Exploring pupils’ perspectives on their interactions with peers and Teaching Assistants.

A mixed methods study of Key Stage 1 pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs in mainstream schooling.

(Volume 2 – Appendices)

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of the West of England, Bristol for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Arts, Creative Industries and Education,

University of the West of England, Bristol

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## Appendices

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Dear Head teacher,

I am writing to request your participation in a new research project, which seeks to look into the friendships of pupils with Special Educational Needs, focusing particularly on the pupils' own views.

The social lives of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools is an under-researched area and there exists very little work in which children are given the opportunity to speak for themselves about their own experiences. This study will both increase the knowledge base and make an important contribution by making sure pupil views about their own lives are heard within education research.

From a school's perspective this research project could help you to understand how your pupils with SEN are interacting with their peers and their feelings about these friendships; information that could help to inform support strategies for these pupils.

The project will involve a total of 10 pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs and are studying within a mainstream school. I will only need one pupil from each school. The research will involve me shadowing each pupil for one school week and recording his/her moment-by-moment interactions through observations. I will also conduct interviews with key stakeholders (e.g. teachers, TAs, SENCOs and parents) where possible. Later in the school year I will return for a single day to conduct an interview with the pupil.

I am aware of the sensitivities of carrying out this form of data collection. Please be assured that data gathered in your school would remain private and confidential. All data collected will be anonymised. Individual schools, staff and pupils will not be identified in any uses of the data. Finally, as this is a descriptive study capturing what happens in everyday circumstances, you and your staff would not be required to change any practice for the purposes of the visit.

At this stage, I am looking for schools who would be interested in taking part and have a suitable pupil that I could include. This study will focus on children under the age of 8 who have a statement of SEN and are receiving TA support. I am planning to conduct the research between April and July 2014, so you would also need to be happy with me coming into school on two occasions within these dates.

If you are interested in being part of this project, and feel you have a pupil that fits the description outlined above, please contact me at alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk or by phone on 07588499878.

If you agree to participate, I will then contact you to discuss the next stage of the project. If appropriate, I am happy to visit the school to meet with you and/or the pupil's parents to discuss any questions.

I very much hope that you will be able to support this research project and help to make a valuable contribution to what is currently known about the friendships of pupils with SEN.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Wren
PHD student, University of the West of England
**A2: Information sheet for parents (pilot study)**

**What is a pilot study?**
A pilot study is a small scale study carried out before a larger study to test out the methods chosen and ensure they are suitable.

**How is the pilot study different to the main study?**
In this case, the pilot study will only involve one child while the main study will involve several. I will still be undertaking observations followed by an interview. Participation is still voluntary and protocols regarding confidentiality will still be followed.

**Are there any increased risks related to taking part in a pilot study?**
The methods used will not have been tried on any other children, however (as described in the main information sheet) plans have been put in place to ensure my presence in school will not upset your child. It is also possible that the data collection tools I will be using will change throughout the pilot study, and it is hard to predict whether this could affect your child. School staff will be briefed to tell me if they feel my presence in the classroom is having any kind of negative impact on your child.

If you have any questions regarding this information, feel free to contact me:

Alison Wren  
**Address:** UWE Graduate School, Room 3E37, University of the West of England, Coldharbour Lane, Frenchay, Bristol, BS16 1QY  
**Email:** alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk  
**Phone:**

Date: 01/02/14
A3: Assent information (pilot study)

Pupil name:

Date:

Please circle the happy face if you agree and the sad face if you don’t agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alison has told me what the project is about</th>
<th>I understand that I can choose if I want to take part</th>
<th>I understand that I will be taking photographs in school and that I can have a copy if I want.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Happy Face] ![Sad Face]</td>
<td>![Happy Face] ![Sad Face]</td>
<td>![Happy Face] ![Sad Face]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I understand that I will be drawing some pictures and that I can have a copy if I want.</th>
<th>I know that my voice will be recorded today so that Alison can remember what I have said. I can listen to my voice on the recorder if I want.</th>
<th>I know that if I have any more questions I can ask.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Happy Face] ![Sad Face]</td>
<td>![Happy Face] ![Sad Face]</td>
<td>![Happy Face] ![Sad Face]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I understand that we can stop at any time if I want.</th>
<th>I am happy to take part in the project.</th>
<th>I am happy for my drawings and photographs to be used in reports in the future.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Happy Face] ![Sad Face]</td>
<td>![Happy Face] ![Sad Face]</td>
<td>![Happy Face] ![Sad Face]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signed by pupil: .......................................................

Signed by parent: ......................................................

234
A4: Information sheet for parents

PHD research project – investigating the friendships of primary school pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

This information sheet is designed to tell you about my project so you can understand why this research is being done and what it will involve for you and your child. Please take the time to read through this sheet carefully and to discuss it with others if you wish. Contact me if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Thank you.

What is the purpose of the project?

This study is focused on improving understanding about the friendships of pupils with a statement of SEN in mainstream primary schools. Very little research has been done about these pupils' social lives and even fewer studies which give pupils the chance to speak for themselves about their own experiences. This project aims to fill those gaps.

Why has your child been chosen?

My project will involve observation and interviews with children under the age of 8, who have a statement of SEN in mainstream primary schools. The school your child attends identified your child to me as they meet the criteria for inclusion in the project.

Does your child have to take part?

Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether or not you are happy for your child to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and a consent form to sign. Even once you have decided to be take part, you are still free to withdraw from the project at any point and without giving a reason.

What will happen to your child if they take part? What does your child have to do?

If you sign the consent form, then I will arrange a date to come in to school to observe your child. The observation will involve me being in the classroom / playground watching your child's
moment-by-moment interactions with their friends for one school week. My observation will be subtle and I will maintain a distance from your child (so as not to single them out). School staff will be briefed to make me aware if they feel the observation is causing any stress or changes in behaviour for your child.

On a second occasion, later in the school year, I will come into school to interview your child. Either you or another trusted adult will be present. After ensuring that they are happy to be interviewed, I will ask your child to take me on a tour of their school taking photographs using an instant camera. These photographs will be included in my thesis and may be included in other publications. Your child will not be able to be identified in any images used. I will then talk to your child about their school experience and about their friends while we complete a set of drawing tasks. I have interviewed young children, and those with SEN, before and am aware of the complexities of this sort of research. The drawings that your child completes will be included in my thesis and may be included in other publications. Your child will not be able to be identified from any drawings used.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I will receive personal information about your child through observations and interviews and from the school. This information will be anonymised prior to inclusion in the project and will be stored securely (a locked filing cabinet / password protected hard drive) in my home.

It is possible your child may find the research process stressful or upsetting. To counteract this, school staff will be briefed to make me aware if they have any concerns about your child’s reaction to my presence.

What if something goes wrong?

If you are unhappy about the project or would like to make a complaint about the research, you should contact my supervisor, Dr Jane Andrews. Her contact details are listed here:

Phone: 01173284186

Email: Jane.AndrewsEDU@uwe.ac.uk

Will your taking part in this study be kept confidential?

As previously explained, all personal information I receive will be kept in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected hard drive. Data included in the study will be anonymised and pseudonyms will be used for pupil and school – this means all names and addresses will be removed so that you/your child could not be recognised from it.
What will happen to the results of the research project?

The data collected during this project will form the basis of my PHD thesis, due to be submitted in 2015. Results may also be used for presentations at conferences or submissions to peer-reviewed journals. Written feedback about the results of the project (across all cases, not specific to particular children) will be sent to schools and to parents following the completion of the project.

As previously stated neither you nor your child will be identified in any report or publication.

Who is organising / funding the project?

I am a fully funded PHD student at the University of the West of England. My studentship is the result of a research proposal I submitted in 2012.

Contact details for further information

If you need to contact me, my details are as follows:

Alison Wren
Address: UWE Graduate School, Room 3E37, University of the West of England, Coldharbour Lane, Frenchay, Bristol, BS16 1QY
Email: alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk
Phone: 07588499878

Thank you again for considering consenting to your child taking part in this project, feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns. I very much hope that you will be able to support this research project and help to make a valuable contribution to what is currently known about the friendships of pupils with SEN.

Date: 04/06/14
Dear Parent/Carer,

Thank you for agreeing to your child participating in my research project.

As you will know, this research study involves me, a PHD student from the University of the West of England, observing your child over the course of a school week, and with your permission, carrying out a short informal interview with you and with your child at a time/date to be decided later in the school year. This interview will be conducted in complete confidence.

Please note that this letter is not a contract. You have the right to withdraw from the project at any time if you so wish.

Please read the statement below and tick the boxes for the items to which you give your permission. Sign and date both copies of this letter in the space below, and keep one copy for yourself. The other copy will be returned to me via the school.

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

I/we have read the information letter and I/we agree to (tick all boxes that apply):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allow my child to be observed</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take part in a confidential, tape recorded interview with my child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow photographs taken by / drawings completed by my child to be included in the study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Print name of parent(s)/carer(s) ……………………………………………………………………………………………

Signature of parent(s)/carer(s) ……………………………………………………………………………………………

Date ………………………

Many thanks for completing this form, and thank you again for supporting this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Wren

PHD student, University of the West of England
# B1: Observation Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time interval</th>
<th>Who interacting with?</th>
<th>Influence on interactions</th>
<th>Classroom info</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Adult - Target</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Stars</td>
<td>Ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Peer - Target</td>
<td>No interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum focus</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art/ICT</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music/Drama</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE/HE</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-curriculum</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>53</td>
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<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Digital and paper documents with an asterisk above the sign the sign in the digital document.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time Interval</th>
<th>Who Interacting with?</th>
<th>Influence on interactions</th>
<th>Classroom Info</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adult - Target</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parent - Adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer - Parent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Target - Peer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 In class</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Out of class [ID?]</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Art / ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Music / Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. PE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. PSHE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Non-curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Notes
B2: Criteria for coding responses
Criteria for coding responses – systematic observation schedule

General information

Pupil ID: Pupil pseudonym
School ID: e.g. S1
Date
Day and lesson noted by circling the appropriate number
Subject: Focus of lesson being taught. ‘Play’ in unstructured times.

The observation record should reflect the predominant type of interaction observed during the observation interval. As such, if multiple interactions occur within the observation interval, the longest interaction should be recorded.

Main schedule

Who interacting with?

The first six columns relate to interactions observed for the target pupils in the study. Pupils can be seen as interacting in one of three ways:

1. Interaction with an adult
2. Interaction with a peer
3. No interaction

**Adult – Target**

This box should be ticked if the pupil is involved in an interaction with an adult which is primarily adult led.

**Target – Adult**

This box should be ticked if the pupil is involved in an interaction with an adult which is primarily pupil led.

**Peer – Target**

This box should be ticked if the pupil is involved in an interaction with a peer which is primarily peer led.

**Target – Peer**

This box should be ticked if the target pupil is involved in an interaction with a peer which is primarily led by the target pupil.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This box should be ticked if no interaction occurs during the observation interval. This should be coded even if the pupil is sat with an adult or peer when no specific interaction occurs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This box should be ticked if the focus of the interaction is unclear based on the above criteria. This can also be used if the researcher has no clear line of vision or the pupil leaves the classroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact on interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These five columns relate to direct TA influence on the peer interactions of target pupils.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is where the Adult ID of the TA observed as influencing an interaction is recorded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This box should be ticked if the TA tries to start an interaction between the target pupil and a peer e.g. setting up partner work, inviting peers to play with the pupil. This should be coded even when an interaction between pupil and peer does not follow as the TA intention was to start an interaction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This box should be ticked if the TA tries to end an interaction between the target pupil and a peer. In this case, the pupil will be engaged in an interaction with a peer which the TA attempts to end, e.g. telling the pupil not to talk, removing the pupil from the interaction. This should be coded even when any interaction between pupil and peer continues as the TA intention was to end the interaction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This box should be ticked if the target pupil is involved in an interaction with a peer and the TA offers positive support for the interaction e.g. praising the pupil for sharing or rewarding the pupil for working well with a peer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This box should be ticked if the target pupil is involved in an interaction with a peer and the TA offers negative support for the interaction. This is not as final as ending an</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
interaction (see above) but is rather just a message of disapproval related to the interaction e.g. phrases such as “should we be talking now?”

### Classroom information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This box records whether the pupil is inside or outside of the school building at the time of observation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = inside the school building (including rooms other than the main classroom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = outside of the school building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subcodes should be used to identify the specific space in the school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This box is codes whether an adult was within a 1 metre radius of the pupil during the observation interval. The adult ID should be coded in the box.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### B3: Example of observation notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Intervals</th>
<th>Hesit. Target</th>
<th>Peer Target</th>
<th>Partner Target</th>
<th>No Interaction</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>In class</td>
<td>Out of class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Hour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing Symbols</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Notes:**
- Reminded peer to say thank you when peer found something for her.
- Working with A.
245

Charlie has the closest thing to a single best friend that I’ve seen so far. At playtime he is always looking for her and seems genuinely lost if she isn’t there. What happened today, though, I told her that their friendship is quite new as they weren’t together in the same class the previous year. I’ve noticed that they’re not talking to each other as much in class as they do in the playground—don’t know if I’m looking for that type of pattern though as it would match others. Really glad I’ve got the observation figures.

Today he was very fidgety and seemed to be struggling to stay on task. It’s like this both seemed to be much harder on him than I’ve seen before—and he seemed to feel that because he was quieter in the afternoon sessions than I’ve seen him.
B5: Interview schedule (TAs)

TA information

Information from allocated TAs to be collected during stage one of data collection.

How long have you worked at the school?

How long have you worked with [pupil name]?

How would you describe your main role in the support of [pupil name]?
B6: Activity Sheet
Photography task
Drawing task

Name: 

Date: 

My Friends

My Helper
Assent Information for pupils

At the start of stage two of the research, verbal assent discussion prior to interview

- Explain who I am and remind them of our previous meeting.
- Explain why parent / adult is present.
- “I am doing a research project about children's friendships and I would like your help”
- What we are going to do:
  - tour of the school to take pictures of where you play
  - draw some pictures / make some models and talk about the way you play in school
  - How long it will take
  - Who will know the results / how will the results be used
- Explain that they do not have to take part if they don't want to and can stop at any time if they want
- Explain about confidentiality
- “There are no right answers I just want to hear what you think”.
- “If you don't understand a question that's fine”.
- Are you happy to take part?
- Are you happy for me to record you speaking so I can listen to it again later?

At the end of the interview:

- Are you happy for me to use your photographs and drawings in my project?
- Are you happy for me to use them in presentations and other writing that I do?
Introduction to tour

Could you take me around your school and show me the places where you talk to and play with your friends?

I have a camera so we can take some photos.

We aren't going to take pictures of any people, just of pictures, places and things that you play with, is that ok?

Questions related to research question 2: What is the experience of children receiving TA support with specific regard to their peer interactions?

Now we have looked at where you play I would like to talk to you a bit more about who you play with and how you play. I thought it might be good to draw something / make a picture / make a model while we talk if that's ok?

Could you draw me a picture of your favourite person to play with in school?

(Clarifying questions will be asked while they draw / model etc – such as: Who is that? What are you playing? Where are you? Pictures will be labelled if the child wishes)

Questions to be asked while child is drawing:

Can you tell me some things you like to do with this person / these people?

Talk to me about what you like to do at playtime.

Can you tell me about some of the children that you play with in school?
Where do you talk to your friends? Do you talk to your friends here?

Is there anything else you would like to add to your picture? Or anything else you would like to say about who you play with in school?

Did you play with anyone at playtime today?

**Questions related to research question:** What do the pupils themselves say with regard to the relationship between their TA support and their interactions with peers?

Now I would like you to tell me about your helper(s) in school. Can you draw me a picture of an adult who helps you in school?

(ํclarifying questions of drawing: what are they doing? How are they helping you?)

Say some of the ways that [TA name] helps you in school? (How?)

Tell me about some of the things [TA name] does in the classroom.

Are there any ways that [TA name] helps other children as well?

Tell me about some of the things [TA name] does in the playground.

What sort of things does [TA name] do with you in the playground?

Can you tell me if there is anything that [TA name] does that you don't like?

Can you think of any ways that [TA name] could help you better?

Is there anything else you would like to add to the picture? Or anything else you would like to say about [TA name]?
Introduction to tour

Could you take me around your school and show me the places where you talk to and play with your friends?

I have a camera so we can take some photos.

We aren't going to take pictures of any people, just of pictures, places and things that you play with, is that ok?

Questions related to research question 2: What is the experience of children receiving TA support with specific regard to their peer interactions?

Now we have looked at where you play I would like to talk to you a bit more about who you play with and how you play. I thought it might be good to draw something / make a picture / make a model while we talk if that's ok?

Could you draw me a picture of your favourite person to play with in school?

(Clarifying questions will be asked while they draw / model etc – such as: Who is that? What are you playing? Where are you? Pictures will be labelled if the child wishes)

Questions to be asked while child is drawing:

Can you tell me some things you like to do with this person / these people?

Talk to me about what you like to do at playtime.
Can you tell me about some of the children that you play with in school?

Where do you talk to your friends? Do you talk to your friends here?

Is there anything else you would like to add to your picture? Or anything else you would like to say about who you play with in school?

Did you play with anyone at playtime today?

When I visited before I saw you playing with Tim, what do you like to play with him?

You sometimes play games in the sensory room, who do you like to play with then?

You took pictures of the classroom, who do you play with there?

What do you like to do during choosing time?

**Questions related to research question:** What do the pupils themselves say with regard to the relationship between their TA support and their interactions with peers?

Now I would like you to tell me about the people who help you in school. Can you draw me a picture of an adult who helps you in school?

( clarifying questions of drawing: what are they doing? How are they helping you? )

Say some of the ways that Mrs L helps you in school? (How?)

Tell me about some of the things [TA name] does in the classroom.

Are there any ways that [TA name] helps other children as well?
Tell me about some of the things [TA name] does in the playground.

What sort of things does [TA name] do with you in the playground?

What do the other helpers do in the Early Years playground?

Can you tell me if there is anything that any of your helpers do that you don't like?

Can you think of any ways that your helpers could help you better?

Is there anything else you would like to add to the picture? Or anything else you would like to say about [TA name]?
Dear [NAME],

I met you in [DATE] when I came into school to observe [child’s name]. As you may remember we spoke at the time regarding the types of support offered for [child’s name] and about your role in their support. Attached to this form is a copy of the information I collected from these conversations with you. As you will see, your information has been anonymised and any information which might make you identifiable has been removed. I am contacting you now to ask you to approve this information by providing written consent for it to be used.

**Please note that this letter is not a contract. You have the right to withdraw from the project at any time if you so wish.**

As I explained during my school visit, should you consent, the information you have provided will be included in my PHD thesis and may also be used for presentations at conferences or submissions to peer-reviewed journals.

Please read the statement below and tick the boxes for the items to which you give your permission. Sign and date both copies of this letter in the space below, and keep one copy for yourself. Return the other copy to me using the signed addressed envelope provided.

