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Supporting Social Emotional Development in the Primary School Setting

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Signed: Sarah Kavanagh

Date: 24/9/20

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Glossary of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms were interpreted as:

Social Emotional Difficulties: Difficulties a pupil or young person is experiencing which act as a barrier to their personal, social, cognitive and emotional development

Internalising Difficulties: Emotional or behavioural difficulties which do not present as a threat to others but to one's own social emotional well-being and academic development

Externalising Difficulties: Emotional or behavioural difficulties which present as a threat to the pupil's own social emotional well-being and academic development or that of others

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Behavioural and cognitive disorders characterised by difficulties in sustaining attention to tasks and regulating impulses and, in some cases, difficulties in regulating physical movement

Attachment: The bond between child and their primary caregiver

Attunement: An awareness and responsivity of an individual to the emotional needs of others

Co-Participant: The pupils involved in this study are referred to as co-participants as their contributions are considered to carry equal weight to those of the researcher

List of Abbreviations

CAMHS: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

DCYA: Department of Child and Youth Affairs

DES: Department of Education and Skills

EBD: Emotional Behavioural Disorder

ECCE: Early Childhood Care and Education

ESRI: The Economic and Social Research Institute

INTO: Irish National Teacher's Organisation

NAERM: National Assessments in English Reading and Mathematics

NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NCSE: National Council for Special Education

PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment

SEBD: Social Emotional Behaviour Disorder

SEMH: Social Emotional Mental Health

SEN: Special Educational Needs

SNA: Special Needs Assistant

SPHE: Social Personal Health Education

TA: Thematic Analysis

TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

WHO: World Health Organisation

Abstract

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Operational Guide (2019) states that in December 2018 in Ireland, 19,073 children and adolescents were attending their services. Lack of resources and understaffing in CAMHS mean many children and families are on waiting lists to receive support. These statistics highlight the need for early intervention and support at primary school level.

With a specific focus on the social emotional development of the children in my school, using a self-study approach within an action research framework, I reflected on my practice with an aim to enhancing my knowledge and understanding and improving the care and support I provide to my pupils. The Nurture Group is a short-term, focused intervention delivered in a small group setting. Through collaboration with pupils, colleagues and parents, using the intervention of the Nurture Group, I began to see my values of communication and positive relationship formation being realised. This research process has enhanced my awareness and understanding of the social emotional experience of some of the children in my care and improved my personal and professional development.

This research was interrupted due to nationwide school closures imposed by Covid-19. However, response from parents and teachers supported the implementation of Nurture Group intervention as they described improvements in classroom participation, confidence, emotional expression and regulation as well as overall happiness at school for these children. The intervention of the Nurture Group facilitated child voice, making time for dialogue and allowing the children to guide planning and scheduling of the day, transforming the teacher-child relationship. Thematic Analysis revealed a need for more creativity and self-directed play and identified self-identity and sense of belonging as areas worthy of further exploration. These themes granted insight into the social emotional experience of the children. These findings enlightened me towards new ways of thinking and planning. It ignited a transformation in my

teaching, guiding me towards a pedagogy of care and nurture which reflected my personal values of building connection, communication and positive relationships grounded in equality and respect, within the school community.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis presents an account of the reflective journey I undertook as I sought to enhance the learning experience of children with social emotional difficulties in primary school. Through consultation with pupils, parents and colleagues, using a self-study approach, I explored my own practice and how it could be enhanced to better support my pupils (McNiff, 2002). Within this process I noticed a change in my thinking and teaching as my knowledge and understanding of the topic as well as the child's experience began to widen. With this transformation I began to realise the outward manifestation of my values in my practice. As the children were given more say in their learning experience, the teacher-child relationship began to evolve towards a partnership grounded in respect, trust and equality. Within this chapter, my values in education and learning, of communication and positive relationship development, upon which this project is based, are presented. Detailing some of the long-term implications of social emotional health for young people and their overall mental health, rationale for this study is outlined along with the research question and study objectives. It concludes with an overview detailing the structure of the remainder of this thesis.

1.2 My Values

This study is grounded in the value I hold in creating connection through communication and positive relationship formation, laying the foundation for a positive educational and learning experience. Having studied the philosophies of Friedrich Froebel at post-graduate level, my philosophy of education and ontological and epistemological values are strongly influenced by Froebel's principles.

respect	connectedness	play	talk
creativity	freedom	guidance	community

positive relationships
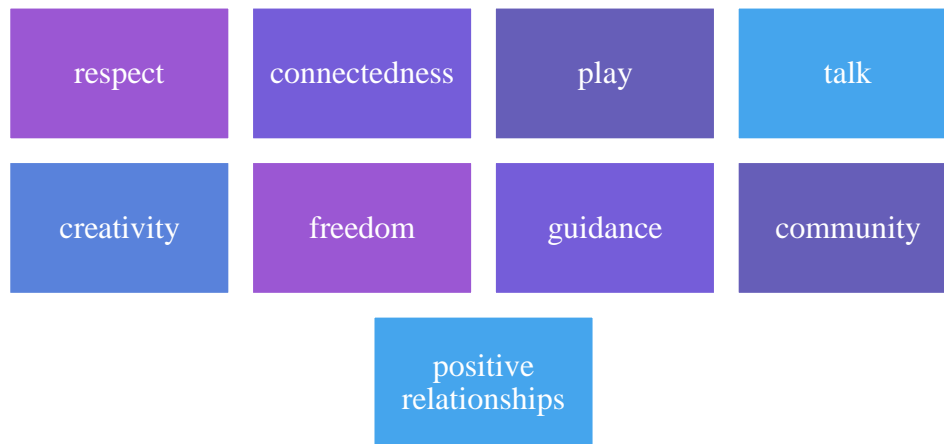
Figure 1.1: Froebelian Principles

I believe in the holistic development of children, placing care at the centre of education and ensuring the foundations for learning (Tovey, 2013). I believe communication promotes positive relationships grounded in empathy, trust and respect. This is essential for cultivating a pedagogy of nurture and care. I was concerned with the number of children presenting in our school with social emotional difficulties and the potential long-term impact this could have on their learning and mental health. These difficulties were affecting participation in classroom learning as well as their relationships within the school community. From my experience working as both teacher and Special Needs Assistant (SNA) for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), I developed a greater appreciation for language and the ability to communicate. I have also experienced how such proficiency can influence behaviour. I came to see behaviour functioning as a language itself, especially for some who struggle to communicate their wants and needs verbally.

Externalising difficulties, such as disruptive behaviour, aggression or refusal to participate in classroom activities, and internalising difficulties, including social withdrawal or avoidance, were arising in the classroom. While these children were struggling to communicate their needs, we were struggling to understand, resulting in a breakdown in connection. I saw a need for more explicit teaching to develop tools of expression so that these children may participate more in classroom life. While documents such as the 'Guidelines for Mental Health

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Promotion, Well Being in Primary Schools' (DES, 2015) and 'Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties-A Continuum of Support Guidelines for Teachers' (DES, 2010) provide recommendations for whole school approaches, structuring of support and suggestions for behaviour management, I did not feel as though my personal knowledge and understanding of such difficulties were sufficient to provide effective support and intervention for these children. In addition to this, little research and guidance is available in relation to internalising difficulties. I was also concerned that the Primary Curriculum allocation of 30 minutes for Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) lessons per week was insufficient to teach the skills and strategies these children required (NCCA, 2016). I believe it is important to first examine what the behaviour is communicating, rather than focusing solely on eradicating the behaviour. I believe this can be supported by promoting the skills of self-expression and emotional regulation to enable positive relationships with pupils and families to grow.

I came to realise my values were being denied in my daily teaching by time constraints imposed by timetabling and completing workbooks combined with pressures to achieve curriculum objectives. This was reducing time for meaningful engagement and conversation with my pupils. The quality of the classroom and parental relationships can become undermined by these demands along with additional pressures that exist within a large class size of 30 children (hooks, 2010). Some children may not possess the skills required to connect with and express their needs to others and may require additional time and space to practice and develop them. This unfortunately may not always be possible to provide in large class sizes.

Such situations can often feel overwhelming and when faced with challenging behaviour it can be difficult in the moment to understand what the child is trying to communicate, leaving them feel unheard, misunderstood, or unhappy. Within this study I adopt the epistemological stance positioning myself as the object of this investigation, investigating

my own practice through collaboration and dialogue with my pupils, their parents and my colleagues. In order to live to my values of positive relationship formation and communication, this study aimed to listen to the child's experience, to learn how they see themselves and their attitude towards learning, so that I may have a better understanding of how I can support their social emotional needs and engagement in classroom life. I felt driven to establish an epistemology of practice grounded in a pedagogy of equality, empathy and care, nurturing the relationships within our school system, moving towards a practice of freedom through dialogue, what Freire (1970) refers to as 'emancipatory practice' (Glenn et al., 2017).

1.3 Contextual Background: The Importance of Social Emotional Health Among Children

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2013) describes health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Having positive mental health means that we value ourselves, can cope with everyday life stresses and feel emotionally well (Mental Health Foundation, 2019a). The UK British Medical Association (2006) reports that 20% of young people will experience mental health difficulties at some point with 10% receiving clinical diagnosis (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). It must be acknowledged that while some may not be recipients of a mental health diagnosis, they may not be experiencing optimal mental health (Keyes 2006 cited in O'Connor et al., 2019). Within the Irish context, Ireland continues to see increases in child and adolescent referrals for mental health services. However, there is a distinct lack of services available to support these young people and their families.

The Fifth Annual Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Report (2013), reported an increase of 21% in the number of referrals to CAMHS from 2011-2012 with 16% of referrals waiting over 12 months to be seen by the CAMHS team (HSE, 2013). McNicholas (2018),

professor from UCD School of Medicine and Medical Science, reports an increase of 26% in the number of referrals to CAMHS between 2012 and 2017. McNicholas (2018) reports a total of 2,700 children on the waiting list with 14% waiting over 12 months to be seen by the CAMHS team. More recently, the CAMHS Operational Guide (2019) states that in December 2018, there were 19,073 children and adolescents attending their services, 13, 177 new referrals, and 2, 526 waiting to be seen. From these statistics it is clear there has been consistent demand for mental health services and supports for children and adolescents between the years 2011 and 2019. In 1984, mental health services in Ireland received 13% of the health budget, that has dropped to 6%, lower than many other countries, with even less allocated to CAMHS, making it difficult to alleviate the pressures of understaffing and resources for supporting children and adolescents (McNicholas et al., 2020). Due to reduced support received from external agencies and systems, Hornby and Blackwell (2018) state that schools now face a greater role in supporting parents and children in need of specialised support.

Internationally, the government of Australia, for example, allocated $61 million to social and emotional development programmes for children and initiatives on youth mental health promotion and prevention between 2012 and 2016 (Cullen et al., 2017). A report by Skokauskas et al. (2019), a team consisting of multiple experts in child and adolescent mental health, including The World Health Organisation of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, the Section on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of the World Psychiatric Association as well as the World Association for Infant Mental Health, describes the limited resources and pressure experienced by CAMHS services in many countries, including Ireland, as demands for these services continue to increase (McDonagh, 2017 cited in Skokauskas et al., 2019). Severe cases are given priority while prevention and early intervention are understaffed and under resourced (Skokauskas et al., 2019).

The Growing Up in Ireland Study (2017) found that while social emotional well-being among Irish nine-year olds in the cohort was quite high, many of those who did experience difficulties at age 5 continued to so at age 9 (ESRI, 2018). According to the Mental Health Foundation (2019b: 6), prevalence of mental health conditions among children and young people are continuously increasing as in the UK "one in eight children aged between 5 and 19 years old, meet the criteria for a common mental health problem every week". Skokauskas et al. (2019) report that 50% of all mental health disorders are evident before the age of 14. These statistics highlight the need for early intervention at primary school level and the need for enhanced understanding of how educators can help to support positive mental health development.

1.3.1 Social Emotional Development in Primary School Children

Social and emotional development are key to health and well-being for children and the foundation of many other developmental areas such as language, intellectual function and communication skills (Coyne et al., 2018). Coyne et al., (2018), a research team from the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College Dublin, claim that childhood mental health plays a fundamental and persistent role throughout a person's life. Many studies report the importance of the child's social and emotional skills as part of healthy relationship development and over all well-being in adulthood (Ma et al., 2016; ESRI, 2018; Skokauskas et al. 2019). Longitudinal research by Jones et al. (2015) over a 19 year period observed positive links between social emotional skills observed in pre-school children and outcome in young adulthood, particularly with regards to future educational attainment, criminal activity, substance use and overall mental health. Likewise, Moffitt et al. (2015), tracking 1,000 participants from birth to age 32, report links between self-control in childhood, defined in terms of delayed gratification, impulse control, regulated emotional expression, and future

experiences of criminality, physical health and depression. Meanwhile Domitrovich et al. (2017), reporting on longitudinal research on social-emotional competence, mention low levels of self-esteem as predictive of aggression, delinquency and substance abuse. These findings support the need for early intervention and support for social emotional development in childhood.

1.4 The Nurture Group

The Nurture Group was developed by Marjorie Boxall in 1970 to support vulnerable children experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties in the mainstream setting (Cubeddu & MacKay, 2017). Influenced by Bowlby's (1969) Theory of Attachment and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1970), the Nurture Group seeks to establish a nurturing and secure environment that supports social emotional development alongside curriculum objectives. Nurture theory promotes the positive role of sensitive interaction from a caregiver responsive to the child's needs (Vincent, 2017). It focuses on the developmental needs of the child and acknowledges behaviour as a form of communication. Language is encouraged as a means of expression and the importance of transitional life experiences are central. Children are provided with opportunities for success with the overall aim of enhancing self-esteem (Rose, 2012). The Nurture Group facilitates trusting, respectful relationship formation between child and teacher. It encourages the use of language and communication, acknowledging and respecting the voice of the child. The concept of the Nurture Group and many of its approaches share similarities with Froebelian principles and reflect my personal values. It was therefore employed within this study to explore how I can support the children's social and emotional development.

1.5 Research Question and Objectives

Underpinned by my ontological value of positive relationship formation and epistemological value of communication in knowledge creation, this study aims to address the research question: "How can I enhance the social and emotional support that I give to my pupils, in order for them to reach their academic potential?"

To meet the aim of this study, the following three objectives will be explored:

- To investigate children's attitudes towards themselves and school and their opinions as to how they learn best;

- To gain insight into the parent perspective while also exploring the parent-teacher relationship and how this can be enhanced;

- To improve my own understanding and teaching so that I can support these children in their social and emotional development so that they might reach their academic potential.

1.6 Overview of Thesis

This thesis is presented in five chapters. This chapter has presented the values upon which this study is based, the rationale for this study from my personal perspective as well as an overview of the Irish mental health system and importance of childhood social emotional health. An introduction to the Nurture Group is provided along with an outline of the overall aim and objectives of this study.

Chapter 2 presents a review and analyses of current literature with regards to the role of the school and teacher in social emotional development, significance of the teacher-child relationship, investigations of the Nurture Group, exploration of the teacher-parent partnership as well as the importance of peer relationships in social emotional development.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and paradigm employed in this study. Research design and cycles are detailed along with data collection instruments and subsequent analysis. The ethical considerations pertaining to the study are also presented. It must be noted that due to school closures imposed in March 2020, following the global pandemic of Covid-19, research was interrupted. Therefore, the steps outlined in Cycle 3, Chapter 3 were not completed as intended. Chapter 4 details the steps that would have been taken had school closures not occurred.

Chapter 4 consists of the overall findings from the study. It presents the main themes that arose and details the transformation of my practice over the course of the study along with the challenges that were encountered.

Finally, Chapter 5 presents an overview of the results of this study, discussing the main findings that arose and the implications for my practice. Limitations are considered along with consideration for future practice and areas of exploration. It concludes with recommendations for policy and practice.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter, Chapter 1, provided an account of the prevalence of mental health issues among children and young adults. It examined the contributing role of social emotional development to one's overall mental health. This chapter begins with an exploration of social emotional development in relation to educational attainment. Secondly, it discusses the protective potential of the teacher-child relationship for social emotional development, creating positive relationships, a sense of belonging, providing skills to cope with stressful life events and fostering self-efficacy (DES, 2019). Next, it describes a nurturing approach in the form of the Nurture Group, with a view to enhancing the social and emotional support delivered within the school as well as supporting relationships within the school community. Finally, the importance of the teacher-parent relationship and peer relationships are discussed. Overall, this chapter presents a detailed account of the importance of a child's social emotional development to their future outcome as well as the significant roles teachers and schools play in supporting this development.

2.2 Social Emotional Difficulties and Educational Attainment: The Role of the School

The Department of Education and Skills in Ireland (2015) identifies the school as one of the most important settings for mental health development in young people. It lays the foundation for the many life skills and provides a sense of belonging. This section briefly describes the association between social emotional development, mental health and educational outcome.

Social emotional difficulties can present as externalising or internalising behaviours. While many studies have been conducted on pupils exhibiting externalising behaviour, less research is available in relation to internalising pupils (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). These pupils

experience low academic achievement and report anxiety and difficulties concentrating or completing homework tasks. There is also a high chance that these children will leave school early. Academic achievement among this group is very similar to that of children who exhibit externalising difficulties (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). Similar findings by Webster-Stratton and Reid (2010) state that social emotional adjustment is a significant predictor of academic achievement. Research involving internalising difficulties is sparse, therefore it is important as educators to also address the challenges faced by these children in order to understand the nature of these difficulties and how educators can support and assist them in reaching their academic potential. The study sample in this case therefore includes children experiencing both internalising and externalising difficulties.

Cooper and Jacobs (2011) state that mental health and/or social development could impact on school experience and socialisation which may further exacerbate these difficulties. O'Connor et al. (2019) claim that positive mental health, which they define in terms of emotional regulation, social competency and coping skills, produces stronger academic achievement. Skokauskas et al. (2019) report links between behavioural and hyperactivity difficulties and attainment and social difficulties. Domitrovich et al. (2017) highlight the protective value of the school setting for at-risk students. This perspective is shared by studies by Werner & Smith (1992) who examined the outcomes of 'at-risk' participants: risk factors included social deprivation, low income, family dysfunction and early trauma. Three sets of protective factors are mentioned, including dispositional attributes such as sociability and communication skills, affectional ties with family (emotional support, supportive relationships) and rewarding external support systems which included school or work (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). Further supported by Crosnoe and Elder (2004) and Cefai (2008), both identify positive protective qualities of the home, community, schools and classrooms for the development of healthy social and emotional development in at-risk children (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011).

Meanwhile, the First 5 Strategy (2015), a ten-year plan launched by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DYCA) to support babies, young people and their families, reports relationships with adults and the caregiving environment as crucial determinants of mental health (Coyne et al., 2018). The authors emphasise the necessity of stable, responsive, nurturing experiences for fostering a sense of belonging, happiness and behavioural adjustment (Coyne et al., 2018).

2.3 The Roles of Teacher and School in Social Emotional Development

2.3.1 Bowlby's Theory of Attachment (1969) and Social Emotional Development

Originally cited in 1960's and 70's, the significance and relevance of Attachment Theory is still evident in recent investigations of attachment and development (e.g. Taylor et al., 2015; O'Connor et al., 2013 cited in Hayes et al., 2017). John Bowlby's (1969) Theory of Attachment describes how the quality of a child's attachment to caregivers is indicative of future relationships (Ahnert et al., 2006; Hayes et al., 2017). Such relationships influence the establishment of trust and later independence. According to Bowlby, caregivers who are consistently warm, affectionate, caring and responsive to the child's needs will ensure a secure attachment. Inconsistent responses to needs will result in unreliable and insecure attachment (Hayes et al., 2017). Ainsworth (1978) claims that securely attached babies see their caregiver as a safe base from which they feel confident to explore their environment. As children grow older, physical proximity is replaced by trust and affection in the attachment relationship.

According to Bowlby, attachments become internalised into an 'internal working model' which influences one's sense of self and how one values themselves. If positive, consistent expectations of others are internalised, the child will face future relationships with optimism. However, experiences of unsupportive relationships will result in misbehaviour and reduce the likelihood of experiencing positive relationships (Kernan and Singer 2011; Hayes

et al., 2017). This theory shares similarities with Bourdieu's (1977) theory of habitus. Bourdieu (1977) described one's habitus as formed by past and present experience including family and educational experiences which influences one's present and future actions. This leads to the "dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality" as dispositions, (i.e. inclinations or tendencies), which produce perceptions and actions inform practice in a specific situation (Bourdieu, 1977 cited in Grenfell, 2012: 53).

2.3.2 The Significance of Caregiver Qualities and Behaviour

Securely attached individuals demonstrate curiosity, optimistic problem-solving skills, empathy and independence. Those who experience insecure attachments are more likely to exhibit internalising and externalising behaviours. However, Hayes et al. (2017) propose the potential counteracting power of practitioners who seek to establish calming environments, attuned to children's needs. Ahnert et al. (2006) and Bowlby's son Richard Bowlby (2007) discuss the significance of the secondary attachment figure such as a teacher or other non-parental caregivers. Bowlby (2007) claims a relationship between adult and child depends on the personal characteristics of the adult and child, suggesting the teacher's own attachment style influences the relationship with the children in their class (Hayes et al., 2017). This suggests teachers should be aware of and reflect on their own experiences and how this can influence their actions and responses to the children in their care. It alerts us to the impact of our own behaviour on the quality of the relationships with our pupils.

2.3.3 Limitations of Bowlby's Theory of Attachment

Bowlby's (1969) use of the term 'primary caregiver' was originally disputed for its focus on the female figure however, modern interpretations of the primary caregiver now relate to the caregiver who has most contact with the child and may be of any gender. The concept of

attachment is no longer seen as a fixed attribute as critics of attachment theory would have highlighted, but as one that is open to change. This suggests attention should be paid to protective environments as mentioned above when working with children experiencing internalising or externalising behaviours. Attachment theory has also been criticised for ignoring the influence of context and culture in establishing relationships (Hayes et al., 2017). This will be explored further at a later stage in this chapter in section 2.5.2 [The Role of Culture in Relationship Formation].

