aims to highlight if Gentle Teaching is a technique or system that can be taught, or if it is a series of tools naturally present within the user to provide ideal learning environments and conditions for young people and adults with cognitive difficulties. Either way, the study will discover what skills were part of Gentle Teaching and observe these in practice in a school that has well-established practices and a related whole school ethos. This has been linked to the School Development Plan and subsequently the School Improvement Plan (see appendix IV) as a process for school improvement and developing a school-wide culture based on mutual respect. Whilst the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, details a process through which schools can become "self-

improving school systems” (Hargreaves, 2010, p6), there are some methods that are more difficult for unique schools to follow. This school at the focus of the study is unique in its out of borough state-maintained remnants of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) has developed by promoting other aspects of the self-improvement system, such as self-reflection and developing inter Local Authority links.

This project title naturally led to a series of relevant sub-questions being established, which are poignant and relevant. Firstly, “Is Gentle Teaching a natural ability, can it be taught/learned?”; it was necessary to discover from the relevant and related literature if the notion of Gentle Teaching can be taught or learned. The literature demonstrated a series of techniques and skills that one could develop as a “Gentle Teacher” (McGee, et al. 1987a). Although the literature claimed that these skills as discussed in the previous chapter on Gentle Teaching are accessible to all and therefore inherent within us all, there is a requirement for us to change our practice, our perceptions, and our values to enable this to be most effective (Hobbs, 1991).

The second part of the research question, “How is the Gentle Teaching approach, used, embedded and sustained within a special residential school”, looked to establish the extent to which Gentle Teaching has been embedded within the school’s culture. The research, as highlighted in the literature review proceeding this chapter, explored the difference between enacted and espoused culture. The research also suggested that the closer that these two elements are aligned, the more effective they are as a tool for measuring the success of an culture (Gopinath et al., 2018). To better capture this interval between espoused culture and enacted

culture, a creative and qualitative process was embedded into the data collection methods to determine this perception from the staff and young people involved within the study.

The third part of the research question, “What are the perceptions of Gentle Teaching for the service users within a school that uses this approach?”, looks to identify the perceptions that the young people have with regards to Gentle Teaching, this alludes to the particular research question relating to the perceptions of the cultural ethos as expressed by the service users. This question has raised many concerns about ethical considerations. As the voice of the student is vitally important from a Gentle Teaching value basis, it is, therefore, an important element of the study. Some innovative ideas have been created to enable this to happen effectively. This will be addressed in full in the ethics section of this chapter which will identify the barriers that were overcome, with reference to the students’ special circumstances and needs.

The following section describes the design of the study about the methodological perspectives, and identifies the rationale behind the choice of approach and theoretical perspective.

### **3.1 Methodological perspective**

The qualitative and quantitative dichotomy has been widely researched (Gill, 2011), but how the nature of the different methodological perspectives relates to this study is addressed briefly to allow the clear focus to prevail with regards to the intentions of this study. Ratnesar and Mackenzie (2007) suggest that those methodological discussions are “dominated by a contrast and conflict, between the two approaches” (p.108) meaning qualitative and quantitative research.

Quantitative research tends to be more associated with the collection of numbers (Flick, 2015) the associated research methods are designed with this in mind and allow for data to be collected. There is almost a scientific approach to reduce possible variants which are demonstrated through the standardised interviews and collection methods that mean variants have been carefully considered and minimised through the design process (ibid). In contrast, qualitative research is less concerned with standardisation and random sampling, instead selecting “participants purposively and integrate[ing] small numbers of cases according to their relevance” (ibid, p11). The data to be collected is usually more transparent and designed to create a comprehensive picture of events and actions, this has been referred to as “soft techniques such as interviews and ethnography” (Swann and Pratt, 2003, p.52).

There is a large body of literature surrounding the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research, however, according to Morgan (2018), there has been a debate about how successful it is to “truly combine” (p.268) both approaches. This argument is very prominent in terms of this study as Symbolic Interactionism has been considered an approach that appears to allow the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods. According to Morse and Field (1995), Symbolic Interactionism has perspectives that are used within qualitative research, whereas Meltzer et al (1975) align the core principles with quantitative methods. This demonstrates support for mixed methods research and signifies an integration with other theoretical frameworks (Benzies and Allen, 2001).

As the school at the focus of this study had been using Gentle Teaching for some years, I was unable to successfully undertake data collection before the introduction and compare this to how

the school has progressed. Instead, I opted for collecting data that was more qualitative, which allowed comparisons to be made between staff and pupil experience, and this data, in turn, would triangulate with certain elements of working practice and against relevant supporting literature in the field of Gentle Teaching. Qualitative research had, up until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century been seen as a lesser approach to that of quantitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), with mathematics and formulaic paradigms often referred to as the “queen of sciences”. Several arguments came to light to show the value of quantitative paradigms and methods, for example, quantitative research was seen to focus on selected variables to elicit randomised trials, which is not the case for qualitative approaches that explore all variables and data. There was also a suggestion that the quantitative sciences were not appropriate for examining human behaviour with the need to make meaning and references to actions and activities. These two factors demonstrate that the choice of the methodological approach undertaken for this study remains appropriate and correct. Furthermore, there is evidence that suggests that qualitative research is more suited to the “emic view of studied individuals, groups, societies and cultures” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p106). This argument of the insider view is further supported and affirmed as useful for the study of such groups (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This makes an excellent supporting argument for my choice of methodological approach considering that as the researcher I am present within the field of study and fully immersed within the data daily. There is, however, a criticism of this, which will be addressed later in this chapter regarding ethical practitioner inquiry.

The study is explored and analysed through a Symbolic Interactionist lens which according to Blumer, is a “perspective in empirical social science” (1998, p.21) and as such it is based on

observable facts and analysis. To capture the observable facts, it was necessary to develop a series of field studies with follow up semi-structured interviews to tease out the required information to support the research questions and to provide notions of truth relating to the study. To address my methodological perspective through a Symbolic Interactionist lens, I have drawn upon some research from Blumer. I used the six parts of scientific enquiry that Blumer identifies as a methodology (ibid).

- 1) Possession and use of a prior picture or scheme of the empirical world under study.
- 2) The asking of questions of the empirical world and the conversion of the questions into problems.
- 3) Determination of the data to be sought and the means to be employed in getting the data.
- 4) Determination of relations between the data.
- 5) Interpretations of the data.
- 6) The use of concepts.

Blumer 1998 (pp.24-26).

Blumer (1998) suggests that the empirical world is seen and identified through a series of premises which are required to be identified as part of the methodological process. The premises to which Blumer refers were highlighted on page 8, but a summary will enable these to be applied to the notion of Symbolic Interactionism from a methodological perspective. Premise 1 identifies that humans act towards things based upon the meaning to which they ascribe them. Premise 2 suggests that these meanings are derived from social interactions with others and society. Premise 3 explains that these meanings can adapt and change with new interpretations. A series of related premises or rules should be identified as a process through ordering the research process. I feel that for this piece of research the, premise here should link with the components within my conceptual map which has been my basis and foundation for this work.

The second process in Blumer's methodological enquiry identifies the need to ask questions of the empirical world. This process has been identified through the research purpose and the associated research questions. Blumer stated that "the methodologist should examine carefully and appraise critically how problems are selected and formulated" (ibid, p.25). In terms of this research, there was a lengthy process through the meta-analysis within the literature review to establish the problems associated with this topic of enquiry and these were linked both to supporting literature and analysed through theory.

Blumer's methodological process continues to include data collection. Blumer suggests that "data are set by the problem" (ibid. p.25). However, he continues to suggest that the data need to be constantly examined to see if they require "revision or rejection" (ibid) concerning the problem. As will become more apparent as this chapter continues, the data collection methods have been designed to gather a variety of different forms of data to enable triangulation which in turn will highlight how the data needs revising or rejection. The collection methods have been designed to allow for flexibility which seems to concur with the research as stated by Blumer.

Blumer (1998) then highlights the need to identify relations between the data with emphasis on the identification of how the connection has been made and the conclusion that this presents. This component is of most interest considering the type of data collected and the use of a Symbolic Interactionist lens. As the theory suggests, meaning derived from stimuli is created by the individual based upon different factors. It is at this stage that connections are made apparent to the reader, linking observable actions to meanings based upon social interaction. This is closely associated with the next step in the methodological process, the interpretation of the

data. According to Blumer this “terminal step” involves the researcher relating findings to “an outside body of theory or a set of conceptions that transcend the study” (ibid, p.26). This action is performed during the analysis of the data where findings are related to initial literature and theory to enable comparisons to be made, and to highlight the significant findings the study has produced. Lastly, Blumer suggests that these concepts that have been discovered through the research process can be used to inform other studies and research.

This methodological process that Blumer identifies, appears to follow that of many research processes, including the scientific method (Burns, 2000; Gauch, 2003; Hammersley, 2011; Neuman, 2011) with slight variations on language. However, as this has been specifically identified by the principal theorist for developing Symbolic Interactionism over the years, it seems only fitting that this research project should attempt to explicitly follow the principles that have been identified. However, in terms of a methodological perspective, there is supporting evidence to suggest that Symbolic Interactionism leads itself to both qualitative and quantitative research approaches (Benzies and Allen, 2001). This same research identifies a plethora of associated research methods that are in alignment, and highlights the use of mixed methods to enable triangulation that is usually associated with Symbolic Interactionism (ibid).

Other methodological approaches may have enabled similar data to have been collected but in the interests of building upon my conceptual map, there had to be an optimal degree of connection between methodology and my theoretical perspective. I also had to consider the type of data that could be collected which, due to its nature and context, would be far removed from statistical data and sit within the qualitative epistemology. The previous chapter gave more



insight into my theoretical lens and the associated reasons for using this to observe and interact with the research, however, it is necessary to explain in terms of methodological approach how the two connect and link.

The nature of social research with regards to children is well documented as is the research into adults and interaction (Mayne and Howitt, 2014). However, my work is focused on young people with atypical perspectives on the world and as such their perceptions of truth and nature are also different. Whereas a neurotypical young person would more easily be able to describe how they feel as a result of an action or, in this case a school-wide culture, the young people in this study, with their complex diagnoses sometimes lack the vocabulary (Boucher et al., 2008) or the cognitive ability to describe these emotions (Serret et al., 2014) or actions, if the actions have much meaning at all for them.

Implications arising from Symbolic Interactionism suggest that to capture the nature of human interaction, one must view this from two perspectives: the meanings that have been associated at the individual level and those from the interactional level (Denzin, 1969). The subjects in the study will have notions about the world which change depending upon the information that is provided and there are the notions that arise from the interactions themselves, for example, the perception of a curriculum resource seen independent from its application can take on a new meaning when it is applied for its purpose. From a methodological perspective, care has been taken to ensure both these perspectives are examined. Webb et al. (1966) suggest that there is a need to employ multiple observational techniques and then this data been triangulated, also suggesting that no single method can produce the same discovery or verification. The premise

for this can be taken from the idea that “truth is tentative and never absolute because meaning changes depending on the context for the individual” (Benzies and Allen, 2001, p.544), which is justification for the need for data to be collected in a variety of ways and from various perspectives to enable the research questions to be answered.

### **3.2 Design Description**

The study is broken down into parts that elicit information from different participants. The methods employed within this thesis include: arts-based projects, arts-based project discussions, field studies, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The table below shows briefly how each of these methods will be used with the next section addressing, in more detail, what these look like and what data was expected to be produced through each method.

	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Tools</b>	<b>Participants</b>
<b>Arts-based project</b>	To gather the views and opinions about the school from the students.	6 months from beginning of the study Completed in one day between 10-30mins Classes had autonomy over what day did the art project to fit in with timetables. Classes completed on two separate days a week apart.	Template sheet Various writing tools Various symbols See appendix X	Students x 10 (with consent) Total students = 16
<b>Arts-based project discussion</b>	To triangulate the analysis of the Arts-Based Project through discussions with staff	6 months from beginning of the study Over two different days Same day as the art project was completed or following day at the end of the school day Discussion lasted from 30-50mins	Dictaphone to record conversations for transcription See appendix XXVIII	Class 1 – Teacher, HLTA, 4 Tas  Class 2 – Teacher, Senior TA, 4 TAs
<b>Field studies</b>	To observe interactions between staff and students	8-10 months from beginning of study (CV19) 6 separate days varied due to needs of the students and school commitments. 4 different classes Observations between 1-10mins each	Field notes template form See appendix VIII	6 participants in total 4 teachers 1 HLTA 1 TA 6 students observed
<b>Semi-structured interviews</b>	To draw out more information from the field studies to identify if actions or interactions were planned.	8-10 months from beginning of study (CV19) Interview occurred at the end of the day following the field study observations Average length of interview 50mins	Semi-structured interview template See appendix IX	6 participants in total 4 teachers 1 HLTA 1 TA
<b>Document Analysis</b>	To explore the most used policy documents to identify links to Gentle Teaching and school culture.	Throughout the length of the study (10months)	Four policy documents	None

Table 1 – Method distribution, rationale and timeline table

To address the use of Gentle Teaching in the classrooms or practice settings requires observation to draw out connections between the theory and the practice. This then needed to be discussed in semi-structured interviews to ascertain whether the actions of the subject were purposeful and deliberate. This whole process will act as a cross-referencing process to ensure that the observations are a clear indication of the intent. However, according to Blumer, the notion of reality lies with the human experience (1998). This is to suggest that my observations are based upon my understanding of the experience or in Blumer's terms 'schemes or pictures' of truth. Although I want to base this study on my observations and empirical evidence, I also want to ascertain the thoughts behind the actions of others. The premise for this also stems from Symbolic Interactionism theory suggesting that it is not just understanding the individual's point of view but understanding the "process by which the points of view develop" (Benzies and Allen, 2001, p.545).

I also want to highlight the Symbolic Interactionist view of interaction and how it is dependent upon the meaning that different stimuli have upon the perceiver. As interaction is by definition a joint action, I wish to discern how this interaction is perceived by the students in the study. I will determine if there is a perception that Gentle Teaching is something that is done to them; if it is done with them; or if there is no perceivable intent. This has been completed through the analysis of an art-based Project. For the projects to be led simultaneously and in a similar fashion, a lesson plan has been provided (see appendix VI) to direct classes in how to deliver this element. In addition, each class will have resource packs containing identical resources (see appendix X). This element is seen as a vital part of the study, not just for gaining some voice of the student but to abide by the values within Gentle Teaching in showing that the opinions of the young people

are just as valid as that of anyone else (McGee et al., 1987a). To ensure that the analysis of this artwork is fair and valid, I have chosen to encourage class staff teams to discuss the completed work and use this discourse to add to my own opinions. This adds yet another layer of data and analysis and creates a more critical perspective on what the students could be saying. To prevent this project from becoming a collection of marks on paper and to illicit more meaning for the young people, many of the symbols and colour choices have been adapted from the Zones of Regulation (Kuypers, 2011). The Zones of Regulation (ibid) was a curriculum tool developed to enable students to not just learn about their own emotions but to also provide them with a series of tools to enable them to move to a different Zone. For example, students will be encouraged to identify their emotions based on four colours (see appendix XXXV).

To focus the observations and to give more robust data, an observation tool (see appendix I) was created to enable techniques within the Gentle Teaching pedagogy to be identified and recorded as they happened during the interactions. These criteria were duplicated for the interviews to prompt the subject to make connections between practice and theory. There were several elements to the interviews that asked the participant to give a question a grade on a Likert scale. Although the introduction of a Likert scale produced quantitative data, the intention was to encourage and develop the participants' rationale behind the score they assigned and to further develop the qualitative discussion and “self-reflective behaviour” (Denzin, 1974, p.269).

### **3.3 Methods**

To successfully address my research questions, I have created some data collection tools that allowed for relevant information to be captured without disturbing the general flow of life at the school where this study was situated. As the younger participants either have limited functional

language or limited cognitive understanding of the process, I decided to gather their opinions in a rather novel manner, although there are examples of these methods being employed (see appendix VII(a-c)). I have opted for an arts-based approach that allows the students to express themselves in terms of how they feel. However, this requires analysis to provide answers on their behalf. The criteria for analysis has been provided and linked to the Gentle Teaching tools, techniques and values which have been discussed in previous chapters (see appendix XXXVI).

Arts-based research is considered different from a scientific approach, however it “yields distinct methodologies for knowing” (Rolling, 2013, p.4). Jones and Leavy (2004) suggest that arts-based research is any form of social or human enquiry that incorporates the use of creative arts into a methodological approach. Although this research is not based on arts-based research in its entirety, there is a need to employ some of the associated methods to enable the views, opinions and voices of the non-adult research participants to be collected. These methods have been used to collect the data, but other tools will be needed to analyse evidence to create an a triangulation process offering an additional critical element to the data that has been collected.

The adults in the study are a collection of staff from across the school. The methods used for collecting data for this group are varied and several types of collection methods have been employed to enable cross-referencing. The main collection method is that of field studies and observations of the interactions between staff and students. To minimise the effect that the researcher can have on the subject, my time in the observations has been limited to short intervals which were based on personal perceptions on how my presence was affecting the students and also from guidance taken from other staff within the classrooms. Field notes were

taken briefly and discretely onto a small template (see appendix XIV (a&b)) and audio recordings detailing the observations were made and transcribed immediately after the observation (see appendix XV (a-F)) to maximise retention of information gained. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken to collect “factual and attitudinal data” (McNeill and Chapman, 2005, p56.) but also to draw out “contextual information” (Hennink et al., 2011, p.131) about the participants' reactions and personal stories related to the research or school culture.

### **3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews have been employed over unstructured interviews to enable more focused and relevant data to be collected. The use of semi-structured interviews has also enabled a tighter grasp on time restrictions ensuring that interviews are approximately equivalent in terms of the time taken and thus the volume of data that can be collected from the adult participants. The benefit of semi-structured interviews lies in the understanding that the same questions will be posed to all participants which will enable comparisons to be made in terms of frequency of responses or similarities of terms used in response (Gillham, 2005). Although from a Symbolic Interactionist perspective, notions of truth are beheld by the individual in terms of what the stimulus means to each individual, which means that the need for standardised questions is not vitally important as any answers that they share will be relevant to this study. However, in terms of keeping the study succinct and focused, there is a need to offer some structure to the interviews. Other strengths associated with this type of interview include the ability to capture non-verbal behaviour and communication (Greenfield, 1996). This data will add to the views and opinions from the staff as it might prompt additional questions to gain further understanding or provided some insight into true heartfelt answers compared to

participant answering as a perception of what they deem the researcher is expecting or through the connection the institution is expecting.

There are some disadvantages associated with interviews as a research method. These include time, expense, the nature of the quality of the interactions, researcher bias (Kumar, 2014) and even cultural misconceptions arising from replies (Greenfield, 1996). However, these limitations are less significant than the value of the data that is collected. Some researchers opt for pre-pilots of their interviews which is said to have both benefits in terms of enabling the most relevant and precise questions to be asked. Gillham (2005) suggests that these pilots can be used to give opportunities to change the wording in the questions, sometimes the ordering of words and events to direct the focus, should the analysis of this pilot stage highlight issues. The focus of these pilots is usually directed towards participants similar to but not those taking part in the actual study. One of the reasons I chose not to trial my interviews was due to my potential number of willing and available participants.

The interviews consisted of a selection of closed and open questions to firstly establish a concrete answer and then to break this down to ascertain why this answer was given (see appendix IX). The closed questions formed a quantitative element that can be compared across the whole study and the open questions formed the qualitative element. In addition to these two types of questions, the interview also requires participants to rate their answers on a Likert scale (see appendix IX). This has been designed, not as a way to gather more quantitative data but to encourage participants to explain why they gave themselves this score over, say, a higher or lower score. It is a way to encourage more in-depth discussion and to encourage participant

reflection. This reflection process is quite an important feature in the data collection, as it fits with the Gentle Teaching concept of reflective practice.

There is some suggestion that interviewees should be given some information regarding the type of questions that will be asked during the interview (Gillham, 2005). However, the purpose behind my questions is to enable reflection on the interactions with the students. Giving the questions out before the interviews could have two possible effects. Firstly, it could enable participants to be more prepared with an increased length of time to think of possible responses, however, this could also mean that participants have time to prepare with answers that they perceive to be correct, which would create bias in the study. Secondly, it would enable participants to feel more relaxed with the knowledge of what will be asked, which in turn could increase the number of participants willing to take part. As I wanted the interviews to reflect the observation of the interactions, I decided not to give a list of questions to participants as I felt this would prevent a true reflection and make the interview too structured. The structure of the semi-structured interviews was flexible and relaxed, except for the use of Likert scales which were used only as a tool to encourage critical discussions with regard to how participants scored themselves. However, to alleviate some anxiety I did share the purpose of the interviews, the guarantee of anonymity and some general expectations in the participant information sheet. I also reiterated that the interviews were not about determining correct answers, as the purpose of the study was not to distinguish truth from falsehood.

Gillham (ibid) also suggests that interviewees should have the opportunity to read and agree to the transcriptions of the interview. This has not been an issue during this study as I have been



interested in trends over direct quotations. On the odd occasions where I have felt the need to add participant voice within the study, I have sought permission from the participant to ensure that they are happy for me to quote what they have said during the interview. Because the number of participants was small, this would have enabled participants to identify themselves within the research, and this would present issues should they be misquoted or not give additional consent over and above what had been agreed at the start of the project. Interviews were recorded for the sole purpose of creating transcriptions, however this process is not without issues with misrepresentation or mis-heard words, so participants were given copies of the transcripts to read before direct quotation was taken for the results in this thesis.

### **3.3.2 Field Studies**

I have used the term 'field study' to refer to the participant observations. Field study is said to be "crucial to our understanding of important phenomena that can only be documented and studied by going into the field" (Malsch and Salterio, 2016, p.17). However, this is not the sole reason for this method to be employed within my research. These observations were natural occurrences in terms of observations in real environments and of real daily activities as opposed to artificially created situations. The objective is to analyse the interactions between staff and pupils; for this to be optimally realistic and authentic, I wanted my presence to be minimal but not covert. Symbolic Interactionism has been referred to as an ethnographic practise as and such it is usually categorised into four types; open overt, open covert, closed overt and closed covert (Bryman, 2016), these categories were carefully considered when planning the data collection stage of the research.

In preparation for this research project, I had to carefully consider how best to approach the observations. I knew that my presence would have some impact on the data that was collected, but I also knew that I was not inclined to perform any covert observations. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, I knew that it would have been virtually impossible for me to observe classes without my presence being detected, even if I disguised my intent for other intentions, my presence still would impact the outcomes. Secondly, my values, which are aligned to those within the Gentle Teaching pedagogy, would not be comparable with covert uninformed observations. I wanted the pupils to be part of the study, which meant being honest and upfront. Other reasons based upon ethical considerations will be discussed later in this chapter.

To focus my observations on collecting the correct and most relevant data entailed planning and creating an observational checklist (see appendix I) which was based upon a similar tool that was created as part of the “Teaching Strategy Check List” (Hobbs, 1991, p.15) but adapted to meet the needs of this study. This enabled me to focus my attention. For example, I wanted to share equal time between staff interactions and those of the young people. This would highlight subtle changes in the interactions. For example, staff might approach a young person and that young person might choose to engage or move away. These were the interactions that I needed to capture, record and re-address later in the interviews. The observational checklist also enabled me to focus on the techniques of Gentle Teaching to determine if these were happening, and to what extent. Again, this captured information was taken to the interviews to cross-reference with the staff if there were intentional or incidental. The correlation between staff purposefully planning and considering the Gentle Teaching techniques, those who had not considered these

techniques, and those for whom these techniques flowed almost naturally, was the key in determining the effectiveness of the whole school ethos.

Research recording in field study is personal to the researcher, according to Savin-Baden and Major (2013). They suggest that some researchers take very detailed notes, which can include word for word transcriptions of each participant, key phrases or simply summaries. This is slightly different for my research as I know that most of my younger participants have no formal verbal language and rely instead on gestural, symbolic and even behavioural indicators to express their wants, needs and opinions. My field notes were designed to allow the capture of behaviours and actions more than words and language; however, the staff participants would often use verbal language to direct, reward and share value, which also needed to be captured.

There are suggested challenges and advantages with fieldwork. The advantages can be seen in the quality and quantity of data to be collected. The challenges suggest that there is a possibility that the researcher can become overwhelmed by the fieldwork, and they can have difficulty noticing or acknowledging this change. This is said to cause problems with the data collection and analysis of the data, as the researcher can become impatient and lose clarity to make judgements (ibid). This limitation was planned into my research, as the number of field studies was pre-determined by the number of participants willing to consent, and some reduced in length due to the impact researcher presence was having on the participants in the classrooms. As stated in both my ethical approval and later in this chapter, I did not want my presence within the classroom to become a distraction for the young people or an antecedence for stress or behavioural expression of this. I used my understanding of the students and judgement from the

staff to determine the length of each observation to save from negatively impacting the wellbeing of the students. However, there were enough data collected from each group of participants to enable triangulation and effective analysis.

### **3.3.3 Arts-based Project**

There is a difference between arts-based inquiry and arts-informed inquiry. This study will not use this approach exactly how it is designed to be used but tailor the approach to enable the students to express their views in a form that is most accessible to them; in this case, mark-making or art. Arts-based inquiry involves the process of understanding the art or the phenomenon through the artistic process whereas arts-informed inquiry involves art being used to represent the findings of a study or issue studies (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). This approach is suggested to be “sufficiently fluid and flexible to serve as either as a methodological enhancement to other research approaches or as a stand-alone qualitative methodology” (Given, 2008, p.34). There is, therefore, an element of arts-informed research within this study to allow for the expression of opinion from the younger participants. In terms of this study both approaches are being used to explain the process of thought and include the voice of the student.

This approach has some links with the theoretical approach of symbolic interactionism. Art is suggested to be a “synthetic system of thinking and learning”, and it is said to include “self-expression, invention, communication and reinterpretation of symbolic languages” (Rolling, 2013, p.12). This makes some comparisons with symbolic interactionism in terms of how meaning is understood and through the interactions with stimuli and society.

Arts-based research (ABR) is considered as an approach that enables researchers to “investigate, question and represent aspects of human life and the social and natural worlds of which we are part” (Leavy, 2017, p.3). This approach is considered “person-specific” that “strives for authenticity rather than objectivity” and it is “well suited to exploring children’s perspectives on their experiences” (Cologon et al., 2019, p.57). As suggested by Nind, (2014) research is often done to children rather than with young children. Cologon et al. (2019) identify ABR to negate this, giving a voice back to the children, especially when there is a deficit-based understanding of disability leading to low expectation in terms of participation.

ABR has been described as a methodological approach (Pentassuglia, 2017) and it is suggested that it goes “beyond the restrictions that limit communication in order to express meanings that otherwise could be unintelligible” (Barone and Eisner, 2012, p.1). It is safe to employ this approach in the methodological perspectives of this study as it is in keeping with both the theoretical approach and the core body of research on Gentle Teaching. This offers an accepted data collection tool that provides a voice for those participants who find expression and communication difficult and, as the research, as suggested, are often dismissed from educational research due to the difficulties in capturing their views and opinions.

This study has employed this approach to capture the thoughts and opinions of the student participants. As many of the younger participants have neither the functional communication skills nor the associated cognitive understanding, it was important to be rather creative in attempting to ascertain how they considered the school’s ethos in terms of how staff engage with them. I didn’t want to pay ‘lip service’ to this element of the study as I consider this to be

both unethical and disrespectful. The voice of the student participants had to be given equal if not, greater emphasis in the study.

An arts-based activity was planned to enable the student participants to express themselves. This would in turn be analysed to determine what and how they felt. The analysis of these pieces of work was open to researcher interpretation which could have contained bias; however, these findings were not used as hard facts but made for interesting discussion. Amongst the art resources were some images that could have had more obvious negative or positive connotations. One example was the use of basic emoticons for the more easily expressible emotional responses. There was also the opportunity to associate darker colours with negative feelings and lighter with more positive, but again this would be open to interpretation. As the student participants within the school are already accustomed to the association of emotions to colours based upon the work of Kuypers (2011) with her curriculum on the Zones of Regulation, there is some support to suggest that interpretation of the artwork will be accurate. To further increase the accuracy of this analysis, plans were implemented to explore the conversations of the class staff when discussing the work produced by the students at the end of the session. Rather than relying on my judgements alone, I would also incorporate the feedback from the teachers and support staff, who know the individuals better than I do.

Using an arts-based activity meant that all students could participate as part of an art lesson. To enable a sense of equity, I chose to allow all students to participate in the Art Project as this would not be too dissimilar to the activities that they would likely be engaged with in class. It would have been difficult for the students to see peers engaging in something that there were

unable to complete themselves. To ensure that the ethical considerations had been followed, only the work of those who gave informed consent were collected and analysed. It could have appeared more unethical for some children in a class to be left out of the activity, and moving only those with consent into a separate room would also have caused unnecessary distress through the change of routine and an unfamiliar environment.

The data collected from the arts-based project consisted of work from ten young people. This was taken from two classes; one group with six young people and the other class with four. Class sizes are usually larger, however some of the young people were not present at the time of this study. Classes had autonomy over the day and time to conclude this project. Each class group had access to the same resources that were provided in packs (see appendix X). These packs also included lesson plans (see appendix VI) to formalise the process for the activity, and this plan also included key language and questions to use with the class. The activity packs included materials such as pencils, crayons, coloured paper, and a wide selection of both coloured and black and white symbols. There was no guidance on how to use the resources or how many to use, as the purpose of the study was to allow the young people to express themselves. There was a choice of either A4 or A3 templates to allow the young people to exercise an element of control over the work. The templates gave the students a visual prompt that the topic was about school, and the supporting staff, having followed the lesson plan, were encouraging the students to creatively express what school meant to them. This was quite an abstract concept but as demonstrated in the results chapter, many of the students were able to complete this task. This element of the study was designed both to enable the voice of the student to describe what they think of school and enable a group discussion analysing the artwork. I was hoping that the

artwork would demonstrate like or dislike of school, which would be a starting point for the group discussions.

There was no time limit to complete these projects although generally, the feedback indicated that each young person took between 20-30 minutes. Classes were able to adapt how the project was presented to best meet the needs of the young people and to minimise any disruption to their day. Projects were concluded on different days and the work was carefully stored or returned ready for the following layer of assessment which would conclude at a later time.

#### **3.3.4 Document Analysis**

The school in this study uses a series of documents as driving features of policy and practice. These include the School Vision Statement, the School Improvement Plan, the School Evaluation Form, and the Statement of Intent. While these are similar in terms of the purpose to promote the continual improvement of the school, its staff and the students, each document has a slightly different focus. To determine how effective at promoting the school values and ethos, these documents will be subjected to “Content Analysis” which according to Silverman (2020) is one of four common methods for analysing documents. The other three methods include “Thematic Analysis, Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis” (ibid, 298). Content Analysis is the process through which themes are extracted from larger documents and the frequencies that these themes arise is measured. This approach was used to extract the themes from the school documents by breaking down each of these documents into individual sentences. These sentences were then given a theme related to the topic with a variety of different themes arising. Once the whole document was given initial themes, these were grouped into more significant themes and eventually combined to leave the core themes, this is discussed in greater detail in



Chapter 4.3 where the themes are also described. The use of content analysis, particularly comparative keyword analysis, is identified as being more adapt at identifying differences between text than conventional qualitative analysis methods (Seale et al. 2006) which is why this was used in this context to make the identification of specific themes more accessible. Content analysis and thematic analysis are very similar, although there are some subtle differences; content analysis looks more towards the frequency of occurrences to identify categories, whereas thematic analysis is about developing a more cohesive analysis through themes (Neuendorf, 2019). The purpose of the analysis of these documents was to provide that additional form of triangulation with the other data collection method to ascertain if the procedures and policies were in fact being followed within the classroom or understood through the interview process.

### **3.4 Background and rationale for design choice**

The methodological approach needed to enable an element of flexibility to ensure that the needs of all my research participants were considered. As the participants themselves are from both the teaching staff and the pupils, there was a massive spectrum of needs. Staff would be content to be observed, but merely the presence of someone in the classroom, who could be perceived as not belonging in the routine would cause distress to the children and young people within the classrooms. To negate this, or at the very least to reduce the impact, alternative methods for collecting data from the young people were developed in the form of an art project. This removed the need for the researcher to be present within the class for longer periods or more frequently. There was still a need for the researcher's presence within the classroom to collect data for the field study, but the presence of senior school leaders in the classroom is by no means

an unusual practice and therefore the impact was minimal. Classroom practitioners were happy to share moments of engagement in the classroom without the usual angst that formal lesson observations can produce. To prevent altered behaviour from staff as a result of researcher presence from complicating the data, different data collection tools including field studies, semi-structured interviews, art-based projects and group interviews about the art project were used to triangulate data and focus on answering the research questions. This enabled the research to continue with the mixed methodological approaches that have been associated with Symbolic Interactionism and to enable my research to stay guided by my theoretical lens.

#### **3.4.1 Evaluation of Choice of Methods and Statement of Limitations**

There are reported to be some limitations linked to the associated methodological perspectives within Symbolic Interactionism, and these will be highlighted, evaluated and discussed to demonstrate the process through which these limitations have been negated or reduced in terms of impact to this study. One main criticism of the theoretical perspective is seen in the argument that, early during its conception, Symbolic Interactionism lacked clarity and the processes were not articulated effectively (Benzies & Allen, 2001). There is a suggestion that this was passed down verbally through the teachings of Mead (Meltzer et al, 1975). However, I feel that this perceived issue relates to that of Gentle Teaching, which also suffered criticism for being passed down verbally (Cuvo, 1992).

According to LaRossa & Reitzes (1993), there has been an increase in the clarity of symbolic interactionism and many elements within has been refined. However, Blumer is reported to have argued that Symbolic Interactionism is a philosophical approach to direct the observation of the

empirical social world and not in itself a method (Benzin and Allen, 2001), although he does identify how Symbolic Interactionism lends itself to field studies when the researcher is immersed within the environment (Handberg et al., 2015). There has been some research highlighting the “methodological difficulties” associated with Symbolic Interactionism, there is a suggestion that the framework associated with Mead’s work is “not easily researched” and that it has no “specific techniques for enhancing its researchability <sic>” (Meltzer et al., 1975, p.84). To account for this, I opted to employ a range of methods commonly associated with Symbolic Interactionism in the field, these include researcher presence within the field to experience the interactions first-hand.

### **3.5 Ethics**

The process of applying for ethical approval for this study was made more difficult considering the nature of the study. Approval for research on adults was straightforward, as they were able to understand the concept of informed consent, however, this study also involved children and particularly vulnerable children. The approval formed two elements one directed towards the adult participants and the other towards the young people and children.

In applying for university ethical approval, it was important to provide enough information to demonstrate that I had given enough consideration to all the possible ethical issues that could have arisen in research of this nature. I ensured that I was able to “balance the risks and benefits” (Gelling, 2016, p.43), the potential risk to all participants, and the benefits that this research has provided in terms of the contribution to the body of knowledge around this topic. Although Gelling suggests that there is no research without risk to participants, I wanted to explain that I could see the potential issues and that I already had planned to minimise these. I

also had to give information about the different research participants as I was aware that obtaining informed consent from all of them would be difficult. I also knew that my position within the institution would have an impact on their decision to approve my study if I had not indicated reasonable adjustments to reduce the impact.