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

I have read the information letter and I consent to the use of this information by Alison Wren.

Print name  ..................................................................................................................

Signature  ....................................................................................................................

Date  ........................................

Many thanks for completing this form, and thank you again for supporting this research project. Feel free to contact me should you have any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Wren  
PHD student, University of the West of England
C1: Case study frame

Case Study Frame

Pupil information

Age, details from statement of SEN, details of interventions happening and not, information from school staff about pupil characteristics.

School information

Size and location of school. Information regarding levels of FSM, EAL and recent Ofsted result.

School Experience

Classes set by attainment? Teacher information, TA allocation and funding, levels of TA proximity.

Classroom

Allocated seat? Carpet space? Any other classroom info

Teaching Assistants

TA details: deployment, level of qualification any specific training, time at the school, time working with target child, TA main role

Pupil perception of TA role

Pupil view of TA role (primarily from drawing task Box 2)

Peer interactions

Interactions

Levels of interaction from systematic observations

In the classroom

Levels of interaction in classroom settings. Details from observation notes and research diaries.
At playtime

Levels of interaction in playtime sessions. Details from observation notes and research diaries.

Favourite people / friends

Information about pupils’ friends (primarily from drawing task Box 1)

TA influence on interactions

Figures linked to TA influence on interaction and details from observation notes. TA proximity levels.
C2: Mind map of themes arising from case-by-case analysis
C3: Mind map of themes arising from results
D: Case studies

1. Olivia
2. Jake
3. Charlie
4. Ryan
5. Kai
6. Matthew
7. Gopal
8. Sneha
9. Lucie
10. Henry
11. Seth
Case Study - Olivia

Pupil background

Olivia was six at the time of observation. She has a statement of SEN as a result of a medical condition with 25 hours of allocated TA support each week. She requires support both for physical and for cognitive needs, as well as help to manage her behaviour both within the classroom and at playtimes. From a learning perspective, her statement lists needs relating to her expressive/receptive language, cognition and understanding, behavioural responses and social interaction skills. She is working approximately 18 months behind her age for literacy, two years for numeracy. In class, she struggles to focus on the task at hand or to follow instructions without prompting. Olivia wears glasses to correct her eyesight although she often forgets to bring these to school or takes them off because she doesn't like wearing them.

In relation to peer interactions, Olivia has some unusual behaviours which the other pupils in class seemed to find difficult to understand. She rocks from side to side constantly (even when sitting on the carpet) and I observed peers asking her not to do this as she was bumping them. She also has a habit of running around the classroom which both peers and the adults in the room chastise her for. Olivia has a speech and language impairment which can make some of what she says difficult to understand and her needs relating to expressive and receptive language mean she does not always comprehend what she hears. Both of these factors could form a barrier to peer interaction.

Mrs A said she felt that the other pupils in the class were supportive of Olivia and her behaviours, but that her speech and language issues made it hard for them to always understand what Olivia was saying.

The statement suggests Olivia would benefit from adapted provision in the form of a speech and language therapy programme and support to learn appropriate behaviour within the classroom. At the time of visiting, Olivia was having speech and language therapy twice a week with her TA (Mrs A). Her behaviour in class was being supported through her IEP where targets were focused on sitting and listening and concentration in class. Mrs A has also taken Olivia out of class for physiotherapy in the past.
School Information

Olivia was a Year One pupil at a community primary school in the West Midlands of England. The school is a two form entry and has around 500 pupils on roll (larger than the national average). The school had the highest proportion of pupils with SEN of all schools visited. It has a similar percentage of pupils eligible for FSM to the national average and a low proportion of pupils with English as a second language. The school received a rating of 'Good' at its last Ofsted. The Ofsted report states that pupils with SEN and/or disabilities make good progress in their learning due to the personalised support they receive from 'knowledgeable teaching assistants'.

School experience

Olivia is in a mixed ability class for most subjects but is in a separate class set by attainment for numeracy. In her main class, Olivia is taught by Mrs AB for four days a week. Mrs AB's PPA time is covered by the school cover supervisor Mrs A1 who teaches a weekly RE class, and by TAs Mrs A2 and Mrs A3. In her numeracy class, Olivia is taught by Mrs A4.

The systematic observation results show that Olivia spent 56.1% of her time with an adult proximal (within a one metre radius) which is slightly higher than the sample average (52%). She spent 48% of her time outside of class and 65.1% of her time in class with an adult present.

94.4% of all occasions when an adult was present it was a TA rather than a teacher and on 89% of all occasions it was Olivia's allocated TA Mrs A. I recorded in my observation notes feeling that the teachers had passed over responsibility of Olivia's schooling to Mrs A as it felt as though they made very little contact with Olivia at any point. In class Olivia looked to Mrs A for tasks she should be doing or for help with work. The only time I saw Olivia approach a teacher (Mrs AB) was to show her completed work at the end of a lesson, and this was on Mrs A's instruction.

Classroom
The pupils have allocated seats in all lessons. In her main classroom, Olivia sits at a table at the back of the room with TA Mrs A and two low attaining pupils (one of whom is undergoing assessment by an Educational psychologist at present). Due to her location in the classroom, any partner-talk was undertaken with Mrs A and small group work happened on her table with the lower attaining pupils (overseen by Mrs A). I noted that it often felt as though Olivia and Mrs A were very separate to the rest of the classroom as they were so far removed from the other members of the class and were often working on different topics and tasks to the rest of the pupils.

On the carpet, she sits at the feet of Teacher Mrs AB because she often needs prompting to sit properly (she lies on the floor) and to pay attention. She has a peer sat close to her on each side as Mrs A felt this might discourage Olivia from rocking (she is told off for this more than for any other behaviour).

In her numeracy classroom, she sits at a table with three lower attaining pupils and Mrs A. On the carpet she sits in the front row, next to Mrs A.

On a number of occasions across the week Mrs A took Olivia, and sometimes a small number of other pupils, out of class into a separate room to work on tasks. For example, in a numeracy session she took Olivia and two other pupils into the adjoining classroom to have a car race as they were trying to learn about ordinal numbers and she felt the pupils would benefit from a real-world example.

Aside from these classrooms, Olivia also has one lesson a week in an ICT space. In these sessions pupils are allocated seats as they come into the classroom. Olivia always sits next to Mrs A.

Teaching Assistants

Olivia has allocated TA support from Mrs A for 25 hours a week (9am – 2.30pm each day), which includes lunchtimes and breaktimes. Mrs A has been Olivia’s allocated TA since she started at the school in reception. She has worked at the school for more than five years, across all key stages. She has no formal qualifications linked to
educational support, but says she has received ongoing training while working at the school.

Mrs A described her main role in class as keeping Olivia focused and safe. She said she breaks tasks down for her and tries to keep things interesting so that Olivia stays on task. She also said she reminds Olivia about the class rules and gives out sanctions if she breaks them.

Mrs A explained that originally the support out of class was in place to keep Olivia safe in the playground because she is unaware of risk and could hurt herself or others. This is less of an issue now but the support has remained in place to reassure Olivia that she has someone to go to if she needs.

Aside from Mrs A, Olivia saw three other TAs in the week observed. Mrs A1 and Mrs A2, who cover her teachers’ PPA time and Mrs A5 who supports some other pupils in her main classroom.

Pupil perceptions of TA role

When asked to draw a picture of an adult who helps her in school, Olivia opted to draw both her mother and TA Mrs A. This may have been because her mother was in the room at the time of the interview, or could reflect the fact that she has been asked to come in to support Olivia occasionally in the past.

I asked Olivia how Mrs A helps her in school.

Olivia: She does writing

Me: She helps you with your writing?

Olivia: Yes

Me: Can you tell me any other ways she helps you?

Olivia: Um.... she reads words

Me: She reads with you
This exchange is interesting in two ways. First, everything Olivia said regarding her support from Mrs A was in relation to academic work. Later in the interview she said “She does letters” and also “she writes me”. Olivia clearly relates the support she receives from Mrs A to her written work, rather than to any social or emotional support or to the interventions (such as speech and language therapy) that she does. Secondly, this view of Mrs A as only helping her was repeated throughout the interview. Olivia referred to Mrs A as “mine” and said she “only helps me” more than once while we were talking. This sense of ownership may be because of the large amount of time the two spend together.

I asked Olivia what Mrs A does in the playground and she said “walks around”.

Me: Does Mrs A help you in the playground?  
Olivia: No. Not me.  
Me: Do you see her in the playground?  
Olivia: No. in class.

This is interesting, especially given that I observed multiple occasions where Mrs A talked to Olivia in the playground or helped her to interact with other pupils. This further suggests that Olivia sees Mrs A as linked to her academic work rather than to anything outside of class.

Olivia did not name any ways in which her support could be improved.

Peer interactions

Interactions

Based on the systematic observation results, Olivia spent 76.3% of her time in school interacting with adults, the highest of any pupil in the sample (average 58.4%). This despite not having the highest levels of adult proximity in the sample (63.6%). She
spent just 14.1% of her time interacting with peers, much lower than the average for target pupils (21%) and the third lowest result amongst the sample.

Olivia spent 7.9% of her time not interacting with anyone, by far the lowest of any target pupil (average 17.9%).

**In the classroom**

There were relatively few opportunities for Olivia to interact with peers in class, as she spent the vast majority of her time in interactions with adults (71.1% of all her time in class). Of these adult interactions, a far higher number were with TAs than with teachers (61.2% compared to 36.5%) and most of the TA interactions were with Mrs A (47.3% of all adult interactions).

In total peer interactions accounted for just 15.6% of all Olivia’s time in class. During observations, the vast majority of Olivia’s interactions with peers in class were with a single low-attaining pupil (Gary) who sits at her table. Mrs A said that this had been an issue earlier in the year because Gary is a very emotional child and Olivia used to get overly concerned if Gary was upset in school. As such, Mrs A had spent some time trying to introduce Olivia to other pupils in hopes she would make new friends. Mrs A felt this had caused some distance between Olivia and Gary but felt that Olivia had failed to bond particularly with any other pupil.

I noted in my research diaries that the other pupils in class seemed to see Mrs A as a gatekeeper, asking her for permission when they wanted to talk to Olivia. In a literacy lesson, for example, where the pupils had been asked to bring in a favourite book that they wished to share, I observed several pupils approaching Mrs A and asking if it was ok prior to sharing their books with Olivia. This behaviour also happened at playtime (discussed below in).

**At playtime**

Olivia spent 54.2% of her time in the playground interacting with peers and just 22.9% interacting with adults.
In the playground, she often played independently and was not seen actively approaching other pupils to play with her at any point. If asked by another child to play, however, she was happy to do so. Several times, I saw other pupils join in with the game Olivia had started independently – for example, one lunchtime she was spinning around a pole on her own and, after a few minutes, some of her classmates copied. The other pupils then carried on to play with hula hoops and Olivia joined them. She played with different pupils each lunchtime, from classes across her key stage.

On multiple occasions, Mrs A was seen either setting up games between Olivia and other pupils or encouraging her to play with others. She also praised Olivia if she was playing well with other pupils, rewarding her with stickers and by telling the teacher when they came back into class.

Mrs A was also seen helping Olivia to play successfully with others. For example, on one occasion Olivia was playing on a rocking horse and was not sharing with other pupils who were becoming increasingly upset. Mrs A told all the pupils that they could have ten rocks on the horse and then it was the next person’s go. Olivia followed these rules and managed to play happily with the other pupils.

One lunch break I heard a girl from Olivia’s class ask Mrs A, “Does Olivia want to play with me?” Mrs A responded that the girl should ask Olivia. When approached, Olivia happily played with the girl (a chasing game).

In spite of their multiple interactions in class, Olivia was not observed playing with Gary at any point outside of class.

**Favourite people / friends**

Olivia was asked to draw her favourite friend to play with in school. She started drawing a figure which, when completed, she said was her. I asked if she would like to draw someone to play with and she thought about it for more than a minute and then said she would like to draw Alexa (a girl from her class). There followed this exchange:
Me: Do you like to play with Alexa?

Olivia: She plays with Pearl

Me: Do you play with them?

Olivia: They play together

Me: When do you play with Alexa?

Olivia: She likes play skipping..... I can't skipping

I had not observed Olivia playing with either Alexa or Pearl at any point during my observations and Mrs A confirmed that they did not play with Olivia regularly. It felt to me as if Olivia was choosing someone she would like to play with, rather than someone who she plays with often. Alexa and Pearl have a very close friendship and are popular with other members of the class so it is possible this was an aspirational choice.

After she had drawn Alexa she asked if she could draw another child Wayne.

Olivia: I play with Wayne

Me: Is Wayne a boy in school?

Olivia: No, my cousin.

Mum: He's her cousin, he's a bit younger

Me: Ok. When do you play with Wayne?

Olivia: Sometimes when I see him

Mum: She's not allowed to play with him because he cycles out on the street, you know? It just wouldn't be safe for her

Olivia: I like Wayne.

Olivia’s drawing Wayne is perhaps a result of her mother being in the room. If she misses playing with Wayne then she may be using this activity as an opportunity to let her mother know. Even if this is the case, it is interesting that Olivia did not chose to draw any of the other pupils she was observed playing with in school.

TA influence on interactions
29 occasions were recorded where a TA influenced an interaction between Olivia and a peer. This is far higher than for any other pupil, in part because I observed for longer at Olivia's school (five days rather than four) but also because Mrs A was very proactive about both keeping Olivia on task in class and about praising her when she did manage a successful interaction with a peer. All 29 occasions observed were Mrs A

Four occasions were recorded where Mrs A started an interaction between Olivia and a peer, and fifteen occasions were observed of Mrs A praising Olivia for interacting with another pupil. As previously stated, Mrs A was very keen for Olivia to work with other pupils where this was possible and made efforts to help her to play successfully in the playground.

When tasks were set up for collaborative peer work, Mrs A tried to facilitate this where possible. For example, in a PE class they were practising throwing and catching. Mrs A set Olivia up with a middle attaining peer and praised them throughout the session for how good a team they were. In another lesson, the pupils were writing book reviews and Mrs A asked the pupils in turn to tell the others about their book.

Seven occasions were recorded of Mrs A ending an interaction between Olivia and a peer. These all happened in class, and involved Mrs A stopping Olivia talking to peers as she felt this was off task behaviour. Mrs A was trying to refocus her to the task at hand, or stopping her distracting others. I noted that Mrs A used the phrases “you need to do your own work” or “stop bothering X” on more than one occasion during my visit. Three occasions of negative support for interactions between Olivia and a peer were also recorded, and these were also in class and based around keeping her focused on the task set.
Pupil information

Jake has a statement of SEN due to a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). He was six years and nine months old at the time of observation and in Year One at his primary school. His statement provides funding to achieve full time support for Jake in school, which he receives from two TAs. Jake’s statement identifies four areas of need: communication and interaction, cognition and learning, behaviour emotional and social, and sensory and physical.

Jake has limited independence and is often led around school by his hand. He has issues with tasks that involve both fine and gross motor skills and he also needs support to dress and use the toilet in school. He makes noises, closes his eyes when over stimulated and has a space behind his chair to allow him to walk around if he needs to. He also comes out of class regularly for breaks. He has a visual timetable to help him understand the school day. Jake takes part in 'sensory circuits' once a week, which TA Mrs B said was in place to calm him down.

In terms of his interaction skills, Jake communicates primarily through noises and gestures. He can speak in short utterances, but his speech can be hard to understand. He is capable of comprehending and following instructions, but only when he is paying attention (his concentration is limited). His statement says he has significant difficulties interacting with pupils in an age appropriate way, often ignoring peers and playing on his own. He can become aggressive because he struggles to express himself and because he does not always understand social cues and finds it difficult to wait his turn or share.

These needs impact on Jake's interactions with peers in multiple ways. Peers may not understand Jake's complex behaviour (for example, he often throws tantrums) or know how to play safely with him. Alongside this, he struggles to invite other pupils to play or work with him and may not understand or be able to respond to their invitations if offered. His limited independence also means he is rarely alone.
In the statement, adapted provision is suggested in the form of a speech and language therapy programme based around improving his understanding of how to use language appropriately in both learning and social settings. This was in place and active during observations. Differentiation of curriculum and support to improve his concentration skills are also suggested and were seen being implemented. Finally, a small group programme designed to develop his social skills is also suggested. This support was not in place during observations, although he has had previous social skills support in nursery.

**School Information**

Jake's school is a large community primary in a rural market town in the East Midlands. The school has over 500 pupils on roll and is the biggest included in the sample. The school has a low percentage of pupils with SEN and of pupils eligible for Free School Meals compared to the national average. The school reserved a rating of 'good' at its last Ofsted.

**School Experience**

All of Jake's lessons take place in a mixed ability Year One class. The classes are taught by a main class teacher, Mrs A1, aside from her PPA time (which is covered by a TA Mrs A2) and some PE lessons (which are taken by an external agency). Despite being in his main class for the majority of the week, Jake rarely takes part in whole class activities, working instead on differentiated tasks or interventions with his TAs (66.4% of the time). Jake has full time TA support including break and lunchtimes.

Looking at his observation results, Jake spent 67.20% of his time with an adult proximal (within approximately a one metre radius of him). Jake spent a much higher proportion of time with an adult proximal in class (80%) than he did in the playground (17.17%). In class, the longest stretch he spent unsupported was three minutes in a literacy lesson.

Of the time spent with an adult present, 91.9% was with one of his main TAs. I noted in my research diaries that they only left his side when he was set up with a task on a computer (he gets this as a reward for working well). The affect of such a high level of TA proximity is discussed in later in the case study.
Pupils have allocated seats in Jake's classroom, although they move for literacy lessons as they are grouped by ability. Jake sits at the back of the classroom in the same seat for all lessons. He sits at a four seat table, next to his TA and opposite two low attaining peers. In the centre of his table is a box full of resources used to support Jake, but this also blocks his view of the other pupils at his table as it is piled very high. There is a space behind Jake in which he is allowed to walk if he needs to.

Jake does not move to the carpet with the rest of the class. His TA explained this is because his behaviour is much worse there and it was felt he was causing a distraction for other pupils.

Aside from his table space, Jake spends some of his time on the computers in his main classroom, these are at the front of the classroom facing away from the other pupils. As previously explained, Jake is allowed to play on these computers as a reward for good behaviour.

Jake also comes out of class regularly with his TAs. His poor levels of concentrations mean that he can become frustrated or difficult when asked to focus on a task for an extended period of time. Consequently, his TAs take him for walks around school to provide breaks between activities.

Jake has full time support, including break and lunchtimes. He is supported by two TAs, one in the morning and one in the afternoons, both of whom have worked with him since the beginning of Year One (approximately ten months). He will have a different pair of TAs in Year Two, one of whom (Mrs A3) is already undertaking a handover.

Mrs B supports Jake in the mornings and at break time. She had worked at the school for five years. She has no formal qualifications linked to educational support, although she previously worked in a nursery setting and was trained for this.
Mrs C supports Jake at lunchtimes and in the afternoons. When she is not supporting him she works on the school reception. She has no formal qualifications linked to educational support and have no specific training before starting to support Jake. She has worked as a TA for three years.