2.3.4 Teacher Qualities in Building Relationships

The First 5 Strategy (2015) lists key determinants of quality relationships between adults and children including experience of trust, autonomy and empathy (Coyne et al., 2018). Likewise hooks (2010) speaks of trust as the foundation of self-confidence and confidence in others. While guidelines provided by the DES (2015) acknowledge the essential role of the family in the development of mental health and well-being, they emphasise the contribution of the community and school in the process. The classroom teacher is consistently identified as playing a crucial role in influencing educational outcome (DES, 2015). This is also supported by Domitrovich et al. (2017: 414) who describes the school setting as an "important location for prevention efforts designed to promote the wellness of at-risk students". Children who are happy, feel confident and supported at school, will learn more effectively (DES, 2015).

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) (2012) reports the importance of the teacher-child relationship, particularly for children experiencing social emotional and behavioural difficulties. Cooper and Jacobs (2011) list qualities that build caring and trusting teacher-child relationships including those of respect, support, being there, listening and patience. Teachers should maintain high expectations for achievement, should involve the child, empower them to share their opinions, solve problems and help others. The teacher

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should also draw upon the child's strengths and interests (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). In 'Happiness and Education', Noddings (2003) discussed the importance of developing inter-personal relationships and the responsiveness of a caring adult to children's needs. Noddings (2003) claims that a state of unhappiness occurs when schools do not fit the needs and interests of the child. According to Coyne et al. (2018: 20), children are experts in their own lives and "are the most important source of evidence on how their lives are lived and experienced", therefore this perspective is essential if educators are to understand how to support the children in their care.

2.3.5 The Child's Perception of the Teacher-Child Relationship

O'Connor (2010) claims that the quality of the teacher-child relationship declines as children progress through primary school. Berry and O'Connor (2010) suggest that while relationship quality declines at this time, it is still a very significant factor in terms of social and academic achievement and therefore should be nurtured (cited in Rucinski et al., 2018). While investigating the quality of teacher-child relationships and the influence of emotional climate in determining children's social emotional and academic development in the US, Rucinksi et al. (2018) examined a sample of both children and teachers. The researchers discovered a positive relationship between the quality of teacher-child relationships and decrease in externalising and internalising problems amongst pupils. The authors concluded that children's perceived quality of child-teacher relationship was predictive of future depressive symptoms and therefore extremely valuable in considering the quality of child-teacher relationship and child outcome. This is supported by the Mental Health Foundation (2019a) who report that low levels of perceived support from teachers were associated with high levels of depression and low levels of self-esteem.

Ahnert et al. (2006) speculate that a possible cause for reduced quality of teacher-child relationships could be due in part to the importance children begin to place on peer relationships over the teacher relationship. Rucinski et al. (2018) meanwhile, suggest that perhaps as children become older, they begin to internalise their perceived relationship with their teacher, interpreting this as a reflection of their own character influencing self-image and well-being. This emphasises the importance of acknowledging all perspectives when exploring child teacher relationship quality. These findings echo the 'internal working model' described by Bowlby, as mentioned above, as well as Noddings (2003) who claims that some causes of unhappiness in school stem from a misfit between the individual and classes that fail to acknowledge their needs and interests, calling for consideration of the valuable contribution of the child's own voice.

2.3.6 A Call for the Inclusion of Child Voice

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child articles 12 and 13 acknowledge the child's rights to freedom of expression and to share their opinions (United Nations, 2010). However, much of the research investigating the teacher-child relationship feature responses from teachers only, neglecting the perspective of the child. Research by Moen et al. (2019) identify a positive correlation between classrooms with high levels of emotional classroom support and improvement in teacher-child relationships. This was rated in terms of closeness of relationship and reduction in conflict and compared with peers in less emotionally supportive classrooms. However, reports on the child-teacher relationships came from teacher reports only, children perceptions were not collected in the study. The researchers also note issues of generalisability of findings as the sample consisted of mainly white, non-Hispanic or Latino participants and suggest further research, sampling more diverse backgrounds (Moen et al., 2019). Much of the research suggests the significance of a caring, trusting teacher-child

relationship for promoting positive social and emotional development however more research is needed that accounts for the perspective of the child and qualities they value in forming trusting teacher-child relationships.

2.4 The Potential of a Nurturing Pedagogy in Schools

A 'nurturing pedagogy' is characterised by the values of care and nurturing, prioritising relationships, playful interaction, exploration, dialogue and collaborative learning (Hayes et al., 2017). Within the Nurture Group, observation and reflection by the practitioner are essential. This is an enquiry-based approach where children are active agents in their own learning. Relationships and interaction are at the core of a nurturing pedagogy, reflecting my own personal ontological and epistemological values of relationship formation and communication in the learning process (Hayes et al., 2017).

2.4.1 Nurture Group Research

Research to date on the efficacy of Nurture Groups have revealed benefits in terms of pupil self-management, social skills, self-awareness and confidence, skills for learning and approaches to learning (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). A study by O'Connor and Colwell (2003) reports improvement in cognitive and emotional development, social engagement and behaviour (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). Cooper and Whitebread (2007) report a positive impact on social, emotional and behavioural functioning for children attending Nurture Groups compared with those matched in certain dimensions who had not attended. However, it was also found that children with social emotional behavioural difficulties who had not attended the group but attended a school which had a Nurture Group, demonstrated statistically significant benefits compared with those who attended schools without a Nurture Group. This

suggests potential benefits for the whole school environment and is supported by research by Doyle (2003) and Binnie (2008) (cited in Cooper & Jacobs, 2011).

Following feedback from Nurture Group staff, Vincent (2017) reports improvement in listening, speaking and turn taking among pupils. This was supported by feedback from parents and the children themselves. Children demonstrated greater self-confidence, greater persistence in academic tasks, more independence, fewer incidences of undesirable behaviour, were better at communicating their feelings in a calm, appropriate manner at school and home and took greater responsibility for their behaviour (Vincent, 2017). Mainstream class teachers expressed feeling unable to provide individual attention to the children to the same degree as teachers in the Nurture Group setting. They reported a positive sense of teamwork and regular communication with Nurture Group teachers. They also felt improvements observed within the Nurture Group setting were also evident in the mainstream class (Vincent, 2017). Vincent (2017) suggests further research into the opinions of children and parents which is what this study aims to do.

2.4.2 Nurturing Teacher Qualities

Cubeddu and MacKay (2017) investigated how the teacher contributes to the effectiveness of the Nurture Group. The authors explored the principles of attunement most frequently employed by Nurture Group staff in comparison to mainstream class teachers. The principles included: being attentive, encouraging initiatives, receiving initiatives, developing attuned interactions, guiding and deepening discussion. Nurture Group staff were found to use these attunement principles more often and more consistently than mainstream class teachers. The principle used least by mainstream teachers was 'deepening discussion' (Cubeddu & MacKay, 2017), this could be a result of the time constraints faced by many teachers along with the pupil teacher ratio in mainstream settings. While the authors acknowledge that Nurture

Groups are often not feasible in many schools and such children are often required to stay in mainstream classes, this finding along with Vincent's (2017) above, reveals positive implications for mainstream settings and whole schools for encouraging nurturing, emotionally responsive teacher behaviours and whole-school environment (Cubeddu & MacKay, 2017). Bani (2011) and Cowell and O'Connor (2003) both describe the positive influence of teacher praise, both verbal and non-verbal, on self-esteem, use of appropriate behaviours, compliance to instruction and positive facial expression (cited in Cubeddu & MacKay, 2017). However, the study by Cubeddu and MacKay (2017) fails to account for the children's perceptions of the Nurture Group versus the mainstream setting and the behaviours or practices that they value in their teachers. hooks (2010: 19) suggests that "as teachers, we can create a climate for optimal learning if we understand the level of emotional awareness and emotional intelligence in the classroom. That means we need to take time to assess who we are teaching", to do so the voice of the child must be acknowledged. This is therefore the first objective of this study.

2.5 The Importance of the Teacher-Parent Partnership in Social Emotional Development

When asked what the best things were about living in Ireland, most children who participated in the First 5 Strategy (2015) identified their home and family relationships as the best things in their lives. When asked what they would change, they wished for more time with parents (Coyne et al., 2018). The First 5 Strategy (2015) identifies family relationships as having the most profound influence on development (Coyne et al., 2018). Froebel emphasised the importance of family in a child's learning and the link between family and community. According to Froebel (1902) "thou [family life] are more than school and church. Thou art greater than all the institutions which necessity has called into being for the protection of life and prosperity" (Bruce et al., 2019: 27).The role of the school is to supplement the family, assisting the parent in their child's development (Bruce et al., 2019). This can be read in relation

to the theories of Bowlby and Bourdieu. The experiences one collects through family interaction and school determine future actions and behaviour. The ESRI (2018), DES (2015) and DCYA (2018) therefore emphasise the necessity of positive experiences and nurturance within these settings (Coyne et al., 2018). As both the family and school play such significant roles in a child's life, the relationship between the is two is worth consideration when exploring social emotional development and support. Therefore, guided by the values of communication and fostering positive relationships, enhancing the parent-teacher relationship will also be a focus in this study.

2.5.1 Parental Participation in Education

Ma et al. (2016) describe the complimentary relationship between parents, teachers and communities in facilitating optimal learning and development for children. The First 5 Strategy (2015) therefore recommends communities should be inclusive, promoting opportunities for proactive engagement for parents and children (Coyne et al., 2018). Daily experience within the family as well as the academic support children receive from home have been found to be important determinants in adult outcome (DES, 2015). However, a study carried out by Hanafin and Lynch (2002) in an inner city DEIS primary school in Ireland, found that despite implementation of strategies to involve parents in school activities, actual participation was low. Hanafin and Lynch (2002) claim this is due to parental involvement restricted to tasks which require little practical engagement, suggesting more proactive activities and initiatives within schools to create more meaningful parental involvement. This research also suggests the importance of parental voice and how parental perception of exclusion can hinder the establishment of parent-teacher relationships. A meta-analysis by Ma et al. (2016) suggests a strong relationship between learning outcome and parental involvement. The authors report that home-school communication as opposed to school-home communication, voluntary work

within the school, home discussion around school activities and home supervision promote a positive message for children about the importance of learning. They also suggest forging respectful, effective partnerships with families that are reflected in school culture, practice and programmes (Ma et al., 2016). This study seeks to enhance these relationships through collaboration with parents with the view to improving the educational experience of the child.

2.5.2 The Role of Culture in Relationship Formation

Webster-Stratton and Reid (2010) also advocate the importance of collaborative partnerships between parents and the school. They recommend collaborations should be built on the assumption that all members have valuable insight to share about the child, all members care for and have shared goals and that any interventions should be consistent across both settings (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010). This view is supported by Coyne et al. (2018). Examining the value of the school and home partnership Rodriguez-Izquierdo (2018) describes the influence of culture in establishing relationships. The author suggests teachers should also be aware of the contributing role of constructs such as emotion, race, social class, gender, language background and sexual orientation.

Cultural differences may play a part in parents' perceptions of their role and that of the school, influencing parental agency and partnership. The author describes the importance placed by Asian-American families on academic success and how within this partnership, educational matters are primarily viewed as the responsibility of the school. The Roma community meanwhile place great value on education, however, the role of parents is to ensure attendance, respect for the teacher and good behaviour (Rodriguez-Izquierdo, 2018). It is therefore important to consider the culture of the family before making assumptions of commitment to education or seeking to establish educational partnerships with parents. This

study seeks to learn from the parental perspective, how the school can better support them and their child's development, therefore family culture and beliefs should be considered.

2.6 The Significance of Child-Peer Relationships in Social Emotional Development

School, home and communities have been identified as providing protection for children at risk in terms of healthy well-being. According to Brennan (2008) children crave the opportunity to belong, connect with others, be part of a group, to be understood (Kernan & Singer, 2011). "Children are motivated to be affiliated" (Kernan & Singer, 2011: 31). Criss et al. (2002) discovered the potential protective power of peer acceptance and friendships against anti-social and aggressive behaviours (cited in Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). This is supported by findings from Ervin et al. (1996) who observed that positive peer reporting had a positive impact on peer interaction and acceptance for children with SEBD. Likewise, a study by Roseth et al. (2008) reported a relationship between positive peer relationships and achievement (cited in Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). This section examines how peer acceptance or rejection during childhood may have long lasting effects on social emotional development and self-esteem that can persist into adulthood.

2.6.1 The Positive Role of Peer Relationships

Janney and Snell (2006) identify the valuable functions peer relationships provide, such as, delivery of information, emotional support, access to other social groups, a sense of worth and value and a sense of belonging and affirmation. Kernan and Singer (2011) question the predictive power of Attachment Theory in peer relationship formation. Peer encounters and group events provide many opportunities for social and emotional growth. While Ahnert et al. (2006) found that secure attachment could be formed by a responsive caregiver even when responding to group needs, Howes et al. (1994) claim that not all caregiver relationships which

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support positive attachment are related to positive peer relationships suggesting caregiver attachment as insufficient for promoting social competence in group settings (Kernan & Singer, 2011). This argument may suggest that some children require specific intervention for engaging socially and emotionally in group activities. It also raises the question of how effective or secure the secondary attachment of the teacher-child relationship is in a large class setting.

Kernan and Singer (2011) propose the experience of positive peer relationships as a determining factor of one's positive identity, well-being and sense of belonging. With peers, children co-construct meaning, resolve conflict and experience relationships of greater equality and distribution of power than the adult child relationship (Kernan & Singer, 2011). Bowlby (1969) proposes that as peer relationships are repeated, one internalises social expectations about the behaviour of others, forming an internalising model of relationships (Kernan & Singer, 2011). This is supported by a study by Brennan (2008) who examined childhood interpretations of conflict experiences with peers. Conflict may be internalised as a form of rejection or as an experience of problem solving (Kernan & Singer, 2011). Kernan & Singer (2011) suggest additional support and teacher intervention are required to assist in building peer relationships, modelling and creating opportunities for developing strategies.

2.7 Conclusion

As is evident from the research cited, social emotional development has lifelong implications for a person's life and mental health, however teachers and schools are in a position to provide children with the skills and support to nurture this development. The literature has highlighted areas for further consideration such as the contribution of the voice of the child, particularly, how they perceive the role of the teacher and what exactly they value in their relationships with their teacher. It highlights the significant role of self-image and self-esteem in social emotional development and the importance of teacher understanding and

sensitivity to this. This knowledge may assist teachers and schools in establishing ways in which they can help children to overcome difficulties they may be experiencing in self-regulation and expression that may be preventing them from accessing the curriculum or forming interpersonal relationships. The research clearly acknowledges the role of parents in promoting positive educational outcomes for their children, however it indicates areas for improvement for schools in strengthening home school links. For example, facilitating dialogue and open communication to make parents feel welcome and their voice, valued. The literature focuses attention on the necessity of sensitivity towards cultural backgrounds of families. It encourages the teacher to look inward at their own emotions and preconceived judgements to establish trusting, positive relationships with children and parents. Another area for further investigation is that of peer relationships with special consideration for peer perceptions and stigmatisation and how this contributes to the development of self-concept and image among children experiencing social emotional difficulties. It suggests the possible need for small group, focused intervention addressing social and communication skills. The literature also acknowledges the barriers facing teachers and schools that may hinder this process and undermine the establishment of relationships.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter, Chapter 3, describes the research process adopted by this study. It will focus specifically on the theoretical underpinnings of this research, such as research paradigm, reliability, validity and ethical considerations, research design, research sample, data collection instruments and data analysis. A multimethod approach, combining verbal and non-verbal tools, is adopted to better understand children's lives. These research tools include observation, conferencing, discussion and work samples. Using these methods, I hope to examine how the children participating in this study perceive their world, the relationships they have with the people in it and their learning experience. In doing so I aim to reflect on my ontological position, improve my own practice and the provision of social and emotional support to the children in my care. This study employs a self-study approach within the action research paradigm. Within this framework I recognise myself as the subject of enquiry as I examine how I can enhance the social and emotional support that I give to my pupils, for them to reach their academic potential.

The objectives of this study are threefold:

- To investigate children's attitudes towards themselves and school and their opinions as to how they learn best;

- To gain insight into the parent perspective while also exploring the parent-teacher relationship and how this can be enhanced;

- To improve my own understanding and teaching so that I can support these children in their social and emotional development so that they might reach their academic potential.

3.2 Action Research Paradigm

Action research is concerned with personal, introspective, self-evaluative processes with the aim of improving one's professional work (McNiff, 2002: 5). Values are at the core. To become a critically reflective practitioner, hooks (2010: 10) proposes that we must be "open at all times, and we must be willing to acknowledge what we do not know". This is supported by Dewey (1933) who describes the importance of wholeheartedness and open mindedness of reflective practitioners (Sullivan et al., 2016). Through critical reflection of one's practice, we may come to understand how we can improve our work, and in doing so enhance the learning of the children in our classes.

An action research approach was adopted in this study as it requires research into oneself and one's practice (McNiff, 2002). We evaluate our practice, decide whether modifications are necessary, then review and evaluate these modifications (McNiff, 2002). One's ontological and epistemological values are examined. This approach allows me to examine my ontological position in relation to others and the epistemological concept of the "knower" (Sullivan et al., 2016). I am the "knower" in the sense that this research aims to improve my practice, yet the children and parents are also considered "knowers" as their insights and perceptions are crucial to informing my practice. As their contributions are considered to carry equal weight, the children will be referred to as co-participants in this study. "At its core there is a person, the teacher, who, with professional expertise engages in a committed and responsible relationship with others to support them in their learning and development" (Kelchterman, 2018: 229). According the Kelchterman (2018), the personal and professional are intertwined.

3.3 Ethical Issues in Data Collection

Guided by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education Ethics policy, Maynooth University Ethics Policy and Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017) this study also abided by the school's own Child Protection Policy as well as the Data Protection Act (2018). The ethical proposal for the study was approved by the Maynooth University Ethics Board. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is also considered throughout the research process.

This study acknowledges the position of the children in this study as vulnerable due to the extent of their knowledge and experience of the world, cognitive levels and lack of independence and autonomy (DCYA, 2012). Therefore, I sought to ensure co-participants were not exposed to any more risk than would be encountered within their typical school day. As it was important that children understand the research aims, I explained the purpose of my research to them in plain language at the beginning of each session (Cowie and Khoo, 2017). I reminded each child that they may cease participation at any stage without consequence. In the case of a subject or conversation arising in which a co-participant felt upset, I spoke with the child to understand their concerns and relieve worries, the incident was recorded, and their teachers were consulted. I liaised regularly with class teachers and informed them if a child was upset. Every effort was made to abide by the school policy and Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Safety of Children (2017).

Finally, as the Boxall Profile is protected by copyright, permission was sought and granted by Nurtureuk to produce the Boxall Profile insert and report contained in the appendices of this thesis.

3.3.1 Informed Consent

The approval of the school principal and Board of Management was sought to commence research. As the co-participants in this project are under the age of 18, the consent of their parents and guardians for their participation was also collected. Participant assent to be involved in the process was also established and permission was granted to use work samples, audio recording and conversations as part of the study. A separate form, designed with developmental and cognitive development in mind, was provided along with parental consent forms. Consent was continually sought as research progressed, acknowledging that consent/assent is dependent on researcher-participant and participant-participant relationships (Cowie & Khoo, 2017). This also ensured that the children and parents were informed participants at each stage and reminded them that I was the subject of this study. The participants and guardians were made aware that they were entitled to cease participation at any time during the research process. In such case their data would be disposed of and would not be used in the study.

3.3.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Parents and children were assured that any personal or identifying information would be kept confidential and anonymous in line with school policy and Data Protection Guidelines. Their names and the name of the school would not be included in the thesis written at the end of the research. The children and parents are identified as 'Child 1', 'Parent 1' etc. in this study. All information is stored in encrypted files or a locked filing cabinet and information will be destroyed in a stated timeframe of 10 years, in accordance with the University guidelines. Participants and gatekeepers were also made aware that data and findings from this study may be presented in the future, but any personal information would not be used.

3.3.3 Validity and Reliability

Validity was ensured through use of triangulation with my critical friend, the validation group and co-participants. The use of a validation group and critical friend sought to minimise potential bias of the researcher and ensure that I was operating within my values of empathy, respect and trusted relationships. Triangulation was also achieved using a variety of data collection instruments such as questionnaire, profiles, work samples, my reflective journal and observations, reducing the impact of researcher bias in attempt to provide as accurate, detailed and balanced a representation as possible (Sullivan et al., 2016). Instruments and questioning used were cognitively and developmentally appropriate (Cohen et al., 2011). During interviews, the same questions and wording were used for each respondent and leading questions were avoided. Aware of the child-adult imbalance of power, the co-participants' views were sought on an on-going basis throughout the research process (Lundy et al., 2011). My representation of those views was also discussed with the co-participants to ensure credibility (Nowell et al., 2017).

The use of qualitative data is criticised as being prone to bias. Chesworth (2018) discusses the accuracy of qualitative methods, questioning the possibility of ever revealing a true representation of children's lives. However, the combination of a critical friend, validation group and variety of data collection instruments ensured minimisation of bias and sought to reveal an overall picture of children's experience through different lenses.

3.4 Research Design

3.4.1 Research Site / Context

The research site is a large multi-faith primary school in an urban area in the east of Ireland. Approximately 700 pupils attend the three-stream school which employs 42 teachers and 20 special needs assistants. There are also two special classes for children with ASD. There

are 29 countries and 32 languages represented in the school community. The school therefore celebrates a variety of cultures, languages and beliefs. The children who attend the school come from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. The school strives to embrace diversity and strongly promotes tolerance and respect for all members of the school community.

3.4.2 The Study Sample

The final study sample consists of 5 children aged between 6 and 8 years old. The age range of 5 years to 9 years was identified following my analysis of the Growing Up in Ireland Study (2017). Data was collected from co-participants, parents, my validation group and critical friend in order to assess my own professional practise as I aim to improve the emotional and social support I provide as an educator. A non-probability, purposive sampling approach is used for this research. Through consultation with class teachers from Senior Infants to Second Class, the co-participants were identified as suitable for intervention with a focus of delivering social and emotional support. Sample suitability was confirmed using the Boxall Profile (2017).

