

**An exploration of the experience and impact of Equine  
Facilitated Learning (EFL) on a group of Year 5 children in  
a mainstream primary school.**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of  
Education (Ed.D)**

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**29th January 2018**

## Declaration

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material is included which has been submitted for any other award or qualification.

Signed: 

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018

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## **Abstract**

This thesis set out to gain an understanding of Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL), and to explore the experience and impact of EFL on a group of six, Year 5 children in a mainstream suburban primary school, who were considered to lack confidence and experience difficulties with peer relationships. EFL is a relatively new field with limited research however communities of practice of EFL continue to emerge and grow on a world wide scale. General interest in EFL and other animal assisted education programmes is increasing as schools seek alternative ways to meet the varying needs of children and young people. This research project adds a fresh dimension to the growing body of research and contributes to a gap in the literature. It explores the potential value of using horses in an experiential learning context.

This small scale study involves a time limited exploratory research design, encompassing a case study approach. The children participated in HorseHeard's 'Being Friends Programme' and had four sessions of EFL in total, one two hour session per week for four weeks. The programme required the children to be actively involved throughout and they were supported and encouraged to engage and reflect upon their own experiences as part of the learning process over the course of the four weeks. Mixed methods were used to collect data; semi-structured interviews and photograph/video elicitation were used to elicit children's experiences of EFL and semi-structured teacher interviews, the Boxall Profile and sociogram were used to explore the impact EFL had upon the children's developmental needs, friendships and the school's experience of EFL as an intervention. The children were interviewed after the final session and then again five months later. Pre and Post intervention data was obtained for the both the sociogram and the Boxall

Profile. Thematic analysis based upon Braune and Clarke's (2006) model was used to code and categorise the interview data.

The findings suggest that EFL was a fun and enjoyable experience for the children and that all the children benefited in some way. EFL could be beneficial in providing support for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs in school as an alternative approach to more traditional methods. Positive impacts were perceived by both participants and school, particularly in the areas of friendship, positive changes to behaviour and attitude, self-worth and confidence. Opportunities for reflection and the support of the teaching assistant played an important role in this intervention; both integral to the EFL experiential learning process.

**Key Words:**

Equine-Facilitated-Learning, experiential-learning, social-emotional-mental-health, children and young people,

## **Glossary of Terms**

EFL - Equine Facilitated Learning

EAL – Equine Assisted Learning

EAP – Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

AAT – Equine Assisted Therapy

EAA – Equine Assisted Activities

AAI – Animal Assisted Interventions

LOTG – Learning Outside the Classroom

SEMH – Social Emotional Mental Health

## **Definition of Terms (Oxford English Dictionary)**

Experience – Practical contact with and observation of facts or events, or an event or occurrence which leaves an impression on someone.

To experience (verb) – 1. To encounter or undergo. 2. Feel (an emotion or sensation).

Experiential – involving or based on experience and observation.

Hands on – Involving or offering active participation rather than theory.

Outdoors – In the open air, outside of a building or shelter.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background to the study**

Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) is not an entirely new concept; it has been around for about ten years in the United Kingdom and is very popular in the United States of America, where it is used for example to support war veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Intervention using equines has a variety of labels and is fast gaining recognition in the UK and internationally. Often it is labelled Equine Assisted Activities, Equine Facilitated Learning, Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy, Equine Behaviour Therapy...there are many more variations. Each intervention may differ slightly in the way it is delivered however the equine is the common element to the practice.

There has been a development of several different strands of equine facilitated intervention, although they appear to fall into two main categories; one with a focus on learning and one that involves counselling and psychotherapy. Research has shown that intervention using horses is diverse. Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) is a specialised form of intervention using the horse as a therapeutic tool (Schultz, Remick-Barlow and Robbins 2007). EAP is generally practised by someone with a qualification in mental health, psychotherapy or counselling and is used for example in the form of mental health interventions with children who have experienced intra-family violence (Schultz, Remick-Barlow and Robbins 2007).

Therapeutic interventions using horses have also been used to develop muscle tone, balance and posture, as a form of occupational therapy, through Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT) in elderly adults (Wehofer, Goodson and Shurtleff 2013). EAAT involves treatment from a licensed therapist using the movement of

the horse as a therapeutic treatment; this is particularly beneficial to those with disabilities. Equines have even been used to explore the development of leadership skills through EFL (Kelly 2013). EFL however can be practiced by people who do not have a mental health qualification for example teachers, coaches and those working in the equine industry (Leap Equine, 2014). EFL uses equine-facilitated activities as a tool for self-development and education in which children learn skills such as communication, assertiveness, resilience, problem solving and leadership (Leap Equine, 2014).

### 1.2 My Background in relation to this study

Based upon the current, limited evidence base I have explored so far, equine facilitated intervention can be used by a wide range of people, of all ages, with a wide variety of issues. As I have a background based in education and this is an Education Doctoral thesis, my research will focus upon the learning strand of intervention. I am interested in exploring how this intervention could be used to support primary aged children from a mainstream school. In my experience as a classroom based practitioner, interventions that address children's social, emotional or behavioural needs are generally school based and do not offer children the opportunity of a participatory approach. Targets are often set by the class teacher or Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and the incentive for children to engage in the intervention is often linked to a school based reward system. In my experience, school based incentives and rewards are often inadequate and work for some but not all, and in many cases are not meaningful to the young person.

### 1.3 The need for alternative approaches

My background in education and experience of working with children with special educational needs has prompted my search for alternative interventions that can reach a wide variety of children. There is a rising need nowadays for schools to meet children's social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs within educational settings through evidence based interventions and the current government is attempting to respond to this through implementing changes to the way schools offer support to such children. As part of the current government's mission to support schools in promoting resilience (DFE 2016), funding has been made available through the character grants scheme for rugby coaches to go into schools to instil character, resilience and respect in disaffected children. It is anticipated that this scheme will build character and resilience in 17000 pupils across the country in 2015. It is believed that this will give all children, regardless of background, the chance to fulfil their potential and achieve high aspirations. Other such ventures funded by the character grants scheme to build positive character traits and resilience in children include projects by St. John's Ambulance, the PHSE Association, The Prince's Trust and City Year UK. Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI's) or EFL could fit into this category because research has suggested that such interventions have psychosocial benefits, that is of changing thoughts and behaviour (Burgon 2011) and can induce positive changes with regards to conduct and social acceptance (Ewing, MacDonald, Taylor and Bowers 2007) and as previously mentioned, EFL can help children learn skills such as communication, assertiveness, resilience, problem solving and leadership (Leap Equine, 2014).

There are strong links between learning outside the classroom and the 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) outcomes, in particular enjoying and achieving, staying safe and

being healthy (DfES 2006). The ECM green paper was published in 2003 by the previous government alongside its formal response to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report, in an attempt to ensure that every child had the opportunity to reach their full potential by reducing risks of educational failure, ill health, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, abuse and neglect, crime and anti-social behaviour amongst children and young people (TSO 2003). A commissioned research report written by Malone (2008) draws together studies that encompass both formal and non-formal learning outside the classroom to develop a supportive case claiming that experiential learning outside the classroom is essential for developing the '*whole young person*' and provides evidence that learning outside the classroom can contribute to the children's overall development (cognitive, physical, social, emotional and personal) and the achievement of the five ECM outcomes. OfSTED (2008) found that learning outside the classroom contributed to the improvement of children and young people's development in all five areas of the ECM outcomes, particularly in 'enjoying and achieving' where learning outside the classroom was reported as fun and motivating, and 'future economic well-being', through enterprise days and activities that developed leadership, communication and teamwork skills.

The ECM agenda is no longer current policy in schools, however, following on from the development of ECM and the consultation with children and young people, the Children's Act (2004) was designed with the EMC principles in mind, responding to what children and young people considered important with the intention of reforming the then Children's Services within a legal framework (DfES 2004). The Children and Families Act (2014) superseded the ECM agenda and the Children's Act 2004. The current government appears to be recognising the value of alternative interventions to help meet the social, emotional and mental health needs of children



and is keen for schools to offer opportunities to promote resilience, providing children with inner resources they can draw upon in the event of negative or stressful challenges. The DFE suggests that in order to help children succeed schools have a role to play in supporting them to be mentally healthy (DFE 2016). The most current statistics, obtained in 2004, provided by the DFE (2015), state that 1 in 10 children and young people aged between 5 and 16 have a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder and 1 in 7 have less severe problems which put them at risk of developing problems in the future. It is likely that these figures will have increased in 2017.

#### 1.4 The beginning of this study

I am keen to explore the notion of EFL as an alternative approach to supporting young people with SEMH needs in school; using animals offers an exciting and modern approach to intervention that I believe children will find stimulating and engaging. This research emerged from a question based upon intellectual curiosity sparked by both a background in education, working as a specialist teacher for children with Special Educational Needs and having a keen interest in horses. I have always admired and been fascinated by the special human-animal bond and the unconditional love and respect that animals such as horses, and for example dogs give us. As this field was previously unknown to me, I explored literature around EFL to learn more about the concept and the contexts in which it is employed. I was keen to learn about its effectiveness and discover the different contexts in which EFL could be utilised and I was able to locate several local EFL practitioners who were willing to meet with me and discuss the nature of their work.

The possible benefits of using of animals and in particular horses in intervention will be further discussed in the literature review and research on EFL with children and

young people experiencing various SEMH difficulties within a range of educational settings is explored. Informed by this background, my research aims to explore children's experiences of EFL, specifically investigating the impact that EFL has upon their friendships and SEMH within the school setting. The research also considers the school's experience of EFL and aims to ascertain whether EFL could be an effective and worthwhile intervention thus guiding its future development and use in schools.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter explores current literature and research relating to EFL and situates my research within the wider academic field. I explore the underlying principles of EFL, its versatility and application, and its relationship with experiential learning. It is anticipated that this discussion of literature will support the appropriate selection of research methodology and questions.

### **2.1 Searching for literature**

The literature search has led me to consider EFL to be a relatively immature field however, there continues to be an increase in the publication of research into this field in the form of academic papers and also a growth in general interest in the field of EFL through the publication of new books (for example Burgon 2014) and website resources. University library database searches, in particular of Scopus, Web of Knowledge and Intute and internet searches using Google and Google Scholar have identified limited academic resources. Search terms such as Equine Facilitated Learning, Equine Assisted Learning, experiential learning, experiential learning with horses and Equine Assisted Activities were used to source information. In addition to database searches, literature was sought using the reference lists of current publications and books that were suggested by current EFL practitioners. Searches were mostly limited to publications ranging from 1990 to the present day so that resources remained current, however as the literature review progressed, I found it necessary to include literature from 1980 onwards in order to find additional relevant material.

Difficulties were encountered whilst conducting the literature search; the term 'Equine Facilitated Learning' identified equine/animal science and veterinary based resources, whilst the term 'Equine Assisted Activity' generated records relating to hippotherapy, occupational therapy, the benefits of horse-back riding, physiology and rehabilitation. Using Intute's Oxford Journals database, the search term 'Equine Assisted Learning' generated only 3 records, whereas using Newcastle's University Library search facility 'Equine Assisted Learning' identified 103 resources, of which only 8 were considered relevant.

I found the process of deciding which resources were relevant to this study challenging; firstly I considered the academic literature available to be limited and I felt I had to look beyond this, to explore resources produced by those with practical expertise in the field of EFL. It is intended that by using resources from a range of sources and perspectives, the possibility of bias will be reduced. Consideration was taken to avoid being too restrictive or narrow with the inclusion criteria that it became unlikely that resources would be found. Children and Young People were criteria for inclusion; I also included global studies and research from English speaking countries. I was particularly keen to find rigorous research involving AAI within schools and chose peer reviewed research papers that were of relevance to my research questions. I mostly rejected resources that I considered were belonging to the fields of veterinary or medical science, adult counselling or psychotherapy and those which were based upon hippotherapy or horse-back riding. My criteria for selection focussed upon the idea that this project is situated within the field of education and learning as opposed to medical or veterinary sciences.

## 2.2 Structure of literature review

I begin by exploring the concept of learning outside the classroom, as this is where EFL sessions actually happen, and look at the educational benefits and disadvantages of this approach to learning. I explore the relationship between EFL and educational policy; the Children and Families Act (2014) actively states that schools have a responsibility to meet the special educational needs of the children they educate. I wish to determine whether EFL could be used by schools in cases where additional support is needed to meet the SEMH needs of children, as stated in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2015). This necessitated exploring the bond between humans and animals, that is, the relationship animals play in the lives of humans and discuss some of the effects AAI have in a variety of contexts.

Next I explore the literature surrounding the use of the horse in AAI's - as opposed to other animals, and in particular I discuss if horses are useful in facilitating learning and attempt to determine how exactly, EFL works, in particular I look at the concept of reflective learning and how this is connected to EFL. I summarise current research on EFL and the methodological approaches used so that I can determine what is already known about my area of research. I anticipated that this exploration would make sure my research was unique and different from other people's work and findings, through conducting research in a different setting and with younger children than have participated in previous studies. I wanted to ensure that I would make an original contribution to the developing body of knowledge and understanding of EFL and the potential benefits a programme of experiential learning with horses has to offer.

### 2.3 Learning outside the classroom

Although learning with children and young people often takes place within a classroom environment, in animal assisted interventions using horses this is not the case. For this kind of work, it is necessary for learners to enter the environment of the horse, which is generally outdoors, be that in a field or specialised equine establishment with appropriate facilities.

Learning outside the classroom (LOTC) is the use of places other than the classroom for teaching and learning. It involves getting children and young people out and about and providing them with different experiences that are exciting and challenging (Council for LOTC 2015). Waite (2011) suggests that learning outdoors, offers tangible resources with which children can experiment and discover hands-on learning, and in the process learn values such as genuineness and a love of learning in which they can touch, feel and engage with the environment they are in. Other values associated with experiential learning include freedom, fun, authenticity and ownership (Waite 2011).

Over the past decade, more emphasis has been placed on activities outside of the classroom with the previous government's publication of the Learning Outside the Classroom manifesto (LOTC) (DfES 2006). The previous government was keen to encourage and support schools to provide such opportunities through the LOTC manifesto in which schools, colleges and other educational providers can sign up to creating a national body, with the shared vision of making a difference to children and young people. This resulted in the development of the Council for LOTC, a registered charity existing to champion LOTC.

This emphasis on learning outside of the classroom is also reflected in the National Curriculum 2014, through reference to the need for children to have practical experiences in Key Stage 1 and 2 Science, fieldwork opportunities and local studies (Council for LOTC 2015). The manifesto states that the most memorable learning experiences help us make sense of the world around us by making links between feelings and learning. These experiences then stay with us into adulthood and can have an effect upon our behaviour, lifestyle and work. The manifesto suggests that LOTC allows us to transfer learning experienced outside the classroom into the classroom and vice versa (DfES 2006). A survey completed by OfSTED (2008) of LOTC looked at learning outside the classroom across all areas of the curriculum and assessed the impact and importance of such learning in primary and secondary schools and colleges. The survey found that hands-on activities out of the classroom led to improved outcomes, including improved achievements, motivation and personal, social and emotional development (OfSTED 2008).

The Manifesto (DfES 2006) places an importance on schools to provide opportunities for children to experience learning outside of the classroom. Of course, the Manifesto refers to opportunities for learning a variety of subjects from across the National Curriculum, for example, through Geography field trips and Forest Schools to Outdoor Adventure Education. This does not exclude the opportunity for children to experience those skills that are not readily determined by the National Curriculum such as prosocial, communication and behavioural skills. The Manifesto suggests that schools can provide opportunities for learning outside the classroom at any time during the school day, before or after school or even during weekends or school holidays meaning that schools can adopt a flexible

approach with minimal disruption to routine. There is however, no guarantee that schools actually provide such opportunities or wish to do so.

In Waite's (2011) discussion of experiential opportunities of children in a nursery class, she refers to the children as active learners capable of understanding the world. Through the experiential mode of learning, with facilitation and reflective comments of a supporting adult in the nursery, Waite suggests knowledge is co-created, not transferred; interactions between adult, child and place demonstrate a co-constructivist pedagogy, with learning opportunities being generated through hands-on learning experiences. In the case of EFL, this would also include interactions with the horse. Waite's (2011) argument suggests that learning may only take place in certain situations and in that case, opportunities for hands-on learning may be limited to particular aspects of the curriculum.

The Children's University is an international charity which encourages children aged 5 to 14 years to try new experiences, develop new interests and acquire new skills through participation in innovative and creative learning activities outside of the school day (Children's University (CU Trust) 2016). In MacBeath's (2010) evaluation of the Children's University (CU) he suggests the CU tends to be seen as having its own value and not so much as connected to or enhancing classroom learning. This is despite specific responses from interviews with children stating that since being part of the CU they felt they were getting better results or that the things they learnt in CU helped them learn better in class. MacBeath (2010) suggests that the children's interview responses may be a perceived 'transfer of learning' and would benefit from more inquiry into what particular aspects of out of class learning are being considered by the children.



The DfES (2006) argues that the educational benefits from learning outside the classroom are numerous, including improvements to academic achievement, development of creativity and higher order learning skills, opportunities to learn about risk taking and challenge, improvements to behaviour, attendance and attitude to learning. MacBeath's (2010) evaluation of the CU suggests that in many places the CU had a positive impact on children's behaviour in the classroom and that this was in part due to the relationship the teacher had with the children in a less pressurised context, allowing them to see young people in a different light. The quality of child-teacher relationship and possible links to behaviour problems amongst elementary students was also researched by O'Connor, Dearing and Collins (2011), who found that high-quality teacher-child relationships predicted low levels of externalising behaviour (for example aggressive, impulsive or overactive behaviours). O'Connor et al (2011) also concluded that to help prevent behaviour problems in middle childhood teacher-child relationships may be a possible phenomenon that could be targeted in interventions and suggest an increase in relationship quality would be expected to support children's socio-emotional and behavioural development. Pianta and Walsh (1996) suggest that children develop over time within an interrelated 'system', their 'Contextual Systems Model' (CSM), places the child in a system of child, family, classroom and culture. Pianta and Walsh (1996) believe these systems continually interact with one another, therefore influencing the development of the child. It is reasonable to suggest a child's behaviour may be influenced by a wide range of factors within the CSM framework, for example parental attitudes, home life, peer groups, classroom settings, religion to name just a few, and these factors may need to be taken into account when considering approaches to interventions for behaviour change. Considering further

the interplay of such factors influencing the behavioural development of the child, it is suggested by Malone (2008) that experiential learning outside the classroom is essential for developing the young person as a whole. A research report written by Malone (2008) draws together global studies that span formal and non-formal learning outside of the classroom to develop a case to support the claim that experiential learning outside the classroom is essential for developing the whole young person. Children aged between 0 and 18 years are the focus of the review. The report was commissioned by Farming and Countryside Education to support actions identified through the LOTC Manifesto (DFES 2006) to support the continuation and development of this form of learning. The review found that learning outside the classroom gives children to opportunity to develop real life problem solving and critical skills beyond the walls of the classroom and that there is a need for a balance between what children learn and do in the classroom and what they learn and experience outside of the classroom. Malone (2008) also suggests that experiential learning can provide children with opportunities to; better achieve in the acquisition of knowledge and skills, change behaviours for the better including changes to attitude and resilience to responding to environmental change, increase physical health, socialise and interact in different ways with other children and adults and improve self-esteem, self-concept and attention. The review explores the benefits of experiential learning to the development of the child or young person as a whole, and found that outcomes of experiential learning had positive effects upon cognitive, physical, social, emotional and personal aspects of a child's development. Opportunities for learning outside of the classroom over the past few years have not been as available as desired as a result of time-consuming paperwork constraints, risk-assessments and fear of legal implications if there is an accident. Increased

workloads for staff, health and safety concerns and timetabling constraints in secondary schools has also meant that importance has been placed on providing out of classroom learning opportunities (OfSTED 2008). In addition to the barriers discussed above, learning outside of the classroom may incur financial costs. This too may deter schools from offering such opportunities as, in light of current governmental reforms, budgets have been cut and teachers face the challenge of tightly managing budgets. Schools cannot charge for activities during the school day other than for musical instrument lessons (OfSTED 2008) although they can ask for voluntary contributions. This issue has encouraged some schools to engage in fundraising events to cover costs such as transport or admission fees, lunches, specialist staff or equipment hire. EFL requires both specialist staff and venue hire therefore cost is a potential barrier to schools wishing to offer EFL as an intervention. It may be necessary for schools wishing to offer EFL to consider a range of funding options including sourcing grants from funding organisations or charities.

#### 2.4 Why use animals within an intervention?

I begin with a discussion to provide some background into the use of animals in interventions and to place EFL within a wider context. I explore some of the physical and emotional effects that animals have upon humans through interaction with animals such as dogs, and anticipate that this information may go some way to explaining how interactions between humans and horses might function. I want to determine why animals are useful as an intervention as opposed to more traditional methods.

Animals play important roles in the lives of children with many children in the UK in particular growing up with pets in their homes (Williams, Muldoon and Lawrence 2010). There is a growing body of research exploring the role and effects of animals in child development, and in particular their socioemotional development. Owning a pet gives children the opportunity to learn about caring and nurturing, grooming and feeding, giving and receiving affection, which may support the development of empathy (Williams, Muldoon and Lawrence 2010). Melson (2003) suggests that children's relationships with companion animals can enrich understanding of their perceptual, cognitive, social and emotional development and that animals can be perceptually interesting to young children, helping to sustain attention and stimulate curiosity. Melson (2003) also states her concern with regard to research into children and companion animals, suggesting such research is limited in both quality and quantity. Melson (2003) argues that most studies are correlational and this often confuses relationships and prevents causal conclusions from being made. Other relationships may affect the child-pet relationship, for example, that of parent and child, and Melson (2003) is keen to point out that when the child-pet relationship is studied it should be done systemically, as a whole, because children's relationships with others are modified by family dynamics, particularly the parent-child relationship.

A systematic review of empirical research into AAls with children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) by O'Haire (2013) found that increased social interactions and language communication were most commonly reported. The review also found that there were reported decreases in problem behaviour, stress and autism severity. The review however, was highly critical of the quality of research into AAI for ASD and highlighted significant limitations. One of O'Haire's (2013) major concerns is bias; selective reporting and publishing meant that studies that had not achieved

positive outcomes were not published, or those that were in languages other than English were not included. The review highlighted methodological weakness as an additional limiting factor and suggested the need for more high quality research, replicated on a larger scale in the future.

Research conducted by Zasloff, Hart and DeArmond (1999) suggested that the use of animals in the classroom is important for teaching children humane values and can interest and motivate children with learning difficulties. Today the development of the use of animals in education can be seen through the work of charities such as 'Pets as Therapy' (Pets as Therapy 2012), who developed a 'Read2Dogs' scheme; a classroom based programme that uses dogs to help develop children's confidence in and enjoyment of reading. Reading Education Assistance Dogs (READ) are becoming more popular within the United Kingdom (UK); The Kennel Club is actively supporting charities who take dogs into schools to support literacy development of children. Through the READ scheme students are given opportunity to engage in reading without fear of judgement, whilst the dog handler provides non-threatening support through their pet partner (Massengill Shaw 2013). READ is not intended to replace the teaching of reading, it offers a supervised and enjoyable opportunity for children to practice, develop and consolidate reading skills (Jalongo 2005).

Research suggests that the presence of a dog in a classroom environment reduces anxiety and blood pressure in children when reading aloud, suggesting that dogs make reading a more enjoyable process by reducing psychological discomfort (Barker and Woolen 2008 cited in Mills and Hall 2014). The connection between supporting literacy development in children through the use of dogs and a dog's ability to reduce observable signs of stress or anxiety, for example around reading, can be further explored. In an attempt to gain scientific recognition for AAI,

Odendaal (2000) conducted experimental research to investigate the physiological responses associated with human–dog interaction. The hypothesis was that specific neurochemical plasma levels would indicate physiological responses associated with positive human-dog interaction. The methodology aimed to use the same parameters for positive human–animal interaction as for positive intra-species interaction.

The parameters chosen were six neurochemicals associated with a decrease in blood pressure, namely  $\beta$ -endorphin, oxytocin, prolactin,  $\beta$ -phenylethylamine, dopamine and cortisol. Eighteen healthy humans and dogs participated in the research. Blood was collected for analysis when there was a decrease in arterial blood pressure. Controls were put in place - baseline versus after interaction values; dog owners versus people interacting with unfamiliar dogs and dog interaction versus quiet book reading. Results showed that in humans and dogs, there was a significant increase of  $\beta$ -endorphin, oxytocin, prolactin, phenylacetic acid and dopamine. The only statistical significant difference in the before/after interaction between the control (when dog owners interacted with their own dogs) and experimental dog groups was oxytocin. Odendall (2000) states that oxytocin is an indicator of the neurochemicals measured for social attachment on an intraspecies basis.

There were no significant differences between the changes of the neurochemicals of quiet book reading and positive dog interaction except for oxytocin, prolactin and  $\beta$ -endorphin, where the neurochemicals were higher during dog interaction than quiet book reading, chemical changes which Odendaal suggests are in accordance with social bonding. The lack of difference in some neurochemicals between the two groups suggests that the experience did not create stressful or negative mood

changing situations. Odendaal concluded that quiet book reading as a control indicates that positive dog interaction can be as relaxing and stress relieving as book reading, and in some cases additional positive effects such as those caused by oxytocin, prolactin and  $\beta$ -endorphin can be achieved. This research appears to indicate that human-dog interaction combined with quiet book reading lends itself to a positive physiological effect. Odendall (2000) does however recognise that the profile for neurochemicals during positive human-dog interaction can be too generalised and that the success of complimentary therapies such as reflexology or music therapy could also be based upon similar physiological changes.

More recently, Bristol University introduced the use of a 'puppy room' as a means of helping to reduce anxiety and stress levels in students during the exam period (BBC 2015). Research into the relationship between companion animals and physical wellbeing in humans shows that the presence of animals can offer short-term health benefits for example by reducing stress, heart rate and blood pressure (Wells 2009), however, research has also shown that similar effects can be achieved by watching animals on videos. A study undertaken by Wells (2005) suggested that the presence of animals in video form (without sound) can have the same type of effect on blood pressure and heart rate as when interacting with live animals. The blood pressure and heart rate of participants were recorded following a ten minute relaxation period, then following exposure to a video, and again after a ten minute task of reading aloud. Participants were exposed to a pre-selected video showing either birds, fish, primates, control 1 (humans) or control 2 (blank screen). The results showed that the participants who watched videos containing animals had significantly lower levels of heart rates and blood pressure following the reading aloud task than the participants who watched either of the control videos. This study only examined the

short term effects of watching animals so conclusions cannot be drawn regarding longer term effects. Wells (2005) also concluded that it remains unknown that if the videos had been frightening or more stimulating that the effect would be the same.

In her review of literature surrounding the effects of animals on human health and well-being, Wells (2009) argues there is a need for additional research to gather evidence regarding the longer term effects of animal based interventions, especially longitudinal studies. Some studies reviewed by Wells were considered to have methodological weaknesses, mixed results and generalized conclusions. Wells (2009) suggests although that there is inconclusive evidence to make an association between human well-being and companion animals, the literature is largely supportive of the belief that pets are good for us. Wells claims although there is little evidence to support the ability of companion animals to improve long term physical health, a small number of studies propose pets may hold long-term therapeutic benefits, including preventing illness and assisting recovery from serious physical conditions. Despite the positive effects that have so far been discussed, there are also risks associated with AAls and therapies (Wells 2009). Animals can be dangerous and unpredictable, they can scratch or bite, horses can kick or stand on feet and there is also a risk of allergies and diseases such as toxoplasmosis from handling cats.

The literature discussed so far demonstrates that the use of animals, in particular dogs, in both education and health interventions appears to have certain benefits, particularly physiological and socioemotional, although research has mainly explored these in the short term. I suggest that whilst there is evidence to support the belief that pets are good for us and that the presence of animals brings both physiological



and socioemotional benefits, there is a need for further research, in particular to determine the long term effects of such interactions.

## 2.5 Why use horses?

This project is focussed upon the use of horses as an intervention as opposed to other animals, for example dogs as previously discussed. I wish to explore why in particular horses are used and what is to be gained, if anything, from using them. In this section limited academic literature meant I found it necessary to draw upon the expertise of others, found in literature from a non-academic field; from Coates (2008), who discusses EFL in her book 'Connecting with Horses' and EFL practitioners HorseHeard (2015) and Day (2014). From an academic standpoint, the quality of this information may be questioned however, as it is written by experienced equine practitioners, I consider inclusion of this material helps to illustrate the human-horse relationship from the practitioners perspective, subjective material I have not found in academic publications.

Apart from the fact that horses are large, powerful and beautiful animals, in my experience they are playful and have their own behaviours and personality traits. They are prey animals, flight animals, intelligent and sensitive to their environment and often unpredictable; when humans interact with them different emotions are often experienced; some people love and adore horses, others do not and are fearful or scared. Coates (2008) suggests that research into horse-human correlated behaviours by Dr. Helen Spence (unreferenced in Coates 2008) has shown that people affect the way in which horses present themselves and that horse behaviour often matches that of a person, which is known as mirroring. HorseHeard (2015)

claims horses are highly astute at mirroring the subtleties of our body language and energies, giving instant feedback to the learner by providing a non-judgemental mirror to how we are being and behaving around them. HorseHeard's assumption however could be considered biased; this belief is central to much of the charity's work with both adults and children. The sheer, intimidating size of a horse creates an opportunity for some to overcome fear and develop confidence (VanFleet and Thompson 2010) although it can be argued that opportunity to positively interact with a dog could afford the same achievement for those who have a fear of dogs. However, VanFleet and Thompson (2010) suggest that by accomplishing a task involving a horse despite those fears creates confidence, and gives children confidence to deal with other intimidating and challenging situations in life.

Much of a horse's communication is non-vocal; horses do vocalise to communicate through snorts, whinnies and squeals, however within the herd, horses use non-vocal communication to warn of danger, to establish pecking order, breeding rights or leadership. Non-verbal communication can work well for some learners, especially those who have abilities to feel something rather than talk about it (Day 2014). It is for these reasons that horses are used in EFL sessions and not dogs or cats; it is unlikely that dogs and cats could offer the same level of responsiveness to and mirroring of our body language and energy, simply because they are not prey animals (Coates 2008).

The role of the facilitator in the EFL sessions is to make it possible for an interaction to occur between a learner and a horse with minimal interference (Day 2014). The facilitator may use a variety of methods within a session to encourage interaction, this may include coaching, mentoring or teaching and the facilitator may be required

to utilise skills of horse awareness, verbal communication, active listening and empathy (Day 2014).

## 2.6 Approaches to EFL Research

There has been research undertaken so far in EFL that has been completed by researchers with a Social Work background, for example, Holmes, Goodwin, Redhead and Goymour (2011) and Burgon (2011) with little available research completed by academics from an education perspective. Holmes et al (2011) undertook research based upon previous anecdotal evidence and looked at the effects of equine assisted activities upon adolescents with emotional or behavioural difficulties. In particular they wanted to explore the effects upon anxiety and self-esteem. Burgon(2011) explored the experiences of seven 'at risk' young people who participated in a therapeutic horsemanship programme. The young people were considered at risk due to various psychosocial factors putting them at a greater likelihood of negative life outcomes (Burgon 2011).

Researchers of EFL so far have used a variety of methodological approaches to explore this field; the table below (Table 1) outlines the range of research, methods used and significant findings in studies that I have identified. The studies of Holmes, et al (2011), Ewing, Macdonald, Taylor and Bowers (2007), Burgon (2011) and Pendry and Roeter (2013) will be discussed in more detail as these are considered to have more relevance to my research questions.

**Table 1. Summary of EFL/EAA studies showing significant findings**

<b>Author (Pub.Year)</b>	<b>Research Aim</b>	<b>Sample number (age range)  Educational setting and country</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Burgon (2011)	Experiences of at risk young people participating in a therapeutic horsemanship programme.	7 (11-16yrs)  Residential foster care, UK	Sessions of 1-3 hrs, weekly or fortnightly.  Over two years.	Participative ethnography  Case study design  Experiential learning/ reflection	Perceived experience	Psychosocial benefits; improved confidence, mastery and self-efficacy, self-esteem, empathy, opening up of positive opportunities.
Dell et al (2011)	Benefits of EAL on Inuit youths' healing - focus on those who abuse solvents.	15 (12-17yrs)  Residential Treatment Programme  Canada	2x2hr session per week over 3mths	Phenomenological approach  Semi-structured interviews, staff reflection, EAL journals, observation  Experiential learning/ reflection	Perceived experience of impact on healing	Experiences allowed for 'spiritual exchange, complementary communication and authentic occurrence'. Healing aided through culturally relevant space.
Ewing et al (2007)	Effects of EFL on youths with severe emotional disorders.	28 (10-13yrs)  Special day school, USA	9 weeks (2x2 hr sessions per week) 36 hours in total.	Quantitative and Qualitative  Pre and post intervention tests  Case studies compiled from interviews and observations  Experiential learning/ reflection	Self esteem (self-perception profile for children)  Empathy (Empathy questionnaire)  Locus of control (Locus of control scale)  Depression (Children's Depression Inventory)  Loneliness (Children's Loneliness Questionnaire)	Quant – no significant changes.  Qual – positive changes in conduct and social acceptance.
Frederick et al (2015)	Impact of EAL on levels of hope and depression in At-Risk Adolescents.	26 (11-17yrs)  Middle/high school, USA	5weeks, session length not stated.	Experimental design with longitudinal repeated measures. Control group used. Pre and post tests and	ADSHS level of hope self report measure  MDI level of depression self report	EAL effective at increasing levels of hope and decreasing levels of depression.

				tests at four points during intervention.  Experiential learning/ reflection	measure	
Hauge et al (2013)	Impact of EAA on perceived social support, self-esteem and self-efficacy amongst adolescents.	80 (12-15yrs)  Secondary school, Norway	1 x 2hr session over 4 months	Use of Control group  Pre and post intervention Questionnaires	Perceived social support  Self esteem  Self efficacy	Increase in perceived social support in intervention group.
Holmes et al. (2011)	Benefits of EAA to adolescents with emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties on anxiety and self-esteem.	11	4 x 3 hr consecutive sessions	Quantitative and control object	Self esteem (Rosenburg self-esteem scale)  Anxiety (Spence children's anxiety scale)  Interaction Frequency (experimenter observation)	Reduction in anxiety. No significant changes to self-esteem.
Pendry and Roeter (2013)	Positive effects of EFL on child social competence.	64 (10-14yrs)  Middle school, USA	8 children per 90 minute session once a week over 11 weeks	Randomised control trial  Experiential learning/ reflection	Parental ratings of child social competence	Increase in social competence post test

Considering the range of methodological approaches we can see that Burgon's (2011) research uses a participative ethnography case-study, an exploratory phenomenology was used by Dell, Chalmers, Bresette, Swain, Rankin and Hopkins (2011), Ewing et al (2007) employed a mixed method approach using a variety of questionnaires, inventories and observational data and Pendry and Roeter (2013) utilised a randomised control trial to find out the causal effects of EFL interventions on human development and wellbeing. Research undertaken by Ewing et al (2007) highlighted the need for more empirical data within the field of EFL research; there is limited published literature available and of the research I have found during my

literature search, as discussed previously, there appear to be contributions from a variety of academics from differing paradigms.

One study which researched the effects of EFL on child social competence identified limitations as the results were based upon parental perceptions of child social competence and did not consider the views of the child in the process (Pendry and Roeter 2013). In order to establish more detailed information about the process of EFL, qualitative methods such as participant interviews should be employed by researchers wishing to gain a deeper understanding of how particular elements of EFL are considered effective by participants. Pendry and Roeter (2013) continue to suggest that future research should aim to elucidate which components of EFL are central to program success. I intend to address both these issues through participant interviews and observation; I anticipate that the results from my discussions with the children will highlight some of the key elements of the intervention and what contributes to its success, and go some way to influencing future EFL programme design.

Holmes, Goodwin, Redhead and Goymour (2011) explored the benefits of Equine Assisted Activities (EAA) to adolescents with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. EAA are activities more aligned with EFL than EAP; in this case participants were taught skills such as how to behave safely around a horse, grooming, fitting head collars, picking out feet and fitting rugs. They used a positivist approach incorporating experimental design which involved use of a life sized model horse as a control. The study measured interaction frequency, self-report anxiety and self-esteem for one 3 hour session per week over four weeks. The research concluded that EAA have the potential to reduce anxiety although the process that leads to that conclusion is unclear. The study did not report any changes to self-

esteem although there was a significant reduction in anxiety from the first to the final session. Holmes et al (2011) suggest that these findings replicate findings from qualitative literature regarding the efficacy of horse-back riding and experiential therapy programmes.

Burgon (2011) completed case study designed research into the experience of seven young people aged between eleven and twenty-one who participated in a therapeutic horsemanship programme over two years using a 'participative reflexive ethnography' approach. Burgon adopted a practitioner-researcher approach with the intention of 'giving voice' to the participants and becoming absorbed in the research process to capture the co-researcher's experience (Burgon 2011). The findings from Burgon's study, based upon data collected through a combination of observations, field notes, semi-structured, ethnographic conversational and unstructured interviews suggest that the relationships and experiences the participants had with the horses contributed to them gaining psychosocial benefits. Emerging themes resulting from the thematic analysis of interviews and field notes suggested that the participants appeared to grow in confidence, self-efficacy and empathy and seemed to benefit from opportunities to open up new social relationships and possibilities. In the case of EFL, any improvements to self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence through positive interactions and experiences may lead to a reduction in anxiety because of an increased ability to deal with, for example, new challenges, risk taking and experiences that could have negative or positive outcomes. The qualitative ethnographic approach to research used by Burgon (2011) meant that data collection methods were limited and no tests were administered to measure improvements of psychosocial aspects; findings are based upon the researcher's interpretation of participant's interpretations of their

experiences. Burgon (2011) employed a range of methods in her research in the hope of giving a 'voice' to the participants. Details of any follow up or information with regards to how long the benefits lasted are not specified in the research paper.

A common theme identified in three research papers (Holmes et al 2011, Hauge et al 2013 and Ewing et al 2007) focussed upon the impact and benefits of EFL/EAA on self-esteem. Hauge et al (2013) examined the effect of EAA on self-esteem based upon the assumption that acquiring skills or abilities through sport, or mastering skills related to handling and interaction with a large animal may give a feeling of achievement and competence, developing a greater or more positive sense of self. Ewing et al (2007) measured self-esteem as part of a study to evaluate the effects of an alternative therapeutic learning method on youths with severe emotional disorders. Ewing et al predicted that the EFL programme would increase children's sense of self-esteem, a hypothesis based upon previous research/pilot studies (Gatty 2001 cited in Ewing et al 2007) in which improvements in self-esteem had been identified following a therapeutic riding programme and exploratory research conducted by Holmes et al (2011) considered the effects of EAA upon the self-esteem of children with emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties based upon previous research by other authors investigating the benefits of human-animal interactions. I believe the use of a control measure within the research conducted by Holmes et al (2011) was intended to potentially gain scientific recognition of future human-animal interaction studies. Considering the theme of self-esteem has been a common element within the research mentioned so far, I will now look at self-esteem in more depth.



## 2.7 What is Self-Esteem?

There does not appear to be one clear single definition for self-esteem but in general terms, self-esteem is a favourable opinion of oneself. Our judgements of ourselves, of our own self-worth are based upon the judgements we imagine others make of us (Emler 2001). Orth and Robins (2014) suggest self-esteem refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of his or her self-worth. It is generally believed that having high self-esteem has benefits to those who have it and having a high self-esteem is associated with feeling good about oneself, being able to cope with challenges and negative feedback and believing that one is valued and respected by others (Heatherton and Wyland 2003). Leary (1999) suggests that self-esteem rises when a person succeeds, is praised or is loved. Having low self-esteem on the other hand is generally associated with feelings of negativity; children with low self-esteem view themselves less favourably, often dwelling on perceived weaknesses rather than strengths (Shaffer and Kipp 2007). Self-esteem does not necessarily reflect a person's talents or abilities (Orth and Robins 2014).

Miller and Moran (2006) discuss the growing awareness of a two-dimensional model of self-esteem which suggests that the creation of a sense of self-worth has to be complimented by a similar emphasis on self-competence. They suggest that, in the context of a primary school classroom, this perspective of self-esteem may require practitioners to re-evaluate their current practice; in order to improve a child's sense of competence it is necessary to provide opportunities to achieve success and to support children in recognising such success, it is not enough just to tell a child they are good at something without the process of producing a genuine sense of competence based upon new achievement. This suggests that for interventions hoping to raise self-esteem, the opportunity for achievement should be considered

for all participants and children be supported in recognising and celebrating such achievements.

Gorresse and Ruggieri (2013) believe that cognitive abilities such as perspective taking skills and the ability to form higher order concepts influence the development of self-esteem, however Emler (2001) suggests that the development of self-esteem in childhood is influenced by first parent-child interactions and the attachments formed between parent and child. Parental influence is partly genetic and partly produced by the amount of love, concern, interest and acceptance shown by parents during childhood and adolescence (Emler 2001). Secure attachments with parents are linked to positive representations of the self and high levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Gorrese and Ruggieri 2013). Shaffer and Kipp (2007) discuss Bowlby's working models theory, suggesting that securely attached children who construct a positive working model of themselves, should soon begin to evaluate themselves more favourably than insecurely attached children, whose working models are not so positive. This aspect of self-esteem is important to consider when considering employing an intervention to raise self-esteem and the time taken to achieve results; Shaffer and Kip's (2007) suggestion implies that desirable results may be seen more readily in securely attached children and it may take much longer to see changes in self-esteem in children with insecure attachment.

## 2.8 Measuring Self-Esteem

Hague et al (2013) define self-esteem as 'the affections and feelings towards oneself', but neither Ewing et al (2007) or Holmes et al (2011) indicate in their research what they understand self-esteem to be. The measurement scale used by

Ewing et al (2007) (and also by Hague et al (2013)) - Harter's 'Self-Perception Profile for Children' and Harter's 'Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents' indicates that self-esteem within particular domains and global self-esteem were being assessed. Holmes et al's (2011) use of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale indicates that global self-esteem was being examined. Self-report measures carry the risk of those answering the questions not being completely honest when completing the assessment, however Rosenberg's self-esteem scale is commonly used in research (Heatherton and Wyland 2003) and is considered low cost and relatively low error (Emler 2001) and Harter's Self-Perception Profiles appear to be commonly used, especially by researchers and professionals in the field of psychology.

The 'domains' that Harter's scale measures refer to what value people have of themselves in particular areas of their life (domains) at a given life stage, whereas 'global self-esteem' is described as the value a person places upon themselves as a whole. The domains Harter refers to in 'The Self Perception Profile for Children' include scholastic competence, social competence, athletic competence, physical appearance and behavioural conduct. As the child moves towards adolescence, additional domains are added to reflect changes in socialisation and behaviour that is more common amongst teenagers. 'The Self Perception Profile for Adolescents' (Harter 2012) includes the domains as per the profile for children but also includes job competence, romantic appeal and close friendship specific domains. Harter (2012) suggests that domains and global self-esteem can coexist and change with age and maturity. The stability of self-esteem has been previously questioned by researchers; Heatherton et al (2003) suggest that self-esteem can be viewed as 'state' and 'trait'; state self-esteem are thought to be momentary fluctuations in a person's feelings about him or herself, whereas trait self-esteem is considered the

person's general appraisal of his or her value (Leary 1999). Considering the above discussion, measuring self-esteem presents some challenges. The nature of self-esteem requires valuations of self to be made by oneself and as previously mentioned this carries a risk of assessment not been completed honestly which may affect the results. As research suggests, there are many different aspects to self-esteem and therefore it is important to consider which particular aspect of self-esteem is to be measured (global/domains, state/ trait) in order to select the appropriate assessment.

## 2.9 Self-Esteem and Peer Relationships

As children grow and mature they develop a greater understanding of the self and become more aware of, and able to judge the qualities they perceive themselves as having (Shaffer and Kip 2007). They become more aware of and able to manage feelings, and so become better able to manage relationships with others (Greenhalgh 2002). The relationships we have with others give us feedback about how we are valued by others. The more children feel they have to offer, the more they are able to perceive themselves as a valuable member of the group (Greenhalgh 2002). Shaffer and Kip (2007) argue that the value children place upon themselves is self-esteem. By early adolescence, interpersonal relationships play an important influential part in one's perceptions of self-worth and people outside of the family start to play a vital role in the development of self-esteem. In Gorrese and Ruggieri's (2013) meta-analysis review of peer attachment and self-esteem, research found that there are significant correlations between peer attachment and self-esteem. Findings suggest feelings of trust and alienation (feelings of isolation,

anger and detachment in attachment relationships with parents and peers) more than communication quality are likely to affect self-esteem and that when adolescents trust their peers enough for emotional disclosure they may feel more accepted thus increasing self-esteem.

Emler (2001) suggests the quality of close relationships with others appears to be a particular determinant of self-esteem however, having the ability to form such relationships is influenced by a person's security in attachment, that is how secure people feel in their relationship with parents and peers. Research has suggested that people secure in attachments have more trusting, happy, intimate and friendly close relationships in comparison to those who have insecure attachments (Collins and Read 1990, Hazan and Shaver 1987 and Mikulincer 1998 cited in Gorrese and Ruggieri 2013). Gorrese and Ruggieri (2013) suggest that peer attachments may influence the beliefs people have of their self-worth and the extent to which such beliefs are formed and maintained. Berndt (2002) believes that having a few good friendships may help children make positive contacts with other children, which in turn may lead to positive relationships – not as close as friendships but enough to influence children's attitudes towards their classmates.

Berndt (2002) suggests friendship quality does not significantly affect the changes over time of a student's self-esteem. Sociometer theory however, which assumes that self-esteem is measured upon the quality of people's relationships with others (Leary 1999), claims that when people behave in ways to protect their self-esteem they are acting in ways that they think will augment their relational value (in other people's eyes) and increase opportunities for social acceptance (Leary 1999). In my experience as a teacher, this type of behaviour in children or young people may be interpreted as children who show off, or act out in class to try to impress peers to

improve their popularity within a group. This might suggest that such behaviour is likely from children with lower self-esteem, or those who are trying to increase their relational value in accordance with how they believe other people perceive them, and if, as research previously discussed suggests, this is influenced by security in attachment, children who experience difficulty forming and maintaining friendships at school are likely to have insecure attachments. Leary (1999) also claims that many personal problems lower self-esteem because they lead other people to devalue or reject the individual, this may be as a result of a change in a person's behaviour as a result of personal problems. Berndt (2002) believes friends who often get into conflict with one another or who often try to dominate one another are practising social negative behaviours that may become generalised to interactions with other peers or adults. The closer the friendship is, interaction increases and the more frequently the negative social exchanges are practiced, suggesting a cyclical relationship. The student's negative behaviours provoke unwanted responses from teachers and classmates leading the student to become disengaged from classmates and school activities (Berndt 2002).