Another considerable concern for the ethical approval for this study was ensuring that I had attempted to enable all participants to understand their rights. Although my plan could not guarantee that the level and type of rights were fully understood by all, I had to assure the ethics committee that this was an important topic and that through my actions I had demonstrated that I had no intent to purposefully exploit my participants or even leave myself open to accusations of exploitation. This was demonstrated through the submitted letters and study information sheets (see appendix XXXIII) which were presented in a variety of accessible forms (see appendix XII). In the next section, I will explain in greater detail the ethical considerations within my study and how I negated these from becoming issues preventing the study from being undertaken.

### **3.5.1 Ethical Considerations**

The major consideration in the planning of this study was how I could gain informed consent from all participants. The adult participants were fully able to understand the concept of informed consent and they were able to understand the rights they had around withdrawal and confidentiality. A simple consent form and project description were enough to pass all this information onto this cohort, leaving a greater focus on obtaining informed consent from the children and young people (see appendix XXXIII). One more difficult issue discovered during the

planning of this study was to be found in the power balance between my position within the institution and the adult participants.

By far the most challenging aspect of the ethical process was ensuring the participation of the children and young adults. I needed to be honest and upfront, and my thought processes, and my intentions needed to be transparent, not only because the cohort of young people would easily see past covert research but also to ensure the safeguarding of the children. This approach meant that I needed to explain the study to the children in a way that would be understood by the vast majority, if not all, the younger participants. Considering the barriers that these young people have to life and education, this again, was not a simple feat.

The young people in this study had a vast difference in cognitive ability and in relation to this was the difficulties that they have with both receptive and expressive communication. All younger participants have a diagnosis of autism, learning difficulties and social, and communication difficulties. I used a variety of different resources to share the intentions of my study with the children, this was in the form of a simple language study description, replacing words with symbols which, elevates the need for the young people to read (see appendix XXXIII). Still, even with symbols, this was not completely accessible to all as some of the young people had only pre-language skills, which in its most basic form is communicated through physical behaviours. In my symbol letter to the students, I explained very simply and briefly what I was doing and why I needed their help. I explained that I would not be angry or upset if they decided not to help me or if they wanted to change their minds. I told them that the work would be secret and that nobody would know to whom the work belonged, which was a very basic way of explaining

anonymity. I made it very clear that there were no right or wrong answers, as I did not want them to feel pressure and I did not want to restrict their creativity. My letter ended with information about how I would share the results and how they could ask me for more information.

I also had to consider where the line was drawn between the age of consent for such a study or, if through the mental capacity act, this consent was not possible. I decided to seek permission from the parents of the young people in the first instance. This raised another issue. The school is residential, which does not necessarily pose problems gaining parental consent, but the issue lay with the placing local authority (LA). Some local authorities class a young person as being 'in care' if they are placed within a residential school, which means they can share the parental responsibility. Once I discovered under what section each child was cared for by the LA, I could attempt to seek consent from the appropriate persons. For example, the student could have a Section 20 full care order which would mean consent would need to be obtained from just the social worker, or in the case of a Section 31, shared parental responsibility with the local authority and parents, this would require two lots of consent.

As the study is concerned with understanding the voice of the young person, gaining permission from a parent or corporate parent felt a little underhanded and almost negated the purpose of the study, so I opted to ask the young people as well. If parents gave consent but the young people did not, then I opted to take the views of the young person as the deciding factor. If parents did not give consent, then I decided not to ask the young person to take part in the study as this could have caused a conflict or caused an increase in anxiety through the uncertainty.

Once consent had been given and all participants were aware of their rights to anonymity, withdrawal and access to information, I had to turn my attention to the issue of causing pain or distress. The ethics approval template provided a firm baseline to ensure that potential risk or harm to participants was considered and reflected upon and methods of minimising the risks provided. Information regarding the nature of the study was provided in terms of the effects this would have on participants, and although my study would not intentionally cause pain or distress, this could have been a possible outcome purely as a result of my presence. With the nature of how autism presents in the students, changes in routine can cause a considerable increase in the levels of anxiety. A stranger in the classroom could also increase this level of anxiety because their purpose in the room is unclear and often there are unperceived links to the past trauma that the young people have experienced, some new or different experiences can result in these being relived.

I could observe in class with minimal impact as my presence is well known by most of the young people in the school, as I have in the past taught many of them. However, I did not want to assume that, just because I was known to them, my presence would not have a negative impact, so I decided to end the observation at the first sign of any distress. My presence could also have caused the young people to act or behave differently, which could have caused an element of researcher bias. To attempt to alleviate this to some degree, I spent the year preceding the study increasing my observed presence within all classrooms. As part of my managerial role within the school, I was expected to go into classes to observe, support and share communications with staff and pupils. I purposely delayed the data collection aspect of the study to ensure that I was

able to move in and out of classrooms without causing too much interference to the regular routines.

My position on the Senior Management Team had the potential to affect the study in terms of staff feeling that they could not opt out or that they might have felt they needed to act or answer questions in a certain way as opposed to being truthful. This power differential could have had two considerations; firstly, ethically, staff might have felt obliged to take part in the study, they may also feel that they cannot withdraw for fear of reprisals. Secondly, there is an element of bias from staff giving responses in the interview that expresses a perceived correct answer or limited answers for fear of looking incompetent or unsupportive towards the corporate school policies or professional standards.

To attempt to address this concern, I informed staff that I will be wearing a badge to indicate that my presence at that point in time is purely based upon the study and that when wearing the badge, I will not be representing the Senior Management Team. There is only one caveat to this rule which is issues surrounding the safeguarding of children or other criminal acts in which case I am legally bound to raise these concerns to the appropriate authorities.

To honour my research proposal and ethics, I have shared my findings with all relevant participants. For adult participants, this was relatively easy and required a simple summary (see appendix XXXVIII) to be emailed to all staff and hard copies for each department for those staff less inclined to read emails. To ensure that the children and young adult participants received information about the findings, I had to think creatively again. I opted to write a short letter,



using simple language and symbols. The information I wanted to share with them was more about how their involvement helped to enable them to make connections with what they had done and what this meant (see appendix XXXVIII).

As previously mentioned in this chapter, I have been present in the field during this research, and as a place of work, and this can raise some ethical issues in practitioner enquiry. I shall take some time to explain what the ethical issues are with practitioner enquiry and how these have been overcome. Some of these have already been discussed within the chapter including the researcher/participant power differential with me being a member of the school management team, however, more issues could arise. Clayton (2013) mentions “obligations and a sense of loyalty” as a potential difficulty she faced within her study. Thinking on this, similar could be apparent within my study as I also have an obligation towards my colleagues, both participants and non-participants, as my presence will have undoubtedly been felt; obligation to the students, families and other stakeholders and even to my institution and research community through the sense of producing an unbiased contribution to the body of research. Whilst many of these considerations could be planned for through careful planning, I had not considered what I would do if my research raised some unfavourable findings. The only safeguards I had towards this outcome was the fact that reflective practice and openness to change and development had been the cornerstone to the school’s progression and these featured deep within the school policies and practices. I also had first-hand experience of this as a member of staff engaging in weekly video reflections of practice, so I felt reassured that should unfavourable findings be raised as a result of this study, they would be met with openness and that I would be able to report my

findings without compromising my contribution to the body of knowledge and the research community.

In order to recruit participants, I sent out a school-wide email with information about my study and what this would look like. I had some replies asking for more information and several staff members agreed to take part. I also asked a group of staff in a meeting, which led to more participants. Unfortunately, this coincided with the global pandemic and I was unable to allow staff or students to mix outside of bubbles. Due to the increased levels of anxiety within both the staff and student population of the school, I decided to postpone my data collection. It would have been possible to alter my methodological stance and opt for alternative methods for data collection, but I wanted to follow my theoretical lens and ensure that my conceptual framework remained intact. As groups began to mix again, I was able to reinitialise my data collection. All classes were given the packs to enable them to take part in the art project, but I ensured that I only used the work from consenting students and their parents. Permissions from the parents, carers or corporate parents were very high with 80% returning their consent forms. Consent from the students was given by agreeing to take part without collecting signatures, however, I listened to classroom staff and if they suggested that a pupil was becoming upset or anxious, I took this as the student opting out. Teachers from two different classes recommended their classes for the art project and this consisted of a team of one class teacher, one senior classroom assistant and two or three other classroom assistants.

Once the art projects were completed, I arranged for a suitable time with the class teacher to meet with the class. This was no longer than a week after the art project and the class staff agreed to take part in a group discussion about the work and agreed for me to record the

conversations for transcription (see appendix XXVIII(a-c)). The group discussions were open with no structure, allowing for a frank and critical discussion of the artwork that was produced. There was an element of hierarchy within the classes with teachers and senior classroom assistants leading the conversations, but all staff contributed at some point (see appendix XXIX (a&b) and XXX (a&b)).

Field studies were a little more difficult to find participants, but I found 6 members of staff to willingly participate in field studies followed by interviews. Two of these were class teachers, one an Early Career Teacher (ECT) who had been employed by the school for over 10 years in various different roles including care. One was a new teacher in their second year of teaching and new to the role. Other participants included four classroom assistants, three of whom had been at the school for between three and five years, and the fourth had just completed their induction period. All staff had the experience of working with children in other school settings. I have enclosed a brief case study to give you more information about the participants including teaching background and training.

Participant 1 is a member of staff who has been teaching within the school for 18 months as their first teaching post. This member of staff completed the ECT (Early Career Teacher) period or NQT (Newly Qualified Teacher) as it was referred to at that stage. This teacher began their teaching career briefly before the Global Pandemic but before this time received both the standard school induction for all staff and the additional induction for class teachers. Participant 1 was teaching a class consisting of seven students one of whom had an individualised timetable taught in a satellite classroom due to specific needs that made them vulnerable. Participant 1 also had a regular and consistent team of four classroom assistants and one senior classroom assistant holding the qualification of HLTA (Higher Level Teaching Assistant).

Case Study 1 (Participant 1)

Participant 2 is a member of staff who had completed their ITT (Initial Teacher Training) as the pandemic hit. Participant 2 had worked in the school for twelve or thirteen years during which they held many different positions across the school from both education and care settings. This member of staff took on greater levels of responsibility and more senior posts as they progressed. Participant 2 held the qualification of HLTA (Higher Level Teaching Assistant) and acted as class teacher for a period preceding their teacher training. Having been a member of staff at the school for many years they would have attended various training sessions including specific CPD (Continual Professional Development) related to Gentle Teaching. This member of staff taught in the lower school with students in key stages two and three, and they were supported by a consistent team of four classroom assistants and one senior classroom assistant.

Case Study 2 (Participant 2)

### **3.5.2 Section Summary**

This section has identified the methodological perspectives associated with this thesis and it has summarised this in terms of linking the methods to my theoretical lens of Symbolic Interactionism. Specific details of each method that had been used have been described, along with how these link to both the topic of my thesis and the lens. The next chapter draws out the data that has been collected from each of the methods employed, and then begins to analyse this data.

## CHAPTER 4

### Results and Discussion

#### 4.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents the data from the various data collection methods, and it will begin to draw out some common themes identified within each component. The process of data analysis within this study is guided by Braun & Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis research, but it will also be formulated within the conceptual framework of this study. Braun and Clarke offer a structure for the analysis of data, which includes becoming familiar with the data (ibid) as the initial process. For example, as the data collected is under three distinct headings of staff data, student data, and document analysis data, these will form stage 1 of the Thematic Analysis. It is in this chapter that the data is presented in its initial form before progressing through the chapters and through the other stages as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). There will be explicit links at this stage between the sub-research questions and themes from the data to begin to build a picture of how these are being answered; for example, the first research question seeks to identify if Gentle Teaching can be taught to staff, or if that skill is a natural ability. This is supported by examples of data gathered through field studies where the staff have been observed interacting, and this was followed up in greater depth with semi-structured interviews. Both data sets have been analysed for themes and patterns that will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5. The data collected from the student participants gathered facts and opinions directly from the young people about their perceptions of Gentle Teaching, which will answer the second sub-research question. The final sub-research question looks to ascertain how Gentle Teaching can be embedded in a whole school ethos is answered through an analysis of the

school's policy and vision documents, this supports the depth at which the ethos has been embedded and will provide a method for understanding the overarching research theme to explore how Gentle Teaching can be embedded and sustained in a school culture for this specific school.

#### **4.1 Adult Participant Data**

All adults (n=6) that took part in the study were observed briefly engaging with the students in situ, where they were most at ease and already engaged in either curriculum or functional tasks. The observations were planned with the staff members at the beginning of the day to discuss the preferred time for the observation to take place and to remind participants of the intentions and expectations of the study. It was made clear to participants that there was no expectation of seeing a lesson being delivered, in fact, it was made clear that it would be more meaningful to see general interactions. The reason for this expectation was to ensure that the interactions were more natural and that the interactions between the staff and the student would be more easily seen, I was also mindful that had I expected to see a planned activity this could be misconstrued as a formal lesson observation. The purpose of this pre-observation meeting was also to determine if there would be any perceived concerns in terms of ethical stance and the student's right to withdraw. Pre-cursors were established so that the adult participant could subtly indicate to the observer that the behaviours and presentation were being influenced by the presence of an additional person in the room. During these field study observations, the interactions between the adult and student were recorded on a template (see appendix XIV (a&b)) in coded responses to minimise the impact that perceived notetaking could have on the interactions themselves. For example, the students could become distracted by the additional

sensory stimuli and therefore reduce the validity of the observation. To ensure that records of the observations in the field were maintained, immediately after the observation, audio notes were recorded to aid analysis at a later stage.

Following on from the field study, participants were interviewed as promptly after the observation as possible. This was, in most cases, no later than the end of the school day. All semi-structured interviews were recorded to aid transcription and later analysis, and only a few notes were taken so as not to distract from the rich evidence produced from the dialogue. Interviews were conducted in a private space where interruptions could be minimised, and the views and opinions of the participants were valued in terms of the time given and through Active Listening (Rodgers, 2015). Active Listening is a coaching tool that is often used within counselling or coaching (Levitt, 2002). It is defined as a “communication technique that requires the listener to attend and to focus on the speaker or the group to understand the message” (Comstock, 2015, p.42)

From the early stages of these interactions and in-the-moment analysis, various patterns began to emerge showing some links between the length of service and understanding of the Gentle Teaching tools and techniques. While those staff members with relatively short lengths of service at this school showed understanding of and were able to explain the tools, without the opportunity to practice these in action the connection with the school culture and ethos was less. This is most likely to relate to the information imparted during the induction period being fresher in the mind. Inversely, those members of staff with long service history and induction being almost a distant memory, explained their understanding of the Gentle Teaching tools and

techniques more fluidly through the school ethos and culture. For example, participant 01 suggested that annual “refreshers” (see appendix XVI(c)) on Gentle Teaching would boost their understanding of the Gentle Teaching principles. This participant also indicated the importance that they associated with understanding the principles “because it’s within the culture of the school’ (ibid). This same participant rated their understanding of the school ethos as being slightly higher, suggesting that they have had more involvement with whole school development which, has supported their understanding. This participant had the longest period of service within the school out of those interviewed and, although they were relatively new to the position in the school, they had experience from other departments in the school. The difference between the understanding of Gentle Teaching principles and understanding of the school ethos was only one in terms of the rating they gave themselves with the Likert scale during the interviews. This was not significant enough to suggest that school ethos is seen separately from Gentle Teaching. It was noted that all participants observed then interviewed rated their understanding of both Gentle Teaching and School Ethos as ‘High’ with little or no difference between the two. While there was a possibility these high answers were given, as there is an expectation that staff should know and understand the school policies and procedures, there would have been no repercussions for honest answers if this highlighted a lack of understanding. The interview format and template (see appendix IX) provided opportunities for staff to express why they gave themselves the score, which would have enabled them to speak a little more freely and qualify their level of policy understanding. The actual discussions showed more involvement with policies and processes across the school. For example participant 1 identified their understanding was higher “because...my extra role supporting with the development of the



curriculum” (see appendix XVI(f) <00:11:43>), which needed them to have a greater understanding of the needs, and the nature of the school to fulfil. Participant 2 also scored their understanding of the ethos, values and culture as high, suggesting that “I’ve been here a long time” (see appendix XVII(k) <00:16:15>).

Participant (02) had been working at the school for many years and in several different roles. They suggested that, despite having training in both Gentle Teaching and the school culture, it was not until they took part in the training sessions with the external consultant and became a “reflective” (see appendix XVII(b) <00:02:14>) practitioner, that it really made sense, they said “over the first five years of working, I did not know what Gentle Teaching was” (see appendix XVII(e) <00:06:35>) but they reiterated that they understood what the school’s ethos was. Participant 02 suggested that, even with the video reflections on their own practice (which is a process that is encouraged on a weekly basis in each classroom) , it was not until they embarked on the Gentle Teaching school training that they realised “<they> missed the whole point of the video” (see appendix XVII(f) <00:07:36>) and the point was in fact “spend<ing> time together...and...valuing each other’s time” when Gentle Teaching made sense. At one point in the interview, participant 02, indicated that Gentle Teaching “came natural <sic> to me”.

The adult participant data was very rich and produced some relevant themes that will enable the research questions to be discussed in Chapter 5. The data has shown that the staff observed and interviewed understand the common names for the Gentle Teaching techniques but have not really heard of the terms that are indicated within the literature. However, when reworded, it

was apparent that these concepts were being used. For example, when asked what the term 'Stimulus Control' meant, Participant 01 asked for some clarification, after which they were able to express the need to take ownership of the resources.

“Don't give them transition cards and then a fidget toy and then a coat...like something all the time because they won't know whether they're coming or going.”

Participant 01 (see appendix XVI(d) <00:08:36>).

This comment demonstrated that they understood the concept but not the terminology that had been used.

The data has also linked both school culture with the Gentle Teaching approach with many participants seeing it as part of the whole school culture. The data has also shown some disparate evidence that Gentle Teaching skills have been both learned through the various training opportunities provided, and there is also evidence to suggest that staff had these skills to begin with. These will be argued in greater depth in the following chapters.

#### **4.2 Student Participant Data**

Before I explore the data gathered from the student participants, I have included four case studies to give you more information about the needs, abilities and talents that each student possesses, this also includes basic diagnosis and the level of verbal communication skills they each have. Information relating to the diagnosis is taken directly from the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). Although this information is based upon the EHCPs of each student, these have not been cited to protect the anonymity of both, the student and the local authority, who take ownership of creating and maintaining the plans.

Student 02 is a 9-year-old young man. He has a diagnosis of ASD, and he has severe difficulties with social communication, social interaction and social imagination with rigidity in activity and thought. He has delayed expressive and receptive language skills which impact his ability to engage effectively with his peers despite a preference for reciprocal relationships. He is a day student and travels in excess of one hour to attend school each day. He appears to enjoy school and the structure that this offers, he also appears to enjoy the curriculum activities that are provided. Student 02 can verbally express himself to a point although he is not always able to express how he is feeling which can result in behaviours of concern. His academic levels are lower than other children his age although he is working towards National Curriculum level 1 in most subjects, except for Mathematics and Literacy, where he is reaching National Curriculum level 2. He has a great sense of humour, and he likes to spend time with staff exploring his likes and interests.

Case Study 3 (Student 02)

Student 03 is an 11-year-old young man. He has a diagnosis of ASD, and he has social communication and social interaction difficulties. He is verbally able to express himself however, he will usually initiate spoken interactions to request a desired object or activity or to express disapproval or reluctance. He generally speaks in short phrases; however, he can make requests using short but complete sentences when this is modelled for him. His cognitive levels, while lower than children his age, are high within the school. His reading age is comparative to his chronological age as he shows an interest in reading and literature. He does have some sensory issues whereby he likes to control the environment around him, this can sometimes reduce his ability to engage with his peers as he can vocalise his disapproval very loudly in the event of changes to his environment.

Case Study 4 (Student 03)

Student 05 is a 13-year-old young man. He has a diagnosis of ASD, ADHD and mild to borderline learning difficulties. He experiences a high degree of impulsivity, intolerance of getting things wrong and, uncertainty which results in behaviours of concern. He has difficulty with transitions and a high degree of rigidity to minor changes. Cognitively, he is working at a lower level than other children his age however, he is working at National Curriculum level 1 and 2 in most subjects. He is verbally able to express himself and he delights in talking about his areas of interest in great depth. He is more able to understand receptive language than he is to express himself. He appears to enjoy school and, as a day student he travels locally each morning. He is very vocal when he feels unfairly treated as he has a good sense of justice. He engages well with peers of similar needs, abilities and communitive levels, although due to his rigid behaviour, he will often fall out with his friends.

Case Study 5 (Student 05)

Student 08 is a 17-year-old lady. She has a diagnosis of ASD, learning difficulties and complex communication difficulties. She does not speak and makes her needs known through gestures or objects of reference. If she is unable to make her needs known she can become frustrated which can be displayed through behaviours of concern. Her cognitive levels are much lower than children her age, and she is working in a non-subject specific curriculum based on the Areas of Engagement. She has a lovely personality, and she loves to be either watching others or sitting with the group. She can become introverted in unfamiliar situations or with new people and will often hide behind her hair. She loves music and will use her voice to make sounds as her own form of singing. She really enjoys sensory equipment and art.

Case Study 6 (Student 08)

All young people (n=10) that took part in the project produced a finished piece of art, an example of which is shown in figure 1 below. Two young people chose not to use the symbols that were provided but instead drew or wrote something to express how they felt. One of these was eager to move on to a preferred activity and simply wrote the word happy. The other young person was more descriptive, and although he took this opportunity to discuss his interests and thoughts, these were not necessarily linked to the topic with which he was presented.

Five young people used symbols that could be identified as being positive or suggesting that the young people enjoy/like school. One young person used a mixture of both positive and negative symbols which, after a group discussion with the classroom staff, suggested that he was unsure what he was expected to do. One young person used a mixture of positive and neutral symbols. One young person used negative symbols, indicating that he was hot, angry, and tired, which after discussion with staff, it transpired that he had been in crisis (behaviourally unable to self-regulate) before the activity, and he used this opportunity to tell the staff how he was feeling. Larger copies of the art project can be found in appendix VII.

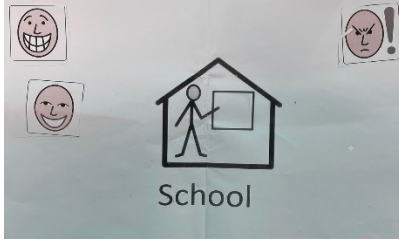


Figure 3 - YP01



Figure 2 - YP02

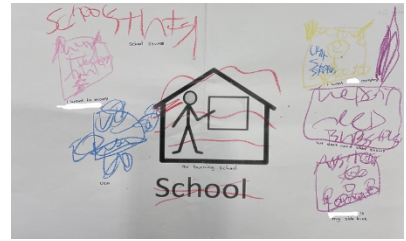


Figure 4 - YP03



Figure 6 - YP04

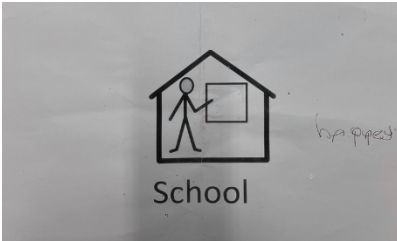


Figure 7 - YP05

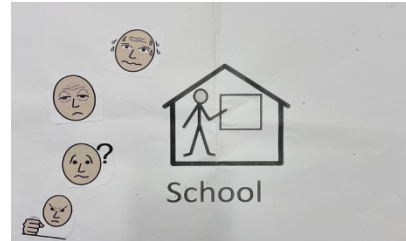


Figure 5 - YP06



Figure 10 - YP07



Figure 9 - YP08



Figure 8 - YP09



Figure 11 - YP10

On two different days, group meetings were held with the staff in each class and the work that was produced was laid out before them. Each piece of work was explored in turn and staff, that included a class teacher, a senior classroom assistant and at least two other classroom assistants, were asked to discuss what they felt the students were trying to say. This was an unstructured group interview, but it did need some questions to both prompt discussions and gain clarity. Questions posed consisted of prompts towards specific elements of the work, for example, choice of colour and choice of symbol. The discussions in each class lasted between

fifteen and twenty minutes and were recorded to be transcribed later for analytical purposes (see appendix XXVIII). It was clear that both class groups understood the needs and abilities of the young people and they were passionate to share this.

Four themes began to emerge from both the students' work and the discussion that the staff had regarding the meaning they derived from the artwork. The transcripts from the discussions of the work the students created (see appendix XXVIII) show some familiar themes. One of these themes concerns how the voice of the student is listened to and understood. Theme two is about the value that is given to the views and opinions of the students, which can be presented through the level of expectations and aspirations staff have of the students. The transcripts also showed a third theme which looks at other stimuli present in the lives of the young people, whether this is past events, future expectations, immediate interactions or thoughts and feelings from distant memory affecting decision-making and opinion in the moment. Theme four, which was not expected to be seen through this data collection method, showed some level of understanding of the Gentle Teaching Tools: safe, loving, loved and engaged (see appendix XXXIV). Staff were able to demonstrate both positive and negative use of these tools. These themes themselves link with the research questions and begin to make a cohesive argument in support of an answer.

*Theme one: Gaining the voice of the student*

This links back to my conceptual framework component of Gentle Teaching. To enable the young people to feel loved, loving, safe and engaged, they will need to know that they are being

understood, and that the voice they have, albeit through verbal or non-verbal methods has value and meaning.

*Theme two: Expectations and aspirations for the students*

If staff have low expectations of the students, then the outcomes will be diminished, as opportunities will not be provided for growth and development. In Gentle Teaching, this is called “social role valorisation” (Webber, 1995), which means having real meaning in life and to have a part in a social group based on independence and interdependence.

*Theme three: Past and present stimuli in the lives of the students*

This links to the conceptual framework but through the Symbolic Interactionist component and how meaning is derived from objects. In this case, the meaning that was shared in the artwork related to something that happened before the activity on the day and the impact that this presented to the student. In terms of what the data set is showing, this should not be limited to just that moment in time; it could present notions of truth outside of our neuro-typical time restraints, for example, some young people with Autism can have distant memories that feel like they happened only moments ago. Research surrounding the impact that time has on the perceptions of events is explained by Poole et al. (2021) who identify three elements called “temporal knowledge”, “prospection” and “monotropism” which are related to how young people learn about time; the differences in how young people prepare themselves for the future; and how young people orientate time around their activities and interests.

The use of the art project as a collection method used in combination with group unstructured interviews also gave information that was not originally identified for collection and was quite unexpected but insightful. It was not my intention to use this data set to ascertain the understanding that the staff had of the Gentle Teaching tools, however, the transcribed data did show both understanding of these tools and some questionable use or missed opportunities to use the tools during the interactions with the young people. For example, S04 in class 6 whole group interview, mentioned how the resources were adapted to enable the young person to see, using the environmental prompt, how much work there was left to complete. This could refer to the Gentle Teaching tools of “Shaping and Fading” and “Environmental Management”, both of which suggest that the teacher carefully adapts the resources to meet needs and inform the learner of the expectations. There is also an example where the same teacher commented on how “50 colours <were> not necessary” when supporting a different student. There were, in fact, limited colours but with this comment, the teacher suggested that the colour choice was too much for this student which, shows quite low expectations that demonstrate either a conflict in Gentle Teaching values or the understanding of the needs of the student was not fully developed. These examples provide a substantial link to both the conceptual framework and the research questions.

#### **4.3 Vision Statement and Policy Data**

An analysis was undertaken of the relevant and important policy documents used by the school. These documents would have been provided to new staff on induction and these also would have been very well known to existing staff as driving policy documents. This has been able to identify the depth at which the school vision and ethos have been embedded in the heart



of the school proceedings. These documents have also been included in the analysis along with the findings from both student participants and adult participants, and the same analytical system has been applied to draw out links and support for the research questions. This is to enable cross-referencing to be applied to the data to identify concurrent themes, for example, the School Vision Document highlights the use of the Gentle Teaching tools, and if these are used during interactions with the students, there is evidence to suggest these are understood.

There are many documents that the school has to ensure that consistent and robust practices are in place to ensure that the school and its stakeholders maintain the high standards that have been built. Whilst there are strong elements of the school's vision in many of the documents, from individual curriculum policies to risk assessments, the driving documents used by the school consist of:

- The Vision Statement (appendix XVIII)
- School Improvement Plan (SIP) (appendix XIX)
- School Evaluation Form (SEF) (appendix XX)
- Statement of Intent (appendix XXI)

It is these four documents that have been analysed in-depth to show themes and patterns that identify how Gentle Teaching has been embedded and sustained within the school ethos.

Each of the four documents was taken in turn for analysis. Each document varies slightly in its role and purpose as a driving feature for the school. For example, the Vision Statement expresses one sentence: "Living and learning together within a Culture of Gentleness" (see appendix XVIII), with the remainder of the document demonstrating the central purpose of the staff working in the school and how this will be achieved. Of all the documents within the

school, this one is most closely aligned to the principles of Gentle Teaching, and it provides the foundation stone for all the work that is done within the school. Chapter 5 will break this down, make the connections between Gentle Teaching and the School Vision apparent, and highlight any familiar themes that have arisen within the other two data sets.

**Vision Statement**  
"Living and learning together within a Culture of Gentleness"  
Requires each of us to be mindful that:  
**The central purpose of our presence in the lives of others is to:**

- Nurture
- Teach
- Sustain

**The experience of:**

- Connectedness
- Companionship (what it is like to be and have a friend)
- Community of contribution

**Through the principles that make every one of us feel:**

- Safe
- Loved unconditionally
- Loving towards others
- Engaged meaningfully in life

**We express these principles using:**

- Words that are kind, uplifting, encouraging and loving
- Eyes that are warm and smiling
- Touch that is gentle and respectful
- Presence that is attentive and responsive to the person

**And by reflecting upon our relationships in the context of how we have planned:**

- The environment
- The organisation of life
- How information is understood and acted on
- The dialogue (listening, interpreting and adjusting)

**The Culture of Gentleness can be supported by:**

- Keeping our young people at the centre of everything we do
- Working harmoniously together so we can realise the goal of giving each young person a real life
- Fostering a sense of community within [REDACTED]

Figure 3 – School Vision Statement

The other three documents (School Improvement Plan, School Evaluation Form and Statement of Intent) are linked to the overarching values, but they also set out how improvement and self-evaluation will be undertaken. The process of analysis involved working through each document and highlighting patterns that support the school ethos; those patterns that support the Gentle Teaching (GT) principles; those that support both the ethos and the Gentle Teaching principles; and finally, those themes or patterns that don't appear to be connected to either ethos or GT principles. To support and aid this process, the documents were broken into individual sentences, and these were coded to reflect sentence-and word-level themes that fit

into the four previously mentioned data sets. These first-stage analysis documents can be found in appendix (XII).

The initial organising and ordering of the data from these four documents indicated several themes for further analysis and exploration. These were identified due to the frequency of use within each document. Some other relevant themes were also identified due to the nature of the content bearing a direct relation to the study, and there was also a high frequency of use regarding these terms. There is an association between some of the themes identified in this data set and that of the data derived from the student participants, and because of this connection between the two data sets, these themes have also been included within the analysis.

The summary of the school policy document coding (see appendix XXV) shows a RAG-rated (Red, Amber, Green) entry of themes that arose during the initial analysis. For example, for those themes that showed a higher frequency, the colour green was applied and those that only arose once were coloured red. This was to enable a quick reference guide to enable some of the less frequent themes to be discounted or if possible incorporated into other themes, this is discussed in greater depth in the following chapter. This table was particularly useful when refining themes resulting in the following six core themes.

- Quality of life for the young people
- Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities
- External auditing and benchmarking
- Review and reflection
- Gentle Teaching Ethos linked to the school values
- Pupil Voice

#### **4.4 Analysis Introduction**

The purpose of this subsection is to explore the collected data and analyse that information in reference to the research questions to begin to show connections between data and specific research sub-questions. This chapter also gives the reader a summary and explanation of thematic analysis, including what this entails and why it has been used within this piece of research. There are multiple approaches to qualitative data collection and analysis, many of these are directly linked to the theoretical approach at the heart of the research, and others have disciplinary perspectives (Guest, et al., 2014). However, it is suggested that thematic analysis is flexible in that there are few or no concise guidelines for its use (Antaki et al., 2002), I tend to agree with this, as linked research that I have discovered tends to stem from the initial ideas of Braun and Clarke (2006) who described it as a method for “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data” (p.79). As the data collected through qualitative research is often “voluminous” (Gibbs, 2018, p.2), there needs to be a systematic way to organise the data sets to allow for more efficient analysis. According to Silverman (2020), thematic analysis is used to explore the meanings of participants from focus groups, this is just one of the data collection methods used in this study which corroborates some justification for its use. However, Gibbs identifies a range of data collection methods that are suited to thematic analysis, even extending this list to include almost any form of human communication (2018, p.3).

A thematic analysis approach was employed to code, structure and decode the data to address these research questions. This analytical approach is suited to both the theoretical approach followed within the study and the general nature of qualitative research. Thematic analysis is a

frequently used method for analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021.), but to enable a clear and direct path through the different sets of data, this introduction will explain how the process has been completed and the rationale for the decisions made at this stage. In the previous chapter, the first of six steps of analysis were demonstrated, based on the research of Braun and Clarke (2006). Step one, which is in essence this chapter focused on the exploration of the data and clearly defined what information was captured and through which method. Steps two to six have been used as a structural guide for the remainder of this chapter.

#### **4.4.1 Field Study Analysis**

The data gathered through the various field studies produced some very rich data. These were only short observations as I wanted to ensure that my presence had little or no impact on the students and equally reduce any demand and stress on the teachers. These were not covert observations, so there was a possibility that my presence had some impact on the behaviours of both students and staff. I did, however, speak to the members of staff in the morning before my observations to recap my expectations and to check that this was convenient for them and the students.

Each observation was very different, which is in keeping with the school's culture. For example, one observation took place outside on the playground as the student was not ready to transition into the classroom. This was the type of data that I was most eager to collect as it relied on the teachers' ability to plan on the spot and use the Gentle Teaching tools to develop and build on those relationships. Other observations took place within the classrooms and as such there was already a plan for the session or activity. This also produced some very rich data that enabled me to see planned opportunities for engagement and relationship building.

I had some pre-planned codes to enable me to record the observations more quickly. These were adapted from the observation template created by Hobbs (1991). My initial thoughts were that these codes would make the process more streamlined and enable more of a tick box exercise. For example, where there was value shared, I would be able to initial LD/Loved (See appendix i). I very quickly gave up with this and changed to frantically scribbling down what I saw the student doing, and how the staff responded. Immediately after the observation, I made an audio recording of what I had seen, in case I had missed any vital data.

My observation collection forms were developed to guide my observations to ensure that I did not overlook the tools or techniques for Gentle Teaching. This was valuable in the observations as I could very quickly identify if these tools had been used during the interactions and if so, how effective I felt they were. I judged the effectiveness on the criteria of the interaction 'producing change, producing variable change or producing no change'. Again, this was adapted from Hobbs', (1991) 'teaching strategy checklist' (see appendix I), and the information from this fed into the post-observation interviews.

Initial themes that were coming from the early-stage data included 'staff-initiated interaction versus student-initiated interaction', this emerged clearly as there was a much higher frequency of moments where staff led or initiated the engagement. This ranged from interactions of greetings and welcomes to interactions to refocus the student on the planned activities. The students' interactions, during this stage, appeared to attempt to ask questions or gain further understanding. There were also interactions where the students wanted to bring the teacher closer to them, which included reaching out, or in some cases, seeking positive physical contact. It was unclear during the observations if this was a formed behaviour as part of a pattern of daily

activities or if the student wanted to close that physical distance to provide themselves with an increased sense of safety.