3.5 Overview of the Research Design of this Study

Cycle 1
- Collect consent and assent
- Observation and Boxall Profiles
- Individual child interview
- Parent questionnaires issued

Cycle 2
- Nurture Group Intervention
- One session a week for 2-2 1/2 hours
- Parent journals provided
- Frequent meetings with Validation Group and Critical Friend
- Ongoing conferencing and reflection with co-participants

Cycle 3
- Group interview with co-participants
- Follow up questionnaire with parents
- Follow up pofile with class teachers
- Individual interviews with parents
- Final meeting with validation group
- Data analysis

Figure 3.1 Overview of the Research Design in this Study

3.5.1 Action Research Cycle One

Cycle One of the action research cycle involves approaching class teachers from Senior Infants to Second Class. They identify children experiencing both social difficulties and difficulties expressing and regulating their emotions. The teachers feel these children would benefit from more focused intervention as in-class strategies have not been successful. Once this is complete parents are contacted by the researcher and arrangements are made to meet face to face to explain the possible benefits of the intervention and to seek permission for their child to attend the lessons. It is clearly expressed by the researcher that the overall aim of the intervention is to enable me, the researcher to better understand their children's needs and how to cater for their needs in order to improve their overall educational outcome. This is also expressed when collecting assent from the children themselves. These children are then observed and assessed using the Boxall Profile (2017). I then meet with the children themselves

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to explain the intervention fully and confirm their assent to participate both orally and in written form. The children are asked questions about how they learn best and what they hope they will achieve from the lessons. It is continually emphasised that the focus of research is the researcher and not the children themselves. They answer the 'Thoughts About School' questions devised by DES (2007). Parents are issued the Goodman (1997) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to ascertain their perspectives on their child's development, to identify areas of possible concern on their part and to learn more about the child.

3.5.2 Action Research Cycle Two

With data collected from Cycle One, lesson objectives are devised. Intervention in the form of the Nurture Group is employed and children attend these sessions once a week for 2 – 2 ½ hours. Nurture Group lessons take place in a large learning support room in the school and are tailored towards self-esteem building activities, social communication skills as well as relaxation and emotional regulation skills. Attention is also given to academic work as each child completes activities that are being taught in their mainstream class. Discussion and open dialogue are encouraged. Every effort is made to ensure the Nurture Group is a comfortable and safe space for the co-participants to share and describe their learning experiences. During this cycle parents are also provided with journals to record any observations they deem important or interesting over the course of the intervention.

3.5.3 Action Research Cycle Three

Cycle Three was not completed due to Covid-19 school closures. However, this section describes how Cycle Three was intended to be delivered.

Cycle Three includes a group interview with the children to hear their thoughts and opinions regarding intervention and what they find helpful and enjoyable. A second Boxall

Profile (2017) is conducted with class teachers to establish a change in classroom behaviour. Parents are issued a follow up Goodman SDQ (1997) to compare pre and post intervention results. Follow up interviews are held with parents to share their perspectives on the intervention and to establish whether they recognise a notable difference in their children's behaviour, attitudes and emotions over the period of intervention. Interviews also focus on data collected from parent journals, clarification of my interpretations and to explore arising themes or concerns further. Transcripts from the interviews, along with work samples and data collected from parental questionnaires and the Boxall Profile (2017) are then analysed for emerging themes.

3.6 Qualitative Methods

To achieve the research aims above, this study embraced a largely qualitative approach. Qualitative data provides detailed and in-depth data that enable us to interpret meaning, actions, intentions and behaviours (Cohen et al., 2011). "It gives voices to participants, and probes issues that lie beneath the surface of presenting behaviours and actions", which is what this study intended to do in order to support co-participants' social and emotional development and improve their academic outcome (Cohen et al., 2011: 219). Supporting the paradigm of action research, the following tools were included, the value of each is described below.

3.6.1 Data Collection Instruments

A multimodal approach based on the Mosaic Approach (Clark & Moss, 2001 cited in Rouvali & Riga, 2019) was employed during this study. The methods included: observational notes, reflective journal, parental journal, questionnaires, profiles, samples of participants' work, and individual and group interviews. Rouvali and Riga (2019) suggest a flexible and adaptable approach using verbal and non-verbal tools when conducting research involving

children to achieve true active engagement and to capture the authentic voice of the child. Listening is emphasised as is attention to gestures and actions (Rouvali & Riga, 2019). Tools were chosen based on observation of the children, their ages and their literacy and numeracy skills. Lundy et al. (2011) recommend that within samples with limited literacy and numeracy skills, effort should be made to include visual and or kinaesthetic strategies when collecting data. They also suggest using verbal and non-verbal techniques as children use many forms of communication to express their views (Lundy et al., 2011).

3.6.2 Observational Notes

Meetings with and observations of co-participants during lessons and at yard time were made prior to commencing intervention to build familiarity and rapport, supporting my value of relationship formation. Notes were based on observations and consultations with class teachers. Notes were continuously taken throughout the course of intervention and ideas and thoughts were shared with my critical friend and validation group. Observation notes initially provided perspective on participants behaviours and social interactions, revealing insights into co-participants' social and emotional experiences. Further notes such as those regarding behaviour in the group, comments, insights, notes around play etc. were often discussed with co-participants and continually used as stimuli for reflection and lesson planning. Rouvali and Riga (2019) note how observation is used to collect information about groups or individuals which can be helpful when interpreting children's opinions and can be used alongside other tools.

3.6.3 Reflective Journal

Dewey (1933) argues that to truly enhance our practice we must reflect on our experiences, what Schön (1984) calls 'reflection on practice' (Sullivan et al., 2016). Sullivan

et al. (2016) explain how standing back from a situation and thinking deeply about our actions might highlight patterns within our practice. In doing so we may become aware of the values we hold that we may not have been aware of previously. This may bring our attention to how we are not living to our values, becoming what Whitehead (1989) refers to as a 'living contradiction' (Sullivan et al., 2016). The personal lens has been criticised in research as too subjective, however Brookfield (2017) argues that while personal experiences are often idiosyncratic in nature, often they possess valuable elements that are universal, that speak to experience of others. Such introspective action enables one to establish whether their goals are in line with their values (McNiff, 2002).

Journal entries were recorded daily based on interactions, conversations and events that had taken place at school. Reflective journal entries combined with class observations and other data collection instruments were used to form the basis for interviews with co-participants and their parents as well as for conferencing with co-participants or meetings with my validation group. Later, Gibbs (1988) Reflective Cycle (See Appendix 19) was used alongside journal entries to support the process of meta-reflection in order to explore potential influences such as my own actions and responses, those of others as well as the environment during the study and to identify patterns for thematic analysis (McLoughlin, 2019). The journal highlighted areas within my practice where I was or was not teaching to my values, prioritising relationships and communication.

3.6.4 Critical Friend and the Validation Group

Action research requires dialogue and engagement with others, sharing opinions and seeing other perspectives. By opening ourselves to the views of others we may be illuminated towards new actions and understandings (McNiff, 2002). The validation group consisted of co-participants' class teachers. My critical friend was my Senior-Infant co-teacher in my school.

I met with both frequently across each cycle to share observations and ideas and gain their feedback noting observations of any changes or significance in co-participant emotions or behaviours across cycles. Members of the validation group and my critical friend were invited to the Nurture Group to have breakfast providing opportunity to observe my interaction with the group and to see activities the co-participants were working on. Self-study action research requires an openness to collaboration and constructive critique, fulfilling my value of achieving enhanced communication (McNiff, 2002; Sullivan et al., 2016). The validation group work with the children each day in the mainstream setting. Their opinions offer valuable information and insights into changes in behaviour, emotions, social interaction and whether strategies were being generalised across contexts. This informed lesson planning, objectives for nurture lessons and highlighted times when my values were manifesting in my practice.

3.6.5 Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (1997)

The SDQ (1997) is a behaviour screening tool which aims to collect the subjective perspectives of parents, teachers or social workers of a child's behaviour (McSherry et al., 2019). It was therefore employed in this study to collect the perspective of parents in terms of their child's social emotional behaviour. Goodman's SDQ (1997) was issued to parents before intervention and post intervention. The questionnaire is comprised of five scales: Emotional Symptoms, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity/ Inattention, Peer-Relationship Problems and Prosocial Behaviour. The SDQ (1997) was provided both pre and post intervention to examine whether a notable difference was observed by guardians in co-participants' behaviours, attitudes or interactions during or following intervention providing an overall home perspective.

3.6.6 The Boxall Profile (2017)

The Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 2017) was designed to examine the function of behaviour and facilitate planning of intervention. It acknowledges the child's strengths as well as needs and is comprised of two sections, the Developmental Strands and the Diagnostic Profile. Following identification of individuals by class teachers, the Boxall Profile (2017) was used to confirm suitability for the group and to inform lesson planning. The profile was intended as a pre and post intervention tool to be completed by the researcher and class teachers to examine any significant changes providing an overall school perspective. However, the post-intervention profile was not completed due to Covid-19 school closures.

3.6.7 Individual Child Interviews

One interview of approximately 15 – 30 minutes was conducted with each co-participant prior to beginning intervention. Considering the age and concentration of co-participants, a short break was taken halfway through. Capturing the opinions of the co-participants before intervention began was of the utmost importance to the design of this study as it ensures even distribution of power, encouraging democracy as we provide rationale for our actions and seek feedback providing credibility (Brookfield, 2017). Brookfield (2017) highlights the importance of employing different perspectives when analysing our ideas. He proposes that humans are limited by our biases and assumptions. To overcome this and avoid self-confirmation, the student lens reveals how they learn and directs us towards effective strategies. It reveals student perceptions of us as educators and our actions which may be enhancing or counter-productive to learning, therefore complimenting the reflective journal.

Using 'Thoughts about School' (DES, 2007) as framework for interviews, the children expressed what they liked or didn't like about school, the ways they learn best, how they believe their teachers and friends see them and what they expected the group to be like. This

information was used to form lesson plans, guide future discussion as well as to build rapport while getting to know the co-participants. As some children in the group were reluctant to speak during individual interview, I provided a variety of pictures of various activities and visuals depicting different emotions for them to convey their thoughts. This tool achieved my values as it established a respectful foundation for our relationship and revealed information of language and communication styles.

3.6.8 Children's Work Samples

Work samples consisting of drawings, writing and photographs of activities or places taken by participants were used during data collection. These samples were used as the basis for conferencing, discussion as well as lesson plans as I sought to listen to and interpret their voices and opinions (See Appendix 14) (Cohen et al., 2011). Cohen et al. (2011) state that artefacts convey messages or meaning. This understanding is shared by Clark and Moss' (2001) Mosaic Approach as it seeks to recognise child voice in research (Rouvali & Riga, 2019). Horgan (2017), Woolhouse (2017) and Spyrou (2015) also recommend a multimodal approach to participatory research with children and the used of visual, interactive, non-verbal tools to represent the 'multivoicedness' of children (Horgan, 2017). According to Rouvali and Riga (2019), the use of such tools is a motivating way to enable children to become part of the decision-making process and increase meaningful participation. This is further supported by Koller and San Juan (2015) who suggest art activities to facilitate expression through drawing. This instrument is particularly helpful for co-participants in this group who were reluctant to speak as they shared their thoughts through words and drawings therefore serving as a communication system. It also gave participants more time to reflect on their ideas before sharing them.

3.6.9 Group Interview

Due to Covid-19 school closures, this tool was unfortunately not used during the study. During Cycle Three, post intervention, I intended to meet with co-participants as a group to collect their final feedback from the sessions. The structure of the interview followed that of Jenny Mosley's (1996) Circle Time (Lundy et al., 2011). This would provide opportunity for all members to speak using a speaking object or the opportunity to pass. Photographs of different activities during intervention as well as children's work samples from sessions would have been used as stimuli for discussion. Co-participants would be asked their opinions on different activities, how they felt during these times and how other children might experience them. Cohen et al. (2011) claim advantages of group interviews lie in their ability to address the issue of power imbalance between adults and children, they claim the environment is more comfortable and less unnatural or intimidating than individual interviews and provide the opportunity for children to build upon or extend each other's ideas.

3.6.10 Parent Journals and Interviews

With the aim of enhancing the teacher-parent relationship and promoting meaningful co-operation and involvement, parents were issued journals and encouraged to use them to record any observations they had of their children over the course of intervention. Nind and Lewthwaite (2018) described the creative potential of diary methods to collect thoughts, understand events and contexts and collect different perspectives. It is a reflective process and provides opportunity to encourage community and collaboration, therefore complimenting my value of relationship formation and communication. Particular attention was directed towards attitudes towards school, interactions with parents, siblings and other children as well as the overall happiness and contentment of their child during this time. Conversations at home regarding intervention and activities were encouraged and parents were invited to breakfast to

experience the group and the activities done during group time. Jacquez et al. (2013) encourage involvement of parents in child and adolescent research as often parents are strongly invested in improving conditions and outcomes for their children. Likewise, Frobel promotes close links between school, parents and community (Tovey, 2013). Information gathered from the journals were used to inform progress of intervention as well as to provide a wider perspective and overall understanding of each child, reflecting my educational values of collaboration and cooperation.

Unfortunately, Cycle Three individual parent interviews and breakfast were not possible with school closures. This information, combined with data collected from the pre and post SDQ's (1997) along with parent journals would have been used to ensure accurate interpretation of the parental experience of the group, establishing triangulation and credibility. According to Cohen et al. (2011), interviews provide greater depth than questionnaires while also allowing the interviewer to clarify any misunderstandings. They are also a useful when working with individuals with a different first language or limited literacy.

3.7 Data analysis

With the research objectives in mind, artefacts, interview transcripts, observations, journal entries and questionnaire data were organised and explored for patterns, themes and regularities (Cohen et al., 2011). Qualitative data analysis is selected, organised and interpreted by the researcher and as such has been criticised as being too subjective, susceptible to researcher bias and not a true representation of participants' worlds (Cohen et al., 2011). Therefore, transcriptions were made as soon as possible following interviews, every attempt was made to also include any inflections, tone of voice or pauses and silences (Spyrou, 2015). Following my interpretation of the data I then relayed my interpretation back to co-participants

to ensure accurate representation of their voices as opposed to an adult interpretation of their lives (Lundy et al., 2011).

3.7.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis (TA) was conducted during and after data collection. The research question and objectives were considered before and during analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest immersing oneself in the data, repeatedly reading and searching for patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest. The data from each instrument were examined and coded manually into meaningful groups. Codes were then analysed and combined to identify recurring patterns and uncover themes. Arising themes were then organised into categories and subcategories. These themes were then reviewed and considered in relation to the research question and my values (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The implications of each theme for this study were considered along with the overall story the themes reveal about the topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

While TA has been criticised as lacking clarity and consistency in its implementation, it is a flexible and useful qualitative tool that can be used across research questions and epistemologies, providing a rich detailed account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Not only does it organise the data, it also interprets aspects of the research topic (Nowell et al., 2017). TA requires reflexive dialogue between the researcher and research question. Nowell et al. (2017) suggest the use of a reflexive journal to support the TA process and as such reflects the nature of this self-study action research project. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), TA can be used to examine different perspectives of different research participants, identifying similarities and differences and was therefore considered appropriate for this study as the child and parent perspective is explored in relation to my own practice and how it can be enhanced.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the aims of the study along with a description of the research paradigm and the research site within which the study takes place. An outline of the research sample, data collection instruments and sources are also provided. Attempts to minimise potential bias are described in the validity and reliability section and an account of ethical considerations relating to this study is also given. The research paradigm and instruments were selected to reveal the unique insights of the co-participants and their parents in the learning experience with the hope of enriching my understanding and self-reflection and enhancing my practice. These instruments also assisted in laying the foundations for relationships to develop and to explore communication systems. Graham et al. (2017) describe the potential transformative power for services and policies that comes from seeking greater insight into children's lives. Baumfield et al. (2008) claim such action establishes an environment in which both pupils and the teacher feel valued, promoting self-esteem and confidence as well as an inclusive, collaborative learning community reflecting my values of positive relationship development and communication. This is further supported by the First 5 Strategy (2015) as well as Cowie and Khoo (2017) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child who recognise the important role of children as co-researchers and experts in their own right on their own lives, culture and experience (Baumfield et al., 2008; Woolhouse, 2017; Coyne et al., 2018; Rouvali & Riga, 2019). The following section will present findings from the research.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the main themes arising from the research question, "How can I enhance the social and emotional support that I give to my pupils, in order for them to reach their academic potential?", and the implications of these findings for my practice. Parent and class teacher feedback revealed a positive impact on the social emotional difficulties experienced by co-participants including increased classroom participation, greater confidence in play and with peers as well as enhanced emotional regulation skills. Throughout the data analysis process the themes of creativity, self-directed play as well as self-identity and belonging appeared consistently throughout co-participant interviews, conversations, feedback and questionnaire responses from the validation group and parents, identifying them as areas worthy of further exploration. Using interviews and conversations with co-participants, discussion with the validation group as well as lesson and yard time observations, I gained insight into the children's attitudes towards themselves and their relationships with others within the school context. Upon reflection of these themes within my own practice, I explored alternative communication systems such as picture exchange, writing and drawing along with methods for creating dialogue and conversation including story, meditation, puppetry, drama, art and breakfast time. It gave me the opportunity to examine the parent-teacher relationship and to investigate methods of encouraging active two-way communication. This process also revealed areas in my practice which did not reflect my values. I explored ways of transforming my teaching to promote communication and child voice and give the relationships in my classroom the nurturance they require.

4.1.2 Overview of Findings

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part 1 describes feedback from parents and class teachers on the value of the Nurture Group intervention followed by a presentation of the main themes that arose during the thematic analysis process. It also presents some of the challenges that arose over the course of the study. Part 2 outlines the intended steps of the final phase of research, prevented due to school closures. It concludes with an account of the learning gained from exploring the primary themes and the transformation that occurred within my practice as I sought to teach to my values of positive relationship formation and communication.

4.2 Part 1

4.2.1 Parent and Teacher Response to the Nurture Group Intervention

Parent responses were invaluable in establishing the significance of the Nurture Group for their child's progress. A second SDQ revealed a positive experience of the group for their child. The group provided support and information and most observed improvements in their child's difficulties over the 6 weeks. The ability to name and describe emotions was a clear finding as feedback from class teachers also revealed improvement using calming strategies, classroom participation and improved confidence both academically and socially. The group provided additional positive experiences of school for these children. These results reflect similar findings from Vincent (2017), O'Connor and Colwell (2003) and Cooper and Whitebread (2007) (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). These findings are significant for determining the future implementation of the Nurture Group in our school and the provision of a new form of support for children struggling with social emotional difficulties.

4.2.2 The Parent Perspective: Questionnaire and Nurture Journal Feedback

The following graphs illustrate parental feedback regarding the Nurture Group intervention. Figure 4.1 reveals that 60% of the parents saw improvement in their child's difficulties since attending the Nurture Group while 40% of parents reported that difficulties remained the same.
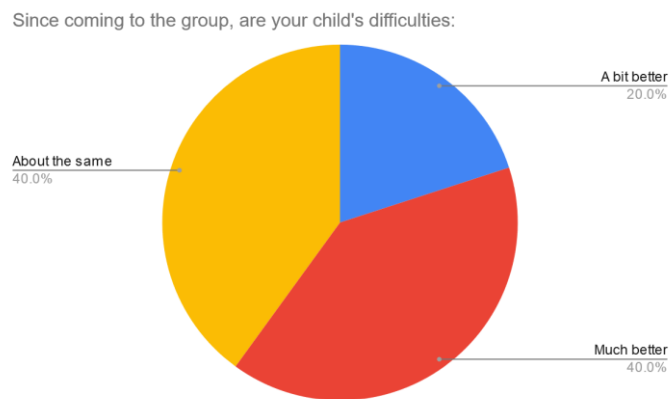
Figure 4.1: Improvement in difficulties since attending the group

Figure 4.2 provides supporting evidence for the Nurture Group as a source of information and support for parents as all reported the group as helpful to some extent.
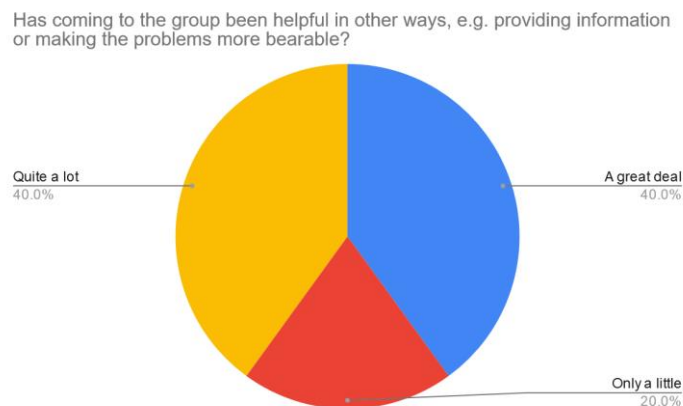
Figure 4.2: Perceived support offered by the group

Finally Figure 4.3 reveals whether difficulties have continued and to what extent following the Nurture Group intervention.

Over the last month, has your child had difficulties in one or more of the following areas: emotions, concentration, behaviour or being able to get on with other people?

Yes minor difficulties
20.0%

Yes definite difficulties
40.0%

No
40.0%
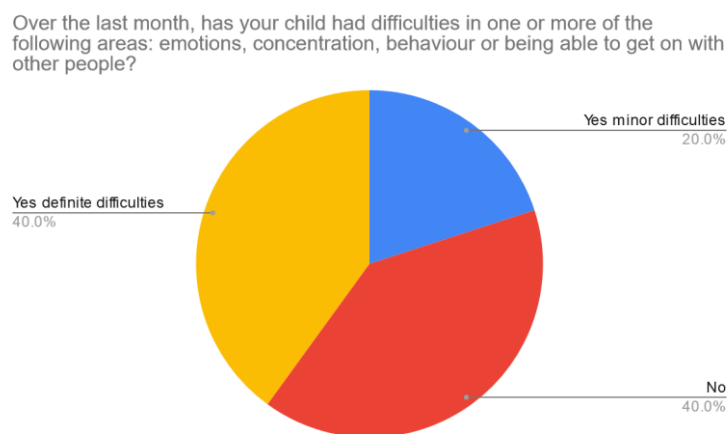
Figure 4.3: Extent of remaining difficulties

While most parents reported improvement in their child's difficulties, some co-participants continued to experience difficulties. However, while 3 out 5 parents continue to report some difficulties, when compared with 4 out of 5 parents in the previous questionnaire, this suggests significant reduction for at least one child.

