How do children anticipate, experience and manage the transition from primary to secondary school?

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Abstract

This thesis explores how children imagine, narrate and navigate their transitions from primary to secondary school, and how difference is (re)produced within and between schools through the process of transition. I used a range of creative, qualitative methods with 17 children and their parents/carers in south Wales to explore the transition, its meaning, and how it was negotiated over time. This marks a departure from the tendency in school transitions research to focus on pre-determined notions of the 'good' transition, and view transition as a one-off event and/or a problem to be solved. Taking a child-led, exploratory approach, I framed the transition as a process of being-and-becoming a professional and/or social pupil, examining how children actively and agentically negotiated the new school, its institutional and peer worlds, and the available identities and subject-positions.

This study generated significant insights into children's classed and gendered navigation of the transition, and how it might be possible to rethink current dominant notions of 'success' in school transition. Throughout, children's accounts centred on the social, but emphasised its connection with all other aspects of the transition. The requirements and possibilities of the peer and institutional worlds interacted in both supportive and challenging ways, and the experience of finding (or making) one's place socially was inseparable from finding one's place in the physical school. Children and parents'/carers' accounts also illuminated how class and school 'choice' shaped imaginings of secondary school and negotiation of these. Class and gender were central to participants' narratives, and the ways that different possibilities for being-and-becoming a professional and social pupil were constructed and regulated by the school, pupils, and their interactions. However, participants' accounts also highlighted their agency and space for resistance, and identified ways that recognition, belonging and spaces could be found or created by participants who were marginalised.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1.   Introducing the study

In this thesis, I explore the imaginings and experiences of children undertaking the transition from primary to secondary school in south Wales. Although the secondary transition has been the subject of extensive research, this has largely not been explored from a critical sociological perspective. This research centred the voices of children, as active, agentic and with insight into their own lives and experiences. However, it also situated these accounts in their wider social and societal context, in contrast to much existing research in this area that has positioned the secondary transition as largely individual and decontextualised.

1.2.   What is secondary transition in the UK?

In England and Wales, the 1944 Education Act established a clear division between primary and secondary school, with the age of transfer between schools set at 11. After a brief rise in the 1960s in 'middle schools' for pupils aged 9-13 in England, nearly all schools in the UK have now reverted to the primary/secondary model, with the transition taking place at age 11, between Year Six and Year Seven (Symonds 2015, p.11)

The transition to secondary school signifies a host of changes. Secondary schools typically have a larger student population than primary schools, and larger buildings and grounds. Whereas primary lessons aim principally to teach 'basic skills of literacy and numeracy', secondary school exposes pupils to new subjects, stressing 'the acquisition of knowledge and conceptual understanding across a range of subjects' (Galton 2000, p.321). New lessons are undertaken by new teachers, often using teaching and learning styles different to those used in primary school (Geen 2005; Hayes and Clay 2007). Lessons are taught by multiple different subject specialists, each in different spaces, rather than one class teacher in one classroom (Symonds 2015), and rules, expectations and relationships may differ between teachers (Coffey 2013) .

The secondary school student population may be largely unfamiliar, with primary school friends and acquaintances moving to different schools (Weller 2007) The familial, familiar, and protective primary school environment is replaced by one where teachers generally have less close and supportive relationships with students, particularly initially (Anderson et al. 2000; Noyes 2006; Ashton 2008; Bru et al. 2010; Symonds 2015). This is part of a broader secondary school culture that

emphasises independence, responsibility, discipline and 'self-management' over protection and caring (Lahelma and Gordon 1997; Boyd 2005; Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008; Topping 2011).

Students making this transition are negotiating changes to their physical and social environment, and a new set of formal and informal systems operating within their school (West et al. 2010), bringing different expectations, norms, hierarchies and power relations. The transition also extends outside the official school day; pupils commonly begin to travel independently to and from school for the first time, sometimes travelling significant distances, and starting secondary school is often accompanied by an increase in autonomy and freedom in other areas (Valentine 1997; Weller and Bruegel 2009).