The ideas discussed so far appear to suggest that there is a link between self-esteem and peer relationships. Peer relationships give us feedback about how others value us, affecting the value we put on ourselves and this is particularly important during adolescence when people outside of the family begin to have influence on one's self-worth. Negative changes to social behaviour are associated with low self-esteem, in particular when it is believed one is acting in a way that will change how others see them. Research suggests the quality of relationships we have with others affects self-esteem and those with secure attachments are likely to have better quality relationships. It is reasonable to suggest then that popular

children with secure attachments will likely have higher self-esteem than those children who experience difficulties with peer relationships and feel less secure in their relationships with parents and peers.

Although EFL can be provided to an individual, group work or team work is not uncommon as seen amongst others in the research of Burgon (2011) and Ewing et al (2007). Considering the relationship between self-esteem and peer relationships, it is possible that children with low self-esteem participating in EFL could experience difficulty working in a group. Hockaday's (1984) research suggests that working together in a group is a difficult task for any individual and the performances of the young children in her study were generally limited by their social skills, however, the participants in this research are older than those in Hockaday's study and it would be expected that the necessary social skills are more developed. Hockaday's research concluded that in general terms, children who were friends worked together better than those that were not and that if children are to work together successfully they need to be taught how to develop and use the particular skills that are needed to engage in collaborative working; reasoning, evaluating skills, the ability to listen and share ideas. With regards to my research, the levels of self-esteem were not measured and it is unknown how much prior experience the participants have of working in a team either in or out of school or, if as a group they have been given any guidance on how to work collaboratively.

### 2.10 Low-Self-Esteem is not the root of all ills

The difficulties children and young people experience at school either academically, emotionally, socially or behaviourally often lead to assumptions that they have low

self-esteem. Such assumptions are often popular amongst those who work with children and young people and are founded in the belief that positive self-esteem is of paramount importance and that many problems in society such as teenage pregnancy, academic failure, drug use and crime are caused by low self-esteem (Heatherton and Wyland 2003). As research on self-esteem has developed over the years, it has been found that many of those beliefs have been wrongly assumed. As Harter (2012) suggests, children's self-esteem can fluctuate over time and can vary within particular domains. Children with low self-esteem are, for example, more likely to have difficulty forming and maintaining close friendships, to become pregnant as a teenager, be victimised and show symptoms of depression, however, having low self-esteem does not make a child more likely to fail academically, commit crimes, drink alcohol, smoke or use illegal drugs (Emler 2001).

### 2.11 Self-Esteem and Interventions

The EFL research papers previously discussed (Holmes et al 2012, Hauge et al 2013 and Ewing et al 2007) question the effects of EAA or EFL upon self-esteem. It seems reasonable to suggest that researchers were interested to discover if self-esteem can be changed and if planned interventions work. Leary (1999) states that interventions that enhance self-esteem do lead to positive psychological changes; changing the way people perceive themselves as socially valued individuals. Leary (1999) argues that self-esteem programmes always include aspects that would be expected to increase real or perceived social acceptance, for example, social or interpersonal skills development, activities to improve physical appearance and programmes to increase self-control. Interventions to raise self-esteem generally



have moderate effects however they are stronger if they specifically intend to raise self-esteem (Emler 2001). Interventions that focus upon other objectives, such as reducing behavioural problems or improving functioning in other areas tend to have little effect on self-esteem (Haney and Durlak 1998). This suggests that the choice of self-esteem assessment is an important factor in allowing for the development of a personalised intervention, designed to either raise a particular domain or domains of a person's self-esteem if a positive effect is to be achieved. Emler (2001) discusses that the effects of interventions specifically targeted to raise self-esteem do not appear to be affected by length of programme, the training or experience of those delivering it, or whether the programme is delivered to individuals or groups. The research of Holmes et al (2012), Hauge et al (2013) and Ewing et al (2007) found no significant changes to self-esteem, which in accordance with Emler (2001) might be expected, as the interventions were not solely focussed upon raising self-esteem.

Emler (2001) highlights several unanswered questions in this area of research and states there is a need for more research. Very little is known about the long term effects, cost effectiveness of interventions or even why such interventions work. In their meta-analytic review, Haney and Durlak (1998) also suggested that many studies into self-esteem in children and adolescents failed to identify ethnicity in programme participants making it difficult to determine the effectiveness of interventions in different ethnic groups. Furthermore, their review reported that too few studies presented outcomes separately for sex and age groups so that differences in responses to interventions between older/younger children or boys/girls are not clearly evident.

Discussion of the literature highlights that interventions to boost self-esteem can be successful and interventions designed specifically to raise self-esteem have stronger

effects than those with a different focus, for example behaviour or social functioning. If raising self-esteem is the focus of the intervention then careful choice of assessment needs to be taken into consideration so that the intervention can be tailored relating to the particular aspect of self-esteem being targeted. Considering self-esteem interventions may be delivered individually or in groups, by someone with no specific experience or training, without affecting results, such interventions have the potential to be delivered in schools in a cost effective way for example by non-teaching staff or volunteers.

#### 2.12 Equine Facilitated Learning and Learning Through Experience and Reflection.

Further exploration of the EFL research has led me to suggest that the theme of experiential and reflective learning is common to several of the studies. The idea that experiential and reflective learning processes play an important part in EFL has been highlighted through authors such as Dell et al (2011), Ewing et al (2007) and Burgon (2011). In this section I explore the processes of experiential learning and reflection and discuss their application to EFL sessions.

Malone (2008) defines experiential learning as, 'a process that develops knowledge, skills and attributes based upon consciously thinking about experience'. Malone (2008) suggests that experiential learning involves direct experience, reflection and feedback and as this form of learning is personal, it affects feelings and emotions as well as developing knowledge and skills. Day (2014) suggests that in order for experiential learning to be effective, the learner needs to be actively involved in the process with the ability to reflect upon their experiences. Several research papers identified (Dell et al 2011, Ewing et al 2007 and Pendry and Roeter 2013) referred to

the process of reflection as a key part of the EFL process and these will be discussed later.

Kolb (1984) defines learning as a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Hence, Kolb's theory suggests that it is not only reflection upon past experience that influences learning but how that experience is then applied to future experiences. Kolb's model of experiential learning was developed based upon his interpretation of the work of Lewin and Dewey (in the 1930's) and consists of four stages (Kolb 1984):

1. The Experience itself (Concrete Experience)
2. Review and reflection upon experience (Reflective Observation).
3. Abstraction and theorisation from the experience (Abstract Conceptualisation).
4. Future planning of experiences (Active Experimentation).

Dewey suggested that although genuine education comes about through experience it does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Dewey claimed that what makes an experience educative is the value that is placed upon it by the learner and unless an experience is examined and reflected upon it has no educative value (Boud, Cohen and Walker 1993). Learning is described as 'a process in which concepts are derived from and continuously modified by experience' (Kolb 1984). Kolb (1984) argues that when considering learning from the experiential perspective then defining learning in terms of outcomes becomes a definition of non-learning, as the reformation process of ideas and behaviours does

not occur. The process of modification of ideas and behaviours does have implications. Kolb contends that we each bring with us past experiences and belief systems to new situations and although they might not be a perfect fit, we apply them as and when needed, suggesting that experiential learning is a unique and individual experience to each learner.

There are critics of this form of learning. Kirschner, Sweller and Clark (2004) argue that evidence from empirical studies over the past fifty years indicates that unguided learning methods, for example experiential learning or problem based learning in which a teacher would take the role of facilitator and learning would be self-led by students, are less efficient than approaches to learning that place emphasis upon guidance of learning, in which direction and instruction are given by a teacher. Kirschner et al (2004) argue that unguided learning methods may have negative results when students gain knowledge that is incomplete or have misconceptions or misunderstandings. Additionally, they suggest that this form of learning seems to encourage educators to move away from teaching as a discipline and as a body of knowledge towards the notion that knowledge can only be gained through experience. Perhaps the difference between teacher led, guided or instructed classroom learning and learning through EFL, self-led or facilitator supported learning can be the product of learning itself; learning outcomes through EFL are less clear and specific than those that are teacher led and are a unique and individual experience for each learner. Despite its critics, this mode of learning appears to underpin the EFL process as described in Dell et al (2011), Pendry and Roeter (2013), Ewing et al (2007) and Burgon (2011).

### 2.13 Models of Experiential Learning

Day (2014) states that in particular, Kolb's experiential learning cycle is a good model to use with EFL sessions although the reason why Day selected Kolb's model above others is unclear. Day suggests how each stage of Kolb's model can be applied to an EFL session. The following is adapted from Day (2014):

1. Concrete experience – Learners could go into the paddock and put a head collar on a horse. The learner has actual experience of being with a horse, this could also include grooming. The learner will have sensory information to refer to; the feel of the horse, sounds, smells and sight.
2. Reflective Observation – The actual experience of being with the horse will afford the learner opportunity to reflect upon what has happened in a way that is different from reading a book or information on the internet. The learner can think about what they enjoyed or disliked, what they found worked or didn't work and any feelings they had during the time spent with the horse.
3. Abstract Conceptualisation – Once the learner has had time to contemplate and reflect upon their experiences they can begin to think about ways in which they would approach the horse to put its head collar on next time.
4. Active Experimentation – The learner then goes out into the paddock again to put the head collar on, this time using their new ideas.

Kolb's model of experiential learning suggests that reflection is a key part of the learning process and of the research identified relating to EFL or EAL, several authors make reference to reflection as part of this process (Pendry and Roeter 2013, Ewing et al 2007, Dell et al 2011, Frederick, Hatz and Lanning 2014). Boud et

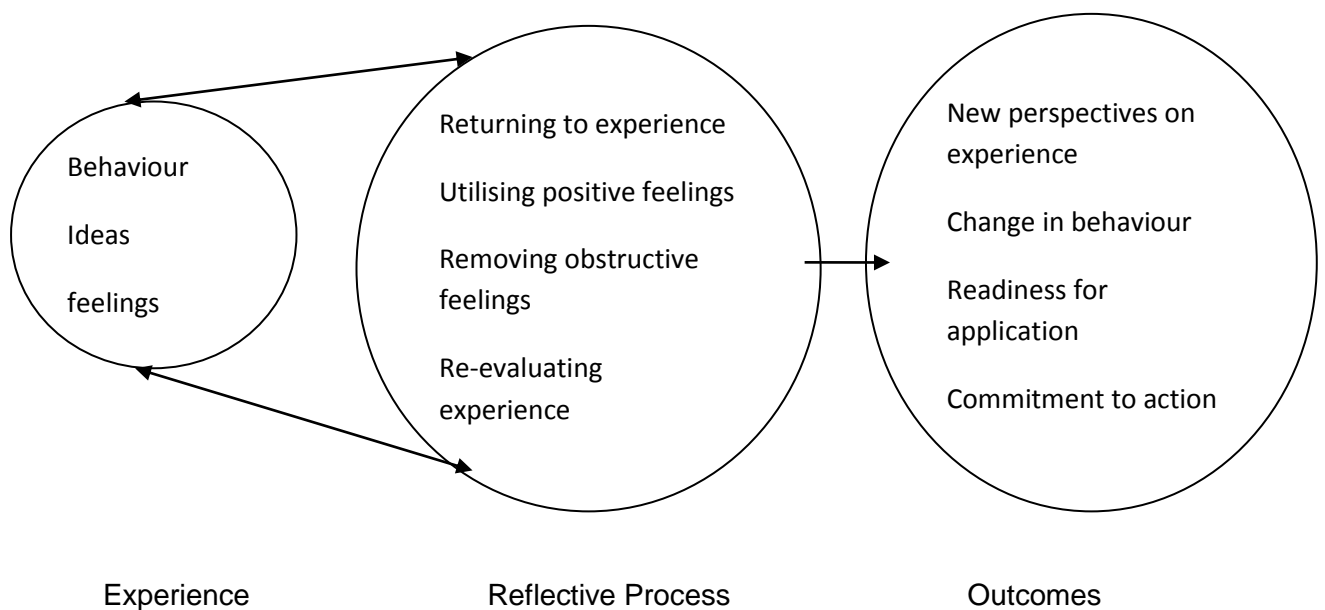
al (1985) define reflection as, *'an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. It is working with experience that is important in learning.'* (Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985, pg 43).

Reflection allows the deeper consideration of things that otherwise might not have been thought about and it is what Boud et al (1985) suggest helps us to learn. Reflecting upon an experience provides an opportunity for a learner to consciously think about aspects of the experience and the actions, feelings and responses that occurred, and interpret or analyse those actions, feelings and responses in order to learn from them. One question might be whether it is essential that learners need to have the ability to reflect, and if so, to what level, for experiential learning to be effective. According to Day (2014), the role of the EFL facilitator is to support the development of the skill of reflection through careful coaching, mentoring and teaching; it may be possible that a learner may begin an EFL session with little or no skills in reflection and develop these skills as the session progresses. It can be difficult for some people to reflect and not everyone finds this way of working comfortable (Moon 2004). The personal nature of reflection means that learners are required to look at themselves and in some cases be self-critical about their actions, which may be uncomfortable for some people and difficult for others including children.

There are several models of reflection and some are cyclical in nature for example those of Kolb (1984), Boud (1985) and Gibbs (1988), suggesting the idea that reflection leads to learning but that learning is a continuous process. Different models place differing importance on the processes that occur within reflection and the levels of critical thinking involved. Kolb's model is simplistic and places few demands on the learner in terms of level of critical thinking. This is possibly why it is

considered a suitable model to use with EFL as previously discussed by Day (2014). The model of reflection created by Boud et al (1985) consists of two main elements; the experience itself and reflective activity based upon the experience. Experience itself is complex and is made up of many components including thoughts, feelings, observations, sight, sound, smell, perceptions and social interactions. I chose this model because of its focus on behaviour and emotions during the reflective process and it is more in depth than that of Kolb, requiring more of the learner in terms of reflection upon thoughts and feelings. Boud et al's (1985) model of reflection is shown below (fig1.).

Figure 1.



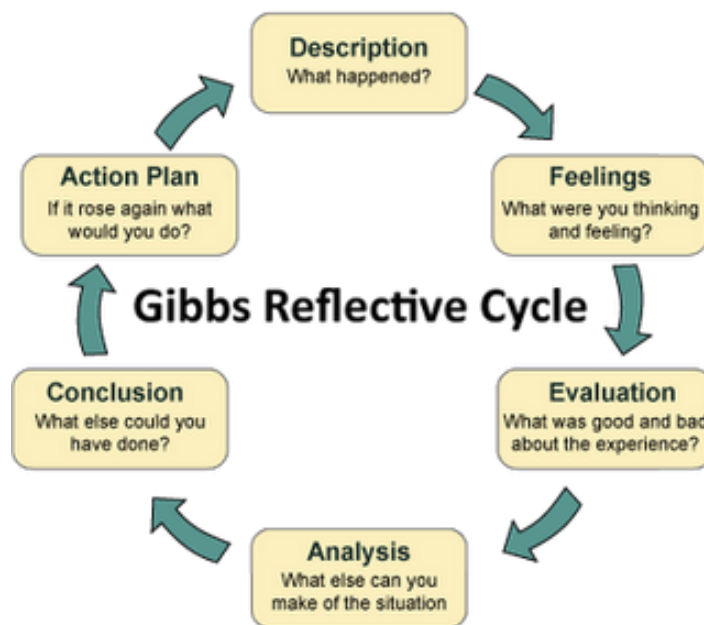
*'The Reflection Process in Context' (Boud et al 1985 pg 36).*

The model shows that the reflective process is cyclical in nature with clear stages, not independent of each other. The process of re-evaluating and re-examining experience through reflection can produce outcomes which may include changes to

attitudes, beliefs and values or emotional state. Outcomes may also be an increase in confidence, a slight behavioural change, use of new knowledge or the decision to engage in a future experience.

Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle (see figure 2.) is a more complex model and further builds upon Boud's (1985) model by developing the aspects of personal feelings and emotions within the cycle. Gibbs suggests that personal feelings influence the situation and how one begins to reflect upon it.

Figure 2.



Gibbs' Reflective Cycle.

(Image taken from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/learning/PDP-and-employability/pdp/reflective.html>)



Gibbs' reflective cycle suggests a clear process for reflection, taking into account the additional aspects of feelings and analysis, requiring the learner to engage in a deeper level of thinking; Boud's reflective cycle does not appear to make such demands upon the learner.

#### 2.14 Reflection and Experience

A response to an experience is unique and could include a learner's thoughts, feelings, actions at the time of the experience or conclusions and subsequent actions. Reflection can be private or completed as part of a group, it can be included as part of a lecture, fieldwork or workshop and can be successful or not (Boud et al 1985). Boud et al (1985) suggest that the capacity to reflect is different in each person; this may affect who would learn most effectively from experiential learning. Day (2014) emphasises the point that although the learner does not need to be able to process their information verbally, they may do this in other sensory ways. Learners do need to have some processing ability and that learners need to be actively involved in the process with the ability to reflect upon their experiences (Day 2014). This suggests that EFL may not be suitable for young children who have not yet developed such skills or for those children or young people who have learning difficulties and are unable to process or reflect upon information.

Boud et al (1985) argue that reflection forms the basis of activities in which learners engage to explore their experiences which can encourage them to develop new understandings. Reflection can of course be completed individually and unaided but can also be facilitated by those supporting learning. Pendry and Roeter (2013) suggest that children may be more willing to reflect on their behaviours with a horse

than a 'non-equine partner' and discuss the role that facilitators play during the EFL sessions, encouraging children to reflect upon their behaviour, thoughts, feelings and communication that they experienced whilst with the horse and how to transfer newly acquired skills when with other humans. The facilitators are not providing instruction or teaching during the reflection period; the process of learning has taken place whilst actively interacting with the horse and the subsequent processing and reflection upon that experience, which is assisted by the facilitator. The facilitator may be required to model reflection in cases where learners are unsure of how to begin to reflect, or do not understand what is expected of them during the reflection period (Gibbs 1988). Modelling reflection can help improve the quality of reflective process (Gibbs 1988) which may make for a more meaningful learning experience for the learner. However, Gibbs is also clear to point out that there has to be some independence from the learner here; facilitators cannot experience or reflect for the learner.

Kelly (2013) in his auto-ethnographic research into leadership development and EAL refers to Kolb's model of experiential learning, and suggests that in his experience, rather than the cyclical nature of reflection and the combination of personal and social knowledge being responsible for personal development, the EAL experience called into question the nature of 'the sense of who we are', which Kelly refers to as subjectivity. Kelly's experiences with the horses encouraged him to be reflective about who he had the potential to be, he describes the experience as being uncomfortable and resulting in a complex ontological encounter between himself and an animal.

## 2.15 Opportunities for Reflection

Pendry and Roeter (2013) also discuss the importance of non-vocal communication within interactions between equines and learners; whilst interacting with horses, children learn to recognise non-vocal communication cues that the horse gives, this could be a lick of the lips, pinning its ears back or a swish of the tail, which might indicate that a horse is not happy about something. This gives opportunity for discussion and reflection, with the support of the facilitator, providing feedback for the children about their own behaviour and being, evoking thoughts about how the learner might manage or change their own behaviour in the future to get a more desirable response from the horse, which may be licking its lips, yawning or resting its foot – all signs that a horse is happy and relaxed. As well as the reflective process being an individual or personal one, Frederick, Hatz and Lanning (2014) used group discussion as part of their EAL sessions to assess the impact of EAL on levels of hope and depression in at-risk adolescents. Participants were encouraged to share information with regards to what techniques they had tried during the activities, which seemed most effective and why and what the experience was like for them. There is no dialogue in the paper to reflect the nature of discussions or whether this impacted upon the children's learning, although the authors state that despite the brevity of the intervention, EAL sessions had an overall positive impact upon the participants. The authors acknowledge that self-report measures used within the research had limitations as truthful answers may not always be given and it was recognised that the small convenience sample used does not allow for generalisation. It is not clear from reading the research paper how much the process of reflection contributed to the findings, if at all.

Ewing et al (2007) refer to EFL as an experiential 'hands-on' approach however there is little reference made to the reflective process. It is not enough to simply have an experience in order to learn; without reflecting upon that experience it may be readily forgotten and would-be learning lost (Gibbs 1988). Ewing et al (2007) state that each session includes a 'circle time' in which participants discuss positive aspects of their programmes and individual goals for the day. It is not clear to what extent the circle time allowed opportunity for reflection, abstract conceptualisation or active experimentation as part of the learning process although it is stated that during circle time, positive components of the sessions and individual goals for the day were discussed and this could be considered as reflection.

As Day (2014) suggested, reflection does not always have to be verbalised through the spoken word. Dell et al (2011) provided opportunities for reflection for their research participants, a group of 15 males and females aged between 12 and 17, through the use of a journal. In this case, the reflective process was structured with the participants being given a series of questions to answer after each session. This method appeared to have its drawbacks however as the reflective journals were only completed by the females, the reason for this is not made clear in the research paper.

I am interested to find out how, if at all, the EFL sessions conducted for my research relate to the models of Kolb (1984), Boud et al (1985) and Gibbs (1988), and whether opportunities for reflective processes were provided.

## **2.16 The Emergence of the Research**

The initial exploration of previous research, as discussed, led me to believe that EFL provides a range of positive benefits for the children and young people with whom it has been used as an intervention. This initially led me to consider the question, 'what would happen if EFL was used for an intervention in a mainstream educational setting as opposed to a social work setting? Table 1 (page 36) shows the age range and educational setting of the participants identified in each study, and from this a gap in the literature has been identified – previous studies have not used participants aged 10 years and under or from a mainstream primary school setting. Literature I have examined so far often reflects positively upon psychosocial approaches and benefits; I am curious to find out whether I would expect to see similar positive effects if this intervention is used in a mainstream primary school.

## **2.17 The Research Questions**

The initial research question focusses upon the desire to explore more about EFL and children's experiences of it. In addition to this, I was intrigued to explore what impact, if any, EFL had upon the social and emotional experience and functioning of primary aged children. I was also keen to explore any impact that the EFL intervention had upon the school, including the views of the class teacher and TA. I felt it was important to try to ascertain whether the school considered the intervention worthwhile, effective and valued, as I believe that this information would guide the future development of EFL and its employment in schools.

The research was based upon the following questions:

1. What does the actual experience of EFL mean to the participants?
2. What has changed for the children as a result of the experience?
3. What is the school experience of EFL as an intervention?

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the methodology considered to be most suitable to the research questions. Multiple methods are considered alongside ethics, my own philosophical standpoint and personal reflexivity. I explore the assumptions my methodology makes about how the world and how I, as a researcher, fit within this.

Exploration of the current research and identification of both strengths and limitations within that research has influenced the methodological focus of my thesis. It is with this in mind that I wish to further explore the experiences of young people and potential impact on SEMH and friendships and contribute to the newly emerging knowledge and literature of EFL by using additional methods (sociogram and Boxall Profile) to complement the qualitative interviews and observational data. I also consider the age range of participants in EFL research to date; I intend to explore the experiences of EFL of younger children (primary aged) and discover any differences or similarities in emerging themes.

### **3.2 My Position as a Researcher**

Denscombe (2008) discusses the concept of communities of practice, in which those in a particular 'community' or group are brought together, through the need to work together with those who face similar questions or issues for which new knowledge is required. What brings the group together is a shared common purpose. Denscombe (2008) refers to communities of practice as research paradigms, although as such being different to paradigms linked to epistemology. In effect, I

have become a part of the community of practice for EFL practitioners and researchers through my involvement with HorseHeard and my immersion in this research. Denscombe (2008) suggests that social learning theory underpins communities of practice - the process acquiring knowledge is social and is learned through participation within the group. There is concern amongst academics that communities of practice may elevate practice based knowledge above more theoretical forms of knowledge (Denscombe 2008). Morgan (2007) highlights the preference Khun expressed (in his 1970 and 1974 publications) for a version of research paradigms embedded in practice and communities instead of ontological and epistemological beliefs. Although this research has emerged from practice and I position myself within the EFL community of practice, it is important as a researcher to determine my implicit and explicit beliefs about the nature of reality and to consider the consequences of such beliefs upon the research questions and the methods chosen to answer them. I am aware that because I have effectively positioned myself within the EFL community, my personal thoughts and beliefs about EFL may influence my thinking as a researcher. I was conscious of this issue so as to avoid bias in data collection and analysis.

### 3.3 Philosophical Underpinnings of the Research

My philosophical stance reflects the ideas discussed by Pring (2000); how we see the world depends upon the ideas we have inherited and that different social groups conceive the world differently. Pring (2000) argues that we create our own ontologies through our language of emotions and motives, intentions and aspirations, attitudes and feelings, rights and obligations and that these



constructions of reality are constantly reconstructed in the interactions between individuals and are affected by social and cultural traditions. Carr (2006) argues that the world around us shapes and influences who we are and that we cannot stand externally from it. My thoughts about the nature of being reflect a constructivist perspective and form the basis of my research processes and findings.

My ontological assumptions reflect the idea of multiple realities (relativist); I challenge the idea that we all see the world in the same way. A constructivist researcher's intent is to make sense of the meanings others have about the world and whilst doing so, develop a theory or pattern of meaning (Creswell 2014). If we do not all see the world in the same way and we each have our own unique interpretation of it then from a research perspective, how will this relate to how knowledge is created? What is true for one person might not appear true to another. I acknowledge that the participants may view the world differently to me, they may experience it differently to me also. Denscombe (2010) suggests that social research is always going to be influenced by the values and expectations of those undertaking the research. My interpretation of the children's experiences is based upon the way the children tell their stories and how I capture that information. My interpretation is also likely to be influenced by my own background and culture (Creswell 2014) giving rise to the issue of reflexivity. Researchers are part of the social world they study – they cannot completely be separated. The concepts, language, theories and ways of interpreting their own worlds are not completely separate from those they use for research purposes to describe and understand particular situations (Denscombe 2010). This has implications for interpretivist research because although interpreted knowledge is valuable for keeping us informed about what is going on in the world, we need to remember that the data we

receive is always someone else's; shared in terms of what they consider should be publicly available knowledge or what is privileged information (McNiff 2000).

The epistemological considerations that form the basis of my research are positioned within the interpretive paradigm; an emic approach. Interpretivism as an epistemology is subjective; it explores rich meanings and is concerned with understanding rather than explaining. Interpretivism regards knowledge of reality as something that is constructed rather than being discovered and only by interpreting the world do we come to know anything about it (Denscombe 2010). Knowledge is not external to people or objective, it is created by people from their own understanding of experience (McNiff 2000). Interpretive research is generally inductive, with theory being constructed from collected data (Cohen and Manion 1994). Qualitative methods are often associated with the interpretivist epistemology (Kalof and Dan 2008) although multiple methods such as interviews and participant observations can be used to establish different views of the situation (Williams 2003). Interpretive researchers set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them, working directly with experience and understanding to build their theory on them (Cohen and Manion 1994). Trauth (2001) discusses the researcher's 'theoretical lens' that is chosen to frame the investigation, that is, the ontological and epistemological assumptions made by the researcher. Philosophical assumptions situate my research within an interpretive framework. It is intended that my personal 'interpretive lens' and qualitative information will produce 'how' and 'why' information about the children's experiences of EFL in a particular context. The quantitative data that I collected fit into the interpretive lens because the methods used require subjective judgements to be made in order for the numerical data to be produced. Even though I position myself within an interpretive epistemology, the research

methods were chosen specifically because they answer the question. My beliefs about the reality of the social world mean that different groups of people might see and experience the world differently. This would suggest that the participants of my research will each, in some way, make sense of their personal experiences of EFL and there may be some aspects of the experiences that have shared interpretations, for example they might share the same feelings or thoughts about a particular experience.

The majority of EFL research I have identified to date sits within the qualitative, mixed method and experimental paradigms. Ewing, MacDonald, Taylor and Bowers (2007) suggest that the majority of research into EFL is qualitative and there is a need for more empirical studies. A review of Animal Assisted Activities (AAA) and Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) research by Holmes, Goodwin, Redhead and Goymour (2011) suggested that only 3% of sampled studies met the criteria for scientific validity. I aim to ensure validity in my research in several ways; firstly by ensuring I answer the research questions and by providing as honest, deep and rich account of data as possible. It is anticipated that the title of this research will reflect what has actually been done. Having considered the lack of empirical research within this field, it is intended that my research should add to the growing interest in this diverse and eclectic field. There does not appear to be one particular way of researching EFL, which supports my epistemological belief that different groups of people see the world in different ways. This, I believe, leaves me free to develop my research by determining the most effective means of investigation. I intend to contribute to the developing knowledge of EFL through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Adopting a positivist approach to research was considered at the planning stage of this research, however, reflection upon my own ontological

and epistemological beliefs would mean that such an approach would not sit comfortably with the sense of questions that I feel need to be asked and my philosophical views. My research will contribute to existent knowledge of EFL with young people but will add a new aspect by using primary aged children as participants.

### **3.4 Research Design**

In an attempt to develop a suitable design for the research, one question was of paramount importance; what types of data were necessary to meaningfully answer the research questions? I also needed to take into consideration a research design that would sit comfortably within my constructivist/interpretive philosophical assumptions. To study EFL within the context of a real life, time restrained intervention, and on such a small scale, required an exploratory case study approach and given the limited research base this is an appropriate approach to take. An exploratory approach to the research further enhances the depth and understanding of the qualitative data, allowing the research process to develop. The implications of this approach and its application to this research will be discussed in more detail later.

#### **3.4.1 Multiple Method Approach**

The nature of my research questions (questions that seek information about experience, impact and change), in my opinion, requires me to employ a suitable mixture of methods as I do not believe that I could find the answers to the three questions using a single method approach. The multiple method approach facilitates

the mixing and blending of data, which can provide a stronger understanding of the question (or in this case EFL) than either by itself (Creswell 2014). A study completed by Darbyshire, MacDougall and Schiller (2005) found that using multiple approaches to identify children's experiences was successful and complementary information was gained; it was considered unlikely that a single method would have uncovered some of the study's most important findings. West (2013) argues that choosing the right research methodologies is often confusing and that one approach is to start with the research question and select the methodology that best answers the question. My decision to use multiple methods sits comfortably within my interpretive epistemology because the methods I have chosen are largely subjective. Adopting a multiple method approach enables the use of a variety of methods appropriate for answering the research questions as suggested by West (2013) and will provide opportunity to collect as much information as possible within the research time frame.

The use of a mixture of methods is of great paradigmatic debate amongst academics, with differences in opinion regarding the distinctiveness of the methodology and its underlying philosophical assumptions. Whilst pragmatism is the paradigm generally seen as the philosophical partner for mixed methods research (Denscombe 2008), mixed methods could essentially be used with any paradigm (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006). Paradigm pluralism or the belief that a variety of paradigms may serve as the underlying philosophy for the use of mixed methods rejects the idea of one to one linkage of methods with paradigms (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2012). A constructivist researcher is most likely to rely on qualitative data collection methods and analysis or a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed methods) (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006). During the

quest to select the most appropriate methods for this research, I established the need to use methods that would allow me to explore the children's experiences of EFL and also explore possible impact of EFL upon the social, emotional and behavioural skills and friendships within the group including possible effects the EFL intervention may have had on the school as a whole. Trauth (2001) lists several factors influencing the choice of methods in qualitative research, some of which I discuss. Although Trauth's discussion is focussed around qualitative research, I found the points made helpful when considering methodological choice for my research. Trauth argues the nature of the research problem should be the most significant influence on the choice of a research methodology; identifying what one wants to learn determines how one should go about learning it. West's (2013) discussion on methodological choice also supports this point. Additionally, Rowlands (2005) argues what we want to learn will help define the research questions.

#### 3.4.2 Case Study Approach

The case study embraces different epistemological orientations (Yin 2014) hence accommodating the interpretivist perspective I have taken. Case study also allows for multiple methods of data collection (Robson 2002) and provides opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth (Bell 2008). Unlike research that is experimental for example, where a phenomenon is separated from its context to test variables, case study research involves the researcher deliberately observing the phenomenon within its contextual conditions (Yin 2014). In this research, I look into the concept of EFL as an intervention with a group of pre-selected Year 5 pupils,

exploring an authentic case of how EFL can be used. This adds validity to the study by giving a reasonable reflection of what EFL actually does within a four week time scale. As the concept of EFL remains a developing field and there is as yet, an under developed body of literature, the flexible nature of the case study approach allows for exploration and discovery of new theory and the generation of fresh descriptions of EFL as an intervention with children.

### 3.4.3 Exploratory Methods

Adopting an exploratory approach allows me to obtain a rich description of the children's experiences through the use of semi-structured interviews and photograph/video elicitation. Photographs/video taken during each EFL session were presented to the children on a laptop during the interview stage for each child to browse through and select photographs that are meaningful to them. To give a fuller picture of the effectiveness of EFL and in an attempt to answer the second and third research questions, semi-structured interviews with the Head teacher, class teacher and Year 5 teaching assistant (TA) and the two quantitative methods were used post intervention. There is no such thing as 'the perfect interview' (Westcott and Littleton 2005), however, an interview which is child focussed, and has greater conceptual clarity on behalf of the researcher, is likely to result in a 'good' interview where the child feels able to participate (Westcott and Littleton 2005). Morrow and Richards (1996) cited in Clark and Statham (2005) argue that to answer questions about children's experiences, the primary source of knowledge should be the child, him or herself, and that this is not intended to undermine the role of adults with particular professional expertise. It is important that the interviewer and interviewee

develop a trusting relationship and a shared, co-constructed, meaningful context for their interaction; creative or challenging responses should be explored for greater understanding to avoid difficulties interpreting responses at a later date (Westcott and Littleton 2005).

#### 3.4.4 Multiple Method Selection

It is important that the research design incorporates methods that facilitate the participation of children, helping them to communicate their experiences. The methods used to co-construct data will be appropriate to an exploratory participatory approach useful for investigating experiences. It is intended that this approach will clarify, describe and determine the underpinnings of this intervention as it is experienced by the participants. The purpose and aim of the research is to explore the concept of EFL centred primarily upon the experiences of children using a mixture of research methods including semi-structured interviews, photograph elicitation, field notes, Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Haskayne 2007) and a friendship mapping diagram referred to as a 'sociogram'. Both of the latter methods will be described in detail below. I found my choice of methods was partly influenced by the school; both the Boxall Profile and sociogram were already used by the staff and were readily accessible to me for use.

Using appropriate qualitative and visual methods, meanings/themes essential to the experience of the participants will be discovered through thematic analysis, developing a deeper and greater understanding of EFL in all its complexity within the context of school and young people. The process of thematic analysis will allow for a clear, consistent and transparent approach to data analysis in which 'thematic



analysis' refers to the process of analysing data according to commonalities, relationships and differences (Gibson and Brown 2009). Qualitative research prefers data in the form of words, text and images and is considered better suited to gaining understanding and depth of the subtleties and complexities of the social world (Denscombe 2010). Trauth (2001) argues that the researcher's level of skill, knowledge and experience in using qualitative research methods is an important influence when deciding whether or not to use them. I have previously used semi-structured interviews in the context of a case study and I am aware of the time, planning and analysis required when employing this method. I consider knowledge and skills gained through a teaching background, working with children with SEMH difficulties influences, to some degree, the perspective I have upon this intervention.

There is a place however for quantitative methods in this research; using the Boxall Profile and sociogram can enhance the information gained through qualitative means and add a richer dimension to the findings. I consider both these methods to be quantitative in their approach because of the numerical or categorical data they produce and the analytical techniques required such as counting, comparing or statistical analysis (Symonds and Gorard 2010). The sociogram is an easily accessible tool that can be used by non-experts, to measure perceived changes in friendships, peer or social acceptance. The use of this particular tool within this research may help to identify changes in friendships or peer relationships within the group, as issues with peer relationships and friendships were one of the key points mentioned by the Head teacher for participant selection. The HorseHeard intervention aimed to improve friendships and peer relationships so the sociogram was considered an appropriate choice. In addition, the sociogram allows the participation of the whole class in the creation of friendship mapping data, allowing

for analysis of friendship patterns not only from the research participant's perspective but also from the perspectives of their classmates.

The Boxall Profile is often used by primary school practitioners to measure change and progress in social, emotional or behavioural skills pre and post intervention and is used regularly by the participating school, meaning that I had ready access to the resource and teachers with knowledge of how to use it. The use of the Boxall Profile in this research may help to identify changes as perceived by the class teacher in the children's social, emotional or behavioural traits following the intervention. Both methods although reliant upon the input of subjective data (which fits within my epistemological stance), give pre and post intervention measurable data allowing another aspect of the impact of the intervention to be explored. Subjective data (subjective because it is based upon people's opinions and perceptions) collected will give an additional view point to the research by means of quantitative data, allowing the identification of possible changes to friendships and social, emotional or behavioural difficulties albeit on a small scale. Other available school based quantitative data that could have been included in the research was pupil attendance figures, however this was disregarded as it was felt that the participants attendance was not a current cause for concern with the participants rarely being absent from school.

It is intended that the methods selected for this research will provide opportunity for children to give individual and unique accounts of their experience. The children's responses will in essence reflect socially constructed perceptions of reality based upon interactions within the social environment presented to them during the intervention. These perceptions of realities are created through the way the children interpret and give meaning to their experiences (Denscombe 2007). Researcher's

own limited interpretations of what counts as good or appropriate responses during interviews can mean that often creative responses given by children are overlooked (Westcott and Littleton 2005). I believed that over the four weeks I had built up a positive relationship with the children which I considered helped them to relax during the interviews. I encouraged freedom and openness of speech and believed the children were open and honest with their responses to me. I attempted to see their point of view and tried not to dismiss things they said that might not have seemed relevant to me at the time.

### 3.5 Participation of the Children

In recent years there has been much interest in listening to what children and young people have to say. Children and young people are involved in the research process for many different reasons (Kirkby, Lanyon, Kronin and Sinclairl 2003 cited in Lewis and Porter 2007) and it could be argued that the research may be more meaningful and have greater validity in revealing children's views and experiences (Lewis and Porter 2007) although Holland, Renold, Ross and Hillman (2008) argue that there is no systematic evidence to support this view. It is anticipated that the children participating in my research will be able to demonstrate what they have learned, if anything, through the use of appropriate data collection methods. With this in mind, an exploratory approach to this research was considered suitable, using semi-structured interviews with photograph and video elicitation and sociograms to gather data that would reflect the experiences of each child.

There are of course differing opinions surrounding the use of participatory research with children; Gallagher and Gallagher (2008) suggest that whilst participatory

methods appear attractive and fail safe, they are no better or worse than other methods and are not without problems. Gallagher and Gallagher (2008) challenge the idea that participatory research empowers children as researchers and gives them agency. The concept of 'how much' children participate in research is often determined by the research methods chosen and is something the child has little say about. For example, are they given managed tasks with clear boundaries explaining what counts as participation, as opposed to being given unmanaged, unstructured tasks where the outcomes may be spontaneous and unpredictable? This challenges the extent to which children are empowered if researchers take a didactic approach to participatory methods. Critics of participatory research have argued that 'who' takes part in participatory research can sometimes be restricted to children who are articulate and able to express their emotions or those who do not fit into the norms of good social behaviour (Pupavac 2002 cited in Davis 2007). If this is so, are researchers who make such selections implying that children who do not behave in socially acceptable ways or who experience difficulty communicating do not have anything of relevance to contribute? If participatory research is perceived to be able to access the perspectives of children being researched rather than the perspectives of the adult researchers (Gallagher and Gallagher 2008) then the overall approach to the research and methods chosen to do so would have to be carefully considered in relation to participant's abilities and age. I argue that language used during such activities would also need to be considered, for example in relation to specific instructions given, wording on resources or questioning during interviews to reflect the participant's abilities and age. These arguments bring to light the thought that participatory methods might not guarantee specific data that the researcher anticipates, especially if the concepts of who and how much are ignored. In this

research I was mindful of how I presented myself to the children during the sessions and of the language I used with them, especially during the interviews and this is reflected in section 3.11.6.

### 3.6 Generalisation

One of the common criticisms of case study research is that findings cannot be generalised (Bryman 2008) and this can be a barrier to researchers doing case studies. One problem with case studies in particular is that they are conducted with a limited number of persons and in specific contexts (Larsson 2009). Bassegy (1999) argues that there are two types of generalisation that can be applied to social science research; statistical generalisation and fuzzy generalisation. Statistical generalisation, a quantitative measure, enables us to claim that if something holds for a sample, then it should hold for the population. Fuzzy generalisation, a qualitative measure, arises from studies of singularities and generally claims that it is likely, unlikely or possible that what is found in the singularity would be found in similar situations elsewhere (Bassegy 1999). A fuzzy generalisation reports that a particular thing has happened in one place and it may also happen elsewhere; there is a possibility but no guarantee. This idea of fuzzy generalisation is similar to Larsson's (2009) context generalisation in which it is suggested that generalisation can be made through context similarity. In the case of this research, context similarity would suggest that this study may be generalised to other mainstream primary schools. Larsson (2009) argues that the audience is often in the best position to judge the similarity of a context, for example a school, with the one portrayed in the research and that the role of the researcher is to describe the

context well enough so the audience can then decide whether a context they know about is similar to the one researched. This links to Denscome's (2010) argument that with case studies with smaller samples, where a representative sample is not claimed, sufficient detail needs to be given about the nature of the units and the process of their selection. Denscombe's argument brings to light the idea of transferability, that is, how the findings might relate to other situations. In interpretative research such as this, transferability is achieved through thick description and in this research, I attempted to give the reader clear and detailed descriptions of the research context, methods and findings aiding both generalisability and transferability. Case study research allows a researcher to study something in particular at an in-depth level, with the aim of increasing understanding of said case. With this in mind, I question if generalisation of the case study to other mainstream schools is useful to future research? From a professional point of view and for those considering the use of EFL, to know the impact of EFL and how it might help children in a particular establishment would be of benefit. Further exploration of EFL might profit from research that looks at the impact or influences of EFL in a wide range of educational contexts not just mainstream schools.

### 3.7 Validity and Reliability

The question of validity and reliability in research is an important one. Validity relates to the quality of the data. Data needs to be detailed enough for the purposes of the research; researchers need to ask the right questions to get the answers they need. In other words, researchers need to ensure that the methods they use accurately reflect the concept they are investigating (Denscombe 2010). Reliability

is concerned with the quality of the methods used and the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions (Bell 2008). Creswell (2014) suggests several strategies helpful in enhancing validity in research, in particular, triangulation which has been utilised in this study. Triangulation is the use of different data sources to build a coherent justification for themes. This research utilised multiple methods to collect data: semi-structured interviews, Boxall Profile and sociogram. By using triangulation it is anticipated that validity and reliability of the data presented will be enhanced. The aim of reliability is also to minimise errors and biases in a study (Yin 1994). Creswell (2014) argues that a researcher's self-reflection creates an honest and open narrative that resonates well with the reader. I have attempted to identify and make known to the reader my risks of bias through an honest approach in my writing and also through the sampling process which is discussed in the next section. In an attempt to reduce error, prior to data analysis all interviewees were given copies of their post intervention and follow up interview transcripts to read through and they were asked if the transcripts were an accurate reflection of what was said. It is hoped that that by including respondent validation (all participants and TA interviews) into the process of data collection, potential data recording errors will be reduced and a more authentic data set will be produced.

### 3.8 Sampling/Identifying Participants

Research such as case study depends on small samples that are purposively selected. In purposive sampling, researchers generally pick the cases to be included on the basis of their typicality, building up a sample that meets specific needs

(Cohen and Manion 1994). If researchers were to use random sampling as an alternative for example in an interview study, then there would be a risk of the most common responses being well represented and less representation of the more unusual answers (Larsson 2009). Sampling should be based upon what is already known and what is needed next in order to further develop understanding of the phenomenon (Larsson 2009). The sample scheme and design of this research reflects the complementary purpose of the mixed method approach. Identical samples are used for both the qualitative and quantitative data collection phases in a sequential mixed method design. This 'frequent combination' data scheme of non-random qualitative and non-random quantitative samples is considered most commonly used in mixed methods research (Onwuegbuzie and Collins 2007).

In this research, the sample was selected with the support and judgement of the Head teacher and the Year 5 class teacher. Prior to participant selection, discussions took place with the Head teacher during which I explained my requirements with regards to suitable partakers in the research. I asked for children whom were known to have SEMH difficulties. I believed it was important that I clearly explained the nature of the research to the Head teacher to support participant selection. In addition to this, the Head teacher and the class teacher agreed to participate in their own EFL taster session with HorseHeard, along with other members of the school staff and parents if they wished, in an attempt to encourage understanding of what the participants might experience.

Following the taster session, it was agreed that the Head teacher would liaise with the Year 5 class teacher to select a group of six children whom they considered would meet my requirements and talk to parents/guardians about participation. The children were identified by the school as having difficulty moving along in the



development of appropriate social skills. From the professional perspective of both the Head and class teacher, other methods normally used in school such as circle time and friendship groups had not worked and the novel approach of EFL had not been tried before. The children were unknown to me and I had no prior knowledge of their personalities, achievements or relationships with peers so I was not involved in the selection process at this stage.

Key factors considered by the Head teacher and class teacher when selecting the children were:

- Level of confidence – pupils who were considered to lack confidence in themselves, in comparison to other children in the year group, for a variety of reasons including creating and maintaining friendships.
- Relationships with peers – four of the pupils selected were considered by the Head teacher to be in a close friendship group together but were often falling out, struggling to see each other's point of view. The children were considered at times to be vying for leadership roles within their small group and using name calling and put downs to gain the upper hand.

In this case, there were limitations to the sampling process including time and resources. The sample size was restricted to 6 children as a result of two factors; cost per participant and limits to group sizes of the HorseHeard sessions (sessions were limited to 6 children). The decision about the size of the project was not only limited by the above factors but also by the need to keep within the scope of a small-scale exploratory study whilst providing sufficient data to enable in depth analysis. Sampling for the project was done knowing that the children might not be

representative of the wider populations in all schools, however they are likely to be similar to children in mainstream schools with SEMH difficulties.

Year 6 children were not considered suitable to participate because they were busy preparing for their Standard Attainment Tests and were not permitted time out of school. In discussion with the Head teacher and HorseHeard, it was agreed that Year 5 children should be chosen to participate if possible because of their physical size. Year 5 children are usually larger and potentially stronger than younger year groups, and because the EFL programme involved being with horses, this meant the Year 5's were more likely to be able to physically manage the activities. The participants would need to be available to leave school once per week for two hours. The children would also need to be available for pre intervention meetings with me and post intervention interviews. The children would also need to be free from allergies to horses and hay. One advantage to this method of selection is that researcher bias, which is often common with purposive sampling, would be reduced as I was not part of the selection process. However, having such a small purposive sample may limit the results to the study as other children that may have benefited from the intervention and contributed interesting responses would be excluded from the research. Adopting a different sampling approach may well have yielded different results.

