



# **Supporting Children in the Care of the Local Authority: Academic Interventions and In-school Relationship Factors**

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## **Declaration**

This work is being submitted for the award of Doctorate of Applied Educational Psychology. This piece contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other university module or degree. To the best of my knowledge this work contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

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## **Overarching Abstract**

Children looked after are a potentially vulnerable group whose educational outcomes remain poor, despite a range of initiatives and interventions. This research takes a holistic approach to identifying support for these pupils, through exploring both academic interventions and in-school relationship factors.

First a quantitative systematic review was conducted, to investigate the effectiveness of academic interventions for this group. Results showed variable success rates, with direct instruction and personalised interventions proving more successful overall. Relationship factors within interventions were not always recognised by researchers, and therefore merited further exploration.

The empirical research used a single case study to focus on the relationship between a School Support Assistant and a Year Six pupil looked after, using interviews and Video Interaction Guidance as tools for this. Theoretical thematic analysis led to preliminary findings suggesting that this professional placed an importance on trust and understanding of such vulnerable pupils in her care. Her professional identity and way of being with children were captured through her dialogue about and filmed interactions with the child. Findings also suggested some of the adult's own needs were met through her work to support those of the pupil.

Educational Psychologists are well placed to bring a holistic approach to their support of pupils looked after, through their understanding of children's broader psychological needs. This research has implications for work in schools to enhance relationality, particularly for pupils looked after, using the VIG principles as a framework for developing staff-pupil interactions.

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**Chapter 1. A Systematic Review of Intervention Studies Aimed at  
Improving Educational Outcomes for Children Looked After**



## **Abstract**

Education professionals are aware of the need to support the growing UK population of pupils looked after. Their educational and life outcomes remain poor, despite a range of initiatives and interventions. A quantitative systematic literature review was carried out to identify effective interventions for pupils looked after. It was hoped this systematic review of studies could provide further insight into how to improve outcomes for this group.

The method followed a staged approach as recommended by Petticrew and Roberts (2006). Initial broad searches were carried out, then eleven studies were selected using inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were selected from a number of countries, as these poor outcomes are found across international boundaries. A framework regarding hierarchy of evidence was applied to the synthesised studies, with consideration of their effect sizes.

Results showed variable success rates, with personalised interventions proving more successful overall. The most successful interventions were a direct instruction tutoring programme, delivered both individually and in a small group, and an initiative which involved sending parcels of educational resources to the homes of children looked after. One-to-one time spent during the interventions was valued both by foster children and carers.

In many studies relationship factors within interventions were not recognised and therefore merited further exploration. Relationships in schools contribute to better learning outcomes, and are of particular importance for vulnerable pupils. This led to a piece of qualitative research with an in-depth focus on the relationship between a pupil looked after and a staff member who supported him in school.

## Introduction

### Children Looked After

The number of children looked after in the UK has been increasing in recent years (see Table 1. Department for Education, 2012b). Professionals are conscious of the need to cater for this growing population. The term 'looked after' refers to all children who are accommodated, detained or in care of a Local Authority. These children may be in a variety of placements including foster care, residential care, residential schools or young offenders' institutes.

*Table 1: Number of Children Looked After in the UK, 2008-2012 (DfE, 2012b)*

| <b>Date</b>                 | <b>No of pupils looked after in the UK</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2008 | 59, 500                                    |
| 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2009 | 60, 900                                    |
| 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2010 | 64, 400                                    |
| 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2011 | 65, 520                                    |
| 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2012 | 67, 050                                    |

One reason for the increase in numbers of pupils looked after could be the heightened awareness of child protection issues, increasingly highlighted both in media and by the government (O'Halloran, 2008), with a resulting impact upon a range of professionals who work directly and indirectly with children. Awareness has risen exponentially as a result of the case of Victoria Climbié, whose traumatic death sparked the Every Child Matters agenda (Department for Education and Skills, 2005). This government-led agenda stressed the importance of professionals working together to improve communication and services for children and families.

Children may be taken into care for a number of reasons. Where there are concerns that a child may have suffered or is likely to suffer neglect or sexual, emotional or physical abuse, a child protection investigation may take place under section 47 of the Children Act (1989). If it is deemed that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, which is attributable to the care being less than that which is

reasonable to expect from a parent, this may result in a Care Order. This instructs that a child is removed from their parent(s) and placed under the care of a local council, to protect them from further harm. Care Orders may also be issued for children who are beyond parental control (DfE, 2012a).

For the above reasons pupils who are looked after are often viewed as a vulnerable group, based on their previous experiences and on how these may impact upon their future experiences. According to attachment theory, a child's primary attachment with their mother affects brain development and subsequent attachments (Bowlby, 1969). It is widely believed that if these early attachments are neglected or interrupted this can have a detrimental effect on the child's future relationships (Gerhardt, 2004), and as a result they may find it more difficult to trust adults in school (Bomber, 2007). Some even go so far as to claim that all pupils looked after experience attachment difficulties (Greig, Munn, & Reynolds, 2010).

However pupils who are looked after are not a homogenous group. Not all pupils in care will have experienced negative early relationships with a caregiver, and some pupils who are not looked after may have done. Relationships are complex and dynamic, and are influenced by a number of inter-related factors (Tew, 2010). It has also been argued that the complexities and individual differences between and within parent-child relationships make such causal links difficult to prove (Dunn, 1993). Pupils looked after may show differing levels of resilience to negative life experiences, and as such some will be more vulnerable than others (Coleman & Hagell, 2007). This is not the sole respect in which these pupils can be construed, although the potential for vulnerability in this group is acknowledged in this thesis (for more Child's Position see Bridging Document p.34).

Current good practice in Educational Psychology involves working towards future solutions rather than dwelling on causes of problems in a child's past. Given this, I believe children's attachments in school in terms of their relationships with others are of significance when considering how to support them better.

## The Education of Children Looked After

'Education is largely based on the assumption that most children are able, willing, and supported, to take up education opportunities. The experiences of looked after and adopted children undermine their capacities and disrupt their opportunities.'

(Peake, 2006, p.98)

Peake compares the education of pupils looked after to highly polished mirrors through which can be seen the lines and blemishes in our education system. This is supported by research which indicates a high proportion of these children are not reaching their academic potential, despite many of them being of similar cognitive ability to their peers (Berlin, Vinnerljung, & Hjern, 2011). Children looked after are ten times more likely than their peers to be excluded, twelve times more likely to leave school with no qualifications, and as a result are much more likely to be unemployed as adults (Greig et al., 2008). Recent UK statistics support claims about a large attainment gap between these children and their peers, with only 15.5% of pupils in care achieving A\* to C GCSEs in English and Maths compared to 58.7% of other pupils in 2011-2012 (DfE, 2012b). Researchers in other countries have demonstrated that these trends exist internationally (Forsman & Vinnerljung, 2012; Zetlin, Weinberg, & Kimm, 2004).

The population of children looked after is complex and diverse, and schools can sometimes struggle to cater for their needs. Early experiences of neglect or abuse can have consequences for the child's cognitive development, meaning they may be less likely to benefit from a learning environment than other children. In addition to this they may mistrust adults, have difficulties in forming friendships with peers, and be preoccupied with issues of identity (Peake, 2006).

Disrupted schooling is another major contributor to low attainment. Children who are looked after may experience frequent moves between homes, often unplanned and consequently less smooth than other transitions in a child's life. Research with pupils looked after found that only 27% of children remained in the same place during their stay in care, half the children had two placement changes and a quarter had at least four (Garnett, 1994). Children may move not only to different schools

but across Local Authority boundaries, complicating matters of communication and effective information sharing between professionals.

Foster children may have a number of adults in their lives, including carers, social workers and teachers. Some studies have shown that these adults may have pessimistic expectations of foster children's school performance (Tideman, Vinnerljung, Hintze, & Isaksson, 2011). High placement turnover also means that significant adults in a child's life may change frequently. Osborne and colleagues argue that lack of educational support from these adults may further contribute to low levels of attainment for pupils who are looked after children (Osborne, Alfano, & Winn, 2010).

### ***Initiatives to improve wider outcomes***

In the late 1990s Quality Protects was launched in the UK as an initiative to improve overall outcomes for children in children's homes and foster care (Blewitt, 2009), but despite this their general outcomes remain poor (Peake, 2006). Since then awareness has grown about the underachievement of children looked after, and further government initiatives have been put in place to address this problem. The White Paper 'Time for Change' (DfES, 2007) and its subsequent implementation plan introduced four principles to guide provision for children looked after in the UK:

- High ambitions for children looked after
- Good parenting from everyone in the system
- Stability in every aspect of the child's experience
- Centrality to the voice of the child

These principles were further mentioned in the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, enacted shortly afterwards. Each Local Authority in the UK now has a Looked After Children Education Service (LACES), working to ensure additional measures are taken to support the education of these children. One such measure is the employment of a Virtual Head, responsible for monitoring the educational progress of children looked after in their area (Durham County Council, 2012).

A number of researchers have also tested educational interventions, to determine effective means of reducing the attainment gap between children looked after and their non-looked after counterparts (Griffiths, Comber, & Dymoke, 2010; Wolfendale

& Bryans, 2004). In the following section a range of these will be discussed, with reference to both academic and social interventions.

### ***Interventions aimed at improving attainment***

Forsman and Vinnerljung (2012) argue that, despite the educational underachievement of this group being well known, little has been done in terms of evaluated interventions to improve the school achievements of pupils looked after. Those that have been carried out have mainly focused on improving attainment levels by academic intervention, although other studies have focused on qualitative methods (Driscoll, 2011; Williams, 2012).

One UK project, The Letterbox Club, focused specifically on improving literacy and numeracy skills of children looked after (Griffiths et al., 2010). Children aged 7-11 were sent parcels to their foster homes once a month for six months, each containing educational materials in the form of reading books, stationery items and a maths game at the child's specific level of attainment. As well as seeking improved attainment, this project focused on the impact of the reading materials on both the children and others in their foster care environment. Findings were positive, showing that many of those involved showed a high level of enthusiasm for receiving the parcels and engaging with the texts, as well as significant improvements to attainment scores (Winter, Connolly, Bell, & Ferguson, 2011).

Other British researchers recognised the potential lack of educational support from key adults in the lives of children looked after, and as a result decided to directly involve carers in the educational intervention. They trained carers to deliver a paired-reading programme with their foster children, supported through weekly liaison with the child's school. This intervention too proved effective, with significant improvements to the children's reading ages (Osborne et al., 2010).

Further afield, researchers have been trying different methods. Swedish researchers used a range of psychological and pedagogical measures to assess each foster child's potential. Individualised educational and psychological support was then tailored to the children's individual needs in a holistic programme which lasted two years. Re-testing after the two-year intervention demonstrated improvements in both literacy and cognitive ability (Tideman et al., 2011). Many of the above interventions were included for in-depth review and will be examined later in the Chapter.

## Aims of the Review

- Identify existing interventions that have been implemented to improve educational outcomes for children looked after
- Analyse the effectiveness of these interventions
- Consider possibilities for further research from systematic review findings

## Method

This review utilises the systematic method described by Petticrew and Roberts (2006). The stages involved in this process are summarised in Table 2, and are described in further detail in this section.

### Steps 1-2: Defining Review Question and Determining Study Type

There were a number of factors that influenced the defining of my review question, including an initial mind map of research ideas, inspiration from key stakeholders (see Bridging Document. p.27) and consideration of the existing literature.

Table 2: The Systematic Review Stages (from Petticrew & Roberts, 2006)

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

The literature provides a strong case for existing concerns about the education of children looked after. Many studies focus on enhancing their attainment through academic interventions which relate to traditional school-based methods such as paired-reading or tutoring. As a researcher it is critical to consider the information needs of those who may read and/or use the research in future (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). A key practitioner stakeholder I consulted with expressed an interest in

further knowledge about academic based interventions; consequently such interventions will provide the main focus of this review.

From an eco-systemic stance I believe the context in which these pupils live and learn has an influence on their educational experiences (Darling, 2007) alongside the specific curriculum and interventions they may receive. Tideman et al. (2011) provided some recognition of this, through adopting a holistic approach to improve both academic and psychological outcomes for pupils. Particularly for pupils looked after, whose experiences may have been complex and traumatic, it seems that such holistic approaches are worthy of consideration. For this reason I also decided to consider the inclusion of intervention studies where social or systemic factors are adopted alongside more traditional academic means. From the above influences my systematic review question emerged:

Which interventions can improve measured educational outcomes for pupils who are looked after?

This will be considered throughout the remainder of the Chapter, with reference to the selected studies.

### **Step 3: Initial Searches**

In order to pinpoint studies relevant to this question, it was necessary to search electronic databases using specific search terms (see Table 3).

Table 3: Terms used for the Literature Search

|                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Target population terms</i><br>Foster / foster child* <sup>1</sup> / looked after / LAC / child* in care / pupil* |
| <i>Outcome terms</i><br>Achieve* / attain* / literacy / numeracy / attend*                                           |
| <i>Intervention terms</i><br>Intervene / intervention / programme / program / tutor*                                 |

---

<sup>1</sup> \* used to search for variations of a search term e.g. child\* will find 'child', 'child's' or 'children'



A set of inclusion criteria was used for initial screening of studies identified from the literature search:

- **PARTICIPANTS:** Children of school age who were looked after
- **SETTINGS:** Anywhere learning might take place e.g. school, home, learning centre. All countries were included.
- **INTERVENTION:** Any intervention aimed at improving educational outcomes. This included group or individual studies, carried out over short or long term periods. Interventions could be delivered by professionals or by the children's foster carers under supervision.
- **STUDY DESIGN:** Petticrew and Roberts (2006) refer to a hierarchy of evidence in systematic reviews. This was taken into account in choosing to use previous systematic reviews, scoping reviews, Randomised Control Trials and pre and post-test studies. Treatment targets related to academic improvements, increased attendance or school placement stability.
- **TIME, PLACE, AND LANGUAGE:** Studies were reported in English, and completed between 1975 and 2012, as one of the pertinent studies included in Forsman and Vinnerljung's scoping review (2012) dated back to this time.

#### **Step 4: Identifying the studies via in-depth searches**

As there were insufficient papers to carry out a reliable quantitative systematic review, further searches were carried out. It was necessary to search through gray literature<sup>2</sup> to find unpublished pieces of work, and to contact colleagues both in the UK and abroad, in order to locate suitable papers. This second attempt proved more fruitful, and sufficient papers were traced in order to exclude perhaps less suitable ones.

At this point the studies were further screened to create a more in-depth review, applying the following additional criteria:

- **PARTICIPANTS:** Age range of pupils: 4-18 years old
- **SETTINGS:** No additional criteria

---

<sup>2</sup> 'Gray literature' refers to unpublished literature such as reports, conference papers, dissertations and theses (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

- INTERVENTION: Some studies with more of a social focus on intervention were excluded in favour of those that measured attainment and attendance outcomes
- STUDY DESIGN: No additional criteria
- TIME, PLACE, LOCATION: Studies completed from 2000 to 2012 only

### **Step 5: Describing and appraising the studies**

The eleven studies meeting the in-depth inclusion criteria were then analysed according to study aims and research questions, study design, methods of analysis and data collection, and outcomes, as shown in Table 4.

Study quality was then assessed using a Weight of Evidence (WoE) tool from the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre, 2007). Each of the eleven studies was evaluated according to twelve criteria, including ethical concerns, research design, data collection and data analysis. Following this evaluation the papers were each given a rating from low to high in three key areas, to determine their overall weighting.

### **Steps 6-7: Synthesis and outcomes**

Findings from the eleven studies were then synthesised, taking into account their overall Weight of Evidence from the stage above. Results from this are discussed in the following section.

## **Results**

### **Characteristics of the Studies**

The studies were selected from mainly Anglophone countries. Four studies were conducted in the UK, three in North America, three in Canada, and one in Sweden (Tideman et al., 2011). Three of the interventions took place in primary school settings and one was in a learning centre (O'Brien & Rutland, 2008). Three others took place in the children's care or foster homes, while the remaining four spanned across both home and school context. Sample sizes ranged from 20 to 268 (median 50) and participants ranged from 4 to 18 years old.

Table 4: Description of the Studies' Aims, Methods and Outcomes

| Study                         | Participants                                                            |       | Context and Aims                                                                                        | Focus (group/ individual) and duration                                               | Design              | Methods/ sources of evidence                                           | Follow up                                | Gains made (* = significant effect, p < 0.05)                                                             | Effect size Cohen's <i>d</i>                |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Courtney <i>et al.</i> (2008) | 212 intervention group<br><br>190 control group<br><br>46% m 54% f      | 14-15 | Home tutoring programme<br><br>USA<br><br>Aim: improve reading & maths skills                           | Individual Tuition/ Outcomes grouped<br><br>50 hours (2 x 2 hour session /week)      | RCT<br><br>Pre/post | Questionnaire (including standardised assessment questions)            | None<br><br>(this was a follow up study) | Letter-word Identification<br><br>Passage Comprehension<br><br>Calculation                                | Estimated but omitted due to Insig. results |
| Flynn <i>et al.</i> (2012)    | 77 children (36 m, 41 f)<br><br>68 foster parents (5 m, 63 f)           | 6-13  | Foster home tutoring programme<br><br>Canada<br><br>Aim: improve reading & maths scores                 | Individual Tuition/ Outcomes grouped<br><br>30 weeks (30 x 3 hour tutoring sessions) | RCT<br><br>Pre/post | WRAT-4 (age standardised reading and mathematics assessment)           | Planned not published                    | Word Reading<br><br>Sentence* Comprehension<br><br>Reading Composite*<br><br>Spelling<br><br>Mathematics* | 0.385<br><br>0.294<br><br>0.466             |
| Harper and Schmidt (2012)     | 30 intervention group (17 m, 13 f)<br><br>35 control group (20 m, 15 f) | 6-13  | Group-based tutoring programme<br>Canada<br><br>Aim: evaluate effectiveness of literacy & maths program | Group<br><br>25 weeks (25 x 2 hour group session)                                    | RCT<br><br>Pre/post | WRAT-4 (age standardised reading, spelling and mathematics assessment) | Planned not published                    | Word Reading*<br><br>Spelling*<br><br>Mathematics<br><br>Sentence Comprehension                           | 0.427<br><br>0.386<br><br>0.264             |
| O'Brien and                   | 44 (2 x reading groups)                                                 | 4-13  | Learning centre tuition<br>Canada                                                                       | Individual programmes/                                                               | Pre/post            | WRAT (age standardised reading and                                     | Planned not published                    | WRAT reading score*                                                                                       | None given                                  |

|                              |                                                                |      |                                                                                                |                                                                                           |                                                            |                                                                            |                       |                                                                                                                      |                                      |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Rutland (2008)               | 50<br>(2 x maths groups)                                       |      | Aim: improve reading & maths grades                                                            | outcomes grouped<br><br>Min 1 year<br>(2 sessions per week)                               |                                                            | maths assessment)<br><br>School records                                    |                       | Reading grades*<br><br>Mathematics                                                                                   | (no control group)                   |
| Olisa <i>et al.</i> (2001)   | 10 (reading group)<br>10 (maths group)<br>4 (comparison group) | 5-11 | Primary school extra tuition UK<br>Aims: improve reading & numeracy skills & motivation        | Individual tuition/<br>Outcomes grouped<br><br>20 weeks (33 hours each)                   | Pre/post<br><br>Quasi-experimental<br><br>(matched groups) | BAS<br>MIRA<br>BPVS<br>(standardised cognitive and attainment assessments) | None                  | Reading*<br><br>Vocabulary*<br><br>Spelling*<br><br>Maths*                                                           | Comp. group too small to calc. this  |
| Osborne <i>et al.</i> (2010) | 35                                                             | 5-11 | Home paired-reading UK<br>Aim: improve children's literacy skills by involving carers directly | Individual tuition/<br>Outcomes grouped<br><br>16 weeks<br>(Minimum 3 x 20 mins/ week)    | Pre/post                                                   | Weekly monitoring sheets (carers)<br><br>Reading ability (by age)          | Planned not published | Reading age (Salford)*                                                                                               | None given<br><br>(no control group) |
| Tideman <i>et al.</i> (2011) | 24                                                             | 7-11 | Primary School Sweden<br>Aim: improve school achievements                                      | Individual programmes/<br>Outcomes grouped<br><br>24 months                               | Pre/post                                                   | Cognitive ability (WISC III)<br>reading, spelling and maths                | None                  | Cognitive ability*<br><br>Word Reading*<br><br>Reading Speed*<br>Spelling*<br><br>Mathematics<br><br>Peer relations* | None given<br><br>(no control group) |
| Winter <i>et al.</i> (2011)  | 268<br>(121 m,<br>147 f)                                       | 7-11 | Foster homes located in five Health & Social Care Trusts Northern Ireland                      | Individual input/<br>Outcomes grouped<br><br>2 x 5 month intervention (5 monthly parcels) | Pre/post                                                   | Attainment scores in reading and mathematics                               | None                  | Reading accuracy*<br><br>Reading comprehension*<br><br>Mathematics*                                                  | 0.24<br><br>0.23<br><br>r = 0.5      |

|                              |                                                                      |       |                                                                                                 |                                                             |                         |                                                                           |      |                                                                  |                                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
|                              |                                                                      |       | Aim: improve educational outcomes                                                               |                                                             |                         | (National Curriculum levels)                                              |      |                                                                  |                                            |
| Wolfendale and Bryans (2004) | 58 (36 m, 26 f, in original cohort of 62)                            | 9-14  | Schools & foster homes UK<br>Aim: benefit literacy attainment                                   | Individual packages/<br>Outcomes grouped<br><br>1 year      | Pre/post                | WORD (standardised assessment instrument)                                 | None | Reading Accuracy*<br><br>Reading comprehension*<br><br>Spelling* | None given<br><br>(no control group)       |
| Trout <i>et al.</i> (2012)   | 24 treatment group (12 m, 12 f)<br><br>20 control group (10 m, 10 f) | 13-18 | Home & school USA<br><br>Aim: support youths, families & schools during reintegration from care | Individual programmes/<br>Outcomes grouped<br><br>12 months | RCT                     | School stability data                                                     | None | School stability*                                                | 0.41<br><br>Effect size measure not stated |
| Zetlin <i>et al.</i> (2004)  | 50 treatment group<br><br>38 control group                           | 5-17  | Home & school USA<br>Aim: improve school performance with education liaison officer             | Individual input / Outcomes grouped<br><br>1 year           | RCT<br><br>Within-group | Grade point average (GPA)<br>Maths and reading test scores,<br>Attendance | None | GPA<br><br>Maths*<br><br>Reading*<br>Attendance*                 | None given                                 |

Some studies had specific participant criteria: three used only pupils who were behind age-related expectations in reading or mathematics, five studies used only pupils who were deemed to be in stable long-term placements and one study sampled pupils who had been discharged from an out-of-home care establishment (Trout, Tyler, Stewart, & Epstein, 2012). Another study used random allocation of pupils (Zetlin et al., 2004). It is interesting to note that three studies chose not to sample children who were too 'academically weak' or had significant behavioural difficulties (Flynn, Marquis, Paquet, Peeke, & Aubrey, 2012; Harper & Schmidt, 2012; Tideman et al., 2011). Aside from the questionable ethicality of this, such exclusions could have implications for validity of study findings. To minimise threats to internal validity researchers should select participants randomly from a population, as characteristics of certain participants may predispose them to having certain outcomes. External validity can also be compromised by such exclusionary practices (Creswell, 2009). The overall characteristics of the group are narrowed, which reduces the extent to which inferences can be drawn from the results of the study to the overall population of children looked after, many of whom may have these characteristics.