Friendships, classroom learning and leisure activities remained the areas of most concern for 3 out of 4 parents, however, this was described as 'only a little' compared with 'quite a lot' in the previous questionnaire suggesting some reduction in difficulties. In their Nurture Journal, Parent 4 describes the positivity Child 4 expressed towards the group, the relationships it had provided and how it had become incorporated into her imaginative play.

"She said she liked to play with her group friend XXX. She talked about her a lot. I think she got on very well with her." (Parent 4 describing Child 4's new friendship in the group, Nurture Journal Entry)

This can be read in relation to Vygotsky (1978) who emphasises of the importance of pretend play and peer play in the development of social competency (Kernan & Singer, 2011).

4.2.3 The Teacher Perspective: Classroom Learning and Social Emotional Behaviour

The lens of the mainstream class teachers offered valuable insight as to whether the experience in Nurture Group extended to the mainstream classroom. For co-participants exhibiting externalising behaviours, as did Child 1 and 2, their teachers described some reduction in disruption in the classroom, increased capability of naming and describing their feelings, providing alternative responses if they became upset or using strategies to keep calm. Vincent (2017) reports similar findings with improvement in communication of feelings and reduction in undesirable behaviour. Child 1 was observed as more willing to engage in differentiated work with both SNA and Learning Support Teacher however this resistance had not been eradicated entirely.

"When he is calm, he has been able to label his feelings, explain a little about the reasons for these feelings and talk about what he and we could do differently next time. We feel he has engaged in 1:1 work with SNA and SEN teacher more often in the last few months." (Class Teacher, Child 1)

This comment suggests the positive impact the intervention has had on this child's attitude towards academic activities as well as improvement in emotional expression and regulation. While disruptive behaviour remains a challenge, positive feelings were observed in co-participants more often and teachers spoke of the Nurture Group as providing opportunities for happy experiences in school.

"I noticed Child 2 being particularly animated and excited when showing me the Nurture Group Newsletter. He could not wait for me to read it and to show it in front of the boys and girls in class. It was a very happy moment for him!" (Class Teacher, Child 2)

Meanwhile two out of three co-participants exhibiting internalising behaviours demonstrated improved posture and positive body language. Child 3 and 5 were described as more inclined to smile and laugh with increased participation in whole class and small group work and more confidence with peers and during play. The following comment from Child 5's class teacher illustrates how his confidence with peers has increased and how much happier and more comfortable he appears in class.

"While he has had some friendships since the start of the year, his shy nature means that he is often on the periphery of the 'fun'. In recent weeks he has appeared to be more involved and confident in his play. I have observed Child 5 smiling more in class (this is not typical – he is usually quite serious at all times) and interacting with the children close to him." (Class Teacher, Child 5)

Child 3's teacher describes a greater sense of confidence and increased participation in class activities.

"She has been trying to participate and engage more. She has answered more questions in a small group, 1:1 and even given one-word answers during whole class discussions. Also, her response time has gotten quicker. She used to take a long time to answer, now she is keener to let you know that she knows the answer." (Class Teacher, Child 3)

The significance of these findings is shared with Dolton et al. (2019) who report how negative experiences of school impact well-being and academic attainment particularly when children have felt restricted in expressing their views. These findings also demonstrate improvements for participants in terms of communication skills and social competency. The following sections examine the themes that arose through dialogue with co-participants as I explored their perspectives of school with them as well as perspectives of parents, my critical friends and validation group.

4.2.4 Thematic Analysis: Primary Themes

This section describes the primary themes of creativity and self-directed play, self-identity and belonging that emerged during thematic analysis of the data. The themes revealed in this study help to provide context, knowledge and understanding when supporting social emotional needs in primary schools and offers direction for future practice.

Theme 1: Creativity and Self-Directed Play

Creativity, self-directed play and fun all arose as important features in the school day. Froebel describes play as "the highest level of child development", strengthening relationships between adults and children and granting insight into the minds of children (Tovey, 2013). This reflects findings from the First 5 Strategy (2015) in which play was identified as one of the best things in children's lives (Coyne et al., 2018). Opportunities for choice and autonomy were also important. When asked what they enjoyed most about Nurture Group, co-participants replied with story time, breakfast, colouring and playdough. Again, the themes of creativity, choice and fun were emerging. When asked again in session 6 they replied with breakfast, you (me the teacher) and playdough or putty. In the Nurture Journal returned by Parent 4, they comment on how Child 4 looked forward to Nurture Group each week. She particularly liked

choice time with playdough and breakfast. This finding also supports the Froebelian approach of promoting creativity as means of reflection for children as they form connections between the inner world of feelings and ideas and their outer world of experiences (Tovey, 2013). The significance of this finding lies in the opportunity creativity and self-directed play provides for getting to know co-participants and creating a pathway for establishing comfort and safety, fulfilling both values of relationship formation and developing communication between teacher and child, researcher and co-participant.

Theme 2: Belonging

While all children expressed a positive relationship with their teachers, the concept of security in school was evident. For some, feelings of safety related to yard time and play with peers or feelings of persecution and isolation. For others, particularly those exhibiting internalising behaviours, these children expressed a concern of being looked at or laughed at, indicating further social insecurity. My own observations from yard along with comments made by co-participants and validation group, revealed a pattern of insecurity with peers and feelings of exclusion. This was often a result of self-withdrawal or exclusion imposed by others. This echoes Howes et al. (1994) who states that caregiver attachment is not indicative of social competence in group settings (Kernan & Singer, 2011).

"I hope it'll help me, em, learn how to stop, learn how to mind my business. Because whenever someone gets hurt, and I ask what happened and I try to help them some people say go away, because they don't really want me to help." (Child 2 explaining what he would like to learn in Nurture Group)

Most parents reported that their child often engages in solitary play as 4 out of 5 stated that their child often gets along better with adults than other children. They described their

child as clingy or nervous in new situations and how their child had many fears or worries. This was further supported by class teacher observations and Boxall Profiles which reported a lack of trust in others along with uncertainty in interpreting the intentions of others.

Figure 4.4 Drawing by Child 4   **Figure 4.5 Drawing by Child 1**
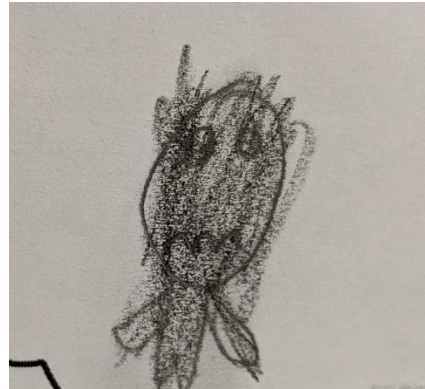
While the children differed in how they presented in terms of externalising and internalising difficulties, their lives were impacted in the same areas. Recalling Bowlby's 'internal working model', I reflected on how perhaps these children's past encounters influenced their sense of belonging within the school community, particularly amongst their peers. While many promote the significance of the teacher-child relationship for children experiencing social emotional difficulties (e.g. Cooper & Jacobs, 2011; NCSE, 2012; DES, 2015; Domitrovich et al., 2017), the power of peer acceptance and rejection cannot be overlooked (Noddings, 2003; Kernan & Singer, 2011). This finding highlights the importance of nurturing a sense of belonging through the network of relationships within the school community.

Theme 3: Self-Identity

While not always said explicitly, the children seemed aware of their difficulties particularly when asked the questions of what they would like to change or to learn in Nurture

Group. Answers such as *"how to be a better friend", "talking"* or *"how to calm down better"* were offered. (See Appendix 16)

Figure 4.6: Drawing by Child 3   **Figure 4.7: Drawing by Child 2**

This was confirmed by parents as 60% stated their child was upset about these difficulties. This awareness was evident again in co-participants' perceptions of how their teachers and parents would describe them. Their answers indicated an awareness of the contrast between their identity at home and their identity at school. For example, Child 4, a child who is reluctant to speak at school, when asked what teacher would say about her she indicated that she is good at writing, yet when asked what her parents would say, she pointed to the card for 'chatty' (See Appendix 16). At home Child 4 and Child 3 communicate directly, but at school use indirect forms of communication. This finding suggests a distinct separation between home and school life.

Boxall Profiles completed by mainstream class teachers, revealed further commonalities among co-participants. Each was regarded as sensitive in relation to self-image and self-worth as well as self-defeating attitudes. I once again was alerted to the theme of self-image. According to the profile, patterns of behaviour were suggested as having developed as a protective response, similar to Bourdieu's (1977) theory of habitus and the potential of past and present experience to inform future actions (Grenfell, 2012). This finding highlighted the

potential significance of relationships with others in self-identity formation. I endeavoured to focus on enhancing social and communication skills with the aim of supporting positive social connections.

Figure 4. 8: Extract from Boxall Profile Child 1 (See Appendix 15)

The theme of image and identity arose on a number of occasions in my reflective journal as I came to notice 'reputations' forming amongst children as young as 6 years old. These classifications were reinforced by adults such as teachers and parents as well as other children.

Extract from Reflective Journal, 13/9/19

I was approached at home time by X's father. He appeared upset and angry. He began to discuss another child from the class labelling him as 'violent' with 'anger problems'. Recounting an incident that had occurred the previous year, he asked what I was "going to do about this child." This is not the first time I have heard descriptions such as this about this 6year old child. Even upon learning he would be in my class this year I wondered how I would manage his behaviour. However, since meeting the child there have been no incidences of misconduct or harm to others or any behaviour that would warrant concern.

I began to consider how I could rehabilitate this child's image when many had condemned him as an 'angry' child. It also made me think about how I too had judged this child before meeting him and how this had influenced my behaviour towards him, undermining my own values of positive relationship formation.

I realised my judgement had been formed by comments like this one which had been made by others. I reflected on how I may have previously contributed to such reputations even unwittingly and how this could influence the quality of my relationships with my pupils. It made me conscious of the language I was using, my body language and my responses and how these may be interpreted by those around me, both by children and other adults.

Such reputations impair equitable relationship formation. I reflected on the extent to which pupil school identities may be imposed and reinforced by members of the school community and how this may impact their relationships within that community. I felt that to live to my value of positive relationship formation, I needed to explore and repair this image that had been created to enhance this child's relationships within the school community. On a separate occasion, visiting pupils asked: "*Who are the good and bad kids?*" They went on to comment that "*X is bad, he is always in trouble*". Again, I was alerted to my own practice, was my response to this child's behaviour communicating a negative image of them amongst their peers and therefore influencing their relationships with others? Likewise, Hayes et al. (2017) alerts us to our own actions and responses to the children in our care. I began to consider how I could support this child's behaviour while preserving our relationship and his relationships with his peers.

4.2.5 Challenges and Opportunities: Exploring Language and Communication Systems

This section presents some of the challenges that arose over the course of the study.

Alternative Communication Systems

Experimenting with alternative communication with co-participants provided both opportunity and challenge. Neither Child 3 nor 4 speak in the school setting and chose to communicate mostly through gestures, picture exchange or drawings. Child 3 occasionally provided one-word answers. While these children speak English as an additional language, according to their parents they speak almost fluent English. At times it was often difficult to understand what exactly the co-participants in question were trying to communicate. It was also unclear whether they understood the questions I was asking. Indicating choice and preference was easily understood, however, thoughts or opinions were more difficult to interpret. Spyrou (2015) advises acceptance of silence as a message in it-self and to avoid the desire to explain away silences. Alternative communication in the form of picture exchange, drawing and writing were offered during sessions with some success. However, it was often difficult to understand their experience of school without the influence of my own assumptions or bias.

Avoiding Adult Interpretation

Language proficiency was a significant challenge when working with this age group as often the children did not possess the language to explain their thoughts and behaviours or provide explanations. This made it difficult to ensure that I was understanding them correctly. For example, why was I one of their favourite things about Nurture Group? Was it the way we interacted or that I was a reliable, consistent figure every Friday? Was it that I imposed fewer academic demands? The acquisition and development of these language and communication skills were part of the learning objectives of this group. Therefore, it was sometimes difficult

to establish clear communication without the interpretation of me, an adult, or providing leading questions.

Home-School Communication

Acquiring and maintaining frequent parental contact was also challenging as the children were not in my mainstream class and it was difficult to reach some parents by phone. Of the Nurture Journals provided to parents, one was returned out of five. The questionnaire was returned by all. It appears this method of sharing information was most convenient for parents and perhaps something they felt more confident with. However, it lacks depth and the enrichment of further detail. Newsletters and a weekly goal activity based on the topic were also created with the co-participants to be sent home as we explored a new topic. It was intended as a talking point for families and to inform parents about our lessons. Four out of five parents reported to have not received the newsletter. As our diverse school setting is made up of a variety of cultures and languages all the parents in this cohort speak English as an additional language and could be considered Newcomer Families. Initial questionnaires were offered to all parents in their home language but each declined. For the final questionnaire however, one parent completed the questionnaire in Romanian. Confidence and comfort in the language may have influenced how parents chose to provide feedback. This also proved challenging when conversing with parents and with questionnaire collection. The concept of language will be considered in more detail in the final chapter.

4.3 Part 2

This section outlines the intended steps of Cycle Three that were prevented due to Covid-19 school closures. It also describes how examining each of the themes above in Part 1 influenced the evolution of my practice over the course of this study.

4.3.1 Intended Steps Prior to School Closures

Conclusion of the Nurture Group Sessions

The final sessions aimed to tie together the learning from the previous lessons. Froebel (1902) advocates the importance of connectedness and nurturing the family and community link in the learning process (Bruce et al., 2019). These lessons therefore also intended to strengthen relationships in the learning community by inviting parents and mainstream class teachers into the nurture space for breakfast with the co-participants in the nurture room. Final follow-up interviews with co-participants, their parents and the validation group would then be conducted. The aim of these sessions was to explore each experience of the Nurture Group and examine how the sessions had impacted on the child's experience of school and social emotional behaviour from the perspective of the co-participant, the parent and the mainstream class teacher. It would seek to establish what they believed contributed to this experience while facilitating triangulation. This information would not only fulfil my objectives of enhancing my own personal understanding and how I can support social emotional development but would be used to inform future nurture planning and mainstream planning.

Co-participant group interviews would focus on sharing what they liked about the group, what they would change and what they would find useful in their mainstream class. The group setting intended to provide peer support and encourage conversation while addressing the power imbalance between children and adults (Horgan, 2017). Interviews would conclude with individual drawings of their ideal classroom which they would explain in their words to avoid adult interpretation of the child's world (Lundy et al., 2011). This method aimed to fulfil my values around communication and relationship formation by involving the children in decision making.

Likewise, individual parent interviews would be conducted to clarify points made in previous questionnaires to establish accurate interpretation of their perspective, particularly as

many of the parents were answering in their second language. It would also be used to ascertain whether they saw a difference in their child since beginning the sessions either in terms of emotion, social interaction or behaviour, how they have changed and what they believe had caused the change. The interviews were intended to seek further information and depth about their experience of the Nurture Group while creating opportunity for active teacher-parent communication.

Finally, a follow-up Boxall Profile for each co-participant would be conducted with class teachers to examine pre- and post-intervention results. Following this I would have a final group interview with the validation group and my critical friend. This collaborative approach would ensure collective feedback and pool ideas and opinions regarding the progression of individual pupils. It would also supplement the data collected in the Boxall Profiles. It would provide a platform for the exploration of possible connections across co-participants and potential patterns providing insight into how we can further support social emotional development in the school.

4.3.2 Analysis of Evolving Values and Current Practice

This section describes how exploration of the themes identified in Part 1 led to enhanced understanding of the experience of the child. This learning guided me towards subtle changes in my planning and behaviour that had a large impact on my thinking and practice.

Child Voice

Opportunities for creativity, self-directed play and autonomy were identified by all co-participants as important and led me to consider a new approach to planning. This information combined with excerpts from my reflective journal asked me to consider how I was facilitating these needs in the mainstream setting. While at infant level creativity and play is facilitated

through Aistear and other enquiry-based learning activities, time for choice and autonomy is sacrificed for rigid literacy and numeracy station teaching and scheduling with little time for individual choice or free play. From first class upwards, Aistear is not in operation and other play-based activities are reduced significantly. From my experience in the Nurture Group, communication and conversation flowed through choice and play periods. I recognised a need for greater balance between station teaching and opportunity for choice to create more space for the voice of the child and more equitable relationships within the classroom. Dolton et al. (2019: 432) claim that "policies and practices which do not include children's voice will be of limited impact and benefit to children's needs." Likewise, Noddings (2003) criticises cluttered curricula which overlook the importance of pleasure and play in learning.

Commenting on guidelines issued from the Department of Education (2018) in the UK regarding Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties, Dolton et al. (2019) critique the absence of child perspective particularly that of primary school aged children. Reflecting on observations from our first nurture session, most of the conversation was teacher led and I wondered whether I had provided enough opportunity for the co-participants to speak. Consulting with my critical friend afterwards I mentioned how quickly time had passed and felt I had failed to complete everything I had planned for. I wondered how I could schedule activities more efficiently for the next session to fit everything in. However, I was reminded of previous conversations and my reflective journal in which I was concerned about bombardment of activities in the mainstream class each day with the regimented rotation of stations. I began to question whether I was giving enough time, particularly within this age group for meaningful engagement without agenda of ticking off an objective. I began to consider that perhaps during that initial session I had unconsciously placed content over connection in my rush to get everything I had planned covered. My reflective journal revealed this as a habit that has developed in my practice, undermining my values of communication and relationship

formation. According to hooks (2010: 45) many children feel as though their voice will not be heard, however, through the intervention of conversation, "it not only makes room for every voice, it also presupposes that all voices can be heard." I saw a need for more flexibility in my practice and planning for my values to be realised. Our next session focused on creating opportunities for conversation by offering opportunity for choice and creativity over content and weaving my objectives into our conversations. Reflecting on our lessons, co-participants spoke and shared their thoughts most freely during story time, breakfast and choice times and by focusing on this, communication was increased. Speaking with their class teacher Child 1 said, *"It's calm and relaxing and you talk a lot about stuff"*, this comment illustrates how by considering the voice of the child, my values were manifesting in my practice.

Breakfast was also reported as a Nurture Group favourite by the children. During this time, we also talked and played games. Coyne et al. (2018) acknowledge the importance and pleasure children derive from eating. When I consider the break and lunch time routine in my classroom, pupils have the opportunity to chat and I engage in conversations with them, yet mostly I am multitasking, circulating, preparing the next activities or correcting written ones. Academic "work" and administration is prioritised over communication and relationship development. This is a clear example of how I was manifesting a "living contradiction" in my practice (Whitehead, 1989 cited in Sullivan et al., 2016). I believe that pressure placed on teachers to achieve academic excellence for their students as well as to provide pastoral care results in missed opportunities for relationship development (Biesta et al., 2019). Going forward lunch time will be prioritised as an opportune time for conversation and engagement similar to Nurture Group breakfasts. This is another example of how consideration of the child's wants and needs led to increased engagement and conversation and produced an outward manifestation of my values in my practice.

Belonging

Exploring the theme of belonging that arose among co-participants, I was reminded of the social pressures and demands that permeate the school day. Within the mainstream setting conversations regarding yard time mostly revolved around conflict management. After break times I began to put aside ten minutes every day to talk about yard with my mainstream class about how they were experiencing it. During this time, we discussed many social encounters both positive and negative. The children listened to each other's experiences and I was impressed with how often they provided advice and suggested alternative responses to each other. I found this had a positive effect on how long I spent at the classroom door solving disputes spilling over from yard. I also began to do this after break in the Nurture Group during choice time. It was during this time that Child 3 would discuss her news from yard, something she would decline to do in the mainstream setting. This small timetable adjustment stimulated conversation and I was able to learn more about their social world and experience, moving from a didactic to explorative approach. Not only did this reflect my values and produce change in my professional practice, this action led to strengthening of connections between pupils and the opportunity to practice social communication skills as well as emotional expression and regulation.

Self-Identity

I was surprised at how self-conscious and self-aware the children were as they articulated their hopes for change and learning. For example, during our second nurture session I asked the group if anyone could think of a time they felt angry or frustrated. Child 1 replied "*I feel like that all the time*". Sharp (2001) describes self-perception and self-image as necessary components of self-esteem which is central to the nurturing process (Kernan & Singer, 2011). I used this information as the basis of our lessons. When I considered lesson planning within the mainstream class, I would often use the academic lesson objective as a

starting point, consider each child's learning ability for planning differentiation and extend from there. Within the nurture context my planning style changed as the lessons took a more exploratory stance, with fun and creativity always in mind and personal expression as the objective. I focused on the concept of 'getting along' in attempt to create a sense of belonging and teamwork, while also incorporating some conflict management strategies as well as those for initiating play. This was followed by resilience skills and confidence building. Empowering co-participant communication and confidence was central. I began to see a change in perspective as co-participants began to discuss their experiences and feelings more often. Recalling a conversation with Child 1 following our 5th session, his learning support teacher writes:

"I also asked him about how the Nurture Room might be helping him or helping him learn, he said it made him feel calm and not be so mad all the time."(Learning Support Teacher, Child 1).

Here I can see an example of the positive influence this more flexible, explorative approach has had on this child's experience of school. It also indicates a positive influence in terms of self-image.

4.4 Conclusion

The findings from the study point towards the importance of creativity, self-directed play and choice in the life of the child. They also highlight that we must acknowledge and use this perspective to inform our planning if we are to learn to understand and connect with the children in our classes. We must not only listen to the voice of the child, but consider it, then act on it. The inclusion of such methods is crucial for stimulating conversation and communication between adults and children and should not be underestimated. While feedback from parents and teachers in the study demonstrated some progress in social and emotional

interaction and expression both at home and at school, the disruption to nurture sessions caused by Covid-19 restrictions prevented the acquisition of more detailed exploration of how this progress came about. The study is also deprived of further insight from the lens of the co-participants themselves. From my own perspective however, following examination and reflection on the data, I was alerted to my own values and how they were manifesting in my practice. While I assert to value the importance of communication and relationships, I found that very often, opportunities for connection and meaningful conversation with my pupils were overlooked and many of the structures within my classroom as well as my own behaviour were undermining the relationships that I seek to nurture. By using this understanding and making changes to my practice and planning I began to see my practice transforming and the benefit this had for co-participants.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

Within this chapter, the primary conclusions of this research study are outlined. The transformation of my practice and manifestation of educational values are presented. Recommendations are proposed for policy and practice. Study limitations are also discussed. Previous research involving the Nurture Group approach has yielded positive improvements for children experiencing social and emotional difficulties. However, this research has focused on feedback and observations from teachers and lacks the child perspective when establishing the strengths of this approach. This study sought to provide a platform for pupil voice, to learn from their school experience in order to enhance my own personal understanding and how I can support them while living to my values of positive relationship formation and communication. As this project progressed, I aimed to fulfil the above values and to enhance connections not only between myself and these pupils and families but also their relationships within the whole school community. In doing so I hoped that these children may be enabled to participate to a greater extent in school and classroom life. While the final phase of research was prevented by school closures due to Covid-19, the study succeeded in achieving the following objectives:

- To investigate children's attitudes towards themselves and school

- To improve my own understanding and teaching so that I can support these children in their social and emotional development so that they might reach their academic potential.