I chose not to interview parents as part of the data gathering process for two reasons; firstly the research is focussed on a school setting and was not looking at the wider impact of EFL on the home and family and secondly, if I had decided to include parents' views I might have experienced issues accessing parents who work full time and also considering my own work commitments.

The Head teacher, Year 5 class teacher and the Year 5 TA were also approached by me to ask if they would be willing to be interviewed as part of the research process. I was interested to explore the views of the adults who came into contact with the children on a daily basis. It was anticipated that this information may contribute to data required to answer the third research question, 'What is the school experience of EFL as an intervention?'

### 3.9 Ethical Considerations

Issues such as informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality are most discussed in literature on ethics in childhood studies. Other issues often discussed include power relations, child protection and factors such as limited linguistic capabilities of young children may present difficulties, especially in respect to informed consent (Gallagher 2009). Ethics is concerned with the principles of right or wrong conduct. Greig and Taylor (1999) argue that researchers should act morally and in a way that does not harm those involved. Researchers should make known to participants any predictable detriment arising from the process or results of the research (BERA 2011). I considered that this research study was unlikely to cause harm, be that emotional or physical, to the participants involved and prior to commencing my project, ethical approval and relevant consents were gained from the following:

- Newcastle University Ethics Committee
- Head teacher of the participating school
- Parents/Carers of the participants
- Participants

### 3.9.1 Informed Consent

This involves gaining consent from the children themselves, rather than obtaining proxy consent from the adult gatekeepers and is increasingly recognised by researchers. Informed consent generally has four main principles (Gallagher 2009);

1. Consent involves some verbal or written agreement.
2. Participants can only consent if they are informed about and understand something of the nature, purpose and likely consequences of the research. It is common for researchers to prepare a leaflet explaining the research in simple language to appeal to children and there are generally verbal discussions about the research.
3. Consent must be given voluntarily without pressure.
4. Consent must be renegotiable and children must be free to withdraw at any point during the project.

Heath, Brooks, Cleaver and Ireland (2009) argue that it may be necessary to conduct research with young people obtaining assent only – there may not be sufficient time allowed to explain the purposes of research in a way that enables the young people to fully understand what they are involved in and therefore they are not able to give genuine informed consent. It is likely that the gatekeepers of young people in schools will insist upon parental consent as this is actively encouraged by the Department for Education and Skills. Parental consent is considered necessary in addition to a child's consent if the child is under 16 (Heath, Brooks, Cleaver and Ireland 2009).

Once the children had been selected, I met with them in school to talk about my research, what they would be expected to do and to ask them if they were interested and willing to participate. The children were given the option to withdraw without question or consequence. For the purposes of this research both parental and participant written consent was sought. Time was allocated to the teachers, parents and participants to explain the research process and requirements and to answer

any questions that may have arisen during the discussion. After discussion with the Head teacher of the school and the participants, I considered the Year 5 pupils both competent and capable of signing the consent form (see Appendix 2 – Participant Consent Form).

Kellet (2010) argues that it is important for participants to know exactly what they are consenting to and understand what is involved and that there is a responsibility on the researcher to explain using language that the child can understand, also highlighting any risks or problems associated with the study. The ideal scenario would be to provide people with sufficient understanding so they can make a reasonable judgement for themselves about whether they wish to participate (Hammersley and Traianou 2012). Care was taken at this stage to ensure that the participants and their parents or carers were fully informed and had understood the nature of the research.

### 3.9.2 Confidentiality/Anonymity

Guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality are generally considered important principles of research ethics. Anonymity refers to the protection of the identity of individuals, confidentiality refers to a 'between you and me' approach – a promise not to pass on specific details pertaining to a person's life to others (Heath et al 2009). Anonymity is usually the default position in research however young people might state that they would like to use their own names in the research. This may have consequences and the researcher may have to deal with these (Heath et al 2009). Anonymity may allow for the young person to be totally free and honest in their responses. A disregard for anonymity may compromise the quality of data that

is generated (Heath et al 2009). Anonymisation does afford participants privacy and confidentiality which encourages participation (Farrimond 2013). It is more difficult to anonymise video or photographic data (Kellet 2010) and data ought to be destroyed once all the analysis is complete. In addition, it can be difficult to maintain anonymity with the use of the internet; search engines have made it possible to search quotes and trace them back to their original source (Farrimond 2013). In this research, to protect the identity of the participants, the children were asked to choose a pseudonym by which they would be referred. We talked about what it meant to be anonymous and I explained how no one reading about the project in the future would know who they were. The children seemed happy with the thought of being anonymous participants and enjoyed thinking up alternative names for themselves.

Confidentiality issues are often discussed in research ethics and confidentiality in research encompasses its own difficulties. Researchers in the UK have a duty of care under the 1989 Children Act to report instances where they believe a young person is in danger or are likely to cause danger to others (Heath et al 2009). Researchers have a responsibility to inform young people that under such circumstances they will be obliged to breach their promise of confidentiality (Heath et al 2009).

### 3.9.3 Child Protection

If a child discloses harm or abuse to a practitioner or researcher it is often seen as ethically necessary to breach confidentiality in order to prevent further harm from taking place. The child could see this as a breach of trust (Gallagher 2009). Harm could not only be physical, but also emotional or mental for example, talking about

bullying could stir up feelings of anxiety or depression (Kellet 2010). Disclosure was discussed with the children during our initial meetings. I explained that if at any time the children informed me that they were being harmed or abused, or at risk of, that I would have to tell the Head teacher. We had a conversation to define what might be meant by harm or abuse to ensure that the children had a sufficient understanding of what the terms meant and had opportunity to ask questions. I obtained a copy of the school's Child Protection Policy so I was aware of the procedures to follow if such an occasion of disclosure occurred. I was fortunate that during the research process there were no incidents that required me to implement the Child Protection Policy.

#### 3.9.4 Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 1988 ensures that any personally identifiable data held by researchers is stored appropriately. Participants have legal rights to access this data if they so wish and to have it stored securely (Farrimond 2013). As previously discussed, photographic and video data ought to be destroyed once the data analysis is complete (Kellet 2010). Examples of good practice of data protection include; protecting data by storing it in a locked cabinet or as an online password protected document, storing online data securely, not sending personal data by insecure means, getting consent from participants for data use (Farrimond 2013).

During this project, several sources of data were used including digital camera/video footage, Dictaphone audio files, handwritten field notes, Microsoft Word documents, Boxall Profile spreadsheets and sociogram data. A data management plan was developed to identify sources of data and how the data would be stored during the research process. Information regarding the storing and destroying of data at the

end of the project was presented in the form of the Project Information Sheet (see Appendix 3) and the Data Management Plan (see Appendix 4). Both these documents were sent to parents before the start of the project. The project information sheet aims to explain the exact nature of the research, its aims and purpose. It also includes information about who might benefit from the findings, data storage, contact details and practical information. At the end of the project, data in the form of notes, photos, video and audio files were destroyed as agreed in the consent form/Project Information sheet (Appendix 3). The anonymised transcripts and spreadsheets will be archived in Figshare and assigned a DOI to aid their discovery and potential future reuse.

#### 3.9.5 Relationship Building

Building relationships with children prior to research may encourage participation. This could be achieved through assent, as opposed to consent (Cocks 2006 cited in Tisdall et al 2009), involving the negotiation of participation through patient, sensitive, non-verbal communication and relationship building. This however could be challenging if time is limited to build relationships prior to research.

Greig and Taylor (1999) believe the main gatekeepers for doing research with children are the parents and in light of this it is important to build up relationships with parents. It is also suggested that the use of good manners contributes towards the development of successful relationships and gaining trust of the parents. Fortunately I was afforded such an opportunity to meet with parents (if they wished to meet me) during the EFL taster session. I attempted to build a relationship with the children through my initial visits to school and I adopted a friendly and relaxed



approach towards the children. My background in teaching means that I am confident in both being around and speaking to children. Punch (2002) suggests that children are not used to being able to express their views freely or be taken seriously because of their position in an adult dominated society, and that the challenge to researchers is how best to enable children to express their views to the best of their ability to an adult researcher during data gathering. During the initial 'getting to know you' phase, I distanced myself from being a part of the school by allowing the participants to call me by my first name. By doing so it was anticipated that the children would be honest and open with me in their responses and feel free to tell me what they think and feel, in a way they may not talk to adults who they consider teachers or part of the school environment.

#### 3.9.6 Power Relationships

It is often the case in educational research that there is a risk of unequal power relationships between adult researchers and child participants. Power relationships between children and adults are largely linked to cultural practices (Kellett 2010). Children spend a great deal of their time in the school environment, which is one of the most governed environments outside of the child's home. It is difficult in this environment for a child to have their voice heard (Kellett 2010). In this research the children were taken out of school for the EFL sessions to an unfamiliar environment to work with adults that were not classed as teachers. The children were also encouraged to call the horse handlers and EFL practitioners by their first names, creating a more relaxed and informal atmosphere without the teacher-pupil feel. The children were encouraged to speak and express their thoughts during the sessions,

and on most occasions were given freedom of choice to determine activities. By allowing the children to refer to me by my first name I attempted to address the power imbalance previously referred to; I hoped to build a rapport with the participants by almost treating them as adults in the research.

The contention that adults have power over children has significant bearing on the control they exercise over how children's views are accessed and therefore on how research about children is conducted and received (Kellet 2010). In my experience, the balance of power became more significant during the interview process. I attempted to keep a relaxed feel during the interviews; we sat in comfy chairs in the library, I offered the children a drink, we chatted before-hand to ease any nervousness and the children continued to speak to me as Rebecca. However, the fact that we were present in a school environment, the children were coming out of lessons to have interviews and they were wearing their school uniforms to participate in the research seemed to encourage the almost automatic division of power.

### 3.9.7 Rights

To incorporate the rights of the child within the research a participant information sheet was produced and given to the children. We read through the sheet together as a group during one of the initial sessions to ensure that they children had opportunity to develop awareness and understanding of their rights. The child should be made aware that they can say 'no' or 'stop' or 'pass' at any time and that their care relating to the research will not change if they refuse to join in or drop out altogether and that they do not need to say why (Farrell 2005). During the getting to know you sessions exit points were discussed and I endeavoured to ensure that all

the participants understood that they could withdraw from the research at any time. In addition, we talked about 'who' the participants could talk to if at any time they felt upset by the research, as suggested by Farrell (2005).

### 3.9.8 Debriefing

Debriefing is a term used in psychological and behavioural research and involves giving information to the participants after the data collection has been completed (Farrimond 2013). This could be written or verbal feedback; written feedback is often used when there has been an element of deception in the research. Although I do not consider any deception to have occurred to obtain my data, I felt it was an appropriate and polite gesture to write to the participants and their parents. At the end of the data collection stage, the interviews were member checked by the participants and the TA. Additionally, I wrote a letter to the participants and their parents, thanking them for taking part in the project and giving them a brief overview of my initial thoughts and findings from the research. The letter also included my contact details and what to do if they require any further information. Debriefing allows the participants or parents opportunity to offer feedback to the researcher as well as developing an insight into the outcomes of the research. Participants might wish to discuss particular issues associated with the data collection process which could be addressed by the researcher in future. In my experience, the debriefing process was a time for reflection and closure, not just for the participants but also for myself; I felt quite sad that my visits to school and interaction with the children had come to an end as I had thoroughly enjoyed this stage of my project.

### **3.10 The Research Context**

Locating a school was not as easy as I had imagined. Several local primary schools were contacted by telephone to ask if they would be interested in taking part in the research project. I experienced difficulties accessing Head teachers; in most instances the telephone is answered by the school secretary and in some cases the pupils, to be told that the Head teacher is unavailable and could I leave a message. I left several messages and my calls were not returned. Eventually, I contacted a school who sounded keen to be involved in my project. After an initial meeting with the Head teacher to discuss project details such as costs and timetabling, the school agreed to participate.

The school is a smaller than average, suburban mixed community primary, with 206 pupils on roll. The socio-economic data supplied by the local authority indicates the school has a mixed catchment with the overall school deprivation indicator being in the 20<sup>th</sup> – 40<sup>th</sup> percentile. There are seven, single-age classes, 8.7% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The percentage of pupils with SEN is in line with the national average at 9.7% (Government Digital Service 2014).

#### **3.10.1 Meeting the children**

Prior to data collection a meeting was held with the head teacher to discuss the intentions of the research. The class teacher was also made aware of the dates and times that firstly I would be visiting school to meet the children and secondly, the agreed dates and times of which the EFL sessions would take place. I met the children several times prior to commencing sessions to build a relationship with

them, in an attempt to encourage participation and understanding of the research as discussed in Clark, Lang, Tiplady and Woolner (2013). During these sessions we chatted and got to know each other, we talked about hobbies, interests, our favourite foods and holidays. In one session the children made name badges; they were asked to think of a pseudonym by which they would be referred to in the thesis. This provoked a discussion surrounding ethics and anonymity. The children enjoyed inventing ideas for names and had fun decorating their badges. They were encouraged to ask questions and I answered honestly and openly about the research and informed them of what would be expected.

Another session involved the children getting used to the video camera and the digital Dictaphone. We took turns at introducing ourselves whilst speaking into the microphone. This was fun, initially the children giggled and were embarrassed, especially when we played back our recordings and listened to our own voices. The children enjoyed this session and laughed throughout much of it. Engaging in this activity allowed the children opportunity to experience being recorded and to overcome any anxieties surrounding this prior to being recorded during the sessions or interviews. It was intended that when the children were recorded during the intervention they would be familiar with the equipment and not distracted or upset by it.

The final time I met with the children was to discuss the matter of consent and informed choice, and to ask the would-be participants to sign consent forms (see Appendix 2). The consent forms included the children's agreement to be photographed and videoed during the EFL sessions. I met with the children as a group and we talked about the consent form and discussed what it meant. I ensured that all the children understood why it was important they gave their consent if they

wished to take part in the project. The children were given opportunity to withdraw at this stage if they so wished. They were also reminded that they could withdraw from the project at any time without penalty and we discussed how they could do so. We discussed issues such as what to wear on your feet, remembering to bring a coat and I answered practical questions about needing the toilet, not feeling well and needing time out.

The school agreed to transport the children to and from the equestrian venue. The children were accompanied by one TA, who remained with them for the duration of each session. The equestrian venue was located approximately three miles from the school. The hire of the indoor arena and two suitable horses per session was organised by HorseHeard. The equestrian venue also supplied qualified horse handlers to accompany each horse during the sessions, to ensure that the children remained safe at all times and if for any reason there was a problem, the horse could be easily and quickly removed from the arena.

Prior to the start of the EFL sessions, the class teacher completed the pre intervention Boxall Profile and administered the sociogram (friendship map) for the participants. Both these methods will later be discussed in more detail.

### 3.10.2 The Equine Facilitated Learning Sessions

HorseHeard agreed to support the research project and provide EFL sessions however, it was necessary to find funding to cover costs including hire of equestrian venue including suitable horses and staff costs. Staff costs included the employment of two EFL facilitators and two horse handlers per session. HorseHeard agreed to

source funding and submitted a successful application to the Big Lottery Fund. The school was also asked for a contribution towards costs.

The children participated in the EFL sessions for two hours per week over a period of four weeks. The children followed HorseHeard's 'Being Friends' programme, which is an established EFL programme written and developed by HorseHeard for use with both primary and secondary aged children. The programme can be adapted to meet the needs of specific schools, age groups and time frames. For the purposes of this research, due to limited funding and time restraints, four sessions were planned.

Each session was structured to allow time for half an hour introductory classroom based discussion and learning, an hour's work with the horses and half an hour classroom based plenary for discussion and reflection at the end. Each session had a different focus and reflection and consolidation during the plenary would inform the next part of the programme. The focus of each session as described by HorseHeard was as follows:

1. Welcome and introductions – 'Senses, Similarities and Differences' - looking at our senses and those of horses, what keeps us safe, similarities and differences (it's ok to be different), getting to know the horses.
2. 'Friendships, Maintenance and Boundaries' – what is a friend?, what qualities are needed to be a friend? Respectful relationships.
3. 'Feelings and Managing Emotions' – to recognise our own and others feelings, to discuss emotional vocabulary, recognising feelings in horses.
4. Teamwork and Celebration – to experience working together as a team, to acknowledge children's own learning, progress and achievement.

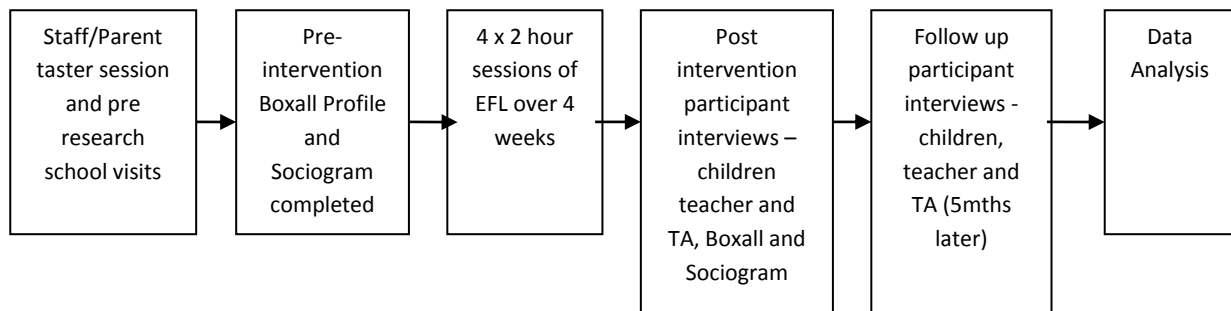
The sessions included a variety of classroom based activities including discussions, games and written tasks. The children were given opportunity to speak, ask questions and be heard. A behaviour agreement established during the introduction session meant that the children had clear boundaries with regards to behaviour and mutual respect; the children themselves identified which rules they wanted to be included in the agreement, this meant that the children had some ownership of the agreement and were more likely to abide by it. The agreement was displayed on the classroom wall, in clear view during each session.

Arena based activities included opportunities to groom and get to know the horses, individual tasks, group tasks, leading a horse with and without a head collar and obstacle courses. The children were divided into two groups of three when working with the horses. Each group worked with a different horse and a different facilitator for each session. The children had some choice as to which group, horse and facilitator they worked with each week. The two groups worked at different ends of the arena, each with a facilitator, horse and a horse handler. The TA floated between the two groups to offer support as necessary. At the end of the arena session, the children returned to the classroom to share their experiences.

After the fourth session had been completed and the children had time to settle back in class, the class teacher completed the post intervention Boxall Profile and administered the sociogram. The results were collated ready for analysis. The children received certificates in the school assembly in recognition of their participation in the HorseHeard programme. They were also awarded a HorseHeard key ring to keep as a reminder of the time they spent with the horses. The flow chart below summarises the research process.



## Summary of The Research Process



### **3.11 Research Methods Used**

#### 3.11.1 The Boxall Profile

The Boxall profile provides a framework for the assessment of children who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and is often used within Nurture Group interventions to measure significant gains and impact (Shaver and McClatchley 2013). One might assume that this form of data collection sits uncomfortably with the interpretivist paradigm in which I situate myself, however, it does not. The quantitative data produced is a result of judgements based upon subjective information provided by the class teacher. The data produced indicates where the child sits in relation to average scores in a sample of competently functioning children in five age groups from 3 years 8 months to 8 years. In this research, it is anticipated that the Boxall profile will measure the impact of EFL intervention upon the SEMH needs of the participant group. It could be argued that the use of the Boxall Profile supports the educational and social inclusion of children with SEMH difficulties through identifying specific developmental and diagnostic strands that may provide a barrier to learning and social participation. Cooper (2004) argues that

Marjorie Boxall, creator of the Boxall Profile, has a very useful way of conceptualizing what is at the heart of educational inclusion by referring to the 'organisation of experience'. This particular strand of the Boxall Profile focusses upon a set of five subskills; gives purposeful attention, participates constructively, connects up experiences, shows insightful involvement and engages cognitively with peers. Cooper (2004) states that children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties often have difficulties with some or all of these skills. It is proposed that through a pre intervention assessment, any such difficulties would be highlighted within the participant's scores and post intervention assessment would reflect any impact the intervention may have had.

The Boxall profile is considered appropriate for use in this research as it can be completed fairly quickly by staff or those who work closely with the children. The school already have access to the resource including staff trained in its application meaning there were no additional costs. Sometimes, the Boxall Profile can be used to create individual tailor made intervention programmes for each child relating to the specific outcomes for each strand as highlighted by the assessment. In this case, the intervention was delivered to the group as a whole with no prior knowledge of the participant's Boxall Profile results. Because the facilitators were unaware of the results this meant the participants were less likely to be compartmentalised and the delivery of the programme was not influenced by the pre-intervention scores.

### 3.11.2 Sociogram (Friendship Mapping)

'Friendship Mapping' (sociogram) is often used in Social Network Analysis and is founded in the field of sociometry, developed by Jacob Levi Moreno in 1934 to analyse interpersonal emotive relationships within a group (Leung and Siberling 2006). Sociometry is a way of measuring the degree of peer relationships among

people; in this research, the sociogram is used as a method to measure the impact of EFL upon the development of friendships of the participants within their class peers. Measurement of relatedness can be useful not only in the assessment of behaviour within groups, but also for interventions to bring about positive change and for determining the extent of change (Hoffman 2001). Sociometric data have been collected to assess the effects of interventions aimed at improving children's social status of social skills (Jiang and Cillessen 2005). The technique can be employed to identify individuals within a group with leadership skills or particular social skills, although it has perhaps been most widely used in studies of friendship patterns (Fontana 1995). Researchers often use sociometric techniques to assess peer acceptance of which there are two main methods (Jiang and Cillessen 2005); the peer nomination method (Coie, Dodge & Coppotelli 1982) and the peer rating method (Asher, Singleton, Tinsley & Hymel 1979). This research used the peer nomination method. Self-report instruments such as the sociogram enable us to see at a glance those children who are perceived as the more or least popular children in a group and also what subgroups exist within the class (Fontana 1995). The results of a class sociogram can support the identification of the need for whole class or individual intervention and the data can also be used to measure the effectiveness of such interventions (Leung and Silberling 2006). Using a sociogram is relatively simple and traditionally involves asking students questions regarding their preferences in hypothetical activities with their peers. A child's sociometric score is calculated by counting either the number of peer nominations received or the average rating received resulting in an index score of a child's social status amongst peers, which is also often seen as a reflection of his or her underlying social skilfulness (Jiang and Cillessen 2005).

Meyerhoff (1999) argues that it is likely that younger children (ie kindergarten or first grade) tend to have more transient friendships and therefore the results may not be as reliable. The participants of this research are somewhat older than those referred to by Meyerhoff (1999) and as discussed by Sneed (2002) are more able to form stable relationships and cognitively make social comparisons and judgements. The mode of questioning is also worth considering here as is who is asking the questions. In most cases the questions would be asked by an adult; the adult would generally meet with each student in a classroom individually and ask both negative and positive questions. An example of questions asked may be 'name two children you would like to work with in a group' or 'who would you not pick to play with at playtime?' Research completed by Leung and Silberling (2006) examined the use of sociogram as a tool to assess friendship status in the classroom. The research demonstrated that sociograms are appropriate for assessing the effectiveness of interventions as pre and post measures and because they are quick and easy to use can be administered regularly to assess a classroom's social climate (Leung and Silberling (2006).

This method is considered fun, quick and easy to administer with children, it can be completed by the whole class so as not to single out individuals and is relatively simple to tally. For the purposes of this project, the sociogram has been simplified and involves the use of a classroom seating plan on which the child can indicate his or her own perception of friendships within their peer group. Prior to completing the sociogram, the whole class were asked the following question by the class teacher, 'Who are your friends?' They were then given time to draw lines from their own seating position in class to those children they considered friends. Sociograms

drawn pre and post intervention allow for impact of the intervention upon the development of friendships and peer relationships within the class to be measured. The number of identified links to friends are tallied to provide numerical data.

### 3.11.3 Observations/Field notes

Data from observation contrasts with and possibly complements information obtained by most other research methods. It is also an appropriate technique for exploring 'real-life' in the real world (Robson 2002). One of the advantages of observation is that as a researcher you do not have to ask people their views, feelings or attitudes, you just watch and listen. Observation is often used in the exploratory phase of research to find out what is going on and is typically unstructured (Robson 2002). Unstructured observation does not entail the use of an observation schedule, the goal is to record as much detail as possible with the aim of developing a narrative account at the end (Bryman 2008). The unstructured approach chosen fits with both the research questions and the exploratory nature of this research. Adopting this approach meant that I had freedom to follow the children as the session unfolded and I was not tied to a specific schedule, looking out for specific behaviours and missing out on others. I was aware of the fact that the participants may change their behaviour when they realised they were being observed, something referred to by researchers as the 'Hawthorne Effect' (Kumar 2005). In an attempt to avoid this happening during the sessions and to try to reduce any anxieties about being watched, the children were given opportunity to practice being videoed during the pre-intervention sessions as discussed previously on page 93.

I found myself to take the role of participant as observer. My stance as an observer only was made clear to the children at the beginning of the EFL sessions. This stance meant that I could ask participants to explain various aspects of what they were doing if required (Robson 2002). I was in the arena with the children, in close proximity and clearly visible to the group. Initially I attempted to record observations by hand but found this extremely challenging as I had two groups to record simultaneously and I wanted to take photos hence I made the decision to video record the sessions. This meant that I could watch and listen whilst videoing and I still had the option to write additional notes if required. This method also reduced the possibility of incomplete observation although it did not eliminate it. On reflection, I feel that if I had continued to only hand write field notes I may have spent so long writing detailed notes it would have been at the expense of missing some of the interaction as discussed by Kumar (2005).

As suggested by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995), the observations were typed up as quickly as possible into a Word document to reduce the possibility of information being forgotten over time. Lofland (1971) cited in Cohen and Manion (1994) suggests that notes should be full enough for one to adequately recall a vivid picture of the described event months later. I found that the writing up of observations took more time than anticipated, however it was a time for reflection and thinking. The advantage of typing up field notes into a Word document is that this information can be easily manipulated for coding during the data analysis stage.

Observers can easily introduce bias and there is no easy way to verify the observations and inferences drawn from them (Kumar 2005). Observer bias and error (Robson 2002) are possible sources of unreliability. Written narratives of observations require description, perception and interpretation, and this means that

different accounts of the same events are possible (Emerson et al 1995). Researchers must also be aware of the issues surrounding selection, in which the researcher writes about some things observed and leaves out others, which could have an effect upon meanings, interpretations and conclusions drawn. Robson (2002) discusses selective encoding and encourages the researcher to try to start with an open mind – and keep it open. Writing up field notes and observations is very much the start of the process of turning experience into text, and during the writing up I attempted to maintain an open mind and refrain from making hasty judgements.

#### 3.11.4 Visual Methods

Researchers have noted that children's earliest memories often appear to be prompted by external cues rather than questions, and that young children often need such cues to aid in the recall and reporting of experiences (Docherty and Sandelowski 1999). Photograph elicitation is based upon the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview (Harper 2002) with the intention of sharpening the interviewee's memory (Collier 1957 cited in Harper 2002). Photograph elicitation is the coupling of words and images allowing for interaction between the two (Burke cited in Thompson 2008). Harper (2002) suggests that images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words alone interviews and that images lead to deep and interesting talk. Images communicate in different ways than words and quickly elicit emotional and intellectual responses (Freedman 2003 cited in Thompson 2008). Methods which make more use of visual and spatial material can widen participation to include all users (Prosser 2007 cited in Woolner, Clark, Hall, Tiplady, Thomas and Wall 2010).

In an exploratory research context, the images give visual cues to the participants to facilitate conversation, to allow the participants to tell their stories, give their views and opinions and talk about things of interest to them. In this research, images were shown to the interviewees prior to being asked questions relating to their experiences of being around the ponies and taking part in the activities. The photographs were taken using a digital camera during each of the EFL sessions. It was important that enough photographs were taken during the sessions to ensure that images of each child participating in a variety of activities could be referred to during the interview process.

It could be argued that in visual research there is more emphasis on using participant's own photographs in an attempt to bridge the gap between the researcher and the researched (Berger and Mohr (1982) and Harper (2002) cited in Croghan, Griffin, Hunter and Pheonix 2008). In this research it was not practical to allow participants to take their own photographs as they needed their hands free for handling the horses and they needed to be engaged in the EFL activity rather than being focussed upon taking photographs. It is important to acknowledge that the photographs were taken by me as a participant observer and that may have an effect upon the content of the photographs and hence the participant's responses during the interviews. Photographs would be taken based upon my judgement of what was important to capture at the time. I tried to ensure that all the children had their photograph taken several times during each particular activity although this was challenging, especially as I could not be with both groups taking photographs at the same time. It would have been helpful to have someone else taking photographs too however this was not possible.



Prior to the interviews, the photographs were uploaded onto a laptop and arranged into files for each child. During the interviews, each child was given control to browse through their own set of photographs, taking time to flick through the collection and find meaningful images. The chosen photographs formed a basis for discussion and reflection.

#### 3.11.5 Video recordings

During the initial EFL session, I had attempted to write field notes and take digital photographs and video. My efforts at multitasking proved to be too complicated and I found myself struggling to manage to write meaningful notes whilst trying to operate a video camera and take photographs, and consequently I felt I was missing some of the interaction. Kumar (2005) argues that an observer may spend so long trying to write detailed notes that some of the interaction is missed and that is what I found I was experiencing. I quickly decided to take video as opposed to writing notes during the sessions so that I could capture as much interaction, conversation and activity as possible. The use of video recordings during the sessions meant that I could capture conversations and interactions between the children, horses and EFL practitioners quickly and easily. As further discussed by Kumar (2005), there is a possibility of inadequate observations and recordings depending upon the method of recording; an observer may watch intensely but at the expense of detailed recording. In my experience, it is challenging to do both.

The videos were taken using a hand held video camera and the data stored on a memory card. There were issues encountered whilst collecting the data using video, I had to make decisions as to where to locate myself during the sessions so that I was not a distraction to the participants or being in the way but I needed to be in a place where I could capture meaningful recordings. Additionally, during the EFL

sessions the participants were divided into two groups working at opposite ends of the arena. This posed a logistical challenge as I physically could not be in two places at the same time. I needed to maintain awareness of what both groups were doing so that I could attempt to capture sufficient footage of the participants during the sessions. There were also issues with the battery life of the video camera. I quickly learnt to ensure that the battery was fully charged prior to the session and that I had the charger with me, since towards the end of one particular session the video camera lost charge and I was unable to continue recording.

Robson (2002) suggests that observational notes should always be completed within twenty four hours of the observation session and that a researcher should not embark upon a second observation until the notes from the first one have been completed. The longer the observer waits after the event in constructing a narrative account, the poorer the account will be in terms of accuracy and completeness (Robson 2002). With this in mind, after each session, I watched the video back whilst making my own set of field notes, noting observations and thoughts. One advantage of using video was that clips could be re-watched or paused as necessary, giving time for thought and reflection whilst writing. It was not however always easy to hear conversations that were had, occasionally background noise and the distance between myself and the children appeared to distort the sound quality.

I was conscious when writing up my field notes that I was not too keen to categorise or jump to conclusions. I tried to write descriptively about what I saw and capture my immediate thoughts. Robson (2002) discusses what he refers to as 'selective encoding' in which prior expectations held by the researcher can influence what is seen and in turn affect encoding and interpretation. Robson (2002) is keen to point

out that categorising information on the basis of initial information may lead to rushed judgements and therefore it is suggested that the researcher 'tries to start with an open mind - and keeps it open'.

The use of video in research is founded upon the desire to capture and preserve reality (Jewitt 2012). Using video can support an exploratory research design because it can remain open for longer relative to other methods of data collection because management of the data is usually employed at the initial analysis stage in ways that narrow down data. It may also capture things that a researcher may not have noticed at the time of being present (Jewitt 2012). There is much debate regarding just how much video captures or distorts what is really happening when used in research however these ideas are often rejected by some social scientists who employ video recording to help understand perspectives, values, practices and experiences that underpin social interactions (Jewitt 2012).

Discussions about the validity of video data centre around what happens in social settings when a camera is in place and the role of the researcher in the data collection. The issue surrounding the role of the researcher questions the ways in which a researcher uses the camera to frame an event and their participation and influence in the recording. During this research, the participants were aware of my presence in the arena recording the sessions although they did not appear to act out, or be disturbed by my being there recording them. I endeavoured to keep my presence minimal so as to reduce any possibility of distraction or influence which may affect the children's experience. The video taken of each session would also be used during the interview process if required by the children as an additional visual resource for eliciting responses to questions.

### 3.11.6 Semi-Structured Interviews

The interviews took place in the school library. The room was reserved specifically for our use so there was little chance of disruption during the interview. The children were given a glass of water at the start of the interview and were made to feel comfortable and at ease; I hoped that the interview process would be a positive experience for them.

The advantage of using semi-structured interviews provides a strong case for their use in this research. Robson (2002) suggests that they allow freedom in wording used within the interview, freedom within the sequencing of questions and freedom within the amount of time and attention given to particular topics. Considering the exploratory nature of this research, I felt it was important that the children were given the opportunity to talk about their experiences as freely as possible. I felt the children engaged well in the interview process, they responded freely to the interview questions although in some instances needed prompting or the question rephrasing so they could answer. In qualitative research, the researcher wants rich, detailed answers (Bryman 2008) and a semi-structured interview style fits well within the exploratory approach. This style of interview allows for the described phenomenon to be explored through careful questioning and a flexible approach to the interview process. In this research, the interview style allowed me to further explore interesting information or particular points that the children made during their responses. It was intended that the children's actual experiences of EFL would be elicited through, as Kvale (2007) suggests, the opportunity to follow up the answers given and stories told by interviewees. The flexibility of the interview meant that I was not restricted with time or a particular line of questioning and could allow the children to expand their accounts of stories they wanted to tell me

Disadvantages to qualitative interviews primarily focus upon the element of time. Interviewing is time consuming (Robson 2002) and each interview can vary in length. Time restraints may restrict the number of participants that a researcher has capacity to interview or the number of willing participants. Interviewing is a highly subjective technique and therefore there is always a risk of bias (Bell 2008). Not only does the interview itself take time to prepare but the preparation and future transcription and analysis are also time consuming and often problematic processes.

Careful consideration was given to the questions in this respect. Aldgate and Bradley (2004) cited in Lewis, Kellet, Robinson, Fraser and Ding (2004) discuss the importance of preparing well for interviews with children. Lewis et al (2004) argue that a careful approach to interviewing helps to ensure a 100% success rate, and that one should take into account children's cognitive development and linguistic ability during preparation. The questions were prepared with this in mind; I considered the use of language appropriate to a Year 5 child and tried to keep the questions simple and unambiguous. During the interview I found that the language I used was generally understood by the children; this was reflected in the quality and appropriateness of responses given and confirming facial expression. If I believed that a question had not been understood correctly, either because they didn't answer or had a blank facial expression, I asked the child if he or she had understood the question and, if not, rephrased it so that they had a clearer understanding.

Research into the theory of semi-structured interviews often discusses the importance of building a rapport with the interviewees (Greene and Hogan 2006, Aldgate and Bradley cited in Lewis et al 2004); the main argument for this, in my opinion, would be to develop trust and reduce anxieties to elicit the best possible responses, whilst also addressing the issue of power imbalance. Trust emerges

throughout the interview process (Greene and Hogan 2006) but in this research, I considered the issue of developing a trusting relationship with the children at the pre-intervention meeting and felt that my visits to school to meet the children prior to the EFL sessions supported the emergence of a trusting relationship.

Eder and Fingerson (2002) cited in Kvale (2007) highlight the issue of power imbalance between adults and children and the need for the interviewer to avoid being associated with the teacher. During the EFL sessions and the subsequent interviews I was mindful of how I presented myself around the children, this included using a friendly tone of voice and a calm manner. I was mindful that I did not want to be recognised as a teacher as I wanted them to feel relaxed and more able to build up a trusting relationship, something they may have been more reluctant to do if they thought I was a teacher. The children were encouraged to call me 'Rebecca' and I referred to myself as a researcher who had worked with children in the past.

Kvale (2007) refers to the interview as an 'inter-view', where knowledge is constructed between two people; the interviewer and interviewee exchange dialogue through which the researcher is provided with descriptions, narratives and texts. Interviews with children allow them to tell about their own experiences and understanding of the world. The interview schedule was structured using mainly open questions that invited the children to talk about their experiences. There were nine questions in total (see Appendix 1). The questions aimed to elicit information about the children's experiences at various stages of the EFL sessions; initial thoughts pre intervention, being with the ponies (doing the activities and working as a group) and post intervention. In order to stimulate conversations about their experiences and views, visual methods as previously discussed were employed through the interview process. A pilot interview was not conducted as part of the

question development. I chose not to do a pilot because the children would have been asked questions about an experience they would not have yet become familiar with. I opted for an approach to questioning that I believed would limit my influence on the child's responses by keeping my questions simple and allowing a flexible structure. I adapted the idea of David Grove's clean language question technique (The Clean Collection, 2017) as a basis for the interview; this technique is one usually used in counselling or Neurolinguistic Programming and is adopted because it focusses on the use of the client's words in interviews rather than those of the therapist. I aimed to achieve something similar in my interviews and believed that this method of questioning would give authentic responses.

I believe my approach to the interview process was successful; I had built up a positive relationship with the children in the weeks prior to the interviews which I feel helped to put the children at ease. The children were able to share their experiences with me and the group endeavoured to answer all the questions.

### 3.11.7 Recording of Interviews

Interviews were recorded using a digital Dictaphone. Other methods of recording were considered but were rejected; using a traditional tape recorder carries the risk of the tape being damaged during recordings or playback. It is also difficult to make copies of tape recordings for back up purposes. Written or shorthand notes would have been impractical and very time consuming considering the length of the interviews and would be very difficult to analyse using computerised software. The digital Dictaphone was considered the most appropriate method of recording the interviews; it is easy to use and the data can easily be downloaded onto a computer

for storage and analysis. One of the main advantages to using digital recording as opposed to tape recording is an improved audio quality (Bryman 2008). This allows for easier transcription and diminishes the possibility of mistakes due to mishearing (Bryman 2008). The interviews were played back using Windows Media Player. They were also saved on an external hard drive in case of damage or loss of the Dictaphone.

Prior to data collection, I felt it was appropriate to introduce the children to the digital Dictaphone. This would allow them the opportunity to overcome any embarrassment or nervousness associated with speaking into a microphone. As a group, we practiced with the Dictaphone by doing a mock interview. I asked each child five simple questions about their likes, dislikes, favourite food and pets. The interviews were recorded and were played back to the group at the end of the session. The children laughed and found it great fun to hear the sound of their own voices. This exercise enabled the children to develop awareness of how the actual interviews might feel. They were encouraged to ask any questions about the interview process in an attempt to reduce any anxiety or misunderstandings.

Permission to be recorded during the data collection interviews was sought verbally prior to the start of each interview. The children were asked if they were happy to be recorded. It was explained to the children that if at any time they wished to stop the interview they could; they were given the option to point to a 'please stop the interview' card that was placed in front of them during the interview.



### 3.11.8 Transcriptions

Transcription is the process by which spoken words are converted into text and as such is part of the analytical process of qualitative research (Wellard and McKenna 2001). The focus of transcription must be on producing relevant and accurate descriptive material with which research questions can be answered (Hammersley 2010). Hammersley (2010) suggest that a dominant theme in the literature surrounding transcription is that transcription is a process of construction as opposed to simply writing down what was said. In this context, construction is taken to mean that there are a variety of decisions involved in the process. Hammersley (2010) argues that such decisions such as which recordings to transcribe, whether to transcribe all or part of the recording, how talk should be represented, whether to include non-word elements such as background noises or including silences and pauses do not have a single rational solution so there cannot be one correct transcription of any stretch of audio or video recording.

Hammersley (2010) suggests the constructive roles of the researcher and the transcriber takes place in the form of selecting what to include and what to omit, and the use of cultural knowledge and skills by the transcriber to interpret and represent what is happening. One disadvantage to transcriptions is that a transcription only provides one account of the interview and does not accurately reflect facial expressions, tone of voice, laughs, sighs or lengths of pauses (Wellard and McKenna 2001).

In total, seven post intervention interviews required transcription; those of six children and the TA. Even though there is an argument for the researcher transcribing their own interviews so that they can immerse themselves in the data

(Wellard and McKenna 2001), previous experience of doing transcriptions earlier on in my academic career meant that I considered my own audio typing skills inadequate for such a task. The use of a transcriber was discussed with the participants to ensure they were all happy with their responses being heard by a third party. To reduce the risk of typing error and to have the transcriptions completed within a reasonable time scale, the decision was made to have the interviews transcribed by a professional audio typist. Prior to the transcription process, I discussed some of Hammersley's (2010) suggestions with the transcriber. We concluded that all the post intervention interviews should be transcribed, we agreed on a format for presentation and what non-verbal elements should be included. Even taking these factors into account I found myself placing my trust in the professionalism of an experienced transcriber to provide me with a data set that would hopefully help me answer my research questions. I believe that having the afore mentioned discussions with the transcriber helped to alleviate any misunderstandings during the process, which could have subsequently led to missing data which may have affected the results. As suggested by Wellard and McKenna (2001) in order to maintain an ethical standard throughout the transcription process pseudonyms were chosen by the children to conceal their identities.

The transcribed interviews were presented as a Microsoft Word document which would then be prepared for analysis using Microsoft Word editing and Excel Spreadsheet software. The documents were set out in an easy to read format, using separate lines for each speaker. The transcripts included punctuation which would help with contextual understanding when re-reading the interviews at a later date. The process of acquiring a full transcription was helpful in supporting the process of

making notes and identifying quotes that would contribute to the process of further analysis.

#### 3.11.9 Follow up Interviews (5 months later)

Follow up interviews were conducted with the participants, teachers (previous and current Year 6 teacher) and the TA. During the follow up interviews most children managed to remember the sessions and could talk quite readily about their experience. Sam struggled to remember what he had done and needed quite a lot of prompting to answer questions. The adults level of reflection was more mature and they were more able to contribute to a deeper discussion about the impact of the intervention. I anticipated that the data obtained from the follow up interviews would support answering research questions 2 and 3. In contrast to the earlier longer interviews, the follow up interviews were not transcribed professionally as I considered it unnecessary; the follow up interviews were much shorter than the post intervention interviews and more specific questions meant that data was easier to locate within the recorded responses. Hammersley (2010) suggests that the best form of transcription may vary over the course of any single enquiry and that no single form of transcription should determine what is or is not included in the transcripts for the purpose of facilitating the analysis. As previously mentioned, Hammersley (2010) argues the focus must be on producing relevant and descriptive material with which to try to answer the research questions. In this case, the interviewees were asked fewer, more specific questions meaning data I considered relevant to answering the questions was easier to locate within the recorded responses. As these interviews were not being professionally transcribed, I made descriptive notes directly from the audio recordings into a Microsoft Word document.

The notes and quotes made from the shorter interviews were in my opinion sufficient for the process of further analysis. It is important to show awareness here of any epistemological influences of both my own interpretation of the data and that of the professional audio typist on the participant's and TA's post intervention transcripts as discussed in Gibson and Brown (2009). Hammersley (2010) describes descriptions as the data of social science from which inferences and conclusions and findings are made, and therefore I considered it appropriate that data from the follow up interviews was included in the thematic analysis process, along with the post intervention interview data.

Once all the transcriptions had been completed the interviews were listened to once again to ensure that the transcriptions were an accurate reflection of the interview and make any amendments if required. This process helps to ensure the integrity of the transcriptions is maintained (Wellard and McKenna 2001). The six participants and the TA were given a copy of their own interview transcriptions so that they could check to see if what had been transcribed was an accurate reflection on what they said. On confirmation that the interviewees were happy with the transcriptions analysis of the data began.

#### 3.11.10 Approach to Thematic Analysis of Interviews

The analytical process of the interview data took an inductive approach (being data driven); each interview was analysed and the data was initially coded without trying to fit into a pre-existing coding frame as discussed by Braun and Clarke (2006). I consider this means of analysis to fit appropriately within the exploratory approach I have adopted, allowing for themes to be identified that are strongly linked to the data, rather than having pre-existing themes into which data is best fit. The overall

process of thematic analysis I followed was based upon Braun and Clarke's (2006) 'Phases of Thematic Analysis' which can be seen below:

Table 2 : Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006)

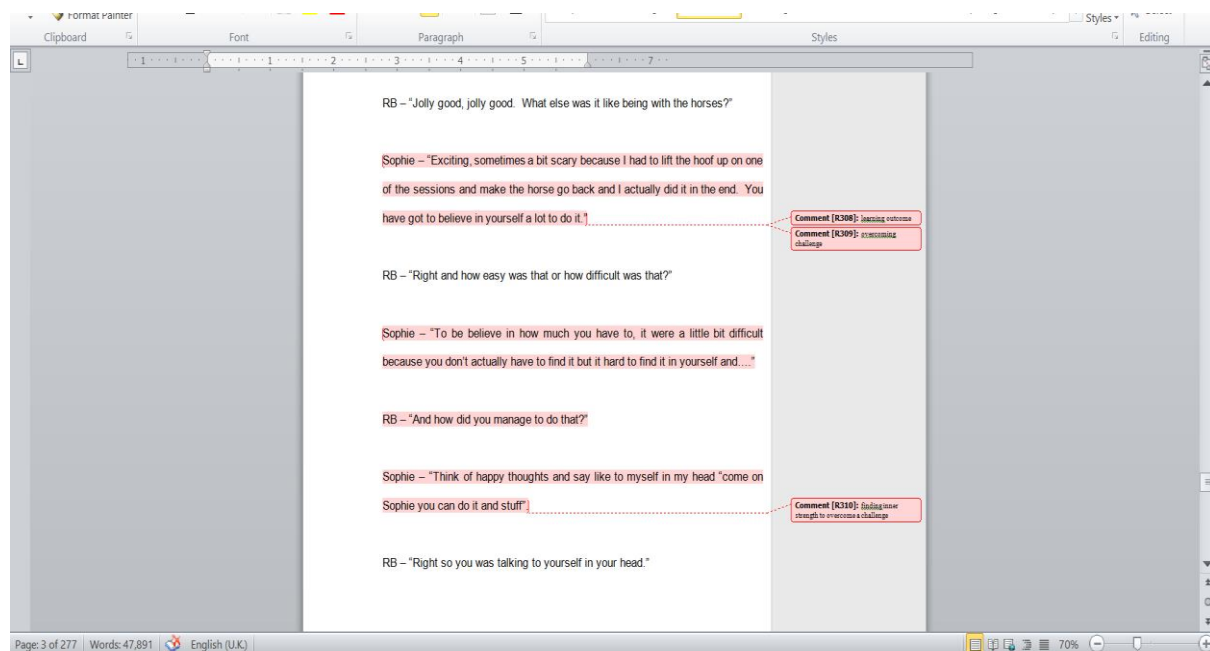
Phase	Description of the process (adapted from Braun and Clarke 2006)
1. Familiarising yourself with the data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data and noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level1) and the entire data set (level2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract samples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature.