### **Aims and Interventions**

The majority of studies evaluated were designed to improve attainment outcomes for pupils looked after. Five studies aimed to improve both literacy and numeracy skills, while two studies focused only on enhancing pupils' literacy. Three studies stated broader aims of improving pupil achievement overall. One study also aimed to improve pupil motivation (Olisa, Stuart, Hill, Male, & Radford, 2001), and another aimed to support the general reintegration of pupils from care back into school and community settings (Zetlin et al., 2004).

A number of different interventions were implemented in attempts to meet the above aims. Two studies used 'Teach Your Children Well', a Canadian direct-instruction programme, and another selected the Kumon mastery approach (O'Brien & Rutland, 2008). Three other studies also used non-specified individual tutoring, while another evaluated a home paired-reading programme (Osborne et al., 2010). Two studies used less structured interventions where pupils were provided with motivating educational resources, such as a hand-held computer (Wolfendale & Bryans, 2004) or personalised monthly parcels of books and maths games (The Letterbox Club,

Winter et al., 2011). One study looked at pupil progress within a wider reintegration programme, 'On the Way Home', which included use of a school mentor in addition to parent support (Trout et al., 2012). The final study evaluated the use of an Education Liaison Officer who provided consultation with adults and direct intervention with pupils to enhance educational outcomes (Zetlin et al., 2004).

Tutoring programmes were carried out by teachers in three studies, and university or college students in two other studies. All tutors were trained and evaluated on their performance. The three tutoring interventions that took place in the pupils' foster homes were implemented by foster carers, who were also trained and monitored. In the reintegration study each pupil had a school mentor and a family consultant working with them and their family (Trout et al., 2012). In the Letterbox Club study foster carers were encouraged to engage with the pupils and resources but this was not a requirement of the study (Winter et al., 2011).

### **Experimental Design**

Five studies used randomised controlled trials (see p.17) with participants assigned randomly to either intervention or control groups (Courtney, Zinn, Zielewski, Bess, & Malm, 2008; Flynn et al., 2012; Harper & Schmidt, 2012; Trout et al., 2012; Zetlin et al., 2004). Of these, two studies provided control group participants with the intervention at a later date (Flynn et al., 2012; Harper & Schmidt, 2012), while in the other studies control groups received no additional services or intervention. The remaining six studies used pre and post-test measures, with no control groups. This research design is deemed less methodologically rigorous than randomised controlled trials, due to higher possible threats to internal and external validity (Cole, 2008) as recognised by Winter et al. (2011) in their pilot evaluation study. One study used a quasi-experimental design, although their control group was notably small and therefore less can be taken from their claims (Olisa et al., 2001).

Data was collected according to a number of different measures, most of which assessed academic or cognitive skills. Three studies utilised the WRAT<sup>3</sup>, a standardised learning assessment, while others used WORD<sup>4</sup> (Wolfendale & Bryans, 2004) Woodcock-Johnson (Courtney et al., 2008), and Neale (Winter et al., 2011)

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<sup>3</sup> Wide Range Achievement Test

<sup>4</sup> Weschler Objective Reading Dimension Test

which are similar standardised assessments. Two studies used cognitive assessments, the BAS<sup>5</sup> (Olisa et al., 2001) and the WISC<sup>6</sup> (Tideman et al., 2011). The other studies made use of self-designed or school-based outcome measures.

### **Outcomes and Effectiveness**

Most studies reviewed found that the intervention they had implemented was effective for at least some of the outcomes measured, except Courtney et al. (2008) who did not manage group conditions (rendering their results inutile). The range of instruments used across studies increased the challenges in drawing comparisons between them. The main outcome variables across the studies were literacy and numeracy skills (see Table 5) with the most common measure being the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) which measures the child's ability to read words, comprehend sentences, spell, and solve maths problems (Wilkinson & Robertson, 2006). Pupils looked after were shown to have made significant improvements in reading on this measure following interventions using direct-instruction home tutoring (Flynn et al., 2012) and direct-instruction group tutoring (Harper & Schmidt, 2012) from the same specific tutoring programme 'Teach Your Children Well'. Kumon, which uses a mastery approach, was also proven to be effective (O'Brien & Rutland, 2008).

Interventions using other literacy measures were also shown to have some impact (please refer to Table 4). One study, Tideman et al. (2011), was recently replicated where improvements in literacy and numeracy skills were again demonstrated (Tordön, Vinnerljung & Axelsson, 2014).

Overall, pupils' outcomes in Mathematics were shown to be significant in four of the studies (Flynn et al., 2012; Olisa et al., 2001; Zetlin et al., 2004) with one of these four producing a large effect size for the Letterbox intervention where pupils were sent parcels including motivating maths games (Winter et al., 2011). Other studies reported significant effects of their intervention on outcomes of school stability (Trout et al., 2012) school attendance (Zetlin et al., 2004) and improved relationships with peers (Tideman et al., 2011).

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<sup>5</sup> British Ability Scales

<sup>6</sup> Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children



*Table 5: Results According to Outcome Variable*

| <b>Outcome Variable</b> | <b>Sub-variable</b>          | <b>Study</b>                 | <b>Sig. gains made?</b>     | <b>Effect size</b>        |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Literacy                | Reading Accuracy             | Courtney et al. (2008)       | N                           | n/a                       |
|                         |                              | Flynn et al. (2012)          | N                           | n/a                       |
|                         |                              | Harper and Schmidt (2012)    | Y                           | 0.427                     |
|                         |                              | Olisa et al. (2001)          | Y                           | Not given                 |
|                         |                              | Osborne et al. (2010)        | Y                           | Not given                 |
|                         |                              | Tideman et al. (2011)        | Y                           | Not given                 |
|                         |                              | Winter et al. (2011)         | Y                           | 0.24                      |
|                         |                              | Wolfendale and Bryans (2004) | Y                           | Not given                 |
|                         | Reading Comprehension        | Courtney et al. (2008)       | N                           | n/a                       |
|                         |                              | Flynn et al. (2012)          | Y                           | 0.385                     |
|                         |                              | Harper and Schmidt (2012)    | N                           | n/a                       |
|                         |                              | Winter et al. (2011)         | Y                           | 0.23                      |
|                         |                              | Wolfendale and Bryans (2004) | Y                           | Not given                 |
|                         | Reading Speed                | Tideman et al. (2011)        | Y                           | Not given                 |
|                         | Reading Composite            | Flynn et al. (2012)          | Y                           | 0.294                     |
|                         |                              | O'Brien and Rutland (2008)   | Y                           | Not given                 |
| Zetlin et al. (2004)    |                              | Y                            | Not given                   |                           |
| Spelling                | Flynn et al. (2012)          | N                            | n/a                         |                           |
|                         | Olisa et al. (2001)          | Y                            | Not given                   |                           |
|                         | Tideman et al. (2011)        | Y                            | Not given                   |                           |
|                         | Wolfendale and Bryans (2004) | Y                            | Not given                   |                           |
| Numeracy                | Mathematics                  | Courtney et al. (2008)       | N                           | n/a                       |
|                         |                              | Flynn et al. (2012)          | Y                           | 0.466                     |
|                         |                              | Harper and Schmidt (2012)    | N                           | 0.264                     |
|                         |                              | O'Brien and Rutland (2008)   | N                           | n/a                       |
|                         |                              | Olisa et al. (2001)          | Y                           | Not given                 |
|                         |                              | Tideman et al. (2011)        | N                           | n/a                       |
|                         |                              | Winter et al. (2011)         | Y                           | 1.155                     |
|                         |                              | Zetlin et al. (2004)         | Y                           | Not given                 |
| General Attainment      | Grade Point Average          | Zetlin et al. (2004)         | N                           | n/a                       |
| Language                | Vocabulary                   | Olisa et al. (2001)          | Y                           | Not given                 |
| Cognitive Ability       | Verbal Ability               | Tideman et al. (2011)        | Y                           | Not given                 |
|                         | Non-verbal Ability           | Tideman et al. (2011)        | Y                           | Not given                 |
| Emotional/ Behavioural  | SDQ                          | Tideman et al. (2011)        | Y (only peer rel'ships sig) | Not given                 |
|                         | Pupil-teacher relationship   | Tideman et al. (2011)        | N                           | n/a                       |
| School Stability        | Placement data               | Trout et al. (2012)          | Y                           | 0.41 (measure not stated) |
|                         | Attendance                   | Zetlin et al. (2004)         | Y                           | Not given                 |

A further challenge arose in that only four of the eleven studies provided effect sizes to quantify the power of their significant results (Flynn et al., 2012; Harper & Schmidt, 2012; Winter et al., 2011), one of which did not state the effect size measure used (Trout et al., 2012). Effect sizes were converted from Hedges' *g* to Cohen's *d*, as this measure is commonly used in the social sciences due to clear rules regarding small (0-0.3) medium (around 0.5) and large (0.8+) effect sizes (Thompson, 2000).

### **Quality of Studies: Weight of Evidence**

Table 4 indicates that some interventions aimed at improving educational outcomes for children looked after demonstrated elements of success. However we cannot take the claims of these papers at face value. This research goes a step further to provide deeper analysis of these studies to determine what can be taken forward from their claims.

First each paper was given a Weight of Evidence rating ranging from low through medium to high (see Table 6) using a framework from the EPPI-Centre (2007). A number of factors were considered in this in-depth approach, including ethics, validity and reliability of data among others. Of significance during this process is consideration of research design, which is based on the notion of hierarchies of evidence.

When conducting a systematic review which seeks to answer a 'what works' question, a hierarchy of evidence is used to provide a list of study designs in order of decreasing internal validity (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). This was applied in both the selection of studies to be included in the review and in assessing their Weight of Evidence. Randomised controlled trials are deemed less susceptible to bias than pre and post-test designs, and have therefore been given more weighting when considering overall study evidence.

Table 6 provides a summary of the Weight of Evidence assigned to each of the eleven studies. The studies used for this review have been categorised into those using randomised controlled trials (RCTs), which rank higher in this hierarchy, and those studies using a pre/post-test design. The full Weight of Evidence tables can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 6: Summary of Weight of Evidence for all Studies

| Study                               | A<br>(Trustworthy in terms of own question) | B<br>(Appropriate design and analysis for this review question) | C<br>(Relevance of Focus to this review question) | D<br>(Overall weight in relation to review question) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Randomised Controlled Trials</b> |                                             |                                                                 |                                                   |                                                      |
| Courtney <i>et al.</i> (2008)       | Medium                                      | Medium-Low                                                      | Medium                                            | Medium                                               |
| Flynn <i>et al.</i> (2012)          | High                                        | Medium-High                                                     | High                                              | High                                                 |
| Harper and Schmidt (2012)           | High                                        | Medium-High                                                     | High                                              | High                                                 |
| Trout <i>et al.</i> (2012)          | Medium                                      | Medium                                                          | Low                                               | Medium                                               |
| Zetlin <i>et al.</i> (2004)         | Medium-Low                                  | Medium                                                          | Medium                                            | Medium                                               |
| <b>Pre/ Post-test Design</b>        |                                             |                                                                 |                                                   |                                                      |
| O'Brien and Rutland (2008)          | Low                                         | Medium-Low                                                      | High                                              | Medium-Low                                           |
| Olisa <i>et al.</i> (2001)          | Medium                                      | Low                                                             | High                                              | Medium-Low                                           |
| Osborne <i>et al.</i> (2010)        | Medium                                      | Medium-High                                                     | High                                              | Medium-High                                          |
| Tideman <i>et al.</i> (2011)        | Medium                                      | Medium-High                                                     | Medium-Low                                        | Medium-High                                          |
| Winter <i>et al.</i> (2011)         | Medium-High                                 | Medium-Low                                                      | High                                              | Medium-High                                          |
| Wolfendale and Bryans (2004)        | Medium                                      | High                                                            | High                                              | Medium                                               |

Five of the studies presented overall Weight of Evidence that was medium-high to high (D). The two that rated high overall were in the treatment versus control design group, as this design was more trustworthy in terms of answering their own research questions and was more relevant to my research question about educational outcomes. The three studies that rated medium-high were in the pre/post-test design group, because while their design was less rigorous they highlighted the limitations of their work (Winter *et al.*, 2011), showed that findings met published criteria for effective literacy intervention (Osborne *et al.*, 2010) and used a holistic approach to educational intervention (Tideman *et al.*, 2011).

One study that used the randomised control design scored low in relevance to my research question because researchers were also measuring non-educational outcomes such as parenting (Trout *et al.*, 2012) which, while important, were not the focus of this review.

## Synthesising Outcomes and Weight of Evidence

Given the above, each of the studies was further weighted according to the statistical evidence provided, ranging from no effect size up to high effect size. Taking into consideration both strength of claim by effect size and Weight of Evidence for each study, overall ratings are provided in Table 7 below. Within studies effect sizes varied dependent on outcome variable; these studies may be represented in more than one cell below. Studies and their claimed outcomes were graded 1–6 accordingly<sup>7</sup>.

It can be seen from Table 7 that the three studies with the best overall Weight of Evidence and effect size, rated number one in the table, are Flynn et al. (2012) and Harper and Schmidt (2012) and Winter et al. (2011).

*Table 7: Weight of Evidence versus Effect Size*

|                              |                    |                                                                                 |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                  |                                               |
|------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Weight of Evidence</b>    | <i>High</i>        |                                                                                 | 2. Flynn et al (2012)<br><b>Reading Composite</b><br><br>Harper & Schmidt (2012)<br><b>Mathematics</b> | 1. Flynn et al (2012)<br><b>Reading Comprehension</b><br><b>Mathematics</b><br>Harper & Schmidt (2012)<br><b>Word Reading</b><br><b>Spelling</b> |                                               |
|                              | <i>Medium-High</i> | 4. Osborne et al. (2010)<br>Tideman et al. (2011)                               | 3. Winter et al. (2011)<br><b>Word Reading</b><br><b>Reading Comprehension</b>                         |                                                                                                                                                  | 1. Winter et al. (2011)<br><b>Mathematics</b> |
|                              | <i>Medium</i>      | 5. Courtney et al. (2008)<br>Wolfendale & Bryans (2004)<br>Zetlin et al. (2004) |                                                                                                        | 3. Trout et al. (2012)<br><b>School Stability</b><br><i>NB. Effect size measure not stated</i>                                                   |                                               |
|                              | <i>Medium-Low</i>  | 6. O'Brien & Rutland (2008)<br>Olisa et al. (2001)                              |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                  |                                               |
|                              | <i>Low</i>         |                                                                                 |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                  |                                               |
|                              | <b>Rating</b>      | <i>No effect size</i>                                                           | <i>Low</i>                                                                                             | <i>Medium</i>                                                                                                                                    | <i>High</i>                                   |
| <b>Effect Size Cohen's d</b> |                    |                                                                                 |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                  |                                               |

Both Flynn et al. (2012) and Harper and Schmidt (2012) evaluated the usefulness of the direct-instruction intervention 'Teach Your Children Well' for pupils in care. This intervention package combines direct instruction and precision teaching with

<sup>7</sup> As demonstrated by their relative position on Table 7 (darker shading indicates higher rating)

behavioural objectives and behavioural management. It was developed in Canada by Maloney (1998), a former psychologist and current educational researcher, for use with at-risk pupils, and is available as a resource online. Flynn et al. trained foster carers to implement this with pupils individually in the home setting, and produced evidence of significant effects on pupils' reading comprehension and mathematics skills. Pupils involved in this intervention reported appreciating the one-on-one time spent with their foster carers during the tutoring sessions. Harper and Schmidt applied the intervention to small groups of three to four pupils matched by skill level, and demonstrated its effectiveness in improving pupil scores in word reading and spelling.

Winter et al. (2011) evaluated a pilot of the Letterbox Club in Northern Ireland. This intervention, designed by Griffiths (2010) and managed by Booktrust, was implemented in the UK under government funding from 2007-2008, and is now available by purchase for any children looked after who are experiencing literacy difficulties. Children receive a parcel once a month for six months, containing selected books, maths activities and stationery. Winter et al. conducted a secondary analysis of data collated by the Fostering Network, and through this were able to demonstrate its effectiveness for improving mathematics skills, with a very strong effect size of 1.155 (converted from  $r$  to  $d$  using Friedman's (1968) formula). Reading accuracy and reading comprehension were also shown to have been improved by the intervention, albeit with smaller effect sizes of 0.24 and 0.23 respectively. There were limitations to this study, as acknowledged by Winter et al., of particular note their lack of a control group for comparison purposes.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Conclusions of this review**

So to return to the original review question: Which interventions can improve measured educational outcomes for pupils who are looked after?

Existing literature selected for this systematic review leads us to a number of conclusions about interventions that have been designed to improve educational outcomes for children in care. The majority of the eleven studies reviewed were able

to claim some success in achieving this aim, with all but one of them (Courtney et al., 2008) demonstrating significant effects on at least some of their outcome measures. Outcome measures were predominately academic, although some studies also aimed to improve school stability and attendance outcomes. Effect sizes are typically used to identify the strength of any significant effects that an intervention has on the sample (Cohen & Lea, 2004). Of the limited studies that reported these, effect sizes ranged from low to medium, with one study producing a high effect size for the effect of the intervention on pupils' mathematics skills (Winter et al., 2011).

In considering the above findings it is important to stipulate that across the eleven studies a range of methodologies were used, including variations in sample size, duration of intervention and type of measurement tool among others. To account for these variations, comparison across studies was aided through use of a Weight of Evidence tool (EPPI-Centre, 2007) which assessed each study according to a number of criteria according to trustworthiness, appropriateness of design and analysis, and relevance to the above review question. Results from this demonstrated that four of the studies presented overall Weight of Evidence that was medium-high to high, with the remaining seven studies receiving an overall weighting of medium-low to medium. Around fifty percent of the studies applied a randomised control design, and were therefore given more credence according to a hierarchy of evidence than the other half of the studies that used a pre/post-test design.