Another possible theme can be derived from the types and frequency of 'value sharing'. By value sharing, I mean the way in which the student was informed that what he or she was doing was worthwhile, meaningful, and appreciated. From the observations, this tended to be expressed verbally through validating the activity or engagement with, for example, comments like 'well done!' or 'great work'. This theme will show what types of phases of encouragement were used if these were accompanied by physical value or reward through 'high-fives', handshakes or even reassuring touches. This theme will also enable a closer look to see if these 'value-sharing' moments were received by the student and which method had a greater impact on the student. Some of the observations showed ways in which the teachers were able to keep the students focused on their work or the activity. In some cases, this included redirecting some low-level behaviours to avoid disruption to the activity, the relationship, or the class. In this study, low-level behaviours refer to any behaviour that does not require physical intervention from a member of staff but in a mainstream school would usually result in some form of sanction. In this school, low-level behaviours are any action that will not result in harm befalling the student, their peers, or the staff. An example of this from the observation was a student changing the slides on the whiteboard while the teacher was delivering a lesson (see appendix XV). This was actually seen by the teacher as the student asking for more information and resulted in no sanction. This was queried during the interview process where I reminded Participant 02 about this event and the response was:

“How people think somebody could have looked at that and thought that young person had deliberate intention to ruin my slides, and that’s not how I see it...you just move on, give him praise, and that’s what otherwise it’s going to stop him from <...> participating in the future”.

Participant 02 (see appendix XVII(i) <00:13:31>)

The teacher redirected this behaviour through the value that was shared, it did not become an issue and towards the end of the session, the teacher referred to the student as his helper.

The following themes will be explored in greater depth from the data which will enable the research questions to be answered:

- Interaction initiations
- Type value sharing
- Timing of value sharing
- Redirection

Interaction initiations will look at who started the interaction and how both participants were involved in this, for example, the teacher initiated the interaction and the student ignored it or vice-versa. Examples of this can be seen in the field study templates (Appendix xiii and xix) staff held hands with students, which is a good example of teacher-initiated interaction, but there is also an example where a student gave intent eye contact to a member of staff. Types of value sharing will look at how either the teacher or student shared their appreciation, whether this is verbally, physically, or gesturally. It will also acknowledge if the value was shared but not accepted by either participant. Timing of the value sharing is also important; too late and this does not validate the reason for the value; too early and this indicates that either the value sharing or the task is not meaningful. An example of this can be seen in the transcription of the



field study for Participant 01 (see appendix XV(a)), where the teacher made the decision not to insist the student move to the teaching area but instead waited for a more opportune moment that would not increase the demands or anxiety levels of the student. The redirection will look at how often the need arises for a situation to be redirected and how successfully this has been achieved.

#### **4.4.2 Semi-Structure Interview Analysis**

The Semi-Structured interviews produced some very rich data. This was more successful as the interviews followed on from the field study observations and acted as a way to extract more information from the participants. This enabled me to discover not only if the teachers were able to link what they were doing during the interactions directly to Gentle Teaching, but it also enabled the teachers to share more about their intentions behind the interactions. The way that the interviews were structured allowed for open dialogue and the questionnaire form acted only as a prompt. In some interviews, additional questions were asked, or prompts were given to encourage more in-depth answers to be generated. The interviews acted as a way for teachers to demonstrate their understanding of Gentle Teaching, rate their understanding of the techniques and principles, and link this with the school's ethos. All participants rated their understanding of the Gentle Teaching principles and techniques as very high and later in the interviews a similar question was asked about their understanding of the school's culture (see appendix IX). These questions were answered identically demonstrating a good correlation between Gentle Teaching and the school ethos.

The interviews demonstrated that teachers were able to talk about what they felt Gentle Teaching was and the core features that made this distinct from other approaches used in other schools (see appendix XVI and XVII). There was evidence that the understanding demonstrated by the interviewees was above and beyond the 'four pillars' and 'tools' that are visually represented in the school Vision Document. For example, Participant 01 identified "patience" (see appendix XVI(b) <00:01:55) as one of the skills required for Gentle Teaching. They also identified the need to be "caring and knowing their <students> inside and out" (ibid <00:02:06>). This could indicate that the school Vision is continuing to develop beyond these documents or that the staff interviewed have a greater understanding of both the school's vision and the Gentle Teaching principles. There was some divergence between the names of the techniques as described in the Gentle Teaching literature and how these were understood by the staff. Although during the interviews, most staff were unaware of the names of the techniques, they were able to describe what they did and link this more easily when the terms were rephrased. For example, in the interview staff were asked what they felt was meant by the term 'shaping and fading', most asked for clarification as to what was meant by this, but when I rephrased it as 'reward or value sharing' they were able to demonstrate what this meant to them and explain how they used this during their interactions (see appendix XVI and XVII).

The data collected through the interviews did draw attention to the length of service and the type and or quality of the training that staff received. For example, one member of staff interviewed had thirteen years of service from a range of different posts within the school; they highlighted the training they received on induction to the school, through planned in-service

training sessions (INSET) and through the Gentle Teaching training delivered by external professionals (see appendix XVII(d) <00:05:36>) for classroom managers. One indicated that, although they found all related training useful, it was not until he received the training focused on classroom leaders that he was able to really put this theory into practice and develop as a 'Gentle Teacher'.

“for the first five years of working, I did not know what Gentle Teaching was...obviously I understood the school’s ethos...but until I actually look into it, I saw it working in practice...and it did take me a while when I first started learning about Gentle Teaching <it> took me months, a few months to really appreciate what it was”.

Participant 02 (see appendix XVII(e) <00:06:28>)

The data did begin to show that length of service had a positive contribution to the understanding of Gentle Teaching, but more importantly, it showed that longer service teachers were more adapted to self-development and change as a result of the Gentle Teaching input.

There was another theme that came from the semi-structured interviews that related to a correlation of keywords that staff used to describe Gentle Teaching. The rationale for this question being used in the interviews was to determine if teachers would simply recite the 'pillars and tools' of Gentle Teaching or if they would become more reflective about how they perceived it, and more importantly if this reflected its use in classes. My initial thoughts were that if teachers simply recited what they had seen or heard from a poster or from a meeting about Gentle Teaching, then this would indicate that the true meaning of the approach had not been fully integrated into the systems that they use on a daily basis. However, it was more reassuring to see and hear that some teachers had taken this deeper, and it formed part of the way they teach. For example, I would expect a new member of staff to cite 'safe, loving, loved and engage' as a response to being asked what Gentle Teaching is, but the staff who had been in service for

longer and received more training were able to talk about what 'safe' was and how this was implemented in the classroom; what it meant to be 'loving' in terms of engagement that is respectful of trusting relationships; how the students could demonstrate feelings of reciprocal trust with adults, and that 'engagement' was not always and even necessarily based upon completing a task, the interaction was seen as the engagement. There are some examples from the interviews that demonstrate this: "Gentle Teaching is about putting relationships at the heart of everything we do with the young people" (see appendix XVII(a) <00:01:17) and "<Gentle Teaching is about> giving young people time to process...child-led education...supporting their needs appropriately...it's not a way of teaching...it's like a culture" (see appendix XVI(a) <00:00:53>).

The data from the semi-structured interviews produced the following themes for investigation of the overall research question and the research sub-questions:

- Opinions on specific techniques related to Gentle Teaching and how these differ from those in the literature.
- The length of service and demonstration of the techniques being used.
- The type of training given on Gentle Teaching.
- The Correlation of keywords related to Gentle Teaching.

These themes will highlight how well the member of staff understands the school culture through their level of understanding of the Gentle Teaching ethos. They will also begin to demonstrate if Gentle Teaching is a natural ability present in all of us, which simply needs moulding to serve the students in a culture of gentleness.

#### **4.4.3 Art-based Project Analysis**

The data generated through the arts-based project give some indication about how the students at the school see Gentle Teaching, although this can be considered tenuous given the nature of the individual needs and how subtly Gentle Teaching is expressed towards the students. The second sub-research question specifically asks, ‘What are the perceptions of Gentle Teaching for the service users within a school that uses this approach?’. For this question to be answered directly, the students would first need to have some idea of Gentle Teaching to enable them to give their opinions and perceptions towards it. However, it could be argued that if Gentle Teaching was embedded into the school ethos, then perception of it would be inseparable from the general feelings of school. The data gathered from the students are generally very positive, save for the odd example that has been identified and reasons for the neutral or negative views detailed. There is a general perception that the word or symbol for school produces positive or happy feelings in the students. This is evidenced through the artwork and reinforced through the discussions of the work with the teaching staff. There is one example that has been written by a student and this was clarified during the discussion to show that one student has a very good relationship with a member of staff calling him his “side-kick”. This is a particularly powerful example as this same student clearly shows that he does not like school but enjoys the engagement with the staff and the planned activities. This demonstrates the value base of Gentle Teaching and how the staff build relationships with the young people, based on reciprocal trust that is built.

Looking through examples of the work that the students created, and assigning each symbol, colour, mark, or word a code, that would to be analysed individually. The use of green tissue is

used most frequently, followed by yellow, and those symbols with positive attributes are used 22 times compared with 12 that could be considered neutral or negative. While this could be considered speculative, seeing that there are considerations that some young people with Autism find expression of feelings difficult (Dantas and Nascimento, 2022; Martinez-Gonzalez, et al. 2021) the school has invested much time in the development and use of the Zones of Regulation (Kuyper, 2011), a study of which has shown that there is a higher understanding of emotions and regulation after using the Zones for a period of time (Romanowycz et al. 2021). The Zones of Regulation (Kuypers, 2011) are divided into four colours: red to signify being angry, mad, scared, elated, or out of control; blue to signify being sad, tired or sick; yellow to show frustration, worry or excitement, and green demonstrates emotions like happiness, calmness, being focused and ready to learn (see appendix XXXV).

In terms of the art project, this was delivered exactly as planned. The artwork was completed independently by the students and, apart from some support with glue where necessary, this art represented the feelings of the young people. This work, combined with the discussions, highlighted that staff were engaging the young people in the work that was set and having generalised discussions about the school. This to me demonstrated some of the Gentle Teaching principles in action, and it was rewarding to see this during this phase of the study as it begins to answer another of the research questions about Gentle Teaching being a natural ability or a taught pedagogy. This will be addressed in greater depth in Chapter 5.

Attempting to draw out some themes from the student art projects is not as simple as in other areas of this study. Although it is reassuring to see that the students are generally happy, other

themes are more abstract and not specifically apparent. This is more like identifying a theme from what is missing or what could be developed further. I have derived four themes: expression, understanding, expectations, and choices. A simple tally of the frequency of either positive, neutral, or negative expressions was made to give an overview. This described that the young people were generally happy, but it did not produce more detailed data than that other than YP03 who was able to write a series of words, some of which were related to the topic. This identified that 'expression' and 'understanding' are underrepresented notions for further exploration, showing that the students had difficulty being understood or difficulty expressing themselves through the media presented. The artwork also shows differences in the number of expressive indicators used by each student, some opting to use few symbols and others choosing to select and use multiple similar symbols. I acknowledged this as 'choice' and 'expectation'. There were patterns emerging relating to how many choices could be made and the perceived expectations that students might have had. Did they feel they were expected to choose one symbol or all the symbols? I will explain what is meant by these in more detail and how I derived these from the data shown in the appendix (XXVIII).

*Expression:* How the students express themselves including their preferred method of expression and how this can be supported in greater depth? This art project only enabled the students to demonstrate their feelings physically by adding information to paper, although there are many other ways of making one's feelings known and many of these require less effort than sticking symbols onto paper. Also, many methods for expression are noticed and acknowledged quicker than others. For example, it is often much easier to identify negative emotional expressions from the students as this is manifested physically and is often perceived as aggression. Yet it is more

difficult to express positive emotions in with the same determination to be noticed. This simple project effectively, and appropriately enabled the students to show that they were happy, and did so whilst maintaining those positive relationships based on mutual trust, which links firmly to the School Vision.

*Understanding:* How do we know the students have understood what is expected of them and how do we understand what is being communicated by them to us? In terms of the expectations I had for the students regarding the outcomes of the students' work, it was successfully achieved. However, from the discussion with the class staff, there appeared to be several members of staff suggesting that the students did not understand. It was my intention to enable the students to express themselves with as many or as few symbols as they felt they needed. This was clearly expressed in the activity plan that all groups read before the session. This leads me to think that either the students did not understand the work but completed it successfully or that there was an issue with the expectations staff had for the young people. This could be the understanding that the staff have regarding the students' abilities. This links to the third research question about Gentle Teaching being embedded within the school's ethos. In Gentle Teaching, we would assume that our aspirations and expectations are high, but this could indicate differently. There is also an element of understanding what the students are saying to us. For example, if a student used a 'happy' symbol, does that mean the same thing to each of us, this links back to the underlying theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism.

*Expectations:* Are our expectations of the students high enough, are they given enough credit?



I feel that if we have low expectations of our students, they will begin to work only towards the level we set them. It is fundamentally wrong to assume that because someone chooses not to communicate verbally, they cannot understand what is being said to them, this is a sure-fire way to damage someone's self-esteem. This is not in line with the Gentle Teaching principles and is sometimes called 'learned helplessness'. One example is tying the laces for a student because you don't think they can do it themselves. This theme did not arise just from the arts-based project but in conjunction with the discussions with staff after the work. It is an important theme as this links very closely with how embedded the Gentle Teaching principles are within the school's ethos.

*Choices:* What choices are the students given, how many, and in what form are they given? Again, this theme is derived both from the arts-based project and the discussion of the work after the activity. Each participant had the same resources in their work pack, and this contained many different choices. The artwork shows that some young people used single symbols and others used multiple and various symbols. These were all mixed up in the packs which would have encouraged the students to look through multiple symbols to make a choice. These included differentiated versions of the same words, for example, coloured symbols versus black and white, but there was a mixture used in the work. In discussions with the staff after the activity, it was suggested that there was perhaps too much choice, and this might have confused the students. While I admit that the resources I used were limited to and were accessible to only those that can associate a symbol and link this to a word, the outcome showed that all students were able to complete the task. In some cases, some students used synonyms. For example, YP01 used excited and happy, both symbols look very similar, but both express a similar feeling. There were

only two students that used contradicting symbols, and these were two of the more expressive and verbal students for whom symbols are not a preferred method of communicating. This theme is important as it links to expectations, especially if there are suggestions that there are too many choices for that person to cope with, but it is also important to make sure the correct method for allowing choices is made. This theme links with the understanding of the School Vision through the use of the Gentle Teaching tools related to 'task analysis' and 'shaping and fading'.

#### **4.4.4 Art-based Project Discussion Analysis**

During the planning stage of this project, I expected that enabling the students to have the opportunity to express themselves and share their opinions on school would provide data showing that the school's ethos is understood on a fundamentally basic level by the young people. My rationale for this was to determine if the young people were able in any way to share an opinion that linked to the Gentle Teaching pillars (safe, loving, loved, engaged), then it would suggest these permeate throughout the school. In many cases, the young people were able to identify as being happy. What was unexpected through this part of the project was the staff's ability to reflect on their practice. Staff also demonstrated some Gentle Teaching principles through discussion of the work that the young people completed and the support they were given.

The work that the students created was discussed in a group involving the staff that generally support the young people each day. This was recorded to provide a transcription of the conversations to better support and aid the generation of codes (see appendix XXVII). Unlike the

codes from the actual work that the students created, showing either positive or negative emotions, the staff produced a much richer and more complex series of data.

The transcripts from the discussions of the work the young people created (see appendix XXVII) show some familiar themes. Twelve themes could be derived from the conversations and through the transcripts, these are as follows.

- Expectations
- Expression
- Understanding
- Choices
- Underestimation
- Values
- Engagement
- GT Concepts
- Enabling
- Assessment Differentiation
- Visuals
- Problem Solving

These themes were not only derived from what was said during the group discussion or deduced from the students' artwork, but some of these came about from what was left unsaid, which could indicate that this was not considered. For example, the same resources and task explanations were given to all participants, but the level of expectation of each student was varied. Some comments suggested the student did not want to do the task or that they rushed it to move on to the next task. There was no obligation for the work to be completed or a set time that the students should focus on the task, so the comments appeared to disregard the positives of the situation. It could have been seen as almost an excuse for the student, whereas taking an alternative view, the effort and skills put in could have been celebrated. Some of these

themes are connected and these have been condensed into overarching themes. For example, there are comments such like, "he didn't understand" (see appendix XXIX) which highlight reasonable assumptions that the language used to explain the task was too complex, but it also indicates that there are some expectations of the young people that could be considered too low. Some of the language used in the group discussion offers some support of this notion. For example, when it was said "He just enjoyed the colouring" (see appendix XXIX) and "Yeah, he was doing like if you probably looked, I bet they're in a similar order" (see appendix XXIX), this suggested that the student used the symbols that were in order. This could also link with the suggested theme of differentiation and values, which if they had been used during this project could have increased the level of understanding.

These themes are broad and plentiful, but they can be combined and defined into three overarching topics. These have been combined as follows:

- Listening to and understanding the students
- Value of views and opinion
- Gentle Teaching concepts

Expression, understanding, differentiation, and visuals, link closely with the ability to listen to and understand what the students are saying. This includes how we support the students to be understood with the aid of visuals but also how we enable them to express themselves effectively. Choices, values and expression, link to how we enable the students to form opinions and demonstrate to them that their views and opinions are valid, valuable, and meaningful. Through this, there will need to be a meaningful choice that enabled control of aspects of their lives. Expectations, underestimation, engagement, enabling, problem solving, and Gentle

Teaching concepts, all refer to specific Gentle Teaching tools that promote safe, loving, loved and engaging lives.

The raw data has shown that there were varied methods for understanding and listening to the views and opinions of the students. In some cases, this was effective at establishing a voice for the student, either through the close, established, and reciprocal trusting relationship that had been formed, or through providing accessible tools and methods to allow the students to express themselves. It was clear from the discussions that staff had varying levels of skill in understanding the students through how they were able to interpret the work that was created. This theme will link with the research questions posed within this study. For example, if Gentle Teaching is a natural ability that is possessed by all of us, there would possibly be a higher quality of listening and understanding in young people. This could also indicate that these skills have been instilled during the induction process that all staff receive. To support the analysis of this and further discussion within the following chapter, length of service and indication of the successful completion of induction have been provided in the coding structure in the appendix (IX).

The second defined theme is focused on the '*value*' that the views and opinions that the students have. Unlike the first theme, the values that a member of staff holds cannot be taught. This is based on personal belief. The premise for this is that the student has shared a view or opinion, for this to have meaning or power, it needs to be valued which in turn suggests that something needs to happen because of receiving this information from the student. This could simply be through acknowledgement of what was shared or through action and eliciting some change. This

theme will enable the third research question to be addressed and will show if the ethos has been embedded throughout the school.

The final defined theme is also found in other parts of the data collection and is related to the understanding of the Gentle Teaching concepts and pedagogy. This theme will allow the exploration and discussion of how the tools and principles of Gentle Teaching have been used to support the students and each other. The specific tools and approaches have been discussed in the literature review in chapter 2. These are like other approaches used with alternative pedagogy but when used in combination with the value base ensure that Gentle Teaching stands out as a unique approach. It would be expected that the use of these tools would be seen in a higher frequency by more established staff with more years of service. The transcripts from the discussions identify specific tools that were used, but not why some tools were employed over others, this will be derived from the combination of field studies and semi-structured interviews. Having multiple opportunities to identify and analyse the concepts through the various data collection methods will strengthen the research and allow for triangulation to occur.

#### **4.4.5 Analysis of school vision and focus**

The school documents were prepared in the form of a table, breaking each document down line by line. I opted to use 'content analysis' which according to (Silverman, 2020), identifies methods to extract the categories and codes from various sources. There are arguments as to whether this approach is considered a qualitative process considering that frequencies of theme occurrences are recorded; however, Silverman argues that the distinction allowing this to be

considered as a qualitative approach is made by recording themes rather than single word counts.

All four of the school policy documents were coded either line by line, or in the case of larger documents, sections and summaries were coded for ease and transparency. Codes were selected based on school values. For example, mention of the Gentle Teaching tools or phrases linked to school development and ethos were selected as codes. The same codes were used within all four documents and a running total was created to identify the frequency that these codes appeared. It was decided not to complicate the process by creating abbreviations or any codes that would require the reader to continually refer to a legend. Instead, I opted to use short phrases like 'staff development' as the actual code itself. There were 31 identified codes within all four documents. However, as some of these codes only appeared once or twice, they have been discounted and have not become themes. There were many codes, and some have been grouped and the theme adapted to consider this.

After grouping codes together, I was left with six themes for analysis. These have been ordered into those with the highest frequency of appearances to the lowest, although this does not presuppose that one theme is any more important than another. These six themes are identified as Gentle Teaching tools/values; active involvement; quality of life; review and reflection; growth and development; and pupil voice. The rationale behind each of these themes will be discussed briefly, including the reason for the combining of the codes.

Gentle Teaching Tools/Values – This theme has all codes that have a connection to the Gentle Teaching Tools and the values, which includes any direct reference to the Gentle Teaching Pillars (safe, loving, loved, engaged) and indirect references to how the tools are applied within the school. This also includes how the Gentle Teaching values have been incorporated into the School Vision Statement, for example, how the Culture of Gentleness can be supported, and concepts related to the central purpose of the lives of the students.

Active Involvement – includes any reference to the creation of ordinary lives for young people, this is anything from meaningful and relevant learning opportunities to social role valorisation and having a purpose and role within a community. Quality of Life is very closely linked to active involvement, although it includes codes from the reduction of restraints to community engagement and fostering a sense of connectedness and relationships of trust.

Review and Reflection incorporates codes that refer to a reflective process of development, either using external benchmarking and audits like Ofsted and Investors in People, or through continual internal audits through staff and stakeholder reviews.

Growth and Development links all codes related to training and development of individual staff and departments or through a whole school development process. This looks at auditing the skills that staff have and further developing these or sharing the professional practice with others.

Pupil voice is a theme which was highlighted within the data set from the young person’s research element of the study, and it has also presented itself from the data gathered through an analysis of the school policies. This includes reference to communication strategy, school council and, more prominently within the ‘Statement of Intent’ document that recommends involving the young person in their planning and interventions.



#### **4.5 Findings Summary**

The various data have shown that there is a good level of connexion between the school values and ethos and how the staff understand the Gentle Teaching principles and techniques. The data explicitly connect the words and actions of the staff to the School Vision Document, and although the language used by the staff varies, it is relevant to the context and content but with more of a reflective elaboration. The actions witnessed through the field studies do show a very strong connection to the school's values and ethos, and this appears to be deeply embedded, suggesting this has become so intrinsically linked with the common practice that it is very difficult to separate the two. This is almost to suggest that staff know what they are doing but cannot always express that what they are doing is anything different.

There is a slight convergence between the views of the staff and the views of the students, as staff seem to be very aware that what they do and how they act is due to 'Gentle Teaching', but the students are unable to acknowledge that they are on the receiving end of such an approach. There are two possible reasons for this: firstly, the students might be unable to express what they are feeling due to their complex needs, and secondly, this is all they know and without the comparison or experience of being in an institution without this approach, how would they identify what is missing?

##### **4.5.1 Findings from student data**

There were a few identified themes from the student data, and these included how the voice, views and opinions of the students were obtained and more importantly how these were understood. The data suggested that the students were able to express basic views and opinions

with the tools and resources that were provided through the data collection methods. However, it was clear that the students had more ideas and views than they were able to express. One example of this can be seen by YP03 who avoided all visual resources and opted to express his views on several topics. Other students either verbally expressed to staff how they were feeling, for example, YP01 told staff that he liked school, but he didn't want to engage in the cutting and sticking. This is comforting to see that the students feel valued and safe enough to tell staff that they don't wish to join in without any fear that this would be seen as disruptive or poor behaviour. Some students expressed their feelings about the school through the work that they had been completing daily. For example, YP04, who suggested that they enjoy the work that teachers set for them. This evidence also identifies aspects of the relationships between staff and students with suggestions of structure and compromise. There was also a high level of understanding and acceptance for the students with teachers demonstrating a very good understanding of needs and temperament. All members of staff would have completed induction in the first three weeks of employment that includes information on Gentle Teaching and the school ethos; the level of understanding of these concepts and tools is demonstrated through the relationships. While the students could not say what Gentle Teaching was, they appeared to acknowledge that the relationship between themselves and the staff was more important than the artwork they were asked to complete.

#### **4.5.2 Findings from staff data**

The findings from the staff data showed a strong link between the school ethos and the understanding of the Gentle Teaching techniques and principles. It was clear that as the time in service increased, so too did the level of understanding of both Gentle Teaching and in turn the

school ethos. Teachers were able to talk about their observed interactions using language much deeper than that contained within the School Vision documents which could suggest that their skills and understanding had grown and developed further. Adversely, many adult participants were unable to identify elements of their practice as Gentle Teaching. For example, there were observed moments of value sharing that infused and strengthened the reciprocal trusting relationship between staff and students, but when questioned on this some staff suggested that this was just general daily practice in the school. This could indicate that Gentle Teaching is in fact a natural ability or that the practice has become second nature and is become a usual process. There was evidence that showed the level of understanding of the terms used to describe the specific techniques from the literature was not fully understood but simplified terms were applied and better understood. This also could indicate that the general level of training was sufficient to allow the Gentle Teaching principles to be used effectively and that further in-depth training was not necessary. There is a possibility that the staff participants were answering questions with an answer they thought I was looking for but the purpose of having multiple methods for collecting this data ensured that there could be an element of triangulation between what was said in the interview and what was observed in the field. For example, in the notes transcribed from the field study, there were several examples of shared value, from physical or verbal praise to tailoring the communication types to directly meet the needs of the students (see appendix XV).

#### **4.6 Bringing the findings together**

Data from the students and data from the adults have produced very different results. It was important to include the views and opinions of the students as to ignore this would indicate that

this data was not valuable and in turn that the student's voice was not important. Although in terms of the study, the student's data did not produce the straightforward information that I had hoped for. My intention was to determine if the students were aware of Gentle Teaching but with the data collected, it is not explicit that they were. However, when analysing the student data with information from the staff, it was felt that the students would have been able to identify a 'feel' which was detailed better by a member of staff who suggest that they would notice a difference had they moved to a different school. Although this is not explicitly the views of the students, it is comforting to know that for the majority that took part in the study, they were happy in school.

The staff data was much richer and provided better evidence for the research questions, although there was still some ambiguity regarding what the data was showing in terms of length of service amounting to a better understanding of Gentle Teaching. This could be attributed to more time to reflect on daily practice developing those Gentle Teaching skills or the greater access to continual professional development on Gentle Teaching and the school ethos. It is also difficult to ascertain from the data if these skills are natural or developed through training and practice, however, it could possibly be a combination of both. The following section uses the data to address each research question in turn and highlights the validity of the data and potential limitations produced.

#### **4.7 Answering the Research Questions**

In this section, each of the research questions has been addressed in turn, linking back to the data that was collected. The data generally supports and answers the questions, however, not all of these have been explicitly resolved. The strengths and limitations of the study have been

explored in chapter 6, leaving this chapter to draw together the relevant information and provide evidence-based answers. This chapter ends with the overarching research question being discussed and it draws out some recommendations for the future along with the contributions made to the body of knowledge surrounding this topic. It is in this chapter that my conceptual framework is drawn together with each of the concepts supporting the findings.

#### **4.7.1 Research Question 1 – Is Gentle Teaching a natural ability, can it be taught/learned?**

The first sub-question in the research proposal asks if Gentle Teaching can be taught or learned, or if this is a natural ability found within each of us. The initial reason for posing this question was due to the training that was provided by the school. It was my opinion that the training did not feel very effective as other staff and I were striving to become Gentle Teachers to better meet the needs of the students within the school. My opinion was that this initial training was not delivered in a way that best suited my learning, but it does appear that other staff were able to gain more from the training than me. There is research into learning styles (Aguilar, et al. 2022; Hassan, 2021; Honey, 1995), but even if this had been embedded into the delivery, it would have needed to be differentiated to meet the needs of all staff, which, within a school the size of the one in this study, would have been a difficult task. The evidence collected shows a self-proclaimed understanding of the Gentle Teaching techniques and processes, which is considered quite high with the average rating being eight out of ten. This is interesting as not all the staff were working at the school when the initial training was delivered and yet the understanding is still high. Evidence from one participant who was part of the initial training suggested that they only really understood what Gentle Teaching was when they put the theory into practice and

took it upon themselves to become reflective practitioners. This mirrors my feelings as I was better placed to understand what the techniques were and how they worked best when using these with the students in the school. This was even better observed when watching videos of my practice and specifically identifying the approaches that I used and how effective they were, based on the reactions of the students. One participant suggested that the skills they had learned through the training came naturally to them, it was not until they were seeing this in practice that they were able to see and understand what it was that they were doing that made a difference.

Part of the initial training involved the use of recordings of our interactions with the students. We would pick a task to work on, something based on daily life, for example, the laying of a table or simple laundry tasks. We would watch these back several times and notice the opportunities for engagement and value sharing that had been missed and note that often our prompts and moments of value sharing were based on verbal prompts, which were not always the most appropriate for that student. One participant in this study said that it took over fifty videos before they realised that the purpose was never about the task, it was the engagement, the sharing of a joint task and the enjoyment in routines based on ordinary lives that made the difference. It could have been that the initial training was focusing on teaching the techniques or at least enabling staff to identify what and how they were interacting, with a mind to develop one's practice. McCrovitz (2021), talks about training in Gentle Teaching as a mentoring process, he suggests that the training helps us to learn how to use the tools and abilities we already have.

“Through the mentoring process, one is supported for potentially learning how to become present to the value and meaning of their feelings/emotions. Through dialogue (verbal/non-verbal), relationship-building opportunities cultivate unknowable degrees of awareness for one’s sense and ability to relate to fine distinctions of their genuine nature, bringing into light both their gifts and vulnerabilities.”

McCrovitz (2021), p.101.

This supports the research question as the recent literature and the findings from the data suggest that there is an element of both natural skills and abilities, and the use of training that enables us to become Gentle Teachers enhances that. This process of training just allows us to draw these skills out from our practice to make these links more apparent and helps us to see the reasons why we do what we do and the impact that this has, not just on the learning of the students, but the relationships we build with them too.

So, in answer to the question; ‘Is Gentle Teaching a natural ability, can it be taught/learned?’, based upon this research and the literature cited surrounding Gentle Teaching, the skills and attributes needed to become a Gentle Teacher are within all of us, some of us can naturally do this without needing to know what we are doing and why, whereas others may need a little support to see that their actions and interactions affect the lives of the children with whom we work, and these can be improved upon through reflecting on our interactions to find the most suitable and effective way of creating that reciprocal trusting relationship. The evidence collected from the examples of participants demonstrated that there was a preconceived idea about what Gentle Teaching was, this showed that there was a natural ability to be a Gentle Teacher. Participant 02 had more training from the school and the external advisor whereas Participant 01 only had the school’s training. Both staff considered themselves to possess the skills to be Gentle Teachers, but both confirmed that this link was made stronger as a result of training. There was

a greater perception of confidence as a Gentle Teacher when they were given opportunities to put theory into practice. It is possible that this conclusion is influenced by my own feelings; I had a feeling that some people are more inclined to be gentle than others, but I also felt that with appropriate training and experience people can learn the skills needed to help them change.

#### **4.7.2 Research Question 2 – What are the perceptions of Gentle Teaching for the service users within a school that uses this approach?**

Sub-question two seeks to identify the perceptions that the pupils have towards Gentle Teaching. This aims to discover if the pupils are aware of the approach that staff and the school have implemented in daily practice and embedded within the very culture of the school. This has been an important question at the heart of the study both from a research point of view but also to enable the pupils to have a voice, which is part of Gentle Teaching. To form a truly reciprocal trusting relationship based on having an ordinary life, it is important to share an opinion and have an expression that is based on acceptance, understanding and value. The recent literature on Gentle Teaching is clear about the importance of creating relationships built on connectedness; the type of connection that comes when dialogue with the pupils is considered.

“In a culture of gentleness, the companion relationship is the context for connectedness. It is the vehicle for each one’s learning to feel safe and loved, loving and engaged.”

McCrovitz, (2021), p.50.

This was the most difficult part of the study not only from an ethical stance which involved finding ways to ensure the rights of participation and withdrawal were understood, and obtaining informed consent in a meaningful way. This also involved creating an activity whereby the pupils could express their feelings and opinions in a method and activity that was not too different from



daily activities or routines that could cause anxiety and distress. It was clear that the pupils enjoyed engaging in the activity, and while I am confident that the activity itself was enjoyable and engaging, it was more likely that the relationship between the pupils and staff is what enabled the pupils to engage and complete the task. Other than confirming to me what I already knew about how much the pupils enjoy school; the data was unable to show any firm answers on how they perceived Gentle Teaching. At the beginning of the study, I opted to base my work within the theoretical lens of Symbolic Interactionism for the very reason that the pupil's views and opinions are just as valid as our own, and just because the meaning that we associate with these concepts differs from the pupils', the validity of the interactions and meanings the pupils have should not be questioned. One tenant of symbolic interactionism suggests that humans deal with situations through a "process of indication, interpretation and defining" (Tripplett and Turner, 2022, p.4), and these are dependent upon the language skills that each person has at their disposal and is built upon prior knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, meaning is suggested to be socially constructed (Sorensen et. al., 2017), so it would therefore be reliable to suggest if the way someone engages socially, for example, someone with autism for whom social interactions can be quite difficult (Tantum, 2000), the perception on meaning is very different from our own. Hughes (2016) suggests that symbolic interactionism can be a tool to support those people on the autism spectrum to make meaning from everyday situations and interactions. I would like to argue from an alternative perspective, that by employing a Symbolic Interactionist lens we can be mindful that those people with autism and indeed social-communication-difficulties, can explore the world and interactions in with just as valid explanations as our own.

The data collected just from the pupils alone, although very valuable, was not sufficient to demonstrate what the pupils' perspectives on Gentle Teaching were. However, during the interviews more data came to light to suggest that the pupils would possibly be able to identify that something was missing should they attend a different school without a similar whole school culture. So, in answer to the question, 'What are the perceptions of Gentle Teaching for the service users within a school that uses this approach?', the results are mixed. The pupils were able to express that they were generally happy within the school and the projects revealed some very positive suggestions in terms of linking symbols, colours, and words with positive attributes to the question, but it was not until the staff were questioned that this question was resolved more. The data suggested that the pupils themselves would be unable to say what Gentle Teaching was, but it was suggested that they would notice a difference, especially with regard to relationships with staff. While this is not an expressed perception by the pupils, it does suggest that the school's ethos is flowing through the interactions which its staff have with its pupils.