1.3.   Aims and approach of the research

This study aimed to problematise dominant views of the secondary transition as a problem to be resolved, and instead explore the transition in a way that centred children's voices and experiences. It also aimed to attend to the social and societal context of the transition, and explore how it may reproduce difference. Drawing on critical sociological work on education as a tool of social reproduction (see for example Gillborn and Youdell 2000; Youdell 2011; Reay 2017), and interactional and post-structural work on identity and subjectivity (Goffman 1967; Butler 1993; Lawler 2008), the transition is theorised as a process of being-and-becoming a secondary school pupil, undertaken by individual pupils through relational interactions with other actors and the school's parallel institutional and peer-led regulatory systems. Creative, longitudinal methods were used, informed by biographical approaches, to co-produce rich in-depth data on the transition over time, in ways that centred children's own voices and experiences, while also allowing these to be connected to their wider societal context.

1.4.   Structure of the thesis

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

In **Chapter Two**, I review existing literature relating to the secondary transition, identifying dominant themes and approaches. I identify the contributions of this work and its methodological and theoretical limitations, and how these lead to my initial overarching research question.

In **Chapter Three,** I develop a theoretical framework for addressing the question identified in Chapter Two. I suggest that it is valuable to think of the secondary transition as a process of 'being-

and-becoming a secondary school pupil', and explain how this view of transition allowed me to hone my initial research question into three more specific sub-questions.

In **Chapter Four,** I set out the methodology used in this study. I explain key aspects of my methodological approach, and how these allowed me to address my research questions in ways that fit with my theoretical and ethical positioning. I discuss the design of the research and how it was undertaken in practice, including some of the unexpected turns taken, and my pre-emptive and response negotiation of ethical considerations. I explain my own role in the research and my reflexive practice, and the steps I took to analyse the data and develop the narrative of the following chapters.

In **Chapters Five to Seven,** findings from the three 'waves' of data generation are explored in chronological order in discrete chapters. However, thematic connections are identified and explored throughout.

Chapter Five discusses findings from the initial interviews, undertaken when children were at the end of Year Six. It examines their imaginings of the transition, the ways they worked to manage these, and how this was classed, gendered and school-specific.

Chapter Six presents data from the second set of interviews, undertaken immediately following the start of Year Seven. It explores children's accounts of negotiating the new institutional, physical and social spaces of secondary school, with a particular focus on friendships and relationships in the initial weeks of school.

Chapter Seven introduces findings from the third set of interviews, which took place halfway through Year Seven. It explores participants' accounts of being-and-becoming professional and social pupils, and their notions of what it meant to undertake a good transition. This chapter also examines participants' accounts of 'bad' pupils, illustrating how the production of 'bad' pupils and the parallel process of 'failed' transition is inseparable from the production of professional pupils.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis, drawing together key arguments and considering the limitations of the study and its methodological, empirical and theoretical contribution, as well as making suggestions for future research, policy and practice.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1.   Introduction

This chapter discusses key strands of research on the secondary transition, considering its contributions and limitations. This research, which spans more than 50 years (Gittins 1967; Plowden 1967; Nisbet and Entwistle 1969) can be roughly divided into 'outcomes' and 'experiences'. The first of these refers to the extensive work examining associations between the secondary transition and various pre-determined 'outcomes', and the effectiveness of interventions aiming to change these associations. This body of work dates from the emergence of middle schools in the 1960s and the desire to identify the optimal age for changing schools (Galton and McLellan 2018). It is largely quantitative, aiming to identify the effect of transition by measuring change in particular outcomes. The second refers to research exploring expectations and experiences of the secondary transition, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The following sections will explore these two areas of research, acknowledging where they overlap and critiquing the tendency to treat these linked processes as separate entities (Tobbell 2003; West et al. 2010).