The data was initially scrutinised using the 'eyeballing' method (Ryan and Bernard 2003) in Microsoft Word. Although this was very time consuming, it allowed me to both revisit and immerse myself in the data, providing me with opportunity to determine what I considered to be important or interesting information; information I felt for example, was surprising, unusual, repeated or different between the

interviews, or information that reminded me of any of the theory I had read about during my literature search. Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggest that looking for repetitions, similarities and differences as well as using cutting and sorting techniques are amongst the most versatile for discovering themes in data. Each of these methods can be applied to any type of qualitative data (Ryan and Bernard 2003) and therefore I considered a combination of these methods suitable for use.

The words or phrases I considered to be worthy of further analysis were selected as possible categories and recorded using the 'comments' facility creating a coded transcript. An example of the coded transcript can be seen below (fig.3). In this example the conversation highlighted sections with comments can be seen in the dialogue between myself (RB) and Sophie.

**Figure 3. An example of coded transcript.**



The comments were subsequently extracted from the interview document to create a simple table, using Microsoft Excel to group categories and sort data at a more in depth level. The initial coding process identified numerous categories and these are

discussed in the data analysis chapter. The initial identification of themes is required before the researcher is able to decide which themes have more importance and how they are related to each other. In theme discovery, more is better and not all themes have equal importance (Ryan and Bernard 2003). To begin identifying themes, I firstly considered the overall data within a category and grouped together data that had similarities in topic or that I believed had some relation to the research questions as suggested by Braun and Clark (2008).

#### 3.11.11. Summary

This chapter has outlined the research design and context alongside my ontological and epistemological position, and the ways in which the data was collected and analysed. Using a case study approach, my objective was to employ appropriate methods which allowed me to explore an authentic case of EFL. My intention was to gain the children's views of EFL and also those of staff who worked closely with them. I considered the use of multiple methods suitable for answering the research questions and useful in gaining complementary data that might not have been acquired using a single method approach. Methods used included semi-structured interviews, the Boxall Profile and Sociogram and in addition, visual methods were used during the children's interviews to facilitate conversation. Time spent building relationships with the children before hand was considered an important part of the interview process. Validity and reliability in research were considered along with the ethical issues of doing research with children. The next chapter presents the data collected.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis**

This chapter presents the data collected as part of this research project. It describes how the data was collated and aims to pull together the findings of the sociograms, Boxall Profiles and semi-structured interviews. Finally, the findings are considered in further detail and an overall summary of the impact the intervention had on each participant is given.

### **4.1 Sociogram data**

The pre and post intervention sociograms were administered during the school day by the class teacher. At the time the pre intervention sociograms were administered the group were not aware they were going to take part in the EFL intervention.

The sociogram information was tallied to give two data sets; firstly the number of 'hits' between the research participants only was recorded and secondly, the number of hits from other classmates to each of the research participants was identified. An example of a completed sociogram can be seen in Appendix 5. The class teacher tallied the results of the pre intervention sociogram. The post intervention results were tallied by myself. The results are shown in table 3 below:



Table 3: Combined results for participants pre and post intervention

From						
	Paul	Sam	Kevin	Joe	Elizabeth	Sophie
Paul			0	00		0
Sam						00
Kevin	0				0	0
Joe						
Elizabeth						
Sophie	0	0	0		0	

Key: | = person considered friend 0= no result



Pre intervention



Post intervention

Table 4: Total 'hits' from the participant group

	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Paul	3	3
Sam	4	4
Kevin	5	2
Joe	5	5
Elizabeth	5	5
Sophie	5	1

Table 5: Total 'hits' from classmates

	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Paul	3	0
Sam	7	0
Kevin	13	7
Joe	9	11
Elizabeth	7	1
Sophie	10	4

#### 4.2 Sociogram results for whole class

The results show only Joe had an increase in hits from classmates post intervention; over the four week period whilst the EFL intervention took place, two more of Joe's peers considered him to be a friend. The remaining five participants had a decrease in 'hits' from classmates post intervention, the largest decrease was in fact Sam, whose hits from classmates decreased from 7 to 0 during the intervention period. Kevin and Sophie had the most pre intervention hits (13 and 10 respectively) but 'lost' hits over the intervention period. I was not able to determine if the results for the other children in the class (non-participants) had changed because I did not have the whole class data from the pre intervention sociogram.

### 4.3 Sociogram results for participant group

The results for the participant group show that one child (Sophie) indicated that post intervention she had considered Paul her friend, whereas pre intervention she had not. Interestingly, post intervention results show 4 of the 5 children who had indicated that they considered Sophie a friend pre intervention had indicated that they did not consider her a friend post intervention and 3 children no longer considered Kevin a friend.

The results for how the participant group viewed Paul, Elizabeth, Joe and Sam showed no change pre or post intervention. The friendships within the group for these four children appear to have remained stable throughout the intervention period.

Despite participating in a 'Being Friends' programme, the sociogram results indicate that only one of the participants (Joe) has increased friendships within the class. The sociogram results were not as I expected. The sociogram was conducted by the school staff and I had no control over how it was administered. The results may have been different if an alternative question had been asked.

#### 4.4 Boxall Profile data

An example of the Boxall Profile Questionnaire can be found in Appendix 6.

Strands a-j form the developmental profile; high scores in these strands are preferred and are intended to describe a child who is emotionally secure, makes constructive and adaptive relationships, is able to cooperate with others and has internalised controls – believing he or she can influence events or outcomes necessary for social functioning. Strands q-z form the diagnostic profile and describe behaviours that impede or affect the child's satisfactory involvement in school. In these particular strands low scores are preferred, with high scores indicating that a child is experiencing problems (Bennathan and Haskayne 2007).

##### 4.4.1 What do the strands mean for each participant?

The table in Appendix 7 explains what each strand is intended to measure and what the scores mean. The table is taken from 'Beyond the Boxall Profile – Strategies and Resources' (Colley, Rae, Stollery and Roden 2013).

The Boxall Profile data for each participant was analysed using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet specifically designed for Boxall Profile Analysis obtained from the school. The scores for each child were added to the spreadsheet and the data was automatically tallied to produce a graph. The pre and post intervention Boxall Profile results for each participant are listed in Appendix 8. The solid shaded areas on the Boxall Profile graphs indicate the range of average scores in a sample of competently functioning children in five age groups from 3 years 4 months to 8

years. The table below shows the number of strands (out of 20) in which an average range score is obtained by each participant.

Table 6: Number of strands in which an average range score is obtained.

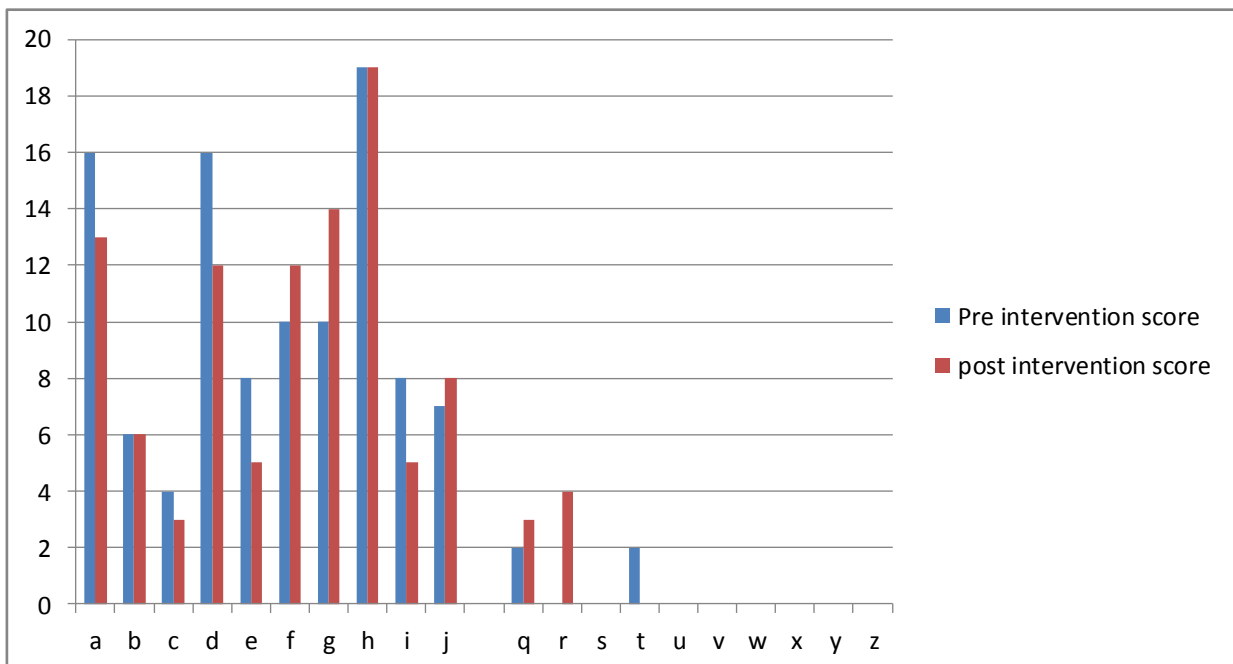
	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Kevin	19	18
Sophie	19	13
Joe	13	10
Sam	11	11
Paul	5	10
Elizabeth	5	8

The results show that within this small group there seem to be differing levels of capacity. Kevin and Sophie score within the average range in 95% of strands pre intervention and 90% and 65% respectively post intervention, whereas Elizabeth and Paul only score within the average range in 25% of strands pre intervention and at 40% and 50% respectively post intervention. Joe and Sam sit within the middle of the group obtaining average range scores in 65% and 55% of strands pre intervention, and 50% and 55% respectively; Sam's scores did not change and remained at 11 strands. The children with the lowest baseline scores (Elizabeth and Paul) made the greatest percentage progress. Kevin and Sophie had high baseline scores to begin with so the amount of progress that could be made across the strands for these children would be limited considering the brevity of the intervention. However, it is surprising that Sophie's scores decreased across 6 strands following

the sessions. Considering she scored average scores in 19 strands pre intervention I would have expected her scores to remain or improve following the sessions.

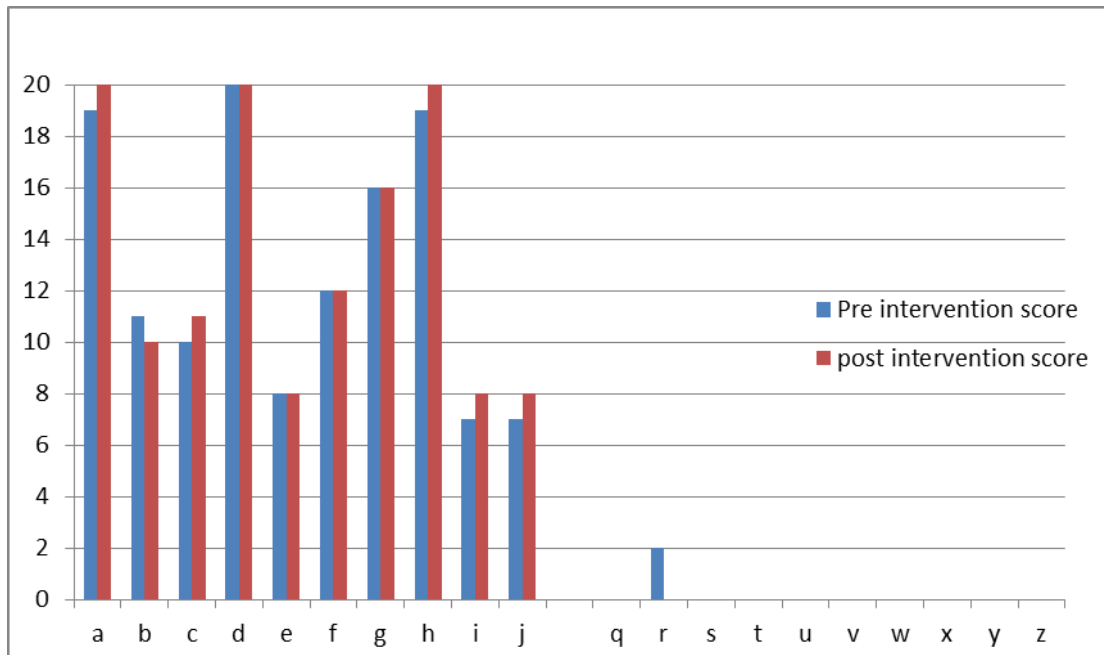
The Boxall Profile scoring system does not indicate results beyond the average score of 20 so any progress children may have made above this would not be measured. For the purposes of this study and to make the scores for each strand easier to compare, additional graphs were created for each participant showing both pre and post intervention scores. The maximum possible score per strand is 20. These are presented below. As previously stated, higher post intervention scores or an increase in scores is preferable for strands a to j and lower scores, or a decrease in scores post intervention are sought for strands q to z. The most noticeable changes are discussed.

Joe – Comparison graph pre and post intervention scores.



The graph shows that Joe made improved scores in strands f,g,j and t. This suggests improvements were perceived to have occurred in areas of feeling secure and self-accepting, the ability to conform in a group, self-control and reflection upon Joe's own behaviour. The post intervention scores suggest that Joe has become more disengaged, self-negating and has a decrease in self-worth. Scores for strands b (participates constructively) and h (accommodates to others) have stayed the same along with strands s,u,v,w,x,y and z in which Joe scored within the average range. The scores for strands a,d, e and i have also decreased suggesting that following the intervention Joe was perceived to be continuing to experience difficulties with attention and concentration and had continued difficulties with relationships within the class and difficulties working with or playing with others. A low score in strand i reflects difficulty with social situations and group work.

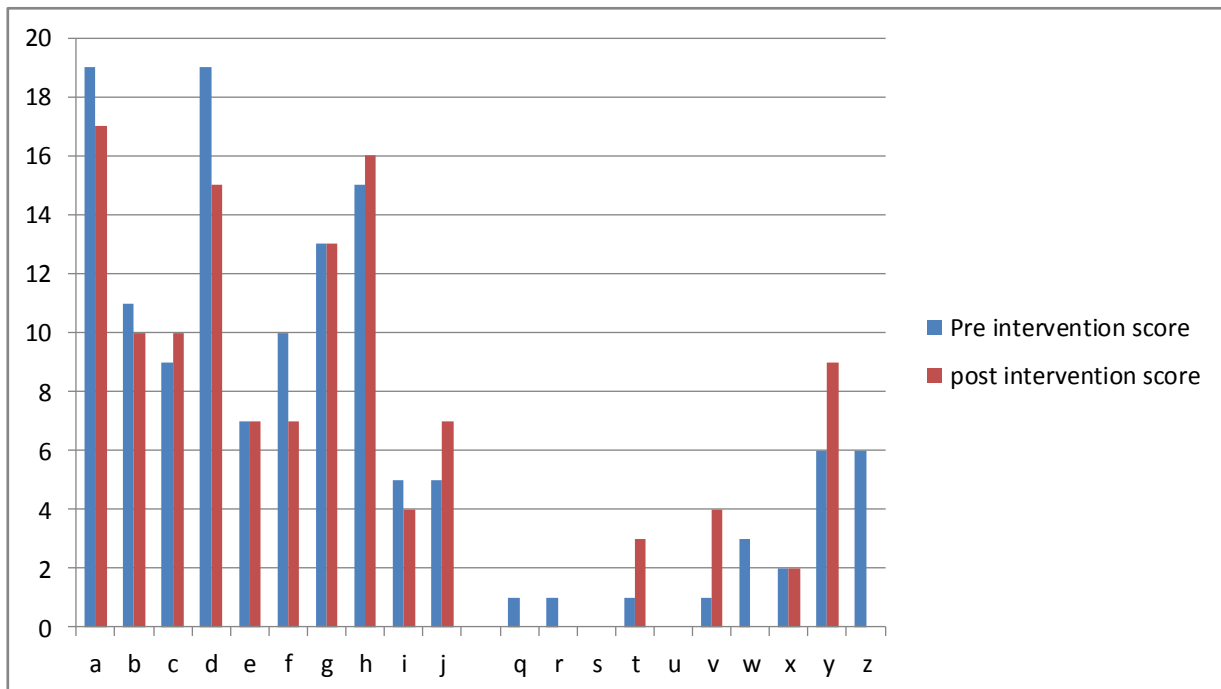
## Kevin – Comparison Graph



The results for Kevin show little change, there is a slight increase in scores for strands a,c,h,i,j and r although Kevin's scores were high to begin with. This suggests that post intervention Kevin was thought to be more attentive, motivated, more able to accommodate to others and express his own needs. An increase in scores for strands i and j suggest that more considerate and helpful behaviour has been seen and that Kevin has shown more self-control and organised behaviour. The score for strand r shows the biggest change, suggesting a decrease in self-negating attitude and an increase in self-worth was noticed by the teacher.

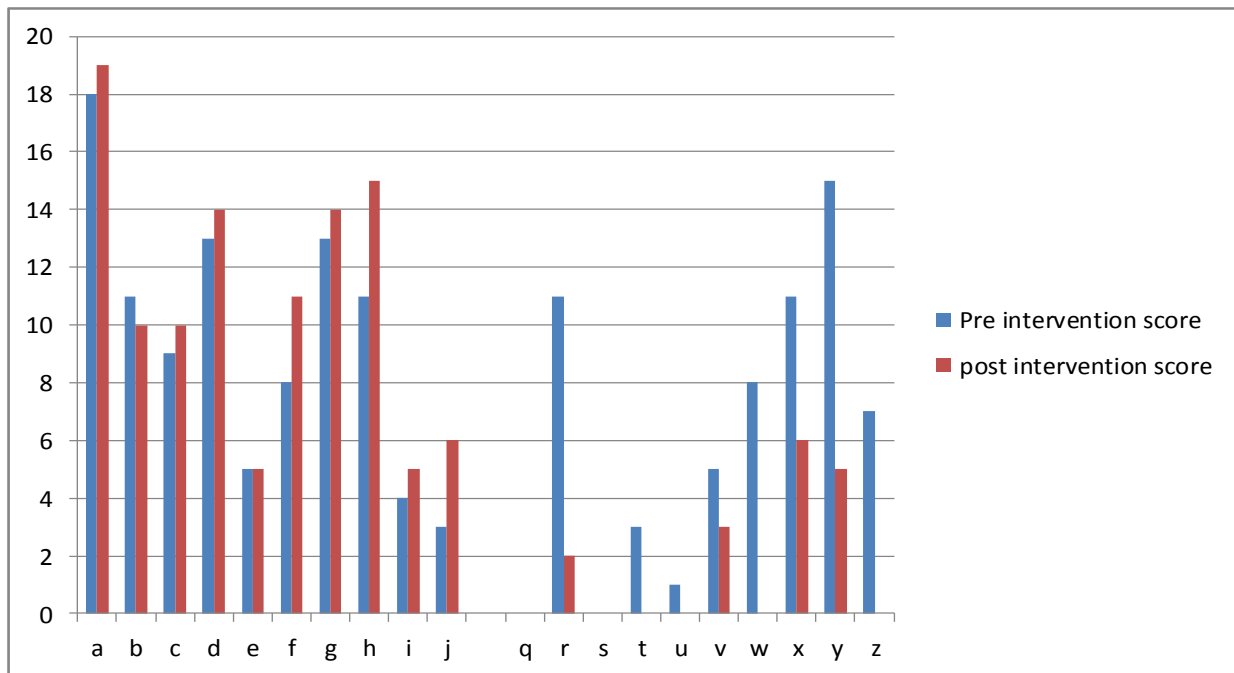


## Sam – Comparison Graph



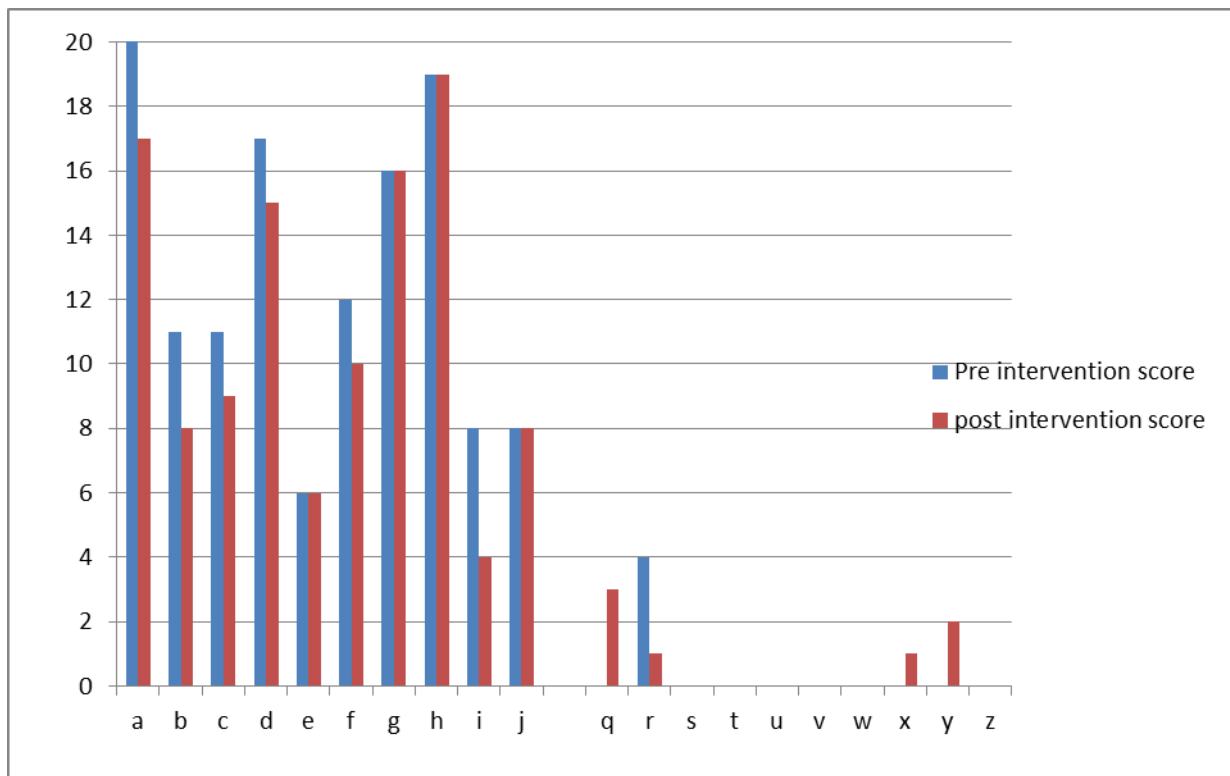
The scores for Sam suggest that improvements have been seen to be made in regards to motivation and self-control. The improvements in strand q and r suggest that Sam has become more engaged in school and that there appears to have been a decrease in self-negating attitudes. A decrease in scores in strands w and z suggest that developments have been made in the areas of feeling secure in one's sense of self and becoming more aware and respectful of the needs of others. The strands for e,h and x showed no change in scores, whereas the scores for strands t,v,y,a,d and f appeared to have decreased post intervention. This suggests that Sam had appeared to lack concentration and attention, struggled to maintain relationships with other children and showed emotional insecurity. The results also suggest Sam was considered to engage in impulsive behaviour, resist making attachments, had difficulty trusting others and had shown negativity towards others through defensive and resentful behaviour.

## Paul – Comparison Graph



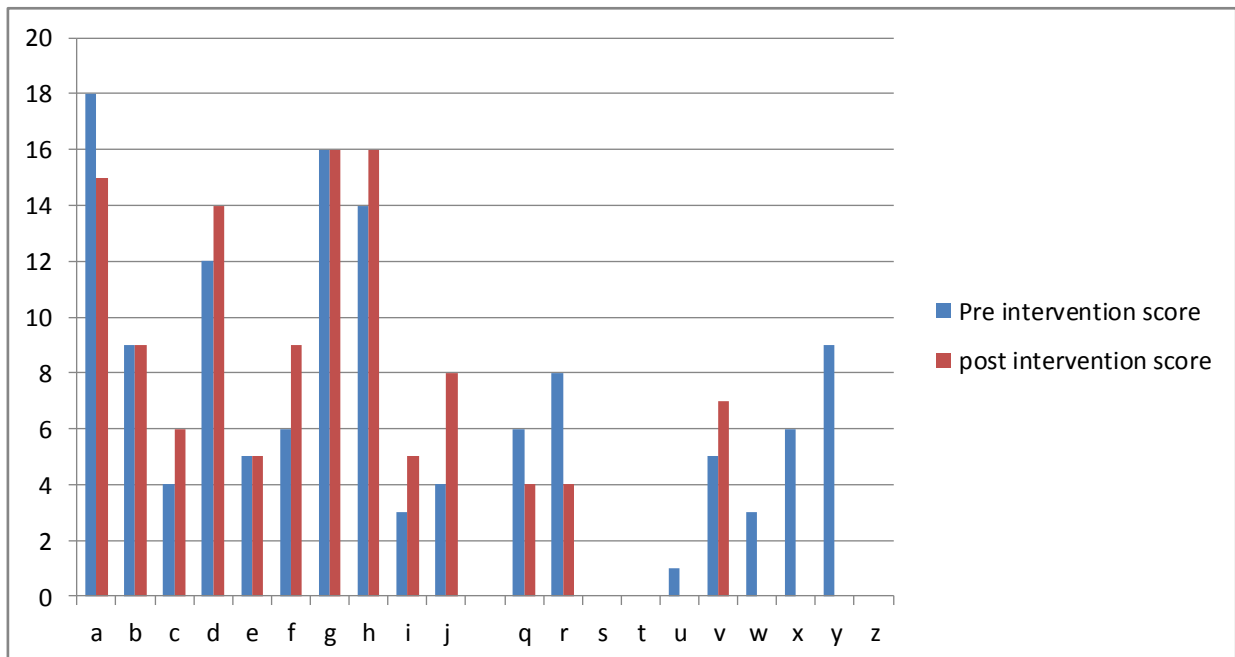
Paul's scores have suggested noticeable improvements across all strands except for b, which showed a slight decrease in scores and e (engaging cognitively with peers), which stayed the same. Strand b relates to participating constructively with others and it appears that following the intervention Paul was perceived to continue to experience difficulty with this as his post intervention scores had slightly dropped.

## Sophie – Comparison Graph



Sophie scored within the average range within 19 strands pre intervention however these scores changed post intervention with only 13 strands falling within the average range. Interestingly, Sophie's post intervention scores only seemed to show an improvement in strand r. This strand measures the self-negating attitude. A decrease in scores in this strand post intervention would suggest that Sophie's self-image and self-worth has increased. The scores for strands a,b,c,d,q and y appear to reflect negative changes post intervention. Sophie's behaviour appears to have been inattentive, lacking in motivation and she has shown less purposeful involvement with other children. Sophie's decrease in scores in strand d suggests that she was perceived to experience difficulty with positive social interaction, which includes making and maintaining friendships.

## Elizabeth – Comparison Graph



Elizabeth's scores have shown an overall improvement across most strands. Strands b, e and g indicate no change to scores, whereas a decrease in scores can be seen in strand a, suggesting Elizabeth has experienced difficulty being attentive and has lacked concentration, she possibly has been unwilling to involve herself in class/school activities. The most noticeable changes to scores are within strands r, w, x and y - in which the graph shows considerably lower scores for these strands post intervention. Strand r relates to Elizabeth's self-negating attitude, suggesting a perceived change post intervention to more positive ideas about her self-image and self-worth and similarly, strand x reflects a perception of improved sense of self and value of self. Strand w measures insecure sense of self, and a decrease in this score suggests a positive development in how Elizabeth feels about herself. Strand y measures negativism towards self and towards others; a decrease in scores

suggests that Elizabeth has been perceived to have a more positive attitude about herself and towards others.

#### **4.4.2 Post Intervention Impact**

Table 7 below identifies strands in which the participant’s scores reflect either a positive, negative or no change impact post –intervention.

Table 7. Post Intervention Impact

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Strands where positive impact identified</b>	<b>Strands where no impact identified</b>	<b>Strand where negative impact identified</b>
Joe	f g j t	b h s u v w x y z	a c d e i q r
Kevin	a c h i j r	d e f g q s t u v w x y z	b
Sam	c h j q r w z	e g s u x	a b d f i t v y
Paul	a c d f g h i j r t u v w x y z	e q s	b
Sophie	r	e g h j s t u v w z	a b c d f i q x y
Elizabeth	c d f h i j q r u w x y	b e g s t z	a v

#### **Modal Data**

Table 8 shows the number of children for whom there was an increase or decrease in scores reflecting an improvement post intervention as identified for each strand.

Table 8. Positive impact post intervention by strand

<b>j</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>c</b>	<b>h</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>i</b>	<b>w</b>	<b>u</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>q</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>y</b>	<b>z</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>e</b>	<b>s</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

The most common increases in scores can be seen across strands j and r with 5 of the 6 participants making improvements in each strand. It is important to bear in mind when looking at these results not to assume that the same 5 children made improvements in both strands j and r. Similarly, I found I had to take some caution when analysing these results. The statistics are based on the subjective views of the staff completing the profiles and I am looking only at a small number of individuals and there is no comparison group.

Strand j relates to the child having internalised standards. A behaviour that is based on internalised standards is said to be one in which the child engages without thinking about rewards or punishments. An increase in these scores would suggest that the child appeared to have developed in areas of personal organisation and self-control. Strand r relates to self-negating features and improvements in this strand would suggest that developments in self-worth were perceived and a decrease in self-defeating attitudes.

The scores for strands c and h were perceived to have improved for 4 of the group. Strand c relates to connecting up experiences and a high score would indicate that the child is purposeful and self-motivated. An increase in scores in this strand seems to show that the children appeared to be more motivated following the intervention. Strand h refers to accommodating others and improvements in this strand might suggest that a child has become more able to express his or her needs, more accepting of the needs of others and feels more secure to accept change.

Half of the group experienced a positive impact within strands f, i and w. Strand f relates to emotional security, suggesting that developments have been made with regards to self-acceptance and self-worth. Strand i measures how the child responds

constructively to others and a positive impact in this strand suggests that improvements were considered to be made in the way a child identifies with others, respects their needs and is considerate and helpful towards others. Strand w relates to the child's sense of self and increases in this strand suggest that the child has a more secure sense of self.

Table 9 shows the frequency of an increase or decrease of scores post intervention reflecting a negative impact as identified per strand.

Table 9. Negative impact by strand.

a	b	d	i	q	c	f	r	v	y	e	t	x	g	h	j	s	u	w	z
4	4	3	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The comparison graphs have shown that in some strands the child's scores had decreased (strands a-j) or increased (strands q-z) showing that the intervention may have been perceived to have had a negative impact on some children. This can be seen most commonly across strands a and b. It is also interesting to note that half of the participants also appeared to show a decrease in scores across strands d and i.

Strand a refers to giving purposeful attention, suggesting that post intervention four of the group experienced difficulties maintaining concentration, following instructions and were considered inattentive by the teacher. They may have had difficulty taking part in group work. Strand b refers to participating constructively and a decrease in post intervention scores in this strand suggests that four of the children were

experiencing difficulty getting along with others and maintaining interest in school life and learning.

Following the intervention, it appears that half of the group obtained lower scores for strands d and i. Strand d relates to insightful involvement; a low score in this strand suggests that the child is likely to experience difficulties in making and sustaining friendships because they struggle to identify causes of or solutions to their difficulties of relationships with others. Strand i measures how the child responds constructively to others. A decrease in these scores would suggest that following the intervention the child has experienced difficulties getting along with others, for example whilst working in a group.

#### 4.4.3 Unexpected results

The results have provided some unexpected data; strand e refers to engaging cognitively with peers (the child adapts flexibly and interacts purposefully and constructively with others) and there was no change identified in this strand for all but one of the participants, who was identified as showing a decrease in scores for strand e (negative impact). A high score in this strand would have been expected as the children were participating in a 'Being Friends' programme. The no change to scores for 5 of the 6 participants suggests that the children continued to experience difficulties working or playing with other children post intervention as reported by the adults working with them.

#### 4.4.4 Summary of Boxall Profile findings

Analysis of the Boxall Profile results leads me to suggest that EFL did not impact on all children in the same way although the results suggest that the intervention had a



positive impact on all the participants. On the basis of the scores presented, Paul appeared to benefit most from the intervention making progress across 16 different strands, closely followed by Elizabeth who showed improvements across 12 strands. Joe's scores improved across 4 of the strands measured, 6 of Kevin's scores improved and 7 of Sam's. In contrast, the results indicate that the intervention only had a positive impact on Sophie in one strand, strand r. A positive impact in this strand suggests that Sophie's attitude towards her self-image and her feelings of self-worth had improved and she was less likely to show a self-defeating attitude.

The profile for each participant is unique and specific to them and as such it is difficult to draw overarching conclusions about the impact of EFL based solely upon the Boxall Profiles, however some common themes within the group's results were found. The results suggest that following the intervention most of the children showed improvements to personal organisation/self-control, self-worth, motivation and were more able to express their own needs and willing to accept the needs of others. Half the group were believed to appear more emotionally secure and self-accepting and had improved their self-worth. I would propose that at some stage during the intervention, something happened for each child to initiate change; It is possible that during the reflective process, the realisation that they 'can do' enhanced the development of a positive self-belief attitude, which reinforced by positive experiences within the sessions may have contributed to such changes and a greater understanding and awareness of themselves and others.

The findings suggest that EFL had little impact on the group in relation to friendships and working together. Only half of the group were considered to have made improvements in making and maintaining friendships and appeared more helpful and respectful of others. Most children (4 of 6) were reported to continue to experience

difficulties working in a group or getting along with others and the majority of participants continued to experience difficulties with concentration and attention following the intervention. This suggests that firstly, the children who continued to experience social difficulties possibly did not recognise within themselves a need to change and secondly, most of the group still needed to practice and consolidate the pro social skills required for collaborative learning as discussed previously by Hockaday (1984) such as reasoning, evaluating skills, the ability to listen and share ideas. The brevity of the intervention in this case may not have allowed ample time for such changes to happen.

The subjective nature of the Boxall Profile means that scores given are influenced by the perceptions of the teacher, and for example, his mood or relationship with the children, at the time of the assessment. The Boxall Profile also poses limitations on the teacher because there is no opportunity to offer additional information that may be considered important in contributing to the SEMH development of the children. A limitation of this method is that the children's views or beliefs about their own progress are not taken into account and so the scores may not reflect how the children believe themselves to be. The Boxall Profile does not measure the children's thoughts or feelings about the intervention or indeed their experiences of it. To help overcome this, the multiple method approach of this research aims to find out what the children's thoughts and experiences of the intervention are through the use of semi-structured interviews. The interview data findings are discussed in the following section.

## **4.5 Interview Data Results**

As previously discussed, the process of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was used to identify themes emerging from the interview data that had similarities in topic or were considered to be related to the research questions. Some categories include data from both participant and staff interviews. A brief description of the sort of data I included in each category is given. The final themes are subsequently discussed in more detail. Screen shot sections of the sorted data given as an example of what was included in each category can be found in Appendix 10. The initial categories identified are described below:

### **4.5.1 Post Intervention Interviews (participants and TA)**

Memorable Experiences - this category comprised of ideas, thoughts or perceptions about particular experiences for example, fun activities the children remembered, learning outside of the classroom and being with the horses.

Connecting up Experiences – incorporated in this category is data that suggests reflection upon experiences to solve problems or transferring skills or knowledge learned back into the classroom or other places. The children gave examples of times throughout the sessions when they had used what they had learned in the EFL sessions in situations at school.

Personal Awareness – included in this category were extracts of dialogue that suggested awareness in various ways, for example of how behaviour affects those around you, feelings and emotions, feelings of self-improvement and awareness of personal space.

Celebrating Success – included in this category were examples of the children feeling proud of themselves, experiencing a sense of achievement, talk of receiving certificates at the end of the sessions/school assembly, talk of feeling good about yourself.

Learning – this combined ideas or thoughts regarding knowledge gained through natural curiosity, problem solving, talk of working as a team, not giving up, classroom discussion. The children talked about things in particular they thought they had learned.

Impact in School – information that suggested the intervention had had an effect on the school was included in this category; impact during unstructured times of the day, classroom behaviour, observations from TA.

Limitations – any factors identified as being limiting to the intervention were included in this category. The TA in particular contributed to this data with the suggestion that

the intervention was limited by time and if it had been longer the children may have learned more.

Behaviour Change – ideas, thoughts or perceptions that suggested a change to a child's usual behaviour are incorporated in this category. The interview data suggests that some changes to behaviour have occurred and that these have been noticed by both the TA and some participants.

Confidence Building – this category constituted information that suggested improvement to confidence, for example through developing resilience, perseverance, believing in yourself, self-talk, conquering fear or leadership opportunities.

Challenge – dialogue that reflected the experience of facing new challenges, participating in challenging activities was included in this category. The children found some of the activities with the horses challenging and for some children brought excitement and for others, the chance to overcome uncertain feelings.

Staff Taster session – the thoughts of the TA about the taster session and also thoughts about the importance of a member of school staff being present in the sessions were part of this category.

#### **4.5.2 Post Intervention Follow Up Interviews - Teacher (five months later)**

Analysis of the follow up interviews saw some common themes evident across both data sets. In addition, themes of no change, suggestions for the future and impact in school were also identified.

The TA and class teachers of the participants whilst in Year 5 and now in Year 6 were interviewed. The previous class teacher of the children whilst they were in Year 5 struggled to comment on impact because he no longer saw the children in class as he was not their class teacher, however he did see them at playtimes, lunchtimes and during other whole school activities and was able to comment about those particular times. The teachers were asked about the school's experience of EFL and the impact they believed the intervention had had on individual children, the whole school and the class. They were also asked about the staff taster session and any limitations to the intervention. As previously discussed, notes were made from the responses they gave and the data has been sorted to identify the following themes:

##### **Impact on individual children:**

**Confidence building** – perceived improvements in confidence have become apparent through the teacher's suggestions that Kevin had become more confident, more resilient and will have a go and improvements to Sophie's confidence have seen her more willing to put her hand up and answer a question, have a go at new things or mixing with new people.

Behaviour Change- Paul was reported to be much calmer and the Year 5 class teacher noticed that he will go and play with others rather than just his little group. His teacher stated that Paul seems more willing to accept different rules than just his own rules, *'Big turn-around, remarkable!'*

No change – The Year 6 teacher was not sure what impact the intervention has had on Elizabeth, she had not noticed any change; *'Elizabeth is still quiet in class and doesn't often put her hand up.'* Both teachers said *'There are still often issues between Sam and Paul falling out.'*

Memorable experiences – The Year 5 class teacher stated, *'the kids loved it, they really enjoyed it, shame it wasn't longer.'* It was clear from this comment that the teacher considered EFL a fun and enjoyable intervention for the children.

Suggestion for the future - *'It would be nice to do 4 week slots several times a year!'*(Year 6 teacher) It is not clear from the interview whether the teacher would like to see the children doing more EFL over the year because she thought they enjoyed it or because of its impact on particular children.

Impact in school - The impact most notably seen was at playtime when there seemed to be fewer instances of falling out between the group of participants. Fewer confrontations between Paul and Kevin were seen during unstructured times of the day.

Staff Taster Session - The teachers felt it was useful for staff to do the taster session so that they understood what the sessions were about but also it meant that staff could share their experiences with the children by *'allowing the children to see*

*that they are human beings and not just teachers'*(Year 5 teacher). It also meant that the teachers could understand what fun the sessions were.

Limitations - The teachers felt that the intervention had an overall positive impact on the children and that most of the children '*benefited in some way*,(Year 5 teacher)' however the cost would be an issue for future use.

#### **4.5.3 Post intervention Follow Up Interviews - Participants (five months later)**

These interviews were much shorter in length and therefore data became limited. Most children managed to remember the sessions and could talk quite readily about their experience albeit quite briefly. Sam struggled to remember what he had done and needed quite a lot of prompting to answer the questions. The additional theme 'Impact out of school' emerged from this data.

The children were asked:

1. What do you remember the most from doing the HorseHeard sessions?
2. What, if anything, has changed for you in school since you did the HorseHeard sessions?

Memorable Experiences - All of the children were able to remember some aspects of the EFL sessions. Some children recalled various activities, stating that they enjoyed them. In particular Sophie, Kevin, Elizabeth and Sam made reference to learning about horse safety and how to behave around the horse.



Behaviour Change - The data suggests the most noticeable change amongst the group is within perceptions of relationships between themselves and their peers. Elizabeth believed relationships had improved with other class members after the sessions and Kevin stated that his relationship with Paul *'has improved the most.'* Sophie said she had learned skills to try and sort out problems between friends and her, or others with problems with friendships.

Confidence Building – the data suggests perceived improvements in confidence by the children. Kevin said he felt *'more confident to put his hand up in class'* and Elizabeth had now started riding lessons again at home after previously losing her confidence after falling off. Joe said that he felt more confident at joining in at football. The children refer to improved confidence in terms of being more confident to do something, or have a go at something they previously may not have.

Personal Awareness - The data suggests that EFL has for some children helped them develop an improved awareness of their own behaviour and this has been sustained post intervention. Kevin believes he has become more aware of his behaviour and how it affects others and he has *'not made other children jump like he used to do!'*

Impact in school – Teamwork; Kevin feels that learning about teamwork has made a difference to him in school especially when working in a group, listening to others'

ideas and Sophie also stated that she enjoys working in groups more now. Paul feels he works more now as a team with the other children in the group and doesn't argue with them as much. If there is an argument starting he now walks away.

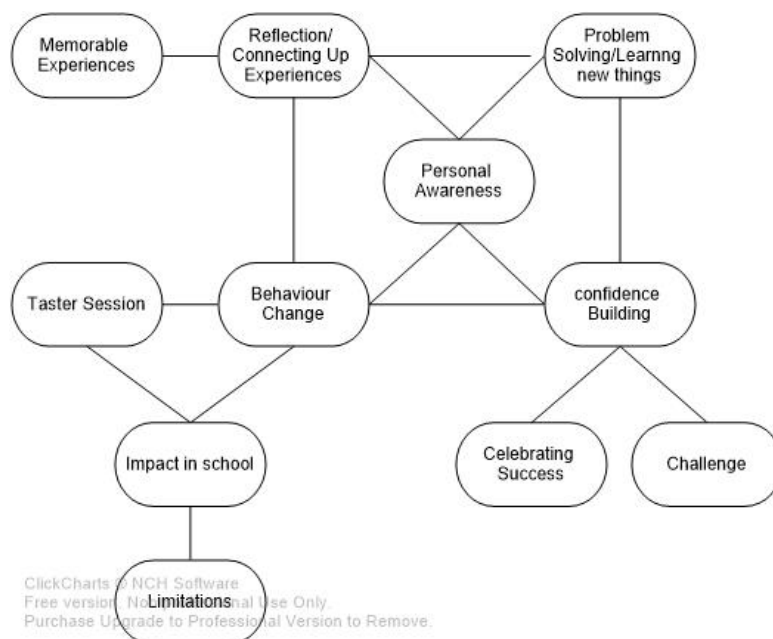
Impact out of school - The data suggests that for most of the children, EFL did not appear to have a noticeable impact outside of school five months post intervention. Two of the children commented on how they felt EFL had changed things for them outside of school; Sophie said that she has made a new friend outside of school through dance lessons and has made some new friends in Year 6. Sam stated he hadn't really got any friends outside of school so hadn't used anything he had learnt in the sessions at home although he had used some of the horse handling skills he learnt at the HorseHeard sessions with a new pony at his local stables.

#### 4.5.4 Thematic Analysis – reduction of themes.

The data analysis so far has followed the first three stages of Braun and Clarke's (2006) Phases of Thematic Analysis. This has led to the construction of 11 initial themes and although this seems a lot, Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggest more is better. During the next stage of analysis the themes are reviewed and refined.

The thematic map (Fig.4) below gives an overview of initial themes and shows how they are considered to be initially connected.

Figure 4: Relationship between initial categories.

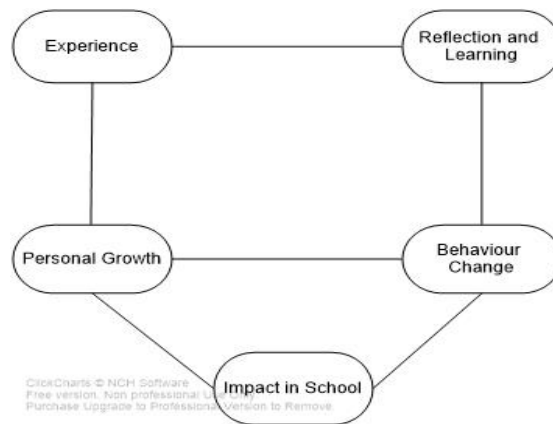


There appears to be a connection between actual experiences children had and the development of personal awareness, problem solving/learning new things and behaviour change. Data containing ideas or thoughts about how individual experiences were perceived by both the children and staff in relation to these themes

suggested that the EFL sessions provided opportunity for personal development and in some cases sparked a natural curiosity to ask questions and learn new things. Extracts from the data also suggested that changes to behaviour appeared to have an impact in school and possible limitations to this impact were identified. Ideas and thoughts about the taster session and the TA's role in supporting the children during both the EFL sessions and in school suggest that there is a connection between the role of the TA and perceived behaviour change in school. Relationships between developments in confidence, celebrating success and challenge were evident in dialogue in which for example overcoming fear, feeling proud of oneself and talk of perseverance and self-belief were highlighted. I did not include the theme impact out of school into the thematic map because the main focus of the research is to explore impact within the school setting.

Further reviewing of categories as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) allowed me to determine which categories were important and could be grouped together, resulting in more specific final themes with clear definitions and names. The reviewed thematic map (Fig. 5) below shows how I consider the final themes to be connected. The underlying connections between themes have remained as discussed in Fig. 4 but now a much clearer and more defined link is seen. Table 10 (see Appendix 9) shows the themes identified and gives a few examples of how each theme was reflected in the interview data.

Figure 5: Relationship between final themes



## Final Themes

Children's own words are included where possible in the analysis. The data was reduced to the following five themes:

Experiences – I decided to group together data referring to experience in particular, this includes reference to actual experiences and memorable activities. The previous category of memorable experience is also included in this theme.

During the interviews it became apparent that the children really enjoyed the experience, they talked about how participating in the EFL sessions made them feel, *'it felt really too good to actually be with the horse doing different things with it because I was afraid of any kind of horse'* and *'it was exciting because I was with my friends'*. Kevin thought the sessions were fun, he said, *'It is quite fun actually, I never thought it would be so fun but it actually was fair fun because you got to walk around with each other and hug the horse.'* Joe told me, *'I just enjoyed everything.'*

The children gave some examples of the kinds of activities they enjoyed, *'I enjoyed when we accomplished picking the hoof up and doing the horse without no lead'* and *'really fun, I think I was the first one to try the maze.'* Sam stated that he found it fun because in the first session he got to groom the horses. The children seemed to enjoy doing something different. Paul commented how he felt at the end of the intervention, *'I felt sad because we had to go. I found it better doing that instead of, I find it better working with the horses than doing lessons'*.