Further exploration of children's opinions as to how they learn best is required. Likewise, the third and final objective requires further exploration.

- To gain insight into the parent perspective while also exploring the parent-teacher relationship and how this can be enhanced.

5.2 Study Conclusions

Throughout the reflective process I came to the realisation that my practice had become rigid and regimented, at the mercy of timetabling and station teaching. I felt that the routine of "this is how it's done in Infants", was impacting on my time and connection with my pupils. Refocusing my attention from strictly prioritising literacy and numeracy towards a more holistic, nurturing approach that was not just curriculum and learning objective focused, but well-being focused, was more in line with my values of positive relationship formation and communication. Giving co-participants a voice in the schedule of the day, providing time for their wants and needs gave me the opportunity to learn about their school experience and to learn a new way of teaching. Exploration and collaboration with co-participants as well as my validation group and critical friend guided the new approach. By making these changes to planning and practice I felt as though I was genuinely living to my values. This transformation in my practice led to improvements for these children in terms of behaviour, emotional expression and regulation, social confidence and classroom participation. This led me to consider the implications this approach could have on the wider school culture and learning community.

5.3 Dissemination of Data

Given the current social and economic climate in Ireland at this time, the findings of this study are valuable for primary school teachers and principals. Findings will be presented at local level through a presentation at a staff meeting in September 2020. Furthermore, a copy of the main findings will be submitted for publication in the 'Intouch' magazine provided to all INTO members. This study will be presented at Nurture Group support meetings for Nurture Group practitioners. Workshops will also be made available through local education centres.

5.4 Future Practice: Data Collection Methods and Teaching Methods

As Coyne et al. (2018: 20) state: "children are the most important source of evidence on how their lives are lived and experienced". Child interview provided opportunity to get to know co-participants and insight into the child's experience of school and relationships within in it. While it was difficult to probe questions deeply, it provided a starting point and helped to inform planning and build rapport. It lay the foundation for a democratic relationship through which the co-participants had freedom to speak. It recognised the children as active participants and "experts in their own lives" (Coyne et al., 2018: 20).

Child drawings provided freedom of expression without influence of leading questions from me. Negi (2015) and Lundy et al. (2011) advocate the use of drawing and creativity particularly when working with children with limited language and social skills for providing opportunity for communication. Similarly, Froebelian principles promote self-activity, talk and play as essentials for early learning (Tovey, 2013). This provided the space for the creativity and fun the co-participants valued. Free-play and choice activities proved to be valuable stimuli for conversation and data collection as this was when co-participants were most inclined to chat. Perhaps this was due to reduced pressure to speak and felt more natural and comfortable, helping to build trust (Coyne et al., 2018).

On reflection, I would employ a short pre-intervention interview with parents to establish parent-teacher rapport. The questionnaire, while a useful data collection tool, did not further the parent-teacher relationship. Having now experienced the online learning platform Seesaw I think this would be a useful way to facilitate ongoing communication with visuals or videos and descriptions of our day. This information would be directly available on smartphones and serve as a more direct way of sharing information back and forth than using written journals and newsletters which serve as one-way communication, thus more in line

with my value of communication. Combining visual and voice recorded descriptions might also be supportive for parents who speak English as their second language.

My critical friend and validation group were invaluable in this process of establishing progress in the classroom. Conversations provided in-depth information about how the children were progressing during the group sessions from an outside perspective. Members often shared conversations that they had with co-participants about the group, providing further angles for exploration as well as sharing the child's voice. It confirmed whether skills we were developing during group time were being transferred to other contexts and whether the co-participants were experiencing educational gains. Conversations also provided alternative viewpoints, for example, I discussed my concern for Child 4 and whether she was benefitting from the group. While participation had stayed the same in both the nurture and mainstream setting, my critical friend commented on how she had become more emotionally expressive before and after sessions and perhaps the benefit was to be found in the happiness and positive experience the group provided as well as the self-expression it stimulated. The dialogue enlightened me towards different interpretations and pathways for exploration (hooks, 2010).

Observation notes guided reflections and formed the basis for many discussions with my validation group and critical friend. They alerted me to subtle events that I may have dismissed previously. Combining observations with my reflective journal encouraged me to examine these situations in more depth and to form connections in a way I had not done previously. It alerted me to my own behaviour and responses as well as my own communication style and skills, for example, the language I use and questioning techniques I would often employ and whether I was living to my values.

5.5 Personal Significance of Findings

This section outlines the personal significance of the findings for my own self-awareness and knowledge. It identifies limitations and the learning I have gained by reflecting on and examining these limitations.

5.5.1 Child Voice: Conversation, Collaboration, Equality

While I had always sought to establish positive relationships with my pupils, as I adopted a new approach to planning, consciously considering their wants and opinions in scheduling, I recognised a change in our relationship. Making more time for conversation, creativity and self-directed play and examining social experiences and challenges together, I recognised a shift towards a more equal partnership with my pupils. In McDonagh et al. (2019), Sullivan describes Buber's (1958) theory of relationships which I also experienced as my practice began to change. As pupils' opinions were considered during planning, involving them in the decision-making process, I saw our relationship evolve from an 'I-It' relationship, with me, the teacher, dominating all decisions and therefore our relationship, to an 'I-Thou' relationship, wherein both parties are of equal value thus laying the foundation for a more equal and increasingly respectful relationship (McDonagh et al., 2019). I began to see my values manifesting in my practice but also began to look at relationship formation in more depth. I came to realise that relationships require more than positivity and good intentions to create effective partnerships. Froebelian philosophy envisions schools as democratic, respectful communities of learners, where adults and children can learn from each other (Tovey, 2013). Collaboration paves the way for equality, empathy and respect. I believe this is what hooks (2010) describes as she outlines the basics of teacher student interaction: care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect and trust. This "mutual pursuit of knowledge creates the conditions for optimal learning" encouraging greater engagement (hooks, 2010:158).

Attachment Theory provides direction when attempting to understand behaviour. While I agree with Bowlby (1969) that establishing a secure, responsive caregiving relationship is important for laying the foundations for trust to develop, other factors must be considered for sustaining this connection. This became more apparent to me during nurture sessions as I got to know co-participants better and came to reflect on our interactions and those with their parents. If we are to begin to understand themes that arose over the course of the study such as self-identity and belonging and how we can support them, children must also be given a voice within these relationships. Noddings (2003) emphasises the importance of respecting their interests and needs for interpersonal relationships to flourish. The themes of belonging and self-identity reveal many of the challenges the children negotiate each day and how they can impact on a child's overall educational experience. The findings in this study add to previous research that highlight the significance of play and peer relationships for social emotional development (Ahnert et al., 2006; Janney & Snell, 2006; Kernan & Singer, 2011; Cooper & Jacobs, 2011; Tovey, 2013).

Prior to this study I was primarily focused on caregiver qualities such as those Bowlby (1969) outlines, however, in order to continue to develop and nourish the relationships with my pupils and live to my values, I came to see that child voice and experience are essential to enhancing my understanding. We must be cognisant of the network of relationships within the community and how relationships with others and with ourselves can shape the school and educational experience. I feel that opportunity in the form of the final group interview was missed to explore the child experience further and to ascertain what exactly they would like to see and would find helpful and supportive in the mainstream setting. While this was beyond my control, I feel this is a limitation within this study and will be an objective for September.

5.5.2 The Power of Language

Another limitation of this study was the further exploration of the parent perspective. While most parents reported positive feedback for the Nurture Group and saw some improvement for their child, I felt that limited advancement had been made in terms of the parent-teacher relationship and examining the parent perspective in more depth, for example why they felt these improvements had taken place. Reflecting on some of the challenges encountered communicating with parents, language had a significant impact on establishing and maintaining frequent communication. This in turn influenced the relationship that developed between us. When I reflected on my efforts to make contact, two things stood out. The first, that most of the communication systems I initiated were one-way systems such as newsletters and home activities. The questionnaires required little feedback other than the use of a box ticking system. The second, was that the systems I had developed were through English. While the questionnaires were offered in parents' home languages, most chose the English version. Newsletters were entirely through English and the Nurture Journals required written responses in English.

Bourdieu (1990) describes the concept of capital which refers to the tools or resources one possesses within a given field or context, in this case the school environment (Grenfell, 2012). Within our multi-cultured school community with very diverse linguistic backgrounds, I came to realise the influence of both linguistic and cultural capital and how the possession of each may result in difficulties such as communication with teachers, the development of a network of social relationships within the school community and negotiating educational support for their child (Darmody, 2011). According to Darmody and McCoy (2011) language proficiency and understanding of the school system could lead to either availability or deprivation of supports. Likewise, Rodriquez- Izquierdo and Darmody (2019) describe language as an instrument of power that within schools could be used to perpetuate inequality

in relationships. Within my context, the parents spoke English as their second language and living in a country other than the one they grew up in, therefore may not possess the linguistic, cultural or social capital associated with the Irish school context resulting in an unequal distribution of power. Therefore, the systems I had developed were not fulfilling my objective of further understanding the parent perspective, nor was I fulfilling my values in establishing communication.

The relationships I had developed lacked depth and were not partnerships. As I came to realise with the co-participants, for a learning partnership to develop, a positive attitude and friendly relationship are not sufficient. As Webster-Stratton and Reid (2010) state, parent-teacher partnerships should be built on collaboration and the assumption that both parties have valuable insight to share. My communication systems while informative, were not collaborative. While I feel the interviews and Nurture Group breakfast would have achieved this in some way, this partnership should be established from the beginning of the relationship. To establish an equal partnership with parents, I needed to alter my thinking away from the idea of "parental involvement" to viewing parents as equal partners in the learning process (Darmody, 2011). We as teachers must be keenly aware of our context and how power is distributed within the school community if we are to create respectful, trusting relationships within that community. Particularly in a context such as my own, I must be aware of the cultural, social and linguistic capital that I and others possess and how I can use this understanding to ensure a more equal distribution of power (Darmody, 2011). This is an example of the transformation in my thinking that occurred during this study. While relationships continue to be of value to me, how I define and approach these relationships has changed. Going forward in September I intend to involve parents in the decision-making process, asking them how they would like to communicate with the school, how they would like to be involved in the learning process and how we can reach a more equitable partnership.

5.6 The Primary School Curriculum (1999): Prioritising Social Emotional Health

This section outlines an argument for redirection and reconsideration of time allocations for specific subjects in the Primary School Curriculum (1999). It calls for a more holistic and balanced curriculum that prioritises well-being and mental health.

Within my own practice, rigid adherence to timetabling of literacy and numeracy had distracted me from quality conversations with my pupils and promoting an environment for trusting relationships to flourish. hooks (2010) writes that dialogue rejects the epistemological view of knowledge as private, individualistic and competitive, and in doing so lays the foundation for inclusive learning partnerships. She promotes conversation as a universal learning tool that is used "across race, class and gender" (hooks, 2010; 44). Time management however had become a primary focus in my teaching. The social and emotional needs within the classroom were no longer central to my teaching which I believe are essential for establishing trust and communication with my pupils. I had become what Whitehead (1989) calls a "living contradiction" (Sullivan et al., 2016).

Curriculum area	Weekly time allocation (full day)	Weekly time allocation (shorter day)***
Language 1 of the school	4 hours	3 hours
Language 2 of the school	3 hours 30 minutes	2 hours 30 minutes
Mathematics	3 hours	2 hours 15 minutes
Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (History, Geography and Science)	3 hours	2 hours 15 minutes
Social, Personal and Health Education	30 minutes	30 minutes
Physical Education	1 hour	1 hour
Arts Education (Visual Arts, Drama and Music)	3 hours	2 hours 30 minutes
Discretionary curriculum time	2 hours	1 hour
Religious education (typically)	2 hours 30 minutes	2 hours 30 minutes
Assembly time	1 hour 40 minutes	1 hour 40 minutes
Roll call	50 minutes	50 minutes
Breaks	50 minutes	50 minutes
Recreation (typically)	2 hours 30 minutes	2 hours 30 minutes

***The shorter day refers to junior and senior infant classes only.

Table 5. 1: Weekly Minimum Time Framework suggested in the Primary School Curriculum (NCCA, 2016)

As illustrated above, under the 1999 Curriculum, majority of teaching time is allocated to language learning and maths. In 2011, the Department of Education and Skills, Circular 0056/2011 proposed an increase in literacy by one hour and numeracy by 70 minutes (NCCA, 2016). Meanwhile SPHE in both junior and senior classes are allocated 30 minutes of instructional time. The DES (2010) recommend using the SPHE Curriculum (NCCA, 1999) when teaching social and emotional strategies. Previously I questioned whether the allocated time of 30 minutes per week is sufficient to address the needs of children experiencing internalising or externalising difficulties in an overcrowded class of 30 children, who may not be emotionally available to learn, or, if such a generic approach is adequate to address their needs. A study by the INTO (2015) found that children do not receive adequate time to engage meaningfully with SPHE content as teachers often prioritise teaching and learning in other areas. Teachers are instructed to devote majority of class time to literacy and numeracy resulting in reduced flexibility and minimal time to explicitly address the social and emotional needs of individual children. While literacy and numeracy are of course priorities in a child's education, it is imperative that we ensure the emotional foundations for a child to learn. Self-reflection and findings from this study have strengthened my previous beliefs that this amount of time is not sufficient and does not acknowledge the significance of the subject matter. Particularly as children transition back to school after 5 months at home, I believe more time must be allocated to the social emotional needs of our pupils as they adapt to their return and the introduction of new safety procedures and routines.

Biesta (2009) discusses what exactly 'good education' is, describing the influence of measurement in education and the culture of blame placed on 'failing schools' and 'failing teachers.' Education has the potential to provide more than qualifications. Biesta (2009) encourages us to reflect on our values in order to understand our roles as teachers, "the danger

here is that we end up valuing what is measured, rather than we engage in the measurement of what we value" (Biesta, 2009: 43). The Irish Teaching Council identifies the values of respect, integrity, trust and care as the ethical values that we must collectively abide by as professional teachers (Teaching Council, 2016). The DES (2011) 'National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy Among Children and Young People 2011-2020' meanwhile identifies literacy and numeracy as priorities in Irish education and as priority life skills, emphasising their importance for future employment. The strategy seeks to achieve targets and raise standards by improving teacher education and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). In contrast to the responsibilities stated by the Council above, this strategy focuses on teacher obligation to ensure academic attainment. The strategy reads: "Better teaching will support better learning" (DES, 2011: 30) focusing on quantification, assessment and evaluation rather than enjoyment or self-actualisation in learning which has been questioned by both Dewey (cited in Warren & Bigger, 2011) and Giroux (2011). This strategy also asserts the epistemological view of knowledge as primarily academic and quantifiable with employment as the ultimate goal of learning and education rather than the holistic development of the individual. Review of the strategy in 2017 acknowledges the role of the family in education, the need for change to the curriculum and the introduction of Aistear in early literacy and numeracy development, however the strategy is still driven by international competition and achievement in PISA, TIMSS and NAERM scores (DES, 2017).

Preoccupation with academic assessment places expectations and pressure on teachers to produce high standardised test scores deflecting attention from the promotion of imagination and creativity or enjoyment in learning (Giroux, 2011). We are no longer "releasing them to learn how to learn" (Greene, 1984). The process of self-reflection has revealed to me how my identity and practice as a teacher had come to be shaped by external forces rather than my own professional values and beliefs. hooks (2010: 19) explains that "as teachers, we can create a

climate for optimal learning if we understand the level of emotional awareness and emotional intelligence in the classroom. That means we need to take time to assess who we are teaching". Here hooks (2010) offers an alternative focus for assessment, one that prioritises well-being over academic quantification in the classroom. Likewise, Warren and Bigger (2017: 79) propose exploring creativity focused methods as they suggest that "emotional outlets through art and music have implications for well-being" which reflects findings from the co-participants themselves in this study. Well-being policies and school culture must prioritise mental health and relationship formation this September as children and staff return to the busy social world of the school environment.

5.7 Teacher Confidence in Supporting Social Emotional Needs: Supporting Teachers to Support their Pupils

One of my main reasons for undertaking this research project stemmed from my personal feelings of being underprepared and lacking knowledge in the areas of social emotional development and supporting childhood mental health. This section explores the supports available to teachers with pupils experiencing social emotional difficulties. It examines the training and preparation provided at undergraduate level and as a qualified teacher as well as the approach suggested in the curriculum.

Rose (2012) reports that many teachers in the UK feel they have not had adequate training when confronted with challenging behaviour. Likewise, Koundourou (2012: 94) states that primary school teachers themselves are "not psychologically prepared to adequately support pupils with social emotional behavioural difficulties within the classroom". Koundourou (2012) reports that teacher-child relationships are endangered by the challenges posed by social emotional and behavioural difficulties. The author claims that teacher perceived self-efficacy is threatened and results in greater levels of teacher burnout

(Koundourou, 2012). As Rae (2012: 6) states, "the conflict between caring and the pressures of the marketplace can be a cause of much emotional dissonance and stress amongst teachers." I felt an urgency within my practice to accomplish academic tasks which absorbed time for dialogue and connection.

Studies conducted in countries outside of Ireland have questioned whether training provision for teachers is adequate when delivering instruction for social emotional support and mental health. A study in Cologne by Frolich et al. (2002) argues that while Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) poses challenges in the classroom, teachers did not possess the skills or sufficient training and understanding of the nature of ADHD and treatment. Researchers also describe unsatisfactory coordination between parents, therapeutic institutions and teachers (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). Following intensive in-service training for teachers based on information about the disorder, instruction on behaviour therapy and inclusion of teachers as part of treatment, teachers reported more confidence dealing with these challenges (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). Similarly, Shiff and BarGil (2004) in Israel found that teacher confidence increased following training for supporting children with SEBD (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). This is further supported by Koundourou (2012) who recommends that teachers develop their own emotional literacy skills (awareness of own emotions, listening to others, demonstrating empathy) before attempting to do so with children experiencing social emotional difficulties. Meanwhile Rae (2012) suggests whole school systems and more specific programmes for teachers and pupils. This should include staff coaching and counselling, solution focused staff meetings, a clear, fair and consistent behaviour policy and a whole school approach to promoting emotional literacy and well-being (Rae, 2012).

The DES (2015: 10) recommend that mental health promotion in schools "is about providing a full continuum of mental health promotion programmes and services in school", this includes providing early intervention for problems arising and providing intervention for

established problems. The NCSE (2012) recommend additional training and professional development for teachers and schools working with children with a diagnosis of EBD. They state that schools should "have access to, be trained in, and implement DES validated educational programmes that have been proven effective for children with EBD" (NCSE, 2012: 5). Teacher education in Ireland does not provide explicit training for teachers in the skills and knowledge necessary for the delivery of social emotional interventions. The 'Special Education Needs: A Continuum of Support' guidelines and the 'Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support' document provided by the DES (2007; 2010) provide instruction for the distribution of learning support and resource allocation under a continuum of support for children experiencing mild social and, or, emotional and behavioural difficulties and those diagnosed with EBD and severe EBD. They also outline suggestions for social and environmental adjustments and strategies for responding to behaviour. Koundourou (2012) claims that programmes and frameworks are not sufficient to support teaching practices with children experiencing social emotional and behavioural difficulties. Speaking in relation to the English educational system, Koundourou (2007) states that teachers lack knowledge and receive limited support from the government (Koundourou, 2012). "If children are to be happy in school, their teachers should also be happy", it is essential that teachers are supported so that they may be empowered to support their students (Noddings, 2003: 261). It is my opinion that current training provision for teachers in Ireland is inadequate when delivering instruction or enhancing the understanding and confidence required for social emotional support and mental health which will be needed more than ever following the global pandemic we are currently facing.

5.8 Conclusion

I undertook this research out of concern for the social emotional well-being of many of the children in our school and how the difficulties they were experiencing were impacting on their learning. Reflecting on the value I place on building relationships within the school community and encouraging communication, I became aware of how I was neglecting to give these children a voice. Behaviour management systems and incentives had achieved minimal, short-term success. Reputations were forming within the school community for these children which were impacting on their image and relationships with both children and adults. I resolved to attempt to understand and learn from their experience by listening to what they had to say. I sought to understand what their behaviour was communicating.

I believe that I have developed a living theory of practice that values respectful relationship development and communication within learning partnerships that has the potential for cultivating a nurturing, inclusive school environment. The progress of my practice can be seen in the final chapters of this study. My values were realised in my practice as I adapted my approach to planning and timetabling through consultation and consideration of the co-participants and my validation group. I experienced a transformation in my own thinking and demonstrated my learning of the importance of child voice and how power is distributed throughout the school community. Instead of developing behaviour systems designed to achieve compliance I adapted the learning experience with consideration for the children's wants and needs. I developed communication systems with the children that encouraged collaboration and conversation.

I maintain that positive relationship development and communication are essential to the learning experience and process. I believe that I have lived to my values with these children and my validation group. I have gained insight into their social worlds in school and our relationship has transformed, acknowledging the pupils a voice. Through the intervention of

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the Nurture Group I have fulfilled my objectives of supporting the children's social and emotional development and enhancing my own understanding and knowledge. This study has had a transformative influence on my practice. I have learned to reflect on and evaluate my practice and to examine different perspectives and viewpoints other than my own, as hooks says (2010: 10) "we must be willing to acknowledge what we do not know". From the beginning I was conscious of the power imbalance between adult and child, I failed to consider the possible imbalance between teacher and parent. The action research process of self-reflection, both in and on my practice (Schön, 1983), alerted me to my own communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, and their influence on relationships with pupils and parents. I found myself attempting to improve not only co-participants' communication skills but my own. The changes to my practice have led to an improvement in my practice but also an improvement for my pupils in terms of emotional expression and regulation, confidence, classroom participation and general happiness at school. I believe the findings of this study have significance for the wider school community as well as well-being and behaviour policy development. I have illustrated a nurturing pedagogy that seeks connection and understanding to establish a positive educational experience for the whole school community.