These areas of research have different dominant understandings of secondary transition, reflected in their theoretical positioning, aims and foci of research, and methodological approaches. Throughout this chapter, I consider the dominant framing of transition associated with each of these research areas, and their affordances and limitations. I explain that in addition to the methodological shortcomings of much outcomes work, it is also limited by its theoretical underpinnings, particularly in framing the transition as a one-way, one-off event with a universally possible and desirable 'good' outcome, and its positioning of children and their agency (or lack thereof). I argue that 'experiences' work addresses many of these shortcomings, but that limitations and gaps remain. The need to address these gaps leads me to the primary research question addressed in this project, which is introduced in Section 2.4 and developed further in Chapter Three.

2.2.   Outcomes research: identifying transition 'effects'

2.2.1.   Academic attainment, engagement and wellbeing

Much research on secondary transition has focused on its relationship with academic attainment. In England, the two Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation (ORACLE) studies (1975-80; 1996-7) used standardised tests to examine academic progress across the school transition. Both found that nearly 40 per cent of pupils did not make progress between the end of Year Six and

the end of Year Seven, but for most this indicated a short-term 'hiatus' rather than a sustained drop (Croll 1983; Galton and Willcocks 1983; Galton et al. 1999; Galton 2000; Hargreaves and Galton 2002). However, Riglin et al. (2013)'s analysis of attainment data from two non-selective schools in England (n=202) demonstrated a decline in attainment between the end of Year Six and the end of Year Seven. Longitudinal research in the UK supports the argument that this stalling in academic attainment may be part of a more sustained decline. Studies in England (Gibbons and Silva 2008) Scotland (West et al. 2010) and Wales (Powell et al. 2006) demonstrate a drop in the percentage of pupils achieving target grades between the end of Year Six and Year Nine, particularly in Wales. Research from the USA (Benner and Graham 2007; Rosenblatt and Elias 2008; Schwerdt and West 2013) also demonstrates a decline after changing schools, including studies specifically focusing on 'lower-income' young people (Serbin et al. 2013) Latino youth (Vasquez-Salgado and Chavira 2014) and African-Americans (Burchinal et al. 2008).

Methodological limitations mean that it cannot be concluded that the transition causes changes in attainment. In the UK, the near-universal nature of the secondary transition inhibits empirical examination of transition effects, due to the lack of comparison group. However, studies outside the UK, where different models of schooling are more common, demonstrate differences in academic attainment for students who do and do not change schools. Both Vaz et al.'s (2014) research in Australia, and Felmlee et al.'s (2018) study in Iowa and Pennsylvania, found that students who experienced a school transition had lower grades or academic scores, compared to those following a through-school model. McGee et al. (2003, p.3), in a review of international literature, reports that school transitions at different ages in different countries have apparently similar associations with a decline or stalling in academic attainment, and that in cases where multiple transitions take place, this is seen at each transition. Similar findings are reported by Anderson et al. (2000) and Alexander (2010), drawing on data from Australia, England, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Scotland, Spain.

A review by Symonds and Galton (2014) of 104 studies, including n=48 from North America and n=43 from the UK, reports that children's emotional engagement with school declines after transition. Two key studies considered in this review, using the ORACLE data from 1996-1997 (Hargreaves and Galton 2002) and data from three Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England in 2000-2002 (Galton et al. 2003), indicated that for all cohorts, enjoyment of school remained relatively constant between July (Year Six) and November (Year Seven) but then declined significantly between November and the following July. These findings are supported by Huggins and Knight's (1997) questionnaire-based study of four UK schools (n=194), which found an overall 'modest decline' in enjoyment of school between the end of Year Six and Year Seven, more pronounced for girls than boys. Research in the USA has similarly shown a decrease in pupil's sense of belonging after

transitioning to high school (Witherspoon and Ennett 2011, n=3312), as well increasing rates of school absence (Benner and Graham 2007; Schwerdt and West 2013).