During the follow up interview five months later, Elizabeth remembered the activities the group did and commented *'I enjoyed those the most.'* Kevin felt the most enjoyable time was *'the final session doing the team challenge'* and he felt his team did that well.' Joe remembered lifting up a horse's hoof and leading a horse without a lead rein.

Reflection and Learning – This theme includes the previous categories of connecting up experiences and learning and incorporates data about reflection upon experiences and learning new things. I decided to include problem solving and reference to team work in this theme.

Kevin referred to an occasion when he and Paul used reminders from the teacher in school about how the horse would react in a particular way to a situation to help them adjust their own behaviour; *'The teacher says, Kevin, Paul what will the horse do? ....I have learnt cos I have made this song up about it now, it is a proper song that I have made my own words to it... I have what would the horse do, bbbback off! bbbback off! like that and I just keep singing, whispering.'*

Sophie talked about her experience of not giving up during one of the activities. As a result of her determination she succeeded at the task, thus encouraging her to think, *'that works so I am going to do it at school'* and Sophie went on to say that it actually has worked for her. During the interview, Joe talked about a time in school he might use what he had learnt by referring to the 'Grace and Power' activity and how that had taught him not be pushed around by others.

The TA discussed how she was able to support the children in transferring the learning that has taken place during the EFL sessions back into school. She talked about observing the children in class and if they have had a particular goal to achieve she was able to say *'what would you do in this situation if you were with the horse?'* or *'what happened in that situation with the horse?'* The TA said she felt that she couldn't have offered that support if she was not watching them and was not in the arena with them.

Kevin said that he had learnt something about the lead rein, *'never ever put your fingers through the metal holes because otherwise if it (the horse) decides to run off, your fingers can be taken off and you could go down to the bone!'* Kevin had also shown a natural curiosity during the sessions by showing an interest and asking questions about horse welfare and diseases. During the discussion, whilst looking at a photograph of himself with a horse, Sam described how he attempted to find a solution to get the horse to follow him during one of the activities. Sam explained he was trying to pull the horse to get her to move just a little bit and then let go to see if she followed but this did not work. I asked Sam what his solution was, to which he replied, *'I think it was just to say it won't work and I think I need the lead rein.'* Sam spoke about his experience trying to move the horse several times without success during previous sessions but then during the fourth session, he was successful – *'for*

*some reason...it worked and I don't know why.'* The TA commented that there have been noticeable differences in the ways in which the children are starting to solve problems in class. She reported, *'they are doing it themselves, without needing us to do it for them.'*

I asked Kevin why he thought the children went into the classroom for part of the sessions, Kevin replied *'to help your thoughts in school and for the team work.'* Here there appears to be some awareness from Kevin that during the classroom sessions reflection and discussion about the sessions takes place, in Kevin's experience this helps his thoughts in school and also helps with team work. When I asked Joe if there was anything in particular he had learnt he replied, *'be friends with people and team work, help each other and say 'come on Sophie' and stuff like that.'* Sam also commented that he too had learnt about team work and he suggested that tasks might be done better in a group rather than by yourself, he stated *'if she did it on her own she might be able to do it but if you had a team you could probably do it a bit better.'*

Behaviour Change – there were no changes made to this category during the review.

Data in this theme reflects ideas, thoughts or perceptions suggesting a change to a child's usual behaviour.

Kevin suggested that since EFL the group are not falling out any more and *'it is getting much better...cos none of us are shouting.'* Several participants had commented on how they noticed Paul had become *'more patient'* and this was also reflected by the TA, who also noticed Paul had become more patient and he *'does not get angry at people half as much as he used to'* and Kevin has started to think



about what he is saying more, he has taken the time to think that *'I don't want to annoy people, I need to think about what I am saying.'* In class, the TA has noticed that Elizabeth puts her hand up a lot more and appears more confident.

The TA commented upon Sam and Paul and how she had noticed a change in their relationship, *'before neither of them would have sat together whilst I discussed things with them, they just blamed each other and they have got angry with each other but there didn't seem to be any anger, they both thought more about their feelings.'*

Follow up interview data from the teacher suggested that for Paul it seemed some noticeable changes had taken place and he had managed to maintain the changes post intervention. Lasting behavioural changes for other participants were not noted by the teachers. The Year 6 class teacher stated that she was, *'Not sure what impact the intervention has had on Joe but he seems to have come a bit more independent.'* It is possible the class teacher did not know Joe in Year 5 so was unable to comment on any changes other than the increase in independence she had noticed.

During the participant follow up interviews, Sophie said that she was *'still falling out with friends, however the fall outs were not lasting as long.'* Joe told me he was not falling out with Paul as much and he has become better friends with Kevin. He remembered learning how to be really nice to the horses and how to be nice to friends. Paul commented, *'How you treat horses, you treat people.'* Paul feels that he has been able to keep friends a bit better. He realised that he was good at making friends but not always good at keeping them. Paul feels that friendships are getting better and his mum had told him that he had *'changed a lot'*- she said that the sessions had made a big difference and that more people were playing with him.

Sam told me that he and Paul don't argue as much as they used to although there were still issues with friendships between himself and others within the group.

Personal Growth - The categories of confidence building, challenge, experiencing and celebrating success and personal awareness were combined to create a new theme which I named Personal Growth. I considered this theme to combine data that reflected social and emotional outcomes, including developments to confidence and the value placed upon self.

The conversations with the children about their experiences led me to believe some changes to awareness of their own behaviour had happened. Kevin spoke about how he had changed his teasing behaviour towards Sophie because she has now told him that she does not like it. Joe had stated quite a lot during his interview that he had had fun and going to the sessions had made him happy. He also said that he had '*got a bit better by the next week*' and even though he initially felt scared he felt he had improved with the horses over time. Sam showed he had awareness of why he thought he and Paul had been chosen to take part in the EFL sessions and he concluded that the sessions had been helpful; '*sometimes me and Paul fall out, that I think is the reason why me and Paul got joined in it to sort out our problems, which worked.*'

From listening to the post intervention interviews I sensed the children's awareness of their actions around the horses was something they had become more aware of. Paul showed awareness of how the volume his own voice had affected the behaviour of the horses and that he had to quieten down so he didn't scare the horse, he said '*because they don't like loud voices I don't think*' and they were

showing consideration towards the horse and how they thought it might feel. Paul continued, *'I had to let her know I was going to be with her because if I just walked around once and then I didn't come with her she might have thought I am not going to be with her.'*

The interview data suggests that some behaviour changes have been maintained since the intervention. During the follow up interviews, Kevin said that awareness of how he needs to behave around the horses has made him think a bit more carefully about how he needs to be around other people. Elizabeth stated she had not been falling out with the boys in the group as much and she felt that they are more aware of each other's feelings. Sophie believed she has become kinder towards other children although she did not go into detail.

The TA talked about how she believed the children were starting to think more about personal space and sharing resources, saying they were sharing books a lot more although they don't like sharing books, they did not seem that bothered anymore, she had heard them say, *'we will just put it between us, we have got enough room.'* The TA commented upon how she thought the children had actually thought through their emotions. She suggested the children realised *'you are a bit more powerful when you feel happier or confident or excited about something, so definitely delving in to the emotional side made them understand what they were actually feeling.'*

Sentiments of feeling important also were included in this category. The TA believed that some of children needed to feel that *'we have done something quite different than anybody has done before'* and that they were important because they had been asked to participate. The interview data gives a general impression of improved confidence amongst the participants which appears to have been maintained. The

TA stated the children have all commented on Elizabeth saying it is so much easier now when they are doing guided reading and *'we can hear what you are saying' and 'we can hear what you have said in your questions.'* Kevin described how he didn't really like horses prior to doing the sessions and went on to say, *'I have conquered my fear now'* suggesting Kevin took something from the sessions that gave him confidence to overcome fear and also changed his perceptions of horses.

Sophie's confidence appears to have improved; the TA suggested that initially Sophie's confidence was not great however, *'I think leading a few of the sessions, taking the charge in her group, that has helped her.'* Opportunities for showing leadership in an activity seemed to give Elizabeth a confidence boost - she said the activity *'were fun .... I felt glad because like I said I was showing the others.'* During the follow up teacher interview, the Year 5 teacher stated that *'Sam has gained a lot in confidence'* and commented he believed EFL has helped the children to become more resilient; *'they seem more able to cope with getting things wrong, they don't get as upset, actually learning from mistakes and not fretting about it.'* It is interesting to note that the teachers continued to see improvements in confidence five months after the intervention.

Sophie said that she had tried some new things whilst on a recent Y6 school trip; she *'had a go and enjoyed it.'* She said she had felt more confident to have a go and that she believed herself to be more confident now in group work. Sophie talked about not giving up; she referred to the challenge of asking the horse to go backwards – Sophie said she felt brave. It is evident here that some aspects of the EFL experience have remained with Sophie for some time post intervention and she has reflected upon her experience to inform her future learning.

The TA noticed that *'Joe and Sam were more confident in being able to decide what they were doing for themselves and Joe decided right I am going to lead the horse.'*

The experience of attempting to lead the horse without a lead rein during one of the activities encouraged Joe to rethink his actions. The TA suggested that after thinking and reflecting upon his actions, Joe realised he could do the task and he managed to take the horse off the rein and it followed him round. The TA commented *'I think he realised that if I am confident I get a bit more, and he is not asking me half as much in class for help.'* She goes on to say, *'I think it was a big confidence boost, being able to do something, it is a big deal for him to be able to, say the horse was being led by me.'*

Examples of self-talk and believing in yourself were seen in Sophie's interview in which she talks about persevering when trying to pick up a horse's hoof, *'believing in myself, because you had to find it somewhere in your body to do it because I were really nervous, I had loads of butterflies in my tummy.'* Sophie described how she talked to herself and focussed on achieving her task, *'I said it in my head to myself "come on Sophie you can do it" and then I did five times and then I did it.'*

The interviews reflected an overall sense of happiness to have taken part in the sessions, the children were pleased to have gained a certificate in the school assembly. Kevin was *'really delighted'* to receive his certificate and Sophie told me how she got a certificate holder to keep hers in. There were times throughout the sessions when achieving at a task gave the children a sense of pride and feeling good about themselves. Sophie talked about one of her achievements and said, *'I were really proud of myself ...I have never been prouder of myself.'* Paul talked about the best thing was *'getting a prize'* because he had worked hard but he was

also concerned that if he didn't get a prize *'I might have thought I might not have done good enough'*, which suggests that Paul believed he had to work to a particular standard although this had never been said to him. Sam said he felt *'really proud'* of himself and Joe was happy to also get a horse keyring to say he had *'done really good'* in the sessions.

Paul used the experience to challenge himself to think of new ways of achieving his goal, he realised that whilst leading the horse round she kept stopping, so he said, *'I kept trying to challenge myself thinking of other ideas instead of just coming up with one all the time.'* Joe enjoyed doing something different, he said they had never done things with a horse before, so for him this was a new experience. Sophie talked about how during the third session the group made a maze using poles and cones. Sophie talked about how the task was difficult because of the weight of the poles they manoeuvred but also the width of the maze they created. Sophie described it as *'a bit tough because it were so thin, the person who were leading it you had to go outside of the maze and then the horse would have followed you so it was really hard how to do it.'* Kevin also talked about the group activity of leading the horse around without touching it, he described the level of challenge as, *'not really easy, it was in the middle, it was in the middle because it was a bit hard to get the horse to go again because it took us like five to three minutes to get it going.'*

Impact in School – the data referring to perceived impact in school, limitations, suggestions for the future and staff taster sessions were grouped together to form this theme. The grouping together of this data will also help to answer research question 3.

The TA stated that she noticed almost immediate changes in class and around school during the intervention, *'straightaway we saw a difference.'* Most noticeably during lunchtimes when problems would usually surface, there appeared to be a change, *'they all seemed to be getting on or sorting out the problem with themselves or coming to us and saying 'we have had a bit of a problem, but we have talked it through and we are alright now.'* The follow up interview data suggests that this particular change appears to last; the Year 6 teacher stated that because there are less incidents and/or upsets at playtime and dinner time the children are coming back into class calmer and more settled, which she felt was having a positive effect upon their learning; *'the children are much calmer and ready to go.'*

The TA feels that the children are now helping each other a lot more in class and that in class she has noticed changes that she has been able to relate back to the sessions. Discussion with the TA suggested that sitting with the children on a daily basis in class has allowed her to observe them, she believes that they have thought about their individual goals.

Elizabeth considered herself to have become more confident as a result of the EFL and she now tries to give answers more in class. She says, *'sometimes when I am sat on my table I say the answer to Miss Green and she says "yes say it" because sometimes if I get it wrong I am not confident and when I am, I say it and if I think I am right, I say it.'* Joe believes that friendships between the group have changed, *'I think that we got a bit better to it, I think we got a bit kinder to each other.'*

The limitations of the intervention identified through the interviews appear to primarily be connected to length of intervention and cost. The TA acknowledged that the

children were making improvements each week however suggested that given another week, *'would there have been something else that would have come out?'*. During the follow up teacher interview, the teacher stated that, *'Budgets are tight and the intervention is expensive isn't it?'* Although the teacher said that he would love for some other children to have the intervention he believed that funding was the main reason it was unlikely to happen.

The TA attended the taster session and was able to show empathy towards the children she was now supporting. She explained she understood how it felt to be stood up there doing EFL and that staff need to try it first with other staff members so they have a little bit of understanding before they start it. She commented, *'I knew how it felt to have your friends watching you whilst you were trying to do it and how hard it is.'* The understanding gained by the TA by engaging in the taster session herself appears to have better positioned her to support the participants throughout their experience.

#### 4.5.5 Summary

The EFL experience was a memorable and enjoyable one for both staff and children. It was considered fun by the children and gave them opportunity to learn new skills as well as practice important skills such as working together and problem solving. The teacher and TA considered EFL to have an overall positive impact on the children. The interview data suggests that EFL made the children happy and gave



them a sense of achievement and opportunity to feel proud of themselves. The children clearly enjoyed doing something different.

The presence of the TA throughout the sessions appears to have been an important part of the EFL process both in facilitating appropriate support in transferring learning when back in school, and also with regards to her empathetic attitude towards the children after having done the taster session, being better placed to offer support to the children. The TA knew the children well enough to be able to notice changes in their attitude and behaviour following the EFL sessions and differences were noted in particular during unstructured times of the day, with less instances of falling out or name calling being reported. The TA and teacher participating in the taster session created a shared experience with the children which appeared to encourage positive interaction allowing staff and children to see each other in a different way.

Improved perceptions of behaviour and attitudes of the children were noted by some children themselves and also by the teacher and TA, and in particular improved relationships within the group were noticed. Changes to awareness of children's own feelings/emotions and awareness of their actions around the horses made some children think about how their behaviour might affect other children. Discussions of improved confidence were had with most of the children and improved confidence and increased independence for several children were also noted by the TA.

Although the children only had four sessions of EFL, some lasting changes were perceived to have been made in the months following the intervention. The teacher suggested the children continued to improve in confidence and there continued to be a reduction in the number of incidents of falling out and name calling during unstructured times.

## 4.6 Children's Individual Experiences of EFL

The results from the sociogram, Boxall Profile and interviews for the participant group have been considered in further detail. Exploring individual cases in this way may be helpful in determining the potential for future use of the intervention in a mainstream school. The following 'pen portraits' give a summary of the children's individual experiences of EFL and insight into the overall impact of the intervention for each participant.

### 4.6.1 Sophie

The pre-intervention sociogram results show that Sophie had 5 'hits' within the participant group however she lost 'hits' post-intervention, only scoring 1. Sophie also lost 'hits' post intervention within the wider class going from 10 pre-intervention down to 4.

The results from the Boxall Profile show that Sophie had 19 out of 20 scores within the average range to begin with. These scores dropped slightly post intervention to 13. The decline in post intervention scores was most noticeable in strands i, q, a and b suggesting that Sophie struggled with concentration, attention, interest and motivation when back in class and she also continued to experience difficulties getting along with others and working in a group. Sophie made most progress in strand r suggesting a positive change in self-negating attitude, increase in perception of self-worth, not giving up so easily and a stronger self-image.

The positive changes to Sophie's perception of self-worth and self-image is reflected in the interview data, in which Sophie talks about how the sessions were a bit scary

at first; being around the horses and also working with new people. Sophie talked about how she felt proud about overcoming her fear of horses. She was initially frightened of stroking the horses as she didn't know if they would bite her but this attitude changed as she became more confident.

*'I were proud of myself because I conquered my fear.'*

Sophie clearly enjoyed being with the horses and although she felt nervous at the start of the intervention, once she had become more used to the horses she found the sessions exciting. The positive experiences she had during the session have contributed to her changes of self-worth and image (I refer to myself as RB throughout the examples of dialogue);

RB: *'What was it like being with the horses?'*

Sophie: *'Exciting, sometimes a bit scary because I had to lift the hoof up on one of the sessions and make the horse go back and I actually did it in the end. You have got to believe in yourself a lot to do it.'*

RB: *'how did it feel the first time you had walked around with the horse?'*

Sophie: *'I were really proud of myself and then I went home and my mum went well done I am really proud of you, and I got all excited because she were really proud of me and I were really really proud of myself, it is like I have never been prouder of myself.'*

Sophie talked about how she found inner strength to overcome a challenge and she referred to one particular activity which she called 'Grace and Power'. Through this activity Sophie claims she learnt how not to let people push her around and said that she felt 'brave enough now to do it.' Sophie describes using self-talk to help achieve her goals:

RB: *'....and how easy or difficult was that?'*

Sophie: *'to believe in how much you have to it were a little bit difficult because you don't actually have to find it but it hard to find it on yourself.'*

RB: *'and how did you manage that?'*

Sophie: *'think of happy thoughts and say like to myself in my head, come on Sophie, you can do it and stuff.'*

In discussion about group work and working in a group, the interview data suggests that Sophie had mixed feelings about working in a group, she said, 'in a way working with your friends is good but then in a way it isn't.' Sophie made reference during the interview to working with new people as being 'scary' and 'nerve racking'. This was described when she talked about working with the other children;

*'If you have got three in a group you have never worked as a three it's a bit nerve racking and all sorts.'*

Sophie spoke positively about being able to 'have a laugh' when you work with the same people but when working with different people you have 'a more good time

than usual' because 'you catch up with what they do at home or school because they might be on a different table.'

The interview data shows that Sophie is aware she finds working with others difficult at times, especially if she doesn't usually sit or work with them in class. This is also reflected in the Boxall Profile data which shows that Sophie continued to experience difficulties getting along with other children and working in a group post intervention. Sophie stated she felt scared to play with other people yet told me she had friends in other year groups, and referred to 'Teegan in Year 4.'

Sophie was asked about friendships within the group and what they were like. She felt the EFL group friendships were good and had stayed the same following the sessions. Sophie described how she felt that she had changed quite a bit with people, she said she was now playing with different people and in particular playing with more boys. She felt she was more confident to play with others and had more belief in herself when it came to playing with new people. Sophie stated that friendships within the whole class had changed and she described how another boy in the class, Andy, had been calling her names because of the football team her mum supports. This also led to another boy in the class joining in. This happened at break times leaving her feeling upset. Sophie talked about how she went to find her friend in Year 4 to overcome this and how she tried to stay out of the way.

The interview contributed additional data that was not reflected in the sociogram or Boxall Profile which gave me a greater insight into the experience of EFL was like for Sophie. Sophie felt she learnt about how to be safe around a horse and how to behave appropriately around them. Sophie learned subject specific knowledge for example differences between ponies and horses, markings, colours and also

grooming. The grooming experience was used as a confidence building activity and to help the children get to know an unfamiliar horse.

Time at the end of the sessions gave Sophie an opportunity to talk about her own feelings and those the horse might have. The group had opportunity to see if there were any similarities between them. Sophie described how she was able to identify what the horse might be feeling by looking at its body language and signals it might give.

In summary, Sophie started the intervention with the highest scores within the group having 19 out of 20 strands falling within the average range which limits how much more progress could be made, however it is interesting that Sophie's average scores actually decreased in some strands post intervention. As discussed, the intervention has shown to have had a positive impact on Sophie in some areas, especially with regards to improvements in self-worth and resilience which was reflected in the Boxall Profile results and interview data. An increase in self-belief and feeling proud appear to have contributed to a stronger self-image. Despite Sophie enjoying the intervention and feeling that friendships within the group had stayed the same, the sociogram data and Boxall Profile data suggest that this was not actually happening back in school. Although Sophie showed awareness of her difficulties of getting along with and working with others, things clearly had not stayed the same and she lost 4 'hits' from the participant group. Whilst acknowledging that things had changed in class, the change she referred to was negative in that Sophie talked about herself being bullied. The intervention may have needed to be longer to see a bigger difference, especially with relationships between Sophie and her class mates.

#### 4.6.2 Joe

Joe's Boxall Profile scores placed him within the middle of the participant group however only 13 strands fell within average range scores and this decreased to 10 post intervention.

The most improvements were seen in strands f,g,j, and t suggesting that Joe had made progress when working in a group, he was more aware of the consequences of his behaviour, he had shown improved self-control and organisation and his feelings of self-worth and trust in others had increased. Following the intervention Joe's scores for strands a,d,e,i,q,and r had reportedly decreased. This suggests that following the intervention Joe's teacher perceived him to be experiencing difficulties with attention and concentration and continued difficulties with relationships within the classroom or working/playing with others. The low score in strand i suggests that Joe experienced difficulties with social situations and group work.

The sociogram scores show Joe to be considered a friend by all the participant group both pre and post intervention, scoring 5 'hits'. Joe scored 9 'hits' pre intervention in the whole class results, with a slight increase to 11 post intervention, however, in a class of 34 children this is still a relatively low score; only 32% of the class considered Joe to be their friend.

Joe's interview data suggest that he really enjoyed the sessions and felt it was exciting and fun to be with his friends. At the start of the EFL intervention Joe said he was happy but also a little scared as it was a totally new experience for him. Joe felt the sessions had taught him to be better with people, he said that he had helped others and encouraged them whilst they were completing their challenges. Joe considered friendships within the group had changed over the duration of the

sessions; 'I think we got better, I think we got kinder to each other.....we have been better friends because we have been to the sessions....it's taught us to be kinder.' This perception of friendship within the group has been positively supported by the sociogram results which show that Joe maintained his friendships within the group following the intervention. Sharing the EFL experience has given Joe a common interest within the group.

Joe felt that he learnt about teamwork in the sessions, he said he enjoyed it and it was fun. He told me that in teamwork you had to be friends with people and help each other and say supportive things for example, 'come on Sophie, and stuff like that.'

RB: *'Were there any times you felt it was better working in groups than others?'*

Joe: *'When we succeeded as a team and if you was on your own you might succeed because teamwork works like friendship.'*

RB: *'And did you succeed as a team?'*

Joe: 'Yes'

RB: *'And what did that feel like?'*

Joe: *'Happy, because at the end of all the sessions we got a certificate and a horse to say that you've done really good at this horse stuff.'*

Joe said that he preferred the activities as a group because it was more exciting. He said that the EFL sessions 'have changed me to be happier.' When asked 'how?', Joe replied with 'by teamwork, working together makes it better.' Even though Joe



appeared to enjoy the teamwork activities and felt he learnt a lot about teamwork during the sessions, the Boxall Profile results show that although Joe made some improvements in strand g, (in which an average score would mean that a child was able to competently function and conform when in a group), Joe's scores were still below average suggesting this learning was not consistently applied when back in school.

The Boxall Profile data shows that Joe's feelings of self-worth had increased post intervention, Joe described some examples of times during the sessions where he felt listened to and trusted, which may have contributed to this increase by allowing him to feel valued and hence developing his confidence.

RB: *'You came up with ideas of how to complete the course, did you feel that other people in the group listened to you?'*

Joe: *'Yes, it was good because they listened to me.'*

Feelings of self-improvement were identified by Joe, he felt that 'you got a bit better week by week.' Joe also talked about feeling really happy and proud of himself when he picked up the horses hoof;

*'I thought that I couldn't do that but then I did.'*

Joe recalled what he had learned about how to stay safe around the horses and how you should behave around them. He told me about his experience of grooming the horses in the first session. Joe felt he improved and got more confident through the sessions, once he had got used to the horses the sessions and activities got easier. Joe was able to tell me what he had learned about horse's body language and how to tell if a horse likes you. He described how the horse's ears would move forwards or backwards and this would indicate if they liked you or not. The positive experiences that Joe had during the EFL sessions have given Joe a more confident attitude;

RB: *'Do you believe you can do things?'*

Joe: *Yes, I believe I can do stuff when you put your mind to it.'*

Joe described how it felt to be trusted and considered reliable by the EFL facilitators to set up their own challenges or obstacle courses and that someone had faith in them;

*"It feels good because they are letting us, trusting us now to do our own things."*

Joe enjoyed the 'Grace and Power' activity the most because he worked with his friend. During this activity children are taught a strategy to help develop confidence and resilience. Joe recalled being taught to 'remember to keep your head up and

smile and think happy thoughts'. Joe described another activity in which he experienced success;

Joe: *'We had to go and try and make the horse follow you without a lead.'*

RB: *'Wow! Tell me more about that.'*

Joe: *'We did it! I did it with Kevin and we did it as team work without the lead and with obstacles and we worked as a team to get the horse going around the obstacles.'*

Joe was clearly very pleased with himself for achieving this task. He went on to tell me how it felt to actually do the task of leading the horse around the obstacles without a lead rein;

Joe: *'It was fun and nervous.'*

RB: *'Tell me what you mean.'*

Joe: *'Well, it was fun going around but it was nervous that I didn't really know if it was coming with me....but once I got used to it I got a bit more fun, make it more fun.'*

RB: *'Do you think you did well with this activity?'*

Joe: *'Yes.'*

The EFL activities were unfamiliar to Joe at the start of the sessions and his feelings of nervousness and excitement turned more towards fun and enjoyment once he had

got used to the horses. Opportunities to experience success through the EFL activities gave Joe the chance to experience a range of positive feelings such as happiness, feeling proud of himself, feeling a valued member of a team and feelings of self-improvement. Joe's biggest feeling throughout the intervention was happiness. Joe felt he had become happier because of the EFL sessions as a result of teamwork and having a different and new experience. Although the sociogram and Boxall profile results have not shown the intervention to have had a significant impact on Joe, the interview data shows Joe has taken something positive from the intervention in the way of excitement and fun, improved perceptions of confidence, self-worth and friendships and the enjoyment of learning something different outside of the classroom.

#### 4.6.3 Paul

The sociogram results show no change in friendships between Paul and Sam, Joe and Elizabeth. Sophie felt she was Paul's friend following the intervention but Kevin felt he was not Paul's friend. Paul lost friend 'hits' within the whole class post intervention going from 3 to 0 although it is not clear why.

The results from the Boxall Profile show that Paul made noticeable improvements especially in strands f, h, r and y. These results suggest that improvements in the way Paul accommodates other children and his attitude towards them has been seen to be more positive although strand b shows a slight decrease indicating that despite those improvements, post intervention Paul continued to experience difficulties participating cognitively with his peers. This is reflected in the sociogram results in which Paul is shown to have lost friends. The Boxall results also suggest

that Paul's image of himself and his self-worth have improved and a more positive attitude towards himself and others has been seen.

Paul shows signs of developing awareness of how his behaviour, for example his use of eye contact and giving the horse personal space, might affect that of the horse. He reflects this when talking about his experiences with the horses;

Paul: *'If I looked backward she might step on my toe, well she might think I'm not interested.'*

RB: *'So, being around the horses, how did that make you feel?'*

Paul: *'Well, very secure and not to go near it, to give it some personal space.'*

He also made reference to having to adjust his tone of voice around the horses because, *'horses don't like loud voices'* demonstrating an awareness of how horses like people to behave around them. Although Paul seems to have developed some awareness of how his behaviour may affect the horse during the EFL sessions, the Boxall Profile and sociogram results suggest that this awareness was not transferred back into school as expected.

Paul talked about how he learnt that the horse shows us it's relaxed by reading it's body language. He also talked about awareness of how to stay safe when being around horses. Paul enjoyed being with the horses, he felt very friendly towards them and so happy in their presence he tried to hug them.

The improvements in attitude towards other children indicated by the Boxall Profile and the way in which Paul has become more accommodating towards other children

has been supported by the interview data. During the interview Paul talked about how he had learned to work better as part of a team and how he felt the group were talking more since taking part in the intervention, he gave the following example;

Paul: *'If you are in a group of six, if you are going to write group ideas down you say 'right, we are going to write this, this and this', and you're not going to write anybody else's ideas, don't do that.....don't boss people around.'*

RB: *'So, do you find as a group you were talking more amongst yourselves?'*

Paul: *'Yes'*

RB: *'Is that something you wouldn't normally do?'*

Paul: *'Yes.'*

The classroom plenary at the end of each EFL session provided opportunity to share experiences and reflect upon the session, during which the children were asked what in particular from the session they were going to take back to school with them. When asked in interview about the classroom discussions, Paul remembered one thing he took away with him from the sessions was to be more patient. Paul considered being patient a big thing for him and it's something he felt he usually struggled with. Paul said in general he's not a patient person and likes to get things over and done with, *'especially maths, because I don't like maths'*. Paul stated that the EFL sessions helped him to improve his patience by teaching him to wait for longer. Paul's improvements in patience was also noted by other members of the group and reflected in Miss Green's interview, in which she says,

*“Paul is definitely more patient, that goes without saying, he doesn’t get angry at people half as much as he used to do.”*

During the interview it became apparent that Paul was aware of ‘bossing around’ during group activities and said that he didn’t want to be a part of it, he would not get involved and would just step away if he felt it was happening. Paul said that he felt he now worked better as a team after the EFL sessions and that he himself is not as bossy. Paul said he has also learnt to listen more to others’ ideas. He gave the following example;

RB: *‘What else did you learn about being friends?’*

Paul: *‘To work as a team, not to just go in all on your own and saying ‘we will do this’ and ‘we will do that.’*

RB: *‘So how did you do that?’*

Paul: *‘So whatever they said I would say yes, why don’t we do that?’*

Paul talked of the opportunity to succeed at something non-academic. He made earlier reference to not liking maths and wanting maths lessons over and done with and in that respect the EFL sessions gave Paul the chance to learn something that made him feel good. Paul referred to the ‘Grace and Power’ activity (as discussed previously) in particular as one that helped him ‘to think happy thoughts.’

*“Being around the horses was really good because of instead of going to school and learning I am learning something else.”*

The Boxall Profile indicated that Pauls' image of himself and self-worth had improved and this is reflected in Paul's perceived development of his own confidence described during the interview. Paul felt that his confidence had improved over the four sessions and that he felt a bit nervous when the sessions first started. He stated that he 'got happier' each session and felt sad when the sessions ended. Paul found the EFL sessions fun and also added that he found it better doing that (EFL) instead of lessons.

Paul was asked what the most challenging thing was for him during the sessions to which he replied,

*“ Leading her round, because at times she kept stopping so I kept trying to challenge myself thinking of other ideas instead of just coming up with one all the time.....Picking the hoof up was challenging because it was heavy.”*

When he succeeded Paul said he felt happy,

*“I felt happy, I thought I had success and I did!”*

Paul started the intervention with one of the lowest apparent capacities as perceived by his teacher (only 25% of his Boxall Profile scores falling with the average range) yet he made the most improvement. The intervention had an overall positive impact upon Paul, with improvements to self-worth, confidence and personal awareness of his own behaviour being seen. Paul felt that the intervention had helped him improve his patience with others and this had been noted by other children and the TA. Although Paul felt that he had made improvements in working with other



children as a team during the intervention, the sociogram results suggest that the skills he had learned had not been transferred back into school and there were ongoing difficulties getting along with other children. Paul clearly enjoyed taking part in the intervention and having the opportunity to learn outside of the classroom, experiencing success through a variety of challenges.

#### 4.6.4 Elizabeth

The sociogram results show that Elizabeth kept friends within the participant group in both the pre and post intervention scores, however she lost 'hits' from friends within her class – her scores decreased from 7 to 1.

The results from the Boxall Profile suggest that Elizabeth scored within the average range of scores in 5 out of 20 strands pre intervention (25%) increasing to 8 out of 20 strands (40%) post intervention. The profile shows Elizabeth's scores increased in strands r, w, x, y and z, suggesting a more positive view of self-image and self-worth, sense of self and a more positive attitude towards herself and others.

During the interviews, the teacher commented that he was unsure of what impact the intervention had had on Elizabeth and that he had not noticed any big changes in class – Elizabeth was still quiet and doesn't put her hand up whereas Elizabeth's interview data appears to suggest a favourable impact and reflects her Boxall Profile results. Elizabeth enjoyed the EFL sessions and said they were 'fun' and 'exciting'. She enjoyed learning about 'walking with it (horse) and getting confidence up.' Elizabeth talked about how she got her confidence up by trying her best and having

a go at a task, then achieving her task, she described the feeling of trying your best and succeeding.

Elizabeth described how the opportunities to show others how to pick a hoof up made her feel, 'It were fun and I felt glad because like I said, I was showing the others..' Elizabeth's interview data reflects some of the findings of the Boxall Profile, in particular relating to having a more positive attitude toward herself; Elizabeth talked about how she felt her confidence had improved and how she thought this had happened:

RB: *'What were you learning when you were doing the activity leading the horse with the head collar on and the lead rein, what were you learning about, if anything?'*

Elizabeth: *'Walking it (the horse) and getting your confidence up.'*

RB: *'Getting your confidence up and how did you manage to get your confidence up?'*

Elizabeth: *'Just by walking it.'*

I wanted to explore if Elizabeth thought her confidence had improved in school because of the sessions she did with the horses and if so, could she could give me any examples. In the extract below Elizabeth talks about how she considered her confidence at giving answers in class and how this has changed;

Elizabeth: *'Because sometimes when I am sat on my table I say the answer to Miss Green and she says "yes say it" because sometimes if I get it wrong I am not confident and when I am, I say it and if I think I am right, I say it.'*

RB: *So you feel that you have been able to say more answers since you have done the sessions with the horses, is that right?.'*

Elizabeth: 'Yes.'

Elizabeth spoke about having positive things said to her and about her during the sessions, she talked about leading a horse and said it was 'exciting' and 'fun' and she was having 'good things' said to her by the facilitators about how she was performing during the task. Elizabeth referred to comments made by the other children who were watching her complete her task, reporting they said, 'well done because you put your arms back and you didn't need to and you relaxed your arms and stuff.'

During the interview Elizabeth told me she had some previous experience with horses. The facilitators drew upon this previous experience, allowing her to demonstrate to others in the group how to correctly pick up a hoof. This opportunity seemed a positive one for Elizabeth, she said it was 'fun' and she 'felt glad' because she was showing the others. Elizabeth talked about how she got her confidence up

in the sessions by trying her best, having a go at a task and then achieving the task. She described how she felt about facing a challenge, saying,

*“it was exciting because I didn’t know if I could do it.”*

It seems that Elizabeth learned about perseverance and not giving up during the sessions and her facial expression showed she was clearly pleased with herself. In the following example, Elizabeth describes how she felt when she achieved a task after trying her best.

Elizabeth: *‘I felt glad that I did it because some people like it is easy to give up but Miss Green said “I know you don’t give up” and if I can’t do it I try again and then I just tried it once and then I did it.’*

RB: *‘Very good, you are smiling a lot aren’t you, were you pleased with yourself when you did that?’*

Elizabeth: *‘Yes.’*

Elizabeth enjoyed working as a team during the activities and this could explain the increase in Boxall Profile scores reflecting a more positive attitude towards others. Elizabeth felt the team work was fun because they did tasks together and made

decisions together during which Elizabeth was asked for her opinion. She thought that the group were now playing together in a better way and described how she felt included during the group work;

*“It felt like they wanted me to join in with the stuff because they were including me and asking me what I wanted to do as well.”*

I asked Elizabeth if there were any feelings in particular that stood out for her in any of the sessions, and her answer was ‘just feeling I could do it.’ This suggests the EFL sessions provided Elizabeth an opportunity to engage in something she feels she can do although the interview does not give data relating to things Elizabeth feels she can or cannot do in other aspects of school life.

Elizabeth started the intervention with one of the lowest levels of apparent capacity and made slight improvements on her Boxall Profile scores post intervention. The sociogram data reflects positively Elizabeth’s enjoyment of working within the participant group and how her friendships within the group have not changed although the same cannot be said for friendships with the rest of the class. It is clear from Elizabeth’s interview that she thoroughly enjoyed the EFL sessions and her dialogue gives a strong sense of her feelings of improved confidence. This reflects the findings of the Boxall Profile data indicating improved self-image, self-worth, secure sense of self and a more positive attitude towards herself and others.

#### 4.6.5 Kevin

The sociogram results for Kevin suggest that the EFL programme did not have a positive impact upon friendship groups for him within the participant group and the whole class as hits were lost in both groups post intervention.

Kevin was one of the participants with the highest apparent capacity, having scored within the average range of scores in 19 strands pre-intervention and 18 strands post intervention. Such high scores mean that little change would have been expected within the Profile. Scores that showed a slight increase suggest that post intervention Kevin was thought by his teachers to be more attentive, motivated, more helpful and considerate to others. Scores also imply that Kevin has shown more self-control and more organised behaviour following the intervention. The biggest change identified in Kevin's profile however suggests a decrease in self-negating attitude and an increase in self-worth.

Kevin began the EFL sessions with a fear of horses and feeling nervous. He was frightened the horse was going to stand on him and he said he was scared. Kevin thought the horses would be like big Police horses however when he saw them and realised they were not what he expected he didn't feel as nervous. He commented how he liked their colours and markings.

Kevin talked about how he thought the sessions were fun, he enjoyed the grooming and in fact he enjoyed everything. The positive experience appears to have helped Kevin overcome his fear of horses, in the interview he confirmed,

*"I have conquered my fear now."*

During our conversation, Kevin gave the impression he considered horses were 'a fair special pet', and he talked about the particular care that horses require. He showed an interest in equine diseases, saying he learned a lot about horse care and health from the posters on display at the yard. Kevin told me he learned about safety around horses and how to correctly lead a horse and that he felt like he had really achieved something. 'I feel jubilant!' he replied when asked how he felt to have been with the horses and done the activities. Kevin had learned about horses and how to behave around them, he had recognised signs that the horses liked him and he had achieved the tasks set by the facilitators.

Kevin gave an example of how he is recognising how his behaviour has an impact on others around him and he thought about how the horse had reacted to his noise level and what he had to do to his noise level to get a favourable reaction from the horse. Kevin's responses during the interview gave me the impression that he likes to be in charge and this could be a possible reason why the sociogram results suggest he lost hits after the intervention.

Kevin was able to talk about his ideas of team work and give examples of his experiences of working in a team in school. He discussed sharing ideas and communicating with the others during the sessions and activities with the horses. When asked what it felt like doing team work in EFL he said,

"It felt really weird cos I have done it before but I don't do it every day so it felt really weird but I felt good for myself because I am letting other people have a chance of doing it and I am one of those kind of boys I like giving other people turns."

Contrary to the findings of the sociogram, Kevin feels friendships within the participant group have improved in school and in particular in the way they behave towards each other. The following example reflects Kevin's opinion;

*"Me and Sam are getting better, and I am getting better just myself, and Paul is getting better with patience and everything like he said, we are all doing better."*

Kevin told me his friendship with Paul had improved and they haven't fallen out as much in school. He also talked about his own improved awareness of others not liking some of his behaviours, for example teasing Sophie, so now he said he no longer does that. Kevin described himself as a 'fun' person who likes to try to 'get as much fun as he can into things. He said,

*'so I try and I might go a bit over the top a bit with the fun and I tease people, sometimes I do it without even noticing.'*

Kevin's behaviour of going a bit over the top and teasing people may also be a contributing factor to the decrease in hits in the sociogram. The conversation continued with Kevin saying,

*'I don't do it as much now, I think about what I am going to do more now.'*

Kevin talked about the classroom based activities during the EFL sessions and considered them easy and said he was always keen to put his hand up, so much so that when he was answering every question the facilitators asked for answers from all the group 'except Kevin'.



Kevin's overall thoughts about his experiences were positive and he considered himself more helpful since he had taken part in the sessions. He also concluded he had 'learnt loads and done miles better' and he was proud of himself for his achievements. These responses reflect the findings of the Boxall Profile in particular with respect to increased self-worth, decrease in self-negating attitude and being more helpful and considerate to others.

#### 4.6.6 Sam

Sam's sociogram scores within the participant group didn't change following the intervention – he had 4 hits before and 4 hits afterwards, however the hits he received from classmates decreased following the intervention from 7 to 0. This was the largest decrease of hits of the group.

Sam scored within the average range of scores within 11 strands of the Boxall Profile and remained at 11 following the intervention. The results suggest that Sam's scores had improved in areas of motivation and self-control, he appeared to be more engaged in school and there had been a decrease in self-negating attitude. Following the intervention, the Boxall Profile results show that Sam was considered to be showing a lack of concentration and attention in school and engaged in impulsive, defensive or resentful behaviour. Sam was still considered to experience difficulty forming attachments with others and maintaining relationships with other children. These findings reflect the sociogram results in which a decrease in hits from Sam's classmates is seen, suggesting continuing difficulties with friendships between Sam and his classmates.

Sam was 'super excited' to be chosen to take part in the intervention although he felt a bit afraid once he saw the horses. Being around horses he didn't know made him feel a bit nervous that they might bite him. These particular feelings disappeared once he got to know the horses better. Sam said he felt happy being in the sessions, he recalled the first session in which the children were talking about their senses of sight and hearing and relating these to those of the horse. Sam had some previous experience with horses; he spoke about a friend's horse he had groomed and said he liked riding.

Sam enjoyed grooming the horses during the first session. He told me he enjoyed the activities, they were 'really fun.' Sam talked about feeling proud of the other children in the group as they watched each other succeed at an activity. Sam described the feeling of the activities being really good because he didn't think he could do some of the tasks, for example leading the horse without a lead rein, and then feeling pleased and proud when he did it. Sam talked about he had to think of different ways to solve problems when doing the tasks – if he realised that doing a task one way wasn't going to work. He described how in some situations the children helped each other and suggested helpful hints to each other during the tasks. The following example is taken from my observation notes during the third EFL session, in which the children were watching Sam attempt to lead a pony without a lead rein through an obstacle course;

*'Sam tried several times to get Zebedee to walk with him but the pony did not want to move. Heather tried to energise the pony by gently touching her side, however, the pony's body language (feet firmly planted, ears back, lowered head) appeared to suggest that it did not like the idea of moving! This was taken as an opportunity to talk to the group about warning signals.'*

*The group were asked what they thought Zebedee was trying to tell them, they were encouraged to read and interpret her body language. The children felt that the pony was trying to say 'don't do that again or leave me alone'. Heather related this to 'what warning signals can we give to people when we don't want them to do something to us?' Elizabeth said 'we could tell them not to do that again'.*

The sessions generated a natural curiosity in Sam to ask questions about horses, giving him opportunity to learn something new. During the interview he asked, 'how strong are horses teeth?'. He went on to explain,

*'I think the fun thing was to learn more about horses that I didn't know, which I was surprised I didn't know because I thought I knew everything!'*

Sam talked about how he felt during some of the sessions; 'I felt like I was the boss of something and I don't know why.' Perhaps the EFL sessions gave Sam a new experience of being a leader or of feeling important. He said he felt listened to. Listening to Sam tell me this gave me the impression that Sam often felt he wasn't listened to and that he was not used to being a leader within the group.

Getting his certificate at the end of the four sessions was a special moment for Sam and he felt 'really really proud' of himself. When asked what, if anything, had Sam learnt from the sessions he replied, 'I learnt that I can listen.'

I asked Sam to tell me what it was like working in a group. He replied,

*'fun, fun, I have never really done team work before, I learnt I could do teamwork.'*

We discussed Sam's thoughts about working in a group and he told me it was good because he trusted his group members. He said that sometimes he and Paul fell out and that he thought that that was the reason why he and Paul had been chosen to do the EFL, to sort out their problems, which he said 'worked.' Sam believed he had been selected to take part in the intervention because he often falls out with the other group members - he named specifically Joe and Elizabeth. Sam spoke about how he thought the sessions with the horses had helped him not fall out as much with Paul because his teacher had been reminding him to think about 'what the horse would do'. Sam said although he found this quite annoying in school he felt it had helped, and that 'there is a little bit of improvement.' Although there have still been incidences of falling out with peers since the EFL sessions, Sam suggested that overall there is not as much arguing. Sam believes his relationship with Paul has improved.

#### 4.6.7 Summary

The pen portraits suggest that the EFL intervention provided a personal and unique experience for each participant and that all participants appear to have benefitted in some way from their experience. The data suggests that the overall experience for each participant was positive and enjoyable, and in particular they enjoyed the variety of activities and learning something different outside of the classroom.

The Boxall Profile and Interview data suggests the intervention impacted upon all the children by increasing feelings of confidence and self-worth and having more positive attitudes toward themselves and others. Interviews with the children highlighted the great sense of achievement felt by the children and all the children said they felt proud of themselves at some stage during the intervention.

The sociogram data suggests that EFL did not appear to have an immediate impact on friendships between the participant group and the whole class, with most of the participants having lost 'hits' from their classmates post intervention. The participants themselves however tell a different story, with the interview data suggesting the participants' perceptions of friendships had improved, particularly within their small group. It is likely that positive change to attitudes and behaviour within the group have facilitated the improvement of relationships amongst the group.

The interview data suggested some children learned new things, particularly in relation to horse husbandry and handling. During the interviews some of the children had demonstrated a transfer of learning about behaviour from the sessions back in school; both Kevin and Paul were able to demonstrate awareness of how their behaviour affected others and had made specific changes to their behaviour since starting the intervention. However, not all children were perceived to be making similar transfers of learning from the sessions to the classroom; Sam's behaviour was perceived to be worse by the teacher around school following EFL, and the Boxall Profile results for Joe suggest his teacher believed him to be continuing to experience difficulties with concentration and attention, social situations and group work.

The pen portraits overall suggest that over the course of the four weeks positive changes occurred for each of the participants to varying degrees. The Boxall Profile and participant interview data suggest perceptions of positive changes to attitude and behaviour have occurred, although I would suggest EFL is not a quick fix for all social or behavioural difficulties experienced by the children. The Boxall Profile data and the participant interview data suggests that some children were considered to be continuing to experience difficulty in making and maintaining friends or working with others post intervention.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

In the previous chapter data from the sociogram, Boxall Profile and interviews were presented and analysed. Pen portraits of participants were given in an attempt to provide the reader with an overall picture of each child's experience of the intervention and any impact EFL may have had upon them. This chapter aims to answer the research questions through my own interpretations and reflections of the findings consistent with my epistemological assumptions.