Studies were synthesised and rated according to both their Weight of Evidence and statistical strength via effect size. The most trustworthy studies tell us that direct-instruction interventions e.g. Teach Your Children Well and personalised interventions such as The Letterbox Club are of particular merit in supporting improved educational outcomes for pupils looked after. Interestingly the latter had been mentioned by a stakeholder I consulted as having been effective when implemented in her Local Authority under previous government funding.

Following an ecological systemic stance I also allowed inclusion of more holistic interventions that employed a more social or systemic focus into their efforts to improve educational outcomes for this vulnerable group. Tideman et al. (2011) demonstrated that provision of educational and psychological support enhanced pupils' peer relationships in addition to their academic skills, while other studies

enhanced school attendance and stability through allocation of named professionals who worked holistically to support the children's needs.

### **Limitations of this Review**

As with any piece of research, this systematic review had notable limitations. While attempts were made to be as rigorous as possible in the Weight of Evidence coding process, the very nature of it could be considered somewhat reductionist.

Categorisation into limited ranges, of study design for example, resulted in some detail from each study being lost. Some elements of this process seemed more subjective than others, which demonstrated that this like other tools has its limitations and findings must be considered alongside other factors when coming to conclusions.

In recognising the importance of context to any situation, I am led to consider the possibility that another limitation to this review lay in the variety of contexts in which interventions took place. Some occurred in schools or learning centres, while others occurred in the more personal setting of the family or foster home. This could have made some difference in terms of pupils' associations of different contexts with different activities e.g. school being for learning (although if the programme were treated as being similar to homework the home setting could allow for this). Their relationships with those implementing the intervention are also likely to have had an impact, e.g. some were delivered by college or university students who would have been strangers to the pupils, whereas others were delivered by their foster carer with whom many had been in long-term placements. The age range was also particularly wide, ranging from pupils as young as 4 years to pupils almost leaving school aged 18.

There are also potential issues relating to generalisability of findings to UK practice. Some studies excluded particular children from interventions and analysis, thus narrowing the overall characteristics these groups. One of the more effective interventions originated in Canada, and was therefore designed to suit their class system of grades (e.g. Booklet 1: Grades K-2). This might be more difficult to access for professionals working within a British education system. Another effective intervention, The Letterbox Club, is accessible in the UK and is of British design, however.

## **Discussion and Recommendations for Further Research**

Just over half of the studies included in the in-depth review used a pre/post-test design, and could have improved the weight of their evidence through inclusion of a control group. One paper stated clear reasons for not doing so, based on ethical concerns of the County Council who were wary that control group children might have had contact with intervention pupils who were receiving motivating resources (Wolfendale & Bryans, 2004). I agree with this given the context, although in other studies pupils were designated as wait-list controls who received the intervention at a later date. This need for a comparison group was recognised by Winter et al. (2011), who noted that their study about The Letterbox Club could be adapted in this manner to produce stronger claims about effectiveness.

Since my review was carried out in 2012-2013, The Letterbox Club has been further evaluated by researchers at Edinburgh University (Hancock & Leslie, 2014), using case studies to capture qualitative feedback from both pupils and carers. While qualitative data was not the focus of my review, I see it as an important supplement to quantitative data and therefore recommend future research using qualitative methodologies. Children's lived experiences of interventions are seen as adding crucial contextual data that can support claims of effectiveness and provide recommendations for future adaptations. Some studies in the review recognised these (O'Brien & Rutland, 2008; Olisa et al., 2001), while others gathered some views from foster parents implementing home-based programmes (Flynn et al., 2012; Osborne et al., 2010).

It was interesting to observe a quote from a foster parent who had delivered a home tutoring programme to the child in their care: "(Child) is enjoying the one-on-one special time he gets during the tutoring" (as cited in Flynn et al., 2012, p.1188). This would imply that the child was benefitting not only from the intervention but also from the one-to-one interaction it afforded. These positive one-to-one experiences were also commented on by carers in another study, one of whom highlighted her experience of: "Spending time with (child), seeing him enjoy books so much..." (as cited in Osborne et al., 2010, p.22).

It appears that relational factors were of importance to some involved in these interventions, and may have played some part in overall success, although they



were not measured. One study acknowledged this by measuring the emotional quality of teacher-pupil relationships from the perspective of each, although this was not shown to be affected by their intervention (Tideman et al., 2011).

It has been suggested that children must first feel safe and secure in school, before they are able to fully engage with the learning experience (Tew, 2010). It could be argued that relationships are especially important for children looked after, as they are more likely to have experienced numerous changes in the key adults they have had contact with in their lives. Many working with this population of children draw attention to the importance of relationships in schools, especially when advising teaching staff on how to support them best (Bomber, 2007). A key member of staff whom the child is able to trust can be crucial to this, and this relationship is often established through time spent together on a one-to-one basis (Hill, 2006).

It may be that some of the selected intervention studies would have benefitted from taking more account of the relevance of such relationships. Further research into in-school relationships is recommended as a result of this review, to add to the knowledge about educational interventions in giving more consideration to contextual and relational factors that exist in the learning environment.

## **Chapter 2. Academic Interventions to Relationships in School: The Research Journey**

## **Abstract**

This chapter serves as a bridging document to explain the research processes that led from Systematic Review to Empirical Research, with reference to my personal journey as a developing researcher. I begin by outlining my initial motivations and decision-making early in the process, which served to activate the whole two-year project. I then reflect on the way in which my decisions were shaped by my ontology and epistemology, with a critical consideration of the methodological steps taken on the grounds of these. Research decisions were also heavily influenced by ethical considerations guided both by personal values and wider research guidelines. These are detailed, with justification provided. As is the case for many researchers I faced unexpected challenges, and have detailed the changes that took place in my attempts to meet them. The chapter concludes with an element of personal reflexivity, where I acknowledge my insider and outsider positions as a researcher, the related influence I had on research outcomes, and the influence the research has had on me as a practitioner.

## **Introduction: Identifying the Research Area**

### **Personal motivations**

My interest in the support of pupils with complex backgrounds originated during my role as a Key Stage 2 Teaching Assistant (TA) in 2007. I felt lacking in efficacy in my support of one particular pupil, related to the range of emotions I experienced when working with her (D. Cross & Hong, 2012). I learned of her inconsistent contact with her mother, which appeared to be having an emotional impact. Within the psychosocial context of the school this had a related emotional impact on many around her (Miller, 2003).

Pupils with traumatic histories are often misunderstood by education professionals, who interpret their behaviour as naughty and disruptive; as a result they are the least well included group of pupils (Greig et al., 2008). In the years since, I have grown in experience and psychological knowledge, and felt inspired to further enhance my understanding of vulnerable pupils, with a motivation to support improvements in their educational experiences.

### **Local Context**

I was also keen to undertake research beneficial to others. I attended a talk by the Chief Executive of the Local Authority, who spoke of the challenges of supporting the growing looked after population in the area. In 2012 I began my current placement as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) in a larger Local Authority, which at that time catered for 385 pupils looked after. As a stakeholder consultation I met with the manager of the Looked After Children's Education Service to discuss possible research directions. She expressed interest in any research that could lead to suggestions for improvements in academic outcomes for this group of pupils.

### **Use of the Term 'Children Looked After'**

A general term for children in care is 'Looked After Children', typically abbreviated to LAC. Whilst I recognise communication across professions is facilitated by such common terms, I have opted to use the term 'children (or pupils) looked after'. First and foremost they are children, who also happen to be in care. A term which puts the person first means these pupils are less likely to be defined by their experiences, as highlighted by Schwartz, Landrum & Gurung (cited in Braun & Clarke, 2013), which all vary greatly.

Adults previously looked after have revealed feelings of having been viewed as being fundamentally different to their peers, due to their looked after label. There was a sense that this label caused others to see through them and ignore their individuality. This links to one researcher's suggestion that children looked after are like glass, in that they are 'looked through' by educationalists and social services, who may not take into account their voices as individuals (McKay, unpub). It is important to be mindful here that similar experiences could also apply to the history of pupils with adopted status (Hudson, 2006), or to those children for whom home challenges have not been identified.

## **My World View**

While there is clear merit to evaluating the effectiveness of academic interventions, as demonstrated in my Systematic Review, the notion that interventions are 'done to' pupils with a cause and effect outcome is too reductionist a claim. According to ecological systems theory (Darling, 2007), the contexts in which these pupils live and learn also influence their experiences, as in turn the pupils influence the contexts of which they are a part. Their educational experiences are complex and varied, and therefore warrant further exploration. As versions of reality are closely linked to the context, we should not consider knowledge outside the context it was generated in (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I therefore followed my curiosity in exploring how an adult, Marie<sup>8</sup>, and a child looked after, Daniel<sup>9</sup>, experienced their relationship with each other, embedding the research in the primary school context where the relationship existed.

This ontological view on the social reality of education systems influenced my decision to carry out qualitative research from a critical realist stance. As a critical realist I hold to the view that an external reality exists in this world, that is independent of myself as a social being. Social objects, such as the relationship explored in my Empirical Research, exist whether I am able to know them or not. Furthermore, reality is only knowable through the human mind and socially constructed meanings, so is therefore experienced subjectively (Robson, 2002).

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<sup>8</sup> Marie (pseudonym) refers to the School Support Assistant who took part in the empirical research

<sup>9</sup> Daniel (pseudonym) refers to the Year 6 pupil looked after who took part in the empirical research

These subjective experiences play a major part in our understanding of how the world is, which is why reality can be seen to exist differently for different people.

Further consideration through a critical lens leads to an acceptance that knowledge created about objects is fallible, because knowledge is in itself transitive (D. Scott, 2007). In this instance the social object itself was also transitive, as the adult-child relationship was not a lasting one, and the knowledge created captured but a moment in time of the lives of these social beings. This criticality is also demonstrated in my Systematic Review, where claims from the studies were not accepted as 'truths' but were further investigated through application of a Weight of Evidence tool.

This epistemological stance enabled me to carry out social research with people in a real world setting, using qualitative methods. In recognising the complex and dynamic nature of systems I make no claims about being separate to the research processes that occurred. I brought to the research my experiences, interests and beliefs about the world, which included beliefs about the pair whose relationship was being explored. I designed the interview questions and selected the intervention tool through which reflections could be facilitated. Furthermore I was embedded in the interview and shared review dialogues, and as such the responses that formed a basis for the research analysis were in effect dialogic co-creations (Marková, 2003). The words came into the research through me, both in the instance they were spoken through dialogue, and again at a later stage during my analysis of them.

The relationship existed in a reality external to me, a reality experienced differently for both Marie and Daniel. The 'realities' and meanings of this relationship were interpreted by me on two levels during the research process, both through my direct observations of it, and through my interpretations of the reported experiences of it. Through this epistemological reflexivity I acknowledge my influence in the entire research process, in particular the constructions of findings and meanings that arose from it (Willig, 2008).

## **From Systematic Review to Empirical Research**

The Systematic Review provided some insight into a range of interventions to improve academic outcomes for pupils looked after. In general the more successful

interventions were individualised and personalised, and some feedback from these related to valuing the one-to-one time spent together during implementation. Interventions do not occur in a vacuum, they take place in a context and rely heavily on interactions between the child(ren) and adult involved. Social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978).

This, coupled with my desire to move away from the within-child model which dominates such reductionist interventions, motivated me to focus on the interaction between an adult and a pupil looked after within an educational context. It could be argued that while relationships are important for all pupils, it is especially important to establish these in schools for this vulnerable group. For many of us home is a safe base to return to at the end of the day, something we probably take for granted. Pupils looked after may not have experienced such feelings of safety in their home context, and the most constant base in their life may have been school. A sense of acceptance and belonging in a place (Sugden, 2013) and relatedness to people in that place are important for a child to feel safe and secure. Enhanced relationality and feelings of security in schools can lead to better learning outcomes in the longer term (Deci & Ryan, 1994; Greenhalgh, 1994) (see Self-Determination Theory p.46), although I could not measure these given the pragmatic limitations of my empirical research.

## **Methodological Decisions**

### **Choice of Research Design**

A single exploratory case study was selected, as its flexible nature would allow for empirical investigation of unique perspectives on a phenomenon within its real life context (Yin, 2003). This design was suited to researching multiple layers within the phenomenon of a relationship. It was chosen in the hope that it would yield rich and in-depth data for analysis, and that it could be used as an exemplar to contribute to the wider body of social sciences literature (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

One criticism of this design is that findings are less generalisable. One colleague suggested my research could be strengthened through a multiple case study design, although I decided that a single case study would allow for greater depth, rather than breadth which was not my research focus. I also held concerns that multiple case

studies could lead to a temptation to draw comparisons between them, counter to my epistemological belief that realities are experienced subjectively and are therefore unique.

### **Video Interaction Guidance: a Research Tool**

My decision here was influenced by a successful piece of casework I had carried out with a Year 8 pupil, using Video Interaction Guidance (VIG - Kennedy, 2011) to support his peer interactions. An interesting theme that arose from joint shared review discussions related to the boy's attunement with the TA. Both parties appeared to benefit from the recognition and celebration of this, which demonstrated for me the importance of such relationships in schools.

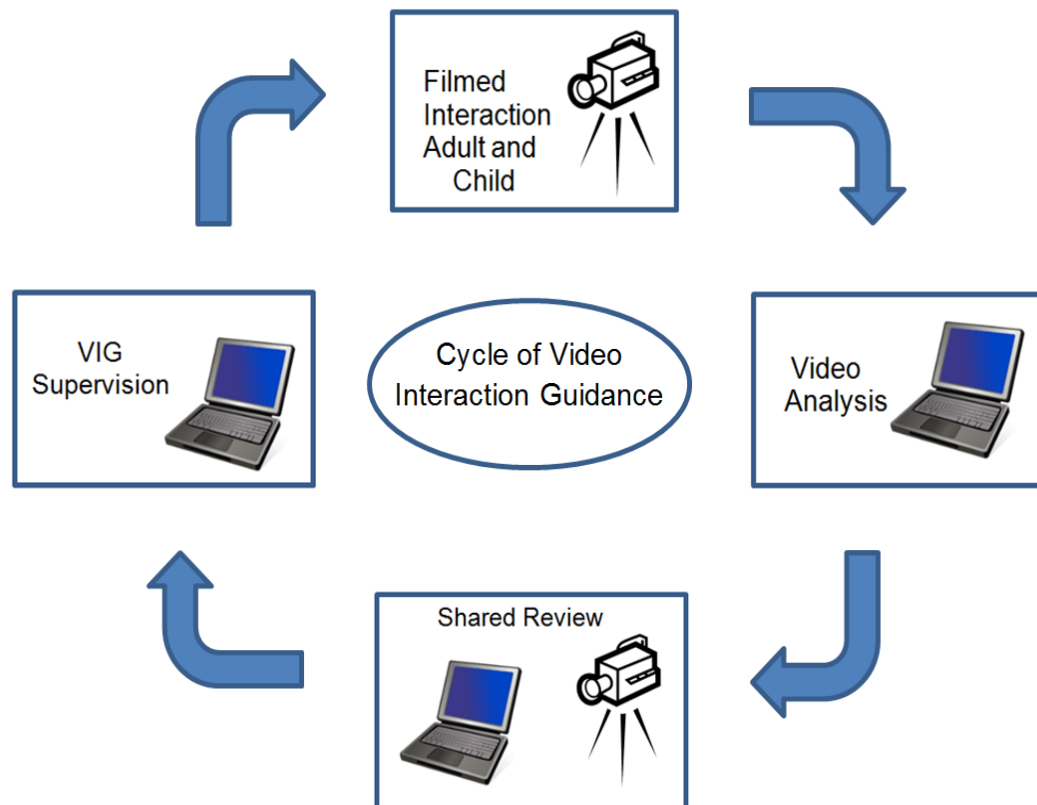
VIG guiders are also filmed as part of the intervention process, which promotes empathy for clients and has enhanced my confidence in my interactions as a practitioner through shared reflections on these in VIG supervision. Through VIG I have had a sense of enjoyment in watching myself interacting with others, and I try to help others achieve this when watching their own videos. Many professionals I have worked with have reported improved confidence in their work, and as it is relationship-based by its very nature (Kennedy, 2011) it seemed the ideal research tool for the empirical study. VIG was also appropriate given the short time frame I had for data generation, as it could be carried out over just two cycles of filmed interaction and feedback (see Figure 1 on the next page).

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and filmed interactions in sessions and shared reviews. Individual interviews were audio-recorded and the final joint interview was filmed so non-verbal interactions could enhance the analysis using the VIG principles of attuned interaction and guidance (VIG Principles see Appendix 2). Qualitative research uses more naturally occurring data generation methods that more closely resemble real life (Braun & Clarke, 2013) so I chose to film the pair in school doing an activity of their choice, to provide strong contextual links. The overall research focus was on process rather than outcomes, supported by regular opportunities for dialogue and reflection during shared reviews.



Figure 1: VIG Process



## **Method of Analysis**

### ***Overall Analysis Type***

There are a number of analytic approaches for interpreting qualitative data. These are evaluated in brief in Table 8. Following the above evaluation ThA was selected, as its flexibility was most suitable for answering my research question. ThA is recommended for new qualitative researchers, as it offers opportunities to learn basic data-handling and coding skills (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Ultimately only interview datasets were selected for analysis, partially due to thesis size constraints.

### ***Use of Theory-Driven Latent Thematic Analysis***

I decided to use theory-driven ThA in this research, as theory-driven analysis is guided by existing theoretical concepts, whereas in inductive ThA themes are generated from the bottom up (Willig, 2008). Relationships manifest themselves not only in spoken words but in non-verbal communication, and as a researcher I desired to incorporate both where possible to provide a fuller picture. The VIG Principles provide an in-depth theoretical framework for audio-visual analysis of

communication and relationships, hence theory-driven ThA was selected. I hoped that through this my research may later contribute to the wider field of VIG and relationship literature.

*Table 8: Qualitative Analytic Methods (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2013)*

| Method of Analysis                           | Brief Evaluation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Thematic Analysis (ThA)                      | A flexible method which looks at identifying themes and patterns across the dataset in relation to a research question. The flexibility of this approach allows for either an inductive or a theory-led approach. One downside is that ThA cannot make claims about the effects of language use as some other methods can. |
| Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) | An experiential and interpretive method which focuses on how people make sense of their lived experience. IPA can be useful for time and resource limited research, but lacks the theoretical flexibility of ThA.                                                                                                          |
| Grounded Theory (GT)                         | An inductive analysis that focuses on building theory from data. It is flexible regarding epistemological frameworks, although within a small project such as this it would be difficult to complete a full GT due to the complexity of its procedures.                                                                    |
| Discourse Analysis (DA)                      | Involves in-depth analysis of discourse and can be useful for researchers who are interested in the subtle uses and effects of broader language patterns. On the downside there can be a lack of clear guidelines on the process, which can be challenging for new researchers.                                            |

Theory-driven ThA is either semantic or latent. Semantic analysis involves describing and identifying themes within the surface meanings of the data. Here the analyst does not search for anything beyond what a participant has actually said. In contrast to this, latent analysis approaches the dataset at an interpretative level, in identifying or examining the underlying assumptions and ideologies that are theorised as shaping or informing the content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I decided latent analysis would better enable me to make novel claims about my research, through synthesising data rather than simply reporting on the relationship.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Actions taken in carrying out this research were influenced by a number of ethical considerations arising from personal values, professional guidelines (BPS, 2010) and qualitative research ethics (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Robson, 2002). These are detailed in Table 9. Below I have reflected upon the positioning of Daniel within my

research, with reference to my interactions with him and consideration of literature on the ethics of research with children.

### **Positioning of the Child**

The category of 'child' only exists in relation to that of 'adult' (Burman, 2008), so by its very name signifies difference between the two. Poststructuralists provide a critical stance on concepts of children and childhood in western society, such as Foucault, who argued that it is we who hold truths about the child and it is through us that these 'regimes of truth' are reproduced and perpetuated in society (Mac Naughton, 2005). The voice of childhood exists in adult-defined and regulated discourses, which are heavily influenced by the socio-political influences of culture and history.

An example of this exists in the positioning of children as passive, dependent and helpless in society (Burman, 2008). They are viewed as needing to be protected and provided for by parents and schools, rather than observing that they are active participants in their own lives (Moss & Petrie, 2002). However it could also be argued that children do have some dependence upon the adults in their lives, and in many cultures adults are seen as having caring and protecting responsibilities towards children. Education and socialisation are seen as being necessary to lead children in the right direction so they can develop into normal adults within society. It has been suggested that adults tend not to be respectful of children's views and opinions (Morrow & Richards, 1996), although researchers interested in issues pertinent to children are advised to consult children directly (J. Scott, 1997). For this reason I sought Daniel's views and experiences of his relationship with Marie in school.