Jake also came into contact with two other TAs: Mrs A2 who was providing PPA cover for his main class teacher, and Mrs A3 who will be one of his TAs in Year Two.

Mrs B described her main role as helping Jake to stay safe and happy in school. She also talked about simplifying work for him. Mrs B did not mention any kind of support with social skills. Mrs C said she was in class to support Jake's interventions and to make sure he was behaving appropriately. She said that she also feels it is part of her role to set up games for him in the playground and to make sure he is playing safely.

Pupil perceptions of TA role

Unlike the other pupils in the sample, Jake was not asked to draw his TA as it was felt, by both his parents and the SENCO, that this would be too stressful for him (he dislikes even holding a pencil due to his limited motor control). Instead Jake was shown photographs of his TAs (provided by them) and asked about them. Jake could name both TAs and identified them as ‘morning’ and ‘afternoon’. When asked what they did to support him he said ‘play’ multiple times. He did not answer questions about support in the playground or ways in which his support could be improved.

Peer Interactions

Based on the systematic observations, Jake spent 55.4% of his time interacting with adults in the week observed, slightly lower than the sample average for pupils (58.4%). Of these 93% were with TAs and just 7% with teachers.
Jake spent 20.1% of his time interacting with peers, only slightly lower than the sample average (21%). He did not interact with anyone for 15.9% of the time, also lower than the average for target pupils (17.9%).

Jake had a very high number of interactions coded as ‘Bin’ (8.6%, sample average of 2.6%). This was due to the occasions where he was removed from class by his TAs, which could not be coded as they were not observed (it was felt that following him out of class might upset him).

In the classroom

Almost all (99.37%) of Jake’s interactions with adults occurred in the classroom, in fact just one occasion was recorded of a TA interacting with Jake in the playground. In contrast, just 6.35% of his interactions with peers happened in the classroom. I recorded, in my research diaries, feeling that there was a separation between Jake and the other pupils in the classroom. Although he was in the same room with them, he spent just a third of his time working on the same task (33.6%) and even when he was, he would be working on it with his TA rather than with a peer.

The other pupils seemed to see his TAs as gatekeepers, asking them questions about Jake. On one occasion I heard a girl ask Mrs B “how is Jake today?” rather than directing the question to Jake himself. In a numeracy lesson, another pupil asked Mrs C “What does Jake think the answer is?”. Jake was sat opposite the pupil at the same table.

It felt as though the other pupils were unsure about whether they were allowed to approach Jake independent of his TA. I noted that one morning a pupil asked TA Mrs C, “Can I show Jake something that I brought in?”. Mrs C agreed that she could and then, after showing him (a toy from home) she turned back to Mrs C and said “Does he like it?”. Mrs C answered that he did.

Only four occasions were recorded of a peer interacting with Jake outside of playtime and three of these occurred were in a single PE lesson where a peer was leading him
through a dance routine by holding his hand (Mrs C had been doing this prior to the peer taking over).

I noted that Jake seemed to have little interest in the other pupils during class time, rarely looking up from his table to see what they were doing.

**At playtime**

93.65% of Jake's interactions with peers occurred during playtime. It is worth noting that he had much lower levels of adult proximity here too (17.19% of his time outside).

In contrast to his behaviour in the classroom, in the playground Jake was observed interacting with peers for the vast majority of his unstructured time (92.19%). He played with multiple peers and engaged in many different games. Of his peer interactions, 73.44% were led by a peer and 26.56% by Jake himself. Where Jake did lead interactions, it was primarily non-verbal: hand-holding, hugging and chasing. Jake seemed much happier and less anxious in the playground.

Mrs C was seen on two occasions setting up a game for Jake and other pupils in the playground. She said that she does this at least two lunchtimes per week, offering Jake a choice of which game to play. She said she did this to help him have a structure to his play as he had previously struggled with appropriate behaviour during break times.

**Favourite People / Friends**

Unlike the other pupils, Jake was not asked to draw his favourite friend in school. Instead Jake was shown pictures of pupils from school, some that he plays with regularly and others that he does not (these pictures were taken by Mrs C). Jake was able to name some of the pupils but was unclear about whether they were friends he played with or not (he said ‘Yes’ to all pictures).

Jake said that he plays with everyone, but then later in the interview, said he doesn't like to play with girls (although he was seen playing with them during observations).
TA influence on interactions

Seven occasions were recorded of TAs influencing Jake's interactions with peers. On 3 occasions, TAs started interactions between him and another pupil. Once was in a literacy lesson where Mrs C sat him next to a peer during guided reading. The other two were in another literacy lesson where Mrs C set up an interaction between Jake and a peer because Jake wanted to play with the other pupil's toy (brought in for 'Show and tell').

One afternoon Jake became very fixated on a toy that another child had brought into school for show and tell. He attempted to snatch the toy from the other child and became very upset when he was told off for doing this. Mrs C asked the child if he would be happy to sit with Jake and show him the toy. While they were doing this she praised him for sharing well and for being polite.

Four occasions were recorded of TAs praising Jake for interacting with a peer and these were all in response to the scenarios described above.

As previously mentioned, I recorded feeling that the TAs served as gatekeepers for Jake in the classroom and that this felt like a barrier to his peer interactions. Alongside this, they moved him around (by hand) a lot of the time so he was rarely in one place for long enough to establish interactions had he wanted to. For example, after Mrs B sat him next to a peer in the literacy session described, she moved him again two minutes later. The TAs (especially Mrs B) seemed to be focusing on keeping him calm and getting his interventions done rather than ensuring he was actually included as a member of the class.
Case Study - Charlie

Pupil Information

Charlie is a seven year old boy in Year Two at a large primary school. He has a statement of SEN, due to developmental delay, which provides funding to achieve full time TA support. His statement identifies four main areas of need: speech and language skills, learning and cognition, social skills and self-help and independence.

In terms of his peer interactions his needs related to language and social skills are of most relevance. Charlie has a speech impediment which can make him difficult to understand and has a short attention span, which affects his receptive language. The statement suggests adapted provision in the form of a speech and language therapy programme, focussed on encouraging him to speak regularly (both to peers and adults) and improving his attention and listening skills. In relation to his needs around social interactions, an individually planned programme to develop his social skill is suggested. This would include small group work, led by a TA, to allow Charlie to practice social skills as well as some support for peers regarding how best to interact with Charlie and to understand his responses. The SENCO said that these interventions were not currently running and that the social skills supports had been deemed unnecessary by the school as Charlie had integrated well within class and had a good group of friends.

School Information

Charlie attends a large community primary school in a small market town in the East of England. At the time of visiting the school had over five hundred pupils on roll aged between 3 and 11, making it the biggest school observed as part of this project. In comparison to the national average it has a low percentage of pupils with SEN and of pupils eligible for Free School Meals. This school was rated 'Good' at its last Ofsted.

School Experience

Charlie is in a mixed ability Year Two class for all subjects. He is taught by a main class teacher, for the majority of his school week, aside from her PPA time (which is covered by a TA, Mrs E) and PE lessons, which are taught by an external agency.
Charlie does not come out of class for any interventions or small group work, but he does stay inside with TA Mrs E for the first few minutes of breaktimes to have a snack and a drink. This was put in place because he was forgetting to do these things and there have been concerns about his weight.

Charlie has full time TA support, and the only time he is not scheduled to have a TA on hand is for the first five minutes of the second morning lesson when Mrs D has her break. During observations, this time was mostly spent on the carpet in whole class instruction.

Observation results show that Charlie spent 62.37% of his time in school with an adult within approximately a one metre radius of him. This is higher than the sample average of 52%. Looking more closely at the results, 94% of the times an adult was proximal it was one of his two TAs. In fact, on more than one occasion he was seen being flanked by both teaching assistants (one on each side), both working with him on the set task. His TAs rarely moved away from him, and when they did it was to collect things or to talk to the teacher rather than to enable him to work independently. Across the time observed, the longest duration Charlie had without an adult next to him was a twelve minute stretch when TA Mrs E had gone to photocopy a sheet for him. The effect of this TA proximity is discussed later in the case study.

Classroom

All pupils have allocated seats in Charlie's classroom as they are grouped on tables by ability. Charlie's table is at the back of the classroom and he shares it with two low attaining peers and his TA. He sits at the extreme edge of the table and leans in to his TA, meaning there is a large distance between him and the other pupils at the table. He does not move from this place for different subjects although other pupils do.

On the carpet the pupils also have allocated spaces. Charlie sits to the left, at the feet of his TA who sits behind him on a chair.

Charlie has a drawer to keep his work in but there are rules as to when he can access it as he was previously prone to spending lots of time collecting things from it.
Teaching Assistants

Charlie has full time support, both in the classroom and at break and lunchtimes. He is supported by two TAs, one in the mornings and one in the afternoons. Both TAs have worked with him since the beginning of Year Two (approximately seven months at the time of observation) and he will likely have a different pair of TAs in Year Three (the school like to move TAs regularly to reduce dependence of pupils on particular members of staff).

Mrs D supports Charlie in the morning sessions and at breaktime. She has worked at the school for more than five years, based mostly with the younger children. She has no formal qualifications linked to educational support although she has received training while working at the school.

Mrs E supports Charlie in the afternoons and at lunchtimes. She has worked at the school for less than two years, but has worked as a TA for much longer. She has no formal qualifications linked to educational support but says she has had extensive training throughout her career.

In the week observed, Charlie also came into contact with two other TAs; Mrs E who covers his main class teacher's PPA time and Mrs A1 who set up a game for several of the pupils one lunchtime.

Both of his allocated TAs described their main role in class as keeping Charlie focussed and on task. Mrs E talked about simplifying tasks for him and helping him to concentrate. Mrs E also mentioned making sure tasks were understood. Neither TA mentioned social skills as a specific focus for Charlie, or as something they would be trying to support.

Pupil Perception of TA Role
Charlie was asked to draw his TA and to explain to me about their job role. He chose to
draw both of his TAs during the interview. When asked what his TAs do in class, he
said they “do my writing” and “they help me”. I asked what they do to help him when he
is on the carpet:

Me: What do they do on the carpet, how do they help you?

Charlie: […] They help me like if I get erm I need help I can just get up and say I
need help.

Me: So they’re just there in case you need help?

Charlie: Yeh.

Charlie said they “look after” him in the playground but could not explain how. He knew
that they were in class specifically to help him but said they sometimes had to help
other pupils, especially in computer lessons. He said he liked having the support,
“mostly Mrs E” and did not mention any negative side effects of his support. He could
not think of any way they could change things to better support him.

Peer Interactions

Interactions

Based on the systematic observations, Charlie spent 64.8% of his time interacting with
adults, higher than the average for target pupils (58.4%). Of the adult interactions
observed, 71% were with TAs and 29% were with teachers.

Charlie spent just 18.8% of the time observed interacting with peers, lower than the
sample average of 21%. Charlie did not interact with anyone for 15% of the time
observed, which was also lower than the average for target pupils (17.9%). This finding
is in line with results showing he spent a large proportion of his time with an adult
proximal.

In the classroom

98% of Charlie’s 242 interactions with adults occurred while he was in the classroom,
and just 28.6% of his peer interactions. As the figures suggest, there were very few
opportunities for Charlie to interact with peers in class as he spent the vast majority of his time in interactions with his TAs. When group work/partner work was set up as the class task, Charlie worked in a pair with his TA rather than with a peer. He very rarely spoke to the other pupils on his table and, on the few occasions he did, was stopped and told to concentrate (see ‘TA influence’ section). Due to his position at the back of the classroom, he had no access to other pupils without leaving his seat.

At playtime

71.4% of Charlie’s interactions with peers occurred during playtime. He had much lower levels of adult proximity here too, only 4.3%.

In the playground, Charlie was observed playing almost exclusively with a girl called Molly, who he identified in his interview as his “very best friend”. When he came onto the playground, he could be seen looking for her and was heard asking the TA to find her for him on one occasion. While we were touring the school, Charlie was asked to show me where he played and, at almost every place he took me to, he talked about playing with Molly or about their plans for the coming playtime.

Charlie (about the climbing frame): Me and Molly like playing here sometimes

Charlie (about the main playground): Yesterday Molly was chasing me on
here

On two occasions Charlie was seen playing with pupils other than Molly, once as part of a large group game that Molly was also involved in and once when Molly was not in the playground (she was helping staff inside school, when she eventually came outside he ran over to play with her)

It is interesting to note that Molly was in his classroom, at a separate table closer to the front, but that Charlie was never seen talking to her within that environment.

Favourite People/Friends
In his interview, Charlie was asked who his favourite friend to play with was in school. At first he responded it was his TA, Mrs E. His mother prompted him to choose a child instead and then Charlie spoke about Molly saying he played with her every day.

Me: Could you draw a picture in this box of your favourite friend to play with in school?

Charlie: I play with Mrs E in class

Mum: No, pick a child

Me: You can draw whoever you would like Charlie

Charlie: I'll draw Molly. I play with her every day

Mum: That's better

Charlie got very excited when he realised he would still have the opportunity to draw Mrs E in the second drawing task, referring to her as “my best one of all”. It is interesting that his first reaction was to draw his TA, especially given his obviously strong bond with Molly. In doing this he identified Mrs E as a friend rather than a helper suggesting some confusion about her role. This could be because she often takes the place of a peer in classroom tasks (e.g. talking partner or PE buddy). Charlie was clearly very fond of Mrs E, often hugging her at their table and jumping out of his seat with excitement when she came in to class.

When asked he could not name any other friends (than Molly), but was able to talk about children he didn't like as much:

Mum: What about Niall?

Charlie: I actually don't play with him anymore. I don't want to. No one plays with him.

Rather than draw any other children, Charlie asked to draw his little brother as someone he liked to play with, although he is not yet at school. This may have been because his brother was present during the interview. His mother said that they do play often together and that Charlie seemed to like the games aimed at younger children.
Seven occasions were recorded during the systematic observations when a TA influenced Charlie's peer interactions. Only once did a TA start any interaction between Charlie and a peer. This happened in a PE lesson when Mrs D asked another pupil to help Charlie balance during a dance warm up because she had to leave. When she returned, she took over from the pupil as Charlie’s partner. On three occasions TAs stopped interactions with peers, all in classroom settings and all focused around keeping Charlie on task. Further to this two occasions of negative support were observed, where peers were asked to stop talking to Charlie as they were affecting his concentration. Finally, the last incident was of positive support, when Charlie was praised for sharing resources (glue) with a pupil at his table.

As previously mentioned, Charlie spent a higher than average percentage of time in school with an adult proximal (within a 1 metre radius). It is worth noting that only 18.6% (13) of the 70 interactions he had with peers occurred while an adult was proximal, meaning 81.4% occurred in the 140 minutes he was unsupported. This suggests some effect of TA proximity either on Charlie's ability to talk to his peers or on their willingness to talk to him.

I noted in my research diary that I felt the TA focus was on keeping Charlie on task (as suggested by their descriptions of their roles) and that this precluded allowing him to interact with peers in class. Any times he did speak to other pupils in the classroom were treated as off task behaviour and stopped or discouraged.
Ryan - Case study

Ryan did not take part in all of the interview tasks but did take me on a tour of the school and helped me label the photographs he had taken. He opted not to take part because the rest of his class were going into assembly at the time of the interview and he wanted to join them.

Pupil information

Ryan is a six year old boy, in Year One at his primary school. He has a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) with associated speech delay for which he has a statement of SEN and full time TA support. His statement identifies four main areas of need: Speech, language and communication, early learning skills, social interaction skills, and emotional wellbeing.

Several of the needs identified on his statement impact upon his ability to interact successfully with peers. Ryan speaks rarely and, when he does, he sometimes muddles words. He can have difficulties understanding what is being said to him. Ryan does not like other pupils being very close to him, and prefers to play alone repeating the same game often. He has issues understanding social rules such as turn taking and can become upset easily. Ryan also struggles to interpret emotional responses in others so can respond inappropriately to peers.

In order to support Ryan's needs, the statement suggests a speech and language programme to develop his language skills. This was in place at the time of observation. A social skills programme is also suggested to give Ryan the opportunity to practise skills such as eye contact and sharing equipment. This was not happening during the research visits. The SENCO explained they did not feel Ryan needed this support at present.

School information

Ryan attends a large community primary school in the East of England. The school has high numbers of pupils on roll (over 500) but low percentages of both pupils with SEN.
and those eligible for Free School Meals. The school was rated 'Good' at its last Ofsted.

34 **School experience**

35 Ryan moves between two classrooms for his lessons. In his main classroom he is taught all lessons except phonics for which he moves into a neighbouring room. In his main classroom, he is taught by Mrs T aside from her PPA time, which is covered by another teacher (Mrs A1) and PE lessons, which are taught by an external agency. Ryan comes out of class for speech and languages sessions fortnightly. He is taught phonics by Mrs A2.

41 Ryan has full time TA support, including break and lunch times.

43 During the systematic observations, Ryan spent 64.9% of his time in school with an adult proximal (within a one metre radius of him). This is higher than the average for target pupils (52%).

47 Of the occasions where an adult was present, in 95.9% of cases it was one of his two main TAs. I noted in my research notes that one TA in particular, Mrs F, rarely moved away from him in class and this shows in the observation results; 77.9% of the times an adult was proximal it was her (this, despite the fact she only supports him for part of each day). The differing approaches of his TAs are discussed later in the case study.

53 **Classroom**

54 Pupils have allocated seats (grouped by ability) in Ryan's main classroom, although Mrs T sometimes moves pupils between tables based on the task set. Ryan sits most often at the back of the classroom, facing the whiteboard. He is at a table with three low attaining peers and his TA. Ryan rarely sat next to a peer at his table, even when his TA was not filling this space. In numeracy, Ryan sat at a table to the extreme left of the classroom with up to 5 low attaining peers (the number changed across the week).
On the carpet, Ryan sits on the back row at the feet of his TA. He struggled to concentrate when out of his seat and Mrs F explained that she sat with him there to keep him focused.

In phonics, Ryan sits at the back of the classroom next to his TA, although in this class pupils moved around a lot to work with others.

**Teaching Assistants**

Ryan has full time TA support including break and lunch times. He is supported by two TAs, one in the mornings and one in the afternoons. His TAs have supported him since the beginning of Year One (approximately seven months at the time of observation) but will not move with him to Year Two.

Mrs F supports Ryan in the morning and at break and lunchtimes. She has worked at the school for more than five years and previously worked as a TA at another school. She has no formal qualifications related to educational support.

Mrs G supports Ryan in the afternoons. She has worked at the school for almost two years. She has a qualification related to educational support and specific training related to supporting learners with ASD.

The TAs had very different approaches to Ryan’s support. Mrs F described her main role as keeping Ryan on task and helping him to get his work done. In line with this, she was observed telling Ryan to concentrate, pushing him to complete work and breaking up activities for him. She seemed to be very much focused on task completion.