5.9 Covid-19: Return and Readjustment

A school community is a system comprised of many interconnecting relationships such as teacher-pupil, pupil-pupil, teacher-teacher, teacher-parent, teacher-external professionals. The quality of these interactions is influenced by any number of factors and events throughout the day. These findings have highlighted the significant impact the social world within the school has on a child's school and learning experience. The introduction of school closures led to an abrupt and unanticipated end to typically reliable daily connections and routines, imposing adjustment to a new, remote, online relationship and experience. Children lost the

opportunity to play and learn with peers and were introduced to a very different type of learning experience through supported home schooling. This in turn led to a transformation within the family system as parents adopted the roles of parent and teacher. Covid-19 school closures produced a huge disturbance in the network of the school system and learning experience.

The global pandemic has had, and continues to have, an enormous impact on the lives of school members, children, parents and staff as not only the school but other support systems such as family and friends were interrupted. The social emotional health of the entire school community is more a priority than ever before. The findings of this study support previous research detailing the importance of the school, family and peer relationships for future outcome. Following five months at home, school return in September must direct attention to re-establishing these connections and supports within the school network and nurturing the social emotional and mental health of all school members. These findings provide guidance for beginning this readjustment process and supporting schools as we navigate this new experience within our school community. Mar a deir an seanfhocail: "Ní neart go cur le chéile", there is no strength without unity.

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Appendix 1: Information Sheets

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Information Sheet
Parents and Guardians

Who is this information sheet for?
This information sheet is for parents and guardians.

What is this Action Research Project about?
Teachers undertaking the Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at Maynooth University, are required to conduct an action research project, examining an area of their own practice as a teacher. This project will involve an analysis of the teacher's own practice. Data will be generated using observation, work samples, reflective notes and questionnaires. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

What are the research questions?
- How can I create an inclusive and safe environment in order to better support the emotional and social development of the children in my care?

What sorts of methods will be used?
- Teacher observation
- Reflective Journal
- Questionnaires and surveys
- Voice recorded interviews and focus groups
- Work samples
- Parent journal and/or questionnaires

Who else will be involved?
The study will be carried out by myself as part of the Master of Education course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The thesis will be submitted for assessment to the module leader Dr Bernadette Wrynn and will be examined by the Department staff. The external examiners will also access the final thesis.

What are you being asked to do?
You are being asked for your consent to permit me to undertake this study with your child. In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and the analysis will be reported anonymously. The data captured will only be used for the purpose of the research as part of the Master of Education in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University and will be destroyed in accordance with University guidelines.

Contact details: Sarah Kavanagh   **E:** XXX

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

I am a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University. As part of my degree I am required to carry out a research project. The focus of my research is based on my own professional practice and how I can support the social and emotional needs of the children in my care.

In order to do this, I intend to carry out research using short term group lessons in the school.

The data will be collected using my own observations, audio recording of interviews and discussion, a daily teacher journal and samples of the children's work. The children will be asked for their opinions by discussing how they felt about different lessons or activities.

I would also like to invite you to participate in the research process by way of a short questionnaire. You are also invited to participate in a short interview of approximately 10-20 minutes.

Your name, your child's name and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I will write at the end of the research. Participants will be identified as 'Child 1', 'Parent 1' etc. You and your child will be allowed withdraw from the research process at any stage.

All information will be kept in encrypted files or a locked filing cabinet and information will be destroyed in a stated timeframe in accordance with the University guidelines. The correct guidelines will be complied with when carrying out this research. The research will not be carried out until approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

By signing this form, you are agreeing to your participation and your child's participation in this project.

If you have any queries on any part of this research project please contact me by email at XXX. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Suzanne O'Keeffe at XXX.

Yours faithfully,

…………………………………………………..
Sarah Kavanagh

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Dear _____,

I am undertaking the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University. As part of my degree I am doing a research project. The focus of my research is based on my own professional practice and how I can support the social and emotional needs of the children in my care.

In order to do this, I intend to carry out research using a short term intervention in the school.

The data will be collected using my own observations, audio recording of interviews and discussion, a daily teacher journal and samples of the children's work. The children will be asked for their opinions by discussing how they felt about different lessons or activities.

I would also like to invite you to participate in the research process by agreeing to listen to and share your opinions about research findings.

Your name and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I will write at the end of the research. You will be allowed to withdraw from the research process at any stage.

All information will be confidential and information will be destroyed in a stated timeframe in accordance with the University guidelines. The correct guidelines will be complied with when carrying out this research. The research will not be carried out until approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

I would like to invite you to give your permission to take part in this project.

If you have any queries on any part of this research project feel free to contact me by email at XXX. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Suzanne O'Keeffe at XXX.

Yours faithfully,

…………………………………………………..
Sarah Kavanagh
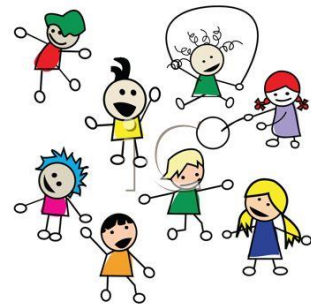
Child's name ....

I am trying to become a better teacher by helping children to talk about their feelings and how they get along with other people. I would like to do some lessons with you, ask you some questions and listen to you. I would like to write down some notes about what you have said and show some of your work.

Would you be ok with that? Circle one.   YES   NO

I have asked your Mum or Dad or Guardian to talk to you about this. If you have any questions I would be happy to answer them. If you are happy with that could you sign the form that I have sent home?

If you change your mind after we start, you can decide not to be part of this at any stage.

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

23rd October, 2019

Dear Chairperson,

I am currently undertaking a Masters of Education degree with Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University. As part of my degree I am required to carry out a research project. It is a self-study action research project with the aim of improving my own professional practice. In particular, I wish to examine my own teaching in supporting the emotional and social needs of the children in my care.

This research has received ethical approval from Maynooth University and I am seeking your consent, as well as the consent of the pupils' parents to engage in this research. I intend to organise a nurturing space in the school and to deliver an intensive, short term emotional and social intervention. Intervention is intended to run for a block of 2 and a half hours a week for a duration of 10 weeks and will involve between 4 and 6 children. I intend to collect data in the form of audio recordings, samples of work and my own reflective diary.

 The children's names and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis. All personal information will remain confidential and anonymous and any data collected will be securely stored in encrypted files or in a locked filing cabinet. I will abide by school, university and legal policy in matters of data protection and child protection. I would greatly appreciate your support in this, and I believe it will benefit not just the children and I, but the whole school.

Thanking you for your consideration,
Is mise le meas,

_____
Sarah Kavanagh

Appendix 3: Letter of Consent from Board of Management

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

To Whom it May Concern,

I _____, principal of XXX, give permission for Sarah Kavanagh to undertake research in our school.

Signed:

_____

Date:

_____

Ethics Approval for Master of Education (Research in Practice)

Student name:	Sarah Kavanagh
Student Number:	XXX
Supervisor:	Dr. Suzanne O'Keeffe
Programme:	Master of Education Research in Practice
Thesis title:	How can I teach in a way that develops a positive and inclusive classroom climate?
Research Question(s):	How can I better support the emotional and social development of children in the primary school setting?
Intended start date of data collection:	December 2019
Professional Ethical Codes or Guidelines used:	Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education Ethics policy Maynooth University Ethics Policy Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 Data Protection Act 2018 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

1(a) Research Participants:

Early years / pre-school	
Primary school students	✓
Secondary school students	
Young people (aged 16 – 18 years)	
Adults	✓

Provide a brief description of the individuals and their proposed role in your research below:

- 4-6 children aged between 6 and 8 years old - I intend to collect data from them in order to assess my own professional practise as I aim to improve the emotional and social support I provide as an educator.
- Children's parents - I hope to collect continual feedback on the intervention.
- Colleagues in my school acting as a validation group
- My co-teacher as a critical friend

1(b) Recruitment and Participation/sampling approach:

My aim is to investigate and improve my teaching of social and communication skills and to provide emotional support for a specific number of pupils in my school. Within this research project, emotional support is underpinned by Bowlby's (1969) Theory of Attachment and the establishment of a secure and nurturing environment. I intend to use a non-probability, purposive sampling approach for this research. I first intend to seek the formal approval of my school principal and Board of Management. I will identify participants through consultation with class teachers. They will identify children they believe will benefit from intervention. Pending parental consent and participant assent I will establish suitability of participants using the Boxall Profile. Once this process is complete, the children will attend lessons aimed towards academics, relaxation, social and communication skills and emotional regulation. Activities will require written and oral responses. Lessons will last 2-2 ½ hours, taking place once a week for ten weeks. I will seek frequent feedback from the children and parents in the form of surveys, focus groups, conferencing and interview, on the delivery and use of activities in order to further inform my practice.

2. Summary of Planned Research

Research will involve a sample of 4 to 6 children aged between 6 and 8 years old in a large primary school of approximately 700 pupils. Throughout this research process I hope to create a calm and open space for children to develop tools of emotional expression and communication. The following methods will be employed to collect data: quantitative profiles; interview; focus groups; audio recording; discussion; collection of portfolios; work samples; surveys and questionnaires; email; parental journals and interviews; my own reflective journal. Through regular reflection, the data collected using these methods will act as formative assessment for my teaching. This will in turn enhance the validity and rigour of this study, as well as enhancing the learning experiences of the pupils. All interviews will be recorded with prior permission and will be stored in-line with Maynooth University ethical protocol. No persons involved in this research will be identifiable. I will begin collecting data in December with the aim of beginning intervention in January. The intervention will run for approximately ten weeks with participants attending intervention group for between 2 and 2 ½ hours a week.

3. Ethical Issues:

Vulnerability

This study acknowledges the position of the children in this study as vulnerable. Therefore, I will ensure participants will not be exposed to any more risk than would be encountered within their typical school day. I will explain orally the purpose of my research in simple language at the beginning of each session. I will remind them that they may cease participation at any stage. Should a topic or conversation arise in which a participant feels uncomfortable I will ensure to conference with the child in order to understand their concerns and relieve worries, I will document the incident and contact their guardians if necessary. I will liaise regularly with class teachers and inform them if a child is upset. I will ensure that, as much as possible, research is conducted within the group setting. In the event I must speak with a participant alone I will ensure that it is in an open location in order to minimize risk to the researcher. I will abide by the school policy and Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Safety of Children (2017).

Power dynamics

I will continue to remind the children throughout the research process of their role as co-participants and that the aim of this study is to help me to improve as a teacher. I am the focus of study, not them. Participants will be made aware that their participation is voluntary and that they may decline participation without fear of consequence. I hope to establish a safe, non-judgemental environment where participant contribution is valued and respected. Incentives will not be used to encourage participation.

Given that English is not the first language of many of the parents/guardians in our school I will ensure that consent forms are available in the home language as well as English and will suggest a translator for meetings if necessary. I will meet frequently with my validation group and critical friend to share findings and observations in order to maintain triangulation and avoid or reduce possible bias of my own perspective.

Informed consent and assent

I intend to seek the approval of the school principal and Board of Management to commence research. As the co-participants in this project are under the age of 18, I will seek the consent of their parents and guardians for their participation in this project. I will also seek the assent of the participants themselves to be involved in the process and ask for their permission to use work samples, audio recording and conversations as part of the study. A separate form, designed with developmental and cognitive development in mind, will be provided along with parental consent forms. I will continue to seek consent as research progresses to ensure the children are informed participants at each stage and to remind them that I am the subject of this study. The participants and guardians will be made aware that they may cease participation at any time in the research process.

Sensitivity

Should any issues of child protection arise at any time I will abide by the school policy and Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Safety of Children (2017).

Data storage
Participants and guardians will also be assured that any personal or identifying information will be kept confidential and anonymous in line with school policy and Data Protection Guidelines. Participants and gatekeepers will also be aware that data and findings from this study may be presented in the future but any personal information will not be used. Any electronic data collected will be stored in encrypted files and any hard-copy documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. All data will be destroyed following period outlined by the university requirements of 10 years.

Attachments
Please attach, where available and applicable, information letters, consent forms and other materials that will be used to inform potential participants about this research.

Declaration

'I confirm that to the best of my knowledge this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of undertaking this research.' If any of the conditions of this proposed research change, I confirm that I will re-negotiate ethical clearance with my supervisor.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Appendix 5: Letter of Consent for Parents

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Parental/Guardian consent form

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to my participation and the participation of my child in this study. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

Parent / Guardian Signature_____

Parent / Guardian Signature_____

Date: _____

Name of Child _____

Child's signature: _____

Date: _____
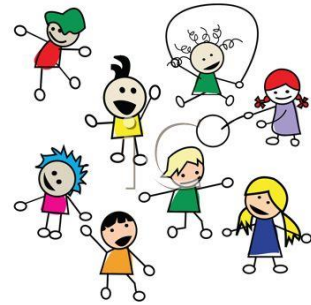
Child's assent to participate

My parent/guardian has read the information sheet with me and I agree to take part in this research.

Name of child (in block capitals):

_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 7: Letter of Consent for Validation and Critical Friend

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Validation Group/Critical Friend consent form

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to my participation this study. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

Signature_____

Date: _____

Appendix 8: My Thoughts about School Interview

My Thoughts About School

1. The things I like best at school are:

_____

2. The things I don't like about school are:

_____

3. The things that I am good at are:

_____

4. The things I find hard are:

_____

5. I am happy in class when:

_____

6. I am happy during break and lunch times when:

_____

7. My friends are:

_____

8. I need help with:

_____

9. Teachers in school can help me by:

_____

10. My teacher would describe me as:

_____

11. My parents would describe me as:

_____

12. Adults I get on best with in school are:

_____

13. Do you ever get into trouble at school?

_____

14. The things I do that make my teacher feel unhappy are:

_____

15. The things my teacher does that make me feel unhappy are:

_____

16. I make my teacher happy when:

_____

17. The things my teacher does that make me feel happy are:

_____

18. The class rules are:

_____

19. If someone breaks the rules:

_____

20. Rewards I like best are:

_____

21. The things I would like to change are:

_____

22. What helps you to learn?

_____

23. What would you like to learn in the Nurture Group?

_____

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Section I
DEVELOPMENTAL STRANDS

Enter scores for Section I items in the appropriate column of 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

#		*Score*	*Column*
1	Listens with interest when the teacher explains something to the class		A
2	Takes appropriate care of something s/he has made or work s/he has done *investment of feeling in his/her achievement is implied, and self esteem*		F
3	Appreciates a joke or is amused by an incongruous statement or situation *disregard lack of appreciation of a joke which is at his/her expense* *disregard amusement that is clearly inappropriate*		D
4	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 *score 2 if a personal and specific request is needed*		G
5	Makes and accepts normal physical contact with others *e.g. when holding hands in a game*		H
6	Makes appropriate and purposeful use of the materials/equipment/toys provided by the teacher without the need for continuing direct support *disregard repetitive activity which does not progress*		A
7	Maintains acceptable behaviour and functions adequately when the routine of the day is disturbed *e.g. when there are visitors in his/her class, or the class is taken by a teacher s/he does not know well*		H
8	Makes an appropriate verbal request to another child who is in his/her way or has something s/he needs *disregard situations of provocation*		H
9	Complies with specific verbal prohibitions of his/her personal use of classroom equipment *score 2 if s/he complies but often protests or sulks*		G
10	Abides by the rules of an organised group game in the playground or school hall *interacts and co-operates and continues to take part for the duration of the game*		J
11	Accommodates to other children when they show friendly and constructive interest in joining his/her play or game		H
12	Listens, attends and does what is required when the teacher addresses a simple positive request specifically to him/her *e.g. to get his/her work book*		A
13	Works or plays alongside a child who is independently occupied, without interfering or causing disturbance		G
14	Shows awareness of happenings in the natural world, is interested and curious, and genuinely seeks explanations		B
15	Of his/her own accord returns to and completes a satisfying activity that has been interrupted *e.g. s/he finishes a painting or carries on with a written story later in the day or the following day*		C
16	Is adequately competent and self-reliant in managing his/her basic personal needs *i.e. clothes, toilet, food*		A

17	In freely developing activities involving other children s/he constructively adapts to their ideas and suggestions		I
18	Turns to his/her teacher for help, reassurance or acknowledgement, in the expectation that support will be forthcoming *disregard occasional normal negativism*		F
19	Accepts disappointments *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*		J
20	Takes part in a teacher centred group activity *e.g. number or language work, or finger games* *score 2 if s/he does no more than try to follow*		A
21	Shows genuine interest in another child's activity or news; looks or listens and gains form experience *does not intrude unduly; does not take over*		B
22	Shows genuine concern and thoughtfulness for other people; is sympathetic and offers help		I
23	Recalls information of relevance to something s/he reads or hears about and makes a constructive link		C
24	Makes constructive and reciprocal friendships which provide companionship *score 3 if the friendship is with one child only* *score 2 if no friendship lasts longer than a week* *score 1 if the association is fleeting, albeit constructive and reciprocal*		D
25	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 *e.g. in the Play House, other free play activities, or improvised class drama*		E
26	Is reasonably well organised in assembling the materials s/he needs and in clearing away *reminders only are needed*		B
27	Communicates a simple train of thought with coherence *e.g. when telling or writing a story or describing an event*		C
28	Responds to stories about animals and people with appropriate feeling; appropriately identifies the characters as good, bad, funny, kind etc. *disregard response to nursery rhymes or fairy stories*		D
29	Makes pertinent observations about the relationship between two other people; appropriately attributes attitudes and motives to them		D
30	Engages in conversation with another child *an interchange of information, ideas or opinions is implied*		E
31	Looks up and makes eye contact when the teacher is nearby and addresses him/her by name *i.e. heeds the teacher; does not necessarily pay attention*		F
32	Sits reasonably still without talking or causing disturbance when the teacher makes a general request to all the children for their attention		G
33	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 *no more than a reminder is needed*		H
34	Shows curiosity and constructive interest when something out of the ordinary happens *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*		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 of 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

		Score	Column
1	Abnormal eye contact and gaze		V
2	Avoids, rejects or becomes upset when faced with a new and unfamiliar task, or a difficult or competitive situation		R
3	Variable in mood; sometimes seeks and responds to affectionate contact with the adult, at other times rejects or avoids		W
4	Oblivious of people and events; doesn't relate; is 'out of contact and can't be reached'		Q
5	Uncontrolled and unpredictable emotional outburst or eruptions that release and relieve pent-up and endured anger or distress		X
6	Inappropriate noises or remarks, or patterns of behaviour, that are bizarre fragments of no obvious relevance		T
7	Erupts into temper, rage or violence when thwarted, frustrated, criticised or touched; the 'trigger' is immediate and specific		Y
8	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		S
9	Always has to be first, or the best, or have the most attention or get immediate attention		Z
10	Adopts stratagems to gain and maintain close physical contact with the adult		U
11	Lacks trust in the adults' intentions and is wary of what they might do; avoids contact, and readily shows fear		V
12	Self-conscious and easily rebuffed, and hypersensitive to disapproval or the regard in which s/he is held by others		R
13	Contrary in behaviour; sometimes helpful, co-operative and compliant, at other times stubborn, obstinate and resistive, or unheeding		W
14	Repetitively pursues a limited work or play activity which does not progress		Q
15	Spoils, destroys, or otherwise negates the achievement or success s/he has worked for and values		X
16	Gives uninhibited expression to boisterous and noisy behaviour; is not influenced by normal social constraints and expectations		T
17	Reacts defensively even when there is no real threat; is evasive, blames others, finds excuses or denies		Y
18	Over-reacts to affection, attention or praise; gets very excited and may become out of control		S
19	Desperately craves affection, approval and reassurance, but doubts and questions the regard shown; seeks it repeatedly but remains insecure		U

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20	Can't wait for his/her turn or something s/he wants; plunges in or grabs		Z
21	Functions and relates to others minimally, and resists or erupts when attempts are made to engage him/her further		V
22	Self-disparaging and self-demeaning		R
23	Attention-seeking in a bid for recognition or admiration		W
24	Disparaging attitude to other children; is critical and contemptuous		Y
25	Listless and aimless; lacks motivation and functions only with direct and continuing support or pressure		Q
26	Sulks when disapproval is shown, or when attention is withdrawn, or when thwarted		X
27	'Is into everything'; shows fleeting interest, but doesn't attend to anything for long		T
28	Remembers a real or imagined offence, bears a grudge and determinedly takes his/her revenge		Y
29	Clings tenaciously to inconsequential objects and resists having them taken away		S
30	Sullen, resentful, and negative in general attitude and mood		V
31	Can't tolerate even a slight imperfection in his/her work and is upset or angry if s/he can't put it right		W
32	Feels persecuted; imagines that others are against him/her, and complains of being 'got at' and left out		X
33	Restless and erratic; behaviour is without purposeful sequence, continuity and direction		T
34	Determinedly dominates or persecutes by bullying, intimidation, or the use of force		Y

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

nurture

Appendix 10: Parent Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Pre-Intervention

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

P 2-4

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour over the last six months.

Child's Name .... Male/Female

Date of Birth...

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
Considerate of other people's feelings	☐	☐	☐
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	☐	☐	☐
Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	☐	☐	☐
Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers	☐	☐	☐
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	☐	☐	☐
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	☐	☐	☐
Many worries, often seems worried	☐	☐	☐
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	☐	☐	☐
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	☐	☐	☐
Has at least one good friend	☐	☐	☐
Often fights with other children or bullies them	☐	☐	☐
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	☐	☐	☐
Generally liked by other children	☐	☐	☐
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	☐	☐	☐
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	☐	☐	☐
Kind to younger children	☐	☐	☐
Often argumentative with adults	☐	☐	☐
Picked on or bullied by other children	☐	☐	☐
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)	☐	☐	☐
Can stop and think things out before acting	☐	☐	☐
Can be spiteful to others	☐	☐	☐
Gets on better with adults than with other children	☐	☐	☐
Many fears, easily scared	☐	☐	☐
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	☐	☐	☐

Do you have any other comments or concerns?