Unfortunately I did not know Daniel prior to the research process. Research projects are best designed with time for a relationship to develop between researcher and researched, particularly for children who may not be accustomed to being asked their opinions and experiences by unknown adults (Morrow & Richards, 1996). I was aware of this, so arranged a pre-research meeting with Daniel, although this was cancelled due to a sporting event so our first encounter was on the day of his first interview. Here he presented as being particularly reticent, which provided challenges in terms of generating verbal data.

Table 9: Research Ethicality

| Action Taken                                         | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Ethical Justification                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Information</b><br/>(Appendices 3 &amp; 4)</p> | <p>All participating in or linked to the research were provided with information beforehand regarding nature of the study, methods and requirements from participants, right to withdrawal, data storage and researcher contact details. Daniel received information in a letter.</p>                                                                                                       | <p>Researchers must be very clear about all aspects of the research from the outset, so that participants are not misled in any way. I wanted Daniel's research invite to be personalised as a formal sheet would be less appropriate for a child his age.</p>                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Consent</b><br/>(Appendices 5 - 7)</p>         | <p><u>Adult with parental responsibility:</u><br/>I contacted Daniel's social worker, who felt unable to provide such consent and consulted her manager. Consent was then provided via the social worker from Daniel's biological mother, who maintained parental responsibility.</p>                                                                                                       | <p>Researchers working directly with children, particularly vulnerable pupils, must gain informed consent from the person with parental responsibility (Robson, 2002).</p>                                                                                                                                                                          |
|                                                      | <p><u>Adult Participant:</u><br/>Marie was asked for her consent to take part in the research with Daniel. Consent was also gained to show videos of Marie in training or presentations. Later in the research process during the analysis phase, possible themes were created about Marie's professional identity. Further consent was gained to include these in the research report.</p> | <p>Any research participant must have provided signed consent before they can participate in the research process.</p> <p>As themes about Marie's professional identity were not part of the original research brief, I did not feel I could include them in the research report without requesting further informed consent from her to do so.</p> |
|                                                      | <p><u>Child Participant:</u><br/>I wrote Daniel a letter inviting him to take part in the research (see above) which was read to him by Marie. She reported he had been very proud when she read the letter to him.</p>                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>I wanted to ensure that Daniel was comfortable in taking part in the study and did not feel that he was obliged to in any way. Some might call this 'assent' rather than consent (BPS, 2010). He had a right to say no to any requests made of him (United Nations, 1989).</p>                                                                   |
|                                                      | <p><u>Head Teacher:</u><br/>The Head Teacher of the Junior School to take part was asked for her permission for the research to take place in her school, involving a member of staff and a child in her educational care.</p>                                                                                                                                                              | <p>As this research was to take place in a school context, it could not have gone ahead without the Head Teacher's consent and support. She was an indirect participant in that she played a key role in the context where the relationship existed.</p>                                                                                            |
|                                                      | <p><u>Daniel's carers:</u><br/>A consent form was sent to Daniel's carers, although this caused confusion initially so I realised in retrospect a telephone conversation might have been more appropriate.</p>                                                                                                                                                                              | <p>As the adults who had the most contact with Daniel, I wanted to consult his carers out of courtesy. I also wanted them to be aware of what I would be doing with Daniel in school, in case he felt unsure about anything and wanted to talk to trusted adults about his experience of the research process.</p>                                  |

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|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Research Focus</b>   | <p><u>Pupil Circumstances:</u><br/>Original ideas to explore and enhance a relationship using VIG were adapted to exploration only in this particular case, using VIG as a research tool for this.</p>                                                                                                                                                  | <p>VIG would typically be used to enhance or develop a relationship, although I felt there could be ethical implications of this given that the relationship was due to come to an end when Daniel moved schools at the end of the term. This was therefore not the focus of the research.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Safeguarding</b>     | <p><u>Data Protection:</u><br/>Videos were stored on a password protected netbook, locked in a combination briefcase until they could be transferred onto the university secure server. Once the research is complete, raw video data will be destroyed following university regulations.<br/>Interview transcriptions were anonymised immediately.</p> | <p>According to The Data Protection Act 1998, all personal or sensitive information must be anonymised and protected from the risk of access by any who are not entitled to have the information. University regulations allow such data to be stored for research purposes, providing consent has been obtained.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                         | <p><u>Emotional well-being of pupil:</u><br/>Initial interviews were carried out individually, then a decision was made to carry out the final interview jointly due to Daniel's apparent reticence.</p>                                                                                                                                                | <p>In his first interview I sensed it was difficult for Daniel to be asked direct questions by a strange adult, despite my attempts to prepare child-friendly questions. Interviewing vulnerable children requires additional skills and experience (Eder &amp; Fingerston, 2001) and I would not have undertaken this had I not already had such experience. I was aware of the power imbalance here, with Daniel often using the counter-control response 'Got no idea' (Kvale, 2006). Ethically I didn't feel it was fair to push him for a response in these instances. The joint-interview with Marie was chosen to help Daniel feel more at ease and so that Marie could adapt some of my questions then direct them to him. Original questions were adapted to avoid either of them feeling uncomfortable in front of each other, and some questions were posed to them as a pair to further ease any pressure to respond.</p> |
| <b>Transition Focus</b> | <p><u>Mid-research Decision:</u><br/>A decision was made to include a transitions focus by continuing work with Daniel in his new secondary setting, rather than seeking out a second case study.</p>                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Ethically I felt compelled to continue working with Daniel, as transition can be a challenging time for pupils looked after (Brewin &amp; Statham, 2011). I saw an opportunity for supporting Daniel in his new relationships with staff in the unfamiliar setting. I felt this would be the most beneficial use of my research skills, as close relationships with staff can be more difficult to form for pupils looked after within a larger school setting. I considered whether or not this would deviate too much from the original research brief, but concluded that the flexible nature of the research design allowed the research to develop according to changes in circumstances. Unfortunately the decision was made to withdraw the Daniel from the research during the autumn term, reasons for which will be discussed in the Attrition section (p.39).</p>                                                       |

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|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Research<br/>Artefacts</b> | <p><u>Celebrating the Relationship:</u><br/>I arranged a celebration meeting at the end of the summer term, where Daniel's carer and class teacher were invited to join the three of us. This was seen as an opportunity to share and celebrate their relationship and work together. Daniel took the lead in showing selected video clips.</p>                                                                                                                              | <p>This provided an opportunity for Daniel to have his support network around him, and for his carer to see some of the work he did at school and observe his relationship with Marie. It was beneficial for Marie in that her line manager commented positively about her work with Daniel in the videos, which further boosted her self-esteem. It also allowed an opportunity to celebrate Daniel's strengths, which has been highlighted as important for pupils looked after in working towards improving their outcomes (Williams, 2012). I hoped this session would help to further promote the importance of in-school relationship for pupils looked after.</p> |
|                               | <p><u>Personal Artefacts:</u><br/>Marie and Daniel were provided with personal artefacts, in the form of a portfolio of selected still photographs and text. Daniel's portfolio provided some narrative as a reminder of the sessions, with some positive quotes from Marie relating to her work with him. Marie's artefact contained quotes from our discussions together, both about her relationship with Daniel and about her identity as an education professional.</p> | <p>I was aware that, although for me the research would continue after the data generation stage, for Marie and Daniel that heralded the end of their main involvement in it. I was also aware that their relationship would be coming to an end, and felt that given the recent focus on it they might benefit from a tangible artefact of it.<br/>These artefacts could also be seen as debrief documents, to remind each participant of the nature of the research.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|                               | <p><u>Staff Training:</u><br/>I have recently spoken to Marie about jointly providing a twilight session for the staff at the Junior school to talk about the research and its applications.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>Ethically, if the school agreed to take part in the research, a good researcher should ensure that the research is of benefit to them in future. This can be done through disseminating research findings into staff training which shows how they can be applied to improve outcomes for pupils and schools.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

Power relations within 'softer' qualitative research can be more subtle than those in quantitative research, so need further consideration throughout the research process (Kvale, 2006). Researchers may not be used to talking to children to ascertain their views, although as a TEP this experience was not foreign to me. During the interview I felt torn between building rapport with Daniel and seeking his responses for my research. Duncombe and Jessop (2002) suggest that 'doing rapport' with interview respondents can represent commodification of empathy and feelings. However in the interview I endeavoured to approach Daniel with the same genuine and empathic manner as I would any child, so feel this interview could not be described as such. I have experienced discomfort myself when being questioned by others, and this empathy for Daniel's situation (Carr, 2004) influenced me to alter my interview technique i.e. I did not press him for answers when they were not offered.

Despite adaptations being made in the second interview to help Daniel feel at ease, transcripts showed he tended to opt for non-verbal communication over verbal answers throughout the research process. Upon reflection I had perhaps neglected to give full consideration to the potential for power imbalance between myself and Daniel during interview. James and Prout (1997) suggest in their model of the 'social child', that while children (like adults) can express their views and experiences, they may possess different competencies to adults. While I made attempts at recognising this through my acknowledgement of Daniel's technological skills with the recording equipment, I could have addressed this further through my research methodology. Rather than asking Daniel to participate in the unfamiliar process of an interview, I could have sought his views through alternative media such as drawing or writing or a qualitative questionnaire. One example of more participatory research was that of a study where teenagers interviewed children aged 10-16 about their experiences of relationships with caregivers (Alderson, Morrow, & Alderson, 2011).

Ultimately I decided that only verbal data from Marie would be analysed, despite my belief in the importance of capturing the child's voice. I did not feel that I could, as a researcher, attempt an appropriate interpretation given the data I had from Daniel. To maintain my focus on the relationship between the pair, my analysis was enhanced through some of the non-verbal interactions between the two as captured on video.

## **Attrition**

Consent was initially provided to continue my research with Daniel in his new secondary setting, and a first filming session took place with his new teacher. Unfortunately soon afterwards a decision was made to withdraw Daniel from the research. According to his carer this was because the school did not see it as a priority and preferred to focus on Daniel's academic progress. This reinforces findings from the Systematic Review that academically focused interventions are better favoured than social or relationship-based ones, possibly as a result of the pressure on schools to meet government targets.

I reflected on the notion that the school did not appear to see the research link between social-emotional aspects of Daniel's school life, such as his relationships, and his overall ability to learn. I concluded that perhaps the new adults around Daniel saw the sole research purpose as benefitting me as the researcher. It was true that the research would contribute to a doctoral qualification, and in retrospect perhaps the possible benefits to Daniel could have been better reinforced at the planning stage. The secondary school had had no prior experience of VIG, so were perhaps less aware of its potential benefits.

This led me to question whether there was something different about a school getting something they have requested, rather than something they have been offered. Often researchers are committed to time limits and must seek out participants, which can often result in the latter situation. I would advise future Trainee EPs to select a research area that is likely to arise from an existing need, whether this be individual or whole-school work, or to advertise the research so those interested can apply to participate.

## **Study Quality**

Many traditional criteria for assessing study quality, such as those embedded in the Weight of Evidence Tool (EPPI-Centre, 2007), are not applicable to studies using qualitative methodologies. Yardley (2000) has proposed alternative criteria for assessing the quality of qualitative studies, as detailed below in Table 10. Examples of how these were addressed in my empirical research are provided.



*Table 10: Characteristics of Good Qualitative Research (adapted from Yardley, 2000)*

| <b>Characteristic</b>             | <b>Examples</b>                                                                                                            | <b>Evidence from this research</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sensitivity to Context</b>     | <i>Theoretical; relevant literature; empirical data; sociocultural setting; participants' perspectives; ethical issues</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Filmed scenarios took place in their natural context and involved activities chosen by Marie and Daniel, thereby enhancing ecological validity (Willig, 2008).</li> <li>- Participants perspectives were central to this research. Marie's views formed the basis of the whole research analysis</li> <li>- Ethical issues have been recognised and decisions justified</li> </ul> |
| <b>Commitment and Rigour</b>      | <i>In-depth engagement with topic; methodological skill; thorough data collection; depth of analysis</i>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As I began this research I was already working as a practitioner in Phase 2 VIG, so demonstrated commitment through competence and skills in the methods used</li> <li>- Original analysis was deepened further through exploring Marie's identity in relation to her work with Daniel</li> </ul>                                                                                  |
| <b>Transparency and Coherence</b> | <i>Clarity of description; transparent methods; fit between theory and method; reflexivity</i>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- See epistemological, methodological and personal reflexivity throughout this chapter</li> <li>- Clear fit between research question and philosophical perspective via phenomenological analysis of verbal data</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Impact and Importance</b>      | <i>Theoretical; socio-cultural; practical (for workers and policy makers)</i>                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- While Marie and Daniel's exact circumstances are unique, the experience of being a member of support staff and having a relationship with a pupil through one-to-one work is common, so findings may be transferable for many such professionals</li> <li>- The empirical research was presented for EPs in the region, to enhance its practical impact</li> </ul>                 |

## **Personal Reflexivity**

In adopting a qualitative sensibility I recognise the need to be reflexive in my work, through giving critical consideration to my role in the research process. Personal reflexivity refers to how the researcher's values, beliefs, experiences and interests have an influence on the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I kept a personal journal as a continuous reflective tool (Shepherd, 2006) throughout the research process in which I recorded challenges faced, key decision points, and personal reflections.

As a researcher I considered my possible insider and outsider positions. One insider role existed in my already established relationship with other staff members and pupils in the school through my work there as a TEP. This enabled the sampling process, and gave me prior knowledge of this particular school context, although there still existed the need to establish a research relationship with those involved in it. My outsider role as an external professional to the primary school could be

argued to have facilitated my objectivity (Le Gallais, 2008), in providing a more critical analysis of the phenomenon of pupil-adult relationship.

However, I recognise that any objectivity was limited by the influence of my identity and personal stance which would ultimately shape the research process and findings (Willig, 2008), in part through my relationship with the phenomenon I was exploring. As I entered into the research process and engaged in further interactions with the pair, this became increasingly apparent to me. I reflected on elements of my past which accorded with those of Marie, such as the work I had done as a TA implementing one-to-one interventions with pupils. Observing myself during the VIG video analysis enabled me to reflect further on my role in the research. My past roles influenced my engagement at times with Marie's 'teacher speak', as I caught myself being drawn into learning-focused dialogues. This research experience has enhanced my awareness of the potential for this in my EP practice also.

In the analysis I draw on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1994) to highlight the importance of relatedness for both Marie and Daniel, and as a researcher I cannot deny the importance of relatedness for myself. Conversations with stakeholders highlighted the potential value of this research to others, which promoted my sense of relatedness to the wider community as a researcher. My own experiences of interpersonal relationships also influenced my motivation to research a relationship and the intricacies of communication within it (see Self-Determination Theory p.46). Since carrying out this research into relationships I am even more mindful of the importance of relatedness and belonging for all pupils, and work to promote this in my role as a TEP. I am also more aware of the importance of my relationships with my schools, and how effective communication can enhance these to build more effective working practices.

**Chapter 3. What can a school support assistant tell us about her experience of working with a vulnerable child? A single case study using Video Interaction Guidance with a Year 6 pupil in the care of the Local Authority.**

## **Abstract**

Many studies in the Systematic Review did not recognise the role of relationship factors within academic interventions. For children looked after, a trusting relationship with an adult in school can support educational experiences. This empirical research used a single case study to focus on the relationship between a School Support Assistant and a Year Six looked after pupil. Semi-structured interviews and Video Interaction Guidance were used as tools to provide opportunities for the staff member to talk about, observe and reflect on her relationship with the child.

Both parties were interviewed separately, then the pair took part in two VIG cycles of filmed interaction and Shared Reviews, facilitated by myself as researcher and guider. The final joint-interview was filmed, so both the adult's dialogue and non-verbal interactions with the pupil could be analysed.

Theoretical Thematic Analysis of the transcribed dialogue, enhanced by video images, led to findings suggesting that the professional placed an importance on closeness with and understanding of the pupils in her care. Her sense of self and way of being with children were captured through both her dialogue about and filmed interactions with the child. Findings also suggest that some of the adult's own psychological needs were met through her work to support the psychological needs of the pupil.

Educational Psychologists are well placed to bring a holistic approach to the support of pupils looked after. This is aided by their understanding of children's broader psychological needs, which include a sense of relatedness and belonging in addition to competence and academic progress.

## **Introduction**

'Relational quality is the foundation, not only for resilience and well-being but also the effectiveness of the learning environment'

(Roffey, Tew, & Dunsmuir, 2010, p.6)

A school emotional climate that meets pupils' basic need to belong leads to better engagement in learning and less disruptive behaviour (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2011). For children looked after in particular, a trusting relationship with a secondary attachment figure in school can enhance educational experiences, through providing a sense of security and belonging (Bomber, 2007). It is through feeling safe and building trusting relationships that these vulnerable pupils are better able to learn and benefit from such interventions as evaluated in the Systematic Review. Literature concerning in-school relationships will be considered in the following sections, before looking at interactions through the lens of intersubjectivity and Video Interaction Guidance (VIG).

### **Ecological Systems Theory**

Modern educational interventions, including many evaluated in my Systematic Review, often arise from a within-child deficit model. This model largely ignores the importance of the school and wider context in which these pupils live and learn. According to ecological systems theory, factors including family and social networks, societal and cultural context, in addition to political agendas which shape school policies and practices have an influence on pupils' experiences (Halle, 2003).

Halle's claims are based on an ecological and dynamic systems model of child development. According to this there exists a dynamic interrelationship between the child and the above factors or levels. The child is influenced by their context, culture and history, and in return they have an active role in shaping the systems around them, through evoking responses from them and reacting to them in a continuous interplay (Darling, 2007). The interrelationship is stronger between the child and those levels that they have most frequent and intense contact with, i.e. family, peers and school staff. For the purpose of this research I will focus specifically on

relationships between pupils and teaching professionals, as these hold particular relevance to the Educational Psychology profession.

### **Staff-pupil Relationships**

Quality of school experience is primarily measured by academic outcomes, although psychological health and social-emotional adjustment also influence this (Murray-Harvey, 2010). It has been demonstrated that academic and social-emotional outcomes are unmistakably linked to the quality of teacher-student relationships (Greenhalgh, 1994).

Primary pupils involved in recent research believed positive teacher-pupil relationships were beneficial, and were enhanced by inclusive learning activities, adequate support for learning and opportunities for interactions outside the typical learning environment. They felt 'being told off' was detrimental to the relationship. These factors interacted to influence each pupil's sense of relatedness, engagement and motivation for learning (Short, unpub). Other pupils felt the qualities of good teachers included being respectful and friendly, showing affection and support, listening, being empathic, noticing when a pupil is absent and being interested in them (Noble & McGrath, 2008). Teachers also value having trusting relationships with pupils, as this helps pupils feel safe and be more open (D. Cross & Hong, 2012).

Fostering relationships through nurture groups enhances social and academic outcomes (MacKay, Reynolds, & Kearney, 2010). These nurturing relationships can be achieved through use of physical proximity, eye contact and touch (Seth-Smith, Levi, Pratt, Fonagy, & Jaffey, 2010). Investing resources in improving relationships in schools leads to engagement and achievement, fewer exclusions over the short term, and community safety and cohesion in the longer term (Black, Chamberlain, Murray, Sewel, & Skelton, 2012). Recent policy encourages education professionals to form supportive relationships where pupils are listened to and can feel secure in discussing sensitive issues (Scottish Government, 2013).

School environments that foster warm relationships and develop pupil and teacher autonomy have a positive impact on children's competence and well-being (Weare & Gray, 2003). Choice Theory proposes all humans have basic needs for belonging, power, freedom and fun (Glasser, 1998). Through working to meet these teachers

can create effective learning environments where pupils learn to motivate and monitor themselves (Erwin, 2004).

### ***Self-Determination Theory***

Another motivation theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000), focuses on goal-directed behaviour, highlighting differentials between the content of goals and the regulatory processes through which these goals are pursued. These differentials can be integrated through recognising our human innate psychological needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness, hence supporting a better understanding of human motivation. Social contexts that enable these needs to be met promote intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Contexts which do not promote this can be associated with poorer motivation, well-being and overall performance (op cit).

It is possible to distinguish between different types of motivation when considering the different goals that give rise to an action or behaviour. Behaviour can be considered to be either intrinsically motivated (autonomous) or extrinsically motivated (controlled) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation refers to behaviours or activities that are carried out for their inherent satisfactions e.g. for fun or challenge. Most goal-directed behaviours are extrinsically motivated, however, meaning they are aiming for some separable consequence e.g. a salary for doing a job. SDT proposes that external rewards do not produce sustained motivation and performance, a stance which contrasts with earlier behaviourist theories of motivation such as operant theory (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006).