Mrs G described her role as helping Ryan to understand what the teachers were saying and supporting him to learn. She was observed rewording questions for Ryan and regularly did not completing tasks because she was working on ensuring he
understood the underlying knowledge. She also often set Ryan up with tasks and left him (at least briefly) to complete them independently.

As previously stated, Mrs F rarely moves away from Ryan (when there was an adult present, 77.9% of the time it was her), while Mrs G was proximal for much less of the time (18%). How these differing approaches correlate with peer interactions is discussed later in the case study.

Pupil perceptions of TA role

Ryan did not take part in the drawing tasks, so I have no information regarding his perceptions of the support he receives. He was asked what his TAs do to help him during our tour of the school but he did not answer. Ryan seemed happy with his TAs.

Peer interactions

Across the time observed Ryan spent 64.3% of his time in interactions with adults (46.5% of these with Mrs F). In contrast, Ryan spent just 8.5% of his time interacting with peers; the lowest of any pupil in the sample (average 21%). This figure reflects just 58 interactions with peers out of a total 684 data points. Ryan also spent 25.5% of his time not interacting with anyone, higher than any other target pupil (average 17.9%). His low level of peer interactions is perhaps unsurprising given both his higher than average levels of adult interaction and of adult proximity; he had very few chances to interact with peers. I think it is also linked to Ryan’s personality however, as he seemed reticent to talk to peers without prompting (this is discussed further later in the case study, where examples of TA prompting and praise are included).

In the case of adult interactions, very few were led by Ryan. ‘Adult to target’ accounted for 90% of all adult interactions. In comparison, his peer interactions were much more even, ‘peer to target’ at 48.3% and ‘target to peer’ at 51.7%. This suggests Ryan feels more able to lead interactions with peers than he does with adults.
Almost all of Ryan's interactions with both adults and peers occurred in the classroom. 96.8% of the times Ryan interacted with an adult it took place in class. This is in line with the very high levels of adult proximity recorded (94.6% in class). As I've previously stated, it felt as though Ryan had very few opportunities to interact with peers because he spent so much time in interactions with adults, this was especially the case when being supported by Mrs F. Having said this, Ryan showed little interest in interacting with peers in class even when unsupported.

Although Ryan had very low numbers of interactions across the week (8.5%), the vast majority of these occurred in class (84.5%). This is an unusual pattern compared to most of the sample for whom the majority of interactions with peers happened in the playground.

At playtime

Just 3.2% of Ryan's interactions with adults happened in the playground, which is also in line with the much lower percentage of adult proximity in this setting (5.4%). Just 15.5% of Ryan's peer interactions occurred at playtime and as stated this is an unusual pattern for the sample.

Ryan had a very repetitive pattern of play in the week observed, which Mrs T and Mrs F confirmed he has been doing for some months now. Every playtime, Ryan plays alone, running a circuit around the edge of the playground. On occasions, other pupils were observed joining in with Ryan's game either by running alongside him or trying to race him. At no point did he invite others to do this or join in with anyone else's games. I noted in my research diaries that Ryan seemed happy to have his friends playing with him but was also content to play alone.

During our tour of the school Ryan was asked to show me where he played. He chose to take two photographs of the playground, and asked if he could take more but was told by the adult present (a TA who was not currently working with Ryan) to choose something different, so the remaining photographs were of other parts of the school. This suggests Ryan sees the playground as the main area in which he plays.
We also talked about the types of games Ryan played in school. He could not name any games that he liked to play and could not recall what he had played earlier that day. Ryan seemed to struggle with many of the interview questions, either not answering or just responding 'yes'.

Me: Who do you play with at playtime?
Ryan: Yes.

Me: What games do you like to play?
Ryan: Yes.

Favourite people/friends
Ryan did not take part in the drawing tasks so was not able to answer questions about his favourite people in school. While we were completing the photograph labelling task I asked Ryan some questions about peers he liked to interact with. Ryan named another boy, Neil, from his class. Talking about the hall (an area in school he had chosen to photograph):

Me: What's this a picture of?
Ryan: Hall.
Me: The hall. Yes. Do you play in the hall?
Ryan: Yes.
Me: What do you do in the hall?
Ryan: Sit.
Me: Sit when?
Ryan: To Neil.
Me: You sit with Neil?
Ryan: In afternoon.

I did not observe Ryan interacting with Neil at any point and Mrs F said she had never seen them together but as this was the only peer Ryan identified throughout my time talking to him it needs to be recognised as important to him. Neil is a high attaining,
popular boy in the class so this could be seen as aspirational from Ryan's perspective. Neil is potentially someone Ryan would like to play with.

**TA influence on interactions**

Sixteen occasions were recorded during the systematic observations when a TA influenced an interaction between Ryan and a peer. On two occasions a TA started an interaction between Ryan and another pupil. These both occurred in the same literacy lesson, where Mrs G set up partner talk between Ryan and a high attaining girl. Five interactions were observed of a TA offering positive support for Ryan interacting with a peer. Four of these were Mrs G and were praising Ryan for working well as part of a group or partner task. One was a TA from a different class encouraging Ryan to play with others rather than playing alone in the playground.

Five occasions were recorded of TAs ending interactions between Ryan and peers (a high number considering he had so few peer interactions). All five of these were Mrs F, stopping interactions in the classroom. I recorded the phrases she used:

*Mrs F:* No talking Ryan

*Don't talk, you should be doing good listening*

*(to peer):* No, we're not talking now.

Finally, four occasions were recorded of a TA negatively supporting an interaction between Ryan and a peer. Again, all of these were Mrs F and involved asking Ryan if he would like to move so he wasn't distracted or actually moving him out of a group to work alone.

It is clear that Mrs F saw interactions between Ryan and his peers as off task behaviour in the classroom setting. I noted that on three of these four occasions the pupils in class were working through activities at tables and that the other pupils were talking between themselves while completing the tasks. It was only the pupils sat with a TA who were told not to talk.
As previously discussed, it is clear that Ryan's two main TAs have very different approaches to support. The observation results show that Mrs F had much higher levels of proximity in the lessons she supported, spending 78.8% of her time within 1m of Ryan. In these lessons, just 6.8% of Ryan's interactions were with peers. In comparison, Mrs G spent a lot less time proximal (47.8%) and Ryan had higher levels of peer interaction (10.5%). This difference in interaction levels may be linked to the differing approaches, but could also have been affected by multiple other factors, for example the subjects of lessons supported (literacy, numeracy and phonics for Mrs F and PE, PSHE and literacy for Mrs G). What is clear is that Ryan would have a higher number of peer interactions in the lesson Mrs F supported if she did not stop or discourage these when they occurred.
Case Study - Kai

Pupil information

Kai is a lively seven year old boy in Year Two at primary school. His special educational needs are focused around Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties as he can struggle to control his emotions in school. His statement outlines other needs including: speech, language and communication difficulties, social interaction skills and attention and listening.

Kai’s SEN affect his interactions with peers in multiple ways. He is prone to angry outbursts (he was in trouble for fighting three times in the week observed) which may be difficult to understand for his peers or cause them to avoid playing with him. He can also misunderstand the behaviours of peers and become upset which could be distressing for the other pupils. Kai struggles with expressive language so cannot always explain how he is feeling or what he wants which could also make interactions with peers difficult. Adapted provision, in the form of a programme to help him express himself clearly, is suggested on his statement as is support to improve his attention and listening skills.

His main class teacher said that he was not undertaking any interventions at present because his behaviour had improved so much since he started school. She said that in reception and Year One he had been unable to stay in his seat and had often had to leave the classroom to calm down. Now he is better able to focus and finds it easier to stay calm.

School Information

Kai attends a community primary school in a town in the West Midlands of England. The school has the highest proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals of any in the sample, as well as the highest proportion of pupils with English as an additional language (both much higher than the national average). At the time of visiting, the school had over 300 pupils on roll making it one of the smaller schools observed. It was rated ‘Satisfactory’ at its last Ofsted.
School Experience

All of Kai’s classes are made up of a mixture of Year One and Year Two pupils. In his main classroom he is taught by class teacher Miss J, except for her PPA time and when she is needed for meetings (she is the Key Stage leader). His literacy and numeracy lessons are set by attainment (he is in the lowest ability class for both) and are taught in classrooms other than his main room. Across the school week observed, Kai was taught by five teachers.

Kai has a TA on hand in every class, although they do not always directly work with him. In total, during observations, he was supported by five TAs often as part of a group rather than one-to-one support. He does not have specific TA support at break and lunchtimes although school staff said he was monitored by whoever was on duty during these times as his behaviour is worse during unscheduled times.

Classroom

Kai has an allocated seat in his literacy and numeracy classrooms. Pupils also have allocated seats in the main classroom, although they are often allowed to choose seats as a reward for good behaviour. In numeracy and his main room he sits at a table near the front of the classroom, in literacy his table is in the middle of the room.

The TAs supporting Kai rarely sat next to him, except in response to poor behaviour or in lessons where they feel he isn’t concentrating. They were often seen standing behind him or supporting him as part of a group.

Teaching Assistants

Kai has support in all of his classes, but no specific support at break and lunchtimes. He is observed by a range of TAs (five in the week observed), although most frequently by Mrs Z and Mrs I. TAs in the school move between classes as and where they are needed. There is no timetabled pattern of support although a TA is always available in his class should he need one.
In the week observed, Mrs Z supported Kai in many of his main class lessons and during PE. She has worked with Kai since he started at the school. She is a qualified teacher who has been working as a TA for five years. She said the only specific training she had received related to educational support was during her teacher training. Mrs Z described her role as helping Kai to behave and keeping him on task.

Mrs I supported Kai in his literacy and numeracy lessons while I was observing. She started working as a TA after joining the school as a dinner lady. She has worked with Kai for a year. She has had no training relevant to educational support and said that she would like some. Mrs I said she was there in class to help him with his work. She talked about keeping Kai calm in class. Neither TA mentioned helping Kai with social interactions, or supporting him with his expressive language.

Pupil perceptions of TA role

In the drawing task, Kai chose to draw TA Mrs I, who had supported him on a regular basis across the week observed. Describing the ways in which she supports him he said,

Kai: She helps me with my work.

Me: How does she help? What does she do?

Kai: Well she does some work with me when I get stuck.

Me: So she helps you when you don’t know the answers?

Kai: Yeah, which is a lot!

On his drawing of Mrs I, he drew her holding his writing because he said that's what she does.

When I asked if she helped him in any way with his friends he told me she didn’t, “That's not her job”.

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I asked specifically whether she helps him in the playground. He said that she went in
the playground for some break and lunchtimes but just to do duty, “She makes sure no-
one gets naughty or hurt”. He said he only spoke to her in the playground to say hello,
and did not feel she was there specifically for him.

Interestingly, Kai did not seem to see a difference between teachers and TAs in terms
of the support he received. He termed Mrs I his “teacher” on several occasions during
the tour and interview. He also asked that she be labelled as his teacher on the
drawing he did of her. At another point he referred to Miss J (his main class teacher) as
his “favourite helper” in school. This view may be the result of the deployment of staff in
Kai’s school. Two of the members of staff working as TAs with Kai (Mrs Z and Mrs A1)
also teach lessons on a fairly regular basis, either covering PPA time or where
teachers are otherwise outside of class (in meetings for example). It should not be
surprising therefore that Kai feels that the differing members of staff perform the same
role.

Alongside this, the way in which Kai is supported in school could be affecting the way
he views the adults working with him. As previously discussed, Kai spends a very low
percentage of time with an adult proximal compared to the rest of the sample. Looking
more specifically at who is supporting, Kai receives a very similar amount of support
from TAs (44.1%) and teachers (55.4%). During the week observed, it felt as though
teachers were as likely to support Kai to stay on task or to answer his questions as TAs
were. The adults in the room were very flexible, moving around to different pupils as
and where they were needed. Clearly, this may also be affecting Kai’s understanding of
adult support roles and responsibilities.

Kai could not think of any ways in which his helpers could improve the way he is
supported. Although he did not say anything specifically positive about support in
general, he referred to the adults supporting him as, “lovely”, “great”, and “friendly”, so
he is clearly very fond of them.

Peer Interactions

Interactions
During observations, Kai spent almost half (48.3%) of his time in interactions with adults, which is lower than the average for target pupils (58.4%). He spent 27.4% of the time observed interacting with peers, which is higher than the sample average (21%). In terms of adult interactions, Kai was more often the object of the interaction than the subject, with 88.4% of his interactions adult led (just 11.6% were led by him).

Kai did not interact with anyone for 20.3% of the time observed, which was one of the highest percentages recorded across the sample.

**In the classroom**

96.3% of Kai’s interactions with adults happened in the classroom. He only interacted with an adult on 12 occasions (3.7%) in the playground across the week. In contrast to much of the sample, the vast majority (82.7%) of Kai’s interactions with peers occurred during class time. Of these he was the person speaking for 58.4% of the time.

Kai was observed talking to a range of peers in class, both about the task set and unrelated topics. He was seen working successfully as part of a group and partner tasks with peers. He often left his seat or turned around to talk to peers not in his vicinity, although this behaviour was discouraged by school staff. In my research diaries, I noted that I felt Kai was very keen to help others and that many peer interactions were based around sharing resources or helping other pupils to complete tasks.

**At playtime**

Kai had relatively few interactions with anyone during playtime. In fact, just 3.7% of his interactions with adults and 17.3% of his interactions with peers happened in the playground. He spent 16.36% of his time interacting with no-one. My research notes show Kai was observed occasionally playing with peers both from his and other classes. He was also seen talking to the adult present in the playground and school staff told me he is regularly reprimanded for coming inside school during breaks and lunchtimes to see adults rather than playing outside.
Mrs R said that she felt unstructured times were quite stressful for Kai as he has had issues with these in the past. She explained that when he joined the school he was regularly fighting with other pupils to the extent that some parents had complained about his behaviour. She felt that he now, “second guessed” the ways in which he approached peers and was wary of saying the wrong thing. She thought he was coming into school at break times to avoid playing with peers.

In line with this, the way Kai spoke about his peers clearly shows a change in his view of school from nursery class to his present class. During the tour, he was very keen to show me the nursery classes and his first playground, choosing taking me to these over his current settings. He talked about his early time at school as, “The place I had the most fun ever!”. I asked him how it was different to now:

Kai: We used to play all the time.
Me: When you were in nursery?
Kai: Yeah, I played with Jenny and Ali. Mostly those two.
Me: Are they still in your class now?
Kai: No they are in class two.
Me: Oh OK, but you can play with them at lunchtime I guess?
Kai: Yes, but I don't.

It is worth noting that this is one of the few times Kai named a peer during his interview; while remembering the time when he was in nursery.

Me: What do you play at playtime?
Kai: I don't know, I used to play in the sand.

It is possible that he felt he had a stronger friendship network then, especially in view of the fact that both he and the staff supporting him struggled to name current friends.

Favourite People / Friends

In the interview, I asked Kai to draw his favourite friend to play with in school. Kai drew four stick people and decided that they were in the hall where the class do PE. When
asked, Kai could not tell me who the stick people were or who he plays with regularly. He could not name the people he had played with earlier that day either, “I can’t remember their names quickly”. He was able to say that he plays with different people each day rather than the same people every day.

As we were finishing, Kai talked about playing with a boy in his class (Nikhil). He said that he sometimes plays cars with him. This was an interesting peer to name because he had been told off for fighting with Nikhil just the day before. When I asked Mrs S if they played together or talked in class, she said they had never seen them together. Aside from the fight, I did not observe them together during observations.

TA influence on interactions

During the systematic observations, sixteen instances were recorded of a TA directly influencing an interaction between Kai and a peer. On one occasion TA, Mrs Z, started an interaction between a peer and Kai. This was the only example of this. It happened in class, where Kai was paired up for a partner task. On seven occasions, TAs were observed trying to end interactions between Kai and other pupils. In class, this was primarily to get him to focus on his written work instead of talking. It also happened once in the playground, where Kai was stopped playing because a pupil had complained he was being too rough.

Four instances were recorded of Kai being praised by a TA for interacting with a peer. In all cases, this was in class when he was working well with others. Finally, four occasions were observed of a TA offering negative support in response to Kai interacting with a peer. Twice this was asking him to stop distracting other people, and twice a TA was critical of the topic of conversation (or it's relevance to the lesson being taught) between him and a peer.

While talking about his friendships, Kai voiced some concern that his adult support may be affecting his peer interactions:

*Me: So, do you play with the same person every playtime?*

*Kai: I play with different people sometimes.*
Me: OK

Kai: Sometimes I get lonely.

Me: Really? How come?

Kai: Sometimes no people come to me.

Me: OK Do you not go to them?

Kai: No.

Me: Have you told an adult? Like Mrs I?

Kai: They make it worse.

Kai could not explain how the adults were affecting him interacting with the other pupils or give examples of this happening. He was very clear throughout the interview that it was not the job of adults to help him with his friends.
Matthew – Case Study

Pupil information

Matthew was seven at the time of observations, and was studying in Year Two at his primary school. His Special Educational Needs relate to a medical condition which affects both his physical and cognitive abilities. He is reported as having developmental delay, which means he is working at a level lower than his chronological age. His physical impairments affect his mobility and his independence in school (he needs helps dressing and keeping himself safe).

Both Matthew's speech and language difficulties and his mobility needs affect his ability to interact with peers. He has a speech impediment, which can make it hard to understand what he is saying. He also has issues with expressive and receptive language, which means he does not always understand longer sentences and sometimes struggles to explain what he means. During observations, other pupils were seen asking TAs what he meant when he spoke to them.

His physical impairments also affect his ability to play with peers. He struggles to balance, cannot move around quickly and is limited in the types of games he can play.

Matthew's statement says he has lots of friends, although warns he can be overly reliant upon adults and other pupils. Alongside a differentiated curriculum, adapted provision is suggested in the form of a programme to support his communication skills. School staff said he is not receiving any specific speech and language support at present, although his TAs have strategies in place to check he has understood information and to help him improve his own speech. He has had social skills support in the past but this is no longer in place.

School Information

Matthew's school is a larger than average (over 450 pupils) community primary in a rural village in the Midlands of England. The school has a low percentage of pupils with English as a second language and of pupils eligible for Free School Meals. It's
percentage of pupils with SEN is in line with the national average. The school received a rating of 'good' at it's last Ofsted.

School Experience

Matthew is taught in two classrooms across the school week. He is in his main room for the majority of his lessons but moves into an adjoining room for some of his literacy lessons. During observations, his class was being team-taught by two teachers as it was a handover period. In general however he would be taught by a main class teacher aside from his time in the other literacy classroom.

At his school literacy and numeracy classes are set by attainment. Matthew is in the lower set for numeracy, which is currently taught by his main class teacher Mr C. Matthew is also in the lower attaining set for literacy, however his TA Mrs J is also allocated to support a pupil in the other set for these lessons. Consequently, Matthew, Mrs J and this peer alternate rooms across the week. Although the two teachers are following the same lesson plans, this led to some confusion in the week observed as the two classes were moving through the work at different speeds.