#### **4.7.3 Research Question 3 – How can Gentle Teaching be embedded and sustained within a school culture?**

Sub-question three seeks to discover if an approach like Gentle Teaching can be embedded within a school ethos. The methods employed to ascertain the answer to this were developed to be drawn from various sources. This included an in-depth analysis of the driving policies for the school; field studies to observe if practice correlates with the policy; and interviews to understand how staff have understood these policies and the essence of the school ethos. The data has shown that Gentle Teaching has been embedded within the most crucial school policies,

but in a fashion that seeks to use this as a foundation to build upon rather than a mere mention of Gentle Teaching. The school policies tend to discuss 'behaviours' associated with the development of change, but this is expressed as a process that all staff, from the headteacher to cleaners, from classroom staff to residential staff, act upon to serve the best interests of the pupils. It is talked about as 'servant leadership' (Policy document, 2018) which is also a phrase that is present in some of the Gentle Teaching literature (McGee, 1987; McCrovitz, 2021) and other authors have discussed this in terms of organisational management (Parris and Peachey, 2013; Eva et. al., 2019). It is far easier for staff to accept, understand and espouse an ethos that is created and developed by all staff, it is not seen as a 'command from on high' as managers are also 'living' this culture. Research by Ostroff et al. discusses about how cultures can be transformed through interactions between leaders and staff, which is evident within the policy documents and the understanding that staff have regarding these.

"Cultures can be transformed by interactions between leaders and staff with focus on visions, goals and shared ideas of ideal behaviors or sometimes also by leaders building an infrastructure promoting change."

(Ostroff et al., 2013).

In addition to the typical Vision document that most schools have, this school has developed a set of 'behaviours' expected from the staff, and are based on the tools of Gentle Teaching but slightly reworded to emphasize the staff using language that incorporates all staff. For example, the tools of Gentle Teaching are words, eyes, hands, and presence, whereas the school document highlights:

“Relationships matter so we:

- Speak only kindly
- Look only warmly
- Touch only gently and respectfully
- Are attentive and responsive to the person”

School Relationships Matter Poster (see appendix XXXII)

This list of behaviours is almost a code of conduct that the staff agree to and follow. They are set to remind staff that to maintain reciprocal relationships based on trust, all the interactions must be mindful to ensure that we always engage and react appropriately. Our words are used only to share value, never to reprimand. We look with compassion and support, never to judge. We touch to offer comfort and guidance, never to force compliance. We are always there for the students when they need us, without the need for them to look for us or wait for us to be available. These are rules that all staff agree to and follow with the understanding that the students are at the very heart of everything we do at the school. All staff that were interviewed rated their understanding of the school ethos very highly; this was generally higher or comparable to their understanding of the Gentle Teaching principles. One participant, when prompted to discuss in a little more depth what they thought Gentle Teaching was, replied “it is about putting relationships at the heart of everything we do with the young people”. The data would suggest that there is very little perceived difference among the staff between their understanding of Gentle Teaching and of the School Ethos, which could suggest that these are aligned very closely. Participant 01 rated their understanding of Gentle Teaching as 7 out of 10 and their understanding of the school ethos as 8 out of 10, whereas Participant 02 rated both 8 out of 10. Participant 02 has worked in the school longer and experienced more training on Gentle Teaching, however the

data is very closely aligned. The literature suggests (Gopinath et al., 2018; Howell et al., 2012) that the closer the alignment of the espoused and enacted culture or ethos the more successfully developed this has become.

So, in answer to the question; How can Gentle Teaching be embedded and sustained within a school ethos?, the school within this study appears to have successfully embedded Gentle Teaching within its very ethos. This seems to be effective through a series of different policies and procedures and through the Vision Statement that is interlinked and has Gentle Teaching themes running throughout. This has likely been made possible because all staff truly aspire to make a difference in the lives of the students at the school and have put the needs of the students at the heart of everything they do. It could be that only like-minded people apply to work at the school, those with a compassionate value-based, or that the involvement of members of staff from each role within the school, writing and developing the School Vision together, has given it more meaning and therefore easier to espouse.

#### **4.7.4 Overarching Research question**

The overarching research theme was “An investigation to explore how Gentle Teaching can be embedded and sustained in a school culture”. This paper has discussed at length how Gentle Teaching had been used within the school and how this has supported the students in their daily lives. There was early discussion about the nature and history of Gentle Teaching through to the tools and techniques that have been used in daily practice at the school. It is through this overarching research question that I will bring together the conceptual map that I shared at the very beginning of this study, which will enable me to draw all the work together. The conceptual

map was an interlinked triad of components including Gentle Teaching, symbolic interactionism and school culture. Each of these components was as important as the others and enabled a structure to form. Gentle Teaching has formed a larger proportion of the body of the work but without the other two components, it would have fallen short. For example, the whole paper looks at Gentle Teaching as part of school culture, so I needed to address concepts around values, ethos, and culture to provide a basis for developing my argument and enabling the research question to be answered. Symbolic interactionism provided a theoretical lens through which to build arguments on truth, not just in terms of the study itself, but by also introducing this to enable the views, opinions, and input from the students to form truth about how they perceive the school culture and ethos. It was important for me to describe and detail the truth as the students see it, as it is far different from our own, but most vitally, it is accepted as truth. A whole chapter discussed how truth is affected by our social interactions, and by the meanings we ascribe to objects and other stimuli, and the truth is affected by the way we modify the meanings ascribed based on our interpretations. This was such an important view to share, as despite the differences we all have regarding the meanings we ascribe to objects, interactions, and stimuli, we usually adjust this through social situations to try to reach an agreed meaning. For the young people in this study where social interactions are very different and in some cases absent, this does not always happen or does not happen as quickly. It would be unjust, unfair and, from a Gentle Teaching perspective, wrong to suggest that the students' perceptions of truth are less valid than our own. This complexity of each component both strengthens and supports the others, is why the conceptual map was created.

The school has successfully embedded Gentle Teaching into its ethos and culture, as the data

collected suggests that staff find it difficult to separate Gentle Teaching from the school culture, with many feeling that the two are the same. For example, Participant 01 suggested that Gentle Teaching is like a culture when asked what they thought Gentle Teaching was, this could suggest they had difficulty separating Gentle Teaching from what is the school culture. There are external measures that quantify how successful the school culture is, for example, the recent Investors in People (IIP) certification shows that the school leaders “lived <the> organisations values as a group of people” and that “people felt your vision and values were at the heart of everything your school does” (IIP, 2022), similar feelings are often reiterated by school visitors including educational psychologists, school improvement partners, and also Ofsted inspectors. I have personally had some social workers tell me that they love visiting the school because everyone is so friendly, and it feels like a big family. This is some high praise indeed but the confirmation we seek is seen on the faces of the students who love to come to school each day as is demonstrated through their behaviours.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion, Limitations & Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

#### 5.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter provides a summary and conclusion of the whole thesis. There is a particular focus on the limitations that have arisen during the process of study and examples of how these have impacted the findings of the study. This chapter will also clearly identify the contribution that this research has made to the body of knowledge on this topic before providing some implications for the future and further recommendations in the concluding thoughts.

#### 5.1 Limitations

I have identified several limitations with this study and the data that has been collected. For example, my connection to the school may have affected my criticality at various points in the planning of this study and the data collection process. I also have some concerns with both the participant numbers (Vasileiou, 2018.; Farrugia, 2019.; Chhabra, 2020.; Holmes, 2020.; Lakens, 2022) and the selection process as this could have impacted the quality and strength of the data collected. Potentially, the most significant limitation could be identified as my personal belief that Gentle Teaching is inherently a good thing, which I feel may have prevented me from being as critical and balanced as perhaps I might have been if researching something for which I had less passion. Each of these will be addressed in greater depth within this chapter and relevant literature has been provided to support these ideas.



### **5.1.1 Strength of the data**

I feel that some of the data lacks strength, especially concerning the data that was collected from the students' art projects. When planning for the data collection, I was hoping for this data to show in more detail what the students thought of the school and the feeling they perceived about the culture. I understood this to be a complex and abstract concept for the students to understand and express, but I had thought that the plan I made would have shown a little more detail. I adapted my methods during the process of data collection when this concern became apparent, and I added a collection method whereby I facilitated group interviews whereby staff that knew the students could talk about the art projects they had completed and provide some additional insight into what could have been expressed. Edelstein et al. (2019) advocate for the use of triangulation of data suggesting that this process can "identify and address limitations in any single data source or data collection method" (p.755), however this was not my underlying reason for opting for a triangulated approach. I knew that there were other members of staff that had a greater understanding about what the students were saying as they had spent considerably more time with them than I had.

There are also some limitations regarding the strength of the culture when employing the congruence between espoused and enacted ethos. There is conflicting evidence to suggest that this is not an accurate measure of the strength of a culture. For example, Howell et al. (2012) suggest that once the espoused values have been shared after the effort and time taken to develop them, there tends to be a loss of "interest or momentum" (p.742), suggesting that these are not held to be important anymore. This does presuppose that once a culture has been

created, it ceases to develop or change until the next change in leadership or external influence. There is often a relationship between school culture and school development (Schoen and Teddlie, 2008), so the constant journey of school development (Bernhardt, 2017) should be accompanied by an ever developing and evolving culture. The school at the heart of this study has developed its culture and ethos over many years and it will continue to evolve: one of the interviewees commented on how the culture is constantly adapting.

### **5.1.2 Participant Numbers and Selection Process**

There are some limitations with the participant numbers and selection process for recruiting participants. It feels natural to suggest that a larger body of data would produce stronger results, which is an idea that has been supported by the suggestion that “the more data that is collected, the more informative the study will be” (Lakens, 2022). There is literature to suggest that, unlike quantitative research that seeks to “maximise statistical power” (Farrugia, 2019, p.69), qualitative research often opts for a smaller number of cases to enable analysis in depth (ibid). On the other hand, Marshall (1996) suggests that appropriate sample size is one that answers the research questions. As I had initial concerns about the number of participants that I would be able to recruit, I opted for a qualitative methodological stance which would enable smaller samples to be analysed in greater depth and as such produce a rich source of data.

There were several reasons for the limited numbers of participants. Part of the issues surrounding my leadership position within the school caused potential discouragement for fear of repercussions. Another issue is related to the global pandemic which delayed field studies and

interviews, causing some participants to withdraw during this time when restrictions were imposed on people mixing. As indicated in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 3), I advertised for participants across the school, reaching almost 300 members of staff. I was conscious that staff were already working very hard at a very stressful time for everyone, so I did not feel comfortable, ethically or from a Gentle Teaching perspective, to prompt, persuade and chase for participants. I was not able to select participants from the numbers that were willing to take part as this would reduce further the sample size. This has been referred to as Resource Constraints by (Lakens, 2022), who identifies that sometimes sample sizes are affected by “source limitations” (ibid, p.3) and in the case of this thesis, the limits were the number of participants. However, a general theme from research regarding sampling and sample sizes seems to suggest that transparency is more important than the actual size of the sample (Vasileioiu, et al., 2018). Although some sample sizes could be considered small, in keeping with the expectations of a qualitative researcher (Armstrong, 2021), evidence was drawn from multiple sources, which is said to “draw together the same inferences” (Steenkamp and Tekelas, 2021, No Page Given) from multiple sources and “validate the accuracy of the research” (ibid).

### **5.1.3 Researcher Connections with the School**

My position within the school may have created several situations that could have impacted the study. As a senior leader within the school and responsible for performance management and supervision of a proportion of the school staff, it could have been difficult for staff to feel comfortable being honest with their responses in the interview. My presence within the field might have caused staff to behave in ways that were not normal for them. Elements of these

limitations were discussed in the Methodology chapter and there were plans made and put in place to reduce the impact that my presence would have. For example, I explained in both the recruitment email and recapped this with the Participant Study Information Sheet, that my presence was not intended to fulfil my function as a senior leader. Daft (2008) cites how power can be seen as an influence over someone or something, suggesting that this can be part of institutional structures, so in the case of this thesis, my position within the senior management team might have created a perception of power imbalance. Included in this literature is the use of words like coercion, force, manipulation, encouragement, and persuasion (ibid), while some of these words are more emotive than others, many of these acts are done without intention. By this, I mean that coercion, force, and in some cases, manipulation are purposeful acts whereas encouragement and persuasion are often done without knowing. Even if the researcher's activity seeks to avoid these, there is still the possibility that the research being undertaken by a person in authority will lead to these actions. It is quite possible that in terms of this study, some participants could have negative emotions toward senior leaders and come forward to take part in the study to disrupt or dissuade others from taking part, however, I have full trust in those participants involved.

#### **5.1.4 Researcher Connection with the Topic**

A considerable limitation to this thesis is linked to the connection I have with the research topic. While there is some expectation that researchers will undertake work of interest to themselves and work that is likely to have some impact on their daily lives; this goes to suggest that there is usually some impact from connection to a topic within research. Berkovic et al, (2020) describe this as “insider research” (p.1). There is a suggestion that this process involves positioning one’s

own interests with one's research (Jacobson and Mustafa, 2019), although there are a series of advantages to this approach. This insider position is said to develop a perspective that demonstrates credibility with participants; it creates a more equal relationship between the participants and the researcher, and it enables rapport to be created between the participants and the researcher (Berkovic et al, 2020). While these suggestions could well have been apparent within this study, this does not highlight the perceptions and concerns of the participants for whom the researcher is a line manager and therefore not 'fully' an insider. Chhabra, (2020) suggests that there is an escape from the dichotomous argument of insider versus outsider, with a third option of the "in-betweeners" (p.315). The suggestion is that this "fluid position" (ibid) allows the researcher to move between the positions at different stages of the research which could suggest that my connection to Gentle Teaching is seen as both a positive influence and a negative influence.

It could be suggested that I have not been teaching within a school that does not have a culture based on Gentle Teaching, but the truth would be that I began my career at this school before Gentle Teaching was introduced. This could be seen as having both positive and negative impacts on the limitations of this study. For example, I know of this school without this cultural perspective which could be seen as less limiting, however, being in the school with the introduction of Gentle Teaching and helping to pilot the change process, could highlight considerable limitations.

Holmes (2020) suggests that the researcher needs to be open and honest regarding their positionality and should show how and where they feel that they may have influenced the

research. I feel that my thoughts on Gentle Teaching have influenced this thesis. I have seen the positive effects of this approach over other approaches and although I have tried to remain critical and impartial, there is an element of bias which cannot be removed. I do not feel that this distracts too much from the research questions as I do not seek to explore Gentle Teaching as either effective or not effective; my research looks to explore if Gentle Teaching can be embedded within a school culture.

## **5.2 Contribution to the Body of Knowledge**

This thesis has investigated some unique and relatively unexplored topics both in terms of the nature and needs of the young people in the school and regarding an intervention that has not been researched since its creation and development. This thesis also offers a creative and unique use of symbolic interactionism as both a methodological approach and a pedagogical approach. This thesis provides insight into how the voices of some very marginalised students can be expressed and more importantly, understood through symbolic Interactionist perspectives, which intern could lead to a shift in how much input and contribution to the decisions that are made in the lives of these students. This thesis also offers an exploration of Gentle Teaching and what this pedagogical perspective can offer in terms of supporting students in educational settings and potentially as a humanistic approach to behaviour management. These ideas will be drawn out in a little more detail to demonstrate how this thesis has contributed to the body of knowledge.

### **5.2.1 Exploration of a Unique Pedagogical Approach that Has Been Relatively Unresearched Since its Creation.**

This thesis offers a modern view of Gentle Teaching based on its use as a pedagogical approach within a school. Much of the existing research on Gentle Teaching has explored this technique when employed in the care setting and as an approach for behavioural management or for the education of life skills (McGee et al, 1987a.; McGee et al, 1987b.; McGee, 1985.; Conneally, 1989.; McGee and Gonzalez, 1990.; McGee, 1990.; Hobbs, 1991.; McGee and Menolascino, 1991.; Cuvo, 1992.; Hobbs, 1992.; McCaughey, 1992.; McGee, 1992.; Aylott and Sell, 1997.; McGee, 1999.; Gates, Newell, and Wray, 2001.; Jones and McCrovitz, 2021.) This thesis brings Gentle Teaching into a school setting and explores its use as pedagogy for enabling students with autism, learning difficulties and communication difficulties to engage in education with a particular focus on the development of life skills, social skills, and the engagement of functional learning in a core curriculum.

### **5.2.2 Unique and creative use of Symbolic Interaction as Both a Methodological and Theoretical Approach.**

This thesis demonstrates the use of symbolic interaction in a unique way, as both a methodological approach and a theoretical approach. Symbolic interactionism used a methodological approach that enabled the methods to be developed. This enable the data to be collected that allowed the voices and opinions of those who infrequently contribute to such matters as research, to not only be expressed but analysed and heard. Symbolic interactionism as a theoretical approach enabled the notions of truth to be captured and expressed based on the meanings and attributions applied to everyday objects, events, and social interactions. Not

only did this mean a marginalised voice was heard, but it also meant that it offered up knowledge and truth from their perspectives.

### **5.2.3 Insight into the Hearing and Understanding of the Views and Opinions of an Often Overlook and Marginalised Group Through the Combination of Gentle Teaching and Symbolic Interactionism**

This thesis offers insight into how the views and opinions can be captured through the methods that were employed through the methodological approaches. Equally as important, this thesis offers a tool to enable the views and opinions to be analysed and understood through the application of a symbolic interactionist lens. These are often some of the more marginalised students whose voices are often captured sporadically for inclusion in professional documents such as the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) as part of the annual review process (Martin-Denham, 2022). These methods enable these views to be sought for a plethora of reasons, enabling them to have more equality and say in life and educational purposes. By employing the symbolic interactionist lens, one can capture the essence of what is being said based on the understanding that their views are reliant on the experiences and social interactions they form. This in turn allows us to see that these views can be different from our own but equally as important.

Research suggests that often the voice of children with complex needs is excluded from research with the focus towards parents, professionals and other adults (Stafford, 2017). Research is beginning to enable increased participation although though 'participatory methods' (ibid), this is suggested to include multiple and varied (Cocks, 2008) ways to participate and communicate with many researchers suggesting the used of Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) and Picture Communication Systems (PCS) (Solomon-Rice and Soto, 2014; Stafford, 2013). There



are some researchers that suggest using creative arts-based methods (Clarke, McQuail, and Moss, 2003) to collect the views and opinions of those usually neglected in research or those that are spoken for. This was part of the reason for my methodological choices and demonstrates a way where this valuable information can be gathered from students with whom we work.

Although this thesis argues the merits of Gentle Teaching from a positive pedagogical approach, elements of Gentle Teaching can be applied to general teacher development within any school. There are often practices that are applied to students with different needs that are universally useful for all students, with the example of visual supports being cited in some cases (Foster-Cohen and Mirfin-Veitch, 2017). Rix et al., (2009) argue that “Pedagogical approaches that effectively include children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms are not about the teacher alone” (pp.92-93). They suggest that there is a need of a “community of learners” (ibid) which they feel includes other practitioners. This seems to lend itself with reflexivity and sharing both knowledge and understanding between professionals to meet the educational needs of the students. There is much research on reflective practice, however Cornish and Jenkins (2012) suggest this is more than just thinking, they highlight “action (experience)...reaction (reflection) and more (experimental) action” (p.161). They continue to elaborate on a cycle of these processes which is very similar to the reflective nature of Gentle Teaching. This process is not situated in just the special educational needs classroom, it can be a tool for assessing teacher development (Larrivee, 2008). Gentle Teaching has demonstrated reflexivity as an important tool for practice development, and this thesis has given some examples of this practice and some tools to help others to become reflective practitioners.

This thesis has also demonstrated the importance of an effective school culture with some examples of how the school or institution can share this and thus engage both staff and students to accept, understand and follow. This thesis also explores the importance of pupil voice, in general and when creating and establishing a whole school culture. Graham (2012) identified that the development of a school culture is also a “process of relationship building” (p.352), this paper is written from the perspective of the students’ voices which suggests the importance of developing those relationships that are not always apparent as pivotal features in school culture. Tiusanen (2017) goes much further to suggest that by including the voice of the students in the school cultural development, this is also preparing them to become active citizens within a climate of democracy. There is some research to suggest that often the voice of the student is sought but there are often barriers to implementing this within the school (Jones and Bubb, 2021). Many students wanting to be “part of the decision-making process” (ibid, p.242), this can lead to students feeling unappreciated, despondent, and this can decrease the value the students find in their own voices.

#### **5.2.4 An illustration of what Gentle Teaching Can Offer**

This thesis offers an example and an illustration of what Gentle Teaching can offer when embedded and sustained within a school culture. It demonstrates the idea that Gentle Teaching can offer a pedagogical approach to education and learning by providing the tools and environments that students need to enable them to focus and learn. It also advocates the use of Gentle Teaching as a behavioural approach that could become an alternative to behavioural interventions based on sanctions and punishment. Øen and Krumsvik (2022), highlight that many

issues with behaviour management stem from what “mainstream teachers attribute as challenging behaviour and what these attributions have on the inclusion in the school” (p.418). This does suggest that there are challenges in schools with understanding behaviour in the first instance before beginning to remedy this. There is often a lack of understanding of the fundamental purpose behind behaviours that challenge, this is not seen as a form of communication (Deb et al, 2022), which means that the root of the need is not catered for in the form of assessable communication resources. By applying Gentle Teaching tools within a school environment, the underlying reasons for behaviours of concern could often be resolved before they cause conflict and disruption between the relationships of student and caregiver.

### **5.3 Implications for the Future**

The implications of this study for the future could enable other schools to investigate developing approaches that focus on relationship-centred strategies, not only for behavioural management but pedagogy. McGee (1999) suggested that the act of caregiving begins when we remove those behaviours that others might see as domineering and when we elevate “our expression of unconditional love to the highest level” (p.26). If other schools and institutions that support the care of vulnerable people could demonstrate the value present in being with others engaged in meaningful activities, this could have a profound effect on the lives of the people that we serve.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

Future recommendations for this study would be to increase the research across a wider range of institutions, this would possibly mean international research to find other establishments that are using Gentle Teaching. It would be valuable to determine if Gentle Teaching could be

successfully integrated into other school cultures. It would be worth investigating if this would cover other types of care environments including, both supported and shared living and post-19 residential colleges or similar congregant settings. The findings from a wider scale study could pave the way for a formalised and structured training system to be created to enable more employees of these types of institutions to become Gentle Teachers.

This thesis could pave the way for further research on a range of topics that includes the voices of marginalised students using symbolic interactionism as a tool to enable these views and opinions to be heard and understood. It would also be possible to repeat some previous investigations with this theoretical lens to enable a greater understanding of how those people that find it difficult to, or those that choose not to verbally express themselves, understand the world and society around them.

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## APPENDICES

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XVII(c)	Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2 (pg3.)
XVII(d)	Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2 (pg4.)
XVII(e)	Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2 (pg5.)
XVII(f)	Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2 (pg6.)
XVII(g)	Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2 (pg7.)
XVII(h)	Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2 (pg8.)
XVII(i)	Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2 (pg9.)
XVII(j)	Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2 (pg10.)
XVII(k)	Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2 (pg11.)
XVII(l)	Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2 (pg12.)
XVIII	School Vision Statement
XIX	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
XX(a)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg1.)
XX(b)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg2.)
XX(c)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg3.)

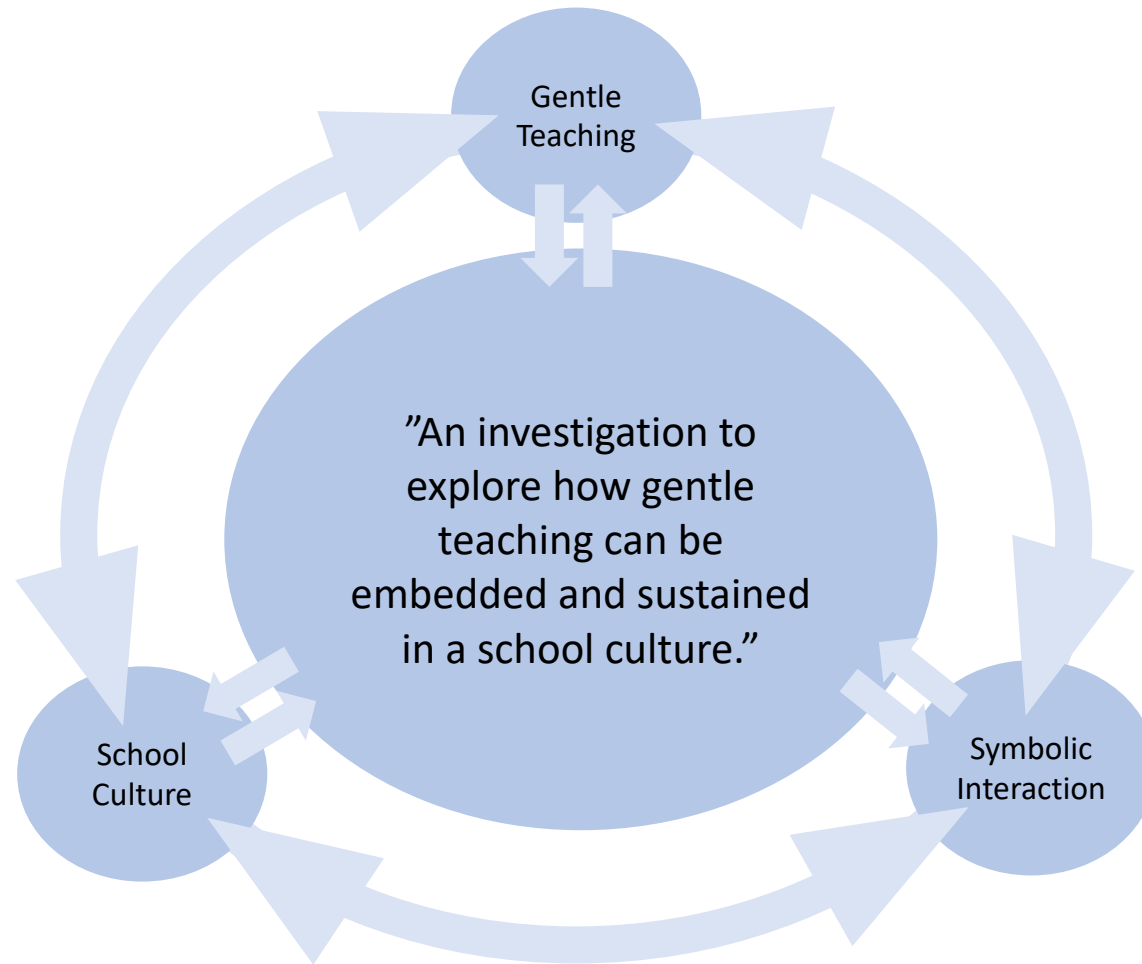
XX(d)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg4.)
XX(e)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg5.)
XX(f)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg6.)
XX(g)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg7.)
XX(h)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg8.)
XX(i)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg9.)
XX(j)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg10.)
XX(k)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg11.)
XX(l)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg12.)
XX(m)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg13.)
XX(n)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg14.)
XX(o)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg15.)
XX(p)	School Evaluation Form (SEF) (pg16.)
XXI	School's Statement of Intent
XII	Analysis of School Documents (Stage 1) Vision Statement Coding
XXIII	Analysis of School Documents (Stage 1) Statement of Intent Coding
XXIV	Analysis of School Documents (Stage 1) School Improvement Plan Coding
XXV	Analysis of School Documents (Stage 2)
XXVI	Thematic Analysis Structure Table
XXVII(a)	Arts-Based Project Coding (pg1.)
XXVII(b)	Arts-Based Project Coding (pg2.)
XXVIII(a)	Transcriptions of Discussions during the Arts-Based Project Review (pg1.)
XXVIII(b)	Transcriptions of Discussions during the Arts-Based Project Review (pg2.)
XXVIII(c)	Transcriptions of Discussions during the Arts-Based Project Review (pg3.)
XXIX(a)	Semi-Structured Interview Example 1 (pg1.)
XXIX(b)	Semi-Structured Interview Example 1 (pg2.)
XXX(a)	Semi-Structured Interview Example 2 (pg1.)
XXX(b)	Semi-Structured Interview Example 2 (pg2.)
XXXI	Servant Leadership Document
XXXII	Relationships Matter Poster
XXXIII	Consent Form & Participant Information Sheet
XXXIV	Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools
XXXV	Zones of Regulation
XXXVI	Statement of Purpose (Extract)
XXXVII	Copy of Supervision Template
XXXVIII	Letter to Students on Completion of the Study

## Appendix I – Field Study Observation Codes

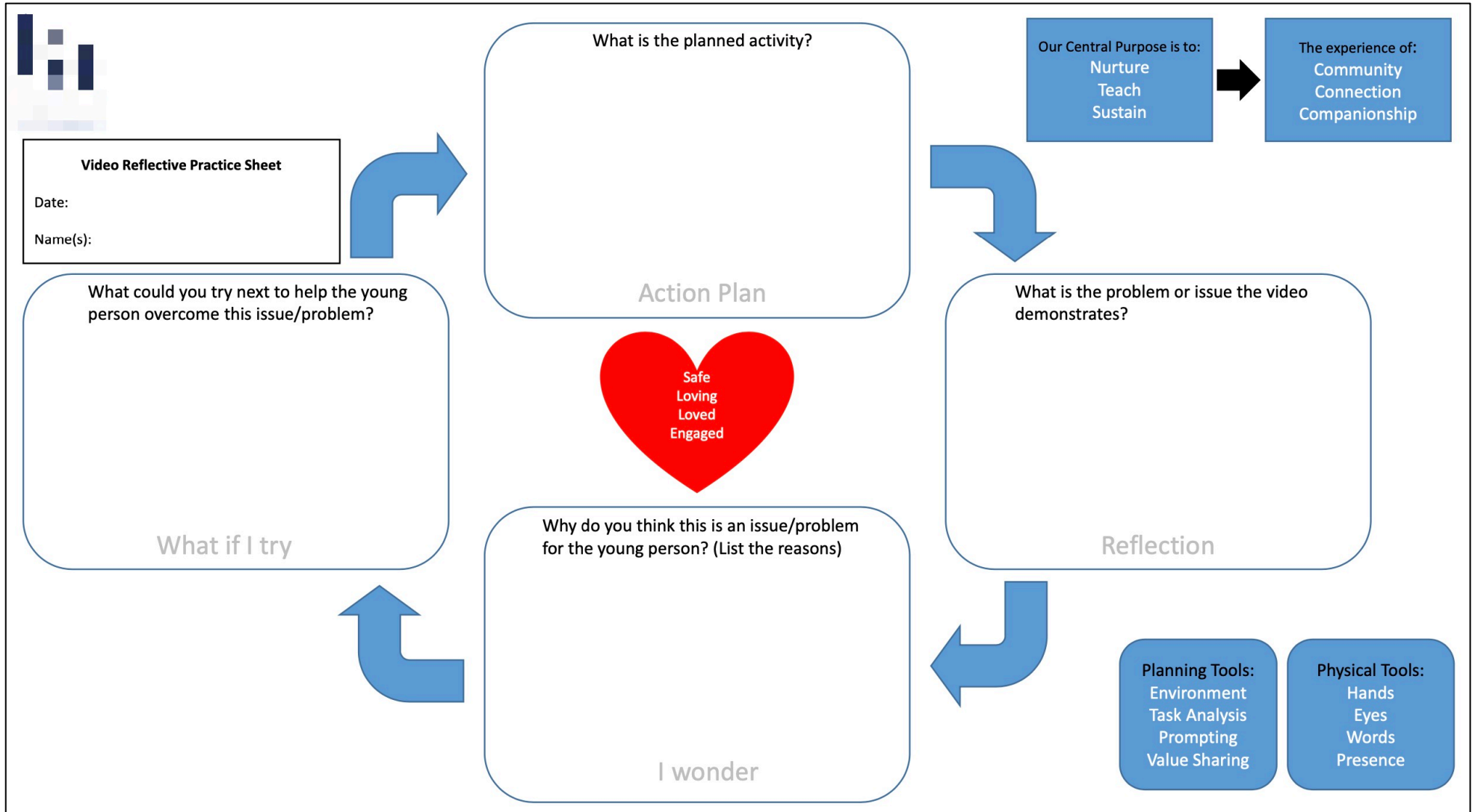
<b>Techniques</b>	<b>Code</b>
Ignore-Redirect-Reward	IRR
Interrupt-Ignore-Redirect-Reward	IIRR
Environmental Management	EM
Stimulus Control	SC
Errorless Learning	EL
Shaping & Fading	SF
Teaching Quietly	TQ
Assistance	A
Reward Envelope	RE
<b>Values</b>	<b>Code</b>
Loved	LD
Loving	LG
Safe	S
Engaged	E
<b>Tools</b>	<b>Code</b>
Hands	HS
Eyes	ES
Words	WD
Presence	PS
<b>Behaviours</b>	<b>Code</b>
Distracting Behaviours	<
Disruptive Behaviours	-
Destructive Behaviours	>

Adapted from Teaching Strategy Check List (Hobbs, 1991)

## Appendix II – Conceptual Framework Diagram



## Appendix III – Weekly School Reflective Practice Forms

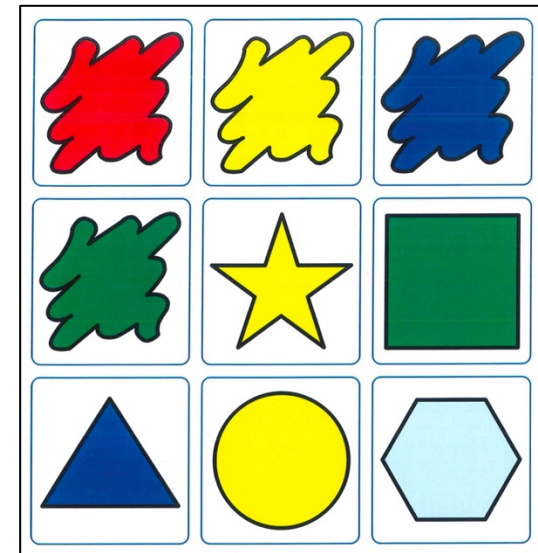
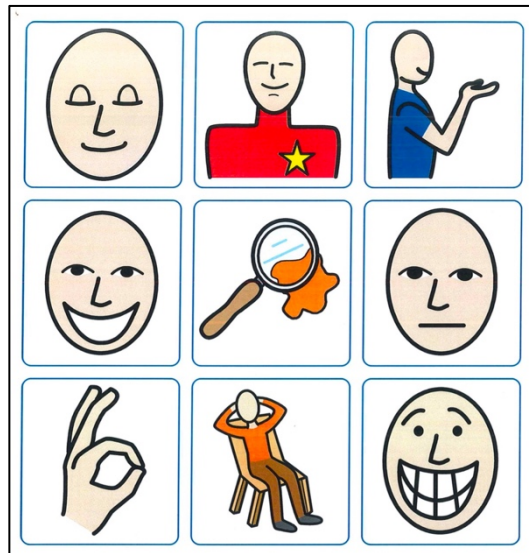
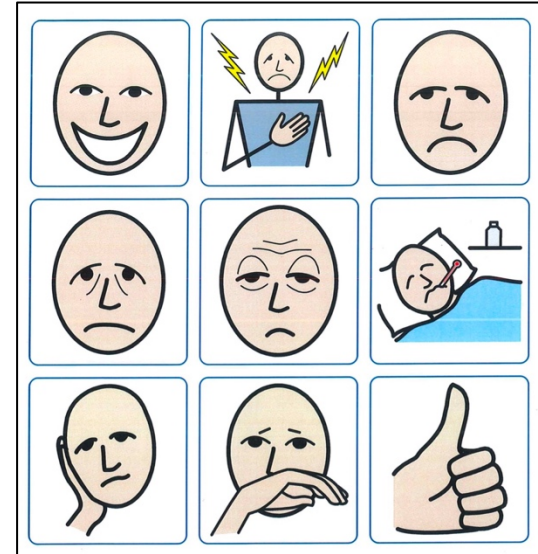
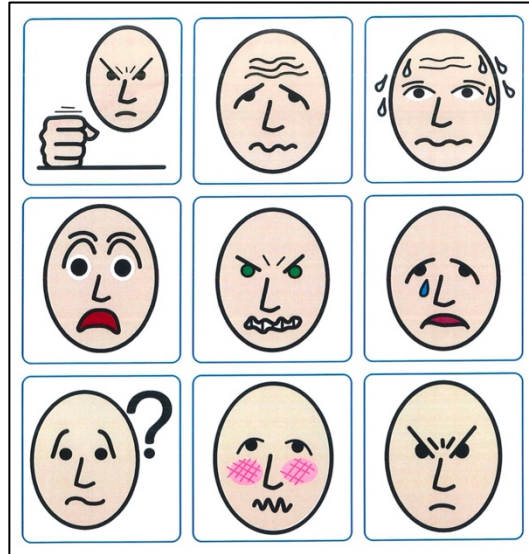