Studies have also considered how the transition may impact on mental health. Simmons and Blyth (1987) found that 12-year-olds in UK schools who had not transitioned to middle school had significantly higher self-esteem than those who had. However, international evidence is mixed, demonstrating both an overall increase (Proctor and Choi 1994; Fenzel 2000; Barber and Olsen 2004; Kingery et al. 2011) and decrease (Seidman et al. 1994; Wigfield and Eccles 1994; Cantin and Boivin 2004) across the transition to middle or junior high school. The different findings may be partly explained by the use of different measures of self-esteem. There is also evidence that 'wellbeing' – a wide-ranging term used here to indicate psychological, spiritual or emotional wellbeing (Toma et al. 2014) – is lower in secondary than primary school. This was illustrated in a UK survey (Marks et al. 2004) of 240 children aged 12-15 (two schools) and 330 primary school children aged 9-11 (five schools), demonstrating lower 'life satisfaction' and 'curiosity' scores among secondary students compared to primary students. A larger study (Mclellan et al. 2012, n=5321) found that views of oneself as 'functioning well and fulfilling potential' and 'feeling good and enjoying life' declined with age, and this accelerated after transition to secondary school.

A further study by (McLellan and Galton 2015) provided empirical data on wellbeing, following students transitioning to four secondary schools in England (n=1110), who completed surveys at the end of Year Six and the beginning and end of Year Seven. Wellbeing inside and outside school was examined separately. Whereas scores for wellbeing outside school remained relatively constant over the year, in-school wellbeing was initially unchanged between the end of Year Six and beginning of Year Seven, only to then decline rapidly between the beginning and the end of Year Seven.

As with academic attainment, there is little UK research comparing the wellbeing of transition and non-transition students. The changes reported by (McLellan and Galton 2015) may therefore be due to aspects of secondary school, rather than the transition itself. Viewing transition as the cause of difficulties fails to acknowledge that regardless of how well students 'settle in' or 'adapt', many will experience difficulties during this time, not due to the transition, but because of secondary school itself.

The potential positive aspects of school transition are also rarely considered in outcomes work (Jindal-Snape et al. 2019). Nielsen et al.'s (2017) comparative study, found that 'emotional symptoms, low school connectedness and conduct problems' were relatively stable over time for Australian pupils who experienced one school transition, whereas for pupils in the Danish system ('through-school model'), these problems increased with age.

A key methodological limitation of outcomes work is the lack of longitudinal examination of the secondary transition; the dominant view is as a one-off or short-term event, and a problem to be resolved or improved (Jindal-Snape et al. 2019). An exception is West et al.'s (2010) analysis of longitudinal questionnaire data from a sample of 2586 pupils from 135 primary and 43 secondary schools in Scotland, transitioning in 1994/1995. Data was generated at various ages, including how well the participant at age 13 recalled managing 'school concerns' and 'peer concerns' about the transition. Recalling 'school concerns' at age 13 was associated with higher depression and lower attainment at age 15, whereas recalling 'peer concerns' predicted lower self-esteem and higher levels of depression. Similar, smaller associations were found at age 18/19.

Similarly, Waters et al.'s (2012) study of 1500 pupils transitioning in Australia found that self-reported difficulties at transition were related to higher levels of depression, anxiety and bullying at the end of the first year of school, even when controlling for self-reported depression, anxiety and bullying at the beginning of the first year. The Scottish study relied on recollections of the transition more than a year later (West et al. 2010), and the Australian study only examined one type of school (Catholic Education schools). Additionally, neither included data on schools' transition activities. Nonetheless, both are valuable in examining the relationship between difficulties at transition and later 'outcomes'. Social 'outcomes' are rarely studied, and so Waters et al.'s (2012) research is an important contribution. In contrast, although West et al. (2010) mentioned the 'informal (peer)' dimension of the transition, they did not explore this social aspect in its own right.

Overall, the evidence from the UK suggests either a temporary or sustained stalling in academic attainment following the secondary transition. However, the lack of a comparison group in UK studies, and limited robust longitudinal research, means there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the transition itself causes this change (Taverner et al. 2001). Wilson's (2011) review of 51 quantitative studies on the transition concludes that 'too much reliance is placed on inferences that experience of transition leads to changes in attainment', and Demetriou et al. (2000) call for greater consideration of students' own accounts of this change.