Matthew receives full time TA support including break and lunchtimes.

In the week observed, Matthew spent 71.47% of his time with a TA proximal; the highest of anyone in the sample (who had an average of 52.21%). In my research diaries I wrote that his TAs very rarely moved away from his side and, even when they did, they continued to communicate with him, talking to him from across the room. I recorded feeling that Matthew seemed very unsure of how to behave when his TAs were away from him, suggesting this was a very rare occurrence. Across the week including playtimes, the longest continuous time Matthew spent unsupported was a five minute stretch in a morning lesson. This happened because Mrs J was on the other side of the room helping another pupil with her spellings.
In Matthew's school, pupils have allocated seats for their lessons. Matthew is in the same seat for all lessons in his main classroom, on a table at the back of the room. His seat faces away from the whiteboard. He is always sat with a group of low attaining peers, although this group changes slightly for numeracy lessons. Matthew sits next to his TA, who crouches at the edge of the table to work with him.

On the carpet, Matthew has an allocated seat at the back. He is sat at the end of the row, with his TA next to him and another low attaining peer next to her. He sits here because there is extra space for him to move. TA Mrs K also said being at the back helps because they do not distract the class if they need to talk to Matthew.

In the other literacy class, Matthew, Mrs J and the other pupil work where they can. They do not have allocated spaces so were seen working on the end of a bookcase at one point and on a floor space near the pupils drawers at another.

**Teaching Assistants**

Matthew is supported by two TAs, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. He also has a woman who works with him at lunchtimes, Mrs V, a dinner lady who is now deployed specifically to support him. Both TAs have worked with him since he started at this school.

Mrs J supports Matthew in the mornings, which includes his literacy lessons. She has worked at the school as a TA for more than ten years. She has no formal qualifications linked to educational support.

Mrs K supports Matthew in the afternoons and at break times. She has also worked as a TA at the school for more than ten years, starting as an administration assistant. She also has no formal qualifications linked to educational support.

Mrs V is employed as a dinner lady by the school. She sits with Matthew while he eats and at lunchtime play.
Mrs J and Mrs K explained their role as keeping Matthew safe and helping him to move around the school. Both also talked about differentiating work, in terms of breaking down tasks. Mrs K also talked about helping Matthew to pay attention in class. Neither TA mentioned speech and language support or helping Matthew to interact with peers.

Pupil perceptions of TA role

When asked to draw his helpers in school, Matthew opted to draw Mrs K although this decision may have been affected because he had already drawn Mrs J in another task. I asked Matthew how his TAs support him and he said they, “work with me” and “help with my writing”. He was clear that his TAs just help him in class rather than working with multiple pupils.

I asked about the support he receives in the playground and he expressed that his TAs were there to play with him:

Me: Do they go out in the playground with you?
Matthew: Yeah, at playtime in the playground with me.

Me: What do they do out there?
Matthew: They play chasing.

Me: They play chasing with you?
Matthew: Yeah, we play.

He talked very positively about both his TAs, seeming to view them as peers rather than as adult support.

Peer Interactions

Matthew spent 65.3% of the time observed interacting with adults although (despite the high level of TA proximity) this was split fairly equally between teachers (47.5%) and TAs (52.5%). This is a higher level of adult interaction than the sample average (58.4%).

303
Matthew spent just 13.8% of his time interacting with peers, the second lowest level recorded across the sample (whose average was 21%). He spent 18.4% of his time not interacting with anyone, a result slightly higher than the average for target pupils (17.9%).

His low level of peer interaction is unsurprising (given both his high percentage of adult interaction and of adult proximity). Matthew had very few chances to talk to peers as he spent so much of his time in interactions with teachers and TAs.

In the classroom

Around 10.26% of Matthew's time in class was spent interacting with a peer (this was roughly equal in terms of direction). In comparison, 71.06% of his class time was spent in interactions with adults and the vast majority of these (72.16%) were adult led. As previously stated, there were very few opportunities for Matthew to talk or work with peers independently as his TAs spent so much of his time talking to him. My observation notes show I felt that although he was in class and sat at a table with peers, much of his time in school looked like a one-to-one session between Matthew and a TA. His attention was very much on the TA supporting him and he rarely even looked at the other pupils in his vicinity.

At playtime

In the week observed, Matthew only went out to play at lunchtime on one occasion. Mrs V, who supports him at lunch, gives him the option to stay in school and play on the library computers rather than going into the playground should he wish. Sometimes he is joined by another pupil with SEN, but most often this is a one-to-one session between Mrs V and Matthew. I went to see him every day in school at lunchtime and only once was he outside with the other members of his class. As these lunchtime activities involved know opportunities for peer interaction they were not recorded.

As with his other TAs, Matthew seemed to see Mrs V as a peer rather than as an adult support, as this exchange shows:
Me: Who did you play with today?

Matthew: I played with Mrs V.

Me: Ok, did you go outside at lunchtime today?

Matthew: No we played inside.

Me: You played inside?

Matthew: Mrs V and me.

Me: What did you play?

Matthew: We played games.

Matthew's view of TAs as peers is discussed further in the next section.

Matthew had very few interactions with peers at any point, but numbers were slightly higher in the playground. 32% of his interactions at playtime were with peers although this is still lower than his number of interactions with adults (35.8%). Matthew spent around a third of his time in the playground not interacting with anyone. My observation notes show that a lot of this time was spent looking either for his TA or for a friend as he was often left behind in chasing games due to his mobility issues.

When he did play with peers, it was always with a girl from the other Year Two class, Nina. School staff identified her as his best friend and said he had been known to cry when she doesn't attend school. Nina is in a different class for most of his lessons, but is in his one of his literacy classes. He gets very excited when he sees her.

Favourite People / Friends

Matthew was asked to draw his favourite friend to play with in school. He chose to draw TA Mrs J, saying she was the, “most fun one”. As previously explained, Matthew talked about his TAs playing with him and spoke about them throughout the interview using the same language as he used for his peers.

Matthew (referring to his TAs): They play chasing.

I play games with her.

(referring to his friends): They play tag,
I go down on the climbing frame with them.

It was hard to see any difference between the ways he talked about the two groups. This confusion could be because his TAs often take the place of his peers in school settings; in partner tasks for example or when the class were asked to line up in pairs.

When asked specifically about other pupils, a lot of Matthew's answers were very vague. He often talked about non-specific “friends” and struggled to name them when asked.

Matthew: I play with my friends on the adventure.
Me: Who do you play with?
Matthew: My friends.
Me: Can you tell me their names?
Matthew: Not now.

He did name a girl called Nina (identified as a close friend by school staff) and another peer in the later stages of the interview.

Matthew: I play with Nina.
Me: Do you want to draw her?
Matthew: Yes. Can I remember what she looks like?
Me: I don't know. Can you?
Matthew: Yes.
Me: What sort of things do you like to do with Nina?
Matthew: Play tag.
Me: You play tag with her?
Matthew: Sally too.

TA influence on interactions
Across the time observed ten occasions were recorded of TAs directly influencing Matthew's interactions with peers. On two occasions TAs started an interaction between Matthew and a peer. These both happened in the same literacy lesson, where Mrs J was setting him up to work with another pupil. It should be said she only moved away to let the pair work independently for a total of seven minutes in the hour long class. Eight occasions were recorded were Matthew received positive support from a TA for interacting with a peer. Five of these were in the same literacy session described above and involved Mrs J praising Matthew for working well with his partner:

_Mrs J: You are doing very well working as a team. Good sharing._

The remaining three occasions happened in a single science lesson. This TA Mrs K was praising Matthew for working well as part of a small group.

No occasions were recorded of TAs ending interactions between Matthew and peers or of negative support of him interacting with a peer. This is likely due to the very low numbers of peer interactions seen.

As previously discussed, Matthew spent a higher than average percentage of time in school with an adult proximal and a much higher percentage of time in interactions with adults than the other pupils in the sample. Just under two thirds of all his interactions with peers happened in the 93 minutes he was unsupported. This suggests TA presence may be affecting his peer interactions.

The largest influence on Matthew's peer interactions seemed to be his view of TAs as peers. On multiple occasions, both in class and in the playground he was seen choosing to work or play with, a TA rather than another pupil. His lack of peer interaction is in direct contrast to the high number of friends talked about on his statement and with his sociable nature (I noted in my research diary that he was always looking around for some kind of social contact). I felt that this was a direct result of the adult support he was receiving.
Case Study – Gopal

Pupil Information

Gopal has a physical condition the maintenance of which has caused him to miss a lot of schooling. He has a statement of SEN which provides funding to achieve full time TA support to help him both with the day-to-day maintenance of his health needs as well as a number of educational needs including, speech and language skills, social interaction skills and issues with attention and listening.

The statement outlines the ways in which Gopal’s SEN may impact upon his interactions with peers. Gopal has a speech impediment and talks very quickly which makes his speech very hard to understand. This could limit his ability to interact with peers and might also make it difficult for peers to engage successfully with Gopal. Alongside this, Gopal’s social behaviour is that of a much younger child. He struggles with turn taking and can snatch things from peers if he wants them. He also interrupts and talks over both adults and peers and raises his voice if he feels he isn’t being listened to. Peers may be upset by these types of behaviour. Finally, Gopal has difficulty concentrating for more than a few minutes and so is often reprimanded in class for failing to listen or not completing tasks. Peers were observed asking to move away from Gopal so as not to be distracted or disciplined themselves.

The statement suggests adapted provision in the form of support groups designed to help him with his SEN, specifically a speech and language therapy programme, a social skills group and support to improve his concentration skills. All of these interventions were in place at the time of observation. He also took part in small group literacy sessions and cooking sessions with other pupils with SEN. In all Gopal’s interventions, the adults present focussed on improving his social behaviour; reminding him to say please and thank you, stopping him from interrupting others and rewarding him for sharing resources with others.

School Information

Gopal attends a primary school in the Midlands of England which has recently changed to having academy status. The school had more than 300 pupils on roll, slightly higher than the national average for primary schools. Compared to the national picture, the school has a high proportion of pupils with English as a second language and of pupils with SEN. It has a lower than average percentage of pupils eligible for Free School Meals. The school received a rating of ‘Outstanding’ at its last Ofsted inspection.
School Experience

When he is not outside of class for interventions, Gopal receives all of his lessons in one classroom and is currently taught by two teachers, Mrs A1 (who was not observed) and Mrs A2 (a final placement PGCE student covering Mrs A1’s lessons as part of her course). As previously stated Gopal comes out of class for multiple interventions each week, spending at least half of each day outside of class. These interventions are all covered by a group of TAs. Gopal does not attend assemblies due to his attention difficulties and spends this time in his main classroom with TA Mrs L. Gopal also comes out of class so his TA can help him with the maintenance of physical disability.

Gopal receives support for multiple TAs at school, but has an allocated TA (Mrs L) in all of his lessons. He has full time support, and is never unsupported in school. The observation results show Gopal had an adult present for 68.8% of his time in school, higher than the average for target pupils (52.5%). Adult proximity was much higher in classroom sessions (72.9%) then in the playground (45.7%), which is a common pattern for the sample. 95% of all the times an adult was preset it was a TA and 44% of the times it was Mrs L.

The only time I observed in class where Gopal did not have a TA either with him or keeping a close eye on him was in a ‘choosing’ session. Mrs L was present in the room but sat at a table facing away from the play space in the room. I asked Mrs L about this and she said that she felt Gopal needed some time without her shadowing him because he had so much support in school, she was aware that he found the time without support difficult as he was unsure of his boundaries (his behaviour deteriorated and he had some negative interactions with peers).

Gopal plays in the mainstream school playground at break times and in one of two ‘early years’ playgrounds at lunch. This move to a different playground at lunch was put in place by the school SENCO as she felt the mainstream playground was too loud and busy for the pupils with SEN. Gopal has a choice to go to either the mainstream playground or to one of the ‘early years’ playground each lunchtime but always chooses the early years playground. Gopal’s support and behaviour at break and lunchtimes is discussed later in this case study.

Classroom

In his main class pupils have allocated seats and move around for literacy, numeracy and topic session but Gopal stays in the same seat for all subjects. He sits at a table near the front of the classroom, facing the whiteboard. His TA has a seat next to him
and there is a gap between him and the other pupils at the table so I noted the two of them feel quite isolated from the rest of the class.

Gopal does not join the rest of the class when they sit on the carpet due to his concentration issues. Instead he stays at his table space with Mrs L working on a whiteboard.

Teaching Assistants
Gopal has an allocated TA for 30 hours each week in school, Mrs L. She has worked with Gopal since the start of Year One (approx two years) and at the school for close to ten years.

She described her main role supporting Gopal as helping him with his physical impairments and “keeping him out of trouble”. She also mentioned reminding Gopal about turn taking and being polite. She does not support him at break and lunch time which could explain her not really mentioning peer interactions. Mrs L does not have any qualifications related to educational support but has received training about Gopal’s health needs and about working with people with speech and language difficulties.

I noted that Mrs L often took on the role of interpreter between Gopal and peers because his speech can be hard to comprehend. I noted the following exchange in an intervention session:

Peer: Can I have that? [pointing to pencil]
Gopal: [unintelligible]
Mrs L: He says he still needs the blue pencil

And this in a classroom session:

Me: Where shall we go Gopal? Where do you play in school?
Mrs L: Gopal likes to play in the playground
Me: Do you want to go to the playground?
Gopal: No, the track.

Aside from Mrs L, Gopal came into contact with seven other TAs while I was observing. This was because many of his interventions were lead by multiple members of staff and also because his lunchtime play sessions in the early years playground were covered by a group of four TAs.
Pupil perceptions of TA role

As with the other pupils, Gopal was asked to draw an adult who helps him in school.

Gopal chose to draw Mrs L; although he named multiple adults who work with him (all TAs).

Me: Who will you draw?
Gopal: Mrs L.
Me: Mrs L, Ok.
Gopal: Mrs L works with me every day.
Me: In all of your lessons?
Gopal: Yes, and Mrs AA and Mrs M and Mrs L again.
Me: You have lots of different helpers!
Gopal: Every day. Most of all Mrs L.

Gopal was very clear that Mrs L was his primary adult support, but that she was not the only adult who helped him. He seemed to think the distinction was that Mrs L was there for him and that the other adults worked with many pupils, as shown in this exchange:

Me: What does Mrs L do?
Gopal: Mrs L just helps me.
Me: What does she do to help you?
Gopal: She helps.
Me: Ok. Can you tell me how?
Gopal: The helpers help everybody but Mrs L just looks after me.

Gopal said that Mrs L and the other adults helped him in multiple ways:

Gopal: They read and help, do some computers; they do some playtimes and dinnertimes.

He was very clear that his TAs do not play with him, even when in the playground.

Me: Do they play with you?
Gopal: No they just help.

Gopal saw his TAs, and especially Mrs L, as being there to help him when he needed it. Although he clearly liked his TAs referring to them as ‘lovely’ and ‘my favourite’ and ‘smiling’, he did not confuse this with friendship.

Peer interactions

Interactions

The vast majority of Gopal’s interactions in the week observed were with adults (60.7%), a higher percentage than the sample average (58.4%).

Just 25.6% of all Gopal’s interactions were with peers, which is slightly higher than the sample average (21%) but again lower than for peers.
Gopal spent 11.5% of the time observed not interacting with anyone which is lower than the average for target pupils (17.9%) and makes sense given the high proportion of adult proximity observed (68.8% - the second highest level in the sample).

In the classroom

93.5% of all Gopal’s interactions with adults occurred in the classroom. As with much of the sample a higher proportion of interactions were adult-target (66.9%) rather than target-adult (33.1%).

68.3% of all Gopal’s interactions with peers occurred in the classroom, an unusual pattern for the sample. This figure may reflect the types of lessons Gopal has each week, many of which (especially the interventions) include a high level of peer-peer conversation (albeit framed and led by adult supports).

I observed in my research diaries that Gopal seemed uncomfortable in his mainstream class, squirming in his seat and fidgeting. In his interventions he was much calmer, as if he knew how to behave correctly in these types of lessons.

I briefly talked before about Gopal’s negative behaviours during a ‘choosing’ session in his mainstream class. In this session I observed Gopal snatching toys from other pupils, drawing on other pupils’ work, breaking models others had made. He was very destructive and seemed to enjoy it when the other pupils became upset. Mrs L said she allowed him to play independently in these sessions because he has so little time in school without adult support, however she also said that he almost always end up being punished for poor behaviour or removed from class. It felt to me that Gopal was acting up to get attention from the adults in the room. As soon as they stepped in Gopal seemed much calmer and happier.

In the playground

Just 9.4% of Gopal’s interactions with adults occurred in the playground, which is a low level considering the high ratio of adults to pupils in many of his playtime sessions (4:7 in all lunchtime session). Although the adults were there, and trying to engage Gopal in games I noted in my research diary that he more often chose to play alone or with another pupil than with any of the adults present.

Just 31.7% of Gopal’s peer interactions occurred in the playground. This reflects 54.3% of the data points recorded in the playground. Despite this relatively low level of peer interaction, I noted that Gopal played happily with multiple peers. His play was
sometimes considered too loud or too busy by TAs and he was asked to calm down. When this happened he would follow instruction and change the game.

Favourite people/friends

I asked Gopal to draw his favourite friend to play with in school. Gopal chose to draw a boy from his main class, Jai. This is an interesting choice, in part because he spends so little time in his mainstream class but also because I observed Jai and Gopal having a negative interaction in the “choosing” session already described (Gopal broke a race track Jai was building multiple times, Jai ended up crying).

Gopal: I’ll draw Jai.
Me: Jai, is he in your class?
Gopal: Yeah. Yesterday he is my friend.
Me: You played with him yesterday?
Gopal: Yes.

This exchange suggests Gopal might just have chosen the first child he could think of.

Mrs L confirmed that Gopal rarely plays with Jai, although there have been similar incidents to the one I observed above between the two boys. Mrs L called it a “love/hate relationship”.

Gopal also drew another child, Adrian, who was also in his mainstream class. Mrs L said Gopal regularly played with Adrian. Unlike his narrative about Jai, Gopal gave specific examples of games he played with Adrian,

Me: What do you play with Adrian?
(I asked this question about Jai and Gopal responded ‘don’t know’)
Gopal: At playtime we sometimes can play too...Adrian chasing me and he was coming too and then we’re hiding in the bench
Me: That sounds like fun.
Gopal: It’s Adrian coming. That one’s Adrian.

I observed Gopal playing with Adrian on one occasion in the week observed.

It is worthy of note that Gopal did not mention at any point, any of the other pupils with SEN that he spends so much of his school time with. Even during our tour of the school, when we went to the two early years playgrounds (areas he only plays in with peers with SEN) he still did not talk about these pupils.

Me: who do you play with here?
Gopal: I play on the side.
Me: Which children do you play on the slide with?
Gopal: My friends.
Me: Can you tell me their names?
Gopal: No.
It is possible that Gopal was trying to distance himself from these pupils with SEN. I observed him playing happily with them every lunch time so it does seem strange that he failed to mention them at any point.