## Appendix IV – School Improvement Plan

Key Priorities	Activities
<div style="text-align: right; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">1</div> <p><b>PEOPLE</b></p> <p>Owner: [REDACTED] Governor Subcommittee:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve staff attendance to enhance the quality of life of our young people</li> <li>Ensure we recruit the right staff, with values aligned to the school</li> <li>Develop the capabilities, skills and competences of our staff</li> <li>Promote the wellbeing of all our staff to be able to best support our young people</li> <li>Review and implement improvements to the operational &amp; HR support processes</li> </ul>
<div style="text-align: right; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">2</div> <p><b>PRACTICE LEADERSHIP</b></p> <p>Owner: [REDACTED] Governor Subcommittee:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement strategy to reduce restrictive practices across the [REDACTED] community</li> <li>Grow the capacity &amp; enhance the leadership of the Mentoring Team</li> <li>Implementation of Active Support and consistent implementation of practice priorities</li> <li>Enhance debriefing &amp; critical incident analysis</li> </ul>
<div style="text-align: right; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">3</div> <p><b>EDUCATIONAL PROVISION</b></p> <p>Owner: Sarah Adams Governor Subcommittee:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To complete a comprehensive curriculum review and innovative redesign in line with the current Ofsted Framework and Preparing for Adulthood initiative</li> <li>To develop onsite and offsite work experience opportunities and work related learning</li> <li>Develop a range of assessment tools to measure outcomes and progression</li> <li>Implement a new and enhanced Therapy Provision and delivery model</li> </ul>
<div style="text-align: right; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">4</div> <p><b>RESIDENTIAL PROVISION</b></p> <p>Owner: [REDACTED] Governor Subcommittee:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To implement the proposal for the change in registration for the residential provision with Ofsted, including five residential school homes and two separate children’s homes with their own registered managers.</li> <li>To develop performance management systems for the children’s homes in line with the requirements set out by Ofsted and the needs of the staff.</li> <li>Develop the health and administration of medication systems for the children’s homes and residential provisions, including implementation of Electronic MAR</li> <li>Enhance the environments of the homes to provide a personalised and homely experience for the young people.</li> </ul>
<div style="text-align: right; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">5</div> <p><b>SUSTAINABILITY</b></p> <p>Owner: [REDACTED] Governor Subcommittee:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a 3 year plan to deliver financial security</li> <li>Realise the full potential of the school site and facilities for the benefit of the young people</li> <li>Develop strategy for community contribution</li> <li>Develop and communicate an IT &amp; communications strategy</li> <li>Continually review and ensure a safe living &amp; working environment for all within the [REDACTED] community (COVID-19)</li> </ul>



## Appendix V – Examples of Widget Symbols used in art project



## Appendix VI – Arts-Based Project Lesson Plan



Paul Gorham – Education Doctorate Research Thesis

Young person opinion expressed through the media of art	
<p><b>Data collection tool purpose:</b> To capture the opinions that the young people have with regards to the school and the culture/ethos.</p>	<p><b>Arts-informed research methodology:</b> Opinion expressed through art and analysed post event to discover and trends.</p>
<p><b>Objective:</b> To create a piece of art work that shows how I feel about the school.</p> <p><i>All young people will colour the paper and/or stick at least four images onto the paper. Most young people will use more than one colour and/or stick at least six images onto the paper. Some young people will decorate the paper to express some of their emotional views.</i></p>	
<p><b>Support:</b> Young people can have as much more little support as needed but they should be allowed to choose what and how to complete the activity.</p>	<p><b>Resources:</b> A3 sheet of paper with school image Crayons: (Red, Blue, Green, Yellow) Pens: (Red, Blue, Green, Yellow) Pencils: (Red, Blue, Green, Yellow) Symbols, images, icons, emoticons, emoji. Glue sticks</p>
<p><b>Introduction:</b></p>	<p>Show the young people the large A3 sized sheet containing the school image. Show the young people a selection of the resources that are available to decorate the image. Explain that you want them to use this picture to show how they feel about the school atmosphere. This can include the activities that they do, the friends that they have, the relationships with staff and the building itself. Explain that this is part of a big project and that the findings will be shared once it is completed.</p>
<p><b>Activity:</b></p>	<p>This activity can last as long as is needed. Classes should do this in whole class groups where possible. Support the young people to engage, but should they choose to finish after a few moments this is perfectly fine. Try not to make choices about colours, resources or positionality for them. When the work is completed write the class number and the initials of the young person on the reverse and put in a safe place.</p>
<p><b>Plenary:</b></p>	<p>To end the session, either as a whole group or as each young person finishes, briefly explore the work with them. Pick out bits of the work that are exciting or different and share value about the work that they have completed. Explain again that it is part of a project and that they will be given more information about the finding when it is completed.</p>
<p><b>Art analysis:</b></p>	<p>At the end of the day when the majority of the young people have completed the work, staff can put the work out onto the table and discuss what they think about each piece of work. Try to discuss what you feel the young person was trying to say, why you think they used one colour over another. The researcher will be present at these discussions to take notes and record the conversation to aid the analysis at a later stage in the study.</p>
<p><b>Ethics:</b></p>	<p>The majority of young people and those with parental responsibility for the young people have expressed consent in this study. However there are some that have not. Information on the work of those who have not given consent will not be used in the study and no information will be kept.</p> <p>The discussions will be recorded on a Dictaphone to aid the analysis, however at the end of the study all recordings will be deleted permanently. Staff names will not be used or recorded.</p>

## Appendix VII(a) – Examples of Student Art Projects



Figure o - YP01



Figure m - YP02



Figure l - YP03



Figure n - YP04

## Appendix VII(b) – Examples of Student Art Projects

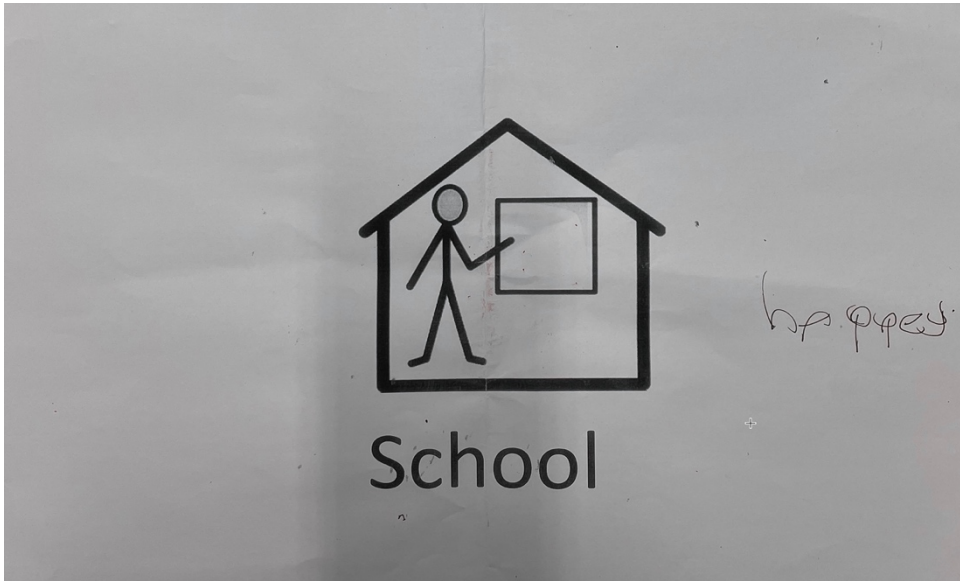


Figure s - YP05

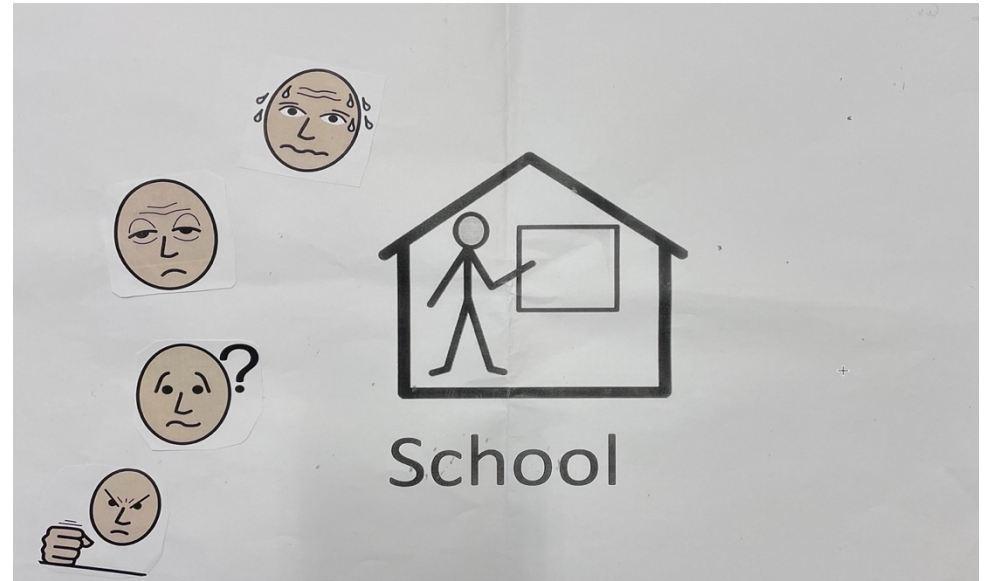


Figure r - YP06



Figure q - YP07



222 Figure p - YP08

## Appendix VII(c) – Examples of Student Art Projects



Figure u - YP09



Figure t - YP10

## Appendix VIII – Field Study Notes Template

Observation Collection Form (Data from Field Notes)			
Observation No.		Room No.	
No. Young People		No. Staff	
Activity/Lesson Observed			
Staff Observations		Young Person Observations	
Staff Interactions		Young Person Interactions	
Frequency of Techniques and effectiveness			
Ignore-Redirect-Reward			
Interrupt-Ignore-Redirect-Reward			
Environmental Management	Physical Resources	Physical Environment	Groupings
Stimulus Control	Task Analysis	Control of Materials	Teaching Style Learning Style

Errorless Learning	Balance of High/Low Demand	Balance of Have to/Want to	Structured
Shaping & Fading	Reward Value		Value Met learners needs
Teaching Quietly	Teacher coms met learns needs	Learner listened to	Visuals
Assistance	Level of support	Support timing	Support reduced
Reward Envelope	Learner felt valued		Teacher felt valued
+ = Produced Change		V = Variable Change	- = No Change Produced

## Appendix IX(a) – Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire Template

### Semi-Structured Interview Question Sheet

<b>Interview No.</b>		<b>Interviewee</b>	
<b>Observation Ref.</b>		<b>Date</b>	
<b>Role in organisation</b>		<b>Length of service</b>	
<b>Study information given</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>		
<b>Permission given for note taking</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>		
<b>Permission to record (audio) interview for transcription purposes only?</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>		
<b>In your opinion what is Gentle Teaching?</b>			
<i>Prompts: Is it a way of teaching? What makes it different from other approaches?</i>			
<b>Do you consider yourself a Gentle Teacher?</b>		<b>Yes/No</b>	
<i>Prompts: What skills do you have that link with the Gentle Teaching approach?</i>			
<b>Do you consider there to be any specific techniques that you use when engaging with children and young people in your role?</b>			
<i>Prompts: Look beyond the tools, what do these mean in practice?</i>			
<b>Has Gentle Teaching impacted your teaching approach, if so, describe the changes in practice?</b>			
<i>Prompts: What do you do differently now?</i>			

<b>Do you think the children and young people know that there is an approach called Gentle Teaching?</b>									
<i>Prompts: Would they be aware of any difference if they moved school for example?</i>									
<b>How do you rate your understanding of the Gentle Teaching Principles?</b>									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Low Understanding</b>			<b>Good Understanding</b>				<b>High Understanding</b>		
<i>Prompts: Why have you given this score? What would make it higher/lower?</i>									
<b>Do you have training or induction in Gentle Teaching?</b>									
<i>Prompts: How do you feel this has prepared you for working with the children and young people?</i>									
<b>Has your understanding of Gentle Teaching developed over your service at the school?</b>									
<i>Prompts: Can you identify when or how this developed? Were there any key moments or training which helped you to understand?</i>									
<b>Can you identify six key words associated with Gentle Teaching?</b>									

## Appendix IX(b) – Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire Template

<b>What do you understand by the following terms?</b>									
<b>Environmental Management: (resources/grouping/environment)</b>									
<b>Stimulus Control: (task analysis/control of materials)</b>									
<b>Errorless Learning: (high/low demand)</b>									
<b>Shaping &amp; Fading: (reward/value sharing)</b>									
<b>Teaching Quietly: (visuals)</b>									
<b>Assistance: (support/timing/reducing support)</b>									
<b>How do you rate your understanding of the school's ethos/values/culture?</b>									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Low Understanding</b>			<b>Good Understanding</b>				<b>High Understanding</b>		
<i>Prompts: Why have you given this score? What would make it higher/lower?</i>									

<b>Is there anything else you would like to share about Gentle Teaching?</b>		
<b>Do you wish to receive an update with the findings of this study?</b>		<b>Yes/No</b>
<b>School email</b>	<b>Private email</b>	<b>Circular memo</b>



## Appendix X – Class Art Project Resources Pack Photograph



## Appendix XI – Letter of Introduction (Staff & Parents)



Mr Paul Gorham

14<sup>th</sup> June 2019

RE: Doctoral Study Introductory Letter,

**Letter of Introduction**  
(for staff & Parents)

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is to introduce myself. I am Paul Gorham and I am a Doctoral student in the Faculty of Education at Canterbury Christ Church University.

I am undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis on the subject of Gentle Teaching with a focus on how this can be embedded and sustained in a school culture or ethos. I would like to invite you to assist with this project by agreeing to be observed in the classroom or workplace. No more than 20 minutes on three occasions. I would also like you to attend a follow-up informal interview also lasting no longer than 20 minutes after each observation.

The focus of the observations is purely to see Gentle Teaching tools and techniques being implemented and the subsequent interactions. These will in no way be used to assess the delivery or effectiveness of teaching in the classroom and will not be used in any performance management or as part of routine classroom observations. The post observation interviews will be used to initiate a dialogue to gather further information about classroom practices and interactions with the children. There are no right or wrong answers, my intention is to understand the thought process behind the actions that were taken in classes. When in classrooms observing I will wear a badge with the writing 'observer', at this time I will not be performing my duties as a senior leader in the school. The only exception to this rule will be breaches in pupil safeguarding which will be reported as school policy.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis. You are, of course entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Since I intend to make an audio recording of the interview, I will seek your consent, on the attached form, to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the thesis, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed. The information will be stored in accordance with GDPR and audio recordings will be erased after the study has been completed.


Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or e-mail [mail@pgorham.co.uk](mailto:mail@pgorham.co.uk)

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely

Paul Gorham M.Ed.; BA (Hons) qts; FRSA; MCCT.]


## Appendix XII – Letter of Introduction (Students - Symbol Version)



Paul Gorham

Dear young people,

I am writing to you about a study I am doing at University about Gentle Teaching. I am inviting you to help me through an art activity that I will use to see what you think about Gentle Teaching in your class and school.



I will keep the work that you do secret and nobody else will see what you have done. You can change your mind whenever you like and you can decide to stop helping me and that will be ok. I will not be upset or angry. The activity will take a little time or a longer time. You can decide how long you take.

There are no wrong answers. There are no right answers. I will let you know the results of my study once it has finished. If you need more information your teacher or I will help. Thankyou. Paul

## Appendix XIII – Letters of Introduction (Students - Text Version)



My Study

Hello Guys,

Some of you might know that I am studying at university. Sometimes you have to do projects in class, well I also have to do a project for my teachers at university. I have to do lots and lots of writing but before that I need to investigate something.

You might know that the teachers and staff at your school work with you in a special way. This is called Gentle Teaching and the school makes sure that everything is friendly and that you are supported to learn and explore the world. I am investigating about what you think Gentle Teaching is. I would really like your help with my project.

I know that not everyone likes to write so I am going to prepare some art activities that you can do in class and through this you can show me what you think Gentle Teaching is. This activity can last a few minutes or a whole hour, it is up to you. I will not show anyone what you have done and I will not use your name in my project.

If you are happy to help me, you should know that you can change your mind at any point. You can decide that you do not want to help any more and this will be fine. I will not be upset or angry and you will not get into trouble. Once my project is finished you can have the work that you completed back or I can put it in the bin so no one can see it.

If you are happy to help me then I will need your permission. This means I need you to write your name on the sheet below. An adult can help you if you have trouble or you can stick a yes or no symbol on the bottom of the page.

I will share my project with you when it is finished. If you want to know more about my project then come and find me and I will tell you more.

Thank you

Paul

## Appendix XIV(a) – Field Study Notes Example 1

Observation Collection Form (Data from Field Notes)			
Observation No.	1	Room No.	Gross
No. Young People	1 DR	No. Staff	2 JB BJF
Activity/Lesson Observed			
YP just around the room. Usual routine and engaged.			
Staff Observations	Young Person Observations		
Comments well, likes to go Shift close but mainly date	Expressing wants + needs. Need accident - wanting unknown looking very much. YP sat on routine and comfort		
Staff Interactions	Young Person Interactions		
Asking questions / plan for day P. a joiner with Dinner what day Was vici to let the YP know when the ac.	Reported back Green Zone Asking questions about when back coming		
Frequency of Techniques and effectiveness			
Ignore-Redirect-Reward	Ignored behavior / routine often, redirected and verbal vici.		
Interrupt-Ignore-Redirect-Reward			
Environmental Management	Physical Resources	Physical Environment	Groupings
	+	+	+
Stimulus Control	Task Analysis	Control of Materials	Teaching Style Learning Style

Completely  
Voice  
OK -  
Plan

Errorless Learning	Balance of High/Low Demand	Balance of Have to/Want to	Structured
	✓	+	-
Shaping & Fading	Reward Value	Value Met learners needs	
	+		
Teaching Quietly	Teacher coms met learns needs	Learner listened to	Visuals
	+	+	X
Assistance	Level of support	Support timing	Support reduced
	✓	+	
Reward Envelope	Learner felt valued	Teacher felt valued	
	+	+	
+ = Produced Change		V = Variable Change	- = No Change Produced

No  
Change

## Appendix XIV(b) – Field Study Notes Example 2

Res. person with initials.

29/3/22 @ 10:00

Observation Collection Form (Data from Field Notes)			
Observation No.	2	Room No.	Turtle Class
No. Young People	3	No. Staff	3
Communicator / with us	State us	Activity/Lesson Observed	JS, SM, LT, MR NK, HOD, PP, <del>DA</del> DCA
Staff Observations		Young Person Observations	
T. Giving time intervals to the yp. T. Demonstrating things actively. T. Holds hand with yp and helps hi to draw		YP. Accents the sound. Copy the program and draw with sht. Draws actual seats Central/Prone.	
Staff Interactions		Young Person Interactions	
Staff was program and help to build up low require returns. Picta pram. Use of which hand / inkless vels in the class. T - going to the yp to engage		Looks to sht to complete at Prone. AM eyes with inkless alcohol	
Frequency of Techniques and effectiveness			
Ignore-Redirect-Reward	+ ✓ YP asks unwanted goods (Omin + milk)		
Interrupt-Ignore-Redirect-Reward	+ engaging, detailed and lead to some notes seen always.		
Environmental Management	Physical Resources	Physical Environment	Groupings
	+	+	+ 1:1
Stimulus Control	Task Analysis	Control of Materials	Teaching Style Learning Style
	+	+	+

understands at the need and always of the yp.

well of hand sht some notes in the class

all available and not

(meets the needs of the class)

	Balance of High/Low Demand	Balance of Have to/Want to	Structured
Errorless Learning	+	+	+ well show
Shaping & Fading	Reward Value		Value Met learners needs
	Inks & vels.		Yes
Teaching Quietly	Teacher coms met learns needs	Learner listened to	Visuals
			Available and well on
Assistance	Level of support	Support timing	Support reduced
	Parent advice	Cultivi	N/A
Reward Envelope	Learner felt valued		Teacher felt valued
	Yes		Yes.
+ = Produced Change		V = Variable Change	- = No Change Produced

Slightly

YP changed the way but no part on time

Value that Prone and Vals pram

NEAR Hung. Ind of question about days the make - not unclear - vels the voice of the YP.

engage and engage all up to eye with still required england.

YP said good way in program

YP draw him the need to water (Hi 5 Fast Pump wam side by)

YP to YP engaged.

YP vels names can dots to come the program - inkless vels and vels. Our lbs. Very fast good.

Expectation high but support varied to help.

Deep eye catch given by Pose to Chang

acknowledge with side - YP vels / sht make.

renewed thing seeing. relate to the days of the week.

## Appendix XV(a) – Field Study 1 Notes (Transcribed from Recording)

### Field Study Notes Observation 1

#### Transcript

Run outside grass courts. One person with student x with two staff. The young person had just transitioned to school on a vehicle. This is a new routine for him. So, he was a little bit unsettled. The activity in progress was to move him to the teaching space.

The staff were engaging. The staff engaged really well using lots of positive verbal language. The young person was trying to communicate about his day by talking about the vehicle he came on, perhaps asking to go back on the vehicle.

Staff picked this up and suggested that the vehicle would be back at the end of the day. So, they gave him some closure and answered his questions. The young person's routine was not finished, which is why he was upset, so the staff were attempting to give him some way of finishing or some type of routine to help him finish. The young person has a normal routine he follows when getting off the bus which includes tapping two tyres before the bus leaves.

The young person was really quite unsettled having not been able to finish his routine, so the observation ended after about 10 minutes before he became very upset.

The young person was listened to really well. Staff were close but maintained a distance due to him being unsettled. The young person in question has no visual sight, so staff were giving him information about their presence using their voice, and he was able to hear and feel where they were.

The young person was expressing his wants and needs. He had his head covered and was vocalising he was unhappy. He felt his way around the outside fences to see where it was holding senses and things.

The young person was asking questions about the day and staff were providing this suggesting that the silver bus will be back at the end of the day and go home. No use of visuals because the young person cannot see them, but the young person was using a radio which he uses to keep track of time and the staff were reading the names of the songs on the radio display and letting the young person know after he requested this.

The person asked to open the gates so they could all walk to the classroom nearby. Staff said that he would need to be in the Green Zone first. The young person repeated Green Zone, indicating that he understood he would need to regulate his emotions before he was moving on.

The plan was to move the young person to his teaching space where work would continue. At one point, the young person urinated on the floor. This was ignored and he was redirected with various verbalised communication but not related to the fact it just urinated.

Value was infused at this point. He praised for everything. Praised for other things other than urination, for example, he was told that his smile was lovely. The environment was well managed. The physical environment and the physical resources and the groupings were all very well managed and created produced change.

Errorless learning there: There was a good balance of high and low demands.

Although this probably is variable because the demands weren't apparent at that moment.

There was good balance of 'have to's' and 'want to's' although the young person wanted to go home and that was not possible, so he stayed outside and distracted him with songs and games.

Lots of value was being shared with lots of positive praise and where when it was safe staff used touch as physical reassurance and reward. The teacher's communication met the learner's needs, they used verbal language with very simple sentences. The learner was able to listen to this, also, the learner was expressing his views was listened to as well. He was able to 'letter spell' to get his point of view across when staff had difficulty understanding what he was saying. So, they asked him to spell it out and he spelt out the words 'open gate' indicating he was ready and wanted to leave that environment.

## Appendix XV(b) – Field Study 2 Notes (Transcribed from Recording)

### Field Study Notes Observation 2

#### Transcript

Turtle class three young people and three members of staff.

The activity was a communication session with a wake-up and shake-up activity.

Staff observed engaging in a one-to-one setting with the young people, supporting them with their activities, and helping them dance. Young people accepted this support and appreciated the support to help them dance and follow the movements. Lots of praise was given.

Staff used their body and presence to deflect any negative behaviours and make other children feel safe. All young people are engaged throughout the whole activity. The observation lasted 20 minutes. The activity was still going. Each of the young people was taking turns to engage on the whiteboard to write their names.

There was an episode of minor behaviour, and the teacher demonstrated the use of 'ignore, redirect and reward'. The young person was asking for Oreos and milk. The teacher prevented this from being an issue. The teacher ignored the question but still gave attention to the young person and praised for their reaction to that.

One young person changed the position on the video on the whiteboard. This behaviour is ignored. In fact, it was turned into a positive, suggesting that the young person had helped and was a DJ and was also praised for how supportive and helpful this was. It wasn't made an issue although the young person was seemingly trying to disrupt the lesson. He didn't get any reward for that in terms of meeting the function of the behaviour, but he was rewarded for the engagement.

Environmental management and physical resources are all ready to be used. Physical environment the tables are set up read and seats are available. The teacher sitting next to young people, so support was available.

Task analysis the activity was well planned and very structured into tiny little segments that were quick to complete and built upon the whole subject.

All materials are really well used and the teaching style and learning style were really compatible. The teacher understood the needs of each young person and was able to adapt interactions to make this more successful and meaningful for the young people.

Lots of effortless learning. I mean the balance of high and low demand was obvious. If a young person was struggling rather than this becoming an issue for the young person and damaging the relationship, the activity was made slightly easier, but not in our detrimental undermining way.

There was a balance of "have to's" and "want to's" for the young people actively wanted to have the music and sing the songs and part of the structure meant that they did one bit first, then it would be time for the song, so they had that.

Reward values others given both verbally verbal praise in all the activities, but also in the presence of being close to people they trust.

Holding hands, supporting them to dance. Being close throughout the whole interaction.

Communication aids: the teacher's communication met the learner's needs where a variety of total communication including signs with verbal. Interactions and gestural.

The young people's voice was listened to and was actually lovely to hear.

The visuals were in abundance. The work would have very structured visuals. Teachers had visuals on them to show them the plan for the activity.

Learners felt valued and in addition to that, teachers felt valued. There was one situation where a young person gave intent eye contact with a member of staff. The teacher acknowledged this with a smile and the look on the young person's face afterwards was quite heart warming. I mean the staff acknowledged this and as a result, the young person felt valued.

And then people said good morning in in in order. But then people had an option. How to say good morning so they could choose to use symbols, they could have a high five or fist bump, a wave, or a side hug. Young people were free to make this choice. There's no influence in this, and there's evidence to see young people making these choices.

There was evidence of young people's engagement, which was lovely to see. The Young people were writing their names on the board over dots. This is the learning activity, but the teacher made it out to be helping him write the registers. This turned the feeling of the activity from something that had to be completed to something the young person wanted to do. This also gave the young people with sense of purpose and ownership and valued them that what they do is important.

Expectations were very high and the way that the teacher supported the young people was not undermining in any way. The language used was ordinary language neurotypical although perhaps slightly slower and more considered. Perhaps the words were more considered, but it didn't feel patronising at all.

The children interacted well using their voices. The teacher asked a question about what is the day of the week? And the first time we've heard one of these young people speak and I heard her little voice, say Tuesday quite clearly. It was quite emotional to hear that actually considering that in the past she has been very shy.

All the young people were then rewarded with a song which seems a little bit odd but watching young people dance to this and the smile and an engagement on their faces. They really appreciated this music, and they were singing and dancing along. The teacher made this very short song and added an even more engaging element when they have the opportunity to sing it quietly and sing it loudly, and even to change the tempo and encourage the children to sing it quickly. This. This was quite engaging, and I'm sure the young people really enjoyed that.

The observation ended after 20 minutes, but the lesson was still going strong. The researcher's influence was not an issue. In fact, no young people acknowledged my presence in the room. The staff noticed but didn't detract from engaging with young people, they didn't look at me, didn't acknowledge me, maybe just a little bit in order or wave just to know that was there, but otherwise, it was purely focused on young people.

Staff are using prompts well, either as gentle nudges or with their hands, and in some cases holding hands, but not in a way where teachers were taking the lead. These young people held their hands out to be held and this was acknowledged and reciprocated by the staff, which again added to the value base in the classroom.

Very low-level behaviours from one young person who was obviously concerned about having Oreos and milk for breakfast. But this did not detract from the lesson or the activity and the way in which the adults interacted and where they positioned themselves in their presence.

It clearly made all the young people feel valued and safe. No one was worried about this young person and what he was doing. A member of staff was sitting with that young person and engaging with him distracting him from his concerns about milk and Oreos with foot tickles and helping him back on the trampoline, so it was really a really lovely observation.



## Appendix XVI(a) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 1

### Transcript

00:00:00 Researcher

Interview number one.

00:00:03 Researcher

I am interviewing JB... (this is a code, reference number one, date 14th of March).

00:00:10 Researcher

What is your role in the organization?

00:00:12 Participant 1

Class teacher.

00:00:14 Researcher

How long have you worked at \*\*\*?

00:00:16 Participant 1

A year and a half.

00:00:22 Researcher

Did you receive information about the study that I am doing?

00:00:24 Participant 1

Yeah...yes

00:00:29 Researcher

And is it OK for me to...do you give me permission to take notes?

00:00:30 Participant 1

Yeah, yeah.

00:00:31 Researcher

And permission for me to record? Although it is a bit late now (laughs).

00:00:32 Participant 1

Yeah. (laughs)

00:00:33 Researcher

Err...this is about <referring to the study> Gentle Teaching.

00:00:34 Researcher

...So, I ask you some questions but if you don't the answers...

00:00:35 Researcher

...that's fine.

00:00:36 Researcher

But this is based on the observation earlier as well, so I'm trying to tease out some.

00:00:40 Researcher

Information from that.

00:00:41 Researcher

So, in your opinion, what is General Teaching?

00:00:44 Participant 1

What is Gentle Teaching? <thinks about the question>. Teaching gently <laughs> so not...no... hands-on...like hands on is the last resort.

00:00:53 Participant 1

Giving young people time to process.

00:00:56 Participant 1

Some sort of child Led education...

00:01:00 Participant 1

...to a point and supporting their needs...appropriately.

00:01:05 Researcher

Would you say that would you say that it is a way of teaching?

00:01:09 Participant 1

Not a way of teaching...

00:01:10 Participant 1

...It's like a culture...

00:01:12 Participant 1

...Like our school is gentle.

00:01:15 Researcher

And what I think makes it different from other approaches that you use and some of the tools <interventions>?

## Appendix XVI(b) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 1

00:01:20 Participant 1

I find with other schools that if they are not a gentle teaching school, their expectations are too high, and the behavior increases because you are not giving young...young people with autism time to think and process...

00:01:34 Participant 1

...information, for example, this morning, if we'd have just wanted him to move <pupil observed during the field study> and go exactly where we wanted him at that time, it just would have caused an incident <period of challenging behaviour>.

00:01:43 Researcher

Do you consider yourself to be a Gentle Teacher?

00:01:47 Participant 1

Yes! <no pause or hesitation>

00:01:48 Researcher

What skills do you have that link with the Gentle Teaching approach?

00:01:55 Participant 1

Patience...like showing love, obviously appropriately towards the children, especially being a residential school.

00:02:02 Participant 1

Because there is that part of.

00:02:06 Participant 1

They <referring to the pupils within the residential school> have not got mum and dad here at all, so just being gentle towards them, caring and knowing their needs like inside and out is really important.

00:02:15 Participant 1

...because they are all individuals.

00:02:21 Researcher

Do you consider there to be any specific techniques that you use when engaging with children and young people?

00:02:26 Participant 1

Yeah, so facial expression I think is really important, especially if there's communication difficulties because...

00:02:33 Participant 1

...they can read your face and if you go to them looking angry, it's going to frighten them.

00:02:38 Participant 1

So, you need to go smiley.

00:02:42 Participant 1

You can try and make eye contact, but they might not want to.

00:02:50 Researcher

Are there any other tools that you would use?

00:02:53 Participant 1

Just having fun making the environment, <pause> like joyful and exciting.

00:03:05 Researcher

Has Gentle Teaching impacted your teaching approach?

00:03:09 Participant 1

Yeah, massively.

00:03:10 Researcher

And what sort of changes has it made to your practice?

00:03:15 Participant 1

I'm more patient than I've ever been.

00:03:24 Researcher

Anything else?

00:03:27 Participant 1

I'm more aware of how I communicate with young people so...

00:03:35 Participant 1

...even though the environment might be really busy, so you could be having an incident and another young person behind you wanting your attention.

00:03:41 Participant 1

## Appendix XVI(c) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 1

And even though you're in that instant, and it's quite a tense situation, you turn on and you put that smile back on and that calm voice and...

00:03:48 Participant 1

...keeping everyone safe.

00:03:58 Researcher

Do you think children and young people know that there's an approach called Gentle Teaching?

00:04:03 Participant 1

I don't know...I'm not sure.

00:04:06 Researcher

So, do you think if they moved school doesn't notice a difference?

00:04:12 Participant 1

Yeah, yeah yeah, I don't...I don't think they could tell you they'd go to a Gentle Teaching school, but I think if they went somewhere else, they'd really notice a difference.

00:04:20 Researcher

What sort of differences do you think they would notice?

00:04:22 Participant 1

I think they'd be more hands on.

00:04:26 Researcher

When said hands on...do you mean? <interrupted>

00:04:28 Participant 1

Like with an incident I find with other schools that I've visited and been to...

00:04:33 Participant 1

...they go into physical interventions before they need to, so it might be they hold someone or move someone because their <pupil> face changed...

00:04:43 Participant 1

...so, it meant something was going to happen, but you don't know that you don't.

00:04:47 Participant 1

You know you can use other techniques like talking to them or distraction <them>, but I find with other schools...

00:04:52 Participant 1

...it's very quick <to intervene>.

00:04:55 Researcher

How would you rate your understanding of the Gentle Teaching principles?

00:04:59 Researcher

I've got a 1-10 here.

00:05:01 Participant 1

Probably about a 7!

00:05:03 Researcher

A 7, so that's good to high understanding of Gentle Teaching.

00:05:08 Researcher

Why did you say seven?

00:05:10 Researcher

...Why did you not say a 9 or a 4?

00:05:11 Participant 1

Because I feel like I need a bit of a refresher.

00:05:14 Participant 1

I feel like a yearly refresher for Gentle Teaching would be good.

00:05:18 Participant 1

I know it because it's within the culture of the school.

00:05:22 Participant 1

But just to be reminded.

00:05:28 Researcher

And what do you think would be reminded of...are you looking for tools and techniques or...<interrupted>.

00:05:34 Participant 1

I think the tools and techniques is in everything we do anyway, so I think we just all do it naturally, but maybe the reasons why.

## Appendix XVI(d) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 1

00:05:49 Researcher

Did you have training or induction in Gentle Teaching?

00:05:52 Participant 1

Yes.

00:05:53 Researcher

How do you feel this has prepared you for working for children and young people?