Similarly, much UK research suggests that engagement, motivation, mental health and wellbeing decline immediately following the start of secondary school or during Year Seven. However, international evidence is equivocal. These differing findings may be due to the timing of studies; the common approach of taking measures only immediately before and after the transition may fail to show longer-term patterns. 'The secondary transition' is not a well-defined period, and different views of when this begins and ends lead to different interpretations of its 'effects'. As with attainment, there is a lack of research exploring the mechanisms connecting outcomes to experiences. The following

section considers explanations suggested in outcomes work for the 'effects' of transition, and the implications of this work for how the transition is treated within policy and practice.

2.2.2.   **Explaining transition 'effects'**

Explanations for transition 'outcomes' commonly relate to the academic, organisational and social discontinuities between primary and secondary school. For example, the change in pedagogy, teaching style and assessment practices, the introduction or increase of homework, and new or more difficult lessons (Eccles et al. 1993; Galton et al. 2000; Geen 2005; Hayes and Clay 2007; Smith et al. 2008). Changes in academic attainment, enjoyment of school and wellbeing are also attributed to changes in expectations of pupils' academic work and behaviour, new rules and harsher punishments, alongside negotiation of the new, often larger, physical space (Anderson et al. 2000; Smith et al. 2008).

It is argued that many of these changes, particularly those related to learning, are exacerbated by a 'fresh start' approach taken by many schools, and poor communication between primary and secondary schools (Galton et al. 1999; Hargreaves and Galton 2002; Osborn et al. 2006; McLellan and Galton 2015). Changes to attainment, engagement and wellbeing are also attributed to the shifts in relationships with peers and teachers (Galton et al. 1999; Galton et al. 2003). Jindal-Snape and Miller (2008) argue that the transition is a 'challenge of living' due to the complex array of 'social and personal messages', accompanied by changes or loss in supportive relationships. This view of discontinuities as a challenge has led to calls for schools to do more to 'smooth' the transition (Galton and McLellan 2018) and/or to support children to manage the transition (Anderson et al. 2000). However, there is also an assumed impetus on the child to adapt.

Conversely, it is argued that certain outcomes can be attributed to the *lack* of difference between primary and secondary school, and a lack of acknowledgement of the transition's significance as a rite of passage (Measor and Woods 1984). The apparent tendency for wellbeing and school engagement to rise immediately following transition and then fall has been attributed to pupils becoming disillusioned after the initial 'novelty' wears off, particularly in relation to new lessons, which are often reported to be easier than expected (Harris and Rudduck 1993; Harris 1994; Galton et al. 1999; Galton et al. 2003; Chedzoy and Burden 2005; McLellan and Galton 2015). A pupil interviewed by Galton et al. (2003) at the end of their first term of secondary school reported that, contrary to expectations, 'It's the same here [as at primary school] but more complex…We just do bigger numbers'. This may be an issue if pupils are expecting secondary school to be radically different. The connection between expectations and experience will be considered in greater detail in Section 2.3.

Much of the literature suggesting explanations for transition 'effects' on school engagement, mental health and wellbeing, uses the framework of 'stage-environment fit' (SEF), which argues that psychological difficulties arise due to lack of fit between an environment and the psychological needs of an individual (Eccles et al. 1993). The definition of these needs varies; it is argued that students need 'relatedness, autonomy and competency' for motivation and mental health, to 'feel safe at school and enjoy lessons' for school engagement (Demetriou et al. 2000; OFSTED 2010; Gorard and See 2011); and to feel 'safe, relationally secure and personally confident' to maintain self-esteem (Symonds and Galton 2014). Within this, children can respond to environmental changes by altering their own psychological schema; accommodating changes within their existing mental structures; or by changing the environment to suit themselves (Symonds and Galton 2014). However, SEF relies on a model that presents the needs of Year Seven students as universal. Symonds and Hargreaves (2016) counter this, suggesting that the needs of students who change schools are different to those who do not. Accordingly, the 'stage' in SEF is not universal, but constructed according to the meaning attributed to the transition, which varies both within and between schools (Deakin Crick et al. 2011; Symonds and Hargreaves 2016).