### **5.1 Discussion for research question 1**

What does the actual experience of EFL mean to the participants?

This question was based upon the desire to explore EFL and children's experiences of it. To answer this question I draw upon the interview data in particular, to determine the children's overall experiences of EFL. During the interviews the children were asked about their experiences of what it was like being around the horses; what their thoughts and feelings were and what they did. As previously discussed, photograph elicitation with video footage (if required) was used to assist the children in remembering the experience. Because the question I am attempting to answer relates to the children's own experiences, data I considered most relevant to help answer this question is drawn from the themes of experience, reflection and learning and personal growth. It is within these themes that data referring to the actual children's experiences and their thoughts and feelings about EFL is grouped.

### 5.1.1 Experience

The interviews evoked a variety of memories and interesting discussion about the horses and activities for the children, giving an overall feeling of excitement and enjoyment about the intervention. In particular, the children seemed to enjoy close interaction with the horses and the opportunity to get to know them through hands on activities. The data suggests EFL gives a 'feel good factor'. The children's experience of EFL overall was good, they had fun and it made them happy. As previously discussed, Waite (2011) suggests one of the values associated with experiential learning is fun and this is reflected in the interview data which showed the intervention was considered fun and enjoyable by the participants. Although the participants clearly enjoyed the experience and had fun, two children appeared to be particularly motivated by learning outside of the classroom; Paul felt he was learning something different, new, exciting and fun, and Kevin stated he had fun at the same time as learning. This connection between learning and having fun away from the classroom did not appear apparent for the other children.

The children referred to special moments they had with the horses during the interviews, for example through hugging the horse or receiving gentle interaction from the horse. As discussed by Odendaal (2002), there are physiological responses associated with human–dog interaction, especially with regards to associated increases in the neurochemical oxytocin, the hormone associated with social bonding and sometimes referred to as the 'feel good' or 'cuddle' hormone. Such interaction with the horses, of being licked and nudged, created a pleasurable and memorable experience for some children; being with the horses for the first time made them happy suggesting the possibility of physiological changes taking place



though human-horse interaction as in Odendaal's human-dog experiment although this was not measured in my research.

New experiences were noted by some; the experience of feeling important whilst being a team leader, feeling trusted by the facilitators to design your own obstacle course, feeling like the 'boss' of something (Sam referred to this during his interview) and also the experience of grooming, leading, handling and working with horses. The children were able to talk about the variety of activities they did throughout the four sessions, for example, building mazes, leading horses around obstacle courses and picking hooves up, however the 'Grace and Power' resilience building activity in particular seemed to stand out as a memorable experience for the children. During this activity the children were taught a positive thinking strategy intended to help them build resilience and confidence. Feelings of importance and value that the children placed upon themselves during the sessions suggest that within the process of EFL the children made subjective evaluations of their own self-worth. As previously discussed, Orth and Robins (2014) suggest this kind of subjective evaluation is self-esteem, so if this is the case, it's possible that during the sessions the children were impacting in some way upon their own self-esteem. If as Leary (1999) suggests, self-esteem rises when a person succeeds or is praised, then the success and praise experienced during the EFL sessions is likely to have had a positive effect upon the children's self-esteem, on the basis of their own experiences. The scope of this research does not allow for changes to self-esteem post intervention to be identified. It is possible to suggest that, as discussed by Heatherton et al (2003), the momentary fluctuations of self-esteem are what may be seen during such a brief intervention however it is unclear if this intervention had any lasting impact on trait self-esteem.

### 5.1.2 Reflection and Learning

Whilst the children were learning about how to behave around a horse and stay safe, the use of real horses provoked natural curiosity and the children found themselves asking questions about horse behaviour, health and husbandry, and the interview data suggests that some children had both gained and retained this knowledge. Similar findings discussed by Dell et al (2011) suggest spending time with the horses allowed for opportunities of enquiry and exploration of knowledge. Kolb (1984) believes the purpose of education is to stimulate enquiry in the process of knowledge getting, and by asking questions about horse health and husbandry it is clear that this process was happening during the sessions for some children, and that this was done independently of the facilitator as suggested by Gibbs (1988). In some instances the children showed that they had been able to take something they had learned from the EFL sessions and transfer that learning to a different situation. This process, discussed by Day (2014) is referred to by Kolb as the 'active experimentation phase' and Pendry and Roeter (2013) discuss the supportive role the EFL facilitator plays in this phase in their research into EFL and child social competence. Kevin talked about how he used to be scared of horses and donkeys but now, since becoming more confident around horses during the sessions, he felt able to ride a donkey on a recent trip to the beach. The children spoke about how they should behave around the horses and applied the examples to behaving around other children in the same way.

During the sessions the children were given opportunity to experience problem solving activities requiring them to work together as a team. During Pendry and

Roeter's (2013) research, facilitators helped the children recognise similarities between human-horse interactions and human-human ones in a variety of social contexts in an attempt to encourage reflection of their own behaviour. As in Pendry and Roeter's (2013) research, discussions within the group became part of the activities with the horses and the classroom plenary sessions. The activities provided challenging experiences for the children, both individually and in groups. They were faced with tasks which required them to use skills enabling them to solve problems and accomplish unfamiliar tasks. For some, this was a relatively new experience - it was fun, both being with friends and not having done team work before. As previously suggested by Hockaday (1984), effective teamwork requires certain skills (for example, reasoning, evaluating, listening and the ability to share ideas) to be employed by the children. The interview data suggests that the children believed they had some awareness of how to work together in a team and were using some of these skills, in particular communication skills such as negotiating, sharing ideas, speaking and listening to others. Working as a team was considered an enjoyable activity by most of the children.

The classroom based plenary sessions provided opportunity for the children to talk about the session with a focus on feelings and emotions. During this time, the children were invited to freely participate in group discussion and reflection, which they did without objection. This aspect of the research has similarities to that of Ewing et al (2007) in which circle time was used to discuss goals for the day and positive aspects of the programme. As previously mentioned, Boud et al (1985) argue that reflection forms the basis of activities in which learners engage to explore their experiences which can encourage them to develop new understandings and

with facilitation and reflective comments of a supporting adult knowledge can be generated (Waite 2011). In this research, the TA accompanying the children during the sessions suggested they appeared to have improved in their understanding of feelings from the experience and opportunity to talk about their emotions. Levels of emotional literacy were not measured in this research so it is difficult comment on any perceived changes. However, the children showed awareness of their feelings both during and following the EFL sessions; during the interviews the children described a range of positive feelings experienced throughout the sessions. Feelings of nervousness or being afraid tended to be related to meeting horses for the first time or being asked to do unfamiliar tasks. The interview data suggests that over the course of the sessions the negative feelings changed for some and became more positive as their confidence improved.

### 5.1.3 Experiencing and Celebrating Success

The children had opportunity to experience success both individually and within a group through the variety of activities presented to them during the sessions. Achievements throughout the activities were celebrated and discussion about how well the children felt they had done during the activities took place during the plenary in the classroom. For some, there was an experience of achievement. All of the group spoke positively about what it felt like when they were successful in a challenge, and described feelings of being proud of themselves and of personal improvements in confidence and I believe this contributed to the 'feel good factor' discussed earlier. The findings of Burgon's (2011) research also suggest

improvements to confidence and self-efficacy were also experienced by the young people participating in EFL.

Formal recognition of the group's efforts at the end of the intervention seems to have been important and valued by the group. Receiving a certificate during the final session and having it presented in the school assembly was a memorable occasion for all the group. The children described how getting the certificate made them feel proud of themselves and for some it was recognition that they had worked hard.

The actual experience of EFL for the participants seems overall to have been a positive one. Most notably, the children found it fun, it made them feel good about themselves and they enjoyed taking part. The positive experiences afforded all the children a sense of achievement and feeling proud of themselves, and this in turn appeared to have a positive impact upon the children's sense of self-worth. Being part of the EFL programme created memorable experiences for most of the children and through an experiential learning approach, provided opportunity to learn and practice a variety of skills, including those necessary for positive social development, leadership, collaborative learning and problem solving away from their normal classroom learning environment. In some cases, this learning was transferred to other areas of school or home life.

## **Discussion for research question 2**

### What has changed for the children as a result of the experience?

This question explores perceived impact from the children's perspective as described during the interview process. Data from the sociogram and Boxall Profile are also included in an attempt to identify any other significant impact the EFL sessions may have had upon the children. To help answer this question, data included in theme 'personal growth' has been drawn upon to highlight social and emotional changes. The fourth theme emerging from the data was 'behaviour change' and this data elaborates perceived changes to children's behaviour by the teacher and the children themselves.

#### 5.2.1 Behaviour Change: Relationships within the group and beyond.

The EFL programme was named 'Being Friends' and how we make and maintain friendship was at the heart of the discussion and activities throughout the four weeks. The sociogram results indicate that only one of the participants (Joe) has increased by 2 friendships within the class, rising from 9 hits to 11 with the other participants actually losing hits post intervention. The reason for this is unclear but it may be the rest of the class felt left out or resentful of the group going out of school to do EFL. The sociogram and Boxall Profile do not take into account the potential differences in conception or understanding of friendship which may also impact on the scores. The sociogram results showed both Kevin and Sophie lost friends within the participant group post intervention. Negative behaviours practiced by the participant group, for example through continuing conflicts or bossiness, might

explain the decrease in sociogram hits. In a study by Berndt and Keefe (1995), it was reported that seventh graders whose friendships were high in negative behaviours in the autumn of the year stated increased disruptive behaviour in school by the Spring. The study also found that students who had friendships high in positive behaviours reported the greatest increase in disruptive behaviour. Berndt and Keefe's research suggests that a possible reason for this is that friends who often are in conflict with one another practice a repertoire of negative social behaviours, that may then be generalised to other children and adults. Berndt and Keefe's findings bear some similarity to my research and may help to explain the decrease in friendships amongst the participants post intervention. If the participant group's behaviour remained negative following the intervention and they were frequently in conflict with each other, then as Berndt (2002) suggests, this may have provoked negative reactions from classmates resulting in a decrease in friendships. During the interviews it was noted that Kevin and Sophie were perceived as 'bossy' on occasions and it is possible that the other children had since grown in confidence and realised they no longer need to be bossed about. The sociogram and Boxall results suggest that EFL has had little positive impact upon friendship groups within the whole class and highlights the need for further support. The Boxall Profile data showed that half the group continued to experience difficulty making and sustaining friendships post intervention. Although transient friendships are more common in younger children of kindergarden age (Meyerhoff 1999), the participants in this research are older yet not in adolescence when friendships are more important (Gorresse et al 2013) and therefore one would expect to see some fluctuations in friendships. The interview data on the other hand suggests that the children perceived their relationships had improved throughout the intervention. These

changes to friendships appear to be interpreted by the children in terms of changes in behaviour towards one another and this is reflected in their interview data. All children commented how they felt they were playing together in a better way, communicating more as a group, they had 'got kinder' to each other and they had become better friends because they had done the intervention. The data overall suggests that although the children continue to experience difficulties making and maintaining friendships, EFL appears to have had a limited positive impact upon the children's perceptions of their friendships and their ability to be friendly with others. A possible reason for this might be that throughout the 'Being Friends' programme the children had gained more knowledge about what they should and shouldn't do to be friends with someone.

Interview data from the TA and children suggest improved behaviours which appear to have some effect upon relationships within the group. Similarities were seen in Pendry and Roeter (2013) in which positive effects of EFL were observed on social competence including improvements in relationship skills. The interview data highlighted that some children had noticed a difference in each other, particularly in relation to Paul, whose increased calmness and patience was referred to by Elizabeth and Kevin, who also believed that everyone in the group had, in his own words, 'got better'. The TA noted how the children had all commented on Elizabeth, saying it was so much easier when doing guided reading because they could hear what she was saying and that they could hear what she said in her questions.

Paul thought that the group were now talking more amongst themselves and he also commented how his mum had said he had changed a lot and that more people were playing with him. The EFL sessions appeared to have positive impact on Sam and Paul's relationship and problems they had; Sam talked about how sometimes he and



Paul fell out and said, 'that I think is the reason why me and Paul got joined in it, to sort out our problems, which worked.' Despite Sam not wanting to go into detail about the problems he and Paul had prior to the EFL sessions, he was able to tell me that it was related to often falling out. Sam described how, at difficult times during the school day, regular reminders about what he learned during the EFL sessions from the class teacher helped to resolve issues and therefore the number of falling out incidents has reduced.

The interview data gave insight into behavioural changes that were seen post intervention by the teacher and TA. In class, the children were perceived to be working better in group work and this had also been noticed whilst the children were expected to share space and resources with their classmates. The TA noticed there were noticeably less instances of falling out and name calling and the children appeared to be being kinder and more helpful to one another. The class teacher noted that there was less friction within the participant group following the intervention, which he believed had a positive effect upon the rest of the class. This in particular was noticed when the participant group came back into class after playtimes in a much calmer manner, they were therefore settled and ready for their lesson more quickly. Similar findings are seen in Ewing et al's (2007) research, in which positive changes in conduct and social acceptance were noted by teachers following EFL, although it is not made clear in Ewing et al's (2007) paper which particular aspects of conduct and social acceptance had been observed. The participant's self-report sub scales results found in Ewing et al's (2007) research did not suggest significant increases. Ewing et al (2007) suggests the reason for this is due to the difficulty the participants had in completing the self-report measures. The measures used in this research were not solely reliant upon self-reporting. The

sociogram in this case is a form of self-reporting because it relied upon the children to complete it themselves based on their own perceptions. It was considered easy to use by the school and the children already had experience of completing it so this limited the possibility of errors during completion. However, as with any self-report measure, there is always a possibility that it may be completed untruthfully. Measures to identify changes to social acceptance and conduct in this research relied upon the perceptions and subjective judgements of the teacher using the Boxall Profile, and the TA, teacher and children's own perceptions during the interview data.

The interview data from this research suggests an overall positive change in behaviour and attitude, with reports of the children being kinder to each other and fewer instances of name calling and less friction within group. These observations connect with the Boxall Profile data which suggests that the children continued to experience difficulties working or playing with other children post intervention. Whilst the children were perceived to be working better in group work and the relationship between them and others in the class was considered to have improved, the Boxall Profile data suggests the children have not yet fully acquired the skills necessary to enable them to interact purposefully and constructively with others.

### 5.2.2 Personal Growth: Improved Self-Worth and Self-Esteem

Emler (2001) in his review of self-esteem research evidence suggests that interventions to raise self-esteem generally have modest effects however they are stronger if they specifically intend to raise self-esteem. This research has not intentionally set out to measure self-esteem. The HorseHeard sessions were not

specifically designed to focus solely on raising self-esteem, and as previously discussed, the main focus of this intervention was friendship. Interventions that focus upon other objectives, such as reducing behavioural problems or improving functioning in other areas, tend to have little effect on self-esteem (Haney and Durlak 1998). So with this in mind, changes to self-esteem as a result of the Horseheard programme were not expected. Emler (2001) proposes the quality of relationships with others as being a significant determinant of self-esteem, and Leary (1999) also puts forward that self-esteem is based upon the quality of people's relationships with others. If, as Leary and Emler argue, self-esteem is affected by the quality of relationships then a focus on quality friendship development, though programmes such as the Being Friends Programme, may actually help to improve self-esteem.

Miller and Moran's (2006) two-dimensional model of self-esteem suggests the creation of self-worth has to be complemented by a similar emphasis on self-competence. The results of the Boxall Profile suggested improvements in self-worth and improved perceptions of self in most of the participants. This is also reflected in the children's interviews in which they spoke of feeling good about their achievements and feeling proud of themselves. Success was celebrated during the sessions by means of recognition from both the facilitators and the TA giving positive feedback and praise. Back in school, the children's successes were recognised again by feedback from the TA, teacher praise and receiving certificates in assembly at the end of the intervention. It is possible that the emphasis on self-competence created during the intervention through such achievements has contributed to the development of self-worth shown in the results.

The Boxall Profile is not a tool used to measure specific changes to self-esteem although the results identified perceived changes to self-worth and self-image. Five

out of the six participants showed improvements in self negating attitudes and internalised constraints, that is, implying a level of self-belief of personal organisation and self- control, suggesting the intervention had a positive impact in these areas. Sophie's internalised constraint scores did not show any improvement, her scores were already within the average range and remained the same. The Boxall Profile showed no improvement for Joe in the strand relating to self-worth and self-image, in fact his scores decreased. The reasons why Joe did not show any improvement in his scores are unknown; the interview data shows Joe enjoyed the intervention and felt he did well during the sessions. Considering the children had such a positive EFL experience I would have expected to see improvements to all their self-worth and self-image scores. For those whose self-worth did not appear to improve, I suggest the intervention was too short to make a lasting impact and developmentally, they may not have acquired the cognitive skills necessary to form higher order thoughts which allow a person to make global self-evaluations, as previously discussed by Gorresse and Ruggieri (2013).

As mentioned earlier, Miller and Moran's (2006) idea that the creation of a sense of self-worth has to be complemented by a similar emphasis on self-competence, and the suggestion that practitioners improve a child's sense of competence by providing opportunities to achieve success and to support children in recognising such success. In this research, opportunities for the children to develop self-competencies were offered both during the sessions and back in school; the TA in particular was able to reinforce the group's achievements gained during the sessions when back in school through feedback to the children themselves, their parents and class teacher and subsequent praise. Successes were celebrated during the sessions when tasks were achieved through praise and feedback, and in school

when children were praised for positive behaviour change or meeting their individual goals set during the EFL session plenary. I suggest that the TA attending the sessions was advantageous in allowing an extension of the EFL session to be provided back in school giving further opportunity for reflection, support in achieving success and recognising such success. I consider the role of the TA in this case a significant factor in the development of the children's self-worth. Ewing et al (2007) suggest that the success of an EFL programme is subject to several factors, including communication between all the professionals, teachers and volunteers involved, including the engagement of the student's teacher as a positive role model and active participant in the sessions. In this research, as mentioned previously, the TA was actively involved in the sessions and as such, was able to provide feedback to the class teacher and the EFL facilitators before and after sessions and support the participants accordingly once back in school.

### 5.2.3 Behaviour Change: Increased Confidence

As Karol (2007) believes, mastering skills related to handling and interaction with a large animal may give a feeling of achievement and competence, developing a greater or more positive sense of self. Improvements to children's confidence post intervention were noticed by the class teacher and the TA especially when in the classroom. During course of the sessions the children all had opportunity to interact with several horses and develop their horse handling skills. Such opportunities may have contributed to feelings of increased confidence and achievement. One child in particular was noted by the TA to be more confident at putting their hand up and speaking with more confidence when answering questions or reading aloud in class.

The class teacher interview data reflects these improvements and are shown through suggestions of increased confidence in class and in unfamiliar tasks.

Some of the children talked about challenging activities such as picking a hoof up or asking the horse to go backwards and how they had helped to build confidence. These findings are similar to those found by Burgon (2011), suggesting the young people appeared to grow in confidence and ability around the horses over the course of the research through various hands on activities. As previously discussed, VanFleet and Thompson (2010) propose that by accomplishing a task involving a horse (despite fears) creates confidence and gives children confidence to deal with other intimidating and challenging situations in life. In this research, the TA described how she believed the realisation of being able to do something, for example leading a horse without a lead rein, had instilled confidence in Joe and he had been seeking less reassurance in class. The class teacher believed the intervention made the children think that if they can do those things with a horse they can do anything. The EFL sessions were considered a 'confidence boost' for all the children by the TA; some children lacked more in confidence than others however it was suggested they all benefited in some way. The TA suggested that EFL had given them an attitude of, 'I can do this, you know I have been told to do something and I can actually do it.' It seems likely that both the teacher and TA's perceptions of how EFL had impacted upon the children's confidence are influenced by their own experiences of EFL and they were wanting to see a positive change for the children. Although improvements to confidence were observed in class by the teacher and TA, children's confidence levels were not observed in other settings and data were not collected from staff members who did not attend the EFL sessions or parents.

In respect of confidence, my results are in accordance with Burgon's (2011) research in which emerging themes suggested that the participants appeared to grow in confidence throughout the intervention. Burgon's research also suggested participants made improvements to self-efficacy and empathy however my research has not supported these findings. Opportunities to build confidence through being group leader were enjoyed by the children, and Elizabeth in particular commented about how being able to show others what to do made her feel 'glad' and it was fun. Having the chance to lead some of the group work gave Sophie a boost to her confidence. The class teacher noticed Sam and Kevin had become more confident in class and Kevin was more willing to 'have a go'. He commented that following the intervention the children seemed more able to cope with getting things wrong and they didn't get as upset if they did, they were actually learning from their mistakes.

#### 5.2.4 The Reflective Process and Behaviour Change

The reflective process took place intermittently throughout the sessions, with the children being actively involved and encouraged to contribute to discussion. Opportunities for reflection (discussion and thought) took place primarily during the classroom introduction, during the activities and the classroom plenary but also when the children were back in school - the TA used verbal reminders; for example by asking the children 'what would you do in this situation if you were with the horse?' or 'what happened in that situation with the horse?' This encouraged the children to reflect upon their EFL experiences in order to resolve a current problem or change behaviour.

The process of reflection seen throughout the EFL sessions fits within Boud's (1985) cyclical model, in which the process of re-evaluating and re-examining experience through reflection can produce changes in behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, values or emotional state. This cyclical model is applied to some observations of EFL in action in an attempt to show the process of reflection using a specific example. The reflective process tended to lead to various outcomes for example, behaviour change and an increased awareness of self. During the introduction to sessions 2, 3 and 4 a recap of the previous session was given and the children were invited to share their experiences both of the previous session and their week in school to determine if their goals had been met. The discussion allowed the TA to pinpoint examples of positive behaviour changes noticed during the week and the EFL facilitators also highlighted examples they had noticed during the previous session. Heather (EFL facilitator) referred to a situation with Kevin, when he initially went running up to Jade the horse at the start of the session and Jade's response was to back off. Kevin picked up on Jade's reaction and interpreted the response as 'Jade doesn't like it' and that he had to be quieter around her. For the remainder of that session, Heather noticed that Kevin was much quieter; he had changed his behaviour in response to feedback from the horse. Heather asked the TA if Kevin had been any different in school as a result of his experience last week, the TA said that he had 'not been as boisterous whilst playing football during the week.' Again, this observation is based upon the TA's perception of Kevin's behaviour. From the interview data alone it is difficult to make a determination as to whether it is Kevin's behaviour that has changed or the way the TA views Kevin's behaviour. The TA had previously stated that doing the sessions with the children had enabled her to see



them in a different light, but it is unclear to what extent this has influenced her perceptions of changes to behaviour.

The nature of the sessions allowed for experience and reflection to interchange flexibly and hence the model of EFL used within this intervention fits more comfortably within Boud's model than the four stage model of Kolb as discussed by Day (2014), or Gibbs' (1988), which is more complex in terms of the deeper level thought process required and analysis of feelings. Feedback given by the horse during the session affords the children opportunity to learn and experience non-verbal cues which may influence social cues, communication and behaviour; the facilitator helps the child to interpret these cues and transfer learning from the human-horse relationship to a human-human one. This transfer of learning appeared to happen in school with the support of the TA as facilitator.

Waite (2011) believes knowledge is co-created; interactions between adult, child and place, require a co-constructivist pedagogy with learning opportunities being generated through hands on learning activities – this has been shown in the interview data. In the following example, constructivist pedagogy occurred during an activity leading a horse; the observers in the group were asked to give some practical advice to the leader to help them do better next time. The group engaged in discussion about how they could get the pony leading more successfully and how they could do some of the things they have mentioned when it was their turn. This suggests the generation of learning opportunities through hands on activities where the children came up with ideas about the best way to lead the horse through discussion and were then able to practically try their ideas out. One of the group appeared to show he had gained knowledge through the understanding of his own experience as discussed by Denscombe (2010) and McNiff (2000). During group

discussion in the plenary of session 3 Sam considered what he thought he had learned during the session and what it meant to him, thus in his own way making sense of his experience. Sam told the facilitator he had learned to think about what he needs to do with the tasks with the horses and his target in class would be to concentrate on what he is doing and think about what he needs to do.

The continual experience/reflective process as described above – learning through hands on activities with opportunity to test out new ideas to overcome challenges, combined with classroom discussion, opportunity to talk, think and share ideas about how to solve problems during the sessions provided opportunity for learning. The opportunities for reflection discussed so far have only mentioned those which may have occurred during the EFL sessions or in school with the TA, but personal reflection may have occurred without the TA or facilitators at other times of the school day or outside of school.

Encouragement from within the group during the sessions and also back in school served as reminders of what worked and what didn't during particular challenges, and of course recognising who did well in a particular activity, which both staff and children seemed to do naturally, appeared important in contributing to celebrating successes within the group.

The EFL facilitators and in particular the TA when back in school appeared to play an important role in the reflective process throughout the sessions, pinpointing positive examples of behaviour, attitude, problem solving, teamwork and facilitating the children in making sense of what they have experienced and what, if anything, they learned from their experiences.

### 5.2.5 Behaviour Change: Decreased Impulsivity and Increased Self-Control

Improvements to five of the children's internalised controls scores in the Boxall Profile suggests their behaviour was perceived by the class teacher to be less impulse driven and the children showed more self-control. Similar findings are discussed by Ewing et al (2007), in which individual case studies compiled from interviews and observations suggest participants learned to control their own behaviour following the EFL sessions and in one case, the participant successfully modelled positive behaviour seen in the EFL sessions. Pendry and Roeter's (2013) research suggests positive effects were observed in children's self-management and decision making skills and similarities were seen in my research; the TA suggested the children had considered their EFL experiences when in the classroom and had been able to think 'I can sort it out or I don't need to fall out.' There were examples given of behaviour change during unstructured times of the day, particularly lunchtimes, when there was a longer break. This would normally be a time during which there would be a lot of problems between both the participant group and other children in school. The children were reported by the class teacher to come back into class in a calmer, more settled state following breaks and lunchtimes and this appeared to be having a positive effect upon their learning.

The intervention appears to have had an impact upon the way the children react to certain situations; the TA had said she thought the group were taking the time to think more before acting. The change had been noticed because the way the children would normally respond to something annoying would have ended up in falling out. Other changes noticed by the TA included less falling out and a willingness to talk through problems in a bid to resolve them. It was noticed that in some instances, the children had started to consider each other's feelings as well as

their own. As previously discussed, this observation is based upon the TA's beliefs of how she perceived the children to be behaving, and although it is possible the children may well have changed their behaviour, it is important to consider this point. There is also a possibility that changes to the behaviour and attitude of the children may be due to a change in the attitudes and behaviours of the teacher and TA towards the children and the perceived improved relationships between both children and teacher/TA.

### **5.3 Discussion for research question 3**

#### What is the school experience of EFL as an intervention?

This question explores the impact of the intervention in school as perceived by staff and in what way, if at all, EFL is brought into the classroom. The fifth theme to develop from the data was 'impact in school' and it is this data that will help to answer the final research question. I draw upon data located within the TA and class teacher interviews to help me identify any significant impact upon the class and school.

#### 5.3.1 Perceived Impact

The class teacher felt that all the children benefited in some way from the intervention and some of the children were considered to still need support working on various targets following the intervention. The class teacher's consideration of the impact of EFL suggests that EFL has had a perceived impact in certain areas and not all lessons or aspects of school life. It is reasonable to suggest that the children developed skills, for example prosocial skills or teamwork, that cannot be easily measured by the National Curriculum yet such skills contribute to their performance within the National Curriculum. This reflects findings in MacBeath's (2010) evaluation of the CU, in which it is suggested that the CU may well have its own value and not so much as connected to or enhancing classroom learning. In this respect, EFL may have its own worth and any benefits may not directly be connected to improving classroom learning as might be seen in interventions with more obvious and direct curriculum links.

Interview data suggests that one of the most noticeable changes seen was on the yard at playtime and lunchtime where the children were observed to be less confrontational between themselves, especially between Paul and Kevin. The improved friendships within the group appeared to have a positive impact upon interactions and behaviour within the playground and classroom, with fewer incidents of undesirable behaviours occurring and therefore less staff time is spent sorting out issues. Based on my own experience of teaching, less time spent sorting out problems between pupils means less stress and more time to focus on other aspects of teaching. The incidents referred to by the teacher were not recorded and the evidence is based upon teacher perceptions. These changes are similar to Ewing et al's (2007) findings in which positive changes to conduct and social acceptance were observed by the teacher and riding instructor.

The class teacher commented that because the participant group was small he struggled to see the impact upon the whole school. The EFL programme was specifically designed to incorporate a small group of children; six participants was considered a suitable number by the EFL facilitators both in terms of practicalities and safety of being around the horses. Past experience had informed the facilitators that larger groups meant fewer opportunities for close up interaction with the horses and longer time spent by the children waiting for their next turn, potentially leading to problems when children get bored of waiting. The sociogram results might have been different if the EFL programme had been offered to the rest of the class and as discussed earlier, the sociogram data suggests the Being Friends programme did not have a significant impact on friendships within the class as a whole and it may be the remainder of the class felt resentful of not being involved. The TA noticed an improved sense of communication between the group in class, in particular during

lessons when the children were seen to be communicating more appropriately and helping each other out. This was considered to have a positive impact in the classroom because the children were trying to sort problems out themselves without the TA or class teacher needing to do it for them. The TA commented that following the intervention she has not had to deal with as many problems or situations. These findings again are based upon the perceptions of the TA and call into question if the number of problems between the children had actually reduced or had her attitude towards the children changed?

The class teacher felt the intervention had given the children confidence to think more positively about themselves and their abilities and suggested the intervention had a generally positive impact on the children, especially with confidence levels and this had been noticed in particular with Joe, Kevin, Sophie and Sam. The class teacher noticed how Sophie had appeared to improve in confidence almost immediately after starting the intervention and Paul was noticed to have made 'a big turnaround', which was described as 'remarkable!' Paul was seen to be much calmer and more willing to accept other's rules following the intervention and his efforts to socialise with children outside of his small friendship group had been noticed. The class teacher stated that since the intervention, the group had shown increased resilience and were showing that they were more able to cope when they get things wrong, and again, this was considered quite remarkable by the class teacher. Such changes, albeit on an individual scale, were perceived to have had a positive impact at classroom level through increased group cohesion and increased confidence as discussed in research question 2. Considering the positive impact EFL is perceived to have had upon such a small group in class and the belief that all participants benefited in some way from it, for other children to reap similar benefits

adopting a whole class or even a whole school approach, rather than one small group, would allow for benefits to be seen over a wider scale, not just at a classroom level. This approach would give more children chance to experience opportunities for personal and social development through learning taking place outside of the classroom. Pendry and Roeter's (2013) findings suggest that smaller, targeted groups may have provided a more supportive environment in which to model appropriate social skills, nurture friendships and promote positive peer interactions, however, they suggest that by not exclusively targeting particular children participants had role models with competent pro-social skills leading to more positive social interactions.

### 5.3.2 The Staff Taster Session

The class teacher and TA considered attendance at the staff EFL 'taster' session beneficial. As discussed by Ewing et al (2007), the support of the school and communication between the 'school administration', in this case – teachers and teaching assistants, and facilitators is critical for a successful classroom programme. In this research, the taster session was offered to all school staff and parents of the participants prior to the start of the project. Attendance at the taster session was voluntary and was attended by the head teacher, all class teachers, the Year 5 TA and two parents of the participants. However if all school staff and parents had attended there may have been increased opportunity for reflection and learning throughout other school lessons and at home.

Being able to experience the sessions meant that staff and parents who attended were able to have a clear understanding of what the sessions were about and what

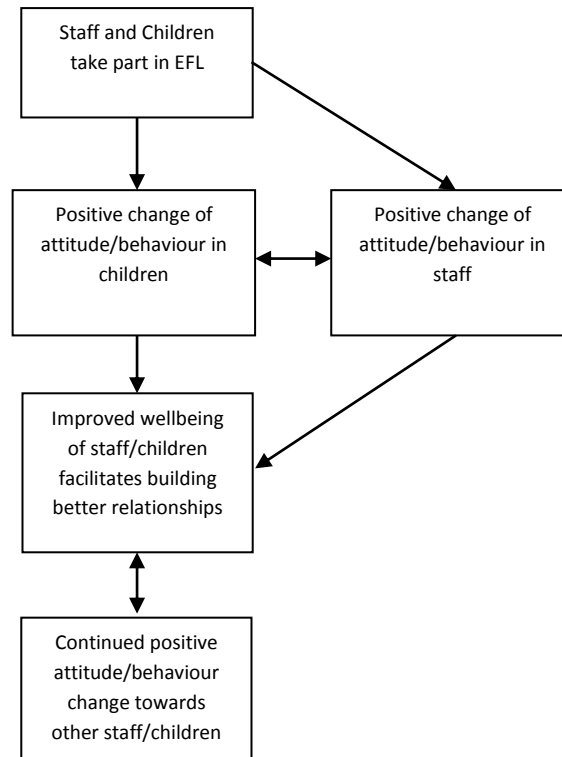


the children might experience. Staff were able to understand what fun the sessions were and how the children might enjoy the variety of activities. It was reported by the Head teacher that one of the parents that attended 'bought-in' to EFL because of the impact it had on her during the taster session; this enabled her to engage in discussions with her child during the programme. The TA explained how she had seen the children in a different way since being with them at the sessions and had shown more empathy towards them after having done the taster session herself. The class teacher stated how he thought the children loved the intervention and really enjoyed going. This provided opportunity for staff and children to share their experience, enabling communication and interaction between them, the class teacher felt this allowed him to show the children that he was a 'normal' person and not just a teacher, encouraging the development of positive child-teacher relationships. The class teacher gave an example of how Sophie came back to school after a session and told him about how the horse had rolled over during the session. The class teacher was able to relate to that experience because the same thing had happened to him and he and Sophie laughed about their experiences together. In most classroom situations this nature of conversation might be limited, and children would not usually get chance to talk with teachers in such an informal way. Having this level of conversation with a teacher may provide opportunity for children to feel special and to believe the teacher is interested in what they have to say.

The sessions had given both staff and children opportunity to start something on the same level in terms of experience, unlike in the classroom when the children perceive the adults to have all the answers. Opportunities for this kind of work, where both staff and pupils share the same level of knowledge, skills and experience

are often limited in the 'normal' school day. Working with the children on a more personal level appears to have facilitated the development of a more positive relationship with them, in which both the teacher and TA's attitude towards the children has changed. During her time supporting the children in class between sessions, the TA used EFL as a way of engaging positively with the children, through positive feedback and encouragement of reflection and learning. It may be that the EFL experience has enabled the both the teacher and TA to see the child for who they are, not just in terms of their behaviour. Changes to behaviour in school appeared to impact favourably upon relationships between staff and participants, and these findings are similar to those discussed in MacBeath's (2010) review of the Children's University, in which it is suggested that positive changes to behaviour may be partly due to the relationship with the teacher in less a formal context allows the children to be seen differently. This also supports the beliefs of O'Connor et al (2011) in which the child-teacher relationship is considered to be an important determinant of a change in behaviour problems. In this case, spending time with the children out of the classroom, away from school, appeared to give the teacher and TA chance to see the children in ways they might otherwise not have done. Based on the findings of this research and the literature discussed, I am proposing that EFL encourages the development of positive child-staff and child-child relationships through changes to behaviour of both staff who attended the taster session and participants. The diagram (fig.6) below helps to explain this process.

Figure 6. Diagram to show the relationship between behaviour change and building positive relationships.



Whilst wary of being too simplistic, staff who worked closely with the participants and attended the taster sessions appeared to change their attitude towards the participants, for example by becoming more empathetic and being able to talk about shared experiences. The evidence also suggested that following the intervention positive changes to behaviour were also seen in the participants, with examples of increased pro-social behaviours being seen within the group. Based upon the findings of this research and my own teaching experience, I suggest that in addition to O'Connor et al's (2011) and MacBeath's (2010) suggestion of behaviour change being partly due to the improvements to children's relationships with teachers, positive changes to behaviour also create a calmer, more pleasurable atmosphere in school and an improved sense of wellbeing, with happier and possibly less stressed

staff and children as incidents of unwanted behaviours become less frequent. I believe that these factors may contribute to the development of more positive relationships not only between staff and children but also between the participants and their wider peer group as other children may too start to see the participants in a different light. This interaction between the child, teacher, peers and environment, can be linked to Pianta and Walsh's (1996) Contextual Systems Model; in this case, the development of positive relationships between children and staff is itself a small system operating within the larger system of the classroom, in which continual interactions between the participants, staff and their peers occur. The diagram (Fig. 6) shows a two way link between the improved wellbeing of staff and children, facilitating the development of positive relationships between staff and children and continued behaviour and attitude change towards other children and staff. I believe these two factors are dependent on each other and are in a continuous cycle; positive changes to attitude and behaviour help to build positive relationships and building positive relationships supports positive behaviour change.

### 5.3.3 Limitations: Time and Cost

Limitations to the intervention perceived by the class teacher included time and cost. During the ever challenging financial climate most schools find themselves now in means that schools have to think very carefully about how they spend their money. There is a possibility that schools could use their Pupil Premium to contribute to the cost.

The class teacher considered longer sessions or more sessions in particular would have been more beneficial because there had been a noticeable improvement within

the class following the intervention. Similarly, Frederick et al (2015) suggested it is beneficial to find the smallest number of sessions possible that will result in positive changes in attitudes and found EFL to be effective over a five week period. The class teacher suggested that four weekly sessions several times a year would be beneficial and he already had in mind a new group of children he considered would benefit. However, the main issue preventing this from happening was funding; the high cost of the sessions would probably prevent the school from using the intervention in the near future due to current school funding cuts and restricted budgets. These points are similar to those noted by Ewing et al (2007) who suggested that it is unreasonable to expect significant change in nine weeks and that a longer time frame, for example a school year should be considered however funding often prevents this.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study set out to explore the experience and impact of EFL on a group of year 5 children in a mainstream primary school. It emerged from my own interest in horses, my experience of teaching children with SEN and a desire to search for alternative interventions that can reach a wide variety of children.

The literature review shows that EFL is a relatively new field, limited academic publications and research made for a challenging literature search, however, the field of EFL and indeed general interest in other AAI's continues to grow through an increase in academic research, websites and social media. There is, for most people, a 'feel good factor' associated with animals. Research suggests that this a result of several factors including physiological changes that occur during human-animal interaction, in particular the release of the bonding hormone oxytocin and the lowering of blood pressure (Odendaal 2000). The development of the use of animals in education through schemes such as the Kennel Club's READ scheme or Pet's As Therapy's 'Read2Dogs' programme has brought attention to the potential benefits of using animals in educational settings. Research suggests that animals can teach children humane values such as empathy, responsibility and respect through pet ownership (Zasloff, Hart and DeArmond 1999) and encourage social interaction (O'Haire 2013).

The use of horses as an outside of the classroom support programme is what sets EFL aside from AAI's such as 'Read2Dogs' or READ, which often take place in school. It has been suggested that the intimidating size of the horse creates an opportunity for some to overcome fear and develop confidence (Van Fleet and

Thompson 2010) although this suggestion has not been reflected in my research, and it is suggested that by succeeding at a task involving a horse despite those fears gives children the confidence to deal with other challenging situations in life. Horses offer a heightened level of responsiveness and mirroring – finely tuned communication established within the herd, unlike that of dogs or other domestic animals.

## 6.1 The Key Findings

### EFL has the ‘feel good factor’

The findings suggest the EFL experience was enjoyable, exciting and fun for all the children. Being around the horses was a new and challenging yet positive experience for most of the children, provoking a natural curiosity and motivation to try something unfamiliar - taking them out of their comfort zone and providing opportunities to learn something new. The findings suggest EFL has a ‘feel good factor’; it made the children happy and they experienced feelings of importance and value.

### Increased perceptions of friendships and group cohesion.

The ‘Being Friends’ programme did not appear to have a significant impact upon increased friendships within the participant group or at class level, however it did have a positive impact on increased perceptions of friendships within the participant group. Perceptions of friendships appeared to be influenced by the way the children within the participant group behaved towards one another; prosocial behaviours such

as being kind, sharing and helping enabled children to get along better, and by doing so the children perceived they were better friends. The findings suggest that the EFL programme had a positive impact on teacher and participant perceptions of improved group cohesion and collaboration. Although the children were considered to be working more positively together following the intervention the Boxall and Interview results suggest that the children continued to experience difficulties working with others and making/maintaining friendships. A longer period of EFL sessions giving the children more time to practice the skills necessary for successful relationships may have provided different results. The methods used to collect data relied heavily on subjective judgements and if alternative methods had been used the research may have yielded different results. Using a multiple method approach allowed me to create a broader understanding of EFL from the perspectives of the participants and school, adding validity to the findings which would not have been possible using a single approach.

#### Positive changes to behaviour

The findings highlighted changes to behaviour perceived by the class teacher; the impact of EFL was seen most noticeably at classroom and playground level and did not appear to extend beyond this. The findings suggest that there were fewer incidents during unstructured times, with children showing less impulsive behaviour and more self-control. Such changes in behaviour, for example less name calling and less falling out particularly during playtimes and lunchtimes were reported to have a positive impact upon the class, with children returning to lessons in a calmer state. The children were perceived to be working better in a group with a more



positive attitude towards each other and similar findings by Ewing et al (2007) and Pendry and Roeter (2013) also suggest improved relationships within the group following EFL. Positive behaviours within the group were seen and practiced within the EFL sessions yet back in school it was not clear how much opportunity the children had to continue to practice the positive behaviours. Opportunity to follow up and practice positive behaviours learned may be beneficial for the development of good quality friendships between the group and their peers. If less negative behaviours were seen by classmates it is likely that there will be more positive contact. The interview data suggests the teacher and TA's views of the children changed as a result of the shared experience, however, their views may have also changed as a result of the positive changes to behaviour seen within the group. It is reasonable to suggest that staff having less disruption or unwanted behaviour to deal with leads to a happier and undoubtedly less stressful atmosphere in school and in turn staff have a more positive attitude and behaviour towards the children. Although these dynamics are complex, the research did provide evidence that EFL can facilitate the building of positive child-staff and child-child relationships through positive changes to attitude of both participants and staff who take part.

#### Increased feelings of self-worth and confidence

The results suggest that the EFL programme had a positive impact upon feelings of self-worth and confidence. The results suggest EFL contributes to the development of self-worth and this appeared to have impacted upon all the participants. EFL gives the participants opportunity to experience a sense of feeling good about themselves and their achievements. Recognition of achievements during the

sessions by individual children, peers and staff combined with the personal experience of success and feelings of accomplishment help to create a sense of self-competence in the children. Feelings of self-worth; of feeling valued and important, when complemented by feelings of self-competence create self-esteem (Miller and Moran 2006). Although this research did not intentionally set out to measure self-esteem, in accordance with Miller and Moran (2006), the results suggest that EFL could possibly improve a child's self-esteem providing the child has a sense of self-worth and self-competence. The results suggest EFL improved the confidence of most of the children. EFL provided the children with opportunity to develop confidence in skills relating to the interaction and handling of a large animal and accomplishing tasks involving large animals such as horses can give children confidence to deal with other challenges in life (Van Fleet and Thompson, 2010). The impact was shown in some cases to have gone beyond the classroom and changes were experienced by the children in other areas of their lives, for example when doing activities out of school and at home. The TA interview data suggests following the intervention the children were more willing to take risks or have a go at unfamiliar tasks and some children had developed confidence in leadership skills. I suggest increased feelings of self-worth and self-competency contribute to the improvements in confidence experienced by the children. In my experience as a teacher, children who feel good about themselves, who have a more positive self-image and a 'can do' attitude are likely to feel more confident in unfamiliar or more challenging situations.

### The TA is central to the process

During the classroom based parts of the EFL sessions the children shared their experiences with each other, they talked about their own behaviours and that of their peers both in the sessions and at school and changes to behaviour were highlighted. Discussions were encouraged and supported by the TA and the EFL facilitators. As previously suggested by Ewing (2007) the support of 'administration', in this case particularly the TA, in the programme was a key element to its success and facilitated the continuous process of reflection when back in school. The interactions between adult, child and place during the EFL sessions and in school facilitated discussion, reflection and learning support the ongoing learning and development of skills throughout the school day via consistent feedback and support from the TA who accompanied the children throughout the sessions. As previously discussed, I suggest the virtuous cycle of more positive interaction between the children and staff during the school day following the intervention contributed to the development of positive relationships and a change in attitude between the children themselves, teacher and TA and I believe the TA played a crucial role in this. As suggested by O'Connor et al (2011), improvements to relationship quality would be anticipated to support children's socio-emotional and behavioural development and the findings of this research suggest that improved relationships have likely contributed to positive changes in behaviour and attitude of the participants.

Reflection and learning play an important role in EFL as suggested in the studies of Dell et al (2011), Ewing et al (2007) and Burgon (2011) and the reflective process was integral to this EFL programme. Reflecting upon an experience provides opportunity for a learner to think about what they have experience and make sense of the various aspects; thoughts, feelings, actions, responses, and then analyse or

interpret those experiences in order to learn from them (Boud et al 1985). Boud's (1985) cyclical model of reflection suggests changes can be made to behaviour and attitudes and in this research the continual process of reflection seen throughout the sessions and following school days appears to support this suggestion. Evidence from the participant and teacher interviews and data from the Boxall Profile suggests changes in attitude and behaviour of most children was seen.

### EFL and SEMH support

I wished to determine whether EFL could be used by schools in cases where additional support is needed to meet the social, emotional and mental health needs of children, as stated in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (DFE 2015) and questioned if EFL could be used by schools in such cases. In terms of offering social, emotional and mental health support, the results of this study suggest that EFL has had a positive impact upon feelings of value of self, confidence and resilience. The 'feel good factor' associated with interacting with a horse suggest that EFL could be beneficial in providing additional support to those with social, emotional and mental health needs. The results suggest EFL has the potential to boost confidence, self-esteem, improve social competencies, and change behaviour and attitudes toward oneself and others.

Schools are expected to offer a range of approaches to support children with SEN and supporting children in developing particular skills, for example social skills or coping skills, could be effective in enabling them to be successful in a variety of situations and overcome life challenges. EFL has the potential to be integrated via links with the PHSE curriculum to form part of a whole school approach to promote

positive behaviour, social development and self-esteem in turn facilitating positive classroom management. Research suggests that EFL helps to promote more positive relationships within groups of children through improved social acceptance (Ewing et al 2007) and relationship skills (Pendry and Roeter 2013), which on a broader scale could promote a healthier school environment with less behaviour problems. The findings of this research suggest that EFL helps to develop more positive child-staff and child-child relationships through a continuous cycle of positive interaction influencing favourable changes to attitude and behaviour. It is reasonable to suggest that changes to attitude and behaviour at classroom level may have a positive effect on the wider school environment. By giving schools the tools to meet SEMH needs more effectively through interventions such as EFL the need for schools to use commissioned services may be reduced. This research reflects the importance of the TA, or other significant adult to be a part of the sessions for the success of the intervention, in accordance with Ewing et al (2007) and this would be an important factor for any school thinking of providing this intervention. Although Ewing et al (2007) do not suggest the 'administration' support needs to be someone who knows the children well, they suggest it is someone who takes an active interest in the child and is an active participant in EFL in order to be a positive role model.