Please turn over - there are a few more questions on the other side

Overall, do you think that your child has difficulties in one or more of the following areas: emotions, concentration, behaviour or being able to get on with other people?

	No	Yes- minor difficulties	Yes- definite difficulties	Yes- severe difficulties
	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you have answered "Yes", please answer the following questions about these difficulties:

• How long have these difficulties been present?

	Less than a month	1-5 months	6-12 months	Over a year
	☐	☐	☐	☐

• Do the difficulties upset or distress your child?

	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
	☐	☐	☐	☐

• Do the difficulties interfere with your child's everyday life in the following areas?

	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
HOME LIFE	☐	☐	☐	☐
FRIENDSHIPS	☐	☐	☐	☐
LEARNING	☐	☐	☐	☐
LEISURE ACTIVITIES	☐	☐	☐	☐

• Do the difficulties put a burden on you or the family as a whole?

	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
	☐	☐	☐	☐

Signature ....   Date ....

Mother/Father/Other (please specify:)

Thank you very much for your help

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Appendix 11: Parent Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Post-Intervention

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

P 2-4
FOLLOW-UP

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour **over the last month**.

Child's Name .... Male/Female

Date of Birth...

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
Considerate of other people's feelings	☐	☐	☐
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	☐	☐	☐
Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	☐	☐	☐
Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers	☐	☐	☐
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	☐	☐	☐
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	☐	☐	☐
Many worries, often seems worried	☐	☐	☐
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	☐	☐	☐
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	☐	☐	☐
Has at least one good friend	☐	☐	☐
Often fights with other children or bullies them	☐	☐	☐
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	☐	☐	☐
Generally liked by other children	☐	☐	☐
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	☐	☐	☐
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	☐	☐	☐
Kind to younger children	☐	☐	☐
Often argumentative with adults	☐	☐	☐
Picked on or bullied by other children	☐	☐	☐
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)	☐	☐	☐
Can stop and think things out before acting	☐	☐	☐
Can be spiteful to others	☐	☐	☐
Gets on better with adults than with other children	☐	☐	☐
Many fears, easily scared	☐	☐	☐
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	☐	☐	☐

Do you have any other comments or concerns?

Please turn over - there are a few more questions on the other side

Since coming to the clinic, are your child's problems:

Much worse	A bit worse	About the same	A bit better	Much better
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Has coming to the clinic been helpful in other ways, e.g. providing information or making the problems more bearable?

Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
☐	☐	☐	☐

Over the last month, has your child had difficulties in one or more of the following areas: emotions, concentration, behaviour or being able to get on with other people?

No	Yes- minor difficulties	Yes- definite difficulties	Yes- severe difficulties
☐	☐	☐	☐

If you have answered "Yes", please answer the following questions about these difficulties:

• Do the difficulties upset or distress your child?

Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
☐	☐	☐	☐

• Do the difficulties interfere with your child's everyday life in the following areas?

	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
HOME LIFE	☐	☐	☐	☐
FRIENDSHIPS	☐	☐	☐	☐
LEARNING	☐	☐	☐	☐
LEISURE ACTIVITIES	☐	☐	☐	☐

• Do the difficulties put a burden on you or the family as a whole?

Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
☐	☐	☐	☐

Signature .... Date ....

Mother/Father/Other (please specify:)

Thank you very much for your help

Appendix 12: The Nurture Room Photographs

Appendix 13: Nurture Group Newsletter

Nurture News

Welcome!

February 2020

Welcome to our first Nurture Group newsletter. We want to keep you updated on all we have been doing in our group so far!

Getting Along

We have been getting to know each other and talking a lot about how to be a good friend. We talked about how important it is to listen to each other, take turns, share and to use kind words.

Resilience

We have also been learning all about different feelings and what it means to be resilient.

Being resilient means that we can keep calm when we are feeling upset or worried.

We can keep calm and help ourselves to get back on track by:

- Finding something fun to do
- Talking to a grown up
- Taking three deep breaths

Valentine's Day

We celebrated Valentine's Day by baking delicious chocolate Rice Krispie buns! Valentine's Day can also be a day when we say thank you to the people around us for being kind, being our friends or taking care of us.

Page 1

Yoga and Meditation

We have yoga and meditation time every week. This time helps us to concentrate on our breathing and our thoughts and feelings.

We talked about how our feelings sometimes make us act or behave in different ways. Sometimes certain feelings are stronger and that's ok. It's ok to feel different feelings at different times and there are ways that we can calm ourselves down.

Here are some examples of what we have done so far in case you would like to try them at home! All are available on YouTube.

Be the pond:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf5K3pP2IUQ&t=10s

The Owl and the Guard Dog:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=so8QN9an3t8&t=273s

Beat the Nerves:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJNOsvTnR1k&t=262s

If you have any questions or would like to get in contact with me, please do not hesitate to contact reception in order to make an appointment for a meeting or phone call! ☺

Page 2

Resilience

We have been learning about 'Resilience' in Nurture Group.

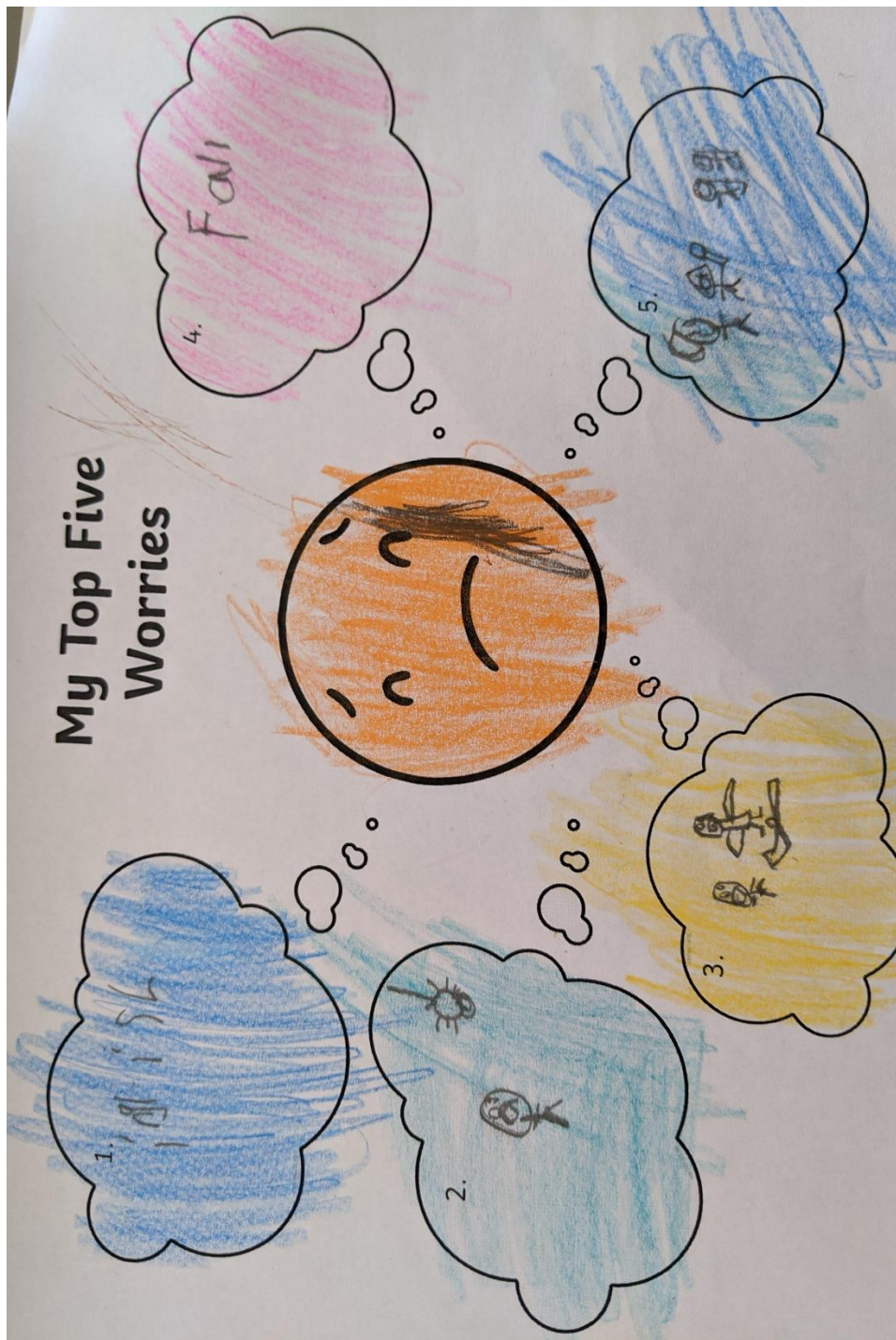Resilience means calming down when you are very upset or worried.

When we are worried or upset, we can calm ourselves down by:

- Finding something fun to do
- Talking to a grown up
- Taking three deep breaths

Can you think of a time when you were resilient and kept calm? Draw a picture or write about it in the box.

Appendix 14: Sample Drawing Child 2

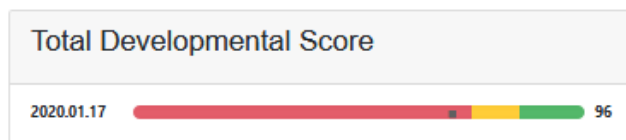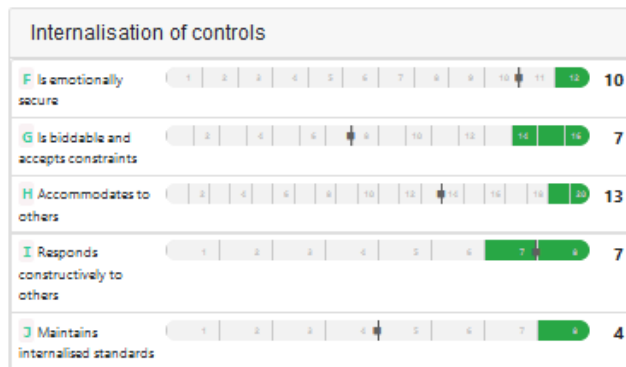31/1/20 Child 2 Speaking about their drawing:

Researcher: Would you like to tell me about your drawing?

Child 2: These are my worries. English, it's really hard to write. Falling. Spiders and Bats. Talking in front of everybody and making a mistake.
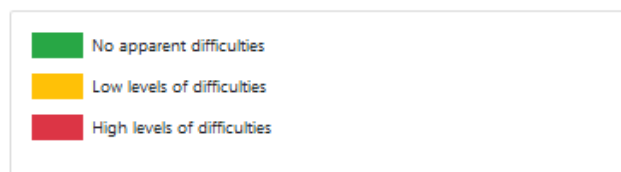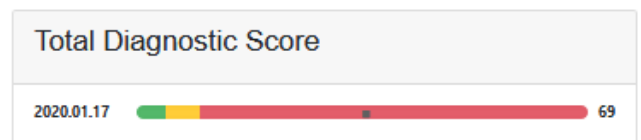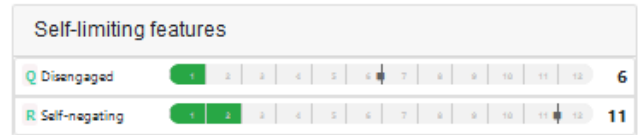
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Developmental

Organisation of experience

		Score
A Gives purposeful attention		14
B Participates constructively		8
C Connects up experiences		12
D Shows insightful involvement		18
E Engages cognitively with peers		3

Internalisation of controls

		Score
F Is emotionally secure		10
G Is biddable and accepts constraints		7
H Accommodates to others		13
I Responds constructively to others		7
J Maintains internalised standards		4

Diagnostic

Self-limiting features

		Score
Q Disengaged		6
R Self-negating		11

Undeveloped behaviour

		Score
S Makes undifferentiated attachments		0
T Shows inconsequential behaviour		11
U Craves attachment, reassurance		4

Unsupported development

		Score
V Avoids/rejects attachment		1
W Has undeveloped/insecure sense of self		9
X Shows negativism towards self		12
Y Shows negativism towards others		8
Z Wants, grabs, disregarding others		7

Total Developmental Score

	Score
2020.01.17	96

Total Diagnostic Score

	Score
2020.01.17	69

- 🟩 No apparent difficulties
- 🟨 Low levels of difficulties
- 🟥 High levels of difficulties

According to the Boxall Profile Online Guide, the green area indicates the range of average scores obtained from a sample of competently functioning children (CFC). The data from the child assessed is indicated by a marker (Nurtureuk, 2019).

Appendix 16: Extract from Individual Child Interviews

17/1/20

My Thoughts About School
Interview with Child 1

Researcher: Is there anything you don't like about yard?

Child 1: People hurt me

Researcher: Ok, I am happy during lunchtimes when … so what makes you happy on the yard? Or it could in the classroom either?

Child 1: When I get to play with friends

Researcher: Yeah, what if we gave you something to help with counting, is there anything that you find helpful with maths?

Child 1: Eeh, colouring.

Researcher: Ok, so you think if you did something that was art and maths together, do you think that might help?

Child 1: Nod

Researcher: In the classroom, is there any time that you feel happy because of what teacher did?

Child 1: Nod

Researcher: Can you tell me about one of those times?

Child 1: To let us colour, to let us do art.

Researcher: Ok, and my last question is about the group that we are going to have on Fridays, so it's called the Nurture Group.

Child 1: The Nurture Group.

Researcher: Yep, and what do you hope to learn in the Nurture Group?

Child 1: How to help people out?

Researcher: How you can help other people?

Child 1: Nod

17/1/20

<div align="center">

My Thoughts About School
Interview with Child 2
Location: Meeting/Nurture Room

</div>

Researcher: Ok, the things I don't like about school are…what do you not like about school?

Child 2: Um, bad news?

Researcher: Bad news? Ok, what do you mean by that?

Child 2: Like when someone gets hurt or something

Researcher: Ok

Child 2: And fighting

Researcher: And you don't like fighting. When does fighting happen?

Child 2: Em usually 6 times a day

Researcher: Really? Where?

Child 2: On yard. Usually 6 times a day on yard.

Researcher: And what happens?

Child 2: Some people on yard just say let's play and some people say no let's play the thing we played yesterday, and they just start hitting each other and you know.

Researcher: And what about in the classroom, is there anything you find hard there?

Child 2: Usually people, you know, people, I don't know, people talk on me for no reason.

Researcher: Ok, and you find that difficult. Does that make you upset?

Child 2: No not really, kind of angry.

Researcher: I am happy at lunchtimes when …

Child 2: Em, when teacher puts something on the board when its lunchtime. When I'm playing on yard safely.

Child 2: Very safely. I do not like getting hurt.

Researcher: And do you get hurt often?

Child 2: No. When I get hurt, I get cheesy.

Researcher: What do you mean by "cheesy"?

Child 2: Angry.

Researcher: Is there anything else you need help with at school? Maybe something on the yard?

Child 2: Maths! No on the yard, people get hurt or when I get hurt.

Researcher: You need help when you're hurt

Child 2: Mm you actually need help when you're hurt

Researcher: Alright, teachers in this school can help me by.. So how can teachers help you?

Child 2: Mm help you learn, help you take care of yourself and help you feel better. Those are all the things I can think about, nothing else.

Researcher: Do you ever get into trouble at school?

Child 2: Yep

Researcher: You do?

Child 2: Yeah

Researcher: When?

Child 2: Em usually two times

Researcher: For what?

Child 2: For like getting mad and then thinking about doing some things, because I don't do that anymore, that was in like senior and junior infants

Researcher: When you were in junior infants you used to think about doing bad things?

Child 2: Uhuh

Researcher: OK

Child 2: Because I don't really understand about the school seeing as I was in senior infants

Researcher: You don't do that anymore though, or do you?

Child 2: I don't do that anymore. Since I transferred to this school I never had friends, and then N came, and then N.

Researcher: Any other rewards? Do you have any others in class? Do you know what I mean, like DOJOs or stickers or maybe extra time at something?

Child 2: Usually go out.

Researcher: Going outside? That' s a good one,

Child 2: Because I usually go outside.

Researcher: And what do you like to do outside?

Child 2: Play. And cycle.

Researcher: We've just three more questions and then we're all finished.

Child 2: Oh, ok, and then we'll play a game.

Researcher: You'd like to play a game after this?

Child 2: Yeah.

Researcher: Ok. The things that I would like to change are, is there anything about school that you would like to change?

Child 2: For people to be stop breaking the rules and stop punching hurting each other, that's all I want to change. But nothing can change that right?

Researcher: What do you think we should do then?

Child 2: Tell teacher, and then think if it was an accident or on purpose.

Researcher: Ok, so you'd take to teacher and see was it an accident or done on purpose.

Child 2: Yeah and if it was on purpose, you will get in trouble, if its either and accident you wont. You'll miss, only miss 5 minutes off yard if it's a accident and if it's on purpose, you lose, actually the whole of it. Because I only missed if for 5 minutes my first time.

Researcher: And do you think that would help to stop people hurting each other?

Child 2: Yeah, because when I'm around, people don't really play with me that much and I ask them to play and then I end up getting hurt.

Researcher: Is there anything else you think that Nurture Group might help you with?

Child 2: Emm.

Researcher: Or that you hope it will help you with?

Child 2: I hope it'll help me, em, learn how to stop, learn how to mind my business.

Researcher: What do you mean by that?

Child 2: Because whenever someone gets hurt, and I ask what happened and I try to help them some people say go away, because they don't really want me to help. So, I need to learn to mind my business. But if its someone in my class and they're my friend, and they want me to help them, then, then, help.

My Thoughts About School
Interview with Child 3
Location: Piano/Support Room

*Used pictures and gestures mainly to communicate, answered using words very rarely

Researcher: So, these are the things that I like…

Child 3: *1:56 Points to picture*

Researcher: You like colouring. Any other things you like to do at school?

Child 3: *Nod*

Researcher: Yeah? You show me all the things you like to do.

Child 3: *2:21 Points to picture*

Researcher: Drawing, ok, we'll pop that one up here so too. Any others?

Child 3: *2:32 Points to picture*

Researcher: Painting. Very good.

Child 3: *2:53 Points to picture*

Researcher: Aistear? Yeah, Aistear is fun (whisper).

Child 3: *3:25 Points to picture*

Researcher: Writing? Ok great. (whisper)

Child 3: *3:45 Points to picture*

Researcher: Going outside? Like at breaktime?

Child 3: *Nod*

Researcher: Great.

Child 3: *4:09 Points to picture*

Researcher: Storytime?

Child 3: *4:23 Points to picture*

Researcher: Cutting and gluing? Yeah, I like that too.

Child 3: *4:52 Points to picture*

Researcher: Lunchtime.

Child 3: *5:10 Points to picture*

Researcher: Oh and dress up time?

Child 3: *Pause until 5:43*

Researcher: Is that everything?

Child 3: *Nod*

Researcher: So, your next question is, I am happy in class when…you can use some of these cards too if you want (activity cards), or you can use these ones (action cards).

Researcher: So, I'm happy in class when…

Child 3: *20:18 Points to picture*

Researcher: You're drawing and colouring? Ok, are there any other times that you're happy? If not that's ok, but if there are, you can show me.

Researcher: Ok, now, my teacher would describe me as…what would teacher say about you? Will we use some of the feeling cards? Would that help?

Child 3: Happy. (32:50)

Researcher: Happy. Anything else?

Child 3: *Shake head*

Researcher: That's the main thing teacher would say? Super. Ok what would mammy say? Mammy and daddy, what would they say? You can use your words as well.

Child 3: *35:09 Points to picture*

Researcher: Mammy and Daddy say you like to play, that you're playful, you like to play. What else would they say?

Child 3: *35:55 Points to picture*

Researcher: You're chatty at home, are you? You're chatty.

Researcher: Is there anything that teacher does that makes you feel unhappy?

Researcher: Yes or no is fine.

Researcher: How about we say, this hand is yes, this hand is no. So, is there anything teacher does that makes you unhappy? Yes (I point to left hand), no (I point to right hand).

Researcher: Do you want to point to one?

Child 3: *Points to 'yes' (40:47)*

Researcher: Yes? That's ok. Do you want to talk about it?

Child 3: *Shake head*

Researcher: What does teacher do that makes you feel happy. Will we have a look at this? If you don't want to say you can just point.

Child 3: *44:29 Points to picture*

Researcher: When teacher plays with you? Yeah? Ok. So, when teacher plays.

Researcher: Ok, the things that I would like to change are…

Researcher: Do you want some of the cards?

Child 3: *Nod*

Child 3: *Points to actions*

Researcher: Ok the actions cards. Running, hopping, talking, writing and drawing, playing, walking and chatting, painting, singing, standing, talking, writing, reading, playing with

friends, drinking, tidy up, yawning, crying, sleeping, eating and jumping. Ok is there

anything, now, is there anything that you would like to change?

Child 3: *Points to talking (7:33)*

23/1/20

<div align="center">

My Thoughts About School
Interview with Child 4
Location: Meeting/Nurture Room

</div>

*Used pictures and gestures to communicate

Researcher: Ok so Child 4 so you can use your words or the pictures. Can you tell me, what

are the things you like best about school?

Researcher: Playdough, great. Anymore?

Researcher: Writing? Ok. Good girl, anything else?

Researcher: I love drawing too.

Researcher: Food dudes?

Child 4: *Nod*

Researcher: Ok cutting, and sticking, great. Is that everything?

Child 4: *Nod*

Researcher: Now, my next question is. Things that I'm good at, so the things that you think

you do really well in school. You can just point to them.

Points to pictures for each response

Researcher: Very good, are you very neat at cutting? Good girl. Anything else that you do

well at school?

Researcher: Story time? You like that? You do good listening to teacher at that time? Good girl. Is there anything else that you are good at, at school?

Researcher: Writing, very good.

Researcher: Playdough.

Researcher: And PE. Good girl. Is that everything?

Child 4: *Nod*

Researcher: Now ok, let's see. My teacher would describe me as…What would teacher say? That you like to play? *Points to card* You're playful?

Child 4: *Nod*

Researcher: Would teacher say anything else?

Researcher: That you're good at writing? Great!

Researcher: Is that everything?

Child 4: *Nod*

Researcher: Ok

Researcher: What would your mam and dad say? What would they say about child 4? Would they say you're a good friend, you're helpful, you're playful, good at writing, good at reading, you're a bit sleepy, you're a bit chatty, that you might play with your friends, that you're helpful.