SDT considers social and environmental factors that facilitate versus undermine intrinsic motivation. A sub-theory, Cognitive Evaluation Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), proposes that interpersonal events and experiences which lead to feelings of competence are conducive to enhanced intrinsic motivation, however they must also be accompanied by feelings of autonomy (a perception of internal locus of causality). Where motivation is extrinsic rather than intrinsic, behaviours tend to be initiated externally (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The level of engagement with these behaviours is influenced by the extent to which they are deemed to be of value to significant others with whom the individual is or wants to feel connected with. These others could be friends or peers, or a wider society or culture.

This need for a sense of affiliation with others is known in SDT as *relatedness*. Satisfaction of this leads to a sense of belongingness and connectedness to a person or group, which promotes extrinsic motivation to enact the desired behaviour e.g. seeking employment because this is approved of at a societal level. Humans are active in seeking a unified sense of self with a simultaneous drive for a sense of connectedness to the wider social system (Nicolaysen, 2013).

### **The Importance of Relationships for Children Looked After**

A few of the Systematic Review studies drew attention to the influence of social and relationship factors on the education of children looked after (Flynn et al., 2012; Osborne et al., 2010; Zetlin et al., 2004). Interventions involving close one-to-one working were commented upon as having had positive effects. Carers in one study felt quality time spent in activities had been as important as improvements in the child's reading ability (Osborne et al., 2010). In another, pupils recognised this, saying they had appreciated and valued the one-to-one time (Flynn et al., 2012). This is unsurprising, given the aforementioned basic psychological needs theories. In having their need for relatedness met both children and adults may have experienced enhanced enjoyment of and motivation for activities (Deci & Ryan, 1994). It has been suggested that some carers do not place a high value on educational activities for the children in their care (Osborne et al., 2010), although for these carers their involvement in these interventions may have enhanced this. Perhaps increased focus by carers on learning activities, and related valuing of such activities, served to enhance the children's externally controlled extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) for the intervention learning activities.

It is important to consider relatedness for pupils looked after, given many of these children's complex histories. Often they will have experienced negative or broken relationships, which may have reinforced perceptions that adults are unreliable and cannot be trusted. This can make these pupils more hesitant in forming relationships with school staff (Greig et al., 2008). For trust to develop attachment theory proposes that a fundamental commitment of adult to child is required, involving emotional closeness.



Although it has been claimed ‘all Looked After Children have attachment issues’ (Greig et al., 2010, p.9) I am not in accord with this assumption, as every child looked after has their unique history, personality and level of resilience. We all have attachment histories that shape us, and pupils should not be solely defined by their looked after circumstances. However, attachment theory can still be useful in considering how to support them better. The negative effects of harmful early relationships can be somewhat countered by the presence of a ‘good enough’ relationship in later childhood, which can allow for the development of new neural pathways related to social understanding and behaviour (Geddes, 2006). One suggestion is to provide pupils looked after with a keyworker in school, with whom they can form a trusting relationship (Bomber, 2007).

### **Video Interaction Guidance and Intersubjectivity**

VIG is a relationship-based intervention designed to promote attunement and wellbeing through the use of strength-based positive psychology (Kennedy, 2011). It works towards better communication between an adult and child through micro-analysis of filmed interactions using the VIG Principles of attuned interaction and guidance (VIG Principles, see Appendix 2) and subsequent reflection on these in a Shared Review with the adult.

Reflective dialogue in the Shared Review process has an indirect impact on the child via the adult’s changing perceptions and interactions with them (J. Cross & Kennedy, 2011). The experience can also enhance the adult’s self-efficacy, as according to Social Learning Theory (1969) the act of viewing oneself perform successfully strengthens one’s belief in the ability to complete specific skills competently.

VIG originated from work by Trevarthen (1979), who filmed mothers engaging in ‘informal conversations’ with their young babies and proposed that infants are born with an innate awareness specifically receptive to subjective states in others, known as primary intersubjectivity. The child later develops secondary intersubjectivity involving joint focus on something external (see Figure 2 below). He suggested that this natural sociability of infants, when engaged with by their parents, promoted intrinsic motivation for companionship, leading the infant towards development of confidence, confiding and acts of meaning (Trevarthen, 1982). This innate need for connectedness has strong links to the intrinsic motivation described in Self-Determination Theory (see p.46).



Video interventions are recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE, 2013). VIG was originally used with mothers and their babies although its use then extended to residential children's homes (Bergh, Klomp, & Harinck, 1997), parents with alcohol dependency (Croft, 2013), school settings (Gavine & Forsyth, 2011; McCartan & Todd, 2011), higher education (Cave, Roger, & Young, 2011), social work (Doria, Strathie, & Strathie, 2011), adoption support services (Feltham-King, 2010) and speech therapy (D. James, 2011). Research has demonstrated VIG's potential for enhancing confidence in Classroom Assistants (Forsythe, 2010) and for developing their positive behaviour management skills (Hayes, Richardson, Hindle, & Grayson, 2011).

### **Empathy**

VIG aims to promote attunement and empathy (Kennedy, 2011) and empathy is regarded in this research as being of relevance to the focus on relationships. The term 'empathy' was used by Rogers in his humanist approach to counselling, as he regarded it as being one of the core conditions of the therapeutic relationship (Rogers, Kirschenbaum, & Henderson, 1990). His work was influenced by that of Otto Rank, who proposed that the therapist should display empathy and acceptance as oppose to the more traditional psychoanalytic authoritarian interpretations (Palmer, Bresler, & Cooper, 2001).

Rogers described the condition of empathy as sensing the emotions of the other as if they were your own, without getting bound up in these (from a therapist's perspective). This differs somewhat to another definition of empathy as 'the ability to be aware of, understand and appreciate the feelings of others' (Carr, 2004, p.113). The nature of empathy in my research is more in line with the latter definition, whilst acknowledging that empathetic feelings differ subjectively between individuals. Empathy has also been described as the state of gaining an accurate understanding of a situation from the other person's perspective, although for me this definition lacks the emotional element necessary for empathy to occur. Empathy occurs within the state of intersubjectivity (Jensen & Moran, 2012), and is promoted in VIG through the adult actively wondering what the other is doing, thinking or feeling (Kennedy, 2011). Empathy, as described by Rogers, encompasses a person-centred approach, where individuals display emotional sensitivity to each other. It has been suggested that empathy skills develop socially supportive relationships (Carr, 2004).

## **Research Aims**

This research aimed to:

- Provide an in depth exploration of an in-school relationship, between a Year 6 pupil in the care of the Local Authority and a School Support Assistant who worked with him, by:
  - Investigating what the SSA had to say about her relationship with the pupil and observing directly her interactions with him
  - Utilising an already established intervention, Video Interaction Guidance, as a research method through which the relationship could be explored through discussion and reflection on video footage

in order to:

- Provide further insight into how education professionals working with pupils looked after can focus on their interactions and relationships with these pupils to enhance the pupils' educational experiences.

## **Methodology**

### **Methodological Stages**

A qualitative research methodology was chosen, as this paradigm is consistent with my own epistemology (see Bridging Document p.28). The empirical research involved a single case study carried out over a period from 2013 to 2014, as illustrated in Figure 3. The stages utilised are further detailed in Table 11, with justification provided for each action. Further ethical considerations are also provided in the Bridging Document (p.33).

### **Social Context**

The school context in this case was crucial in influencing and being influenced by the adult and child in question, in terms of the ecological model previously outlined. This model also considers the influence of the wider social context in which the research takes place. The junior school was in an area of socio-economic deprivation, in an ex-colliery village situated on the North East coast of England. Unemployment was high and the population had poorer than average health and housing. The school was a below average sized junior school, with a well above average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, which is indicative of high levels of deprivation.

Figure 3: Empirical Research Process

Key  = Research Planning  
 = Data Collection  
 = Analysis and Write up

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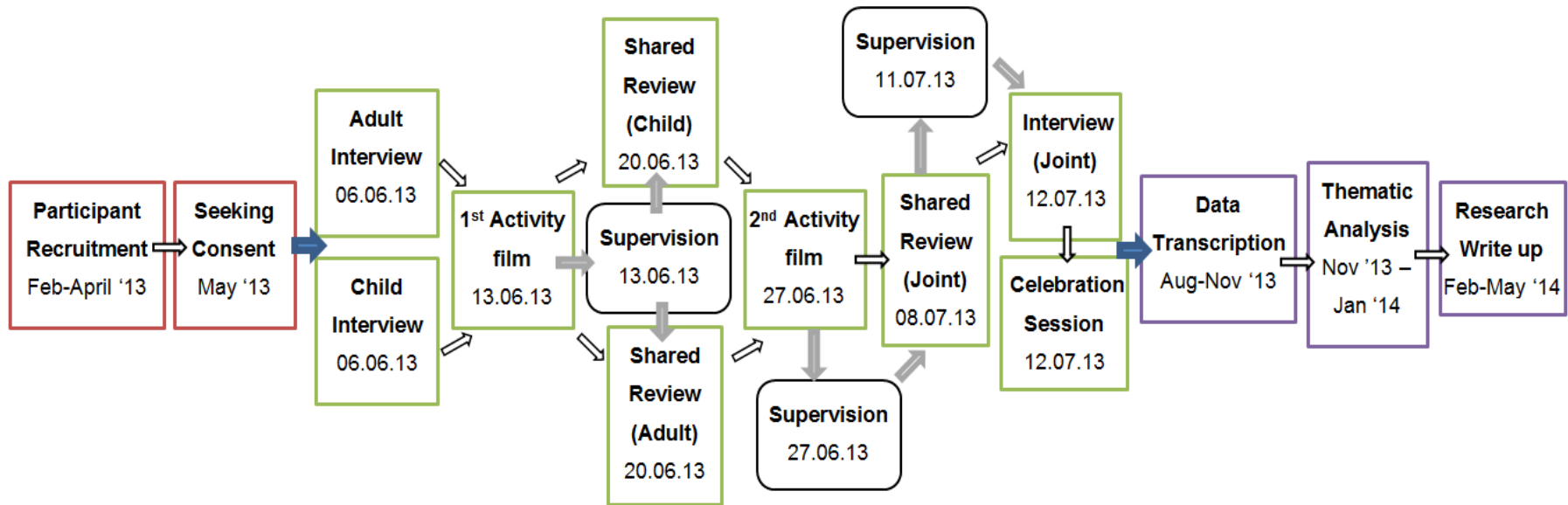


Table 11: Methodological Stages

| Stage           | Step                    | Decision/Process                                                                                                            | Justification                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Planning        | Design                  | Single case study design                                                                                                    | This is would enable me to focus on unique perspectives of a 'contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context' (Yin, 2003).                                                                                                                                       |
|                 | Participant Recruitment | Schools with which I was working as a TEP E-mailed to ascertain numbers of children looked after                            | I already had built relationships with education staff in these schools over the course of the academic year.                                                                                                                                                           |
|                 |                         | Pupils looked after were already engaging in one-to-one work with a key adult                                               | To look at a relationship between an adult and a pupil that already existed in the natural context.                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                 |                         | Primary aged pupils                                                                                                         | One-to-one work is more common in Primary settings.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                 |                         | Child at the upper end of Primary                                                                                           | In order for the child to have a maturity level to be involved directly in the intervention, including the Shared Review process.                                                                                                                                       |
|                 |                         | Two possible pupils highlighted Year 6 male pupil and a School Support Assistant (SSA) who helped support him were selected | One of the possible adults was hesitant due to the time necessary for the intervention.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                 | Consent                 | Consent sought from SSA, pupil's social work and pupil's biological mother                                                  | Even though he was in care, the pupil's biological mother retained parental responsibility.                                                                                                                                                                             |
|                 |                         | Pupil also consulted as to whether or not he wished to take part in the research                                            | While some might suggest that a child is not able to give 'consent' in the traditional sense (BPS, 2010) on principle I made efforts to ensure that the pupil had been given appropriate information and felt assured that he was happy to take part before proceeding. |
|                 |                         | Permission sought from Head Teacher                                                                                         | As a courtesy as the research would be carried out in her school and was using some staff time.                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                 | Data Collection         | Initial Interviews                                                                                                          | Separate semi-structured interviews with pupil and adult (see Appendix 8)                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| VIG cycles      |                         | Two VIG cycles (see Figure 1 p.31)                                                                                          | Generally the minimum needed to enhance reflections and promote changes in thinking.                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                 |                         | Interactive learning activities the pair would normally engage in together selected for filming                             | To ensure that the research was as naturalistic as possible.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Final interview |                         | Filmed joint semi-structured interview (see Appendix 9)                                                                     | Filmed so that data from non-verbal interactions could be used to enhance analysis of dialogue<br>Jointly so that pupil felt more comfortable and adult could scaffold questions for him.                                                                               |

|                                                                                                                                                                         |                           |                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Thematic Analysis (using guidance from Braun &amp; Clarke, 2013)</p> <p><i>NB. Further justification for choice of method provided in Bridging Document p.32</i></p> | Transcription             | Audio interviews transcribed professionally. Transcripts then checked against audio recording. Video interview transcribed by researcher | Interviews selected as core datasets as these included main dialogue about relationships, and enactment of the relationship during final interview. Video analysed personally to include the above and to familiarise self with the dataset. |
|                                                                                                                                                                         |                           | Only verbal data from Marie used for analysis, although some non-verbal communication from both recorded                                 | Not enough verbal pupil data was generated due to Daniel's reticence. Some non-verbal communication was recorded in parentheses to illustrate interactions between the pair.                                                                 |
|                                                                                                                                                                         | Familiarisation with data | Data read through to notice things of relevance to research question                                                                     | To get early impressions from data, including conceptual ideas and more concrete issues.                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                         | Coding                    | More focused re-reading and capturing of words and phrases into codes                                                                    | To find elements of data that could be relevant to answering my research question.                                                                                                                                                           |
|                                                                                                                                                                         |                           | List of codes checked for overlapping/redundant codes                                                                                    | To ensure that each code was relevant and stand-alone.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                         |                           | Data collated by codes                                                                                                                   | This was done electronically, to support the next stage of analysis.                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                                         | Theming                   | Theming of codes using VIG Principles, including what Marie said about Daniel and her direct interactions with him                       | This theory-led analysis was selected as VIG Principles are designed to provide an in-depth framework to analyse communication and relationships.                                                                                            |
|                                                                                                                                                                         |                           | Codes not fitting VIG Principles considered in terms of needs psychology theories                                                        | This was seen as being wider than the main research question about relationships, yet still relevant given the literature, as psychological needs underpin needs for relationships with others.                                              |
|                                                                                                                                                                         | Writing                   | Themes further analysed through process of written analysis (see Findings section below)                                                 | This allowed me to further interpret my data in order to connect it both to my research question and to the wider literature.                                                                                                                |

Marie<sup>10</sup> was from the local area and was married with children. She had worked in catering previously, then decided to find a job that fitted better with her family. Daniel<sup>11</sup> was of mixed-race heritage and had been taken into care with his twin brother, as a result of neglect, approximately ten months before taking part in the research. He had a Statement of Special Educational Needs for a specific difficulty with literacy, and was reported to have flourished since his time in care.

## Findings

### VIG Theory

Theory driven thematic analysis was based on the VIG Principles (see Appendix 2). The below analysis refers to Marie's dialogue about her relationship with Daniel, and her direct interactions with him<sup>12</sup>.

#### ***Being Attentive***

Marie recognised being attentive as a core part of her role, e.g. in the classroom where she was better able to observe children than the teacher. In interview she was observed to give Daniel time and space through lessening pressure on him to answer questions by saying: *"Maybe that's something to think about...you might not know the answer straight away."*

Marie also demonstrated empathy when she had been thinking about Daniel's possible feelings, observing: *"Sometimes I think in the class you feel a little bit lost...like a little bit left out?"*. This showed she was mindful of him in the classroom context, when they were not working together directly. During the joint interview Marie was also aware of how Daniel might be experiencing the situation, saying *"...he's getting a bit bored now (to Daniel)...do you want a biscuit? Are you hungry?"* In his absence she also spoke of the 'barrier' that he could put up: *"The blinking comes...you can see he's getting upset."* While these comments reflect Marie's interpretations of Daniel's feelings rather than an accurate representation of his direct experiences, for me they demonstrated a level of empathy and attunement with his individual needs.

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<sup>10</sup> School Support Assistant

<sup>11</sup> Pupil looked after

<sup>12</sup> Parentheses within dialogue highlight selected non-verbal interactions during interview



There was a clear enjoyment for Marie in watching Daniel, illustrated by her comments to him: *“I watch that with pride looking at you (looks to child)...because you’ve come such a long way this last year.”*...and in her comments to me about Daniel:

*“I was pleased with how happy he looked and how engaged he was with his work...how he seemed to enjoy it. I think that’s what shone out for me...that he was interested and he was enjoying it.”*

I also sensed Marie’s personal gratification in relation to her direct contribution to Daniel’s progress and positive affect (see Table 12 p.62).

### ***Encouraging Initiatives***

Marie valued being approachable in her role with children, telling me: *“I think the relationship’s slightly different, they look to me as the one they can come to talk to about things rather than the teacher.”* Her emotional warmth showed this approachability, e.g. in one session when I observed:

*“A bit of white fluff in your hair chick”* - (gently removes this from Daniel’s hair)

The term *“chick”* reflects the level of endearment Marie felt for Daniel, and links into descriptions of herself as *“mother hen”* in her in-school relationships. This is indicative of a nurturing self-concept, in terms of both personal and professional identity (see p.60). Marie used other affectionate terms including ‘sweetheart’ and ‘mate’, which could be seen to support communication through helping both parties feel accepted by one another through a sense of connection (Tew, 2010).

Marie saw a key feature of her role as boosting Daniel’s confidence. He often found it difficult to initiate, so she used encouragement and naming positively to support him:

*“Do things for yourself can’t you?”*

*“You should give yourself a pat on the back, because you’re great”*

*“You have done brilliant”*

These comments could be seen to support Daniel’s self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1994) through recognising his competence, promoting his autonomy and meeting his

need for relatedness through her acceptance of him. This valuing by Marie of Daniel's performance during learning activities could foster his extrinsic motivation to continue these behaviours (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Naming positively can also include reflecting back on previous initiatives in order to encourage new ones. Marie highlighted Daniel's aptitude for technology, saying about the video controls "*He taught me that*". Resulting changes in Daniel's beliefs about himself could increase the likelihood of him making further initiatives in future, due to his enhanced self-efficacy (Bandura, as cited in J. Cross & Kennedy, 2011). It appeared that the technological elements of the VIG intervention were intrinsically motivating for Daniel (Ryan & Deci, 2000), perhaps because he found it satisfying to stop and start the videos (at one point trying to freeze the frame when someone walked into the room accidentally).

### ***Receiving Initiatives***

Marie spoke nostalgically about early in the relationship when she and Daniel had often shared an illustrated history book: "*He would get this book out and he couldn't read it but he would say, 'Miss will you read with me?'...and we would read it together*". This could indicate Daniel felt Marie was approachable, which fits with her self-descriptions that I coded her 'way of being' with children, such as having "*a big nurturing side*". Marie appeared pleased that he had made these initiatives, and felt her reception of them had sparked off the beginnings of their relationship.

Much of Marie's dialogue referred to understanding Daniel's needs (for a critique of this see Bridging Document p.34), which was reflected in her behaviour with him. She was skilled in interacting with him on his level, and Daniel responded well to this. Daniel had found it amusing to do an 'L' gesture (representing 'loser') to the camera, which was later received by Marie when she commented:

*"...when you were doing your bits of..."* - (Marie demonstrates 'L' gesture)  
(Daniel grins) (adults laugh) (Daniel copies 'L' gesture)

Daniel was fairly reticent, and this mirroring of his playful non-verbal communication was a clear way of both involving and accepting him on his level. It demonstrated their already established relationship and security with each other in the school context.

### ***Developing Attuned Interactions***

Mead (1967) suggests that in an interaction both members hold mutual responsibility for communication. The 'self' makes a gesture, which is completed by the 'other' who gives meaning to it. The VIG stage of attuned interaction is consistent with Mead's position, in which the pair reach an intersubjective state where they both enjoy and contribute to the interaction equally. Experiencing this communicative dance of turn taking in receiving and responding (Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001) can serve to promote the child's intrinsic motivation for companionship and relatedness to others. According to SDT, a secure relational base provides the necessary conditions for intrinsic motivation to develop across the life span (Ryan & La Guardia, 2000 as cited in Ryan & Deci, 2000).