00:06:01 Participant 1

Really, really well.

00:06:04 Researcher

Has your understanding of Gentle Teaching developed over your service at the school?

00:06:16 Participant 1

Yeah, I think it's become just natural now rather than thinking about it.

00:06:22 Participant 1

And where other staff model it so well, you...just it just becomes a natural instinct.

00:06:33 Researcher

Could you identify when or how this has developed?

00:06:44 Participant 1

I'm watching other staff...and so then like come up with resolutions when things are difficult for a young person.

00:06:50 Researcher

Like problem solving?

00:06:53 Researcher

Would you say reflective practice?

00:06:56 Researcher

I don't want to put words in your mouth...but is that what you are saying?

00:07:03 Participant 1

Yeah, like what could you have done differently, which is reflective...

00:07:07 Participant 1

If you had to identify 6 keywords that's associated with Gentle Teaching? What 6 words would spring to mind?

00:07:17 Participant 1

Kind...patient...

00:07:22 Participant 1

...It's it's not a word, but more individual, so you're treating them more individually.

00:07:36 Participant 1

Loving...fun...and another word for like hands-off....<thinking>...space.

00:07:50 Researcher

So, I am going to mention a few terms and see if you can understand those linked to Gentle Teaching or anything you do in class already.

00:08:02 Researcher

So environmental management!... What do you think that means?

00:08:05 Participant 1

So, making sure it's like welcome...fun <reference to the learning environment> and safe.

00:08:15 Researcher

And what would stimulus control mean to you? You might know it by the term task analysis or control of materials.

00:08:26 Participant 1

What within your classroom?

00:08:28 Researcher

Yeah! Or when engaging with the young people.

00:08:31 Participant 1

So so like just give them transition cards.

00:08:36 Participant 1

Don't give them transition cards and then a fidget toy and then the coat...like something all the time because they won't know whether they're coming or going.

00:08:44 Researcher

So that's like a communication tool?

## Appendix XVI(e) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 1

00:08:45 Participant 1

Yeah

00:08:56 Researcher

What would you? How would you understand the term Errorless Learning?

00:09:00 Researcher

What does that mean to you?

00:09:01 Participant 1

Got no idea!

00:09:03 Researcher

You might know it as a balance between high and low demand.

00:09:07 Participant 1

Oh yes, like...so like reading a room so.

00:09:12 Participant 1

You can't engage a young person that's upset or.

00:09:16 Participant 1

You know you need to.

00:09:19 Participant 1

The learning come last comes last really.

00:09:21 Participant 1

You need to get the relationship and make them feel comfortable in their environment and then you can introduce learning.

00:09:31 Researcher

What about the terms shaping and fading?

00:09:36 Participant 1

For an individual young person, right?

00:09:39 Participant 1

So you're preparing them for adulthood and life after  
\*\*\*

00:09:44 Participant 1

Picking up on their skills and interest.

00:09:51 Researcher

You might understand that as Reward and Value sharing!

00:09:57 Participant 1

Yeah, reward in praise, but we praise verbally.

00:10:05 Participant 1

I think young people here...

00:10:06 Participant 1

...You could give them a sticker, but then I think they wouldn't really recognize what it's for.

00:10:14 Participant 1

And face like smiling and giving a high five.

00:10:16 Participant 1

We do that a lot in my class.

00:10:17 Researcher

That is loads of the value sharing!

00:10:21 Researcher

How about the term Teaching Quietly?

00:10:26 Participant 1

So you learn in everything you do <almost expressed as a question>

00:10:37 Researcher

You might understand that better as using visuals.

00:10:41 Participant 1

What like communication cards?

00:10:44 Participant 1

Yeah, so that's just adapting the learning to individual needs.

00:10:53 Researcher

And the last phrase is assistance...which you might know as support, timing or reducing support.

00:11:01 Participant 1

Yeah so...There's a lot of assistance here, so as a teacher you you do you teach, but you also do personal care.

## Appendix XVI(f) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 1

00:11:11 Participant 1

You know there's a lot of real residential schools, so...you look after them, you make sure they're safe.

00:11:18 Participant 1

Obviously you teach them!

00:11:29 Researcher

How much would you rate your understanding of the school's ethos, and values and culture?

00:11:33 Researcher

From one to ten!

00:11:38 Participant 1

8...

00:11:40 Researcher

So higher than your understanding of Gentle Teaching? Why do you think you've given it, 8 and not a 10?

00:11:43 Participant 1

Because I think my...my extra role of supporting with the curriculum is I've really had to understand the needs of the school.

00:11:53 Researcher

Have like more focus?

00:11:56 Participant 1

Yeah....

00:12:01 Researcher

...Towards that whole school...whole school vision.

00:12:10 Participant 1

Yeah, action plan yeah.

00:12:15 Researcher

Is there anything else you would like to share about Gentle Teaching?

00:12:19 Researcher

So maybe when someone doesn't know about Gentle Teaching, how would you explain it and make it sound so amazing that people want to do it straight away?

00:12:27 Participant 1

I think we need to.

00:12:28 Participant 1

And let the Community know more of what we do and work closely with the other schools.

00:12:35 Participant 1

And I think where are \*\*\* <Local Authority Maintained> but we live in Broadstairs <out of borough>

00:12:39 Participant 1

I feel there's like a gap there between us and and other schools.

00:12:44 Researcher

So bridge the gap between local authority?

00:12:46 Participant 1

Yeah yeah, Because I think we could teach mainstream and special needs school a lot, and I think that's what we're missing.

00:12:59 Researcher

Interview ended – Participant thanked for taking part and was asked if they would like to be kept informed about the study and how they would like to receive this information.

## Appendix XVII(a) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2

### Transcript

00:00:01 Researcher

Interview Number 2

First, I'd like to thank you for letting me come and see your lesson. I loved it.

00:00:05 Researcher

I wasn't looking particular lesson, but from seeing the engagement of young people I thoroughly enjoyed it and I do love seeing you engage young people.

00:00:16 Researcher

So there's a few questions about gentle teaching.

00:00:18 Participant 1

Yeah?

00:00:20 Researcher

So this is interview #2.

00:00:24 Researcher

And I'm going to put JS down, but when you're in my paper.

00:00:30 Researcher

I'm going to anonymize you even more.

00:00:31 Researcher

Because it might be harder to find you <making sure participant cannot be linked to school or paper>

And what is your role within this organization?

00:00:41 Participant 2

Teacher ECT.

00:00:47 Researcher

How long have you worked at \*\*\* in any role?

00:00:49 Participant 2

12 or 13 years in various roles.

00:00:55 Researcher

And you have had to access to the information about my study, haven't you? At some point.

00:00:59 Participant 2

Yeah...I've see it before.

00:01:01 Researcher

And you're happy for me to take notes.

00:01:02 Participant 2

Yep...

00:01:04 Researcher

and record...

00:01:06 Participant 2

Sounds good.

00:01:07 Researcher

I'll delete this once I've taken transcribed.

00:01:09 Participant 2

Yeah, no worries.

00:01:11 Researcher

Right, so here comes the questions.

00:01:13 Researcher

Your opinion what is Gentle Teaching?

00:01:17 Participant 2

Gentle teaching is about putting relationships at the heart of everything we do with young people.

00:01:24 Participant 2

It's all about not valuing the children.

00:01:28 Participant 2

**Appendix XVII(b) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2**

For what they do, but rather who they are.	A skill that I have learned here...the skill of reflection, which I think is a very important skill...I have learned here.
00:01:30 Participant 2	
So it's not like we don't praise them when they're being good and put them down when they're being not so good.	00:02:14 Participant 2
00:01:35 Participant 2	Just about constantly reflecting on my own practice.
It's just about that consistent.	00:02:16 Participant 2
00:01:38 Participant 2	...and making sure that the way I act.
That consistent approach of we respect and we value for who?	00:02:19 Participant 2
00:01:41 Participant 2	Is how I want to be perceived and how I want...
You are no matter how you behave or how you've.	00:02:21 Participant 2
00:01:43 Participant 2	...the young people to where I want to model my behavior.
Learned to behave.	00:02:24 Participant 2
00:01:44 Participant 2	And you have to be accepting criticism.
And to do that you get them.	00:02:28 Participant 2
00:01:47 Participant 2	Change your approach which at first, I found hard.
Behaving in a way that's more acceptable because they feel feel safe.	00:02:34 Researcher
00:01:51 Researcher	Do you consider that to be any specific techniques that you would use when engaging with children and young people in your role? Are there any techniques or tools that you use?
Thank you, do you consider yourself to be a Gentle Teacher?	00:02:44 Participant 2
00:01:55 Participant 2	I think it's just.
Yes.	00:02:45 Participant 2
00:01:56 Researcher	About being genuine, really, I think.
What skills do you have that you can associate with Gentle Teaching what? How do you know you are a Gentle Teacher?	00:02:47 Participant 2
00:02:04 Participant 2	You need to want to build a relationship, it's not.
Patience, resilience.	00:02:50 Participant 2
00:02:07 Participant 2	Something you can.



## Appendix XVII(c) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2

00:02:50 Participant 2

Fake and the young people know that is that being you have to generally want to want to build relationships and generally want to spend time with that person.

00:02:58 Participant 2

And to do that, the sort of techniques you find you need to find something you're both interested in, so something it's not just you're going to spend time because I'm asking you spend time.

00:03:08 Participant 2

Shared shared relationships create them sort of like meaningful moments.

00:03:14 Researcher

Has Gentle Teaching impacted your teaching? If So what sort of changes do you think you can associate with Gentle Teaching?

00:03:24 Participant 2

I think Gentle Teaching actually got me into teaching.

00:03:27 Participant 2

I think Gentle Teaching just sort of showed me a way they showed me skills I didn't know I had.

00:03:33 Participant 2

And I've learned skills that I didn't have before, and that's enabled me to be a teacher.

00:03:38 Participant 2

Obviously, I started as in support...in the care side, so.

00:03:43 Participant 2

When I started, I didn't have the skills to be a teacher.

00:03:45 Participant 2

It's until Gentle Teaching, come along, reflective practice.

00:03:48 Participant 2

And that's just improve my practice and improved my confidence.

00:03:51

To be what I have now.

00:03:58 Researcher

Do you think the children and Young people know there's an approach called Gentle Teaching?

00:04:03 Researcher

If they were able to express it verbally, if we said to them.

00:04:06 Researcher

Do you know what we do in school?

00:04:10 Participant 2

I think they can pick out keywords I don't, I don't think.

00:04:12 Participant 2

They would understand my class, if you said what's Gentle Teaching, but if they if you said what's important to \*\*\* <participants name>, what's important to \*\*\* class, they'll be able to say relationships, being kind, being safe.

00:04:22 Participant 2

Its all words we use a lot of the time.

00:04:26 Participant 2

Talk about being safe.

00:04:27 Participant 2

We talk about friendships and relationships and different sort of support.

00:04:30 Participant 2

## Appendix XVII(d) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2

We give each other, but I.

00:04:32 Participant 2

Think they'd be able to pick out the...

00:04:35 Participant 2

...sort of pillars of Gentle Teaching without actually knowing the terminology Gentle Teaching.

00:04:43 Researcher

How would you rate your understanding of the Gentle Teaching principles from one to 10, one being really low, 10 being ultra-high understanding?

00:04:52 Participant 2

I would say about an 8.

00:04:53 Participant 2

Still a lot to learn.

00:04:55 Researcher

So why would you say you can send an 8 not a 5 or 10?

00:05:00 Participant 2

I know...8 as done it for so many years until we practiced it and we've taken it on for all different approaches and I've.

00:05:06 Participant 2

Seen it work but.

00:05:09 Participant 2

Then again, I'm always willing to learn.

00:05:10 Participant 2

There's always someone out there knows more than I am, and I know that there's always someone out there that can think outside of.

00:05:15 Participant 2

The box better than I can.

00:05:17 Participant 2

So I think if you if you think you're a 10.

00:05:19 Participant 2

You close.

00:05:19 Participant 2

Yourself off to improving the suggestions.

00:05:29 Researcher

Do you have training or did you have training or induction into Gentle Teaching?

00:05:33 Participant 2

Yes.

00:05:36 Participant 2

Obviously the weekly thing and termly meetings with \*\*\* <name of external trainer>

00:05:41 Participant 2

And reflective practice and I had that when I was home manager and as a senior and now as teacher.

00:05:49 Participant 2

And the induction initial induction.

00:05:55 Researcher

Do you think this has prepared you for helping to teach children or do you think you could have done that without that training?

00:06:03 Participant 2

I think I couldn't have got to where I am and feel that I'm doing such a good job without Gentle Teaching.

00:06:09 Participant 2

I think there's loads of different ways of teaching, and I think some teachers think

## Appendix XVII(e) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2

they're doing it right, but I...I think the way we the approach of it is, it comes natural to me.

00:06:19 Participant 2

I think that's what best fits my.

00:06:21 Participant 2

I'm not trying to be something I'm not.

00:06:22 Participant 2

That's what sort of best fits my teaching.

00:06:24 Participant 2

It makes me feel confident to deliver what I am teaching.

00:06:28 Researcher

And would you say that over your time, working here your understanding of Gentle Teaching has developed?

00:06:35 Participant 2

Over 13 years...yeah....for the first five years of working, I did not know what Gentle Teaching was...obviously I understood the \*\*\* <schools' ethos>.

00:06:42 Participant 2

But until I actually looked.

00:06:46 Participant 2

Into it until I saw it working in practice...

00:06:47 Participant 2

...and it did take me awhile when I first started learning about Gentle Teaching took me months, a few months...

00:06:53 Participant 2

To really to really appreciate what it was I.

00:06:55 Participant 2

I put my up my boards <class charters linked to Gentle Teaching>.

00:06:56 Participant 2

I didn't like the change.

00:06:57 Participant 2

I didn't see it as a positive thing to us when we.

00:07:00 Participant 2

And to answer how improved my practice.

00:07:03 Researcher

Can you pick any key moments either through the training or what you've seen in class that's made you think...oh yeah, this is gentle teaching?

00:07:11 Participant 2

It's more reflective practice like when I see myself...when I...

00:07:14 Participant 2

...If I look at my early <practice> I've got 50/60 videos all saved on the hard drive of my Gentle Teaching. If I looked at what my first focus was on...my first videos...my focus is very task based.

00:07:24 Participant 2

It was mainly showing the person how to get that task and I saw...that it sort of like an ABI value

00:07:29 Participant 2

...the value of the video is how well we complete the task...we laid the tables the table look clean...I mean this young person.

00:07:34 Participant 2

We laid the tables perfectly.

00:07:36 Participant 2

## Appendix XVII(f) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2

Rather than I missed the whole point of the video.

00:07:38 Participant 2

We spent time together...and like...valuing each others time?

00:07:41 Participant 2

I think it's easy to do...and then before you know it <trailed off>

00:07:46 Researcher

Could you identify 6 keywords associated with Gentle Teaching?

00:07:50 Participant 2

Valued...safe.

00:07:53 Participant 2

Loved...loving.

00:07:57 Speaker 2

Gentleness...

00:08:00 Participant 2

I think it's gotta be mutual...everything to be mutual.

00:08:05 Participant 2

It's gotta be 6?

00:08:08 Researcher

I want to mention some terms now..they are mentioned in the Gentle Teaching text...

And if we don't get them straight away, then I talk about them how you might understand them.

00:08:24 Researcher

And if you could sort of talk me through some of those?

00:08:27 Researcher

Environmental management.

00:08:30 Researcher

So that could be identified as resources groupings and how you organize your classroom and just how's that important.

00:08:37 Participant 2

I think everything we do within the environment is just as important as the lesson plans.

00:08:42 Participant 2

Anything else and sort of how I organize my visuals, how I organise my...making sure that everything is clear and it's like ready for learning.

00:08:52 Participant 2

I think that sort of dictates how successful my learning and learning, how my day will go.

00:08:58 Participant 2

I think if you go into it with like sort of a wing it approach and just and you're not careful and you're not aware of the environmental factors, especially around seeking plans and who's sitting with who and lighting who's facing which way.

00:09:09 Participant 2

I think if you're not aware of that.

00:09:10 Participant 2

And you'll constantly.

00:09:12 Participant 2

Assessing that, then I think you would have a very hard day in class.

00:09:17 Researcher

## Appendix XVII(g) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2

What about the term Stimulus Control? Sometimes known as task analysis or controlling materials.	...Sort of just creates structure and I think it...
00:09:27 Participant 2	00:10:15 Participant 2
So like have resources and differentiation? <asking for clarification>	It keeps...keeps me on task.
00:09:31 Researcher	00:10:21 Researcher
Yeah, or how you structure your lesson, in like from looking at your lesson today you had it structured	What about the term Errorless Learning? You might know about that from our term we use about high and low demand or have to's and want to's
00:09:37 Researcher	00:10:31 Participant 2
Your overall goal, but you.	Yep, so the whole whole of my young people day is based very much on high and low demand.
00:09:38 Researcher	00:10:36 Participant 2
Had it broken into little points.	So that so it's done.
00:09:45 Participant 2	00:10:40 Participant 2
I use visuals to break down all of my lessons, but I feel not only it helped me structuring my lesson and stay within.	Sort of.
00:09:52 Participant 2	00:10:41 Participant 2
My goal and my learning objectives but also helps young people understand the expectation of the lesson so I use the visual.	At school, we've got to do certain stuff we've got.
00:09:59 Participant 2	00:10:43 Participant 2
So I break it down to 123.	To which would...
00:10:01 Participant 2	00:10:44 Participant 2
It might seem to be introduction, main and plenary, but for the young people it might seem something like Attention Autism...the bucket <an activity within Attention Autism>	...be higher in my class, but the majority of my young people higher <demand> would be the tabletop math, English and getting evidence down to paper, but that that would be the shortest part of the session.
00:10:08 Participant 2	00:10:56 Participant 2
Second, we're going to go to the table further into a group activity and....	And then the learning is more functional in my class.
00:10:10 Participant 2	00:10:59 Participant 2
	So it'll be like functional learning, so that would be the want to's...they enjoy playing the scales

## Appendix XVII(h) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2

and enjoying the measuring, and then they have to be right at the end will.

00:11:06 Participant 2

Quickly assess that.

00:11:07 Participant 2

And I think you need a healthy balance.

00:11:09 Participant 2

Of have to's and want to's...if there's too many have to's.

00:11:12 Participant 2

They're they're not going to do the want to's...if it's only the have to's there is just not gonna...they have got nothing anything to motivate them to get through the day.

00:11:19 Participant 2

And same again, if a young person is just going through the days with want to's, want to's, want to's they're not gonna be learning much, so they're not getting pushed and the boundaries aren't getting met.

00:11:27 Participant 2

Have you ever seen some people have a plan for like young person, they've got to do 5 things before their lessons finished and you see that young person struggling would you....

00:11:38 Researcher

...Would you adapt that to make it easier for young person to achieve...so it wasn't such a big thing?

00:11:43 Participant 2

Every sort of lesson, every sort, goal we we have for the kids... I'm not going to push them into having an incident <episode of challenging behaviour> because I want to count to five...we

could do...They still count 5 but we'll do it in different ways, but we....

00:11:55 Participant 2

Do hand-over-hand.

00:11:56 Participant 2

We can sing a song where we count 5 or so many different ways of approach.

00:11:59 Participant 2

And I think try once and then.

00:12:02 Participant 2

Just always we've got to stay fluid with your sort of approach...

00:12:04 Participant 2

...an approach that might work in the morning by the afternoon wouldn't work and changes, but by the minute.

00:12:14 Researcher

What about the term Shaping and Fading?

00:12:17 Researcher

This is sometimes referred to as Reward and Value Sharing.

00:12:23 Participant 2

I think we...we celebrate each other...in class, especially in my class we celebrate each others individuality and they're sort of their uniqueness and it's important.

00:12:32 Participant 2

To celebrate that.

00:12:34 Participant 2

We don't so much reward because in that sort of suggests sanctions for not achieving that.

00:12:40 Participant 2

## Appendix XVII(i) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2

It's more just we were.	But it wasn't an issue and you even thanked.
00:12:42 Participant 2	00:13:21 Researcher
Celebration of what we do.	Him for helping you.
00:12:44 Participant 2	00:13:22 Researcher
We're celebrating everything we're doing in class and it's nice for that to be recognized.	Afterwards, yeah, so do you think that?
00:12:48 Participant 2	00:13:23 Researcher
Especially a lot of children of.	Made it feel valued.
00:12:52 Participant 2	00:13:24 Participant 2
Ended up at *** <school> have quite low self-esteem.	Yeah, I think this is.
00:12:54 Participant 2	00:13:27 Participant 2
I think it's important to sort of to boost that in any way possible and sometimes that can be as simple as the thumbs up or some other children like *** could be very animated and lots of high fives and jumping up and down there's ***.	I think sometimes people believe....
00:13:06 Participant 2	00:13:29 Participant 2
It can be like a just a brief smile so it's different.	...we talked about bias.
00:13:10	00:13:30 Participant 2
Depending on who its for.	Yeah, we talked about bias.
00:13:11 Researcher	00:13:31 Participant 2
What I noticed today in your lesson was a certain young person.	How people think somebody could have looked at that and thought that young person had deliberate intention to ruin to my sides <whiteboard presentation>, and that's not how I see it.
00:13:15 Researcher	00:13:40 Participant 2
Wasn't particularly helpful and sort.	And that's not what it generally is.
00:13:16 Researcher	00:13:41 Participant 2
Of mixed up.	He generally he wants to go back to a certain points.
00:13:18 Researcher	00:13:44 Participant 2
Yeah, yeah, your music.	There's no pointing, no point in bringing it.
00:13:19 Researcher	00:13:45 Participant 2
	Up, there's no point in sanctioning there or moving away from the board.

## Appendix XVII(j) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2

00:13:48 Participant 2

...you just move on, give him praise, and that's what otherwise it's going to stop him from stop him from participating in the future.

00:13:55 Participant 2

Beause that's basically what he done.

00:13:56 Participant 2

It just wasn't at the right point.

00:14:03 Researcher

Would do you understand stand by the term Teaching Quietly?

00:14:06 Researcher

Sometimes referred to as visuals.

00:14:10 Participant 2

It's very important when working with a lot.

00:14:13 Participant 2

Of young people that though verbal even verbal praise.

00:14:18 Participant 2

Verbal demands, verbal commands, and verbal instruction can be seen as a massive demand.

00:14:23 Participant 2

Like for a lot of.

00:14:23 Participant 2

Young people in my class even.

00:14:25 Participant 2

If you're saying something positive.

00:14:26 Participant 2

If you send it verbally that they're having to process.

00:14:29 Participant 2

That is, putting more stress and making more anxious than sometimes we just use visuals and although we use total communication.

00:14:36 Participant 2

We primarily in my class alarm visuals, so it's very much.

00:14:41 Participant 2

We do our singing and dancing, but it's.

00:14:44 Participant 2

Everything visual instruction.

00:14:46 Participant 2

I think it makes it simpler to understand for young people processing...

00:14:49 Participant 2

Wise there's less demand and it's likely to get the tasks it makes the task more manageable into smaller steps.

00:14:57 Researcher

And what about the term Assistance? Sometimes referred to as support timing or reducing support.

00:15:08 Participant 2

Assistance, and I support...physical support?

00:15:10 Researcher

It could be about the way you use the resources or the help you give the young people.

00:15:17 Participant 2

I think the way we we look at it, obviously in my class, no matter what the task is, we don't try to over support, which sometimes happens quite a lot, so it would be, for example, if I see someone doing letters home <a literacy lesson in the school>.

00:15:28 Participant 2



## Appendix XVII(k) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2

The staff members doing a very firm physical hand over hand, they're writing to perfect.

00:15:34 Participant 2

Like I said before, the task complete, writing is perfect, but the young that's not the other person work and they're never going to learn.

00:15:39 Participant 2

Could be over supporting, I prefer.

00:15:41 Participant 2

The young person to make go outside the lines make more mistakes, but it's there were.

00:15:46 Participant 2

And also towards every dependency, even if it comes down to eating with a knife.

00:15:49 Participant 2

And fork either.

00:15:51 Participant 2

Them or the other person is doing more independent and more.

00:15:53 Participant 2

Successful than be.

00:15:55 Participant 2

Knife after practice, right?

00:15:57

Almost finished.

00:16:00 Researcher

How do you rate your understanding? Of the school's ethos, values or culture.

00:16:05 Researcher

From one to 10.

00:16:07 Speaker 3

Again 8.

00:16:09 Researcher

Why 8? What not 7 or 9.

00:16:14 Participant 2

I think 8...

00:16:15 Participant 2

...Because I've been here a long time.

00:16:17 Participant 2

So I think.

00:16:18 Participant 2

I do understand.

00:16:19 Participant 2

It to quite high level, not 9 because like I.

00:16:24 Participant 2

Said, I think.

00:16:24 Participant 2

There's still loads.

00:16:25 Participant 2

About the school's ethos, and obviously times change like the schools ethos.

00:16:31 Participant 2

Now for 12 years, so it's very different so.

00:16:32 Participant 2

It's constantly adapting, I think need to.

00:16:34 Participant 2

Be flexible with that approach.

00:16:37 Participant 2

People find new approaches and new neutral techniques and systems all the time.

## Appendix XVII(I) – Semi-Structured Interview Transcription Example 2

00:16:42 Participant 2

I'm happy to.

00:16:45 Participant 2

To try new things.

00:16:53 Researcher

Anything else you'd like to share about your Gentle Teaching journey?

00:17:02 Participant 2

I think I have covered it.

00:17:04 Researcher

And when I finished my study, would you like to have an update on my findings?

00:17:06 Participant 2

yes, I'd like to have a little look.

00:17:09 Researcher

Would you like that via school email, private email or circular memo?

00:17:16 Researcher

Thank you \*\*\* for your help.

## Appendix XVIII – School Vision Statement

living and learning together

within a Culture of Gentleness

### Vision Statement

**“Living and learning together within a Culture of Gentleness”**

requires each of us to be mindful that:

**The central purpose of our presence in the lives of others is to:**

- Nurture
- Teach
- Sustain

**The experience of:**

- Connectedness
- Companionship (what it is like to be and have a friend)
- Community

**Through the principles that make every one of us feel:**

- Safe
- Loved unconditionally
- Loving towards others
- Engaged meaningfully in life



**We express these principles using:**

- Words that are kind, uplifting, encouraging and loving
- Eyes that are warm and smiling
- Touch that is gentle and respectful
- Presence that is attentive and responsive to the person

**And by reflecting upon our relationships in the context of how we have planned:**

- The environment
- The organisation of life
- How information is understood and acted on
- The dialogue (listening, interpreting and adjusting)

**The Culture of Gentleness can be supported by:**

- Keeping our young people at the centre of everything we do
- Working harmoniously together so we can realise the goal of giving each young person a real life
- Fostering a sense of community within

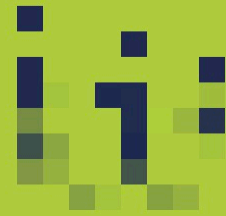
**nurture – teach – sustain**

# Appendix XIX– School Improvement Plan (SIP)

living and learning together



within a Culture of Gentleness



The  High 5

## Appendix XX(a) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

SEF Document Coding		
The Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outcomes for children and young people are outstanding and these are validated across a strong and wide-ranging evidence base.	Quality of life for young people Person centred development
	In the year 2017-18 – 88% of the lessons observed were judged as good or outstanding. During the year 2016- 2017 overall lesson observation judgements deemed that all teaching was good; and 70% of lessons are judged as outstanding over the same period. The year 2015-2016 all teaching was deemed good or better with 45% judged as outstanding.	Quality of life for young people Assessment for Learning
	We know our judgments on teaching are accurate because of moderation with curriculum leaders, senior leaders, the link inspector as well as external consultants. These observations form part of our observation process.	External audits and benchmarking
	Our curriculum meets the complex needs of our children & young people. Schemes of work, since the last inspection has been reviewed in accordance with the new national curriculum. Themed schemes of work are in place for Key Stages 1-4 which are designed to motivate and engage students, providing opportunities so that there are cross curricular links. Literacy, Numeracy and SMSC are embedded across the curriculum to support individualised targets, which are evaluated termly. Our curriculum was reviewed and validated as ‘highly effective in meeting the needs of our pupils’ by peer leadership mentoring groups and the school’s improvement partner, as well as outstanding Head Teachers from other special schools.	Staff leadership Review and reflection on processes External audits and benchmarking
	Discrete SMSC and Fundamental British Values sessions are tailored to meet the children and young peoples’ abilities and are delivered weekly by class teachers and there is smaller group work with a more specialist teacher.	Person centred development
	Children and young people receive enhanced curriculum opportunities linked to sensory integration, including Sherborne, yoga, food technology, interactive storytelling, rebound therapy, TAC PAC, Aromatherapy, ‘Messy Play’, sensory circuit, horticultural studies and a broad range of Physical activity including swimming, circuit training, rugby/football and off-site gym visits. This enhances the engagement of children and young people with their curriculum experience.	Person centred development Quality of life for young people
	Our Performance Management system is highly effective, as evidenced by our Link Inspector. This is linked to the organisational strategic plan, the teaching standards and self-evaluation activities. Regular Performance Management reviews, in line with our schools and children’s home guidelines and policies, take place and are linked to career stage expectation audits based on teachers and the professional standards (objectives linked Professional Development, Leadership and Pupil Progress for all staff). The targets are cascaded down from the School Improvement Plan and strategic objectives which form the Vision Statement.	Staff development Following recommended school processes
	In relation to succession planning, Career Stage Expectation audits have been developed to demonstrate career progression within specific roles and support in identifying developmental personalised targets for CPD. Staff say they feel that their training and development needs are met because it is linked with the School Improvement Plan and the school priorities, and succession planning/leadership initiatives ( <i>taken from staff survey</i> ).	Staff development Following recommended school processes Teamwork around the young person
	Pay and opportunities are inherently linked to performance.	
	We have been awarded the Investors in People Gold Champion, which directly relates to outstanding People Development.	Review and reflection on processes External audits and benchmarking
	EFQM (European Foundation for Quality management) said our staff learning and development is a Role Model Practice within Europe.	External audits and benchmarking
	Strong community links and community projects such as ‘clean for the Queen’ and local work experience opportunities which benefit the local community and the environment prepare our pupils well for adulthood. These include developing independent living skills, community inclusion and for some preparation for employment (see outcomes for children and young people – Pupil Data Booklet).	Community engagement Quality of life for young people Person centred development Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities
	Parents response rates over the last 2 years has been high (50%-75%). 100% of parents reported in 2017 that they felt their child was making good progress.100% of parents reported that they felt teaching was good over the previous 2 years.	External audits and benchmarking

## Appendix XX(b) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

<p>We have a robust baselining process which ensures a wide range of key assessment information is collated when the young person comes into the school. This information is discussed and shared during a multi-agency professionals meeting, with parents, carers and previous school placement. An IEP is in place within the first week of arriving at XXX (see baseline process map). This is reviewed weekly for six weeks to ensure the young people have starting points which are accurately identified to maximise their opportunity to make rapid progress.</p>	<p>Teamwork around the young person Person centred development Review and reflection on processes Assessment for Learning</p>
<p><b>Areas of development over the next 3 years</b></p>	
<p>To further develop the process for teachers who require support; To facilitate further peer observations with other schools to triangulate judgements and share best practice; Assessment- developing a bespoke assessment system which will assess attainment in relation to 'outcomes we value'. It is identified that this process will occur following a full curriculum review and will be linked to preparing for adulthood outcomes.</p>	

## Appendix XX(c) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

<b>Outcomes for Children and Young People</b>	Children and young people make outstanding progress across all key stages from their individual starting points.	Quality of life for young people
	We know our data and judgements are accurate as we use input from a range of professionals to validate our assessments. We incorporate data and information including academic progress and attainment; personal social & emotional information; health & wellbeing; behaviour data analysis; speech and language therapy data and Occupational Therapy assessments.	External audits and benchmarking Review and reflection on processes Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities
	The data for the different cohorts has been scrutinised and there are no significant gaps in vulnerable groups and their attainments. This is evidenced in our data booklet.	Quality of life for young people Review and reflection on processes
	Challenging IEP targets are achieved across the school, ranging from 70% to 95% achievement rate in the years 2015-18. This is evidenced on our pupil data booklet.	Quality of life for young people
	During the year 2017 – 2018 challenging Annual review targets were consistently met with an average success rate of 90%. These targets are linked to the outcomes from the EHCP.	Review and reflection on processes
	Personalised communication and learning resources are created to enable each young person to access and engage with high levels of progression in speaking and listening across the school.	Quality of life for young people
	Triangulation and moderation occur with other SEND schools with similar cohorts of children and young people to moderate and validate our robust assessment processes.	External audits and benchmarking Review and reflection on processes
	Termly tracking for children and young people with teachers, the data manager and Heads of department ensures robust and highly individualised action plans are in place for the very few children and young people who are making below expected progress or may be expiring difficulties in any given area of their progression and development.	External audits and benchmarking Review and reflection on processes
	We monitor and use outcomes we value to assess progress e.g., independence, healthy lifestyles, access to the community, transition into adulthood	External audits and benchmarking Review and reflection on processes Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Quality of life for young people
	<b>Areas for Development over the next 3 years:</b>	
Developing a 'dashboard' whereby the comprehensive range of information currently held on the school's different databases can be centralised to reflect the progress in all areas of a young person's attainment and EHCP; Improve Annual Review targets to align further with the EHCP key stage outcomes		

## Appendix XX(d) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

Personal Development, behaviour and welfare	At XXX we have a firmly held and well tested approach to promoting Positive Behaviour Support. In addition to subjects taught in the curriculum, we maintain a strong Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural element in school life and are confident in compliance with government requirements that we promote British Values. Under-pinning all our work is preparing children for the opportunity's responsibilities and experiences of later life. We have clear objectives for all our children and young people. We support the development of communication skills which is a critical concern for many of our young people.	Person centred development Teamwork around the young person Communication strategy External Policy
	We aim to generate confidence, self-worth and interdependence skills: many of our young people find interaction with others to be a real challenge due to their autism and need develop skills to share life with others. To enable young people to manage anxiety and relationships is a key to enhancing their chances of a happier life, increase opportunities and safer interactions with other people. For these reasons we celebrate diversity and ensure everyone takes part in cultural activities. We create opportunities for problem solving and aim always to create in our young people the resilience to cope with adult life beyond XXX School.	Quality of life for young people Person centred development Connectedness and relationships
	School improvement partner (August 2016) supports a strong evidence base that there is:	Review and reflection on processes
	an effective individualised programme for each child and young person, a gentle teaching ethos and a unique 24-hour curriculum from 5-19 which provides excellent education and therapeutic support to pupils	Quality of life for young people
	A strong focus and outstanding practice in the personal development and well-being of pupils and staff meeting a wide range of very complex pupil needs and, in the preparation, or pupils for next steps, including securing stable placements, post school and for adult life.	Quality of life for young people Giving pupils a voice
	Young people have a robust and supportive transition process into adult services for the young people and their families leading to successful onward placements.	Connectedness and relationships Quality of life for young people
	We have a rigorous and robust staff induction programme (reflected by staff surveys and feedback from Induction) in the management of behaviour and provide mentors for all staff to ensure practice is reflective and developmental and provide weekly training refreshers sessions for staff linked to behavioural support. The impact of this is reflected in consistency of approach and highly effective management of the often extremely complex and challenging needs of our pupils.	Staff development Staff growth Staff wellbeing
	A range of feedback from visitors and professional working with the school reflects that the 'gentle teaching approach is highly effective and results in outstanding management of pupils' behaviour in and around the school and that our process of reflective practice enables staff groups to review their support with the young people in order to be more effective.	GT Ethos linked to school values Community engagement
	Behaviour is monitored closely through a range of monitoring activities across the whole school and data across all areas is brought together to identify and address links to behaviour incidents where they arise.	Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Assessment for Learning
	There is strong evidence and data that shows that children and young people at XXX make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional skills as well as in the more academic areas.	Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Assessment for Learning
Children and Young People are supported and challenged to participate in learning effectively through trusting and respectful relationships. Parents have reported two years running that they feel that their child is treated respectfully (100%).	Giving pupils a voice Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities GT Ethos linked to school values Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools	
XXX is a UNICEF Rights Respecting School that has just been awarded Gold Award status.	External audits and benchmarking Review and	