**TA influence on interactions**

Seven instances were recorded of a TA influencing an interaction between Gopal and a peer during my research visits. On a five occasions a TA ended an interaction between Gopal and a peer. Three of these were Mrs L ending interactions between Gopal and peers in the “choosing” session described. The remaining two were Mrs AA stopping Gopal playing with a peer during a playtime session (it was felt that the way he was playing was unsafe). It is clear, therefore, that TAs feel they need to police Gopal’s behaviour towards peers in both class and playground sessions.

Two occasions were recorded of TAs positively supporting interactions between Gopal and a peer. Both of these occurred in intervention sessions and involved TAs praising Gopal for being a good friend either by sharing or by being polite.

Across all sessions, just 28.3% of all Gopal’s interactions with peers occurred with an adult proximal. This suggests that Gopal felt less able to talk to peers while adults were present, perhaps because he is often chastised for the ways in which he chooses to interact.
Case Study – Sneha

Pupil information

At the time of observation, Sneha was a seven year old girl, coming to the end of Year Two at her primary school. She has a statement of SEN due to Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and needs related to speech, language and communication skills. She has multiple learning needs and reads and writes at a level well below her chronological age. Her statement provides finding for full time TA support, including break and lunch times.

Sneha's SEN affects her peers interactions with peers in multiple ways. Her speech is hard to understand as her speech sounds are unclear and she has a tendency to whisper. This makes it difficult for her to converse with peers. Alongside this, Sneha has needs relating to her understanding of expressive and receptive language. She often repeats what has been said to her, can need to hear instructions / questions multiple times in order to understand them and can find it hard to express how she is feeling. For peers not used to Sneha's language needs, these could also prove a barrier to successful interaction. Sneha lacks independence and is happiest in adult company, which may mean she prioritizes time with adults over time with peers.

Sneha's MLD could also affect her ability to interact with peers. Her style of play is that of a child much younger than her chronological age, often choosing games and toys aimed at pre-school children. Same age peers may not want to take part in this type of play.

Sneha's statement suggests adapted provision to support her needs in school. Speech and language support, a phonics based early learning programme and small group support sessions to build her confidence are all listed and were in place at the time of observation. A social skills group is also suggested, and this was observed during the research visit. A small group of pupils met together to practise turn taking, sharing and social cues.
Sneha also took part in 'forest school' sessions and small group literacy sessions designed to help her understand the order of stories and the concepts of 'before and after'. She attends cooking sessions with other pupils with SEN, these are focused on sharing, turn taking and following instructions. She also undertakes activities intended to improve her fine and gross motor skills.

School information

Sneha attends an infant academy school in a small town in the Midlands of England. At the time of observation, the school had more than 300 pupils on roll, making it one of the smaller schools observed. The school has been rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Compared to the national average, the school has a high proportion of pupils with SEN and of pupils with English as a second language. It has a lower than average percentage of pupils eligible for FSM.

School experience

Each week Sneha comes out of class for multiple interventions: forest school, small group phonics, social skills practise and small group literacy (story based). She also comes out of class if her TA (Mrs M) feels she is struggling to focus in class or as a reward for completing work. Sneha really enjoys seeing the adults around the school so, when out of class, she and Mrs M sometimes visit the office or the Head teacher.

Aside from her multiple interventions, Sneha is in a mixed ability Year Two class for all subjects. Her class is taught by a main class teacher (Mrs A1) and by two other teachers, Mrs A2 and Mrs A3, who cover her morning off and her PPA time.

Sneha receives full time support from a group of TAs across the week. She is never unsupported, with someone on hand at break and lunchtimes. She does, however, have a single allocated TA who provides her support for the majority of her time in school.

In total, across the research visit, Sneha had an adult proximal for 65.2% of the time. This is higher than the average for target pupils (52.2%). Of these, 92% of the time the
adult present was a TA, and on 66% of occasions it was Mrs M (her allocated TA). In
class, Mrs M was only away from Sneha for short intervals and, even when she moved
away, she would stand watching to ensure Sneha was ok. A large proportion of the
time Sneha spent without an adult proximal was during registration. During this time
she would sit on the carpet with the rest of the class, but I noted she would still look
round and wave at Mrs M, who was at the back of the classroom.

Her intervention sessions were led by multiple TAs and, in these, the staff would rotate
support working with the pupils as and when they were needed. Even in these
sessions, where support shifted throughout, Sneha still had an adult proximal for the
majority of the time (71.4%).

At break times Sneha plays in the main school playground alongside her class mates.
Mrs M is present if Sneha needs support. At lunchtime, however, Sneha (and up to 8
other pupils with SEN) went into a different playground connected to the school's early
years rooms. This has a slide and other play equipment aimed at young pupils (such as
a play kitchen and building blocks). While in this playground, Sneha and the other
pupils were supported by four TAs (this is discussed later in the case study). The
school SENCO explained to me that this move to the early years playground was put in
place as it was felt that the main playground was too loud and busy for many of the
school's pupils with SEN. The pupils have the option to play in the main playground if
they wish to, but Mrs M said Sneha always chooses the early years playground.

There is a third outdoor play space at the school (also connected to the early years
rooms) which the pupils sometimes use. Sneha was not observed playing in this area
during the research visit.

Classroom

In Sneha's classroom, pupils have allocated seats, grouped on tables by attainment.
Sneha sits at the back of the room near the classroom door. Her table also seats three
other low attaining peers and her TA, Mrs M. There is a gap between Sneha, Mrs M,
and the other pupils and I noted it felt as though they were on a table of their own, very
much separate to the other pupils.
On the carpet, the pupils do not have allocated spaces. Sneha tends to sit fairly close to the front near the teacher when she joins in with activities on the carpet (she sometimes stays at her table with Mrs M).

Outside of her main class, Sneha has a work station which includes photographs of activities she has completed, a visual timetable and some resources used to support her in class. Mrs M said they sometimes use this space for interventions or differentiated class work.

**Teaching assistants**

Sneha has full time support in school. For the majority of her time in school she is supported by Mrs M, who has worked with her since the beginning of Year One (close to two years). Mrs M supports Sneha in her main class lessons and leads her literacy, phonics and cooking interventions.

Mrs M described her role supporting Sneha as planning and providing her interventions and keeping her safe in school. She explained that Sneha is not able to access most of the curriculum taught in class, so she spends a lot of her time finding other things Sneha can achieve. I observed this in class, in a lesson where the other pupils were undertaking a writing task, Mrs M gave Sneha a jigsaw to do (a task focused on building her fine motor skills).

Aside from Mrs M, Sneha came into contact with ten other TAs during the research visit, the highest of any pupil in the sample. This was the result of multiple members of staff during some of her intervention sessions (e.g. Four TAs during a cooking session, three in a forest school activity). Alongside this, a group of four other TAs supported Sneha as part of a group of pupils with SEN each lunchtime.

Mrs M has been working at the school for three years and has no formal qualifications related to educational support. She said she had received training to deliver speech and language therapy and in using Makaton since she joined the school.
Pupil perceptions of TA role

When asked to draw someone who helps her in school, Sneha chose to draw her main TA Mrs M. Due to her speech and language needs, Sneha found the interview quite difficult, however she did say some things related to the support she receives.

When asked what Mrs M does to help her, Sneha said “M for Mummy” and then “Mrs M Mummy”. This could suggest Sneha sees Mrs M as a mother figure. It was certainly clear throughout observations that Sneha looked to Mrs M for approval when she is concerned about what to do next as a child would a mother.

Sneha also made several references throughout the tour and interview about playing with the TAs who support her. In relation to Mrs M, I recorded the following exchange:

Me: What do you and Mrs M do?

Sneha: Play

Me: You play together

Sneha: Play all day

When asked about who she likes to play with in the playground (referring to the photographs taken), Sneha named Mrs M and Mrs A4 but did not name any peers. This fits with my observation notes which show that Sneha was much more likely to choose an adult to play with than a peer at play times.

Peer interactions

Sneha had a low level of peer interactions (14.8%) during the research visit, lower than the sample average (21%). Given the observation notes discussed above, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that Sneha had a high level of interactions with adults throughout the visit (64.7%; sample average 58.4%). She spent 18.9% of her time not interacting with anyone. As previously stated, Sneha had high levels of adult proximity throughout the time observed.
In the classroom

The majority of Sneha’s interactions with adults (87.3%) happened during taught sessions, as did the majority of her peer interactions (59.3%). She also recorded 82.6% of the occasions was interacting with anyone in the classroom. As previously stated, Sneha was very rarely without an adult present across her time in school and was more commonly the case in taught sessions (68.8% of her time was with an adult proximal).

I recorded in my research diaries feeling that Sneha spent much of her time in school looking for a response from adults (including me). She was observed waving, calling out names and crossing the classroom to hug or show her work to adults (both TAs, teachers and support staff). She did not display these types of behaviour towards peers.

Sneha spent very little time working on the same task as other members of the class, even when she was not removed for interventions. She had no opportunities observed in her main classroom for either group or partner work.

Mrs M often took on the role of an interpreter in class, ensuring that other people understood what Sneha was saying or what she wanted, as in this exchange:

Mrs U (teacher): What shall we do next Sneha?
Sneha: House
Mrs U: What do you mean?
Mrs M: She wants to go in the greenhouse
Sneha: Strawberries
Mrs U: You want to water the strawberries in the greenhouse?
Sneha: Strawberries!

In an intervention session I recorded the following exchange

Mrs AA (TA): Sneha, can you tell us what you like?
Mrs M: Sneha likes sausages!

Mrs AA: Do you like sausages Sneha?

Mrs M: Sneha would eat sausages every day

Mrs AA: I will put down sausages then

On this occasion it felt more like Mrs M was talking for Sneha rather than supporting
her to be understood,

At playtime

Reflecting my observations, just 40.7% of Sneha's peer interactions happened during
unstructured times. Of the 65 interactions recorded during playtimes, 57.7% were with
adults and just 42.3% were with peers. This is an unusual pattern compared to other
members of the sample.

In my research diaries I noted that, when playing, Sneha called to TAs to join in with
her games rather than peers. For example, she regularly called Mrs AA to join her on
the slide in the early years playground even though there were up to seven other pupils
available to play. This view of TAs as peers is discussed later in the case study.

Sneha did not approach peers to play with her at any point. On a number of occasions,
peers asked Sneha to join in with their games but, on more than one of these, Sneha
left the game shortly thereafter to play with or talk to an adult.

Favourite people / friends

Sneha was asked to draw her favourite friend to play with in school. She chose to draw
two girls, Priya and Asha, and a boy, Imran, who are in her main class. Sneha was not
observed interacting with any of these pupils at any point and Mrs M said she could not
recall Sneha playing with them. Priya and Asha are both popular, high attaining girls so
it is possible Sneha chose them as people she would like to play with, rather than people she regularly played with.

Sneha also chose to draw her teacher for the coming school year, Mrs Q, who she had seen that morning and some sausages so it is also possible she did not fully understand the task at hand.

It is worthy of note that Sneha did not talk about any of the pupils with SEN that she is in both multiple interventions and the early years playground with daily. Furthermore, she did not talk about any of the pupils she drew in regard to any of the places we photographed as areas where she plays.

TA influence on interactions

Only five occasions were recorded of a TA influencing an interaction between Sneha and a peer. All five were TAs offering positive support for an interaction. On all occasions this was Mrs M. Three of these interactions involved praising Sneha for working well with a peer (for example sharing resources in a small group phonics session). The remaining two happened in a literacy session where Miss B helped Sneha to ask a question of a peer and signed (Makaton) her response back to Sneha.

As previously stated, I felt that Sneha saw her TAs as peers rather than as adult supports. This could be affecting her levels of interaction with other pupils as she was observed choosing to interact with adults rather than peers on several occasions.

Alongside this, her TAs were not seen helping Sneha to interact with peers during unstructured times. Due to her speech and language difficulties and low confidence, she would likely benefit from support and this could increase her interaction levels.
Case Study – Lucie

Pupil Information

Lucie was six years and ten months old at the time of my research visit and was receiving her education on a split timetable, with part of her time in a mainstream classroom and the rest in a Hearing Impaired Resource Base (HIRB). She has a statement of SEN due to moderate hearing loss and associated delays in her speech and language skills. When she started school, she was unable to communicate verbally but now speaks regularly and confidently. Despite the significant progress made, Lucie’s speech can still be hard to understand as she speaks very softly and finds it difficult to form some speech sounds. Lucie often forgets to bring her hearing aids to school, which means she cannot hear speech clearly. She has delays in terms of her expressive and receptive language skills, which also affect her ability to interact with peers.

Lucie’s statement suggests a speech and language therapy programme focussed on helping her to express her needs and thoughts clearly and improving her ability to follow instructions. It is suggested that this could help Lucie to communicate more successfully with peers. Regular contact with mainstream peers is advised, so that they could model appropriate language. Support to improve her social confidence and help to develop play skills are also included in the suggested adaptations. At the time of observation, Lucie was following a speech and language programme but no other specific interventions were in place. Mrs Q, a resource base teacher, said the social skills programmes were not running as Lucie had a strong friendship network so it was felt this support was no longer needed.

Lucie’s most recent IEP targets were to speed up her rate of work (she is easily distracted) and to reduce her hesitation between words when reading aloud.

School Information

The school Lucie attends is an all-through academy in the South West of England. Compared to the national average, it is a high proportion of pupils with SEN. It has a
low proportion of pupils eligible for FSM. The school received a 'Satisfactory' rating at its last Ofsted. The school has an attached HIRB on the primary school site.

**School Experience**

In the week observed, Lucie spent a higher proportion of time in the HIRB than she would in a standard week. This was because of a whole school activity week which meant the pupils were off curriculum. Lucie is normally timetabled to join a mainstream class for PE, ICT and some topic sessions each week (approx. 5 hours in total). While I was observing, she did join her mainstream class for some sessions on the final day meaning, that although the pattern was atypical, I observed a similar ratio of 'mainstream schooling : resource base' time as would have been seen in the standard week.

Lucie spends the majority of her time in school in the HIRB. She is taught in one of two conjoined classrooms by a teacher, Mrs Q, and two TAs, Mrs O and Mrs N. All do some teaching and some support work.

Lucie is allocated twenty hours of support each week. In class, she has a TA on hand at all times should she need them – although the TAs work with all pupils in the HIRB rather than being attached one-to-one.

Lucie does not have specific support in the playground, although Mrs O is outside at break times and lunch times (because she is allocated to another pupil during these times).

In terms of adult proximity, Lucie spent 40.2% of her time with an adult present. This is lower than the sample average (52.2%) and is an interesting result given that multiple adults were on hand at all times (three adults for up to eight children in the HIRB). Of the times an adult were present, 53.8% of these it was a teacher and 48.5% it was a TA. I observed in my research diary that Lucie, despite her low confidence, felt like a very independent girl and that, when adults did interact with her, it was generally just to
check on her progress or to set up another task for her. Adults rarely sat with her for long periods of time, the longest stretch recorded was seven consecutive minutes.

**Classroom**

The pupils in the HIRB do not have allocated seats and can choose which room and which table to sit at in each session. TA Mrs O said that in a standard week they sometimes split the group between the two classrooms and that these groups have fixed members.

The HIRB has its own patio space, which the pupils use regularly both for taught and unstructured tasks.

Lucie was observed in her mainstream classroom, however the pupils were taking part in an activity and were not seated at any point. Generally in this class she sits in the centre of this room on a table with several middle attaining peers. A TA is present in this classroom but sits at a nearby table with another pupil.

**Teaching Assistants**

Lucie does not have an attached TA in any lessons, however she has support on hand across her time in school. She is funded twenty hours of support each week.

Lucie receives the majority of her support from two TAs, Mrs N and Mrs O. Mrs N is not allocated to a specific pupil but is simply the main TA working full time in the HIRB. She has worked at the school for more than five years and with Lucie for the last two. Mrs N has had training linked to working with pupils with hearing impairment and is fluent in British Sign Language and Makaton.

Mrs N said that she feels her main role is to help Lucie improve her confidence when speaking and to ensure she is practising her communication skills regularly. She said Lucie sometimes needs support talking to other pupils so she checks on her regularly when she is working in group and partner tasks.
Mrs O is allocated to support a specific pupil in the HIRB but works with other pupils if they need it. Mrs O also supports Lucie (and some other pupils) in mainstream class. She has worked with Lucie for approximately 9 months and at the school as a TA for less than two years. She has no qualifications related to educational support and has had no training since starting at the school. She cannot sign British Sign Language or use Makaton.

Lucie came into contact with one other TA while I was observing, Mrs A1, who works part time in the HIRB. Lucie was also supported by another pupil's parent in one lesson as part of a whole school event. This only accounted for 3 minutes of adult proximity across all observations.

Pupil perceptions of TA role

Lucie was asked to draw an adult who helps her in school. She decided she would draw a peer instead:

Me: So in this box I would like you to draw an adult who helps you in school.

Lucie: I will draw a girl

Me: Ok, who are you going to draw?

Lucie: It's a children but she helped me all the time. Sometimes she's a little bit grumpy.

Me: Is she?

Lucie: Yes, but Natalie not always.

Me: No...

Lucie: Its' Natalie!

Me: Ah, that's nice! How does she help you?

Lucie: Um, when I'm confused she knows how. [...] when we was doing our list didn't know how to spell bananas right? I asked Natalie how to spell bananas, so I told her and she told me.

Me: That's very kind of her. Do you help her too?

Lucie: I help her and she helps me.
Lucie's decision to draw a peer may be the result of her low levels of both adult interactions and adult proximity. Her peers, such as Natalie, may have a larger number of chances to help her; she has more of an opportunity to work with her friends without support.

I asked Lucie about the adults in the HIRB and the ways they help her. She said that Mrs N “helps me the most” and that “Mrs N helps if I am confused with sounding out”. Lucie did not seem to think that Mrs O supported her in school.

Lucie: Mrs O is not there for me.
Me: Ok, what does she do?
Lucie: Mrs O comes to look after Heidi.
Me: But does she work with you?
Lucie: Not mostly.

Lucie clearly understood that Mrs O was allocated to Heidi and felt this meant she was not in class to support her. In observations, only 10.6% of Lucie's interactions were with Mrs O, and 15.7% of the times an adult was proximal it was Mrs O. Their low level of interaction could also explain Lucie's view that Mrs O does not support her in school.

Lucie did not seem to see a difference between the HIRB’s main teacher and the TAs, in terms of the roles they undertook in supporting her. She said that “all the helpers, help lots of children” and that they worked “inside and outside”. She did not use the words “teacher” or “TA” at any point while I was talking to her, calling all adult supporters “helpers”. This is likely due to the way in which adults work in the HIRB, all undertaking some teaching and support work.

Lucie could not think of any ways in which her support could be improved.

Peer interactions
In Line with Lucie’s lower level of adult proximity she also had low levels of adult interaction. In total just 39.8% of all of Lucie’s interactions were with adults. She’s the only pupil in the sample who had higher levels of peer interaction than of adult interaction. In total, 42% of Lucie’s interactions were with peers, double the sample average (21%). Lucie spent 17.8% of the time not interacting with anyone (sample average 17.9%).