The three broad explanations considered here all frame transition difficulties as caused by some combination of challenges posed by the secondary school, and the ability of individual children to 'cope'. The 'problem' of transition is thereby situated within the school system, with the individual child, or a combination. Different intervention approaches, which focus on either changing the school environment and addressing the discontinuities between primary and secondary school, or working to enhance individuals' ability to 'cope', will be discussed in Section 2.2.5. Notably, there is little acknowledgement within the literature that some pupils struggle with transition due to difficulties with secondary school to which they cannot 'adapt'. Despite the widespread acknowledgement of difficulties and 'negative outcomes', the transition is constructed within outcomes work as something at which pupils will generally succeed, with the exception of a few who experience 'failed transition'. The notion of transition success will be explored in the following section.

2.2.3.   Dominant views of the 'good transition'

This review has so far focused on research on the 'effects' and mechanisms relating to the transition and particular outcomes. Outcomes research also provides insights into dominant views of success in secondary transition. Where good/successful transition is explicitly defined (Galton et al. 1999), the successfully transitioned child is one who achieves academically and maintains appropriate 'motivation' and 'attitudes' towards school. Rice et al. (2015, pp.14–15) offer a similar definition but also include attendance, behaviour and feelings of belonging. This was drawn from data from

repeated questionnaires and interviews undertaken from the final term of Year Six to the final term of Year Seven by pupils, parents and teachers from nine schools in Greater London and South East England. Numbers of participants ranged across the study from n=750 to n=1712 (pupils), n=544 to n=939 (parents) and n=761 to n=1879 (teachers). Evangelou et al. (2008) developed a more extensive definition, following factor analysis of relevant questions on surveys distributed to 550 Year Seven students and 568 parents in six English LEAs as part of the EPPSE 3-14 (Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14) project. Their definition of successful transition comprised students having:

1. Developed new friendships and improved their self-esteem and confidence;

2. Settled so well in school life that they caused no concerns to their parents;

3. Shown an increasing interest in school and school work;

4. Got used to their new routines and school organisation with great ease;

5. Experienced curriculum continuity (defined here as 'finding work completed in Year Six to be very useful for the work they were doing in Year Seven')

(Evangelou et al. 2008, p.16)

With the exception of curriculum continuity, all aspects of the successful transition relate to behaviours or attributes that may be demonstrated by a child. The common criteria are those relating to becoming a good student according to secondary school norms and requirements – attaining academically, and learning and demonstrating 'appropriate' behaviour and, in some cases, social relationships and wellbeing or mental health.

Although outcomes research frequently does not define 'success' or the 'good transition', the assumptions that certain outcomes are good (increased school engagement) or bad (decline in academic progress) reflect a particular view of what it means to transition well. The 'failed' transition is also implicitly defined: one who does not settle in, attain academically, behave appropriately, and form new friendships, or whose mental and social wellbeing declines. Failed transition is described within outcomes literature as associated with 'disengagement…conflict between the youth and the school as an institution', and ultimately dropout or exclusion from school, and 'engagement in marginalized social groups, such as gangs' (Anderson et al. 2000, p.329; Waters et al. 2012; Trotman et al. 2015). Not achieving the 'good transition' in the present is assumed to indicate failure in the future.

The 'good transition' is defined within outcomes work as learning how to manage oneself in secondary school and be a 'good pupil'. The following section reviews research exploring factors associated with '(un)successful' transition according to these definitions, and how the 'outcomes' discussed in Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 vary within and between populations. The need to question both the dominant idea of the 'good transition' and the notion of any 'good transition' that is accessible or desirable to all students, will be discussed in Section 2.2.7.

2.2.4.   <u>Who transitions well?</u>

This section considers research relating to factors associated with different outcomes and aspects of the 'good transition', including academic attainment; pupils' views of having 'settled in'; concerns about school or peers; and 'social adjustment'; as well as pre-transition anxiety, which can be understood as an outcome in itself or a mediator of other outcomes. Research exploring factors associated with 'good' transition generally follows an individualised framework of risk and support/protection, aligning with targeted or universal support via school-based interventions focusing on individual skills, attributes or psychological characteristics. Limited attention is paid to children's wider social networks, and there is little exploration of how factors such as class and gender shape the transition.