## Appendix XX(e) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

		reflection on processes Quality of life for young people
	<p>Feedback from parents and professionals working with the school reflects that:                      Individualised Positive Behaviour Support Plans (Interaction Plans); Functional assessments Risk assessments and reducing restrictive practice plans; Communication profiles to support behavioural development and wellbeing; Discrete SMSC, online safety and British values sessions tailored to students abilities delivered weekly by a specialist teacher; Individualised health care plans and passports which integrate Children’s Home regulations and Standards (holistic and integrated planning); Individual Wikis to support EHCP and care planning, <b>are all highly effective</b> in supporting pupils behaviour and attitudes to maximise their access to opportunities for learning and independence</p>	External audits and benchmarking Review and reflection on processes Quality of life Assessment for Learning Active Involvement
	<p><b>Areas of development over next three years:</b></p>	
	<p>Continuing to enhance the Children’s Home Regulations and Standards; Implementation of development programme to enable the use of Wikis for all young people</p>	External Policy Giving pupils a voice

## Appendix XX(f) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

Leadership and Management	<p>The effectiveness of Leadership &amp; Management is outstanding, and this is clearly demonstrated by the conclusions of our regular external regulatory inspections and external audits against published standards managed by OFSTED, EFQM and Investors in People, for example. The development of leaders and succession planning at all levels of the staffing structure is a key aspect of our learning and development programmes, which build on our rigorous approach to Performance Management and Supervision. These programmes of professional development are also frequently the requirements for advanced qualifications, for example, QCF. Not only is this a demand of our regulatory systems, but it is also the way in which we deliver high quality performance against our strategic demands. We review and refine the systems of the school on a regular basis. Leaders and managers are expected to role model the values and behaviours we have all agreed and adopt a model of Servant leadership. Change is a way of life in education and social care – we expect all our leaders and managers to positively embrace and respond to these learning opportunities when it is required.</p>	<p>Review and reflection on processes External audits and benchmarking GT Ethos linked to school values Following recommended school processes</p>
	<p>All staff have Performance Management objectives set by line managers (supervisors) as part of their Performance Management Cycle, encompassing 3 core objectives (children and young people’s progress, leadership skills and professional development). These objectives cascade down from the XXX Improvement Plan (SIP) and the objectives or priorities set for the Head Teacher by the Governing Body, and onwards through senior leaders and middle managers to their people. All strategic activity is subject to regular review and improvement. The objectives or priorities of the school are communicated in a variety of different ways to all staff e.g. The High Five, XXX Improvement Plan Summary and whole community staff meetings. There is a structure in place to support upward and downward communication. Both Governors, and union representatives, are involved in understanding and feeding back comment, for example, on school restructuring and on the Children's Home structure. We all, at whatever level, aim to meet and exceed the needs of children and young people as well as the structures of the school.</p>	<p>Staff development Staff growth Following recommended school processes</p>
	<p>We have self-funded a new residential building to improve the provision for our children and young people and will then implement the refurbishment of the main building to provide high quality CPD suites, therapist provision and administrative spaces. Thus, we have significantly improved the quality of residential accommodation and the working environment for our people. We have developed a variety of residential packages which has led to the increased intake of Wandsworth children and young people and made provision for an increased intake of Kent placements. We deliver outreach, professional development and expertise beyond our community. We are a registered Cache centre and offer accreditation for CPD for external schools and organisations. Increasing staff numbers and registration as a children’s home have given us an increasing focus on people development and wellbeing (reward and recognition). Restructuring departments has also increased efficiency and extended skills to reflect the changing needs of the school and its sustainability.</p>	<p>Quality of life for young people Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Teamwork around the young person Person centred development</p>
	<p>The school has obtained the following national and international awards and recognitions:</p>	<p>External audits and benchmarking</p>
	<p>These awards and external feedback from a range of agencies, LA officers and external consultants and visitors demonstrates that Leadership and Management across the school is outstanding with the following main themes emerging: “Strong leadership and management by the head teacher who leads by example with a strong vision, and whose drive and high expectations are understood and shared by all staff.”</p>	<p>Staff leadership External audits and benchmarking</p>
	<p>XXX is proud to be an Investors in People (IiP) Champion/Gold Standard. We have been an IiP Accredited school since March 2001. We believe there is a direct correlation between the emotional wellbeing and personal development of our staff and that of the children and young people in our care. We have implemented a range of initiatives and encourage staff to be dynamic and flexible whilst remaining calm and compassionate. By valuing our staff, we can empower the delivery of extraordinary levels of care and education. Our most recent assessment was in January 2016.</p>	<p>External audits and benchmarking School development GT Ethos linked to school values Quality of life for young people</p>
	<p>We were EFQM Excellence Award Finalists twice, in 2009 and 2010, winning three prizes (Customer Focus; Leading with Vision, Inspiration and Integrity and Succeeding through People) in total. We have continued to work with the Excellence Model, which supports our management and improvement structures. The continued growth of the school and its development rests on the foundation of the Excellence Model. Our Role Model activities rest on the Fundamental Concepts of Excellence.</p>	<p>External audits and benchmarking School development</p>
	<p>We have been EFQM Excellence Award Finalists again in 2016 and XXX School has again been a prize winner, winning two prizes for Adding value for customers, and Sustainability for the future.</p>	<p>External audits and benchmarking School development Quality of life for young people</p>

## Appendix XX(g) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

Strong and highly supportive senior leadership team who strive and work determinedly to secure continual improvement.	Supporting staff through difficult moments Staff leadership
Staff who understand, share and promote the strong vision of the school, its ethos and values, and who are fully committed to the young people, families and whole school community.	GT Ethos linked to school values Personal Values identified in recruitment Community engagement Acknowledgement of School community Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools
Detailed and comprehensive school improvement plan which is based on priorities identified through effective monitoring and evaluation.	External audits and benchmarking School development Review and reflection on processes
Effective Performance Management and Supervision processes which staff value and which identify areas for development as well as exciting opportunities for staff which supports retention and recruitment.	External audits and benchmarking School development Staff development Staff growth Review and reflection on processes
Robust and strategic monitoring and evaluation cycle with whole school systems and processes embedded throughout all areas of school.	Review and reflection on processes Following recommended school processes
Effective Use of objective external evaluations and awards to validate their judgements of effectiveness and to ensure they are accurately identifying priorities	External audits and benchmarking School development
A dynamic self-improving school which is ably and rigorously monitoring its performance and identifying areas for development on an ongoing basis securing continual improvement and striving for excellence in all it does.	External audits and benchmarking School development
Highly effective provision, leading to highly effective practice in managing CYPs' very complex behaviour and development resulting in 'outstanding' behaviour and attitudes to learning, to school and other children and young people.	External audits and benchmarking School development Quality of life for young people Reducing Restraint Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities

## Appendix XX(h) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

<p>Depth and breadth of curriculum and extended 24-hour curriculum which is creative and innovatory, meeting the wide range of children and young people’s needs, providing excellent preparation for the next steps and adult life as evidenced through the progress pupils make across a range of indicators.</p>	<p>School development Quality of life for young people Reducing Restraint Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Assessment for Learning</p>
<p>Strong evidence of the development of CYPs’ spiritual, moral social and cultural development reflected throughout the school culture and environment.</p>	<p>Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Assessment for Learning Quality of life for young people Reducing</p>
<p>Integrated communication and language development, therapeutic support and provision and leadership of this area is a strength of the school.</p>	<p>Communication strategy Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Assessment for Learning Quality of life for young people Reducing</p>
<p>A carefully structured and comprehensive induction/CPD programme is in place and staff speak highly of the support and opportunities they have received whilst at XXX School.</p>	<p>School development Staff development Staff growth Review and reflection on processes</p>
<p>Staff attitudes and commitment and the stability of staffing in a highly challenging environment which is impressive.</p>	<p>Staff Behaviours Improvement of staff attendance GT Ethos linked to school values</p>
<p>No staff bullying or racist incidents over many years.</p>	<p>Staff Behaviours Improvement of staff attendance GT Ethos linked to school values</p>
<p>A range of effective partnership working across other schools and organisations.</p>	<p>External audits and benchmarking Community engagement</p>
<p>Effective leadership training for all senior and middle leaders on Prevent and radicalisation and delivered training for all staff. Bold and innovatory attempts to promote British Values and address the ‘Prevent’ agenda in relation to pupil’s levels of understanding and comprehension through assemblies and in the everyday delivery of the curriculum – and as evidenced in focussed lesson observations and in their success in the many and various external awards and accreditations, Gold Investors in People. Enhanced healthy schools’ status, Rights Respecting School etc.</p>	<p>Safety for pupils and staff External audits and benchmarking External Policy</p>

## Appendix XX(i) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

	<p><b>Evidence that further supports this judgement:</b> Teaching that is consistently good or outstanding; Students make substantial and sustained progress in relation to their rigorously identified starting points within key Stage 5; Students have sustained post 19 placements due to intensive transition processes (2012/13- 100% still in placement 3 years after transition; 2013-14 100% of young people still in designated placements 2 years after initial placement; 2014-15 57% of young people still in initial placement one year after initial transition).</p> <p><b>Governance</b> - School has committed governors who strongly support and also challenge the school to retain its outstanding performance; The Head teacher’s Report to Governors is comprehensive and informative; Governing Body minutes reflect that Governors receive quality and accurate information and a schedule of governing body visits are undertaken throughout the year and reported back to full governing body meetings; Governors are undertaking a self-audit and have commissioned a review of governance from the LA scheduled for summer 2017 to ensure their practice is continually challenged to ensure maximum effectiveness.</p> <p><b>Safeguarding</b> - Safeguarding in XXX continues to be judged as Outstanding. The safeguarding practice was judged as outstanding in the school’s last Ofsted Inspection of the Residential Care in January 2017. The school undertakes regular reviews of safeguarding and is robust in its monitoring of practice across the school and Children’s Home. We are part of a European research project looking at Safeguarding in residential settings led by Ann Craft Trust.</p> <p><b>Areas of Development over the next 3 years</b> - Develop further opportunities for work-based experiences in the local community; Develop an assessment system to measure attainment in preparing for adulthood skills such as life skills and independent living; To further develop the collaborative school improvement, work to enable the school to moderate and evaluate their judgements effectively; Audit and review of governance to ensure performance and effectiveness is maintained; Progress the identified areas for development as exemplified in the school’s improvement plans and self- evaluations.</p>	<p>Person centred development Quality of life for young people Community engagement Connectedness and relationships</p> <p>External audits and benchmarking</p> <p>Safety for pupils and staff External audits and benchmarking External Policy</p> <p>Assessment for Learning External audits and benchmarking</p>
<p>6<sup>th</sup> Form (16-19 department)</p>	<p><b>Overall Effectiveness</b> Overall attainment in the 6th form is outstanding as demonstrated in End of Key stage data (July 2017) and end of year data (July 2018). There has been a year-on-year increase in the number of young people exceeding XXX school’s expectations which follow a levels progress throughout key stage 5 in English. English and Maths is embedded within the curriculum and throughout a variety of real-life experiences. The assessment system reflects this approach and enables assessment to occur around our curriculum offer. Teaching is outstanding as evidenced by lesson observations (2015/16- 50% Outstanding &amp; 25% Good; 2016/17 – 70% outstanding &amp; 22% Good; 2017/18 – 42% outstanding &amp; 29% good). All students leave with ASDAN ‘Towards Independence’ accreditation (up to 5 modules each year). An increase year on year of young people accessing work experience opportunities off site; 2016-17 58% of young people accessing off site work experience opportunities; 2017-18 70% of young people accessing work experience off site. Pupils and families make an active choice to stay on into the 6th form from year 11 (2016-17 100%; 2017-18 100%). Young people categorised as SLD attending college taster sessions one weekly (2016/17-38% of young people in key stage 5 attending college link programme; 2017/18-43% of young people in key stage 5 attending college link programme; 2018/18 – 65% of young people in Key Stage 5 attending college link programme). This provision has now been expanded. There are now two cohorts accessing a variety of courses. One course is aimed at young people working below entry level 1; the other is aimed at young people working at or above entry level 1. All young people access work related learning on site (horticulture, woodwork and arts sessions). Highly successful transition arrangements to support post 19 providers with sustained placements (2015-2016 80% of young people still in provision identified post 19 after a successful transition; 2016-17 100% of young people remain in placements identified post 19 6 months on). Family engagement is outstanding attendance at annual reviews (2015/16 – 22 Annual Reviews held, attended by 100% of families; 2016/17 – 26 Annual Reviews held, attended by 84% of families; 2017/18- 22 Annual reviews attended by 91% of families)</p> <p><b>Areas of Development over the next 3 years</b> Further activities within the community for young people to access throughout the 24-hour curriculum.</p>	<p>Person centred development Quality of life for young people Community engagement Connectedness and relationships Following recommended school processes</p> <p>Community engagement Social Role Valorisation</p>

## Appendix XX(j) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

<b>Personal Development, Behaviour and welfare</b>	Individual mentoring plans and individualised risk assessments have a significant impact on increasing children and young people’s engagement and reduce inappropriate/challenging behaviours.	Reducing Restraint Teamwork around the young person Safety for pupils and staff GT Ethos linked to school values Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools
	CYP mental health and wellbeing are positively supported through the behaviour mentoring team provided in house at XXX and liaising with services such as CAMHS.	Reducing Restraint Teamwork around the young person Safety for pupils and staff
	Person centred approach to all young people in terms of targets and mentoring programs for all young people to support their needs.	Reducing Restraint Teamwork around the young person Safety for pupils and staff Person centred development
	Person centred approach to transition to adult services from XXX	GT Ethos linked to school values Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools Giving pupils a voice Person centred development Teamwork around the young person Community engagement Connectedness and relationships
	Integrated approach to behavioural support that provides consistent responses to young people’s behaviour alongside internal processes which monitor behavioural progress termly	Person centred development Teamwork around the young person Safety for pupils and staff
	CYP are supported to demonstrate and understand social and moral responsibility through everyday learning opportunities, the PSHE curriculum, departmental and whole school assemblies.	Person centred development Teamwork around the young person Safety for pupils and staff Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities
	Students follow individualised learning program or pathways to meet their needs	Meaningful and relevant learning

## Appendix XX(k) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

		opportunities Person centred development Teamwork around
	Young people are proactively engaged in decision making and the promotion of their voice through student councils, raising money for local charities and carrying out community projects through work experience opportunities.	Giving pupils a voice Person centred development Teamwork around the young person Community engagement Connectedness and relationships GT Ethos linked to school values Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools
	<b>Areas of development over next 3 years</b>	
	Continue to develop reflective practice throughout the school to reflect on practice with all young people and routines throughout the 24-hour curriculum to make improvements; Continue to reduce restrictive practice throughout the homes and classes.	Review and reflection on processes Reducing Restraint
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	Teaching is outstanding or good.	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice
	In 2017/18 – 71% of teaching was judged as outstanding or good.	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice
	In 2016/17- 92% of teaching was judged as outstanding or good.	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice
	In 2015/16- 89% of teaching was judged as outstanding or good.	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement

## Appendix XX(I) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

		Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice
	Children and young people make substantial and sustained progress in relation to their starting points within key stage 5	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice
	CYP have sustained post 19 placements due to intensive transition processes	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice Connectedness and relationships
	<b>Areas of Development over the next 3 years</b>	
	Review careers provision using the Gatsby profile; Further develop SRE education throughout the upper school; Introduce aspirations days information into transition panning process at annual reviews.	Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Review and reflection on processes
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	Overall attainment in the 6th form is outstanding as demonstrated in End of Key stage data (July 2016) and end of year data (July 2017).	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice
	A substantial number of CYP have exceeded UQ targets set (1 levels progress over key stage 5). 2014/15-67% exceeded targets in maths, 22% exceeded targets in English; 2015/16-86% of young people exceeded targets in English and maths. In 2016-17, 82% of young people exceeded targets in English and 86% exceeded targets in maths.	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice
	All children and young people leave with accreditation in ASDAN's towards Independence modules.	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and



## Appendix XX(m) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

		relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice
	The Integrated Therapies within the curriculum of the 6th Form continues to have a significant and positive impact on children and young people’s levels of engagement, attainment and achievement as evidenced by progress towards communication, behavioural and annual review targets.	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice Teamwork around the young person
	Moderated Accredited work judged to be exemplary by ASDAN; Comments from moderators are consistently commending the standard of work produced by young people at XXX and the presentation of administrative and workbooks.	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice Teamwork around the young person
	Young people make outstanding progress in independent and living skills as evidenced by increased community access, work experience opportunities and ASDAN modules, young people have extensive learning opportunities in the community.	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice Teamwork around the young person Social Role Valorisation Community engagement Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools GT Ethos linked to school values
	<b>Areas of development over next 3 years</b>	
	Develop and utilise an assessment system which measure achievement in core 6th form areas such as life skills and work experience; Increase level of outstanding teaching by at least 25%.	Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Review and reflection on processes

## Appendix XX(n) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

<b>Outcomes for Learners</b>	Overall attainment in the 6th form is outstanding as demonstrated in End of Key stage data (July 2016) and end of year data (July 2017).	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice
	There has been a year-on-year increase in the number of young people exceeding XXX school's expectations which follow a levels progress throughout key stage 5 in maths.	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice
	Live data demonstrates outstanding outcomes for young people in Key stage 5 in English and Maths (see tables in overall effectiveness section).	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice
	All young people leave with ASDAN 'Towards Independence' accreditation (up to 5 modules each year).	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice
	An increase year on year of young people accessing work experience opportunities off site; 2016-17 58% of young people accessing off site work experience opportunities.	Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice Teamwork around the young person Social Role Valorisation Community engagement Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools GT Ethos linked to school values

## Appendix XX(o) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

	<p>Young people categorised as SLD attending college taster sessions one weekly ((2016/17-38% of young people in key stage 5 attending college link programme; 2017/18-43% of young people in key stage 5 attending college link programme)</p>	<p>Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice Teamwork around the young person Social Role Valorisation Community engagement Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools GT Ethos linked to school values</p>
	<p>All young people access work related learning on site (horticulture, woodworking and arts sessions).</p>	<p>Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice Teamwork around the young person Social Role Valorisation Community engagement Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools GT Ethos linked to school values</p>
	<p>No young people NEET for 2015/16, 2016/17 or 2017/18.</p>	<p>Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities</p>
	<p>100% of leavers 2015 were learning to travel with support (2014/15 88% of leavers were accessing a travel training program). In 2017-18 all young people in the post-16 department were accessing the Secondary Independent Living Skills Assessment Framework (SILSAF) which includes travel training.</p>	<p>Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice Teamwork around the young person Social Role</p>

## Appendix XX(p) – School Evaluation Form (SEF)

	<p>Valorisation Community engagement Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools GT Ethos linked to school values</p>
There were no gaps in attainments/ variations in trends of data related to cohorts (i.e., girls/ boys, LAC/ Non-LAC, ethnicity).	<p>Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities</p>
Young people make sustained and substantial progress in relation to their starting points over time.	<p>Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice</p>
Learning Outcomes and attainment are effectively communicated by the annual review process and parent consultations.	<p>Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice</p>
Young people and their families are prepared for the next phase of their lives after XXX School with intensive transition process and transition planning from the beginning of key stage 4 into year 14.	<p>Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice</p>
Increased aspirations of young people and their families (2015/16 – 22 Annual Reviews held, attended by 100% of families; 2016/17 – 26 Annual Reviews held, attended by 84% of families)	<p>Quality of life for young people Active Involvement Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Giving pupils a voice</p>
<b>Areas of development over next 3 years</b>	<p>Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities Review and reflection on processes</p>
Develop increased work-based placements in a variety of roles within the community; Develop a role for life skills and work experience within the school.	

## Appendix XXI – School’s Statement of intent



### Statement of intent: The Core Principles of Reducing Restrictive Practices at

1. Nurturing, teaching and sustaining the experience of connectedness, companionship, and a community of contribution, and achieving real lives for our young people are our primary objectives which are underpinned by our Gentle Teaching ethos and Vision Statement.
2. Improving quality of life will be the focus of our interventions and improved quality of life is an outcome measure.
3. Primary preparation and prevention, and a planned multi-element approach will shape our support to alter the context in which behaviour occurs.
4. We will develop strong leadership and capable environments, competent to support the individual.
4. Staff will understand how they need to interact and behave. And how their behaviour is part of the behavioural paradigm.
5. Changes in behaviour and potential difficulties will be identified early leading to prompt and responsive intervention.
6. Staff members' will be provided with the necessary support to remain resilient.
7. Analysis of data and functional assessment will be used to inform evidence based practice.
8. Any restrictive practices will be ethical and justifiable; their use will reduce over time.
9. There will be an organisational approach to governance with accountability at every level.
10. Performance management reviews for staff at all levels have a key focus to reduce restrictive practice across the community.

## Appendix XXII – Analysis of School Documents (stage one)

### Vision Statement Coding

Vision Statement Coding	
<p><b>"Living and learning together within a Culture of Gentleness"</b></p>	Vision, Culture, Reciprocal, Gentleness
<p>Requires each of us to be mindful that:</p>	Code of conduct
<p><b>The central purpose of our presence in the lives of others is to:</b></p>	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurture</li> <li>• Teach</li> <li>• Sustain</li> </ul>	School values, aims, objectives
<p><b>The experience of:</b></p>	What?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connectedness</li> <li>• Companionship (what it is like to be and have a friend)</li> <li>• Community of contribution</li> </ul>	Connectedness, Companionship, Friendships, Reciprocal, Social Role Valorisation, Community, Belonging
<p><b>Through the principles that make every one of us feel:</b></p>	How?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe</li> <li>• Loved unconditionally</li> <li>• Loving towards others</li> <li>• Engaged meaningfully in life</li> </ul>	Gentle Teaching Pillars, Safe, Loving, Loved, Engaged
<p><b>We express these principles using:</b></p>	Tools!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Words that are kind, uplifting, encouraging and loving</li> <li>• Eyes that are warm and smiling</li> <li>• Touch that is gentle and respectful</li> <li>• Presence that is attentive and responsive to the person</li> </ul>	Gentle Teaching Tools, Eyes, Words, Touch, Presence
<p><b>And by reflecting upon our relationships in the context of how we have planned:</b></p>	Resources!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The environment</li> <li>• The organisation of life</li> <li>• How information is understood and acted on</li> <li>• The dialogue (listening, interpreting and adjusting)</li> </ul>	Environmental Management, Shaping & fading, Assistance, Errorless Learning, Stimulus Control, Flow of Life, Visuals, Reward Envelope, Value Sharing
<p><b>The Culture of Gentleness can be supported by:</b></p>	Reminders!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping our young people at the centre of everything we do</li> <li>• Working harmoniously together so we can realise the goal of giving each young person a real life</li> <li>• Fostering a sense of community within xxx</li> </ul>	Central Purpose, Community, Real Lives, Connectedness, Companionship

## Appendix XXIII – Analysis of School Documents (stage one)

### Statement of Intent Coding

Statement of Intent Coding Summary	
The Core Principles of Reducing Restrictive Practices at xxx School.	Reducing Restraint GT Ethos linked to school values Quality of life for young people
We will develop strong leadership and capable environments, competent to support the individual.	Staff leadership Staff development School development
Nurturing, teaching and sustaining the experience of connectedness, companionship, and a community of contribution, and achieving real lives for our young people are our primary objectives which are underpinned by our Gentle Teaching ethos and Vision Statement.	GT Ethos linked to school values Connectedness and relationships Community engagement Quality of life for young people
Improving quality of life will be the focus of our interventions and improved quality of life is an outcome measure, to this end we will actively involve young people in their planning and interventions.	Quality of life for young people Social Role Valorisation Active Involvement Giving pupils a voice
Primary preparation and prevention, and a planned multi-element approach will shape our support to alter the context in which behaviour occurs.	Teamwork around the young person Safety for pupils and staff GT Ethos linked to school values
Staff will understand how they need to interact and behave. And how their behaviour is part of the behavioural paradigm.  Staff members will be provided with the necessary support to remain resilient including debriefing and reflective practice.	GT Ethos linked to school values Quality of life for young people Staff wellbeing Review and reflection on processes
Changes in behaviour and potential difficulties will be identified early leading to prompt and responsive intervention.	Staff development School development
Analysis of data and functional assessment will be used to inform evidence-based practice.	Teamwork around the young person Review and reflection on processes
Any restrictive practices will be ethical and justifiable; their use will reduce over time. Restrictive Practice Reduction Plans will be used to monitor this reduction.	GT Ethos linked to school values Review and reflection on processes Staff development Following recommended school processes
There will be an organisational approach to governance with accountability at every level.	Review and reflection on processes
Performance management reviews for staff at all levels have a key focus to reduce restrictive practice across the xxx community.	Quality of life for young people Community engagement

## Appendix XXIV – Analysis of School Documents (stage one)

### School Improvement Plan Coding

School Improvement Plan Coding			
People	Improve staff attendance to enhance the quality of life of our young people	Improvement of staff attendance Quality of life for young people	
	Ensure we recruit the right staff, with values aligned to the school	Personal Values identified in recruitment GT Ethos linked to school values	
	Develop the capabilities, skills and competences of our staff	Staff development Staff growth	
	Promote the wellbeing of all our staff to be able to best support our young people	Staff wellbeing Quality of life for young people	
	Review and implement improvements to the operational & HR support processes	Review and reflection on processes External audits and benchmarking	
Practice Leadership	Implement strategy to reduce restrictive practices across the xxx community.	Reducing Restraint Quality of life for young people Acknowledgement of School community	
	Grow the capacity & enhance the leadership of the Mentoring Team.	Staff development Staff growth Staff leadership	
	Implementation of Active Support and consistent implementation of practice priorities.	Active Involvement Quality of life for young people Connectedness and relationships Following recommended school processes	
	Enhance debriefing & critical incident analysis	Review and reflection on processes Supporting staff through difficult moments	
Educational Provision	To develop onsite and offsite work experience opportunities and work-related learning	Active Involvement Quality of life for young people Connectedness and relationships Community engagement	
	To complete a comprehensive curriculum review and innovative redesign in line with the current Ofsted Framework and Preparing for Adulthood initiative	Review and reflection on processes External audits and benchmarking Quality of life for young people Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities	
	Develop a range of assessment tools to measure outcomes and progression	Review and reflection on processes External audits and benchmarking Assessment for Learning	
	Implement a new and enhanced Therapy Provision and delivery model	Person centred development Teamwork around the young person Quality of life for young people	
Children's Home	The Children's Home will continue to endeavour to achieve an OFSTED inspection rating of Outstanding	Review and reflection on processes External audits and benchmarking	
	Reorganise and embed the revised Care Management structure and accountabilities	Teamwork around the young person Staff leadership Organisational structure	
	To develop a suite of advocacy tools to ensure the voice of the young person is heard.	Active Involvement Quality of life for young people Connectedness and relationships Giving pupils a voice	
	Continue to embed a culture of Safeguarding.	Safety for pupils and staff Quality of life for young people Connectedness and relationships	
Sustainability	Develop a 3-year plan to deliver financial security	External Policy Financial security	
	Realise the full potential of the school site and facilities for the benefit of the young people	Active Involvement Quality of life for young people Connectedness and relationships School development	
	Develop strategy for community contribution	Active Involvement Quality of life for young people Connectedness and relationships Social Role Valorisation Community engagement	
	Develop and communicate an IT & communications strategy	Communication strategy Staff development	
	Continually review and ensure a safe living & working environments for all within the xxx community (COVID-19).	Safety for pupils and staff Quality of life for young people	



## Appendix XXV – Analysis of School Documents (Stage two)

<b>School Policy Document Coding Summary</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Quality of life for young people	...enhance the quality of life of our young people	74	15.4
Meaningful and relevant learning opportunities	To complete a comprehensive curriculum review and innovative redesign in line with the current Ofsted Framework and Preparing for Adulthood initiative	43	8.9
Active Involvement	Implementation of Active Support and consistent implementation of practice priorities.	33	6.9
External audits and benchmarking	To complete a comprehensive curriculum review and innovative redesign in line with the current Ofsted Framework and Preparing for Adulthood initiative	31	6.4
Giving pupils a voice	To develop a suite of advocacy tools to ensure the voice of the young person is heard.	31	6.4
Review and reflection on processes	Review and implement improvements to the operational & HR support processes	30	6.2
GT Ethos linked to school values	values aligned to the school	28	5.8
Teamwork around the young person	Implement a new and enhanced Therapy Provision and delivery model	23	4.8
Community engagement	To develop onsite and offsite work experience opportunities and work-related learning	20	4.2
Connectedness and relationships	Develop strategy for community contribution	19	4
Person centred development	Implement a new and enhanced Therapy Provision and delivery model	17	3.5
Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools		16	3.3
School development	Realise the full potential of the school site and facilities for the benefit of the young people	13	2.7
Staff development	Develop the capabilities, skills and competences of our staff	12	2.5
Following recommended school processes	Implementation of Active Support and consistent implementation of practice priorities.	12	2.5
Safety for pupils and staff	Continue to embed a culture of Safeguarding.	11	2.3
Reducing Restraint	Implement strategy to reduce restrictive practices...	10	2.1
Assessment for Learning	Develop a range of assessment tools to measure outcomes and progression	10	2.1
Social Role Valorisation	Develop strategy for community contribution	8	1.7
Staff leadership	...leadership of the Mentoring Team.	7	1.5
Staff growth	Grow the capacity & enhance the leadership of the Mentoring Team.	6	1.2
External Policy	Develop a 3-year plan to deliver financial security	5	1
Acknowledgement of School community	...across the xxx community.	4	0.8
Staff Behaviours		4	0.8
Improvement of staff attendance	Improve staff attendance to...	3	0.6
Staff wellbeing	Promote the wellbeing of all our staff	3	0.6
Personal Values identified in recruitment	Ensure we recruit the right staff, with values aligned to the school	2	0.4
Supporting staff through difficult moments	Enhance debriefing & critical incident analysis	2	0.4
Communication strategy	Develop and communicate an IT & communications strategy	2	0.4
Organisational structure	Reorganise and embed the revised Care Management structure and accountabilities	1	0.2
Financial security	Develop a 3-year plan to deliver financial security	1	0.2
		<b>481</b>	<b>100%</b>

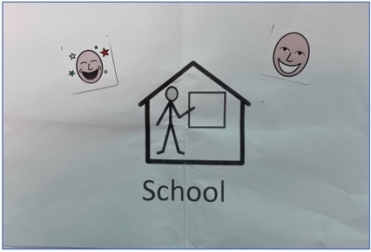
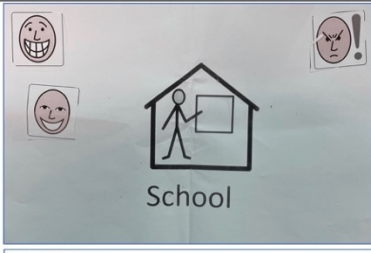
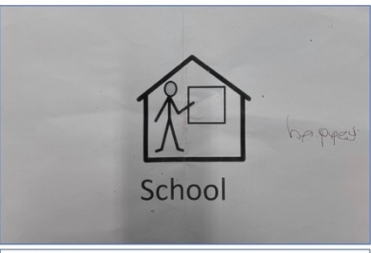
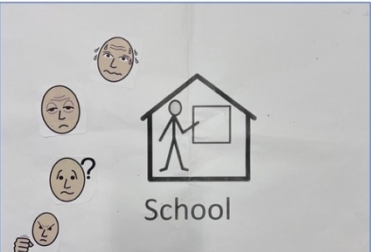
## Appendix XXVI – Thematic Analysis Structure Table






Thematic Analysis Structure																		
Chapter 4													Chapter 5				Chapter 6	Chapter 7
Sub Chapter 4.1	Sub Chapter 4.2	Sub Chapter 4.3	Sub Chapter 4.4.2	Sub Chapter 4.4.3	Sub Chapter 4.4.4	Sub Chapter 4.4.5	Sub Chapter 4.4.6	Sub Chapter 4.4.7	Sub Chapter 4.4.8	Sub Chapter 4.5.1	Sub Chapter 4.5.2	Sub Chapter 4.5.3	Sub Chapter 5.1	Sub Chapter 5.2	Sub Chapter 5.3	Sub Chapter 5.4		
Staff Results	Student Results	School Vision Documents Meta-Analysis	Filed Study Analysis	Filed Study Discussion	Semi-Structured Interview Analysis	Semi-Structured Interview Discussion	Arts Based Project Analysis	Arts Based Discussion	School Vision Document Discussion	Student Findings	Staff Findings	Findings Summary	Research Question 1 Discussion	Research Question 2 Discussion	Research Question 3 Discussion	Over-Arching Research Question Discussion	Implications	Recommendations
Thematic Analysis Stage 1			Thematic Analysis Stage 2-5													Thematic Analysis Stage 6		
1. Familiarizing yourself with the data			2. Generating initial codes 3. Searching for themes 4. Reviewing themes 5. Defining and naming themes													6. Producing the report		

Data Sets/Research Methods	
Young Person	Staff Members
Arts-based Research	Field study
Field Study	Semi-structured interview
	Arts-based research discussion
Meta-Analysis	
School Vision Documents	

## Appendix XXVII(a) – Arts-Based Project Coding

Data	Theme	Code	Frequency
 <p>Figure 1 - YP01</p>	(Symbol) Excited - Coloured +	(S)ExC+	1
	(Symbol) Happy +	(S)Ha+	1
 <p>Figure 2 - YP02</p>	(Symbol) Excited +	(S)Ex+	1
	(Symbol) Happy +	(S)Ha+	1
	(Symbol) Annoyed -	(S)An-	1
 <p>Figure 5 - YP05</p>	(Word) Happy +	(W)Ha+	1
 <p>Figure 6 - YP06</p>	(Symbol) Hot -	(S)Ho-	
	(Symbol) Tired -	(S)Ti-	
	(Symbol) Confused -	(S)Co-	
	(Symbol) Angry -	(S)An-	

 <p>Figure 3 - YP03</p>			
 <p>Figure 4 - YP04</p>	(Symbol) Thumbs-up/OK +	(S)Tok+	1
	(Symbol) Alright <>	(S)Al<>	1
	(Symbol) Confused -	(S)Co-	1
	(Symbol) Work <>	(S)Wo<>	1
	(Symbol) CBlue <>	(S)Cb<>	1
	(Colour) Red	(C)R	1
	(Colour) Yellow	(C)Y	1
(Colour) Blue	(C)B	1	
 <p>Figure 7 - YP07</p>	(Symbol) Sign Okay+	(S)SOk+	1
	(Symbol) Happy +	(S)Ha+	1
	(Symbol) Star +	(S)St+	1
	(Symbol) CYellow <>	(S)Cy<>	1
	(Tissue) Green	(T)Gr	4
	(Tissue) Blue	(T)Bl	3
	(Tissue) Yellow	(T)Ye	4
(Tissue) Pink	(T)Pi	2	
 <p>Figure 8 - YP08</p>	(Pencil) Blue <vertical>	(P)Bl<v>	3
	(Pencil) Green <circular>	(P)Bl<c>	1
 <p>Figure 8 - YP08</p>	(Symbol) Happy + <rotated90>	(S)Ha+R	1
	(Symbol) Calm + <rotated90>	(S)Ca+R	1
	(Symbol) CGreen <>	(S)Cg<>	1
	(Symbol) CRed <>	(S)Cr<>	1
	(Symbol) CBlue<>	(S)Cb<>	1
	(Tissue) Green	(T)Gr	4
	(Tissue) Yellow	(T)Ye	3
	(Tissue) Blue	(T)Bl	2
	(Tissue) Pink	(T)Pi	2
	(Felt-tip) Green <horizontal>	(FT)Gr<h>	1

## Appendix XXVII(b) – Arts-Based Project Coding



Figure 9 - YP09

(Symbol) Shape Circle <>	(S)Sh<ci>	1
(Symbol) Shape Hexagon <>	(S)Sh<he>	1
(Symbol) Sign Thank-you +	(S)S-TY+	1
(Symbol) Calm +	(S)Ca+	1
(Symbol) Happy +	(S)Ha+	1
(Symbol) Okay<Face> +	(S)OK<f>+	1
(Symbol) Excited – Non-Coloured +	(S)ExNC+	1
(Symbol) Sign Okay +	(S)OK<s>+	1
(Symbol) Relax +	(S)Re+	1
(Symbol) Brave +	(S)Br+	1
(Symbol) CGreen <>	(S)Cgr<>	1
(Symbol) CYellow <>	(S)CYe<>	1
(Symbol) CRed <>	(S)CRe<>	1
(Symbol) CBlue <>	(S)CBl<>	1
(Symbol) Shape Triangle <>	(S)Sh<tr>	1
(Symbol) Shape Square <>	(S)Sh<sq>	1
(Symbol) Shape Star +	(S)Sh<st.>	1
(Pencil) Blue <horizontal>	(P)Bl<h>	1



Figure 10 - YP10

(Symbol) Excited - Coloured +	(S)ExC+	1
(Symbol) Good +	(S)Go+	1
(Tissue) Yellow	(T)Ye	1
(Tissue) Green	(T)Gr	1
(Tissue) Blue	(T)Bl	2
(Tissue) Pink	(T)Pi	2
(Pencil) Orange <vertical & horizontal>	(P)Or<vh>	3

## Appendix XXVIII(a) – Transcriptions of discussions during the art-based project review

Interview with Class 3 Staff regarding the Art Project  
Anonymised

Researcher 0:02

Do you want to go one at a time?