In the Classroom

All of Lucie’s interactions with adults occurred in the classroom and 43.4% of her interactions with peers. I noted in my research diaries that Lucie often worked independently in class and worked well with other pupils. She was regularly seen approaching peers and asking them to work with her or for help with her work. Despite her speech and language difficulties and her hearing impairment, within the environment of the HIRB, Lucie was confident talking to other pupils both about task based and non-task based subjects.

I noted that in her mainstream classroom, Lucie seemed more reserved. She was not seen interacting with any pupils that she did not know from the HIRB and in her mainstream lessons she had higher proportions of adult proximity (52%). This may have been because she was feeling less confident in that setting.

At Playtime

Lucie did not interact with any adults in the playground, and 56.6% of all her interactions with peers occurred here. She was observed playing with a group of pupils from the HIRB every break and lunchtime.

During our tour of the school, Lucie made reference to several different games she plays with her friends. She talked clearly about “playing” both in the HIRB and in the playground saying that in the HIRB they had more opportunities to play than in her mainstream class.
Lucie: We play all the time. Lots and lots of times.

Me: Who does?

Lucie: The HIRB children. We play in the HIRB.

Me: Ok, that sounds fun.

Lucie: We play in the HIRB and outside.

This view of the HIRB activities as “play” may be due to the types of lessons they were doing in the week observed, most of which were based around play or craft type tasks. Mrs Q also said that in a standard week they try to include tasks other than those with a writing focus as these can be easier for the pupils to access so much of the work they do has a play element. This could also account for Lucie’s view of the HIRB as somewhere she plays.

Favourite people/friends

Lucie was asked to draw her favourite friend to play with in school. She chose to draw a boy in her class, Spike, saying he was her best friend.

Me: Why is Spike your best friend?

Lucie: Because we were in reception together and we go in taxis and Spike likes me and I always visit him.

Me: You visit him at home?

Lucie: Yeah. I keep visiting him ‘oh hello Spike’.

Spike was one of the HIRB pupils that Lucie was seen playing with each break and lunchtime.

(As well as Spike) Lucie also talked about a number of other pupils who were her friends, all of whom spend some of their time in school in the HIRB. She was clear that she only likes to play with “HIRB children” because they were her friends. She was not observed interacting with any mainstream pupils at any point, even when in her
This is worthy of note as her statement suggests contact with mainstream pupils could help Lucie improve her language.

**TA influence on interactions**

Only two occasions were observed of a TA directly influencing an interaction between Lucie and a peer. Both of these were incidences of positive support, were Mrs N praised Lucie for working well with another pupil.

*Mrs N: Lovely sharing Lucie, well done!*

*You are working together so nicely!*

No interactions with a peer were started or ended by a TA for Lucie.

Lucie had very low levels of TA proximity, however the vast majority of her interactions with peers still occurred while she had no adult present (87.6%). Looking just at class based sessions, 73% of her interactions with peers occurred with no adult present. This suggests that having an adult close to her, much as this was a rare occurrence, may have reduced her number of interactions with peers.
Case Study – Henry

Pupil information

Henry has a statement of SEN due to severe hearing loss, which has resulted in speech and language delay and some concentration issues. His behaviour, both in school and at home, can be challenging and he can struggle to follow instructions. At the time of observations Henry was seven years old and in Year Two at his primary school.

Henry's SEN may affect his peer interactions in multiple ways. Although Henry speaks clearly, he sometimes lacks confidence when talking to new people. Furthermore, his ability to hear spoken word fluctuates so some days he can struggle to hear his own voice or what is being said to him. This could cause difficulties when interacting with peers who are unable to use British Sign Language (BSL) or aren't used to speaking to people with a hearing impairment. Henry has issues with spacial awareness and can struggle to maintain personal space which other pupils may find difficult. He also has issues with sharing and turn-taking which may upset peers.

His statement outlines adapted provision to support Henry's SEN. A speech and language therapy programme is suggested alongside a school environment designed to help Henry improve both his expressive and receptive language. No further interventions are listed but the statement suggests Henry may need support to develop his social interaction skills. Aside from a timetable split between a hearing impaired resource base (HIRB) and a mainstream classroom, Henry is not receiving any specific interventions at present.

The school SENCO gave me Henry's most recent IEP. At the time of observation, he was working on two targets:

- I can understand and use the language of friendship
- I can organize myself in the classroom
Mrs Q, a teacher in the HIRB, explained that the first target had been put in place because Henry was ‘telling tales’ about other pupils and saying unkind things. The second target was chosen as Henry has poor concentration when working independently and asks questions of adults even in relation to very simple problems. She said that the friendship target had been in place for several months as this was an ongoing issue for Henry.

In response to his negative behaviour towards peers, Henry is being put into a separate class to most of the other children he knows from the HIRB when he moves into Year Three. He talked about this in the interview and seemed positive about the year ahead, despite this change.

School information

Henry attends the primary phase of an academy in the south west of England. Across all phases, the school has over 750 pupils on roll. It has a higher than average percentage of pupils with SEN and a low proportion of pupils eligible for FSM. At its last Ofsted the school was given a ‘satisfactory’ rating. The school has a HIRB which is part of the main primary school building, and a nursery based on the same site.

School experience

The week observed was atypical as Henry spent a higher proportion of time in the HIRB than he would in a usual week. In a standard week, Henry goes into a mainstream classroom for several afternoons for his ‘topic’ lessons. In contrast, while I was observing, Henry only went into that class on one day and this was part of a school event. Despite this his HIRB teacher Mrs Q said that his time in the resource base reflected a typical week, except that they were not following the standard curriculum as the whole school were undertaking an activity week. She said the teaching style and support in place were the same as for a standard week. Throughout this section, I will describe Henry’s school experience as observed.

During my research visit, Henry had the vast majority of his lessons in the HIRB. He was taught in one of two classrooms by a team of teachers and TAs as part of a small group of pupils. The HIRB has two conjoined classrooms and its own patio space and
the pupils moved between these freely. Henry was taught by a main teacher, Mrs Q, supported by two TAs (Mrs O and Mrs N). The SENCO, Mrs Y, also came into lessons sometimes and teaches occasional lessons.

Mrs Q and TAs, Mrs O and Mrs N, taught the HIRB pupils as a team. All did some leading of activities and some work in a supportive role.

In the HIRB, the pupils did not have allocated seats. Mrs O said that, in a standard week, the class is sometimes split into two groups which have fixed members and allocated rooms. Even when this happens, the pupils are still able to choose their seats.

I observed Henry in his mainstream classroom but he was taking part in a craft activity and so was not sat at a table. Another important difference was that parents had been invited in to support the event, so Henry's father was there and serving as his primary in-class support. I cannot speak to the typical school experience in the classroom as I did not observe it.

Henry is allocated seventeen hours of support weekly, although in reality he has a TA on hand should he need them for the entirety of his time in the HIRB. In his mainstream class, a TA is present every other lesson (primarily to manage his behaviour, according to the SENCO).

As might be expected from this pattern of support, Henry's observation results show that he spent less time with an adult present than the majority of the sample. Despite being in the HIRB for most of the school week during my research visit, Henry only spent 51.4% of his time with an adult proximal (the sample average is 52.2% but Henry's figure represents the fourth lowest of the eleven pupils observed).

When Henry did have an adult proximal, there was a fairly even split between teachers (40.1%) and TAs (38.8%). This result is unusual for the sample, the majority of whom had much higher levels of TA support. In Henry's case, Mrs Q (the resource base teacher) has taken a specific interest in Henry's behavioural needs and told me she
often finds just sitting near him is enough to calm him down or to get him to focus on his work. She was observed doing this regularly throughout the research visit, and this would definitely account for much of the teacher proximity.

Henry has a TA, Mrs N, present while he is eating at lunch because he had previous issues finishing his food. Henry said he preferred his time in the HIRB because “you get to play all the time and all my friends are there”.

Classroom

As described previously, Henry and the other pupils who use the HIRB have a lot of freedom about where they work. There are no allocated seats, although pupils were observed being moved to separate tables if it was felt they were not working well. The pupils were only observed sitting on the carpet on one occasion, and this was so they could watch a video online (there is no whiteboard in the HIRB, so they did this on a computer screen).

The HIRB has its own patio which was used as an additional classroom space. Henry was observed undertaking craft activities and researching topics on an iPad outside.

Teaching assistants

Henry has an allocated support for 17 hours a week although he has access to more than this.

In the HIRB, aside from teacher Mrs Q, Henry is supported primarily by Mrs N who works full time in the resource base but is allocated to support multiple pupils. Mrs N has worked at the school for more than five years, three years with Henry, and previously worked at a school for children with hearing impairments. She has qualifications in BSL, can use Makaton and has had specific training in strategies to support learners with hearing impairments. Mrs N described her role supporting Henry as keeping him working and stopping him distracting others. She also said that she does specific work with him about politeness and being a good friend.
Henry also receives support from Mrs O, who is allocated full time to another pupil but helps answer questions and check work if needed. Mrs O has worked at the school for less than two years and has known Henry since the start of Year Two (approximately nine months at the time of observation). She has no specific qualifications related to educational support or to working with learners with a hearing impairment. Mrs O said she supports Henry by reminding him of what he should be doing and stopping him if his behaviour becomes challenging. She did not mention support with social interactions but did say she sometimes had to talk to him in the playground (she is outside to support her allocated pupils) as his play can become very boisterous which has been known to upset other pupils.

In the week observed, Henry also came into contact with another TA, Mrs A1, who works part time in the HIRB if needed.

As previously stated, Henry's father also supported him in school in the week I observed. This was due to an event where parents were invited into school and is not typical.

Pupil perceptions of TA role

When asked to draw an adult who helps him in school, Henry chose to draw the entire team who work in the HIRB (the SENCO, a teacher and three TAs). He did not seem to see a distinction between the TAs and the teaching staff either in terms of the role they undertook in school or the ways in which they helped him. This is evident in this exchange:

Me: Can you draw me a picture of one of your helpers in school?
Henry: Mrs N, Mrs Q, Mrs O, Mrs Y. There are lots.
Me: Which one will you draw?
Henry: All of them
Me: Ok, can you tell me what do they do? Do they do different jobs?
Henry: If I need their help, I just put my hand up and one of them comes to help me
Me: Ok. What might you need help with?

Henry: Hard stuff. Mrs Q is good at maths but Mrs N is good at writing.

Throughout the interview, and before I introduced the term, Henry referred to all the HIRB staff as 'helpers'.

I asked Henry about whether Mrs N or Mrs O help him in the playground. He explained that Mrs N came out at lunchtime but that she was there for Heidi (her allocated pupil). He said that he 'couldn't remember' if she helped him in the playground.

As Henry has some issues managing his behaviour during unstructured times, I asked him if Mrs O or Mrs N ever help him when he was playing with friends.

Me: Do they help you when you play with people?

Henry: Sometimes

Me: How do they help?

Henry: Um.. they sort out problems

Me: They sort out problems? That's nice of them

Henry: Yeah

Me: Can you give me an example? Can you tell me of a time when they helped you with a problem when you were playing?

Henry: All of the time!

This exchange suggests that Henry knows that he receives regular support to play well with others. I observed one occasion where Mrs O stopped a game that Henry was part of because other pupils were being knocked over as the group were running. She said that this happens quite often and that Henry is often the instigator of these more lively games.

Henry was clear that the adults in the HIRB were there to support all the children “they help everyone”. He could not think of any ways in which they could help him more.
Peer interactions

In line with the lower levels of adult proximity observed for Henry, relatively low levels of adult interaction were also recorded (53%); lower than the sample average (58.4%). Interestingly, despite roughly equal proportions of proximity, teachers had a much higher percentage of interactions than TAs, at 56.3% (TAs, 30.5%). This can be linked directly to teacher Mrs Q, who took part in 32.8% of all Henry’s interactions with adults.

Henry spent 33.1% of the time observed interacting with peers. This is the second highest percentage recorded across the entire sample (second only to a girl, Lucie, who attends the same school and HIRB), and is higher than the sample average of 21%.

'No interaction' was recorded for just 12.5% of his time in school. This is lower than the average for target pupils (17.9%).

In the classroom

Henry had a higher level of peer interaction in the classroom (64.3%) than he did in the playground (35.7%). This is unusual for the pupils observed, most of whom had higher levels of interaction during playtimes. This figure reflects the style of working observed in the HIRB, much of which was based around partner and group work. During peer interactions in the classroom, Henry was slightly more likely to lead (55.6%) than be the subject of the interaction (44.4%).

98.4% of all Henry’s interactions with adults occurred in the classroom, with only two data points recorded in the playground across the week (the lowest of any target pupil), he had an adult present for 58.6% of his time in class.

At playtime
Despite having the majority of his peer interactions in class, Henry spent 87.5% of his
time in the playground interacting with peers, and the majority of these interactions
(65.7%) were led by the peer. He only spent 0.2% of the time interacting with adults
(the occasion recorded with Mrs O, discussed previously) which is also reflected in the
low level of adult proximity recorded (1.3%).

In my research diaries I noted that Henry played every break and lunch time with the
group of children from the HIRB. Across the research visit he was not seen at any point
interacting with a child who did not have at least some of their schooling within the
HIRB. Henry knew this was the case, telling me during our tour of the school “I only
play with HIRB children”. When I asked him why, he said “they are my friends”.

During the interview, Henry talked about the types of games he and his friends tend to
play in school:

   Me: Can you tell me what you do at playtimes with your friends?
   Henry: Play with them
   Me: Are there any games you play often?
   Henry: I always play werewolfs
   Me: Werewolfs? I don't know that game
   Henry: It's good but it's not good because people roar
   Me: Oh! And then it gets loud in the playground?
   Henry: yeah
   me: Is it a bit like a chasing game?
   Henry: Yeah. Spike just likes playing with it but I don't
   Me: You don't like it?
   Henry: But but sometimes I find it fun so sometimes I join in

This was the game that I had observed the group being warned by Mrs O for playing. I
think this exchange shows that Henry is aware that he can have issues at playtime and
is trying to distance himself from this particular incident.
I recorded in my research diaries that Henry played well with other pupils but that he could be quite dominant and was seen more than once refusing to play a game that he had not chosen.

Favourite people/friends

In the interview I asked Henry to draw his favourite friend to play with in school. As he did with the other drawing task, Henry chose to draw all the regular pupils of the HIRB rather than choosing an individual to draw, “they are all my friends”.

Henry drew himself, alongside four pupils all of whom also spend the majority of their time in the HIRB.

I asked Henry who he would choose to work with, if he could only pick one. Henry chose Tim because he is his cousin, but added “I like the others too though” showing he clearly didn't enjoy picking just one person.

TA influence on interactions

Eight occasions were recorded during the research visit of TAs influencing interactions between Henry and peers. Twice during the week, Mrs N started an interaction between Henry and a peer, both times setting him up working with a partner in class “Henry, you talk to Spike”. One occasion was recorded of a TA ending an interaction between Henry and a peer. This was Mrs O, who stopped Henry dancing with a friend in class.

Four occasions were observed where a TA offered positive support for an interaction between Henry and a peer. These all occurred in the same lesson where Henry was building a model with Timothy and Mrs N was praising him for working well as part of a pair. Only one occasion was recorded of negative support, this was in a humanities lesson where Mrs O asked Henry “Should you be talking to Spike now?” thereby discouraging their conversation.
Although Henry has low levels of adult proximity, a difference can still be seen between his levels of peer interaction when an adult was present and not. In total, 79.6% of all Henry's interactions occurred when there was no adult present. This suggests that adult proximity is having some effect on his peer interactions.
Case Study – Seth

Pupil Information
When I first observed Seth, he was seven years old and in Year Two at his primary school. He has funding to achieve full time support and a statement of SEN, due to a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. His statement identifies multiple needs including speech, language and communication skills, social vulnerability, and attention and listening skills.

Seth’s statement outlines needs which could impact negatively upon his interactions with peers. Seth can be reticent to speak and sometimes does not respond when spoken to. He also has issues with expressive and receptive language so may not understand everything that is said to him. These speech and language difficulties could lead to peers finding it hard to interact with Seth. The statement of SEN suggests a speech and language programme, set up as a small group to enable Seth to build his confidence speaking and to have opportunities to practise speaking with peers.

The statement also identifies Seth as being socially vulnerable. He is keen to be around peers but finds it difficult to read social cues, which can upset other pupils. For example, he can try to join in with games even when he has been asked not to. The statement suggests Seth would benefit from support to build his understanding of facial expressions and to practice turn taking and sharing.

Some of Seth’s behaviours may also affect his peer interactions. He can become upset and, when he does, throws tantrums. Furthermore, he has recently started to touch and pinch himself in class. As these behaviours are socially unacceptable, it may be hard for peers to understand why he is doing them. Seth is also told off for exhibiting these behaviours, which may cause peers to avoid contact with him as they do not want to be told off with him. The statement of SEN suggests that support should be in place to help Seth manage his difficult behaviours and to support peers to understand why Seth may behave in unusual ways and what they could do to help him.

At the time of observation, Seth was receiving no specific interventions in relation to any of his Special Educational Needs. His class teacher, Mrs U, said she could not explain why these were not in place, but that she felt Seth needed more help in class. TA Mrs P said that the school has decided these interventions are not needed for Seth right now, but would discuss at his upcoming annual review whether they should be started for him.
School Information

Seth’s school was the smallest visited as part of this research project. With less than 250 pupils on roll it is smaller than the national average and has just one class (of around 30 pupils) per year group. The school is a voluntary aided faith primary school in the South West of England. Compared to the national average, it has a lower percentage of pupils eligible for Free School Meals and of pupils with SEN. It has a high proportion of pupils with English as a second language compared to the other schools in the sample, with a large number of Polish pupils on roll. The school received a rating of 'Outstanding' at its last Ofsted.

School Experience

Seth is taught in a single mixed ability Year Two class for all of his schooling. He has a main class teacher, Mrs U, for the majority of the week aside from her PPA time (which is covered by another teacher, Mrs A1) and PE lessons (which are taught by an external agency). He comes out of his main classroom once a week for reading practice and another to take part in an ICT session. All pupils in his class undertake these same interventions.

I was told prior to visiting that Seth has full time TA support, as is suggested in his statement, although this does not fit with what was observed. According to the school Seth is supported one-to-one full time in class by Mrs P and has an adult allocated to him at break and lunchtimes. I observed very little interaction between Mrs P and Seth during my research visit. In total Seth had an adult present for just 14.8% of the time observed, by far the lowest of any target pupil. This discrepancy between school reports and my observations is discussed later in the case study.

Classroom

In Seth’s classroom, pupils have allocated seats which do not change by subject. Seth sits at a table to the far right of the classroom near the door. He faces away from the whiteboard. He shares his table with four other pupils, two of whom have English as an additional language (EAL). The remaining two pupils are low attaining, and one has an IEP for behavioural issues.