When asked if they had noticed singing coming from the hall during the session, Marie replied: "*No, he carried on reading coz...we were so...engaged*" (to Daniel) "*Weren't we? We were so enjoying what we were doing*". Use of the word 'we' suggests Marie felt it was a mutual experience, although notably this was her interpretation not his. Mutual enjoyment of interaction is key to this stage, which leads to each individual seeking out further interactions in the future, either with each other or within other relationships.

Marie added "*I think once we got into the flow and Daniel was reading...and I was concentrating to him and he was concentrating...*" (to Daniel) "*We didn't really notice did we?*" Marie's use of the word "flow" is interesting here. Csikszentmihaly (2002) uses 'flow' to refer to the state of being completely absorbed in an activity that is intrinsically motivating. Perhaps this is the sense that Marie had during moments of attunement with Daniel.

Marie highlighted a favourite moment from the session when they shared a Biology book:

*"...the bit about the body...when he was telling me...what he knew. ...the whole interaction...and how interested he was when we looked at the baby. That was interesting for me."*

Here both were benefitting from the interaction, through contributing to it equally and learning from one another.

### **Guiding**

Marie saw part of her role as mediating Daniel's learning, telling me: *"He just needs that initial start and then he flows"*. She recognised the importance of judging the amount of support required:

*"When working with a child...I try and think about how he's gonna understand the vocabulary rather than sometimes what we come out with automatically"*.

Marie also provided scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) through adapting my questions to Daniel e.g. "What did you like about the technology?" was changed to: *"What did you like most about...the videoing? Have you enjoyed being able to use the laptop and help Katrina with it, and working the recorder?"*

Marie also saw her role as modelling relationship skills to Daniel, telling me: *"We're the children's role models...they don't always view that at home...how a good relationship is."* This could be seen as further evidence of Marie's all-encompassing role as the 'mother hen', overseeing Daniel's needs and development on a wider level as is seen in skilled parents.

Marie demonstrated this when she scaffolded Daniel's silent response to my thanks, saying: *"He says you're welcome. Do you want to shake Katrina's hand or are you gonna give her a high five"*. Marie was aware that a non-verbal reception was easier for Daniel than a verbal response, and through this she modelled social skills that he may need in future relationships. Relational quality promotes effective learning for pupils (Roffey et al., 2010), which perhaps developed for Marie and Daniel during frequent contact with each other in a one-to-one context.

### **Deepening Discussion**

Interviews and shared reviews afforded reflective opportunities for deepening discussions about Marie and Daniel's relationship. Marie's reference to trust was notable: *"You get a lot more from somebody if you've got a good relationship and you trust them... for the children it's that safety net, feeling it's a safe environment."* 'Trust' and 'being listened to' have been listed by pupils as valued characteristics of teacher-pupil relationships (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010). Teachers have also reported that trusting relationships help pupils open up (D. Cross & Hong, 2012).

Attuned adults such as Marie are perhaps able to help children to build trust, through being alert to the child's signs of anxiety or curiosity (Greig et al., 2008).

Marie presented as having a humanistic unconditional positive regard for Daniel (Rogers, 1967), with an acceptance of him not based on conditions of his behaviour or achievement. This term refers to caring for the other as a separate person, with a right to their own feelings and experiences (Rogers et al., 1990). Marie noted positive changes: *"He still puts that barrier up...but not as much as in the beginning"*, yet also recognised change takes time: *"It's a little at a time with him...Rome wasn't built in a day"*. She also suggested their relationship could have future benefits: *"If you have a strong relationship with someone in primary... it gives them confidence to trust somebody when they get up there."* Others also believe previous experiences of relationships have an impact on future ones (Mathieson & Banerjee, 2010; Murray-Harvey, 2010).

### **Professional Identity**

Just as my beliefs about myself and the world influenced my research interactions, so too did Marie's beliefs and identity influence her interactions with Daniel (Day, 2007). Staff-pupil interactions can be multi-layered, with adults taking on roles of friend, caregiver or role model (D. Cross & Hong, 2012). Through the research I gained a sense of Marie's professional identity, and was curious about its influence on her interactions with Daniel, so synthesised these using the VIG Principles (see Table 12).

Marie highlighted her motivations for her job: *"I would describe it as coming to work and being able to work with children in the school and being part of yet another family made me complete again..."*. Perhaps *"complete"* illustrates that Marie's job was fulfilling, and *"family"* suggests she felt close relationships with those around her and saw herself in a nurturing mother-like role. The opportunity to work closely with children is a common motivation for many entering into educational roles (Klassen, Perry, & Frenzel, 2012).

One analytical code from Marie's interview was 'For some children life is hard', which represented a belief about Daniel. Educationalists working with disadvantaged pupils often feel the need to be compassionate towards them (Ben-Peretz, Mendelson, & Kron, 2003). However despite negative experiences children

demonstrate varying degrees of resilience, so some may be more vulnerable than others (Moss & Petrie, 2002).

Once Marie commented on: *“The whole looking up to you and wanting answers...”* indicating this particular interaction with Daniel had affected her personally. Perhaps it was through observing herself as the knowledgeable adult with the child looking up to her physically and emotionally, as a chick might look up to its mother, that confirmed her identity as mother hen. This was also apparent in her dialogue about her relationships with staff, e.g. saying she was *“mother hen...even in the staff room”*, and her reported *“need to get on with everybody”*. Self-determination theory labels this ‘relatedness’ i.e. a need to feel connected to others, be a group member and develop close and intimate relationships (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Marie felt VIG had helped her reflect on her practice, in particular her direct impact on children: *“You work with lots of children but I didn’t realise the impact one session... can have for them. I’ll take that away.”* This demonstrates feelings of competence (op cit), and illustrates small changes in Marie’s professional identity, aided by VIG.

Marie said of the overall experience:

*“I’ve got a lot more out of it than I thought...sometimes you don’t appreciate...how much of an impact you’re having on a child. To be honest it’s a bit of a wake-up call and I think it’s built my self-esteem up...”*

Seeing oneself perform successfully enhances self-efficacy (Bandura, 1969), aided in this process by the power of the visual image. This sense of enhanced confidence was reported by Marie one year post-research. It is likely that observing her work with Daniel, enhanced through VIG positive psychology, elicited positive emotions. Positive emotions for teachers often arise from interactions with students (D. Cross & Hong, 2012). Optimism and positive mood enhance motivation and teacher self-efficacy (Critchley & Gibbs, 2012).

*Table 12: Professional identity and adult-pupil interactions*

| <b>Marie's Identity</b>                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Marie's perceptions of Daniel</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Marie's Actions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>VIG Principle</b>            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Role as observer in class<br>Having an awareness of the pupils around her<br>Feeling personal gratification about her contribution to Daniel's progress                                                         | Adult attention makes him feel special<br>Noticing that he 'puts barriers up'<br>Awareness of his emotional development                                                                                                                                          | Giving Daniel space and time e.g. for his answers during interview<br>Being empathic by wondering what he is thinking or feeling in class or individual sessions<br>Enjoying watching him                                                                                           | Being Attentive                 |
| 'Mother hen'<br>Supportive and nurturing<br>Being approachable for children<br>Closer to the pupils than the teacher<br>Not perfect herself<br>Role in building pupils' confidence                              | Life has been hard for him in the past<br>He's lacking in confidence<br>He needs to feel safe<br>Pupils confide in her                                                                                                                                           | Showing emotional warmth<br>Using affectionate terms e.g. 'sweetheart'<br>Helping him feel safe and secure<br>Naming positively what he does or says<br>Encouraging him                                                                                                             | Encouraging Initiatives         |
| A way of being with children<br>Empathic<br>Having a 'big nurturing side'<br>Understands his need to be received                                                                                                | He can't praise himself<br>He can find it difficult to answer questions                                                                                                                                                                                          | Recognising his strengths<br>Sharing a book that he has chosen<br>Interacting with him on his level<br>Mirroring his non-verbal communication<br>Copying his spoken phrases<br>Reading his body language as initiatives                                                             | Receiving Initiatives           |
| Enjoys being around/working with children<br>School as a 'second family'<br>Role in teaching children<br>Learning from the pupils too<br>Personal need for relationships in school                              | One-to-one work is fulfilling for him<br>One-to-one helps his emotional development<br>One-to-one work enhances his learning                                                                                                                                     | Enjoying the interaction<br>Being engaged in the work together<br>Observing him in 'flow' in the videos<br>Enjoying his level of interest in the activity<br>Having fun with him                                                                                                    | Developing Attuned Interactions |
| Identity as a parent<br>Holistic view of the child<br>Role in mediating pupil learning<br>Role in supporting social skills<br>Role as mediator between pupils<br>Wants 'the best' for children<br>Wants to help | Has come a long way but still some way to go<br>'It's a little bit at a time with him'                                                                                                                                                                           | Judging the amount of support he needs<br>Adapting her language when speaking to him<br>Adapting my questions to him during interview<br>Modelling social skills e.g. in his interactions with me as the researcher                                                                 | Guiding                         |
| Knowing what makes children tick<br>Wants to create a safe environment for pupils<br>Feels trust is important<br>Sense of feeling more confident after VIG<br>More aware of her impact on pupils                | 'You get a lot more from somebody if you've got a good relationship and you trust them'<br><br>'If you have a good strong relationship with someone in primary I think it gives them the confidence to trust somebody when they get up there' (secondary school) | Getting to know Daniel (and other pupils)<br>Recognising individuality and trying different things<br>Building relationships with pupils<br>Reflecting on each pupil's progress<br>Helping prepare Daniel for his future school<br>Reflecting on her role and what she has observed | Deepening Discussion            |

*NB. Please note this table does not present a linear framework, but an interactional one i.e. Marie and Daniels' actions influence each other.*

An education professional's sense of identity develops over time, arising from interactions between their subjective experiences and the social context in which they practice. Positive teacher identity is bolstered by positive relationships with pupils and co-operation between colleagues (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006).

## **Discussion**

Through this research I hoped to inform support for pupils looked after, with a focus on their in-school relationships. VIG is an intervention often used to support improvements in a relationship, although here it was utilised as a research tool, as a lens through which focus could be placed on a relationship between a child looked after and a School Support Assistant. When used alongside semi-structured interviews, the aim was to investigate what Marie said about her relationship with Daniel, and to observe her direct interactions with him.

Marie valued her one-to-one support of pupils, as it helped her understand their individual needs and find out '*what makes them tick*'. Daniel appeared to respond well to Marie's nurturing interactions in these sessions, as such attuned interactions help build relationships (J. Cross & Kennedy, 2011). Education professionals who value their relationships with pupils are more likely to demonstrate attuned interactions with them. Webster and Blatchford (2013) suggest one-to-one support of pupils is non-inclusive, and that SSAs are not best suited to meeting the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs. While one-to-one work is not appropriate for all pupils, it was clear this arrangement had helped Daniel to build a trusting relationship with Marie. For children looked after who may find it more difficult to trust adults in school (Peake, 2006) such work could help them form relationships, particularly following a change of school placement.

Reflections during interview and Shared Reviews also stimulated dialogues about Marie's views of herself as an education professional, which led to findings about her professional identity, such as self as 'mother hen'. This sense of professional identity was clearly manifested in her later interactions with Daniel during filmed sessions.



Self-determination is often associated with successful work performance (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004). Klassen et al. (2012) emphasised that for teachers, fulfilment of the need for relatedness with students has a positive impact. Marie's self-efficacy and relatedness were enhanced through the VIG process, and arguably also her autonomy via her individual support of pupils. Here I tentatively suggest that Marie's basic needs were no different from Daniel's, and both were met in the process of working with each other through their interactions in the school context.

The research aimed to provide some further insight into ways in which professionals working with pupils looked after could develop their interactions with them to improve their educational experiences. Findings indicate that closeness and trust are important for pupils looked after, but also that closeness with pupils is important to education professionals. Glasser's work showed that a sense of 'belonging' is critical to this (Erwin, 2004). Self-Determination Theory proposes that pupils must feel a sense of relatedness to staff and each other (Deci & Ryan, 1994) and that those who experience their teachers as warm and caring demonstrate greater intrinsic motivation in school (Ryan, Stiller, & Lynch, 1994).

### **Limitations of this Research**

One limitation was that the final interview was conducted jointly to allow for Daniel's reticence. Educators have inequitable power relations with their students (Naughton, 2005) and this potentially shifted power differentials further, as there were now two adults present. I reasoned that his relationship with Marie could act as a buffer to this, although Daniel still found it challenging. Older pupils looked after may cope better with an interview situation (Driscoll, 2011). Also Marie may have given richer responses had Daniel not been present.

The research was also limited through involving Marie in asking Daniel questions during interview. Firstly, not all Marie's adapted versions of my questions were suitable e.g. when she brought in a learning focus, asking him: *"Did you like looking at yourself to see how much you actually knew? How clever you were?"* (see Bridging Document p.41) which was not the research focus. Ultimately Daniel's verbal data were not analysed, so effects of this limitation were reduced.

A further limitation was the means by which Daniel gave his views. I could have considered alternative means for this, e.g. answers given on a laptop or through

drawing. Alternatively I could have designed interview questions jointly with his teacher, as involving education professionals in research design ensures more effective links to the school context in which the research takes place (Kobrin, 2014; Yardley, 2000).

### **Implications for Educational Psychologists**

EPs can promote school relational practices by encouraging staff to be reliable, available and approachable to pupils. Particularly for pupils looked after, keyworkers can provide consistency and opportunities for developing trusting relationships (Bomber, 2007). This research has demonstrated VIGs potential as a reflective practice tool for staff working with this group of pupils. Positive staff-pupil relationships not only foster a sense of wellbeing and belonging, but enhance motivation to achieve and behave according to the school's pro-social culture (Seth-Smith et al., 2010). Noble and McGrath (2008) suggest educationalists should aim to:

- Be respectful and friendly with pupils
- Show pupils affection and support
- Listen to pupils
- Be empathic
- Notice when a pupil is absent
- Be interested in their pupils

Other suggestions to improve relationality include teachers making efforts to get to know pupils, a balance between teacher 'assertion' and 'co-operation', and teachers being available before class to facilitate one-to-one access for pupils (Noble & McGrath, 2008).

EPs can support such relational changes by delivering training and coaching to school staff. In Marie's school I have made arrangements to deliver training on 'Applying Positive Psychology in the Classroom', aimed at relationship building and use of positive behaviour management techniques. Staff there are keen to use video in classrooms to promote deeper reflective practice. Findings from this research were also presented to a number of EPs from the region in April 2014 to disseminate this knowledge further.

## **Suggestions for Further Research**

This empirical research highlighted the potential for VIG as a research method, so researchers interested in exploring relationships are advised to consider it as a tool for this. Pupils views, while not captured here, remain important. Future researchers could explore perceptions of older pupils looked after on their relationships with teachers, especially since such relationships are reportedly more stressful in secondary than in primary settings (Murray-Harvey, 2010).

Other alternatives to this research include focusing on a new relationship for a child looked after who has just changed educational placement, or testing VIG's application for pupils at risk of exclusion following relational deteriorations, as it is often used in situations where relationships have broken down (McCartan & Todd, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

This research sought to examine the intricacies of a relationship between a child looked after, Daniel, and an education professional who supported him in school, Marie. Video Interaction Guidance provided a means through which Marie was enabled to observe her relational interactions with Daniel and form deeper reflections on them.

It was evident from Marie's dialogue that she valued her relationship with Daniel, and had a clear sense of professional identity as the 'mother hen'. This identity manifested itself in her support of him both academically and emotionally, and new narratives relating to her self-esteem emerged through deeper reflection during shared reviews. It was perhaps through working to promote Daniel's self-determination that Marie was able to strengthen her own self-determination in the process.

Positive relationships with school staff are important for all pupils (Marzano & Marzano, 2003), and especially so for pupils looked after who may have experienced less positive relationships outside their school lives. Improvements here can be achieved through providing well-designed opportunities for staff members to build trust with and get to know these pupils, and through promoting a relational ethos within the school community as whole. While it would not be possible to implement

VIG as an intervention in all cases, staff supporting with pupils looked after are advised to consider the VIG Principles as a framework for their interactions with them.

There is a strong evidence base for the effectiveness of relationality in schools, and Educational Psychologists have the skills and knowledge to help other education professionals strive towards this aim. Through better staff-pupil relationships it is hoped that children and schools will benefit across many levels, including pupil's intrinsic motivation to achieve and enhanced wellbeing as schools shift towards being communities of belonging for all.

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## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1: Full Weight of Evidence Tables** EPPI-Centre (2007)

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| <b>WOE Criteria</b>                             | <b>Flynn et al. 2012</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Zetlin et al. 2004</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Trout et al. 2012</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>N.1 Ethical concerns</b>                     | <p>Positives: - control group given intervention at later date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approval from ethics board granted (University)</li> <li>- Random allocation of pupils to groups</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - Only those fluent in English, excludes EAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'weak' or 'behaviourally disturbed' pupil not included</li> <li>- Access to IT/internet may exclude SES</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, some ethical concerns</b></p> | <p>Positives: - Random allocation of children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Funded by independent family foundation</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - Control grp not given intervention later</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No ethical considerations mentioned</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, some ethical concerns</b></p>                                                                                                                   | <p>Positives: - random allocation of youths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government funded (US DoEd)</li> <li>- Consent gained from both youths and parents</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: – control group not given intervention later</p> <p><b>Yes, some ethical concerns</b></p>                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>N.2 Students and/or parental involvement</b> | <p>Positives: - foster parents involved in delivery of study</p> <p>Negatives: - no involvement from these groups in design of questionnaire</p> <p><b>Yes a little</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <p>Negatives: - No mention of this</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foster children not with parents so input from these unlikely, especially if not mentioned</li> </ul> <p><b>No, students/parents not involved</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>Positives: - Parents involved in conduct, and some design e.g. family emergency plans when necessary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youths and parents involved in design of homework intervention</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, a lot</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>N.3 Justification for study</b>              | <p>Positives: - good justification for choice of area and target population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aims explicitly stated</li> <li>- What works type of study suitable to answer question</li> <li>- Rationale clear</li> <li>- Reference to lack of previous intervention research (aiming to fill gap in research)</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, sufficient justification given</b></p>                                                                                     | <p>Positives: - Aims explicitly stated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What works – effectiveness of intervention</li> <li>- Reasons given for importance of area</li> <li>- Justification for choice of sample (foster children) explicitly stated</li> <li>- Reference to state legislation and policy</li> <li>- Justifies choice of ES liaison (knowledge of school &amp; community) &amp; research to support integrated working</li> </ul> | <p>Positives: - What works i.e. effectiveness of combination of interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good justification for choice of sample &amp; context, and justification continues throughout description of design</li> <li>- Conceptual framework clear</li> <li>- Empirical research basis explicitly stated</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - Aims stated implicitly e.g. 'support / assist youths during</p> |



|                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Yes, sufficient justification given</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | transition' but desired outcomes not explicit<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Theory alluded to but implicit (ecological)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>N.4 Research design</b>                                 | Positives: - Randomized effectiveness trial suitable for answering question<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pre/post test conditions</li> </ul> Negatives: - groups not equal in size<br><p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, appropriate choice</b></p>                                                                          | Positives: - Classic before and after RCT<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Groups of equal size</li> <li>- Between group used for most variables</li> </ul> Negative: within group rather than between group used for Maths & English (although reason for this justified - discrepancy in pre-test scores)<br><p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, appropriate choice</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Positives: - Random assignment to treatment or control groups<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Between group variables used</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, appropriate choice</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>N.5 Repeatability or reliability of data collection</b> | Positives: - Readily available standardised tools used (WRAT)<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teaching method (direct instruction) empirically supported</li> </ul> Negatives: - Direct instruction was individualised, therefore less replicable<br><p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, some attempt</b></p>                    | Positives: - Measures widely used within state, therefore accessible<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of pre-existing data (school performance data)</li> <li>- Provides reference for description of difficulties accessing school records of foster youth</li> </ul> Negatives:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Math &amp; reading achievement test scores used but does not state if these tests were same in each setting</li> <li>- Researchers did not collect data themselves (secondary analysis)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, some attempt to establish these</b></p> | Positives: - Two of three interventions operationalized and manualised to allow for replication and accurate measurement<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review reference provided for intervention</li> <li>- Youths involved in development of homework intervention</li> </ul> Negatives: - Individualised homework interventions perhaps less replicable<br><p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, some attempt to establish these</b></p> |
| <b>N.6 Validity or trustworthiness of data collection</b>  | Positives: - Teaching method (direct instruction) empirically supported<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Researchers evaluated an existing tutoring programme</li> <li>- Training delivered by author of direct instruction programme</li> </ul> Negatives:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No retesting done</li> </ul> | Negatives: - Assumption made that data collected was trustworthy<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No retesting done</li> <li>- No reference to who collected the data and their qualifications for doing so</li> <li>- Daily attendance used as a measure, but reasons for non-attendance not explored</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Positives: - Empirical support for named interventions<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two of three interventions operationalized and manualised to allow for replication and accurate measurement</li> <li>- Review reference provided for one intervention</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                        |