SO2 0:03

Who should be first? YP01 first, because, yeah...erm, YP01 said that he liked school, and that it makes him happy. But in about a minute, he didn't engage for very long at all. The adults did the cutting, and he did the sticking, because he didn't want to cut but he said that he likes school.

Researcher 0:23

Did you look through lots of symbols or are these the first one he picked up?

SO2 0:26

We put it all out on the table for them to pick everything was out. And that's what he chose.

Researcher 0:33

So, it was really definitely looking for happy pictures.

SO3 0:36

<he was> Excited.

SO2 0:38

Yeah, he saw the symbols. He saw all the symbols. So, he could have picked an angry symbol or a sad symbol, but he picked happy.

Researcher 0:45

And to you think he's understanding what those symbols is. Right? He knows what they mean?

SO2 0:48

Yeah. Yeah. Definitely.

Researcher 0:51

Everyone felt the same about YP01 and his opinion on

SO3 0:54

I think, YP01...When YP01 is angry, he's very expressionate that he'll say. You give me an angry face.

SO2 1:01

You put me in the red zone! <Zones of Regulation>.

SO3 1:06

Yeah. Yeah.

SO2 1:08

So that's YP01!

YP02, I don't think he really understood what we were asking of him. He, he, did look through all the symbols. But I think he just saw it as like a cut and stick exercise. I don't think he really understood. I think in hindsight, maybe we should have given him a...

...maybe like a social story first, to get to understand what we were asking him because we explained it, but I don't think he really understood what we were asking him for.

Researcher 1:43

So, he looked at all the different symbols, and he did choose those ones or...

SO2 1:46

I did... he did look, but I think he was picking them. I think he just thought 'Oh, if I stick three things, I've done it'. I don't think he really thought he he...

SO3 1:46

It was just pick up the closest one.

SO2 1:48

Yeah, he was doing like if you probably looked, I bet they're in a similar order <to that on the templates>, because he just does the task and...

...he just wanted to do the task and move on.

Researcher 2:08

The simplest way.

SO2 2:10

Yeah, to do his work.

YP03's, YP03 loves drawing.

and will draw and speak at the same time. He said school stinks.

Researcher 2:23

<Laughter>

## Appendix XXVIII(b) – Transcriptions of discussions during the arts-based project review

S02 2:24

<YP03 said> 'I want to marry xxx' on which is a friend from another school. 'USA' which is where he wants to live. He wants to live in America. 'I want YP01 arrested'. So, they're either the best of friends in here or the worst of enemies. There's no in-between. So that day, they weren't getting on. So, he wanted YP01 arrested. 'We don't need baby shows!'. So, YP03 gets quite upset if another young person watches something on the board <whiteboard> that he doesn't like, like, Peppa Pig or Thomas the Tank Engine because they are 'baby shows'. Yeah, anything CBBS. 'S08 <Staff Member> is my sidekick', so he thinks very highly of staff at school. 'Me <young person> burning school'. And he crossed school out.

Researcher 3:11

So, he is not happy with school?

<Another member of staff walked into the classroom>

Another Staff Member - Interruption 3:13

Why did you do this?

JS02 3:14

For Researcher's...<study>

Another Staff Member - Interruption 3:16

Oh, okay for Researcher's...cool.

<Researcher pointed out that the conversation was being recorded and the other member of staff left the room>

S02 3:25

So yeah, I think, I think at the time we did it, YP03 was in the red zone <Zones of Regulation> about lots of different things. Whereas with YP03 if we did it, if we did the activity, again, I feel would get something completely different from him.

Researcher 3:40

Anything about the colours he used or...?

S02 3:42

He just loves drawing! I don't think there's any link to the colour.

S03 3:45

He's recently been using colours. He never used to use colours before.

S02 3:48

No, but...

...He likes having the tray of felt tips and just draws with them, but I don't think like the burning of the school being red. I don't think he's linked that to like, fire, or the red zone <Zones of Regulation>. I think he's just picking the colours and...

...I don't think there's any relationship between colours.

...This one is <picks up another piece of artwork>...that could have been staff's one.

YP04's we will do YP04. Yeah, that was YP06 <the work referred to as Staff's> actually, I remember now.

<YP04> Likes school so when we was doing it. We were talking to him a lot and talking about school. And he was saying that he does enjoy school. He enjoys the work...erm. He was more

excited about school than he was xxx <Care Home>. So, he was happier. He was expressing in his way that he was happier in school than he is in xxx <Care Home> and he like...

...He had only recently moved class three. So, he was very excited about that.

Yeah, the blue wasn't linked to the Blue Zone <Zones of Regulation>. He just wanted to put blue on it.

He likes the work that we do.

So yeah...

Researcher 5:16

So, the colours on the building, there's nothing like...blue face just because he liked the colour blue.

S02 5:20

He just enjoyed the colouring. He enjoyed colouring it in. He liked the activity, actually, he preferred the colouring to the symbols.

<S02 picks up another piece of artwork>

YP05...Wasn't really fussed about the activity? I said, 'How do you feel about school?' He said, 'happy'. I said, 'Can you show me?' and that's what he did?

Researcher 5:45

Man of a few words?

S02 5:45

yeah, yeah,

## Appendix XXVIII(c) – Transcriptions of discussions during the arts-based project review

S03 5:46

With YP05 if it's not something, he's completely interested in that subject. He'll get it over and done.

S02 5:54

Similar to YP02 really, but YP05, YP05 understood the task that we were asking him to do. And he was understanding the questions.

Researcher 6:01

And I suppose if YP05 wasn't happy with school, you probably would have gotten that on there.

S02 6:06

Yeah, if he was cross about school, we would have known about it, and it would have been very expressive. But I think because he's happy and he settled, he just thought well I'm happy and that's it. Job done.

<S02 picks up another piece of artwork>

And yeah, this was YP06.

YP06, I think.

Again, same as YP03, depending on what mood he was in, it depends on what reaction you'd get. Sometimes you get a... (noise from outside the classroom) like...erm...

...this day was had an incident so that was like his come down from an incident really, but if you'd have asked him yesterday, it would have been different. So again, it's mood dependent for him but he, he says a lot he's happy at school. But on this day, I think he just...

...was not in a good place.

Researcher 7:03

The symbols seem to show this was a bad day and they're quite expressive.

S02 7:09

Yeah, he is very expressive YP06. If he's having a bad day

Researcher 7:13

Angry, Worried, Confused...tired? <Researcher reading out the symbols that were used> Is that the 'hot one'?

S02 7:18

Yeah, I think he was telling us it was hot because he'd had to be like, we had to have to physically intervene.

Researcher 7:23

Alright

S02 7:25

So yeah, but he didn't want to write. He didn't want to colour. He just wanted to do it <add the symbols.>

Researcher 7:30

That's really good if he is bubbling anyway.

S02 7:32

Anyway, yeah, this was directly after incident.

<Researcher picks up the last piece of artwork>

Researcher 7:38

And obviously S01 <Staff Member> enjoys school.

S02 7:45

S01 is happy and she is in the Green Zone <Zones of Regulation> at school.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>

## Appendix XXIX(a) – Semi-Structure Interview Example 1

Semi-Structured Interview Question Sheet			
Interview No.	210	Interviewee	E.L. JB
Observation Ref.	2001	Date	
Role in organisation		Length of service	1.5
Study information given		<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No	
Permission given for note taking		<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No	
Permission to record (audio) interview for transcription purposes only?		<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No	
In your opinion what is Gentle Teaching?			
Prompts: Is it a way of teaching? What makes it different from other approaches?			
Do you consider yourself a Gentle Teacher? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No			
Prompts: What skills do you have that link with the Gentle Teaching approach?			
Patience, calm, caring, listening, the 4 p's.			
Do you consider there to be any specific techniques that you use when engaging with children and young people in your role?			
Prompts: Look beyond the tools, what do these mean in practice?			
Facial expression, with ED, smile, go into room. Fun, comment, body signal.			
Has Gentle Teaching impacted your teaching approach, if so, describe the changes in practice?			
Prompts: What do you do differently now?			
More patient, aware of context how camera around the comment. Also use. Listening.			

Do you think the children and young people know that there is an approach called Gentle Teaching?									
Prompts: Would they be aware of any difference if they moved school for example?									
Hand on; P1 too early, Proactive with it.									
How do you rate your understanding of the Gentle Teaching Principles?									
1	2	3	4	5	6	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 7	8	9	10
Low Understanding			Good Understanding			High Understanding			
Prompts: Why have you given this score? What would make it higher/lower?									
Need refresh, year refresh, remind of. Tools and tools, names used.									
Do you have training or induction in Gentle Teaching? Yes.									
Prompts: How do you feel this has prepared you for working with the children and young people?									
Really well,									
Has your understanding of Gentle Teaching developed over your service at the school?									
Prompts: Can you identify when or how this developed? Were there any key moments or training which helped you to understand?									
Became natural more than the training; 'model's' weekly acts still, Problem Solving, Pr <sup>Release</sup> use.									
Can you identify six key words associated with Gentle Teaching?									
Kind			Patient			Individual			
Long			Fun			Space			



## Appendix XXIX(b) – Semi-Structure Interview Example 1

What do you understand by the following terms?									
Environmental Management: (resources/grouping/environment)									
Welcome Am, Sarah.									
Stimulus Control: (task analysis/control of materials)									
trans cards, show parent notes to enter.									
Errorless Learning: (high/low demand)									
reading the room, leaving part, kindness card.									
Shaping & Fading: (reward/value sharing)									
Prep's card adding, starts and ends, verbal praise / stickers not operate / sides									
Teaching Quietly: (visuals)									
hears in all attend, adapts lets on island cards.									
Assistance: (support/timing/reducing support)									
teach / remind card / make sure they are set.									
How do you rate your understanding of the school's ethos/values/culture?									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Low Understanding			Good Understanding				High Understanding		
Prompts: Why have you given this score? What would make it higher/lower?									
Get on with her given more more cards to use when school visit.									

Is there anything else you would like to share about Gentle Teaching?		
Share with the community and other schools. Break the H Gap between the LA.		
Do you wish to receive an update with the findings of this study? <span style="float: right;">Yes/No</span>		
School email	Private email	Circular memo
GT - a good thing.		

## Appendix XXX(a) – Semi-Structure Interview Example 2

Semi-Structured Interview Question Sheet			
Interview No.	2	Interviewee	JS
Observation Ref.	002	Date	29/3/2022
Role in organisation	Teacher ECT	Length of service	13 years.
Study information given	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No		
Permission given for note taking	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No		
Permission to record (audio) interview for transcription purposes only?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No		
<b>In your opinion what is Gentle Teaching?</b>			
Prompts: Is it a way of teaching? What makes it different from other approaches?			
GT is about Pitt's relations at the heart of what we do. It's about a connection upon which we build.			
<b>Do you consider yourself a Gentle Teacher?</b> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No			
Prompts: What skills do you have that link with the Gentle Teaching approach?			
Patience, persistence, believe, an interest, we can't be too patient, we can't be too strict, we can't be too... .			
<b>Do you consider there to be any specific techniques that you use when engaging with children and young people in your role?</b>			
Prompts: Look beyond the tools, what do these mean in practice?			
Gentle, want to build that relation, want to get to that internal, sharing... .			
<b>Has Gentle Teaching impacted your teaching approach, if so, describe the changes in practice?</b>			
Prompts: What do you do differently now?			
GT got JS into lunch for the first time he did not have to be. He's been given, done with...			

<b>Do you think the children and young people know that there is an approach called Gentle Teaching?</b>									
Prompts: Would they be aware of any difference if they moved school for example?									
Response: They know but not understood the main of the camp. Pillars of GT.									
<b>How do you rate your understanding of the Gentle Teaching Principles?</b>									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Low Understanding			Good Understanding				High Understanding		
Prompts: Why have you given this score? What would make it higher/lower?									
Practice over all the years and see it more than the others. 10 and when done.									
<b>Do you have training or induction in Gentle Teaching?</b>									
Prompts: How do you feel this has prepared you for working with the children and young people?									
Workshops, family meets with actual agency. Videos. Training was invited and has been helpful - natural skills.									
<b>Has your understanding of Gentle Teaching developed over your service at the school?</b>									
Prompts: Can you identify when or how this developed? Were there any key moments or training which helped you to understand?									
Yes. Within our last 5 years - move to understand the context. Relates practice (50/60 vids) Took Board to ABA Assessment Centre - then...									
<b>Can you identify six key words associated with Gentle Teaching?</b>									
Value			Such			Learn			
Using			Written			Metals			

## Appendix XXX(b) – Semi-Structure Interview Example 2

What do you understand by the following terms?										
Environmental Management: (resources/grouping/environment)										
Everythg we do is with it, it sets the context only for Learner - Miss it appears not with - Consider and Social...										
Stimulus Control: (task analysis/control of materials)										
Flow of the content - wants to help the learner then give the 4P both verbally and the other and expecting/Student /										
Errorless Learning: (high/low demand)										
His + her demand. How to's must be done, even into when teacher learn what to's - teaches the term given to each activity.										
Shaping & Fading: (reward/value sharing) <i>Acquire goals but not if more</i>										
Ability each into interest and <i>accents - fluid - flexible</i> rewards, reward; <i>chocolate</i> ; low alt. exten. <i>thumbs up. high tone.</i>										
Teaching Quietly: (visuals) <i>- Scribe - Shrij video with the 4P, not calculator</i>										
Visuals given and Demand <i>with 4P video and the behavior, color written</i> seen as a demand - <i>folded animal - pullover or vest.</i>										
Assistance: (support/timing/reducing support) <i>Visual, use sign &amp; write</i>										
<i>Over supporting should be avoided when possible.</i> <i>Over ride the purpose of the activity.</i>										
How do you rate your understanding of the school's ethos/values/culture?										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Low Understanding			Good Understanding				High Understanding			
Prompts: Why have you given this score? What would make it higher/lower?										
<i>Long term - certainly it will. Still having opportunities - schools with low class, <i>Rehab.</i> more rewards and things.</i>										

Is there anything else you would like to share about Gentle Teaching?		
<i>from across 1/2</i>		
Do you wish to receive an update with the findings of this study? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes/No		
<input checked="" type="radio"/> School email	<input type="radio"/> Private email	<input type="radio"/> Circular memo

## Appendix XXXI – Servant Leadership Document

living and learning together



within a Culture of Gentleness

**The Servant Leadership Model at**

A servant leader is a servant first, whereas many people focus on being a leader first, driven by a need for power or possession of material goods, a servant leader is an individual who shares power, practices humility, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.

**The ten characteristics of servant leaders at**

- Listening
- Empathy
- Healing
- Awareness
- Persuasion
- Conceptualization
- Foresight
- Stewardship
- Commitment to the growth of people
- Building community

Leaders who aspire to be servants first must focus on **listening** to others. Although leaders tend to be admired for great communication and decision-making skills, true servant leaders must make a deep commitment to listening intently to others. Servant leaders have learned to listen to what others are saying, but have also mastered the art of hearing what is left unsaid. Servant leaders are closely tuned in to their own inner voice, and that periods of reflection are necessary in order to hear this voice and grow as leaders.

Another quality servant leaders have mastered is the ability to **empathise** with others. Servant leaders are able to imagine what it is like to be in another person's situation and context, and they strive to understand and appreciate their viewpoint, even when their perspective is different. To be filled with empathy is to recognize that all individuals have special and unique spirits and to value these differences. Servant leaders assume the intentions of others are good, even when faced with circumstances or behaviours that may be less than desirable. It is this positivity and respectful acceptance of others that servant leaders try to emulate.

The capacity for **healing** is another characteristic that marks a true servant leader. All people have emotional pain, and many individuals have what John McGee refers to as a "broken heart". The servant leader, however, recognises that these struggles are a part of life, and endeavours to help heal those they interact with, support and meet. In addition to healing others, the servant leader recognises when a relationship needs to be healed, or even when the servant leader himself or herself needs healing. In this leadership style, the leader focuses on how they can help others as well as themselves and all relationships, rather than solely fixing on the organisation's needs or the needs of the leader.

**Awareness**, both generally and of one's self, strengthens the servant leader and helps them in understanding issues involving ethics, power, and values. Another way to think about the importance of awareness as a leader is to consider the idea that being self-aware is the ability to look inward, consider one's own emotions and behaviours, and to think carefully about how they may affect others. Being self-aware requires that leaders acknowledge their own areas for development, as well as their strength.

The power of **persuasion** is another important tool in the toolbox of a servant leader. Rather than expecting compliance from subordinates, simply by virtue of a position at the top, servant leaders seek to persuade and inform others in order to build a shared consensus and understanding. It is critical to point out that a servant leader tries to persuade everyone to support decisions, but without manipulation, taking advantage of others, or damaging relationships.

The next two qualities of servant leaders, **conceptualisation and foresight**, are closely related to one another. The gift for conceptualising refers to the ability of servant leaders to think beyond the simple day-to-day operations and truly consider the bigger picture within an organisation and hold the vision. Those occasions when servant leaders seek to nurture their abilities to dream great dreams. These leaders are often referred to as visionaries because of their great talent for conceptualising the future, rather than being consumed by the need to achieve short-term operational goals in the present. Foresight is connected to conceptualisation in that leaders who display foresight have thought through the possible outcomes of a scenario and identified the most likely to occur. These leaders have learned from their past experiences and reflected on learning opportunities, but also ponder the most current realities as well as the potential consequences of the decision in the future they make the best decisions possible based on all available information and on imagining what may be.

**Stewardship** is all about taking responsibility for the actions of the organisation and the role that others play. In short, servant leaders who practice good stewardship have learned the value of taking all of the blame, but none of the credit. These leaders understand they have a responsibility for the things that happen inside the organization, and they have identified very clearly what they will and will not stand for. These leaders lead by example, and are not afraid to challenge when others demonstrate behaviours that don't align with the values of the school community.

Another important characteristic of servant leaders at I [redacted] is their **commitment to the growth of people**. In education, this growth may typically take the form of required professional development, but servant leaders are also aware of personal goals, and attempt to present opportunities for employees to achieve these goals. Servant leaders understand people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. They are not solely focused on what people can achieve for the leader or the organisation, but rather, attentive to how people can first nurture their own personal and professional goals, thereby adding more value to the organisation in the long run. If a leader of an institution helps others to understand their own leadership abilities, that institution will become healthier and stronger.

The final quality that servant leaders tend to exhibit is the desire to build a sense of **community** within the organisation. Within larger establishments, such as E [redacted], there could be disconnect between employees and the organisation to which they belong. A servant leader, however, is abundantly aware of the importance of a person's sense of loyalty and belonging within a group, and aspires to provide opportunities for people to share in meaningful experiences across the organisation. Organising social events such as a team lunch, or dedicating the first few minutes of meetings to encouraging informal conversations in order to build relationship and connections. Regardless of how the sense of community is built, servant leaders ensure that each individual knows how they contribute to the overall success of the organisation and make a difference. Truly serving employees requires a commitment by leaders to develop a process that makes it safe for employees to honestly communicate.

As important as it is for one to understand the nature of servant leadership and the qualities exhibited by servant leaders, it is significantly more crucial that one understands why this type of leadership is so beneficial for a school community such as [redacted]. It is quite obvious that a positive and nurturing school climate will lead to higher achievement, contribution and quality of life for young people than a negative one, and research has indicated repeatedly that schools that emphasise a servant leadership approach tend to have a more positive school climate than those that do not.

## Appendix XXXII – Relationships Matter Poster

living and learning together

within a Culture of Gentleness

**Relationships matter so we:**

- **Speak only kindly**
- **Look only warmly**
- **Touch only gently and respectfully**
- **Are attentive and responsive to the person**

nurture    teach    sustain

# Appendix XXXIII – Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet



**Title of Project:**

An exploration into how Gentle Teaching an intervention for intellectual developmental disorders can be used, embedded and sustained within the context of a special residential school for young people and adults with autism spectrum disorders and associated sensory, communication difficulties.

**Name of Researcher:** Paul Gorham

**Contact details:**

Address:

Tel:

Email:

**Please Initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential
4. I agree to take part in the above study.


Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
Researcher	Date	Signature

Ethics Rev Checklist v6\_12\_Nov 17



An exploration into how Gentle Teaching an intervention for intellectual developmental disorders can be used, embedded and sustained within the context of a special residential school for young people and adults with autism spectrum disorders and associated sensory, communication difficulties.

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Paul Gorham.

**Background**

My study will determine how the Gentle Teaching tools and principles have been embedded within the school. I will take a sample of interactions from staff at different lengths of service and within different roles to see at what level these are best understood. This information can be fed back into the training process to enable this process to be more effectively transferred.

**What will you be required to do?**

Participants in this study will be required to be observed interacting with young people for short observations (5-10mins), attend a follow-up semi-structured informal interview (20-30mins) to discuss the interaction and relate to the Gentle Teaching tools and Principles.

**Procedures**

You will be asked to interact in your usual manner with the young people while I take some field notes, then spend some time discussing the interaction and answering some pre-determined questions relating to Gentle Teaching during an informal semi-structured interview.

**Feedback**

I will provide all participants with feedback from the study highlighting what I find in terms of the understanding of Gentle Teaching across the school.

**Confidentiality**

All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by Paul Gorham. After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed).

**Dissemination of results**

The findings from the study will be sent out both in letter form and via e-mail for those who participate in the study.

**Deciding whether to participate**

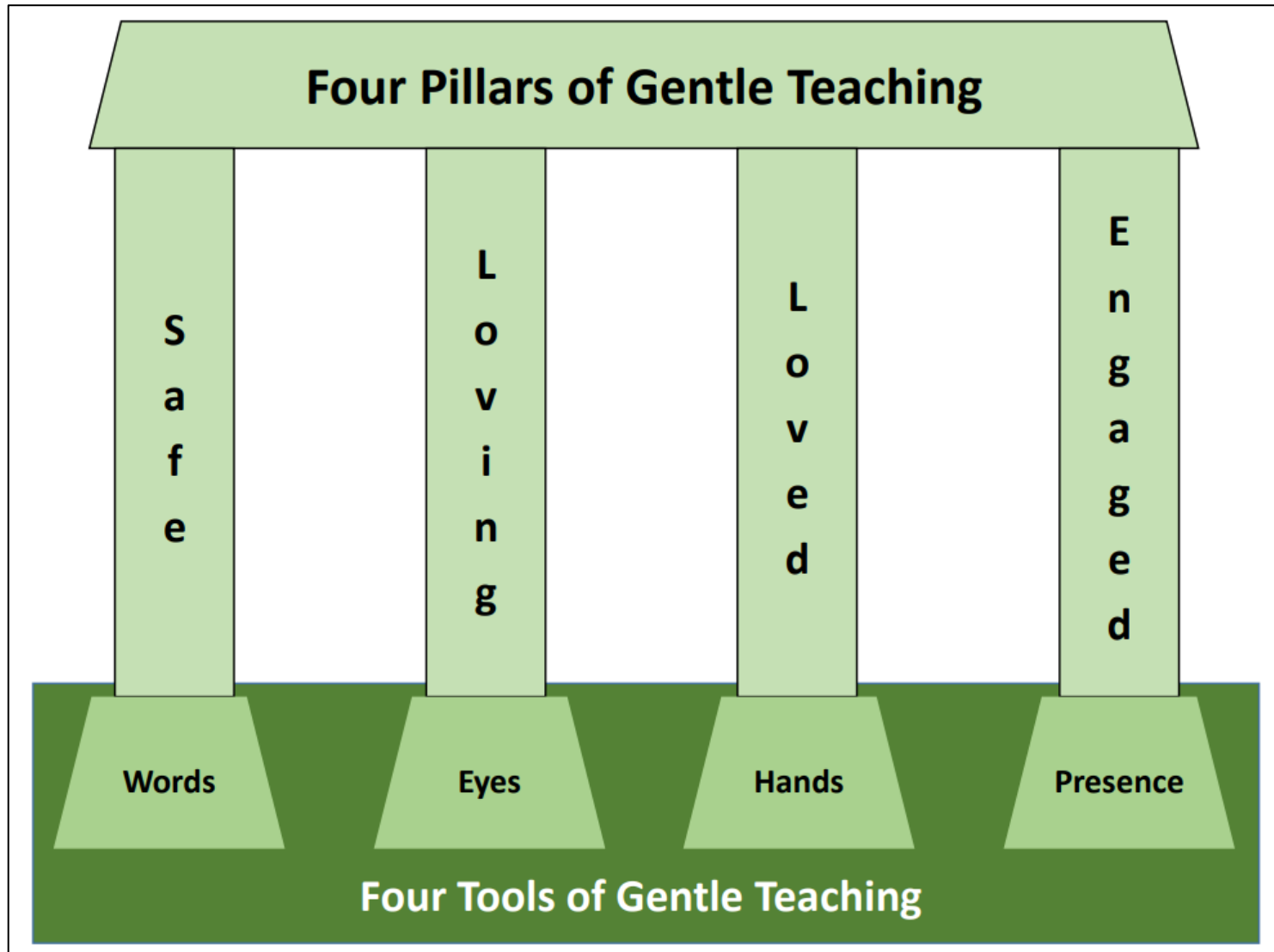
If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

**Any questions?**

Please contact Paul Gorham on 07825701728 or mail@pgorham.co.uk

Ethics Rev Checklist v6\_12\_Nov 17



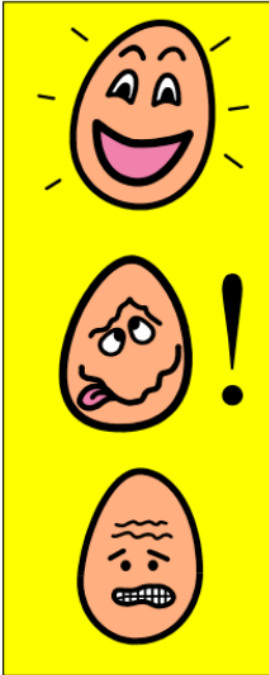

## Appendix XXXIV – Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools



Adapted from McGee et al., (1987) Gentle Teaching Pillars and Tools

## Appendix XXXV – Zones of Regulation

# The Zones of Regulation

			
<b>Blue Zone</b> sad      tired sick      moving tired      slowly	<b>Green Zone</b> happy calm feeling ok focused ready to learn	<b>Yellow Zone</b> frustrated worried silly/wiggly excited loss of some control	<b>Red Zone</b> mad/angry terrified yelling/hitting elated out of control

Kuypers, 2011.



## Appendix XXXVI – School Statement of Purpose (extract)

### Child Statement of Purpose



#### Vision Statement

"Living and learning together within a Culture requires each of us to be mindful that:

The central purpose of our presence in the lives of others is

- Nurture
- Teach
- Sustain

The experience of:

- Connectedness
- Companionship (what it is like to be and have a friend)
- Community

Through the principles that make every one of us feel:

- Safe
- Loved unconditionally
- Loving towards others
- Engaged meaningfully in life

We express these principles using:

- Words that are kind, uplifting, encouraging and loving
- Eyes that are warm and smiling
- Touch that is gentle and respectful
- Presence that is attentive and responsive to the person

And by reflecting upon our relationships in the context of how:

- The environment
- The organisation of life
- How information is understood and acted on
- The dialogue (listening, interpreting and adjusting)

The Culture of Gentleness can be supported by:

- Keeping our young people at the centre of everything
- Working harmoniously together so we can realise the person a real life
- Fostering a sense of community within

### Education

#### 10. Provision to support children with special needs

All young people at [redacted] School Children's Home may be awaiting a diagnosis) and moderate to severe complex needs. All have a Statement of Special Educational Health and Care Plan.

All young people who attend [redacted] School Children's Home follow the National Curriculum at our onsite Ofsted registered school. At Key Stage 5 the young people engage in the special Education curriculum which includes Work Related Learning.

The educational and residential staff works collaboratively to evaluate integrated education plans throughout the year and monitoring procedures are in place to ensure that they are effective.

Staff ensure that all young people have Individual Educational Personal Education Plans (PEP) if required.

Key members of residential staff attend all Children who are Looked After reviews where placement plans will be reviewed and agreed, parent and carers meetings, annual education reviews, PEP meetings and open days.

They will also liaise on a daily basis with the young people and education staff to ensure effective communication.

All young people are able to stay on at school until the end of their education.

We aim to provide a coherent and progressive curriculum through our experiential, memorable learning experiences for all young people. Our Curriculum and through Key Skills we will deliver a curriculum that enables the children and young people to enhance their learning and life.

Historically we have followed the National Curriculum in a discrete format. However, recent changes in government and up and coming policy changes have allowed us more freedom to create our curriculum specifically around the learners at [redacted]. This enables our curriculum to be more meaningful and engaging for each individual.

We aim to provide each young person with a broad and balanced curriculum delivered in a manner that reflects the individual's learning style. We aim to develop active engagement, participation, interdependence and relationships.

The lower school aims to engage in activities within the local community that promote access to learning and inclusion.

#### Aims

To enable our children and young people to be:

- **Valued individuals** who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- **Engaged learners** who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- **Safe citizens** who make a positive contribution within their school, within their families and their local environment and society.

#### Objectives

- To implement and follow a 3 year rolling programme in classes 1, 2 & 3 (See Figure: 1). This will incorporate Curriculum Events; Whole School Events & Local and Worldwide Events. These will be changed to reflect current and local events.

- To have access to a broad & balanced curriculum
- To access the national curriculum at a level that is accessible and relevant to the individual
- To develop positive relationships through memorable learning experiences
- To develop awareness of others

- To develop communication systems that are individualised and functional
- To promote positive self-image, self-esteem and a sense of well being

We endeavour to provide a person centred curriculum to meet the individual needs of our children and young people where a traditional school set up has failed them. We offer highly individualised timetables, to meet their personal teaching and learning needs.

# Appendix XXXVII – Copy of Supervision Template

## Annual Performance Management Objectives

### Senior Leadership

Name of employee:	
Current job role:	
Home:	
Date:	
Supervisor:	

September 2022  
To be updated September 2023

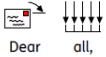

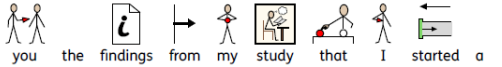

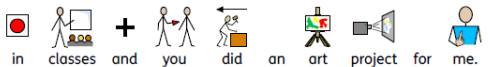

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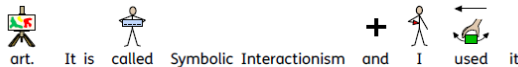



Annual Appraisal Planning and Review Report - Confidential		
Part One: Planning – Autumn 2022 Summary of agreed assessment see Career Stage Expectations Audit		
Leaders develop the mission, vision, values and ethics of the school and act as role models.		
Practice / standard	Area for development	Met
Leaders define, monitor, review and drive the improvement of the school's management system and performance		
Practice / standard	Area for development	Met
Leaders engage with the school's customers, partners and representatives of society		
Practice / standard	Area for development	Met
Leaders reinforce a culture of excellence		
Practice / standard	Area for development	Met

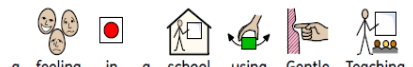



Leaders ensure that the school is flexible and manages change effectively		
Practice / standard	Area for development	Met
People's knowledge and capabilities are developed		
Practice / standard	Area for development	Met

2. Pupil Progress (whole school objective)				
Objective	Agreed actions/support/CPD	Success Criteria	Evidence sources agreed	End of year Achieved?
<p>For all staff to be responsible for the full implementation of personalised visual information/functional communication systems and aids for all young people we support. i.e visual information to be made available at all times, including accessible schedules and breakdown strips, transitions cards, electronic devices and books</p> <p>The staff will plan and prepare a personalised 'flow for life' with each young person to invite them into a fulfilling life style of engagement, participation, contribution, and skill development. The staff will provide the leadership and active support to successfully build relationships of trust that will feel safe, fun, fair and loving for all participants.</p>				

## Appendix XXXVIII – Letter to Students on Completion of the Study

 Dear all,  
 I hope you are well.  
 I wanted to share with you the findings from my study that I started a long while ago.  
 I came to see some of you in classes and you did an art project for me.  
 My project showed that Gentle Teaching is a very good tool to help everyone feel safe and learn more.  
 I also explored a different way to look at your

 art. It is called Symbolic Interactionism and I used it both as a way to look at truth and a way to organise and plan my work.  
 What I found most exciting was using this tool to allow me to listen to your ideas and opinions and to help me see this from your point of view.  
 This tool could help other people listen and try to understand more.  
 I also found that it is possible to create

 a feeling in a school using Gentle Teaching.  
 I wanted to thank you all for helping me with my work and I have kept some of your lovely pictures as a reminder of the project.  
 Kind regards  
 Paul