### Is EFL a worthwhile investment?

Based upon the findings of this study, I believe EFL to be an effective and worthwhile intervention that could be used more widely in schools. Other research has also shown there is some value to EFL with positive outcomes having been identified in several studies (Holmes et al (2011), Ewing et al (2007), Burgon (2011), Hauge et al

(2013), Pendry and Roeter (2013), Dell et al (2011)) and as discussed in the literature review, similar benefits may be achieved from using other in class animal assisted education interventions (Massengill Shaw (2013), Zasloff, Hart and DeArmond (1999)) although these may be limited. These kinds of intervention may not be suitable for all children, in particular those who do not like animals or in this case horses. Other barriers to using these kinds of interventions might include a negative teacher/school attitude towards an alternative approach, reluctance from schools to adopt a holistic approach to SEMH development or a restrictive curriculum particularly in years 5 and 6 when preparations for SATs are likely to start. However, being based out of school, EFL offers a fun, participatory approach to supporting children with SEMH. Taking part in an intervention in a place other than school provides an opportunity for school to meet the needs of children who may otherwise be reluctant to engage or are at risk of social exclusion, through a positive and novel approach to learning which takes them out of their comfort zone and a chance to do something they have possibly not done before. Unlike other school based approaches in which targets are often set for children, EFL allows children to identify their own targets or areas of need, as did the children in this research, and as such creates a personalised and unique learning experience for each child.

## 6.2 Personal Reflection

I have thoroughly enjoyed doing this study, having the opportunity to meet and be inspired by practitioners in the field of EFL and learn from their knowledge and experience. I took great pleasure in learning from the wonderful children who kindly

agreed to participate in this research. This project has been an exciting journey, through which I have experienced development and growth both as a researcher and academic writer.

This research has allowed me to explore the new and emerging world of EFL, something I knew little about at the start of this project. My journey has enabled me to look at EFL and animal assisted education in various forms and learn about the potential benefits associated with using animals both in and out of the classroom with children and young people. Through this, I have developed a keen interest in the use of dogs to support learning and the value they bring to the lives of those they work with. I am curious to explore this further in the future and look at how dogs might be used to improve social, emotional and behavioural functioning within a school setting. I am beginning to consider how the use of dogs or other animals could be incorporated into my own teaching practice based upon current research.

### 6.3 Limitations to the research

#### 6.3.1 Research Funding

The research had cost implications as previously discussed. Without this funding, the research would not have been able to continue. Since the start of this research HorseHeard has gained registered charitable status. The charity is now able to hold fundraising events and receive donations, allowing future programmes to be offered to schools across the UK at a lower cost.

### 6.3.2 Time restraints

Planning the sessions with HorseHeard and obtaining funding took longer than expected, which meant that a great deal of effort had to be made to ensure that necessary preparations with regards to ethics were in place and ready for the time when funding was secured and the sessions could commence. In addition, I was conscious that it would be more pleasurable for the children for the sessions to take place in the summer months when the weather would be warmer. This meant that when planning the sessions school holidays and school activities in which the participants may be involved had to be taken into consideration.

### 6.3.3 Research Methods

Some limitations to this study have already been discussed. I consider the main limitation with the methods used is that they give data based upon subjective judgements. Each individual method used has its' weaknesses which supports my case for using a multiple method approach. I found the Boxall Profile quite complicated to analyse and it did not allow consideration of the children's thoughts or feelings which might have been helpful in supporting interview data. Including individual histories of the children could have brought additional richness to the data.

### 6.3.4 Sample size and generalisation

The small number of participants for this project were selected using non-probability sampling and the participant group was chosen by the head teacher. As a



researcher I propose that generalisation through context similarity can be made about the use of EFL in schools.

Using a single school to collect data meant that I had the opportunity to gain access to a rich source of information however it also possibly limits the extent to which the findings might be applied to other schools not similar in context. Using a smaller than average mainstream primary school has limitations for the scope of potential participants; the range of difficulties or special educational needs encountered by children in a special school or alternative provision would likely be greater and different results might have been given. The school were supportive and interested in the project although it was the TA who was most immediately involved. Had other members of staff or even parents been actively involved, the extent to which EFL impacted on other areas of school or home life might have been more readily seen.

#### 6.4 Contribution to knowledge

This research has added a new aspect to the body of literature currently emerging on EFL, encompassing a unique context and approach and focussing upon primary school aged children in a mainstream school setting. This research suggests EFL can be an effective and worthwhile intervention in supporting Primary school children with SEMH difficulties. The participation of staff in the EFL taster session and the support of the TA throughout the programme were crucial for its success and contributed to the development of positive relationships and subsequent changes to attitude and behaviour. This research has given a different insight into how EFL could be used within educational settings. The findings of this research are in accordance with some of those discussed by Burgon (2011), Ewing et al (2007) and

Hague et al (2013) and go some way to responding to Pendry and Roeter's (2013) suggestion that future research should try to elucidate which components are central to an EFL programme's success.

### 6.5 Possibilities for further research

I suggest there is potential for post-doctoral work following this project to further explore the value of EFL within educational settings. As previously discussed, this project did not set out to measure self-esteem, however the findings suggest that EFL had a positive impact upon perceptions of self-worth or value of self. Further research into this area, specifically measuring changes to self-esteem, for example by using Harter's Self Perception Profile (Harter 2012) might add to the findings of this research and also the findings of Holmes et al (2011) and Ewing et al (2007).

This project would have benefitted from more sessions; 4 weeks is a short time to see any significant changes however HorseHeard design their school based programmes to generally last 4 weeks. Although positive changes were perceived to have taken place after 4 weeks, a longer programme might have allowed more noticeable changes for more of the participants. The subjective nature of the Boxall Profile means that the children's scores are based upon teacher perception and indeed may well have been influenced by the teacher's relationship with each child at the time. In some cases this may be problematic, for example if the teacher has a dislike towards the child, and not give a true reflection of the child. These scores would likely be different if the same children were scored again by someone else, with a different relationship to the children.

Future research could broaden this exploration to look at impact across the whole school or perhaps the impact of EFL in more than one school. I chose not to include parents views in this study – future research could aim to explore the wider impact of EFL within the home and family.

#### 6.6 Implications for Future Practice:

EFL is expensive. As schools experience continuing budget cuts and the financial restraints placed upon them are ever increasing funding for out of the classroom learning opportunities is limited. The school involved in this project suggested that although they would like to use the programme again in the future, funding issues mean it was unlikely this would happen. Schools may be able to source funding through organisations or charities such as the National Lottery or the Education Endowment Foundation, or schools may even be able to raise their own funds by hosting fundraising events.

Despite the DfES (2006) suggesting the educational benefits from LOTC are numerous and research from academics such as Malone (2008) who suggest that experiential learning can provide children with a variety of opportunities that facilitate behaviour change, improved achievement, improved self-esteem, self-concept and attention, opportunities for LOTC tend to be few. Suggested reasons for this include fear of legal implications in case of an accident, health and safety concerns, increased workloads for staff and timetabling restraints. Despite this, I believe schools should prepare well for out of school activities, not be deterred by fear and recognise the benefits of learning away from school.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Semi Structured Interview Questions

#### Introduction

Now that you have finished all the sessions with the horses I would like us to talk about the sessions you took part in. I would like you to try and give me as much information as you can about your experiences during the sessions you had so that I can use the information to find out more about equine facilitated learning. I will also show you some photographs and some video clips of the sessions to help you to remember. There are no right or wrong answers to any questions. If you want us to stop the interview at any time you can just tell me or show me the 'please stop the interview' card.

#### Conversation structure.

(Opening question)

- 1. What did you think it would be like to take part in the sessions when you were first asked?**

Video/photos of being with the horses

- 2. Tell me about your experiences working with and being around the horses....**

What is it like?.....tell me more.....

Video / photos of activities, what do you see? Thoughts/feelings

- 3. Tell me about your experiences taking part in the activities....**

Was there anything you learnt?

How have taken what you have learnt with the horses back into school?

Video/Photos of working as a group

- 4. Tell me about your experiences working as part of a group...**

What is it like to be with other children in the group?

What is different about you, if anything, since you have been in the group?

**5. Tell me about your feelings/emotions during the sessions.**

What thoughts or feelings stood out for you? Do you need to look at any video clips?

**6. Tell me about anything that has changed for you since you have done the sessions with the horses.**

**7. If you were to do the sessions again, what might be helpful, have you any advice?**

Would you change anything about the sessions?

(closing questions)

**8. What would you like to have happen now?**

**9. Is there anything else you would like to say?**

Thankyou ☺

*Clean question bank*

*And that's like what?*

*And what kind of ..... is .....?*

*Is there anything else about.....?*

*And what happens.....?*

*And whereabouts...?*

*And then what happens?*

*And what happens next?...*

*And what happens just before?*

*And where does/could that have come from?*

## Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form



### Project Information Sheet



#### Who am I?

Hello, my name is Rebecca Clavell-Bate and I am a student at Newcastle University.

#### What am I doing?

I am doing a project about the ways in which children experience using horses to help learn skills such as making friends, communicating with others and problem solving. I hope that what I find out from this project will help other children learn these skills in the future.

I am inviting you to be a part of my project although you do not have to take part if you do not want to. The project will last for four weeks and will take place one afternoon per week. There will be six children taking part altogether. The project will take place at the local HAPPA Centre where you will get to know the horses and some of the people who will be helping you.



#### What will happen?

You will need to bring a coat and wear some suitable shoes/boots. You will leave school with your teacher just before 1pm to go to HAPPA. You will take part in the sessions as a group and then you will be brought back to school for home time. At the end of the four sessions, I will come into school to talk to you about your experiences of being with the horses. I will also come back into school in October to talk to you again about what you remember about the sessions.

During the sessions I will be making notes, taking photographs and video so that I can remember what has happened during each session. At the end of the project all the notes, photos and video will be destroyed. You do not have to use your real name. I will keep your names secret and will not write them in my project. You can withdraw from the project at anytime if you are unhappy about taking part. The sessions will be confidential although if you tell me or one of the other adults about something that means you or someone else are in danger of harm, I will have to tell Mrs.XXXX but I will talk to you about it first. At the end of the project I will write to you, your parents and school to let them know what I have found. I will also write up my project which will be given to the University.

Please feel free to ask any questions if there is anything you are unsure about, you can ask me or Mrs. XXXX. I can be contacted at [r.h.clavell-bate@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:r.h.clavell-bate@newcastle.ac.uk) or 07872 xxxxxx. My research supervisors details are: Dr. Pam Woolner, [Pamela.Woolner@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:Pamela.Woolner@ncl.ac.uk) 0191 208 xxxx and Dr. Wilma Barrow [w.barrow@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:w.barrow@ncl.ac.uk). They can be contacted at the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, King George VI Building, Newcastle University, NE1 7RU.

#### Participant Consent Form

Please read and tick	Yes 	No 
I agree to take part in the project		
I understand what will happen		

I am ok with having my photograph taken/being videoed		
I am ok with Rebecca observing the sessions and making notes		
I know that I can opt out at any time		

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix 3: Project Information Sheet**



### **Project Information Sheet**



#### **Who am I?**

My name is Rebecca Clavell-Bate and I am a doctoral researcher at Newcastle University. I am an experienced teacher have worked within the field of education for fourteen years.

#### **What am I doing?**

I am doing a project about the ways in which children experience using horses to help learn skills such as making friends, communicating with others and problem solving. I hope that what I find out from this project will help other children learn these skills in the future.

I am inviting your child to be a part of my project although they do not have to take part if you do not want them to. The project will last for four weeks and will take place one afternoon per week. There will be six children taking part altogether. The project will take place at the local HAPPA Centre where the children will get to know the horses and some of the people who will be helping them.

#### **What will happen?**

Your child will need to bring a coat and some suitable shoes/boots to school on the days when sessions will take place. They will leave school by car with a member of staff just before 1pm to go to HAPPA where they will take part in the sessions as a group. The sessions will be led by a qualified Equine Facilitated Learning coach and horse handler. Both myself and the HorseHeard coach have full DBS clearance; Safeguarding polices will be adhered to at all times in accordance with the Primary School and HAPPA. The children will be brought back to school in time for home time. At the end of the four sessions, I will come into school to talk to your child about their experiences of being with the horses. I will also come back into school in October to talk to them again about their experiences.

#### **How will the research data be used?**

During the sessions I will be making notes, taking photographs and video to help me remember what has happened during each session and to support the children during the interview process. At the end of the project all the notes, photos and video will be destroyed. Anonymity and confidentiality will be respected; data collected during the research will be treated as confidential. Individuals will not be named in written documents or titles of photographs. Your child can withdraw from the project at anytime if you/they are unhappy about taking part. At the end of the project I will write to yourselves and school to inform you of my findings. I will also write up my project, in the form of Doctoral Thesis, which will be submitted to the University. The data may also be shared with 'HorseHeard' and school.

Please feel free to ask any questions if there is anything you are unsure about, you can ask me or Mrs. Xxxxx. I can be contacted at [r.h.clavell-bate@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:r.h.clavell-bate@newcastle.ac.uk) or 07872 xxxxxx. My research supervisors details are: Dr. Pam Woolner, [Pamela.Woolner@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:Pamela.Woolner@ncl.ac.uk) 0191 208 xxxx and Dr. Wilma Barrow [w.barrow@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:w.barrow@ncl.ac.uk). They can be contacted at the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, King George VI Building, Newcastle University, NE1 7RU.

#### **Parental Consent Form**

<b>Please read and tick</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
I agree to my child taking part in the project and I understand what will happen.		
I agree to my child being interviewed		

I am ok with having my child's photograph taken/being videoed		
I am ok with Rebecca observing the sessions and making notes		
I know that my child can opt out at any time		

Signed:	Name:
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## Appendix 4: Data Management Plan

### Data Management Plan

Rebecca Clavell-Bate April 2014



#### Existing Data

The research objectives require qualitative data that are not available from other sources. It also requires secondary quantitative data acquired from the participating school.

#### Information on data

1. *Semi-structured interviews* – It is anticipated that 12 interviews will be conducted in total. The interviews will be recorded using digital audio recording. Transcription will be completed using digital transcription software. Transcripts will be in Microsoft Word. Interview transcripts will be coded in NVivo or a qualitative software suited to interview analysis.
2. *Observations/field notes* – Observations and field notes will be made during the Equine Facilitated Learning sessions with the children. These will be handwritten notes kept by the researcher.
3. *Photographs / video recording* - images will be taken of participants during the research sessions. Images will be stored on a memory card for use during interview process.
4. *School based data* – quantitative data to include participant's raw assessment data and Boxall profile data. A suitable software will be used to support the analysis of this data.

#### Quality Assurance

The research will be overseen by two experienced academic supervisors to ensure both a high quality of research is undertaken and research protocols adhered to in line with Newcastle University guidance.

#### Backup and Security

Data will be backed up onto an external hard-drive that can be locked safely away. Memory cards containing digital photographs/video will be stored securely in a locked drawer. They will be destroyed at the end of the project.

Documents containing sensitive information will be password protected.

### Ethical Issues

A letter stating the purpose, approach and dissemination strategy of the research and accompanying consent forms (including to share data if appropriate) will be prepared and presented to parents and participants. A clear verbal explanation will also be given to parents and participants. Participants will be given opportunity to discuss/ask questions prior to sessions and interviews. Commitments to ensure confidentiality will be maintained ensuring recordings are not shared; that transcripts are anonymised and details that identify participants are removed from transcripts or concealed in write-ups. Where there is risk of participants being identified despite efforts to ensure anonymity or confidentiality, participants will be shown sections of transcripts or report text to ensure they are satisfied that no unnecessary risks are being taken with their interview data. If during some points of the interview process interviewee's are uncomfortable with being recorded, the recordings will be paused. This will be noted.

### Expected Difficulties in data sharing

There may be difficulties transcribing the data using specific transcription software, in such a case assistance may be required from a professional audio typist to transcribe. This will be discussed with participants in the first instance.

### Copyright/intellectual property right

The qualitative data will belong to the researcher however data may be made available (respecting anonymity and confidentiality) to 'HorseHeard', research parents/participants and school.

School own the secondary quantitative data.

The researcher will have photographic/video copyright.

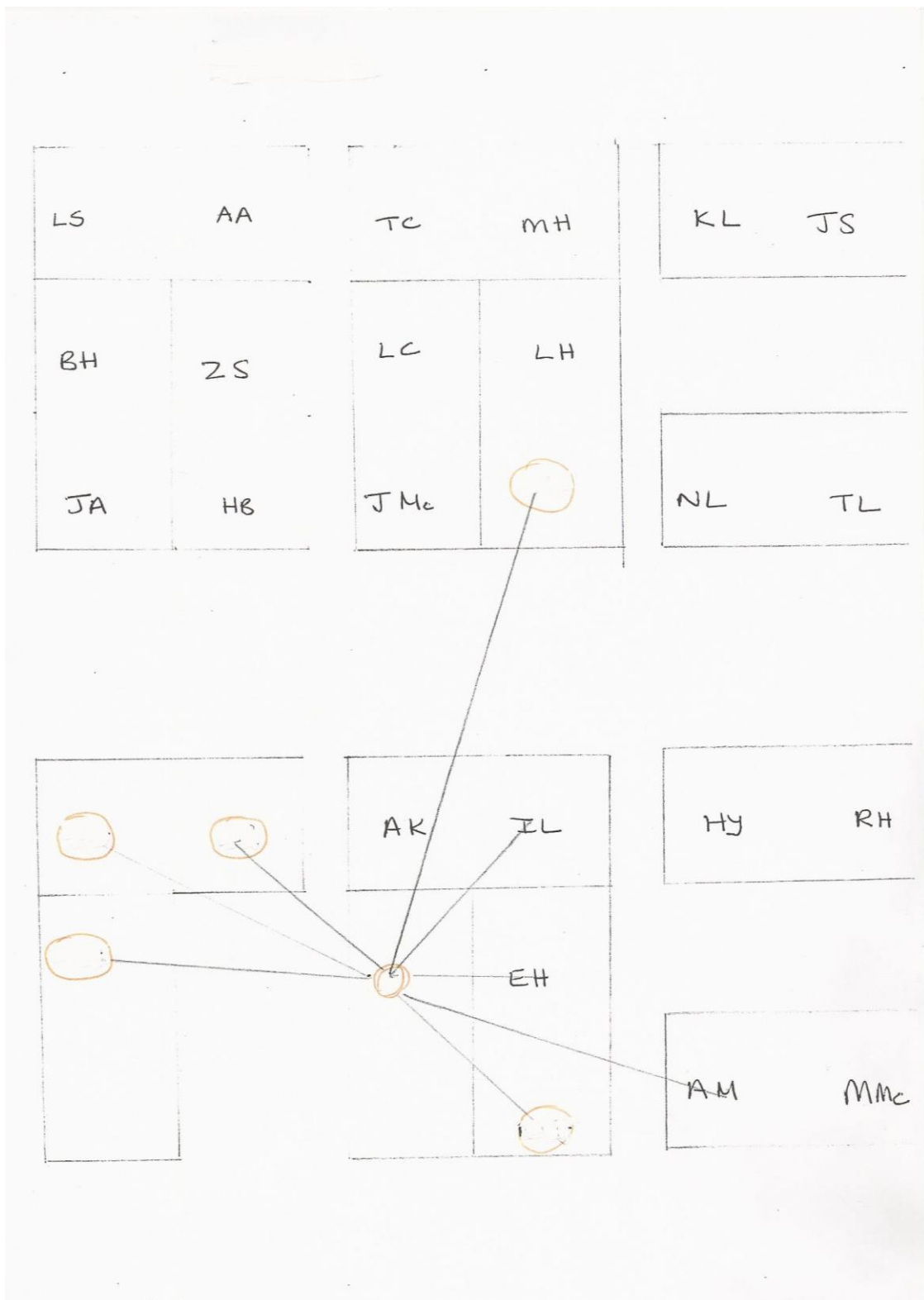
### Responsibilities

The researcher has overall responsibility for the management of the project, generated data, data sharing (if appropriate), archiving and dissemination.

### Preparation of data for sharing and archiving

The data will be presented in the form of Ed.D Thesis at the end of the project. The research will be disseminated with the support of HorseHeard; this is likely to incorporate dissemination online. Information may also be disseminated at request of the school in the form of feed back reports/presentations.

Appendix 5: Example of sociogram



## THE BOXALL PROFILE

**For the structured observation of the developmental progress of school-age children**

Child's Name:
School:
Date of assessment:
Date of birth:
Age at assessment:
Profile completed by:
For how many terms have you known this child?
Relationship to child, e.g. class teacher, SENCO:

<b>Situation in which assessed – please give details including class or group size</b>
Mainstream class:
Small group or unit within the school:
Other special provision:

<b>Current provision for this child's special educational needs</b>
Code of practice level:
Date of most recent I.E.P:
Date of next review:
Current special provision made – please describe in as much detail as possible
Special provision made in the past:

History of pre-school provision, e.g. nursery or playgroup attendance – please describe:

## Section I

### DEVELOPMENTAL STRANDS

Enter scores for Section I items in the appropriate column and Section I histogram

Score each item in turn according to the Key below

- 4 Yes or usually
- 3 At times
- 2 To some extent
- 1 Not really, or virtually never
- 0 Does not arise, not relevant, or cannot be assessed

1	<b>Listens with interest when the teacher explains something to the class</b>		A
2	<b>Takes appropriate care of something s/he has made or work s/he has done</b> <i>Investment of feeling in his/her achievement is implied, and self esteem</i>		F
3	<b>Appreciates a joke or is amused by an incongruous statement or situations</b> <i>Disregard lack of appreciation of a joke which is at his/her expense</i> <i>Disregard amusement that is clearly inappropriate</i>		D
4	<b>Begins to clear up or bring to a close an enjoyable work or play activity when the teacher, with adequate warning, makes a general request to the group</b> <i>Score 2 if a personal and specific request is needed.</i>		G
5	<b>Makes and accepts normal physical contact with others</b> <i>e.g. when holding hands in a game</i>		H
6	<b>Makes appropriate and purposeful use of the materials/equipment/toys provided by the teacher without the need for continuing direct support</b> <i>Disregard repetitive activity which does not progress</i>		A
7	<b>Maintains acceptable behaviour and functions adequately when the routine of the day is disturbed.</b> <i>e.g. when there are visitors in his/her class, or the class is taken by a teacher s/he does not know well.</i>		H

8	<b>Makes an appropriate verbal request to another child who is in his/her way or has something s/he needs</b> <i>Disregard situations of provocation</i>		H
9	<b>Complies with specific verbal prohibitions on his/her personal use of classroom equipment</b> <i>Score 2 if s/he complies but often protests or sulks</i>		G
10	<b>Abides by the rules of an organised group game in the playground or school hall</b> <i>Interacts and co-operates and continues to take part for the duration of the game</i>		J
11	<b>Accommodates to other children when they show friendly and constructive interest in joining his/her play or game</b>		H
12	<b>Listens, attends and does what is required when the teacher addresses a simple positive request specifically to him/her</b> <i>e.g. to get out his/her work book</i>		A
13	<b>Works or plays alongside a child who is independently occupied, without interfering or causing disturbance</b>		G
14	<b>Shows awareness of happenings in the natural world, is interested and curious, and genuinely seeks explanations</b>		B
15	<b>Of his/her own accord returns to and completes a satisfying activity that has been interrupted</b> <i>e.g. s/he finishes a painting or carries on with a written story later in the day or the following day</i>		C
16	<b>Is adequately competent and self-reliant in managing his/her basic personal needs</b> <i>i.e. clothes, toilet, food</i>		A

17	<b>In freely developing activities involving other children s/he constructively adapts to their ideas and suggestions</b>		I
18	<b>Turns to his/her teacher for help, reassurance or acknowledgement in the expectation that support will be forthcoming</b> <i>Disregard occasional normal negativism</i>		F
19	<b>Accepts disappointments</b> <i>e.g. if an outing is cancelled because it is raining, or s/he is not chosen for favourite activity, s/he does no more than complain or briefly moan</i>		J
20	<b>Takes part in a teacher centred group activity</b> <i>e.g. number or language work, or finger games</i> <i>score 2 if s/he does no more than try to follow</i>		A
21	<b>Shows genuine interest in another child's activity or news; looks or listens and gains from experience</b> <i>Does not intrude unduly; does not take over</i>		B
22	<b>Shows genuine concern and thoughtfulness for other people; is sympathetic and offers help</b>		I
23	<b>Recalls information of relevance to something s/he reads or hears about and makes a constructive link</b>		C
24	<b>Makes constructive and reciprocal friendships which provide companionship</b> <i>Score 3 if the friendship is with one child only</i> <i>Score 2 if no friendship lasts longer than a week</i>		D



	<i>Score 1 if the association is fleeting, albeit constructive and reciprocal</i>		
25	<b>Contributes actively to the course of co-operative and developing play with two or more other children and shows some variation in the roles s/he takes</b> <i>e.g. in the play house, other free play activities, or improvised class drama</i>		E
26	<b>Is reasonably well organised in assembling the materials s/he needs and in clearing away</b> <i>Reminders only are needed</i>		B
27	<b>Communicates a simple train of thought with coherence</b> <i>e.g. when telling or writing a story, or describing an event</i>		C
28	<b>Responds to stories about animals and people with appropriate feeling; appropriately identifies the characters as good, bad, funny, kind etc</b> <i>Disregard response to nursery rhymes or fairy stories</i>		D
29	<b>Makes pertinent observations about the relationship between two other people; appropriately attributes attitudes and motives to them</b>		D
30	<b>Engages in conversation with another child</b> <i>An interchange of information, ideas or opinions is implied</i>		E
31	<b>Looks up and makes eye contact when the teacher is nearby and addresses him/her by name</b> <i>i.e. heeds the teacher; does not necessarily pay attention</i>		F
32	<b>Sits reasonably still without talking or causing disturbance when the teacher makes a general request to all the children for their attention</b>		G
33	<b>Gives way to another child's legitimate need for the classroom equipment s/he is using by sharing it with him/her or taking turns</b> <i>No more than a reminder is needed</i>		H
34	<b>Shows curiosity and constructive interest when something out of the ordinary happens</b> <i>Is secure enough to accept a change or the introduction of something new, is alert to the possibilities of the event and gains from it.</i>		D

Any additional comments to amend or extend the information provided by the Profile?

## Section II

### DIAGNOSTIC PROFILE

**Enter scores for Section II items in the appropriate column and Section II histogram**

Score each item in turn according to the Key below

- 4 Like this to a marked extent
- 3 Like this at times
- 2 Like this to some extent
- 1 Only slightly or occasionally like this
- 0 Not like this, not applicable, or not observed

Score	Column		
1		<b>Abnormal eye contact and gaze</b>	V
2		<b>Avoids, rejects or becomes upset when faced with a new and unfamiliar task, or a difficult or competitive situation</b>	R
3		<b>Variable in mood; sometimes seeks and respond to affectionate contact with the adult, or other times rejects or avoids</b>	W
4		<b>Oblivious of people and events; doesn't relate; is 'out of contact and can't be reached'</b>	Q
5		<b>Uncontrolled and unpredictable emotional outburst or eruptions that release and relieve pent-up and endured anger or distress</b>	Z
6		<b>Inappropriate noises or remarks, or patterns of behaviour, that are bizarre fragments of no obvious relevance</b>	T
7		<b>Erupts into temper, rage or violence when thwarted, frustrated, criticised or touched; the "trigger" is immediate and specific</b>	Y
8		<b>Relates and responds to the adult as a baby would; enjoys baby-level pleasures; may happily babble and coo, call out or crawl about, or mirror the others</b>	S
9		<b>Always has to be first, or the best, or have the most attention or get immediate attention</b>	Z
10		<b>Adopts stratagems to gain and maintain close physical contact with the adult.</b>	U
11		<b>Lacks trust in the adults' intentions and is wary of what they might do; avoids contact, and readily shows fear</b>	V
12		<b>Self-conscious and easily rebuffed, and hypersensitive to disapproval or the regard in which s/he is held by others</b>	R
13		<b>Contrary in behaviour; sometimes helpful, co-operative and compliant, at other times stubborn, obstinate and resistive, or unheeding</b>	W
14		<b>Repetitively pursues a limited work or play activity which does not progress</b>	Q
15		<b>Spoils, destroys or otherwise negates the achievement or success s/he has worked for and values.</b>	X
16		<b>Gives uninhibited expression to boisterous and noisy behaviour; is</b>	T

	<b>not influenced by normal social constraints and expectations</b>		
17	<b>Reacts defensively even when there is no real threat; is evasive, blames others, finds excuses or denies</b>		Y
18	<b>Over-reacts to affection, attention or praise; gets very excited and may become out of control</b>		S
19	<b>Desperately craves affection, approval and reassurance, but doubts and questions the regard shown, seeks it repeatedly but remains insecure.</b>		U
20	<b>Can't wait for his/her turn or something s/he wants; plunges I or grabs</b>		Z
21	<b>Functions and relates to others minimally, and resists or erupts when attempts are made to engage him/her further</b>		V
22	<b>Self-disparaging and self-demeaning</b>		R
23	<b>Attention-seeking in a bid for recognition or admiration</b>		W
24	<b>Disparaging attitude to other children; is critical and contemptuous</b>		Y
25	<b>Listless and aimless; lacks motivation and functions only with direct and continuing support or pressure</b>		Q
26	<b>Sulks when disapproval is shown, or when attention is withdrawn, or when thwarted.</b>		X
27	<b>'Is into everything'; shows fleeting interest, but doesn't attend to anything for long</b>		T
28	<b>Remembers a real or imagined offence, bears a grudge and determinedly takes his/her revenge</b>		Y
29	<b>Clings tenaciously to inconsequential objects and resists having them taken away</b>		S
30	<b>Sullen, resentful and negative in general attitude and mood</b>		V
31	<b>Can't tolerate even a slight imperfection in his/her work and is upset or angry if s./he can't put it right</b>		W
32	<b>Feels persecuted; imagines that others are against him/her and complains of being 'got at' and left out</b>		X
33	<b>Restless and erratic; behaviour is without purposeful sequence, continuity and direction</b>		T
34	<b>Determinedly dominates or persecutes by bullying, intimidation or the use of force</b>		Y

Any additional comments to amend or extend the information provided by the Profile?

Appendix 7: Scoring the Boxall Profile.

Strand	What is measured	What a high score means	What a low score means
<b>Developmental Profile</b>			
A	gives purposeful attention	The child heeds the teacher, is biddable and gives attention. He/She is sufficiently organised to meet basic requirements and is interested and willing to involve him/herself, although may need some help. The foundations for productive learning in school have been established.	The child may be developmentally immature. He/She will be inattentive, lack concentration and be unlikely to follow simple requests or instructions. He/She will demonstrate a lack of independence in basic skills, ie dressing or eating independently. He/She may be unwilling to take an active part in group work or games. He or she may have difficulty understanding the expectations of the school, and in predicting adult responses to his/her behaviour.
B	participates constructively	The child is interested and has purposeful involvement with people and events. There is some autonomy of functioning and learning.	The child is likely to play alongside rather than with others. He/She may intrude unduly and may try to take over. He/She is egocentric and shows little or no interest in things or activities going on around him/her. He is unlikely to touch things, make relevant comments or ask questions.
C	connects up experiences	The child is purposeful and self-motivated. He or she is capable of coherent and sustained thinking and relates events to each other appropriately for his/her age.	The child is reluctant to finish tasks and needs encouragement and support to finish work. Language and short term memory skills may be underdeveloped.
D	shows insightful involvement	The child has an alert interest in events and is sufficiently secure and interested to	The child is either too controlling or too passive. He/She is likely to experience

		respond positively to new experiences. He/She is aware of the feelings and attitudes of others and shows the empathy and trust necessary for positive social behaviour.	difficulties in making/sustaining friendships. Relationships may be fleeting, albeit constructive and reciprocal.
E	engages cognitively with peers	The child adapts flexibly and interacts purposefully and constructively with others.	The child is likely to demonstrate difficulties whilst working or playing with other children.
F	is emotionally secure	The child is secure and self-accepting, has a sense of self-worth, trusts others and is secure in their regard.	The child may have to revert to survival instincts to get basic needs met and does not see other people as pleasurable. May not have had enough attention, praise and appreciation.
G	Is biddable, accepts constraints	The child is able to function and conform in a group, has regard for others and accepts organisational constraints and requirements when these are immediate and evident.	The child lacks trust in adults and cannot predict what is going to happen next. May not understand that if an activity stops he/she can do it again at a different time.
H	accommodates to others	The child can express his/her own needs and accept and accommodate those of others; can accept the need for group constraints; is sufficiently secure to accept change. This implies an adequate level of trust and internalised controls.	The child lacks trust in adults; may not feel in a secure position at home; may not have experienced pleasure with others; may not have had enough time/attention/care.
I	Responds constructively to others	The child can identify with others and become part of their world; s/he respects their needs; is considerate and helpful and in good emotional contact.	The child finds social situation in a group hard. Child cannot respond constructively to others or offer help.
J	Maintains internalised	The child has internalised constraints; it implies considerable personal	The child is impulse driven, lacks personal organisation and self-control. He or She may

	standards	organisation and self-control.	find it very difficult to stop a task.
<b>Diagnostic Profile</b>			
Q	Disengaged	The child is not engaging with the world and is without interest and motivation. This suggests that s/he does not have a readily available potential to make productive attachments and is likely to be difficult to reach, particularly when there are high scores on items 4 and 14 (see diagnostic profile questions Appendix 6). Such children will need a tentative approach from the adult and much individual attention to establish an attachment before they can be drawn into the group.	<i>(Low scores are preferred in this section)</i>
R	Self-negating	An insecure, fragile self-image and self-defeating attitudes; the child may be unusually sensitive about his/her worth, perhaps because of high expectations in the home combined with too little support in meeting them; or the home provides inconsistent care and support and chaotic experience; or there has been a sudden loss of support after an earlier good and constructive relationship; or perhaps identification with a depressed mother; or constitutional factors that make the child more vulnerable. Such children have a need for warm attachment but a severe lack of self-worth makes it difficult for them to	

		seek this.	
S	Undifferentiated attachments	The child is at an early stage of development when there is no defined awareness of self and indiscriminately seeks any attachments available. There is a marked need for an early level relationship and although still functioning at an early stage there is a readily available potential for attachment and growth.	
T	Inconsequential behaviour	The child is impulse driven and does not reflect on, monitor or direct his/her own behaviour; personal organisation and identity are undeveloped. It may be that there is an underlying neurophysiological state which needs investigation but more often these features suggest that the child has had too little help in the early years to gain the resources to relate to others and engage in an age appropriate level. However, because the behaviours described are normal at an early level there is an available potential for attachment and growth if appropriate relationshipss and experiences are provided.	
U	Craves attachment, reassurance	The child is seeking attachment and needs a close and consistently supportive relationship. There is a deep insecurity about personal worth and adult regard.	

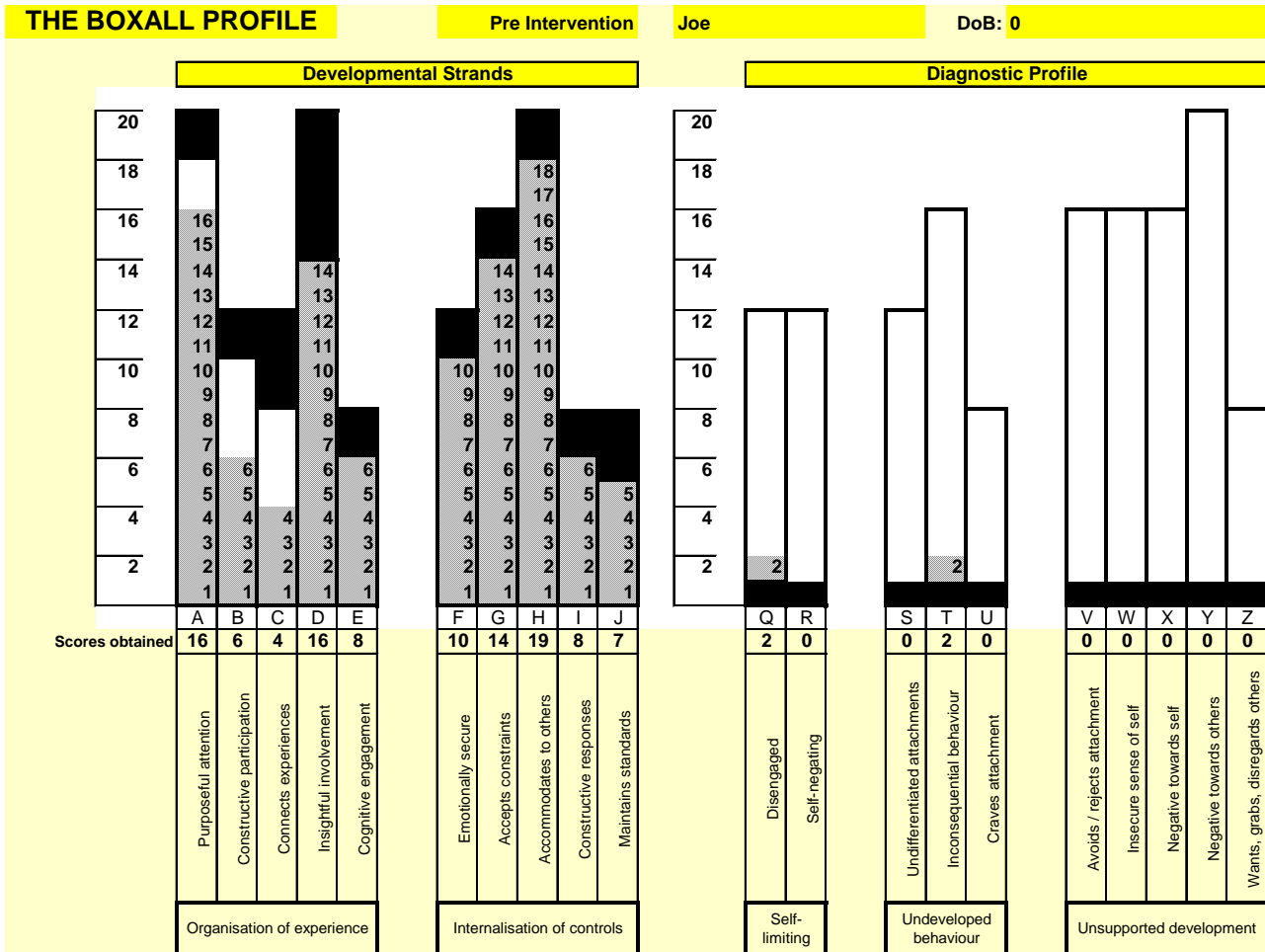
V	<b>Avoids/rejects attachment</b>	The child has not been able to attach to a reliable adult. He/She has a profound lack of trust in others and resists making attachments. A tentative approach is needed and it may be some time before trust is established and an attachment made.	
W	<b>insecure sense of self</b>	The child has internalised profound insecurity and shows an uncertain and ambivalent attitude towards him or herself. Here again, trust is slow to be gained.	
X	<b>Negativism towards self</b>	The child feels unvalued and is nursing a severely injured sense of self. This is expressed in self-damaging anger, silent negativism or projected onto others, who are seen as persecutors. The child may fear the adult's reaction to an overt expression of anger.	
Y	<b>Negativism toward others</b>	The child is oversensitive to real or imagined slight or threat. This shows in itself in defensive and resentful behaviour or in anger directed at others. Trust must first be established and the child's need for affection and approval may then become evident; s/he becomes attached and is open to learning. However, without early and effective intervention the prognosis is likely to be poor because the child has developed a well-organised way of being that increasingly brings satisfaction and power. Giving up these	



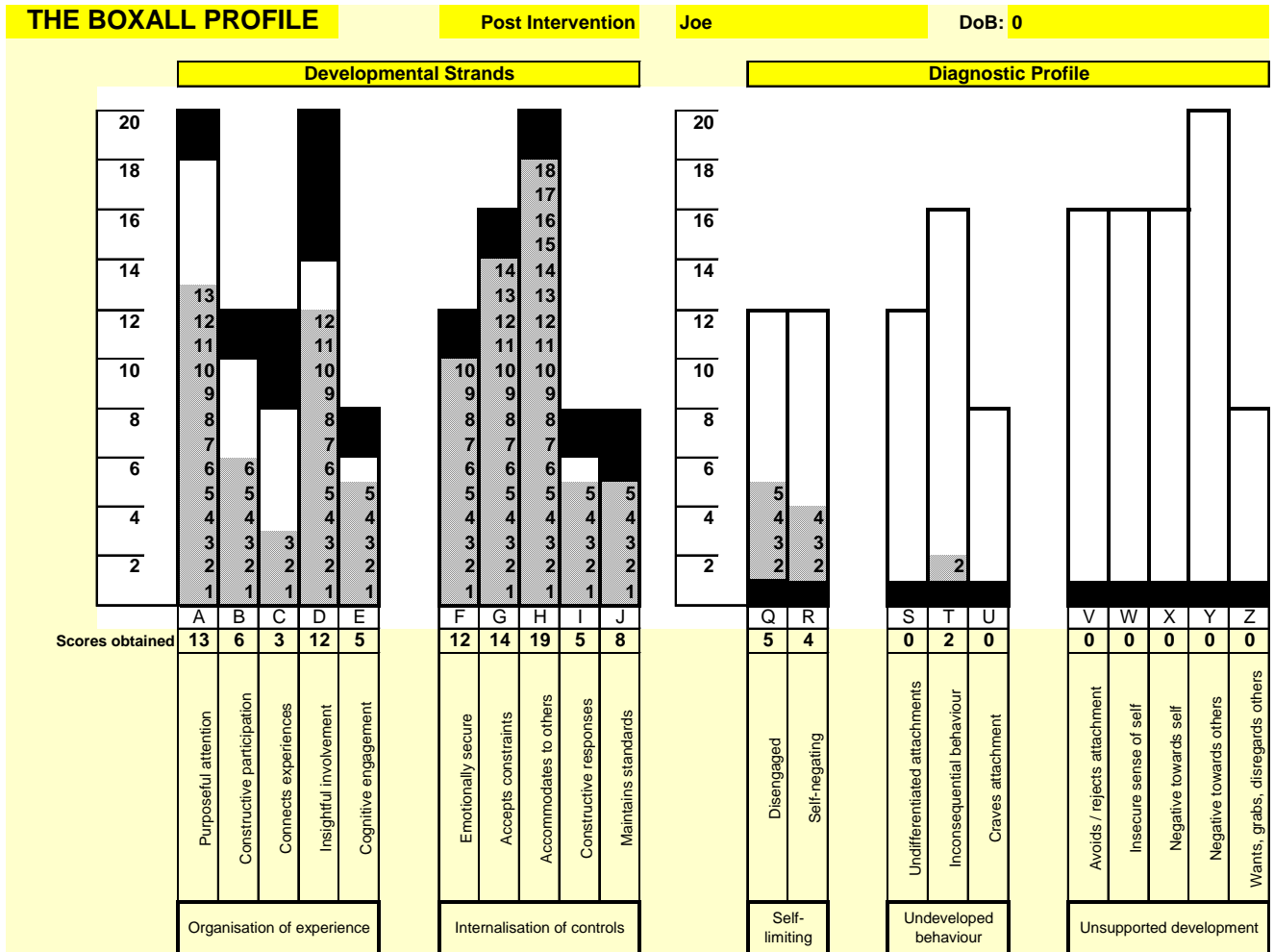
		<p>immediate, primitive and powerful benefits to gain the approval of an adult who initially means nothing to him/her is a long arduous process, both for the child and the adult. Behaviour which begins as defence becomes an entrenched pattern, the longer it is allowed to persist.</p>	
Z	<p>Wants grabs disregarding others</p>	<p>This disregard of the needs of others is aggressive in nature, is motivated by anger and has the intention of depriving others. By contrast a high score here in association with low scores in strands FGHIJ suggests that this is the greedy, grabbing behaviour of the young and undeveloped child.</p>	