|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                          | <b>Yes, good attempt</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attendance measure confusing – called attendance but reported by number of absences (negative measure?)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>No attempts made to establish these</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family Consultants qualified to degree level in appropriate subject area</li> <li>- Supervision provided for Family Consultants</li> <li>- Data collected by trained graduate students</li> <li>- Quarterly data evaluation forms developed</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - No retesting done</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, good attempts made</b></p>                                                                        |
| <b>N.7 Repeatability or reliability of data analysis</b> | <p>Positives: - Empirical support given for choice of analyses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Detail given of how analyses were applied</li> <li>- Effect sizes given</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes</b></p>                                                                                              | <p>Positives: - Describes different analyses used for different variables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Justifies use of nested ANOVA (but doesn't state what would have been used otherwise)</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - Doesn't state how many researchers did the analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No evidence of looking for negative cases</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes</b></p> | <p>Positives: - More than one researcher used to analyse data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- % of students attending school placements easily replicable</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - Online database used but no details of this given, therefore not as replicable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- statistical measures given in formulae but analyses not described</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>No, insufficient attempts</b></p> |
| <b>N.8 Validity or trustworthiness of data analysis</b>  | <p>Positives: - Measures taken to minimize potential statistical dependencies (number of children tutored by each foster parent)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a priori power analysis conducted to determine necessary sample size for multiple regression</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, good</b></p> | <p>Positives: - Recognises that specific effects cannot be tied to a particular strategy or set of actions, due to lack of a component analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sample size appropriate for chosen analyses</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - No evidence of checking results with participants</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, some attempt</b></p>                                                       | <p>Negatives: - No evidence of checking results with participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No discussion of statistical assumptions necessary for analysis</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>No description of this</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>N.9 Error or bias</b>                                 | <p>Negatives: - 28.6% attrition in experimental group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2.9% attrition in control group</li> <li>- Only parents seen as likely to agree were included</li> </ul>                                                                                                                               | <p>Positives: - Process by which participants were allocated was not predictable in advance, as it was done in retrospect</p> <p>Negatives: - Samples not from equivalent populations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some data from original groups was inaccessible, resulting in</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                 | <p>Positives: - Youths allocated to groups randomly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No attrition of participants</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - Youths and families approached to determine interest in participation, therefore excludes those</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

|                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Placements were assessed by child welfare workers for stability (possibly subjective)</li> <li>- Weaker students and those deemed behaviourally disturbed not included</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Not at all</b></p>                                                | <p>difference in group size between control and intervention groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Treatment cases had all been referred for serious education problems, control group were general population of fostered children and therefore may have had less (or more) difficulties in 4 areas measured</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Able to rule these out a little</b></p>  | <p>who were not interested. Interest may mean more likely to be already motivated towards positive change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Length of stay in care was different between control and treatment groups</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes able to rule these out a little</b></p> |
| <b>N.10 Generalisability</b>              | <p>Positives: - Issue being investigated exists internationally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Control group nationally representative</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - Weaker students and those deemed behaviourally disturbed not included</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Generalisable to an extent</b></p> | <p>Positives: - Measures used were appropriate to whole state education system</p> <p>Negatives: - Sample were only those who had been referred for serious problems, doesn't therefore represent all fostered children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May not be generalizable to populations outside state/country</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Generalisable to an extent</b></p> | <p>Negatives: - Relatively small sample size</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Length of stay in care was different between control and treatment groups</li> <li>- Only children discharged from one care provider in area</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Generalisable to an extent</b></p>     |
| <b>N.11 Any difference in conclusions</b> | <b>No difference</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>Difference: - Although scores in Maths and Reading were significant, this was based on the fact that the control group scores deteriorated in these areas. Researchers concluded that this showed a 'typical downward trajectory for youth in foster care', although researchers do not account for increase in Grade Point Average in this group.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes</b></p>            | <b>No difference</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>N.12 Justification of conclusions</b>  | <p>Positives: - Effect sizes stated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some hypotheses supported, evidence given and discussed</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>High trustworthiness</b></p>                                                                                                             | <p>Negatives: - No effect sizes given</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Treatment group found to have received more special education services, but this would be expected due to nature of sample (non-equivalent to control)</li> <li>- Way of justifying significance is a little tenuous, i.e. control group did</li> </ul>                                                                         | <p>Positives: - Clear evidence from findings to support conclusions</p> <p>Negatives: - Effect sizes given, although measure of effect size not stated</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Medium trustworthiness</b></p>                                                                                                |

|                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | not improve rather than treatment group did<br><b>Low trustworthiness</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>N.13 A: Can the study findings be trusted in answering the study question(s)?</b>                                           | <b>High Trustworthiness</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Medium-Low Trustworthiness</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Medium Trustworthiness</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>N.14 B: Appropriateness of research design and analysis for addressing the question of this specific systematic review.</b> | <b>Medium-High</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Medium</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Medium</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>N.15 C: Relevance of particular focus of the study for addressing the question of this specific systematic review</b>       | <b>High</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Low</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Negatives: - Other measures used within this research which were not applicable to SR e.g. home placement change<br><b>Low</b>                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>N.16 D: Overall weight of evidence</b>                                                                                      | <b>High</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Medium-Low</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Medium</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>WOE Criteria</b>                                                                                                            | <b>Harper and Schmidt 2012</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Courtney et al. 2008</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>O'Brien and Rutland 2008</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>N.1 Ethical concerns</b>                                                                                                    | Positives: - Control group given intervention at later date<br>- Approval from ethics board granted (University)<br>- Random allocation of pupils to groups<br>- Consent from both adults and pupils<br>- Funding clear (local government)<br>Negatives: - Those deemed without behavioural control not included | Positives: - Random allocation of children<br>- Funded by national government<br>- During more sensitive sections of interview the interviewer didn't see the responses<br>Negatives: - The notion of 'deemed appropriate for tutoring' was not thoroughly explained<br><br><b>No strong ethical concerns</b> | Positives: - State funded<br>- Intervention open to older students if desired<br>Negatives: - No control group<br>- Details of consent not clear<br>- Retention and progress compared to non LAC, fee paying students<br>- Assumption that LAC pupils would be 'less than enthused' |

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|                                                            | <b>No strong ethical concerns</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | about additional educational demands of the intervention'<br><b>Yes, some ethical concerns</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>N.2 Students and/or parental involvement</b>            | Negatives: - No involvement from these groups in design or conduct of study<br><br><b>No not involved</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Positives: - Focus group carried out with youths<br>Negatives:<br>- No involvement from foster parents<br>- Questionnaire designed by evaluation team<br><b>Some involvement</b>                                                                                                                                                                                  | Positives: - Parents involved in conduct e.g. work done at home<br>- Focus groups for children's workers<br>- Foster parents supported in engaging children in the programme<br><b>Some involvement</b>                                                                                             |
| <b>N.3 Justification for study</b>                         | Positives: - Good justification for target population (foster children) and institution<br>- Reference to importance of culture in group studied<br>- Objective clear<br>- What works type of study suitable to answer question<br>- Rationale clear<br>- Linked to existing empirical research<br>- Reference to lack of previous intervention research with groups (aiming to fill gap in research)<br><b>Yes, sufficient justification given</b> | Positives: - Justification given for group chosen<br>- Reference made to State legislation<br>- Aims explicitly stated<br>- Intervention already in place, therefore pragmatic<br>- What works type of study suitable to answer question<br>Negative: - Not a strong research base – individual learning model used<br><b>Yes, sufficient justification given</b> | Positives: - What works i.e. effectiveness of combination of interventions<br>- Aim clear<br>- Good justification for choice of sample & context<br>Negatives: - No prior research mentioned<br>- No references given<br>- 'Grade level success' not explained<br><b>No (lack of research base)</b> |
| <b>N.4 Research design</b>                                 | Positives: - Randomized control trial suitable for answering question<br>- Groups almost equal in size and gender<br><b>Yes, appropriate choice</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Positives: - Random assignment to groups (RCT)<br>- Experimental design<br>- Questionnaire designed to suit group<br><b>Yes, appropriate choice</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Positives: - Length of intervention (1 year)<br>- Pre and post test<br>- Good intervention design<br>- Suitability of intervention evaluated<br>- Views gathered from all parties<br>Negatives: - No control group<br><b>Yes, but could be improved</b>                                             |
| <b>N.5 Repeatability or reliability of data collection</b> | Positives: - Repeatability, readily available standardised tool used (WRAT4)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Positives: - Standard measures used<br>- Age equivalents and percentiles used                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Positives: - Learning approach described (mastery)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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|                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Repeatability, clear description of each measure</li> <li>- Teaching method (direct instruction) empirically supported</li> <li>- Reliability, use of university students to collect data</li> <li>- Randomisation carried out by Research Randomiser</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - WRAT4 had not been validated among Aboriginal Canadian population</p> <p><b>Yes, some attempt</b></p>                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reference provided for surveys used to compile questionnaire</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, good attempts</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frequency of intervention given (2x week)</li> <li>- Standardised tests used (WRAT)</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - Individualised therefore less replicable</p> <p><b>Yes, some attempt to establish these</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>N.6 Validity or trustworthiness of data collection</b> | <p>Positives: - Teaching method (direct instruction) empirically supported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Validity, WRAT4 empirically supported</li> <li>- High convergent and concurrent validity (WRAT4)</li> <li>- University students used for data collection</li> <li>- Training delivered by developer of tutoring</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - No retesting done</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fidelity of tutoring during programme questionable</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, some attempt</b></p> | <p>Positives: - Timings given</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sensitive use of questioning should improve validity of answers</li> </ul> <p>Negatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviews were not transcribed</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, some attempt</b></p>                                                                                                      | <p>Positives: - Standardised assessments used for data collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data collected at intervals</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - No retesting done</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No details about people collecting data</li> <li>- Doesn't take into account differences in teaching (for school report cards)</li> <li>- Baseline scores estimated for some pupils</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, some attempt</b></p> |
| <b>N.7 Repeatability or reliability of data analysis</b>  | <p>Positives: - Repeatability, type of analysis clear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describes process of computing standard from raw scores</li> <li>- Reliability, standardised test</li> <li>- Version of data analysis software given</li> <li>- Both between and within subject variable used (fuller analysis)</li> <li>- Effect sizes given</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes</b></p>                                                                                                                                   | <p>Positive: - New analyses introduced to account for violations</p> <p>Negatives: - Some of control group received intervention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some of intervention group didn't receive intervention</li> <li>- Not all participants were 1-3 years behind in Maths or Reading</li> <li>- No mention of who did analysis or how many</li> </ul> <p><b>No</b></p> | <p>Positive: - Details of statistical tests clear</p> <p>Negatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of researchers used for analysis not stated</li> <li>- Qualitative data analysis not clear</li> </ul> <p><b>No, insufficient attempts</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                               |

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| <b>N.8 Validity or trustworthiness of data analysis</b> | Positives: - Log transformation conducted to reduce skewness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Control and intervention groups effectively randomised</li> <li>- Multi-level modelling analysis done to control for potential clustering effects</li> <li>- Empirical support given for choice of effect size used</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, good</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Positives: - Violations recognised by researchers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adjustments (e.g. Bonferroni) applied to reduce impact of false discoveries</li> </ul> Negatives: - No evidence of checking results with participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poor internal consistency</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, some attempt</b></p>                                                                                                                               | Positives: - Qualitative data gathered from a number of sources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Details of Qualitative data well conveyed</li> <li>- Context preserved e.g. learning and care environment</li> </ul> Negatives: - No evidence of checking results with participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No discussion of statistical assumptions necessary for analysis</li> <li>- Two Math samples did not contain all the same pupils</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, some attempt</b></p> |
| <b>N.9 Error or bias</b>                                | Positives: - After assignment 2 youths were unsuitable, but were excluded from study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frequencies analysed to check for errors</li> <li>- Histograms created to check for outliers, skewness &amp; kurtosis</li> <li>- Low attrition rates</li> <li>- Multilevel modelling used to control for any clustering effects</li> <li>- Multiple regression used to control for impact of pre-existing baseline conditions</li> </ul> Negatives: - Difficulties with delivery of Maths element <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weaker students and those deemed behaviourally disturbed not included</li> <li>- Inattention, placement stability &amp; ethnicity not controlled for</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Able to rule out a little</b></p> | Positives: - Covariates used also i.e. mental health, substance abuse, behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good retention rates over course of study</li> <li>- Good response rates to surveys</li> </ul> Negatives: - Some members of control group received tutoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many foster youths get some tutoring, from other sources</li> <li>- Services for youths vary by site</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Able to rule these out a little</b></p> | Positives: - Low attrition rate<br><br>Negatives: - No random allocation to groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Initial measure may not be true baseline, depending on when pupil joined intervention</li> <li>- Some comparison to fee paying students with non-LAC status</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Not at all able to rule out</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>N.10 Generalisability</b>                            | Positives: - Gender equally represented<br>Negatives: - Weaker students and those deemed behaviourally disturbed not included                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Positives: - Programme already offered county wide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Standardised use of percentiles for outcomes</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Positives: - Generalisable to USA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generalisable to LAC population</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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|                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High proportion of Aboriginal children not generalisable throughout country</li> <li>- WRAT not necessarily generalisable to classroom situation</li> </ul> <p><b>Not very generalisable</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School grades taken account of also, therefore more generalisable to classroom</li> </ul> <p>Negatives: - Intervention didn't provide clear links to material covered at school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intervention didn't provide clear links to skills learned at school</li> </ul> <p><b>Generalisable to an extent</b></p> | <p>Negatives: - Relatively small sample size</p> <p><b>Generalisable to an extent</b></p>                                                                       |
| <b>N.11 Any difference in conclusions</b>                                                                                      | <b>No difference</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>No difference</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>No difference</b>                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>N.12 Justification of conclusions</b>                                                                                       | <p>Positives: - Effect sizes stated and meaningful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Theory base for effect sizes given</li> </ul> <p><b>High trustworthiness</b></p>                                                          | <p>Positives: - Sufficient evidence given</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No claims made that couldn't be justified</li> </ul> <p><b>High trustworthiness</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>Negatives: - Effect size not stated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overall conclusions unclear</li> </ul> <p><b>Medium trustworthiness</b></p> |
| <b>N.13 A: Can the study findings be trusted in answering the study question(s)?</b>                                           | <b>High Trustworthiness</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Medium Trustworthiness</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Low Trustworthiness</b>                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>N.14 B: Appropriateness of research design and analysis for addressing the question of this specific systematic review.</b> | <b>Medium-High</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Medium-Low</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Medium-Low</b>                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>N.15 C: Relevance of particular focus of the study for addressing the question of this specific systematic review</b>       | <b>High</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Medium</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>High</b>                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>N.16 D: Overall weight of evidence</b>                                                                                      | <b>High</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Medium</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Medium-Low</b>                                                                                                                                               |



| <b>WOE Criteria</b>                             | <b>Olisa et al. 2001</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Osborne et al. 2010</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Tideman et al. 2011</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <b>N.1 Ethical concerns</b>                     | Positives: - Consent from both adults and pupils<br>- Needs of participants taken into account e.g. teaching commitments<br>Negatives: - Five children in sample not taught<br><br><b>No strong ethical concerns</b>                                        | Positives: - Project open to all looked after children, not just those with literacy difficulties<br>Negatives:<br>- No details given for how consent was gained<br>- No details of funding source<br><br><b>Yes, some ethical concerns</b>                                                                                                                 | Positives: - Needs of children taken into account e.g. hours in school<br>Negatives: - No control group<br>- Details of consent not clear<br>- Pupils with neuropsychiatric or behavioural difficulties not included<br><br><b>Yes, some ethical concerns</b> |
| <b>N.2 Students and/or parental involvement</b> | Positives: - Carers given training in language development and ways of fostering this<br><br><b>Some involvement</b>                                                                                                                                        | Positives: - Carers heavily involved in conduct of study<br>- Feedback sought from carers following study<br>Negatives: - No involvement in design of study<br><br><b>Yes, a lot of involvement</b>                                                                                                                                                         | Positives: - Goals established in co-operation with children, teachers and carers<br>Negatives: - No involvement in design of study<br><br><b>Some involvement</b>                                                                                            |
| <b>N.3 Justification for study</b>              | Positives: - Good justification for target population and institution<br>- Aims and objectives clear<br>- What works type of study suitable to answer question<br>- Linked to existing empirical research<br><br><b>Yes, sufficient justification given</b> | Positives: - Justification given for group and context chosen<br>- Links to existing empirical research mentioned<br>- Relevance to government statistics mentioned<br>- Aims explicitly stated<br>- Attempting to fill gap in current research<br>- What works type of study suitable to answer question<br><br><b>Yes, sufficient justification given</b> | Positives: - What works i.e. effectiveness of combination of interventions<br>- Aim clear<br>- Good justification for choice of sample & context<br>- Strong research base<br><br><b>Yes, sufficient justification given</b>                                  |
| <b>N.4 Research design</b>                      | Positives: - Suitable duration of study (20 weeks)<br>- Teachers delivering intervention trained in theory and good practice<br>- Pre/post-test design<br>- Children taught individually<br>- Each child taught in their own school                         | Positives: - Designed to involve carers directly, well suited to research question<br>- Reading ability measured by reading age<br>Negatives: - No control group<br>- All schools not able to put intervention into practice – more monitoring /support needed?                                                                                             | Positives: - Length of intervention (two years)<br>- Pre and post test<br>- Good intervention design<br>- Holistic approach (educational and psychological)<br>Negatives: - No control group<br>- Fairly small sample size                                    |