Researcher: Mum and dad would say you're helpful?

Child 4: *Nod*

Researcher: Would they say anything else?

Researcher: That you like to chat?

Child 4: *Nod*

Researcher: Does teacher ever make you feel unhappy. Does teacher ever make you feel sad?

Child 4: *Shake head*

Researcher: No? ok.

Researcher: Do you ever make teacher feel sad?

Child 4: *Shake head*

Researcher: Is there anything you think would make a really good prize?

Researcher: Get to dress up? Yeah that'd be a good prize. Is there anything else you think would be really fun? Or anything you just think you might like to get?

Researcher: Drawing time?

Child 4: *Nod*

17/1/20

<div align="center">

My Thoughts About School
Interview with Child 5
Location: Meeting/Nurture Room

</div>

Researcher: Ok Child 5, so out first questions, the things I like best at school, are:

Child 5: I like playing with my friends, doing art, and I also kind of like doing homework.

Researcher: Ok, the things I don't like about school are:

Child 5: Well sometimes people bully me.

Researcher: Ok

Child 5: Like people shout at me

Researcher: Ok and you say sometimes people bully you, does that happen in the classroom, does it happen in yard time?

Child 5: Sometimes it happens at both.

Researcher: Is there anything else you find hard sometimes?

Child 5: Getting along with people I don't like that much.

Researcher: OK. I am happy in class when:

Child 5: When it's lunchtime.

Researcher: When it's lunchtime! What do you like about lunch time?

Child 5: That I get to chat.

Researcher: Ok. Alright our next question. I am happy during break and lunchtimes when:

Child 5: When I'm with my friends. Me and my friends sit beside each other.

Researcher: Your friends are really important to you, are they?

Child 5: Yeah

Researcher: Is there anything else about break and lunchtimes that you like?

Child 5: I like playing with my friends.

Researcher: And does teacher ever do anything that makes you feel unhappy?

Child 5: Once.

Researcher: Once? OK, can you tell me about that time?

Child 5: Once I got moved seats from my friends but then I got to sit beside them again.

Researcher: So, if a teacher moved you away from you friend, that would make you sad? Ok.

Researcher: OK, the things my teacher does that makes me feel happy: So, is there anything teacher does that makes you feel extra happy?

Child 5: Like when she says we're going to do Art.

Researcher: You're happy to answer them for me? You're doing great. Now, are there any things about school or class or yard, that would like to change. Have a little time to think about that, if you'd like more time that's fine. Can you think of anything?

Child 5: I'd like to stay on our yard.

Researcher: The middle yard?

Difficult to hear

Researcher: Oh you like the yard you're on now, you don't want to go back to the middle yard? what was it about the middle yard that you didn't like?

Child 5: Just people that I didn't like.

Researcher: What do you hope to learn in Nurture Group? Is there anything you hope to learn?

Child 5: How to be a better friend.

Researcher: How to be a better friend?

Child 5: How to calm down easier.

Researcher: Ok, so how to be a better friend, and how to calm down easier. Great, and that's everything is it?

Child 5: Yeah

Appendix 17: Nurture Journal Instructions

<u>**Nurture Journal**</u>

In order for me to get to know your child better, here is a journal for you to write any ideas you might have, or things you notice in your child while attending Nurture Group.

Your child spends most of their time with you. You know them best.

Make a note if you notice anything in terms of your child's:

-**behaviour**

-emotions

-how they talk with siblings/friends/other family members

-even if a topic of interest comes up in conversation, no matter how small

Any information at all is helpful.

Contact me at any time should you wish to talk about anything.
I will collect journals when the sessions have finished.

Your contribution is welcomed and greatly appreciated,
Thank you,
S. Kavanagh
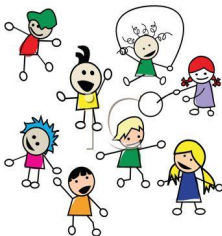
<u>6/4/20</u>

Child 1: Learning Support Teacher

As the weeks progressed he did express excitement when I would remind him that he would be going the next day. When he saw that I had stuck a copy of the Nurture Room newsletter up on my notice board, he was keen to chat about what was on it and talk about what happens in there. He said that I would like it in there as "It is calm and relaxing and you talk a lot about stuff."

When I asked him if he liked the Nurture Room he was very positive about it and asked a number of times would I join him there on a Friday. I also asked him about how the Nurture Room might be helping him or helping him learn, he said it made him feel calm and not be so mad all the time.

I also feel we made some progress during this time in relation to AB following his timetable and working with his SNA one-to-one on appropriately levelled materials. He worked with his SNA most mornings (without too much protesting!). Also, he was usually willing to leave the classroom to work with me individually, something that has been an ongoing challenge.

<u>31/3/20</u>

Child 1: Mainstream Class Teacher

He is able to participate in approx. 2/3 whole class lessons per day with good engagement and minimal disruption. Appears interested and makes valuable and insightful contributions. This was not the case in the first term so great to see an improvement.

Child 1 has had some distressing outbursts in recent months. He has become increasingly self-deprecating and self-injurious during these outbursts (we have been noticing this change since Christmas). That said, he appears to be better equipped to discuss his feelings than he was in Term 1. When he is calm he has been able to label his feelings, explain a little about the reasons for these feelings and talk about what he and we could do differently next time. We feel he has engaged in 1:1 work with SNA and SEN teacher more often in the last few months.

<u>2/4/20</u>

Child 2: Mainstream Class Teacher

I found Child 2 to be more calm and relaxed after coming from the nurture group sessions. On yard, he seems to be playing with peers more often. He has been observed playing games with children in the class. This is different for this child as it would have been more typical of him to walk around alone during yard time looking for an adults attention.

While Child 2 has been observed to be more calm and at ease in class post sessions. He often still may approach an adult about not feeling well or with a bodily aliment such as a sore head. However, this is particularly prevalent in yard. While Child 2 may still approach an adult about this, I would say it is happening far less often in class than it was prior to his nurture group sessions.

Since attending the nurture group sessions to date, I have noticed that Child 2 has struck up a friendship with another child at his table. This is different to how I usually see him interact with peers in class, where he can often seem disengaged and not able to sustain relationships with others for a long period of time. I've observed him playing with this child during golden time and appearing genuinely happy going by the body language and conversations I observed. I feel post sessions Child 2 is more willing to approach adults to tell them about other things aside from having a sore body part or an issue with his work. He appears to be more open to discuss what he learned about in a session and is able to state how he is feeling more accurately. I've heard him reply- "I'm feeling good".

Child 2 has initiated conversations with me about his sessions. He came up to me one day to tell me about worries and what they may feel like and how there are different things to help him when his body may be showing him he has a worry. He was showing me his breathing technique running over his fingers on his hand, that he must have engaged in while in the nurture group. For this particular child, I felt like this was a very positive moment to come out of his sessions! His conversations with adults usually revolve around having a bodily pain or issue of some sort, so this conversation was different to how the child would usually present in school.

I noticed Child 2 being particularly animated and excited when showing me the Nurture Group Newsletter. He could not wait for me to read it and to show it in front of the boys and girls in class. It was a very happy moment for him!

2/4/20

Child 3: Mainstream Co-Teacher 1

Child 3's posture improved, she sat with her shoulders back, head up and looked at people more than before. Previously she would have been hunched over with her head always down trying to avoid looking at anyone.

Previously Child 3 would not ask for or go look for items she needed to complete a task like a pencil or copy. Since participating in the Nurture group she is going to get what she needs, which is amazing

Her mood seems better, a little less anxious than normal. Generally smiling more.

7/4/20

Child 3: Mainstream Co-Teacher 2

She has been trying to participate more and engage more. She has answered more questions in a small group, 1:1 and even given one word answers during whole class discussions. Also her response time has gotten quicker. She used to take a long time to answer, now she is keener to let you know that she knows the answer.

I have noticed that she appears happier in general, smiling and even laughing more often. This is very unusual because it's something I was very concerned about before as she very rarely smiled or joked.

2/4/20

Child 4: Mainstream Class Teacher

It has been evident that Child 4 really enjoys attending the nurture group sessions. Her expressions show a lot of excitement however, we have not noticed any significant changes in her behaviour in the classroom or on the yard. She continues to play with the same friend on yard every day where they communicate through Polish.

137

2/4/20

Child 5: Mainstream Class Teacher

Observed Child 5 playing happily with a group of friends in yard on several occasions. While he has had some friendships since the start of the year, his shy nature means that he is often on the periphery of the 'fun'. In recent weeks he has appeared to be more involved and confident in his play. I have observed Child 5 smiling more in class (this is not typical – he is usually quite serious at all times) and interacting with the children close to him.

Child 5 became distressed on a few occasions in class due to noise level in the room. This is a typical reaction for Child 5. However, he was notably quicker to calm himself with little or no intervention from me.

Child 5 still uses a very quiet voice when speaking to others (myself, other adults and peers). However, on one occasion he volunteered to do a short presentation in Irish at the top of the class. His voice was quiet but he was certainly projecting more than usual and I didn't need to stand close to him and repeat his contribution for the rest of the class as I often do.

6/4/20

Child 5: Learning Support Teacher

Actually, thinking about it now, he was very vocal in all our sessions for the past while - I had put it down to progression with reading that he was understanding the texts, but maybe it was a confidence thing. He was always really interested and engaged in the texts, willing and eager to answer questions and for the most part gave me great insights and answers in response to texts read. His volume was still low, when speaking and reading aloud but he definitely presented as a more active participant in guided reading group.

Appendix 19: Sample Reflective Questions for Reflection Journal

Taken from McNiff (2002)
- What issue am I interested in researching?

- Why do I want to research this issue?

- What kind of evidence can I gather to show why I am interested in this issue?

- What can I do? What will I do?

- What kind of evidence can I gather to show that I am having an influence?

- How can I explain that influence?

- How can I ensure that any judgements I might make are reasonably fair and accurate?

- How will I change my practice in the light of my evaluation?

Values Statement Questions from Lecture Handout, Sullivan et al. (2019)

- What do I value in teaching at the moment?

- What is my area of interest?

- What action will I take?

Taken from Sullivan et al. (2016: 41)

- When do you feel career satisfaction?

- What have been the 'best' times of your teaching career and why?

- What factors might make you feel discontented and why?

- What, are the constraints that might hold me back from engaging in critically reflective practice?

- Can I think of an area in my practice where I am experiencing myself as a 'living contradiction'?

Taken from Noddings (2003: 7)

- What is the aim of Education?

- Who does it benefit? The child or the economy?

Further self-composed questions related directly to my study.

- What is the purpose of education? What am I trying to achieve as a teacher?

- What methodologies will I use?

- Will I have time to implement this?

- Will the school agree?

- What paperwork will be involved?

- Where, when and how often will intervention take place?

- What action can I take to rehabilitate this child's image?

- How can they come to connect this learning with real life experience?

- What is this behaviour contributing?

- What role did I play in this situation?

- What action can I take next?

- How can I provide opportunities for them to practice this skill?

- How can I help them to communicate without putting pressure on them? What other methods can I use?

- What is the role of the parent? What is the role of the teacher? How can these roles be reconciled and enhanced?

- How will I know when this is achieved?

- How have I contributed to this improvement?

2. Reflective Writing: The Reflective Cycle (Gibbs 1988)

Gibbs' reflective cycle encourages you to think systematically about the phases of an experience or activity and you should use all the headings to structure your reflection.

Description: Describe the event in detail and consider: - - where it happened? - - who was involved? - - what were you doing? - - what were others doing? - - what happened? - - what was your part in the event? - - what part did others play? - - what was the outcome?	Feelings and (thoughts): Self-awareness – *what was going on for you?* - how were you feeling when the event began? - what were you thinking about at the time? - how did it make you feel? - how did other people make you feel? - how did you feel about the outcome? - what do you think about it now?
Evaluation: Here you make a judgement about what happened - What was good about the experience – what went well? - What was bad about the experience - what did not go well?	Analysis: Explore each part of the event - What went well? - What did you do well? - What did others do well? - What went wrong or did not turn out as it should have? - In what way did you contribute to this? - In what way did others contribute to this?
Conclusion: Using the information gained from the previous 4 stages – consider the insights you have gained: - about how *your* behaviour contributed to the outcome - about how *others'* behaviour contributed to the outcome - and also consider – what you might have done differently?	Action Plan: Now consider that if you were to encounter this or a similar event in the future – - What would you do? - Would you act differently? - Would you fall into the same pattern of behaviour?

Appendix 20: Nurture Group Intervention Schedule

Week	Date	Actions	Tools
Nurture Group Intervention Schedule			
Week1 & 2	6th -15th January 2020	**Cycle 1:** -Meet with class teachers -Meet with parents and children, Information sheets provided -Collect consent and assent -Pre-Intervention Questionnaire issued to parents	Goodman's SDQ Nurture Journal
Week 3	15th-21st January 2020	-Individual Child interviews -Boxall Profiles with Class Teachers -Prepare Nurture Room	Thoughts About School Boxall Profile
Week 4	24th January 2020	**Cycle 2:** **Session 1** -Getting Along – Being a good friend -Turn taking -Good listening	Observation Story Discussion Drawing Meditation
Week 5	31st January 2020	**Session 2** -Recognise, name, describe emotions -Perspective taking	Observation Drama Yoga Meditation Discussion Game
Week 6	7th February 2020	**Session 3** -Resilience: calming strategies	Story Meditation Yoga Game
Week 7	14th February 2020	**Session 4**	Playdough

		-Resilience: calming strategies -My Worries	Drawing Discussion Meditation Games
Week 8	28th February 2020	**Session 5** -Confidence -Yes I can: Positive Self-Talk -Newsletter and worksheet	Story Discussion Meditation
Week 9	6th March 2020	**Session 6** -Confidence -Things I can do well -Setting Goals	Games Meditation Drawing
Week 10	13th March 2020	School Closures 12th March Total Weeks of Intervention: 6 weeks	

Appendix 21: Findings Table

Supporting Social Emotional Development in the Primary School Setting			
Data Set	**Amount**	**Result(s)**	**Other Relevant Info**
'Thoughts About School' Interview	5 participants	-Co-participant Likes: Autonomy, creativity, rules, play, friends -Self-Image: Home vs School -Co-participant Concerns: socialising – others telling on them, telling them to go away, getting hurt, confidence, safety -Communication: Conversation, picture exchange, writing, drawing, whisper/low volume • Themes arising: Creativity, play, fun, safety, self-image, friendship	• Challenge: English as an Additional Language (EAL) – at times was unclear if participants understood every question – mainly amongst participants who declined to speak and used alternative communication -picture exchange, writing • My practice: -how to incorporate more self-guided play and creativity into schedule -have materials available for alternative communication -strategies for getting along -strategies for developing confidence

SDQ Parent Questionnaire	5 respondents	-Shared descriptions of children: Kindness, empathy -Difficulties: Concerns around friendships, classroom learning, feelings of insecurity, awareness of difficulties, getting along, emotion, behaviour • Themes emerging: socialising, peers, safety/security	• EAL- Parents were distributed SDQs in English and Romanian, all SDQs were answered using the English version • Questionnaire response Lacks detail • Action: Examine further in interviews
Boxall Profile	5 profiles created	Common themes arising across profiles: Empathy, power, control, trust, security, self-worth, self-identity, self-defeating, anger, negative attributions to others, independence, teamwork, approval seeking, self-defence/protection, confidence, language, communication, solitary play • Themes emerging: self-worth, self-image, security, peers, confidence, communication and self-expression	• Completed with assistance of class teachers • Children demonstrate internalising and externalising behaviours • Many overlapping codes despite very different behaviours • Bowlby's Internalised Model: perception of peers • Action: how to be a good friend, turn taking, resilience and skills for keeping calm

Class Teacher Weekly Observations	8 respondents	-Difficulties: self-esteem in relation to academics, confidence is a concern -Signs of Improvement: participation, disruption, emotional expression, play with peers, independence, communication, self-regulation -Conversation with co-participants about the Nurture Group: calm, relaxing, time to talk, happiness, confidence, mood • Themes emerging: confidence, self-image, peers	• 7/8 Teachers observed at least some improvement in terms of behaviour/emotion/participation in mainstream setting • Child 4: little difference observed in mainstream other than in emotional expression before and after group • Critical friend: Perhaps value is in positive experience group provides and emotional expression it arouses
Validation Group Comments	5 respondents	-Difficulties: academic challenge, confidence, control, self-image, self-worth, friendship, seeking attention, avoiding attention -Improvement: facial expression, body language, emotional expression, social interaction, engagement, confidence, participation -Why? Security, consistency, familiarity, comfort, time to talk and be heard • Themes emerging: self image, self-worth, confidence, peers	• Identified possible triggers and observed improvement since joining NG • Happier, increased confidence, greater classroom participation and engagement, more confident socially • Suggestions why this could be the case
NG Observations	6 Sessions 24/1/20	**<u>Session 1</u>**: -patience, kindness -body posture, 3/5 co-participants low confidence -communication, mainly teacher led conversation, little co-participant engagement	• Observations mainly based on conversations during Nurture Group

		-C 3 – some-verbal communication during play only -C5 very low volume -confidence	• Session 1: researcher dominated, create more space for child voice- consider concept of power - Buber (1958): 'I-It' to 'I-Thou'
	31/1/20	**Session 2:** -family, relationships -C1 expressed anger but also empathy, kindness for others -C3 and C4 using picture exchange -'My Worries' worksheet: safety, comfort, attention, control, independence, choice, motivation	• Action: More opportunity for child voice -Critical Friend • More open and talkative as sessions progressed
	7/2/20	**Session 3:** -C3 using one word responses -communication, confidence, safety, comfort, control, -C1 and C2 more emotional expression, empathy, gave examples of emotional regulation -Favourite thing about Nurture Group: choice, motivation, solitary activities, creativity, imagination, image, trust, belonging, approval	• Most conversation during self-directed play and breakfast time – make more time for play • As sessions progress began linking Nurture Group topics to personal experience
	14/2/20	**Session 4:** -C5- very upset - fear of judgement of others, self-conscious, self-esteem, -C1, 2, 3, 5- gave examples of resilience - safety, trust, openness, contrast in settings, environment, -What makes us sad/angry/afraid: school subjects- demands, challenges -C1, 2, 5 – connecting story to self – self-conscious, comments by others	• Naming and describing emotions more • Greater confidence, appear more comfortable • More social participation in group activities and games as group progressed
	28/2/20	**Session 5:**	

		-C5 greater confidence, pride, shared positive emotional experience - familiarity, comfortable -C1- opportunity for self-regulation, emotional expression, control, comparison with others, self-esteem, confidence, self-image	• Relationship development: respect, equality
	6/3/20	**<u>Session 6:</u>** -Breakfast game: C3, 4 and 5 emotionally expressive, laughter, smiling, participation - belonging, safety, comfortable, communication, -Yoga- everyone participating -trust -Nurture group likes- breakfast, free play, me - responsibility, needs being met, familiarity, social opportunity, predictability, sensory, calm, solitary play -C1, 2, 3, 5: Confidence, sharing positive experiences of resilience and confidence: trust, honesty, emotional regulation, family, self-esteem, control	
		• Themes emerging: belonging, comfortable, safety, communication, free-play and creativity	
SDQ Parent Follow Up	5 respondents April 2020	-Shared descriptions of children: Kindness, empathy, self-control, safety, security, interaction with peers, many fears, dishonesty, awareness of difference -3/5 improvement in difficulties -2/5 same, no change -All agreed Nurture Group is helpful -Most (3/4) saw some difference in emotions/concentration/behaviour during this time	• Challenge: Questionnaire provides limited detail and perspective, lacks depth

		-¾ noted differences still cause distress for child -Still some interference in everyday life in areas of home, friendships, learning and leisure activities • Themes emerging: peers, security	
Home Nurture Journals	1 respondent 5/4/20	-Fun, happy, new friendships, play, story -Jobs- opportunity to help, responsibility -Self-expression: feelings, looked forward to it all week, comfortable -incorporated into play: Nurture Group with dolls -Nurture Group-providing opportunities for friendships and positive experience of school • Themes emerging: friendship, peers, self-directed play, breakfast	Challenge of communication with Parents -Journal -Newsletter -Email -Language • Consider power dynamics – language, social power – Bourdieu (1990) concept of Capital and Field
Home worksheets	0 returned	N/A	Required written response Challenge of communication and language Challenge of time, busy households
Drawings	5 31/1/20	My top 5 Worries: Speaking in front of others – ridicule, isolation amongst peers, rejection	• Most see themselves as a good friend and are capable of describing a good friend • Importance of friendships

			• Seeking connection • Often when they seek to help they are rejected – linked to interview
	6/3/20	Things I'm good at: All said being a good friend Themes emerging: peers, security, confidence	
Teacher Reflective Journal	14 Entries Selected overall	Potential themes emerging around: - **Communication**-Refusal to speak in school – alternative communication systems without pressuring child -**Behaviour** as communication, sense of control 9/10/19- X struggling with oral language- frustration getting message across 17/10/19- Bourdieu – habitus – determine behaviour -**Peers and Confidence:** 19/11/19: socialising, connecting with others 19/11/19: "She doesn't speak and she doesn't speak English" 17/9/19: arguments on yard – provide 10 minutes after break to discuss experiences as a group 12/11/19- meeting with mum –"Child 3 doesn't want others to look at her." 12/12/10- "They will look at me. He laughed." - **Reputations and self-image:** 11/9/19: child holding grudge against child from previous year 13/9/19: Upset parent – "That child has anger problems. He is violent."	• Gibbs (1988): The Reflective Cycle • Conflict in Practice: Subject time allocation, class size, rigid practice and timetabling

		Bowlby's Internalising Model	
		-**Power**: Teacher-Child relationship - My own behaviour, actions, emotions – reinforcing reputations 19/11/19- child speaking about another – "That's X, he's the bold boy. " 11/12/19 – X is bad, he's always in trouble 21/1/20- Interview with Child 3 – 'Does teacher do anything that upsets you' – nods yes, would not say any more -**Power/Trust/Culture** - Parent-Teacher Relationship 19/11/19- parent speaking about another child's behaviour: "What are you going to do about it?" 21/11/19 – parent meeting: "In Pakistan, responsibility of learning is 80% parents, 20% school."	