# Appendix 8: Boxall Profile Results: Participant Graphs

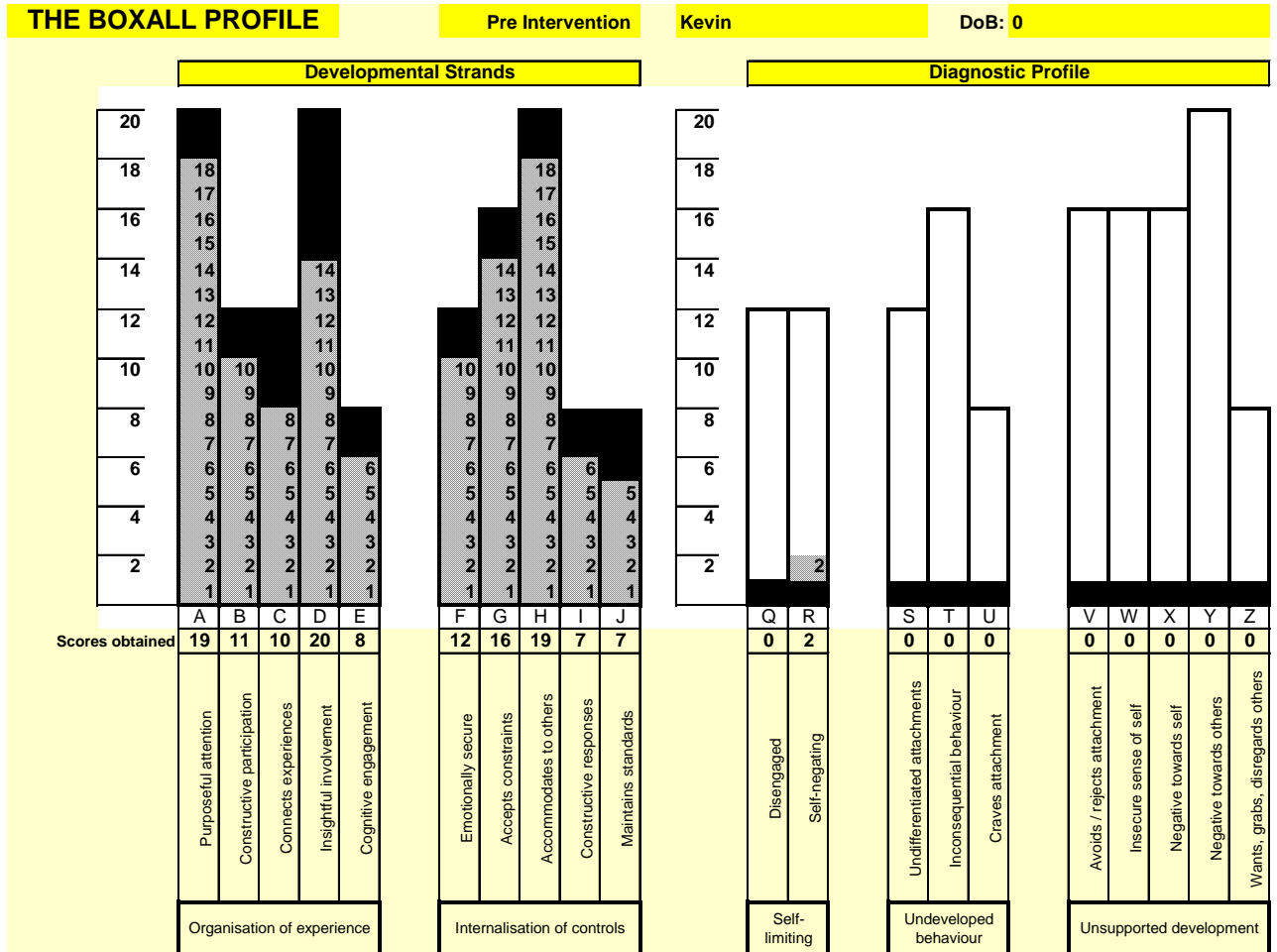
## Joe – Pre Intervention



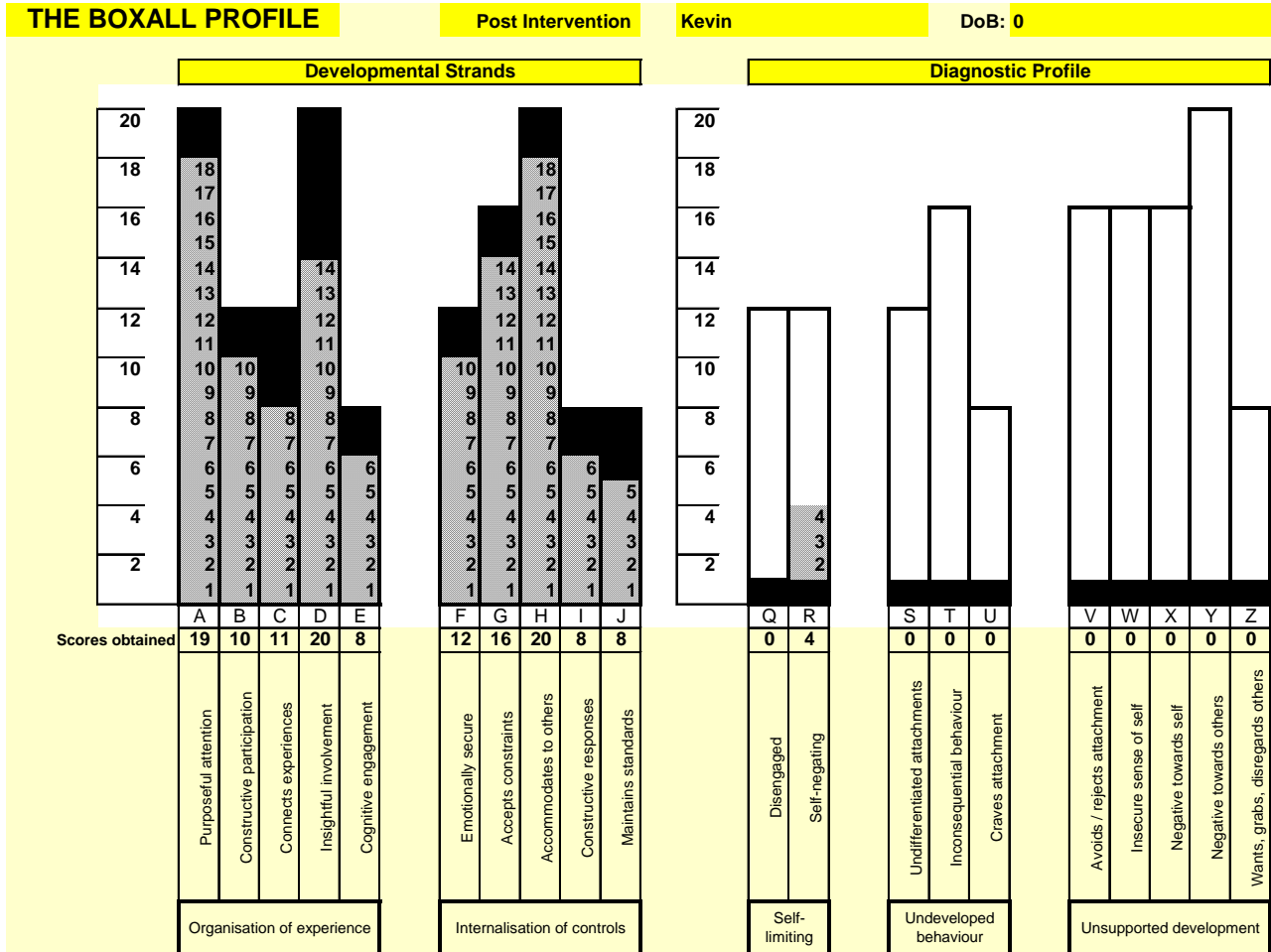
# Joe – Post Intervention



# Kevin – Pre Intervention

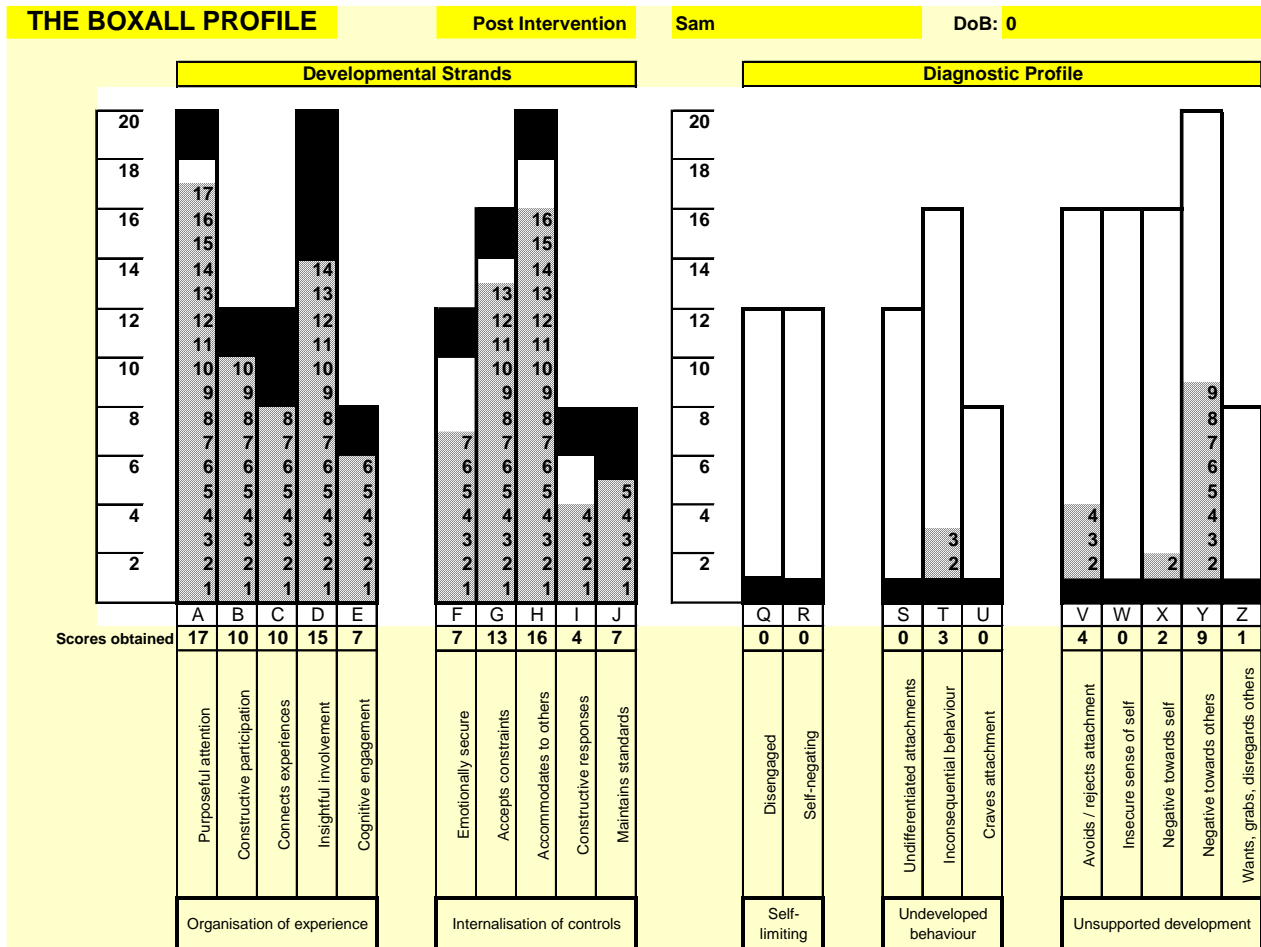


# Kevin – Post Intervention

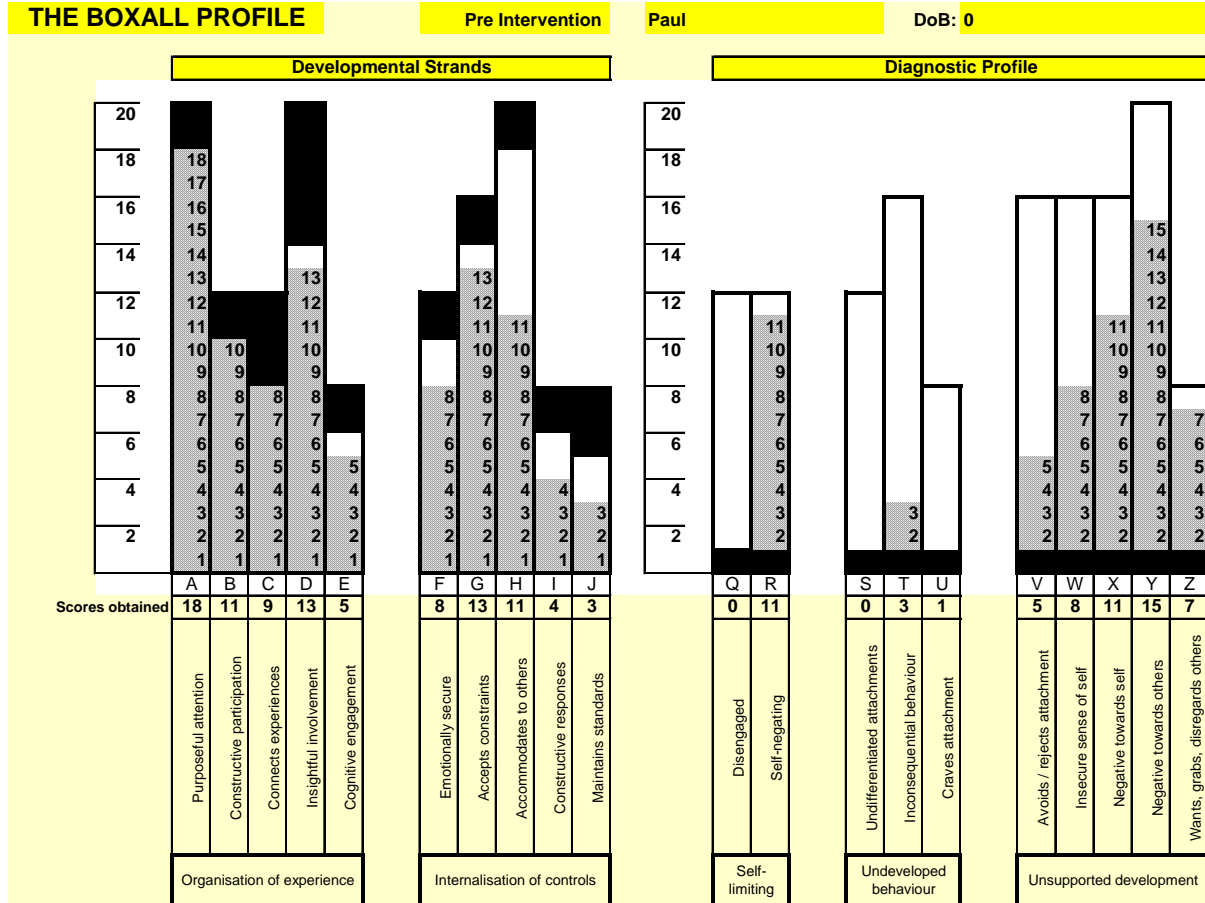




# Sam - Post Intervention

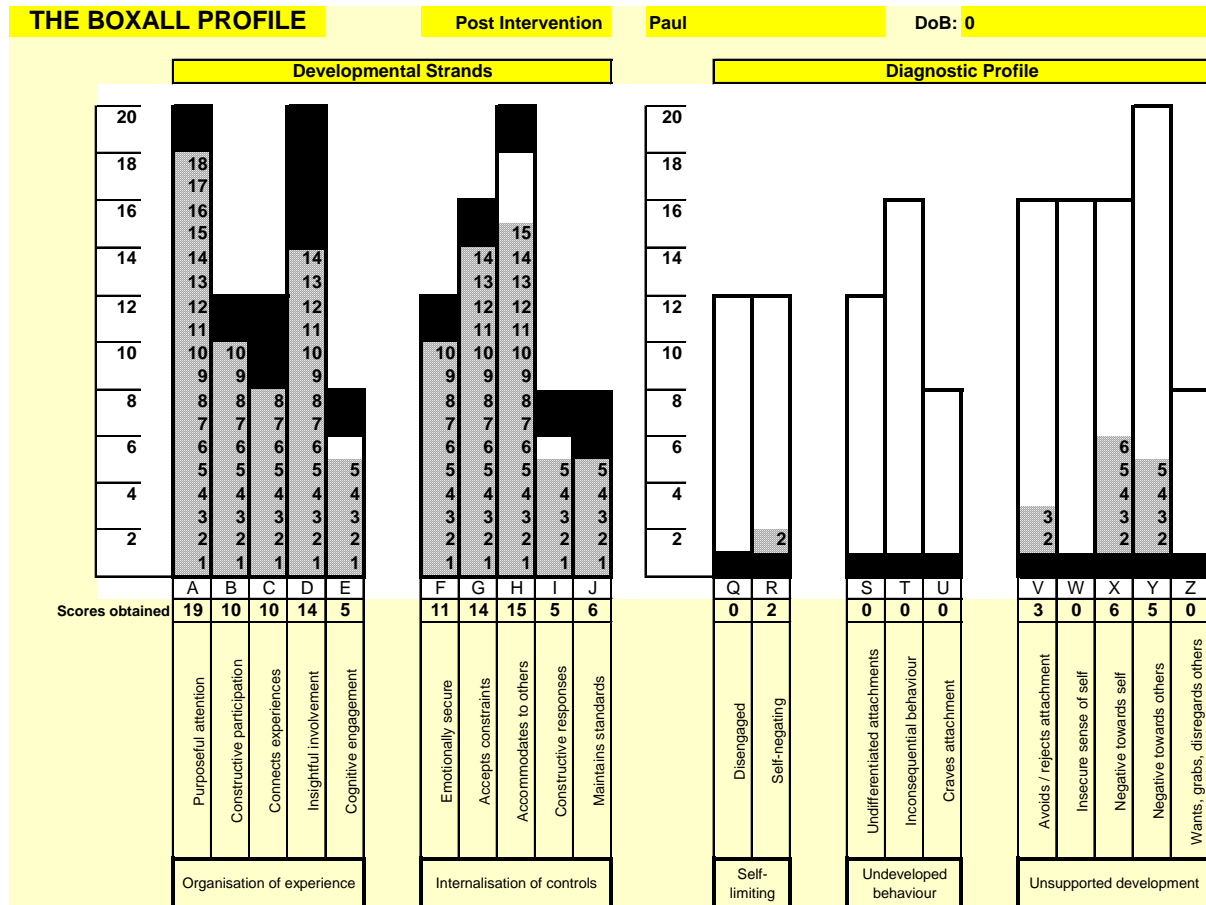


# Paul – Pre Intervention





Paul – Post Intervention



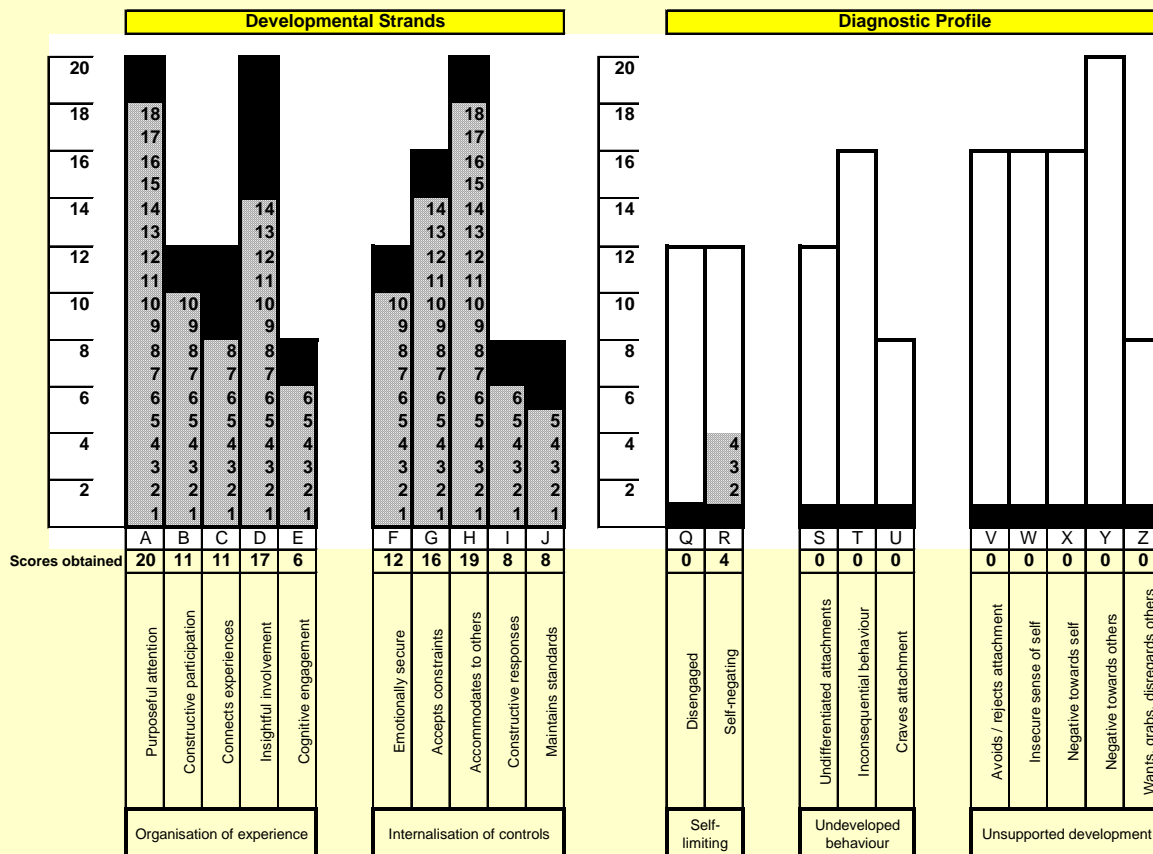
# Sophie – Pre Intervention

## THE BOXALL PROFILE

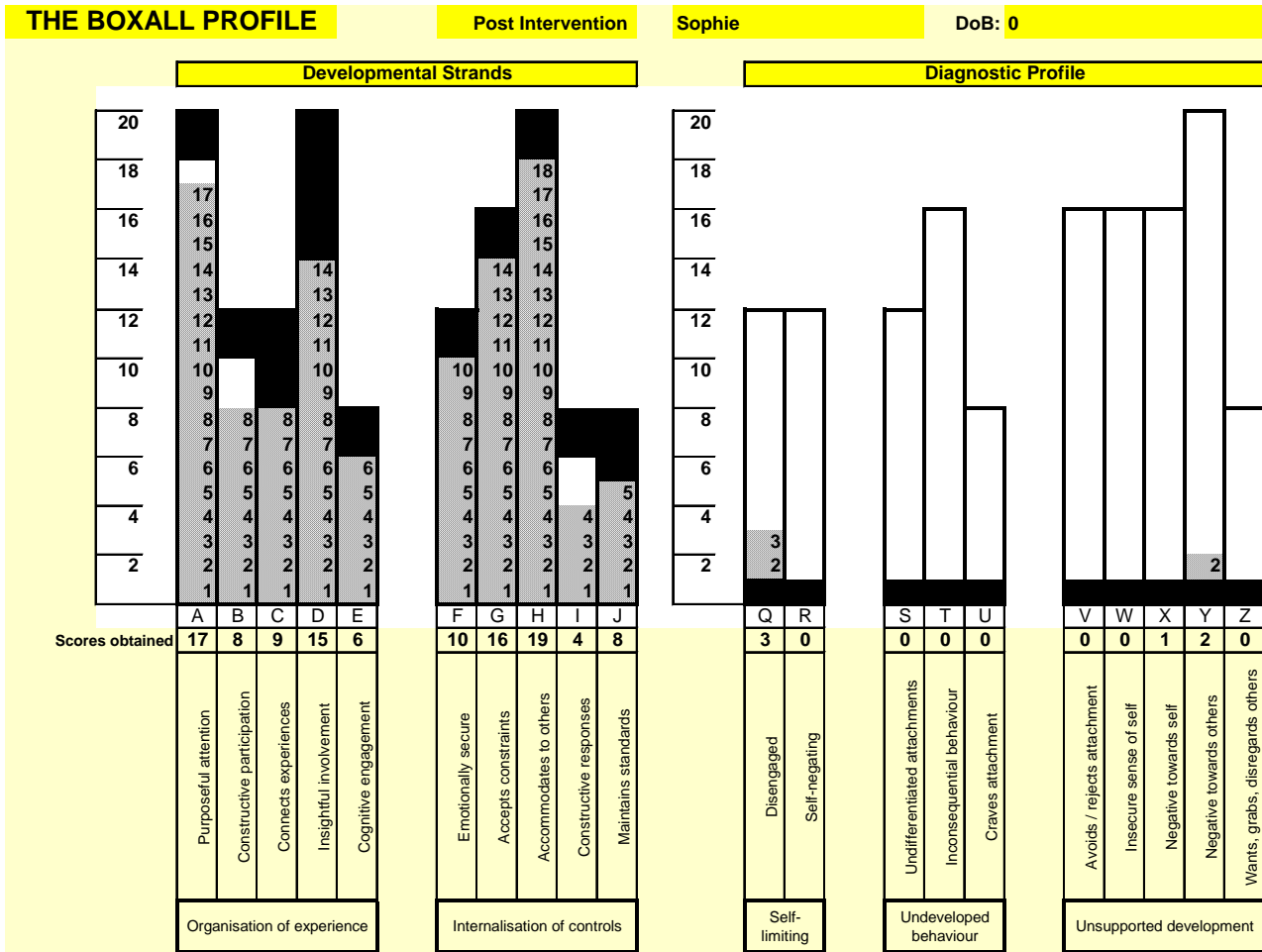
Pre Intervention

Sophie

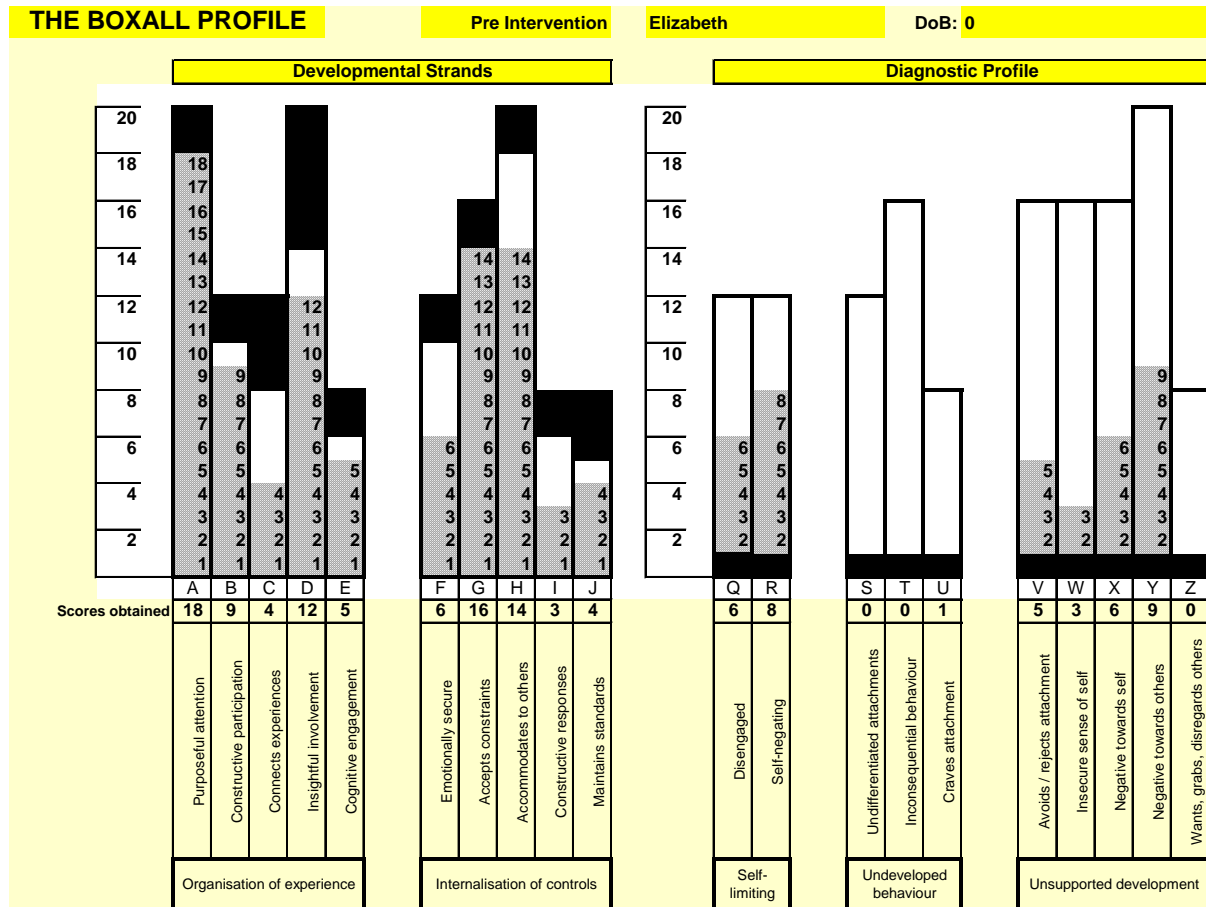
DoB: 0



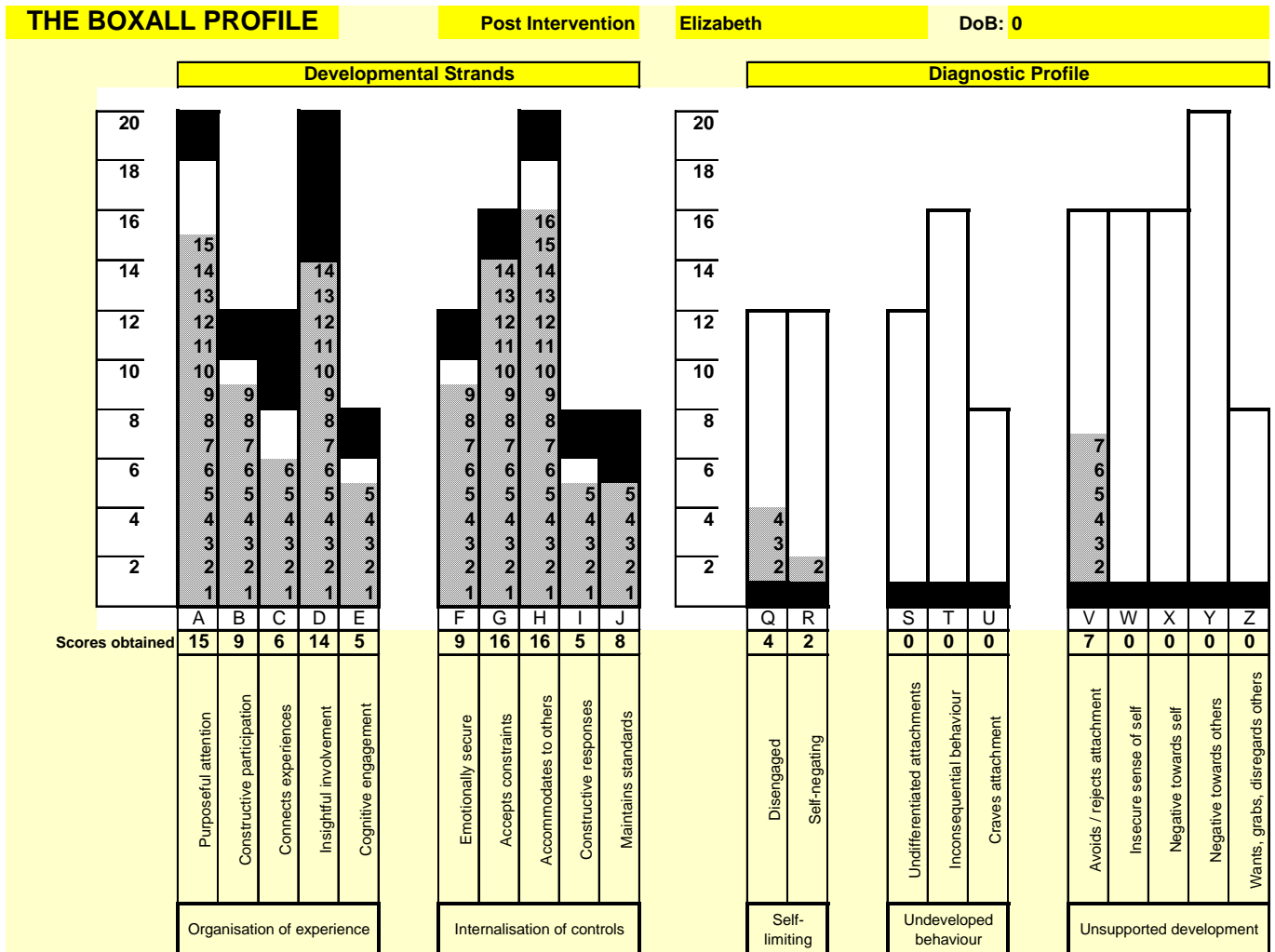
# Sophie – Post Intervention



Elizabeth – Pre Intervention



# Elizabeth - Post Intervention



## Appendix 9

Table 10 : Examples of Interview data reflected in identified themes

Quote from interview	Theme	Person Speaking
I think there were a couple of them that were a bit nervous about going near the horses, especially Kevin and Sophie	Experiences	Teaching Assistant
Being around the horses was really good because instead of going to school and learning I am learning something else	Experiences	Pupil
It was fun because on the third week we got to, we thought of something really sad and then the other person put arm down and they pushed you and then you thought of a really happy thought and our arms or body didn't move and then it were funny because they couldn't get us to move."	Experiences	Pupil
<p>RB – “Okay and what did you learn, what did you say you were going to take back?” (to school)</p> <p>Paul – “This time?”</p> <p>RB – “Well in any of the sessions that you can remember.”</p> <p>Paul – “To be patient, that is one word I can remember.”</p>	<p>Reflection and Learning</p> <p><i>(Paul stated that he learned to be more patient in the sessions; this is reflected in other children's interviews where reference is made about Paul being more patient.)</i></p>	Pupil

Quote from interview	Theme	Person Speaking
<p>Because Sophie and Sam and Paul and Joe said “you can do it and remember what Miss Green said “if you can try, all I need is for you to try your best and if you have tried your best, that is all I want” and so I tried it and then I did it.”</p>	Reflection and Learning	Pupil
<p>I think they learnt a bit more because I did notice that a few of them were taking the time out to listen to each other because they had had to in the session.”</p>	Reflection and Learning	Teaching Assistant
<p>Kevin seems to have he used to have a lot of problems with football, playing with the boys, and he is very rushes into a decision and gets himself into trouble with and he hasn't, he has taken the time to think that “I don't want to annoy people, I need to think what I am saying” and that was one of the things that he needed to work on and he has done quite well with that.</p>	Behaviour Change	Teaching Assistant
<p>Paul is definitely more patient, that goes without saying, he doesn't get angry at people half as much as he used to.”</p>	Behaviour Change	Teaching Assistant
<p>There seems to be less confrontations between Paul and Kevin and Sophie seems to have developed in confidence.</p>	Behaviour Change	Class Teacher

Quote from interview	Theme	Person Speaking
Sophie, her confidence wasn't top, but I think leading a few of the sessions, taking the charge in her group, that has helped her.	Personal Growth	Teaching Assistant
They had actually thought through their emotions because I don't think they write down their emotions a lot and think about "right well I am came in I was nervous before I did HAPPA and I was a little bit apprehensive and now I feel happy and I feel a bit more confident and especially doing", they realised you are a bit more powerful when you feel happier of confident or excited about something so definitely delving in to the emotional side made them understand what they were actually feeling."	Personal Growth	Teaching Assistant
"It was really good because I have conquered my fear now because I didn't really like horses. I liked the colours and everything but I was a bit nervous being around them and everything."	Personal Growth	Pupil
"I were really proud of myself and then when I went home my mum went "what have you been doing today then?" and I told her and she went "well done I am really proud of you" and I got all excited because she were really proud of me and I were really really proud of	Personal Growth	Pupil



Quote from interview	Theme	Person Speaking
myself it is like I have never been prouder of myself.”		
“Believing in myself, because you had to find it somewhere in your body to do it because I were really nervous, I had loads of butterflies in my tummy, so it made me I sort of walked away a little bit when I found out I were doing it and then I said it in my head to myself “come on Sophie you can do it” and then I did five times and then I did it.”	Personal Growth	Pupil
Because there are less incidents or upsets at playtime and dinnertime they are coming back into class more settled, which is having a positive effect upon their learning. They are much calmer and ready to go.	Impact in School	Class Teacher
EFL has helped the children become more resilient; they seem more able to cope when they get things wrong.	Impact in School	Class Teacher
I’m not sure the intervention had a significant impact on all the children but I’ve seen significant changes in some.	Impact in School	Class Teacher

## Appendix 10: Identifying themes - screen shot sections of sorted data

In column B a selection of dialogue is shown and my initial coding/thoughts are listed in column C.

- Memorable Experiences - this includes ideas, thoughts or perceptions about particular experiences for example, fun activities the children remembered, learning outside of the classroom and using real horses.

A	B	C
215	Kevin – "Because I now I can be actually be around horses and I know where not to go and where to go and what to do to them to follow you so I knew that when we were doing the gates, I think it was Zebedee liked me cos he was walking through the cones, I came back down to the gate and then Zebedee just pulled up and I didn't expect I I was still walking but it stopped and I went a bit and I got pulled back a bit and it stopped and it licked me my face like that and I went all wet and so I just gave Elizabeth the rein a minute, wiped all my face and then got the rein back cos it licked me and at one point, Jade the same thing but I was pulling her round the corner, up to the gate into the maze and when we just came over the maze it nudged me on my buttons. on my t-shirt buttons."	a memorable experience for Kevin
151	Joe – "I enjoyed when we accomplished picking the hoof up and doing the horse without no lead."	activities
173	RB – "Can you talk me about some of the activities that you did and tell me what it was like doing them?" Sam – "Doing stuff without the lead rein." RB – "What was that like?" Sam – "Really good because I didn't think I could do it without the lead rein because I actually never tried that I always just rode the horses I jumped and stuff."	activities

- Connecting up Experiences – for example, conversation that suggested reflection upon experiences to solve problems or transferring skills or knowledge learned back into the classroom or other places.

	A	B	C	F
225	Elizabeth and Sophie fall out, which I hardly ever do I only really do it with Paul a bit because he's relivo and sometimes we just play and have some fun and sometimes we just run across and he got me done because apparently I blocked him in the tree but I weren't I was just running past and I relivoed myself and Mr Lomas always ever said since then when we fall out he says "Kevin, Paul what will the horse do?" and I said and he never answered and I just say "back off" but I have learnt cos I have made this song up about it now, it is a proper song that I have made my own words to it. Its cos he says "what would the horse do?" I have what would the horse do bbbback off bbbback off like that and I just keep singing whispering." RB – "Well that is a good way of remembering it isn't it?" Kevin – "Yes I keep singing it."		Transfer learning back into school	
141	RB – "So is there times in school where you think you might use what you have learnt?" Joe – "Yes, when someone pushing me you can stand like that when you are happy and when someone's pushing you again you go all over." RB – "So you might use what you have learnt to not be pushed around?" Joe – "Yes."		transferring skills	
248	Sophie – "That works so I am going to do it at school and it actually has worked."		transferring skills	

- Personal Awareness – included in this category was extracts of dialogue that suggested awareness in various ways, for example of how behaviour affects those around you, feelings and emotions, feelings of self improvement and awareness of personal space.

	A	B	C
247	Sophie – "Believing in myself, because you had to find it somewhere in your body to do it because I were really nervous, I had loads of butterflies in my tummy, so it made me I sort of walked away a little bit when I found out I were doing it and then I said it in my head to myself "come on Sophie you can do it" and then I did five times and then I did it."		feelings
171	Sam – "Very sad that I couldn't walk it all the time but I also felt proud for Sophie because she tried it the first time and she couldn't do it, I think they could have done a picture of her I am not sure		feelings – the children watched each other during the sessions; they were aware of each other's feelings (eg of nervousness) and became proud of each other when they saw others succeed.
122	Joe – "A bit in the middle, it was fun and nervous."		feelings about having a go at an unfamiliar task
66	I felt sad because we had to go. I found it better doing that instead of, I find it better working with the horses than doing lessons		feelings at the end of sessions
164	RB – "And what happened to those feelings throughout the sessions?" Sam – "They disappeared." RB – "Why do you think that was?" Sam – "I didn't care about them anymore because I knew the horses more better."		feelings change

- Celebrating Success – included in this category were examples of the children feeling proud of themselves, experiencing a sense of achievement, talk of receiving certificates at the end of the sessions/school assembly, talk of feeling good about yourself.

	A	B	C
27	127	"Happy, because at the end of all these sessions we got a certificate and a horse to say that you have done really good in this HAPPA stuff."	celebrating success
28	188	RB – "She is the tallest. What was it like getting your certificate?" Sam – "Really, really, really proud of myself."	celebrating success
29	228	RB – "How did it feel when you got your certificates at the end?" Kevin – "Well I was really delighted."	celebrating success
	234	For the Certificate I have got a little book, well not a book, oh yes cos I have made my own book, well I have got a certificate holder as well I just photocopy it, I will put one in my folder thing of all my achievements like 2004 because I was born in 2004, I have got my nursery things and everything in it and I made a big booklet of my own certificates, I made it out of paper, loads of paper, and it has got now 54 records of things in it."	celebrating success

- Learning – ideas or thoughts regarding knowledge gained through natural curiosity, problem solving, talk of working as a team, not giving up, classroom discussion.

	A	B	C
287	130	RB – "How did it work, how did you manage to complete that task as a group?" Joe – "We talked to each other and seen how we were going to do it and we did it really good and.."	problem solving
	173	Sam – "Yes that was nervous for me because it wouldn't do what I was saying, I kept moving but it wouldn't move so we had to do it back with the lead rein but then for some reason the fourth session it worked and I don't know why."	problem solving
288	174	Sam – "That is where I am just trying to pull her just to move her a little bit then I was going to walk with that and then I was going to let go and see if she followed me but she wouldn't even move with the, if I was holding it so that wasn't kind of working, so I had to find a different solution." RB – "And what was your different solution?" Sam – "I think it was just to say "it won't work and I think I need the lead rein." That is my escape plan."	problem solving

- Impact in School – information that suggested the intervention had had an effect on the school was included in this category; impact during unstructured times of the day, classroom behaviour, observations from class teacher or TA.

The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with the following data:

	A	B	C
182	18	I have not had to deal with as many problems or situations	impact in school
183	19	Elizabeth it is not her confidence, she is quite a confident girl but she is very very quiet. She has realised that you don't get anywhere if you are that quiet and she has spoken up a little bit more and I think she speaks up a little bit more if she is struggling as well and she did at HAPPA and she realised that if she spoke up when she was struggling that her group would come and help her.	impact in school
184	20	"I think they did, they did try to help each other with things like that. Also as well, for their goals when she had asked them "what's your goal for this week?" they would say "we struggled with that in the session, how about you do that" or sometimes they did actually, there was no malice, and there was no hurtful words coming out, they were all "why don't you try this" or "for you this could be good." There was a lot more thinking about "actually if I say it nicely, it might help them but it might help us as a group as well."	impact in school
185	20	Obviously they do help each other a lot more in the classes	impact in school
186	22	They all have commented on that even some of them in the class have said "oh yes, you can hear Elizabeth a lot more" and "Elizabeth gave us some really good answers." Obviously some of the class didn't understand that that is what she has got from HAPPA but her group have and they have all patted her on the back for that and that's a nice thing as well	impact in school
	94	Because sometimes when I am sat on my table I say the answer to Miss Green and	impact in school

- Limitations – any factors identified as being limiting to the intervention.

The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with the following data:

	A	B	C
254	24	That did get better with each week but I think that is the timescale again, another week would have learnt something, would there have been something else that would have come out?."	limitations

- Behaviour Change – ideas, thoughts or perceptions that suggested a change to a child’s usual behaviour.

The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with the following data:

	A	B	C
10		So that definitely from with the horses, they had to take turns leading that horse round, they had to wait or they had to help each other, "go and help your friend, they are struggling that horse has stopped. What techniques can you give them?" They did, they have helped each other out and I think they have learnt that you get far more out working as a team rather than falling out all the time so I think that is what I have mainly from playtimes, but we haven't heard from anybody, and that is always good."	behaviour change
16		18 A lot of them in the group they got round the horse and Red Mist was like "I don't know what I am doing here" and I said you have got to think about your friend's personal space, sometimes when they are working, you always seem to spread your books out and your pens and things, you need think and consider the ones that are round you. I think they are a lot more sharing books, they don't like sharing books, they are not that bothered anymore "we will just put it between us, we have got enough room." That is something that just little but actually if they have not got enough books and they have got to share it is a little bit like "I don't really want to share, I am sat next to him or her" and they do, "oh that's fine, no problem, I will just move my book over so you have got a bit more room" and that, just personal space."	behaviour change
17		19 They have thought about their experiences and been able to stop themselves or "I don't need to fall out there, I can sort it out."	behaviour change
18		19 Kevin is not half as boisterous as he used to be. He thinks about what he says before he does it."	behaviour change
19			

- Confidence Building – this included information that suggested improvement to confidence, for example through developing resilience, perseverance, believing in yourself, self-talk, conquering fear or leadership opportunities.

The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with the following data:

	A	B	C
22		She is a lot louder with her friends, she is a lot more confident but in class that confidence drops but I think it has upped a little bit more, she sits up a little bit straighter, she doesn't seem to be as in a corner, I put myself here out of the way, she is more involved, especially in group work	confidence building
49		82 "What were you learning when you were doing the activity leading the horse with the head collar on and the lead rein, what were you learning about, if anything?" Elizabeth – "Walking it and getting your confidence up." RB – "Getting your confidence up and how did you manage to get your confidence up?" Elizabeth – "Just by walking it." RB – "And did you achieve your task?" Elizabeth – "Yes	confidence building
50		84 "Going near other people's feet and other things and if you can go down and do it and not be scared of it standing on you hand like it is building your confidence up."	confidence building
51		213 Kevin – "About being happy and trying not to get pushed over and things and not to get bullied, because it happened to me last year, no not last year before we started doing HAPPA, and someone tried, a year six, tried to push me over and I fell over but that taught me just to say, then I stood up and they would try and do it again because they did it before and then they wouldn't be able to do it because they would probably stop because I won't fall over anymore."	Confidence building



- Challenge – dialogue that reflected the experience of facing new challenges, participating in challenging activities was included in this category.

	A	B	C	F
31	62	Paul – "Leading her around, because at times she kept stopping so I kept trying to challenge myself thinking of other ideas instead of just coming up with one all the time."	challenge	
32	245	Sophie – "The third week we did a maze which were like we had poles but heavy, some were heavy because it had been raining, so it were all wet inside because they have holes in so the water could get in to make it heavy. We brought those in and made a line so the horse could go in and out of it, then we had a gate where basically like how horses jump over poles, well we just got the side poles, not actually the pole over it but we did use them for something else so that was the gate and then we had little white cones which were smaller so we had to proper weave in and out, that were quite tough that were and then last but not least there were a maze that we all had to share, which were the poles what go on to the gate that they jump over and stuff, and it were quite windy but also it were a bit tough because it were so thin the person who were leading it you had to go outside of the maze and then the horse would have followed you so it was really hard how to do it."	challenge	
	227	Kevin – "Not really easy, it was in the middle, it was in the middle because it was a bit hard to get the horse to go again because it took us like five to three minutes to get it going"	challenging experience	

- Staff Taster session – the thoughts of the teacher and TA about the taster session and also thoughts about the importance of a member of school staff being present in the sessions were included in this category.

	A	B	C
302	3	Probably by week three, we were able more, well I was able more, to say to them, "right well what were your goals? What were you meant to be doing? What is your goal from HAPPA? Your achievement you are meant to be doing this week" and they were able to relay those back and you could see them thinking, right well mine, "I need to be a bit more confident".	TA in class; because TA went with them to the sessions it was possible to give reminders about individual goals... follow up what was discussed in EFL sessions.
303	17	"Yes, because I have actually watched them and watched what they are doing and watched if they, when they have had a goal that they have had to try and achieve, I have been able to see if they can "right well if that is my goal, can I take that away to school?" but I have also been able to say "what would you do in this situation if you were with the horse?" or "what happened in that situation with the horse?" and I could say that, I couldn't have done that if I wasn't watching them and I wasn't actually in the arena with them and looking at what they were doing, and also being able to say to them when Sophie ever gets a bit "I don't know whether I can do it" you said that but you were able to do it at HAPPA, you kept saying you can't do it, but did you do it? And "yes I did" and you can see she bucks up a little bit, "well actually yes I can, I am alright now" and I couldn't have said that to her without obviously seeing it, so I think you need somebody who is working with them to be watching it."	TA support
304	17	To just keep relaying it back but I can't do that without watching it so that was important me being there I think."	TA support