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|                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suitable gender split</li> </ul> Negatives: - No control group<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Small sample size</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, but could be improved</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some children were above their reading age at pre-test</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, but could be improved</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sample not the most needy e.g. stable schooling experiences</li> </ul> <p><b>Good overall design</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>N.5 Repeatability or reliability of data collection</b> | Positives: - Repeatability: Methods described clearly<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Repeatability, readily available standardised tool used (e.g. BAS)</li> </ul> Negatives: - Children taught by own class teacher, may not be possible to recreate this<br><p><b>Yes, some attempt</b></p>                                                                                                 | Positives: - Standard measures used (Salford test)<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age equivalents used</li> <li>- Methods clear</li> </ul> Negatives: - Some missing data from schools who didn't carry out interventions<br><p><b>Yes, some attempt</b></p>                                                                                 | Positives: - Descriptions of each measure used<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Standardised tests used (WISC-III)</li> <li>- Assessment materials supplemented with teacher reports</li> </ul> Negatives:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individualised therefore less replicable</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, some attempt to establish these</b></p> |
| <b>N.6 Validity or trustworthiness of data collection</b>  | Positives: - Measures before and immediately after intervention, therefore more attributable to it than if carried out later<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Validity, BAS empirically supported</li> <li>- Training delivered to all teachers</li> </ul> Negatives: - Some children taught by tutors unknown to them, others taught by their class teacher<br><p><b>Yes, some attempt</b></p> | Positives: - Training given to school staff, social workers and foster carers<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Measures before and immediately after intervention, therefore more attributable to it than if carried out later</li> <li>- Same person carried out pre and post-tests in each school</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, good attempt</b></p> | Positives: - Standardised assessments used for data collection<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cognitive assessments carried out by qualified psychologists</li> <li>- Regular monitoring of individual progress</li> <li>- Regular work with tutors to enhance motivation</li> </ul> Negatives: - No retesting done<br><p><b>Yes, good attempt</b></p>      |
| <b>N.7 Repeatability or reliability of data analysis</b>   | Positives: - Repeatability, type of analysis clear<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Measures from BAS</li> </ul> Negatives: - Results based on % underachievement pre/post test<br><p><b>Yes, attempts made</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                             | Positives: - Definition of measure 'ratio-gain' explained<br>Negatives: - Statistical analyses not clear<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not all participants were behind in Maths or Reading</li> <li>- No mention of who did analysis or how many</li> </ul> <p><b>No, insufficient attempts</b></p>                                        | Positives: - Type of statistical analysis given<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reliability – analyses performed in SPSS</li> <li>- Data provided in graphical form also</li> </ul> <p><b>Yes, attempts made</b></p>                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>N.8 Validity or trustworthiness of data analysis</b>    | Positives: - Raw data provided<br>Negatives: - No statistical analysis used, due to small sample size                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Positives: - Some data provided with results in formulae<br>Negatives: - No evidence of checking results with participants                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Positives: - Data provided with significance levels<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Validity – analyses performed in SPSS</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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|                                                     | <b>Yes, though a small attempt</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | - Effect size unclear<br><br><b>Yes, a moderate attempt</b>                                                                                                                                    | Negatives: - No evidence of checking results with participants<br>- No effect sizes given<br><b>Yes, some attempt</b>                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>N.9 Error or bias</b>                            | Negatives: - Improvements in reading and spelling found in both numeracy and literacy groups, so potentially not attributable to intervention<br>- Some children taught by tutors unknown to them, others taught by their class teacher<br>- Attrition of 5 from already small sample<br><b>Not able to rule out</b>                            | Positives: - Same person carried out pre and post-tests in each school<br><br>Negatives: - High attrition rate (almost half)<br><br><b>Able to rule these out a little</b>                     | Positive: - Low attrition rate<br><br>Negative: - No control group<br><br><b>Able to rule these out a little</b>                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>N.10 Generalisability</b>                        | Positives: - Gender equally represented<br>- Generalisable to inner city schools<br>Negatives:- Interventions delivered by children's own class teacher, not always possible<br>- Not generalizable nationwide / internationally<br>- BAS and other assessments not necessarily generalisable to classroom<br><b>Generalisable to an extent</b> | Positives: - Commonly used reading assessment, used nationally<br>- Standardised use of age equivalents for outcomes<br><br><b>Generalisable</b>                                               | Positives: - Generalisable to schools in given population, e.g. familiar tests<br>- Generalisable to LAC population<br>- Generalisable to other populations using WISC-III<br>Negatives: - Relatively small sample size<br>- Generalisable to Sweden only<br><br><b>Generalisable to an extent</b> |
| <b>N.11 Any difference in conclusions</b>           | <b>No difference</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>No difference</b>                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>No difference</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>N.12 Justification of conclusions</b>            | Positive: - Conclusions take into account flaws<br><br><b>Medium trustworthiness</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Positives: - Findings met DFES criteria for effective literacy intervention<br>- Author acknowledges lower progress in pupils with good initial literacy skills<br><b>High trustworthiness</b> | Positives: - General conclusions clear<br><br>Negatives:<br>- No effect sizes given<br><b>Medium trustworthiness</b>                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>N.13 A: Can the study findings be trusted in</b> | <b>Medium Trustworthiness</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Medium Trustworthiness</b>                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Medium Trustworthiness</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

| answering the study question(s)?                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                    |
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| <b>N.14 B: Appropriateness of research design and analysis for addressing the question of this specific systematic review.</b> | <b>Low</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Medium-High</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Medium-High</b> |
| <b>N.15 C: Relevance of particular focus of the study for addressing the question of this specific systematic review</b>       | <b>High</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>High</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Medium-High</b> |
| <b>N.16 D: Overall weight of evidence</b>                                                                                      | <b>Medium-Low</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Medium-High</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Medium-High</b> |
| <b>WOE Criteria</b>                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                    |
| <b>WOE Criteria</b>                                                                                                            | <b>Winter et al. 2011</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Wolfendale and Bryans 2004</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                    |
| <b>N.1 Ethical concerns</b>                                                                                                    | Positives: - Source of funding clear<br>- Supported by government at the time<br>- University commissioned by Fostering Network to evaluate the intervention<br>Negative: - Little mention of ethical considerations, including consent for use of data<br><br><b>Yes, some ethical concerns</b> | Positives: - Project funded by a local charitable trust<br>- Reference given for ethical considerations when working with children<br>- Parental permissions sought<br>- Confidentiality adhered to through coding system for child participants<br>Negative: - Intervention not given to children with less settled placements, who are potentially more vulnerable<br><b>No ethical concerns</b> |                    |
| <b>N.2 Students and/or parental involvement</b>                                                                                | Positives: - Foster carers encouraged to join in with reading and games at home<br>- Partnership between charity, Booktrust and Fostering Network, so carers involved at higher level<br><br><b>Some involvement</b>                                                                             | Positives: - Involvement enhanced through 'signing up' to Project Agreement<br>- Carers given training in ICT and other basic skills<br>- Carers involved in implementing intervention at home<br>- Carers asked for suggestions for improvements to the project (post-test)                                                                                                                       |                    |

|                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Negative: - No involvement of children or carers in design of study<br><b>Reasonable amount of involvement</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>N.3 Justification for study</b>                         | Positives: - Good justification for target population and context<br>- Aims and objectives clear (e.g. improve educational outcomes for foster children)<br>- What works type of study suitable to answer question<br>- Linked to existing empirical research and recent statistics from Northern Ireland<br>- Links to policy in Northern Ireland<br>- Previous intervention studies discussed<br><b>Yes, good justification given</b> | Positives: - Justification given for group and context chosen<br>- Based on previous work<br>- Concerns about achievement of children in care<br>- Reference given to vulnerability of group in later life<br>- Aims explicitly stated (improve literacy scores)<br>- Links made to national developments and research in the area<br>- What works = effectiveness study<br><b>Yes, sufficient justification given</b> |
| <b>N.4 Research design</b>                                 | Positives: - Parcels personalised, to promote ownership<br>- Timescale appropriate (before and during summer holidays)<br>- Some materials designed specifically for children in care<br>- Holistic approach to intervention – Summer scheme, additional events in addition to parcels<br>- Large sample size<br>- Pre/post-test design<br>Negative: - No control group<br><b>Yes, but could be improved</b>                            | Positives: - Holistic approach to intervention – visits from project visitor, equipment and resources for children, reading roadshows<br>- Appropriate timescale for intervention to take effect<br>Negatives: - No control group<br>- 18% of children found to be at an average level or higher at outset of project<br><b>Yes, but could be improved</b>                                                             |
| <b>N.5 Repeatability or reliability of data collection</b> | Positives: - Repeatability: Methods described clearly<br>- Repeatability, readily available standardised tool used (Neale Reading assessment)<br>- List of books distributed given<br>Negatives: - Data not collected by researchers/authors<br><b>Yes, some attempt</b>                                                                                                                                                                | Positives: - Standard measures used (WORD)<br>- Methods clear<br>Negative: - Improvement data given in points, not standardised<br><b>Yes, some attempt</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>N.6 Validity or trustworthiness of data collection</b>  | Positives: - Measures before and immediately after intervention, therefore more attributable to it than if carried out later<br>- Validity = Standard measures used (Neale)<br>Negative: - Data not collected by researchers/authors<br><b>Yes, some attempt</b>                                                                                                                                                                        | Positives: - Validity = Project monitoring group used to monitor research activity<br>- Standard measures used (WORD)<br>- Training given to foster carers<br>- Measures before and immediately after intervention, therefore more attributable to it than if carried out later                                                                                                                                        |

|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Same person carried out pre and post-tests for each child</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, good attempt</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>N.7 Repeatability or reliability of data analysis</b> | Positives: - Large sample size<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Measures used from standardised materials</li> <li>- Results presented graphically also</li> </ul> Negatives: - Mathematics measure was bespoke<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Results based upon multiple statistical testing</li> <li>- Types of analyses used not described</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, some attempts made</b></p>                                                                                                    | Positives: - Researchers already well experienced in intervention research<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Researchers solely responsible for analysis of data</li> <li>- Clear description of statistical tests given in a technical annexe</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, attempts made</b></p>                                                                                                                              |
| <b>N.8 Validity or trustworthiness of data analysis</b>  | Positives: - Raw data provided<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effect sizes given</li> </ul> Negatives: - Secondary analysis of data collected by Fostering Network<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Results based upon multiple statistical testing</li> <li>- No control group</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, a moderate attempt</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                   | Positives: - Strong sample size for analysis<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trustworthiness = Significance levels provided</li> </ul> Negatives: - No control group<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No effect sizes given</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes, a moderate attempt</b></p>                                                                                                                               |
| <b>N.9 Error or bias</b>                                 | Positives: - Extraneous variables taken into account e.g. additional literacy or maths tuition<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Independent Evaluation by university (commissioned by Fostering Network)</li> </ul> Negatives: - Secondary analysis of data collected by Fostering Network<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No control group</li> <li>- Results could be attributable to other policies and initiatives aimed to help children in care</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Not able to rule out</b></p> | Positives: - Consistency = Same person carried out pre and post-tests with all the children<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Researchers were external to the locus of the project</li> </ul> Negatives: - 18% of children found to be at an average level or higher at outset of project<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No control group</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Able to rule these out reasonably well</b></p> |
| <b>N.10 Generalisability</b>                             | Positives: - Mathematics measure designed to convert to National Curriculum levels = Generalisable to UK schools<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gender almost equally represented</li> <li>- Generalisable to Northern Ireland, as sampled across all areas</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Generalisable to an extent</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                               | Positives: - Fairly even gender split<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generalisable within UK</li> <li>- Commonly used reading assessment</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Generalisable to an extent</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>N.11 Any difference in conclusions</b>                | <b>No difference</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>No difference</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>N.12 Justification of conclusions</b>                 | Positives: - Conclusions take into account flaws, no unfounded claims                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Positives: - Conclusions supported by significance levels<br><p style="text-align: center;"><b>Medium - High trustworthiness</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

|                                                                                                                                | <b>High trustworthiness</b>        |                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>N.13 A: Can the study findings be trusted in answering the study question(s)?</b>                                           | <b>Medium-High Trustworthiness</b> | <b>Medium Trustworthiness</b> |
| <b>N.14 B: Appropriateness of research design and analysis for addressing the question of this specific systematic review.</b> | <b>Medium-Low</b>                  | <b>High</b>                   |
| <b>N.15 C: Relevance of particular focus of the study for addressing the question of this specific systematic review</b>       | <b>High</b>                        | <b>High</b>                   |
| <b>N.16 D: Overall weight of evidence</b>                                                                                      | <b>Medium-High</b>                 | <b>Medium</b>                 |

## Appendix 2: A description of the VIG principles of attuned interaction and guidance

(adapted from Kennedy, 2011)

| Principle of Attuned Interaction and Guidance | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Being attentive                               | The foundation for attuned communication exists in the adult being attentive to the child in their presence, as demonstrated in a direct interaction by giving time and space. Being attentive to the child also involves enjoying watching them, and wondering about what they are thinking or feeling, in effect being empathic.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Encouraging initiatives                       | In VIG, being attentive leads to the adult encouraging the child to make initiatives, through giving the child space and encouragement to take the lead and make attempts at contact. The adult naming positively what they see, think or feel is one method of encouraging a child to take the initiative.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Receiving initiatives                         | It follows within attuned communication that if the child initiates then this is received by the adult. Reception of an initiative can be communicated in a number of ways, either verbally or non-verbally. The basic underlying principle is that attunement occurs through a cycle of initiatives and receptions, from both the adult and the child. This attuned communication enables both parties to feel comfortable and valued by one another, which promotes the development of their relationship.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Developing attuned interactions               | At the next stage the pair reach an intersubjective state, where they are both enjoying and contributing to the interaction. Experiences of intersubjectivity can serve to promote the child's intrinsic motivation for companionship and relatedness to others. Within attuned interactions, the pair engage in a communicative dance of both posture and voice (Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001) where they take turns in receiving and responding.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Guiding                                       | Once the pair have had repeated experiences of intersubjectivity with each other and have become comfortable with taking turns in receiving and responding, the adult can engage in guiding the child. This is done through receiving the child then carefully extending their idea. New suggestions can be made here, with sensitive judgements on the adult's part about the amount of support that is required by the child. This is a form of mediated learning, often referred to in education as 'scaffolding' (Bruner & Gil, 1972). Here the child's learning is developed, within their zone of proximal development but not above or below it (Vygotsky, Veer, & Valsiner, 1994). The adult is seen as being 'mediator' to the child's intentions, through using secondary intersubjectivity to give meaning to the child's cognitions and emotions at a level that the child is able to comprehend (Kennedy, 2011). |
| Deepening discussion                          | The highest level of attunement occurs when the adult is able to deepen the discussion by taking the initiative in giving their opinion or passing on further information. Effectively, the pattern of receptions and responses between the pair is said to prepare the child for active learning so they can accept the adult's guidance in their progression. Deepening discussion also occurs in the Shared Review process, where explorations of thoughts and feelings about the interaction can lead to new narratives about the self, other, or the relationship.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |



### Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet (Adult)



#### Participant Information Sheet

The aim of this research is to find out how the relationship between looked after children and key adults in school can be explored through Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). VIG is a therapeutic approach whereby an adult and child are filmed engaging in one-to-one activities, and are then provided with positive feedback about their interactions with one another.

I am undertaking this research as part of my doctoral level training in Educational Psychology at Newcastle University. I will be conducting it in conjunction with those who choose to participate, from one or more schools I am currently working into in.....(area).....This research will take place during 2013, in the summer and/or autumn terms.

The research design is qualitative. This provides in-depth work with a small number of participants, so not all schools in the area will be involved.

Consent for this will be gained from the children, the adults holding parental responsibility, the named adult who will work with the child, and the head teacher of the school(s) involved.

Both the adult and child involved will be asked to take part in a short interview before the filming. I will film them on two to three occasions, and will return to school to show them selected clips from the videos each time. Whilst retained, all data will be stored securely and confidentiality of participants will be maintained. Videos will be viewed only by those participating, the researcher and the research supervisors. Once the research is complete, videos will be destroyed following university regulations. If during the study I have any concerns about the child, relating to safeguarding or other issues, I will be obligated to discuss these with the head teacher or school appointed safeguarding officer.

If desired, outcomes of the research will be shared with those involved once the research report is completed, in 2014.

If you have any questions, please contact Katrina Heywood:

[k.a.m.heywood@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:k.a.m.heywood@newcastle.ac.uk)

Tel. 07880180150

Dr Richard Parker (Research Supervisor)

[richard.parker@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:richard.parker@newcastle.ac.uk)

Appendix 4: Participant Information Letter (Child)



Dear .....

My name is Katrina and I am a student at university. I also work in different schools in your area. I am interested in working with foster children in schools, to see how they get on with the adults they work with in school. Hopefully this project will help to show other adults and children how to get on with each other too.

For this project I will visit you at school and film you working with an adult when you're out of class. Then I'll come back into school and show you all the bits of video I like the best, especially when you are getting on well with the adult you work with. We might do two films or even more if you'd like to.

Apart from you and....., the only person who will see the videos is me and the person helping me do this work. After that I will write about the project and include what you did, if that's ok with you.

You can change your mind any time if you don't want to be in the project anymore, just tell me or your teacher. If I am worried about you at all during the project I will have to tell the head teacher.

If you want to take part I'll come into school to meet you soon and have a chat before we do any filming.

From Katrina

**Appendix 5: Consent Form (Adult Participant)**



## Using VIG with Looked After Children

I am inviting you to take part in this research into the relationships of looked after children and key staff members (please see information sheet). You and/or the child can withdraw from this research at any point, even after consent has been given. All data collected will be confidential and anonymous. If you would like to take part please sign the slip at the bottom and return it to me.

For further information on this research please contact Katrina Heywood, Trainee Educational Psychologist, at

[k.a.m.heywood@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:k.a.m.heywood@ncl.ac.uk) Tel. 07880180150

Dr Richard Parker, Educational Psychologist (Research and Academic Supervisor)

[richard.parker@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:richard.parker@newcastle.ac.uk)

Newcastle University

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE1 7RU

.....

### Using VIG with Looked After Children

**I have read the information sheet and agree to:**

(please tick)

Be interviewed about my relationship with the pupil

Interviews being recorded and transcribed

Be filmed doing learning activities with the pupil in school

The videos being shown to the university VIG supervisor

The study being written up and submitted as a thesis

I understand my right to opt out at any time up to the point of writing up

**Name:** .....

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Appendix 6: Consent Form (Adult with Parental Responsibility)**



## Using VIG with Looked After Children

I am inviting you to consider giving your permission for the child you are responsible for to take part in this research into the relationships of looked after children and key staff members (please see information sheet). You and/or the child can withdraw from this research at any point, even after consent has been given. All data collected will be confidential and anonymous. If you would like to take part please sign the slip at the bottom and return it to me.

For further information on this research please contact Katrina Heywood, Trainee Educational Psychologist, at

[k.a.m.heywood@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:k.a.m.heywood@ncl.ac.uk) Tel. 07880180150

Dr Richard Parker, Educational Psychologist (Research and Academic Supervisor)

[richard.parker@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:richard.parker@newcastle.ac.uk)

Newcastle University

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE1 7RU

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### Using VIG with Looked After Children

**I have read the information sheet and agree to:**

(please tick)

Interviews taking place with the child

Interviews being recorded and transcribed

The child to be filmed doing learning activities with an adult in school

The videos being shown to the university VIG supervisor

The study being written up and submitted as a thesis

I understand my right to opt out at any time up to the point of writing up

**Child's Name:** ..... **Your Name:** .....

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

Appendix 7: Pupil Consent Form



**Pupil Consent Form**

Would you like to take part in this project where you are filmed with an adult in school doing work out of class?

.....

**Pupil Consent Form**

**I have read the information in the letter. I agree to:**

(please tick)

Be asked questions about how I get on with.....

My voice being recorded

Be filmed doing learning activities with .....

The videos being shown to the adult helping Katrina with the project

The project being written about

I know I can change my mind if I want to

**Name:** .....

**School** .....

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

## Appendix 8: Initial Interview Questions

### Adult

- **What's your job title/ role here in school?**
- How did it come about that you work in this role?
- What were your motivations for working in a school?
  
- **What do you see as your key roles in relation to the pupils?**
- Do these differ from the roles of teachers? How?
  
- **Have you had previous experiences of working with looked after children in schools?** If so could you tell me a little about this...
  
- **Why are good relationships in school important?**
- How do you think adults and children get on with each other in this school?
- What do you get out of your relationships with other staff members?
- What do you get out of your relationships with pupils?
  
- **What's the best thing about one-to-one work with pupils?**
- How does this differ to working with a group or a whole class?
- What are your most memorable experiences of one-to-one pupil work?
  
- **How do you view your relationship with (child)?**
- Is there anything you would like to improve about your relationship with him?  
What ideas have you had about this?
- Is there anything else you are hoping will come from being involved in this research?

## Child

- **Do you like coming to school?**
- How many different schools have you been to?
- What are the best bits about this school?
  
- **Tell me a bit about your teacher...**
- What's their main job?
- Which other grown-ups are there in school? What do they do?
  
- **What do you do to get on well with other people in school?**
- How easy do you find it to get on with the other children?
- How about getting on well with grown-ups?
- Would you like to get on better with grown-ups in school?
- How do you think this could happen?
  
- **Do you like doing one-to-one work with a grown-up or doing work with the whole class? Why?**
- What's good about working with grown-ups in school?
- What's good about being with other children?
  
- **Would you tell someone in school if you were upset about something? Who?**
- How important is it to have a grown-up in school you can trust?
- How do you get on with Mrs (adult)?
  
- **What are you hoping will come from being in this project with Mrs (adult)?**
- What are you looking forward to seeing in the videos?

## **Appendix 9: Final Joint Interview Questions**

**What's it been like for you, being involved in this project? Tell me a bit about it...**

- What did it feel like being filmed?
- Did you get used to it?
  
- **How did watching the videos make you feel? 1-10?**
- Did anything surprise you?
- Was anything funny? Embarrassing? Interesting?
- What are you pleased with that you saw in the videos?
- Which was your favourite video clip? Why?

### **Overall Experience**

- What did you like best about the whole thing?
- What did you like least about the whole thing?
  
- (Child) I noticed you were good at using the technology – what was it you liked the most about that?

### **VIG Specific**

- When I've used VIG I've learned that I speak a bit fast, but am also good at listening most of the time. (Adult) Was there anything you learned about yourself? (Child) How about you?
- Was there anything you wanted to happen from your involvement with the intervention? – Do you think this has happened?



**Relationship specific** (if these don't come out of the above)

(Me to adult, then from her to him)

- Do you think this VIG work changed your relationship with each other?
- What did you appreciate seeing / hearing the most?
- Has doing this work changed how you think about your relationships with other children? Teachers?

**Evaluation / thinking ahead**

- (Adult) Have you noticed anything about (child) that you hadn't before?
- (Adult) Do you think any of these skills might help him when he goes to Secondary school?
  
- (Child) What do you think about that?
- (Child) Would you like to do more VIG at secondary school?
  
- (Adult) Have you learned anything from this that you could take into your work with other children in future?
  
- (Both) If other children and teachers were asking about VIG what would you tell them?
  
- (Adult) Can you describe any ways that you think the VIG work could have been improved in this situation? Is there anything I could have done differently?