The pupils spend a lot of time on the carpet being taught as a whole class. They do not have allocated seats but Seth chooses to sit at the back of the carpet. He is sometimes moved to the front by either Mrs P or Mrs U if they are unhappy with his behaviour (e.g. he is pinching himself or they feel he is struggling to concentrate).
Seth has lessons in the ICT suite once a week. In these lessons pupils choose where they would like to sit. While I was observing, Seth opted to sit at a computer away from the other pupils. Mr A2, who often covers these lessons, said this was typical behaviour for Seth.

**Teaching Assistants**

As previously stated I did not observe the same level of support from TAs as the school had stated Seth was receiving. I asked both Ta Mrs P and teacher Mrs U about this discrepancy. Both said Seth’s level of support varies depending on the other tasks that the TA has to do that day. Aside from supporting Seth Mrs P’s responsibility include photocopying work, taking reading tests, making classroom displays and general classroom tidying. She also does some craft activities, for example cake decorating in the week I observed. Mrs P said she prioritises Seth’s support but, if she feels he is coping well in class is happy to leave him to work independently. She said she checks with him and Mrs U regularly throughout the day to see how he is coping.

In my research diary, I noted that Mrs P rarely checked in with Seth at any point, regardless of type of lesson or his behaviour. In one session Seth was becoming upset by the behaviour of pupils at his table and, although Mrs P was in the room preparing some worksheets, it was teacher Mrs U who went to help him. His level of adult interaction will be discussed later in the case study.

Mrs P is allocated to support Seth for 25 hours each week, in class and at lunchtimes. She is scheduled to be in all his lessons, (I was shown her timetable of support by office staff) aside from the other tasks she is responsible for. She has been working with Seth since the start of Year Two (approximately five months at the time of observations) and at the school for around three years. She has no formal qualifications related to educational support and has had no training related to SEN while working at the school. She described her main role as helping lessons to run smoothly and keeping the pupils on task. I asked her about her role supporting Seth. She said she was there to help Seth stay focussed and to stop him disrupting other pupils. She did not talk about Seth’s social needs at any point or about supporting his behaviours in school as specified in his statement.

In the week I observed, Seth also came into contact with Mr A2 who was a student undertaking a placement at the school and fulfilling a basic TA role. He had worked at the school approximately three months with multiple pupils. He said his role supporting
Seth was the same as with the other pupils in the class; helping them to complete tasks and checking their understanding.

Pupil perceptions of TA role

As with the other pupils, Seth was asked to draw an adult who helps him in school. Seth was unsure who to draw:

Seth: Do you mean draw Mrs P?
Me: Does she help you in school?
Seth: Sometimes.
Me: You can draw her if you would like to.
Seth: I will draw her.

It is clear from this exchange that Seth was not certain about who helps him in school. This could be because of his issues with expressive and receptive language or may be due to the ways in which he is supported as he does not seem to spend very much time with any adult support (14.8%).

I asked Seth what Mrs P does and how she helps him. Seth did not name anything specific about the support he receives from Mrs P. Everything he said about Mrs P was clear that she worked with multiple pupils, not just him:

Me: What does Mrs P do?
Seth: Works with me.
Me: Ok does she...
Seth: [interrupts] works with everyone.
Me: She helps other children?
Seth: Yes, not just me sometimes.
Me: How does she help you?
Seth: She helps everyone.

I recorded in my research diary that Seth clearly didn’t like having adults proximal. He would put his head down and lean away from the adult. It is possible he feels the stigma of having support and this is why he wants to be clear to me that he is not the only person getting help.

Seth: Everyone works with Mrs P.
Me: She doesn’t just work with you?
Seth: No, all the children in my class.

Seth did not mention any ways in which his support could be improved and talked as much about the help he gets from Mrs U as from Mrs P.

Peer interactions

Interactions
While I was observing, Seth spent just 39.6% of his time in interactions with adults which is lower than both the sample average (58.4%). This is in line with the low levels of adult proximity observed (14.8%).

In total, Seth spent 29.8% of his time interacting with peers, which is higher than the average for target pupils (21%).

Seth spent 25.7% of the time observed, not interacting with anyone; one of the highest levels recorded for target pupils and therefore higher than the sample average (17.9%).

In the classroom
97.7% of all Seth’s interactions with adults occurred in the classroom, although as previously stated, he has a low level of adult interaction as compared to the rest of the sample. Just over half of all his interactions with peers happened in the classroom (54%). I noted in my research diaries that it felt as though Seth was more often spoken to than the person starting an interaction, and this is borne out by the observation results. (Seth was the speaker in just 3.3% of interactions with adults in the classroom and 43.7% of his interactions with peers). When Seth did talk to peers I noted that it was more often to check he was doing a task correctly or to show them his work. This type of reassurance is something a TA might offer if present.

On several occasions, Seth was seen criticising other pupil’s behaviour or becoming frustrated by the things they were doing. In one lesson some boys at his table were singing and Seth became very angry and asked them to stop multiple times. It felt as though the boys were singing because they wanted to annoy Seth. In the end Seth stood up and complained to Mrs U (Mrs P was not in the classroom). I asked Mrs U about this afterwards and she said this type of exchange has been happening more frequently recently and that she felt they might have to do some work with the boys in class about how to play nicely together. I asked if Seth would get any specific help regarding this and Mrs U said she would talk to Mum about helping him stay calm.

In the playground
Seth only interacted with an adult on five occasions in the playground (of 103 minutes recorded), which is in line with the very low level of adult proximity recorded (1.9%). He was observed playing with multiple peers of different ages across the week. Sometimes he was invited to play by peers, other times he just joined in with games. He played most often with a boy from his class, Isaac, who he talked about multiple times in the interview.
On multiple occasions Seth was seen either arguing with other pupils or throwing tantrums in response to their behaviour. He seemed to have a very strong sense of what was fair and, if he felt things were unfair, would lose his temper or get upset. As was observed in the classroom, some of the other boys were seen actively annoying Seth and seemingly finding it funny when he lost his temper. When this occurred in the playground, school staff (both teachers and dinner ladies) warned Seth about his behaviour and advised the other pupils not to play with him. It felt, to me, as though Seth was the only one being punished for these exchanges.

During our tour Seth named multiple places where he liked to play, but most often spoke of independent games rather than playing with peers. This is reflected in the photographs he took, three of which are of equipment that can only be played on independently. Seth’s relationships with peers are further discussed in the next section.

**Favourite people/friends**

Seth identified a boy in his class called Isaac as his favourite friend to play with in school. After drawing Isaac he decided to draw some other children too.

*Me:* Isaac is in the playground?
*Seth:* Yes he is here (pointing).
*Me:* Ok.
*Seth:* And my other friends.

(Drawing)

*Me:* Ok, who else are you drawing?
*Seth:* Um...Daniel.
*Me:* Daniel from your class?
*Seth:* Yes. Um...Shane.
*Me:* Ok.
*Seth:* Me.
*Me:* That one is you?
*Seth:* Yes and you have to do David ‘cos he’s really funny in that one.
*Me:* Do you play with all these children?
*Seth:* I can sometimes.
*Me:* Did you play with them today?
*Seth:* No. On my own.
*Me:* Ok.
*Seth:* I could play with David

Seth was observed playing with all the pupils he named at some point during the research visit. It should be noted, however, that both Shane and David were involved in the bullying-type incidents described previously. Listening to the interview there are large pauses before each pupil is names (except Isaac) as if Seth is having to think about who he has drawn. I felt as though Seth felt he should draw multiple children,
maybe because his mother had asked whether he played with anyone else. To
appease her he thought of some other children he could draw.

During the tour of the school Seth's mother expressed concerns about Seth's
friendships at school. She said she felt that his friendships had deteriorated recently,
that he had fewer invitations for parties than he used to and he is rarely playing with
anyone when she comes past school. She said she felt Seth was trying to make friends
with other pupils but she felt his ASD was making this hard for him. I asked if she had
talked to school staff about this and she said they had reassured her that he was
playing with others and there were no 'ongoing issues'.

TA influence on interactions

Nine data points were recorded where a TA influenced an interaction between Seth
and a peer, which is a high figure given the low level of TA proximity recorded, it seems
that (when in the room) Mrs P seemed to focus on Seth's peer interactions. Eight of
nine interactions recorded involved Mrs P either ending (five) or criticising (three) an
interaction between Seth and a peer. These all occurred in class and some of the
phrases used are listed here:

Mrs P: Seth, concentrate. No talking.
Leave Isaac alone now
Mouth shut now Seth.
We're not talking now, we are sounding out our words.
Concentrate now. Leave them alone.

Mrs P clearly feels it necessary to stop peer interactions in the classroom, as she feels
these impact negatively upon both Seth's and the other pupils' ability to concentrate on
the tasks set.

Only one occasion was recorded of Mrs P positively influencing peer interactions. This
was in a PE lesson where she praised Seth for working well with his team in a game.
At no point was Mrs P observed starting an interaction between Seth and a peer.

It is hard to quantify Mrs P's impact outside of the interactions described above, as she
spent so little time with Seth while I was observing. I felt as though my presence might
have affected this as Mrs P was very nervous every time she spoke to me, which made
me feel like she might have been avoiding coming into class while I was observing
(this, despite the fact that I spoke to her before I started my observations to ensure she
was happy for me to be there). This would explain the high levels of support reported
by school versus the low levels of support observed.
E: Images from the drawing activity
Olivia’s drawings
Charlie's drawings

My Friends

My Helper
Kai's drawings

My Friends

My Helper

Mrs.

My teacher
She helps
his work.

with
Matthew’s drawings

My Friends

My Helper
Gopal's drawings

My Friends

My Helper
Sneha’s drawings

My Friends

My Helper
Lucie’s drawings

My Friends

My Helper
Seth’s drawings
F: Photographs taken by the pupils

Olivia’s photographs

Me on the swing
I play with my friends

Me on the hopscotch when I had loads of friends. No enema.

A tyre. I go around it

Me in the park. I met all my friends there.

Me on the roundy thing. I play on this on my own.
Jake’s photographs
A book I was reading today in my head.

I was swinging around, I play on this with

I play on this at lunchtimes & breaktimes with

I was putting my head back, I play on this with

I did stay last week with Miss.
Ryan's photographs
Kai's photographs

1. The place where I had the most fun ever.

2. All the stuff I used to play with.

3. Gymnastics with all of Blue Class.

4. Something I like to play with.

5. I play with my friend when there's no one else.
Matthew’s photographs

- I go down on the climbing frame with my friends.
- I played on the sees.
- The pirate ship is fun with pirates.
- I ran around the actual playground.
- I put my feet in the hole.
Gopal’s photographs

I play here in the morning.

The bikes and cars can go on the road.

Things I like choosing time.

In the playground we play on the slide.

I play here in the morning.
Sneha’s photographs
(Sneha’s mother only consented to the use of photographs in which Sneha was not present)
Lucie’s photographs

- We got games to play... (handwritten)
- We play tag there.
- They went out and play.
- The bumper car play in here at lunchtime.
- What we make stuff with.
- When we play outside, we’ve got a little area.
Henry’s photographs

- The wooden house I played in here with my friends.
- The tree of the relaxation garden with my friends.
- I sometimes play soccer in the grass field.
- I read it on my book and my diary.
- Her pencil is red with a cat on it.
Seth’s photographs

- Sometimes I can’t remember
- Legos when we say they are playtime
- A bike making
- There’s a forest trail that I play and it alone
- Standing Room
- I play with
- Clanging Game
G1: Feedback letter for head teachers

Alison Wren
PHD Student
Graduate School, University of the West of England

Address:
Email: alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk
Tel:

Tuesday, 25th March 2014

Dear Head teacher,

I am writing to provide you with some feedback following my research visit to your school in the Spring term of 2014. This feedback brings together information from all of the pupils involved in this study, rather than being specific to your school, and presents results from the observations, from pupil interviews and regarding the pupil responses to the research methods chosen.

As you will see I have attached a feedback sheet for pupils as well as the feedback sheet for school staff and parents, please can you pass these on to the relevant parties and offer them my thanks for participating in the research project and making me feel so welcome during my time in school.

Contact details are provided should you or others have any questions regarding the information presented here and I would be happy to answer any questions or hear any comments that you might have.

Thanks again for all of your support with the research process.
Kind regards,

Alison Wren
PHD student, University of the West of England
Dear [child’s name],

Thank you very much for helping me with my university work by taking me around your school and talking to me about your friends and the people who help you in school. I really enjoyed meeting you and finding out about what school is like for you. I am writing to you to tell you about some of the things I found out in my project.

As well as you, I met ten other children from lots of different places in England. Three of the children were girls and eight were boys. All of you were in either Year One or Year Two when I visited.

You all took me on a tour of your school so I could hear about how you play and who you like to play with. Some children only took me to the playground, but others showed me their classroom, the school hall and other play spaces in school. The tours were very interesting for me.

We took some photographs together using my camera. Lots of children told me how much they liked using the camera and seeing their photos afterwards. The photos you have taken are really good and helped me to remember where you liked to play in school.
Lots of the children I visited drew pictures for me of people who help them in school and of their friends. Some children drew only one friend but others drew lots of different friends. The drawings you did are brilliant, I hope you were proud of them and showed the copy I gave you to people.

By talking to you all, I found out that children are very good at explaining about their friends and about their school. Thank you for being so brave in the interviews and talking to me. All of you told me lots of interesting information about school, about the people who help you and about the games you like to play. I liked watching the different ways you play in school and hearing about these when we talked.

I hope you have enjoyed hearing about what I found out in my project. Thank you again for helping me and for making my visit to your school so much fun.

From Alis
Feedback for school staff and parents

In the Spring term of 2014 I carried out research visits at [school name]. I visited once to observe a child within their classroom and then came back later in the term to carry out an interview with that child. I talked to the children about their friends and about the help they get in school. In total I visited eleven pupils from schools all over England. This feedback brings together results from all of the pupils involved in the project and presents key findings from the project. My contact details are included above should you have any comments or questions regarding this information.

Results from observations

In total, I collected 90 hours of observation data, with an average of 437 minutes per pupil.

During my observations I noted information about who the children talked to during the school day both in class and at break and lunch times. My observations showed that the almost all of the pupils spent most of their time interacting with adults, and that most often they were interacting with their allocated Teaching Assistants. All of the children were also observed talking to peers during my observations, and this happened most often in the playground.

Results from interviews

All eleven of the pupils took part in an interview with me and all were able to talk about their friendships, the way they play and about the help they get in school.

During my second visit, I carried out interviews with the children I had observed. Children were asked to take me on a tour of the school and to take photographs (using an instant camera) of the places they like to play in school. We labelled these photographs together. After this, children were asked two complete two drawing activities (as described above).

All eleven children took me on a tour of their school. Ten of the children took me to the main playground of the school and took the majority of their photographs there. Children also took photographs of the school hall, of other playground spaces and of spaces within school (a sensory room, their classroom, a nursery classroom).

All children named people that they liked to play with during the interview, and nine of the children drew these people. Most children drew a peer but others drew school staff or family members. While drawing, the children named games that they liked to play and many gave specific examples of times they had played with peers.

Children were also asked to draw someone who helps them in school. Eight of the nine children who drew pictures drew their Teaching Assistant(s) and one child drew a girl in her class who she said helps her often. The children were able to talk about what their Teaching Assistant(s) do to help them in school. Many expressed how much they liked their Teaching Assistant(s) during this task.
**Children's responses to the methods used**

During my first visit, I observed children for up to four days of a single week. School staff were told to inform me if my presence was stressful for the child being observed at any point. There were no negative reactions to me observing and many of the children I met told me they liked having me in school.

All of the eleven children took me on a tour of the school and, with my help, took 5 photographs of places around their school. All of the children were given copies of their photographs. Many of the children expressed how much they enjoyed using the camera and were really excited to watch their images process.

The children who took part in the drawing task also expressed that it was an enjoyable activity. Some children completed their pictures quickly while others took the time to colour in their images. During the task, I recorded many children talking about wanting to show their pictures to the people they had drawn.

The methods chosen for the interview supported the children to talk about their friendships and about the help they receive in school. Many of the children had limited speech or lacked confidence but all were able to tell me something about their friends in school and about their support. These methods could be used to support children to talk to adults in school.

**Thank you**

I offer a debt of gratitude to the parents who consented to me observing and interviewing their children for this project. I enjoyed meeting all of the children and had a lot of fun finding out about their ideas and views. Thanks too to those parents who came into school for the interview stage of the research, I'm sure it helped the children to have you present.

I also need to thank the staff who supported me when I visited schools. The teachers, teaching assistants and other staff that I met were all helpful and kind, and made me feel very welcome in the school.
H1: Worksheet for school staff – pupil talk

Worksheet: Supporting pupil’s to talk about their support in school (Drawing activity)

In the box below, draw a picture of the ways your TA helps you:

Can you think of any ways they could help you more? Draw some ideas in the second box:
Prompt questions for school staff (while child is drawing)
Offer to / suggest that they label parts of the picture as this may elicit more detail
Refer to the picture for these questions if possible.
Ask for details about the image - Who is that? What are they doing? Which lesson are you in?
What do you like about having someone to help you in school?
Can you tell me about anything you don't like?
Do you have any ideas about how people could help you more?
What types of things do you think you need the most help with?
What types of things can you do without help?
Can you think of anything that you find hard at school?
How could [TA name] help you with that?

Is there anything else that you want to say about your pictures?

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Photo-elicitation could also be used in this task, instead of drawing activities.

Pupils could be asked to take photographs of activities/places where they need help and activities/places where they don't need help. These could then be used to form a discussion about the help they would like in school. By asking pupils to label the photographs you would get more detail about the reasons behind the photographs taken.
H2: Worksheet for school staff – monitoring opportunities for peer interaction

Worksheet: Monitoring the peer interactions of pupils with SEN
Research has shown that talk with peers is important for children’s learning. This worksheet is designed to monitor the amount of peer interactions occurring in class for an individual pupil with SEN. It is split into two sections, the first for school staff and the second for the pupils themselves.

Activity for school staff
Map the main classroom in the box below.
Include carpet and breakout spaces.

During the day, tally every time the pupil speaks to (or is spoken to by) another child in the class.

Reflecting on the map
Which spaces in the classroom is the most pupil talk happening?
What is different about these spaces?
What could be changed to support peer talk in the spaces where little peer talk occurs?
**Activity for pupils with SEN**
Talking with your friends helps you to learn.
We want you to keep track of the times when you talk to your friends.

Put a sticker in one of these boxes each time you talk to a friend in school.

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<thead>
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<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
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<td><strong>time &amp;</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Lunchtime</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Afternoon</strong></td>
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</table>

**Questions for the end of the week**
Do you talk to your friends more often at break and lunchtimes or in lessons?
Why do you think that is?

Do you talk to your friends more in the morning or the afternoon?
Why do you think that is?

Could you talk to your friends more in class about the things you are learning?
Can you think of anything that would help you to do this?