Individual attributes

Higher academic attainment is consistently found to be associated with better transition in relation to both academic and peer aspects of transition (Anderson et al. 2000; West et al. 2010; Rice et al. 2015). Findings relating to psychological characteristics and individual skills vary greatly between studies and will not be reported here. However, extensive research in this area (see for example West et al. 2010; Bailey and Baines 2012; Rice et al. 2015; Roberts 2015; St Clair-Thompson et al. 2017; Bharara 2019) reflects the focus on individualised, psychological factors.

Children's views on successful transition

Children's accounts reflect the view of transition as largely individualised, with success depending on their skills or attitudes. Zeedyk et al. (2003) report that before leaving primary school, children prioritised academic ability in response to the question 'what skills and abilities are useful in the move from primary to secondary school?'. This view of transition 'success' as ultimately the responsibility of the child is also seen in research taking a more open-ended approach. For example, Evangelou et al. 2008 – see Section 2.2.3 for study details) asked children for recommendations for steps to improve transition. The most common responses were for children to have the 'right attitude' (21.6%, n=74), schools improving transition work (21.3%, n=73), and individual strategies relating to organisational, social, communication or academic skills. Although participants acknowledged the

role of the school in facilitating their transition, they framed this largely as an individual responsibility, with recommendations 'focused on what the individual child could do to improve his/her transition' (Evangelou et al. 2008, p.34).

School factors

Evangelou et al.'s (2008) examination of the relationship between 'success' in different aspects of the transition, and school-level, family and structural factors, found the factor associated with positive experiences of transition in all areas was the secondary school having provided lots of support with the transfer. Booth and Sheehan (2008) argue that transition difficulties relate to both the 'school climate' and its transition practices. Similarly, a USA-based study by Benner and Graham (2009), which collected data at eight points over two final years of primary and two first years of high school, reported that the decline in grades following the transition was associated with school-level factors including the SES level of the school, ethnic diversity and the size of the school. However, research focusing on school environment generally examines only one school, exploring the impacts of interventions to change its environment or support students. There is little research comparing transition outcomes between schools or exploring how the characteristics of different schools may shape these outcomes.

Gender

Research is equivocal regarding transition 'outcomes' and gender, with different studies reporting that girls (Rice et al. 2015) and boys (Anderson et al. 2000) experience fewer difficulties. When included in outcomes work, gender is viewed as a variable, reflecting essentialised views of differences between homogeneous groups of 'boys' and 'girls'. Demetriou et al. (2000, p.438) claim that 'boys are less likely to be stressed at transfer because they are more used to larger and more fluid [friendship] groupings', but girls may find the academic transition easier. Pietarinen (2000) suggests that girls may cope more effectively with transition, as they are better able to assess their own strengths, and they did not experience the same drop in grades as boys (see also Wilson 2011). Explanations for gendered 'outcomes' are speculative; within outcomes work, the processes that may shape the transition as a gendered experience are not considered.

Class

Poverty or deprivation – generally measured through free school meal (FSM) entitlement – has been found in multiple studies to be associated with worse transition 'outcomes' (Burgess et al. 2008; Evangelou et al. 2008; Egan 2009; Demie and Lewis 2011; Wilson 2011; HoC 2014; Rice et al. 2015). Acknowledging the limitations of FSM entitlement as a proxy for poverty (Hobbs and Vignoles 2010), evidence for this association is strong, with (West et al. 2010 – see Section 2.2.1 for study

details) providing the only evidence to the contrary. Additionally, the attainment gap between pupils who do and do not receive FSM increases in Key Stage 3, compared to Key Stage 2 (Egan 2009; Wilson 2011).

Class is inseparable from other factors associated with particular transition outcomes; notably, pupils living in poverty are more likely to have low academic attainment at the end of primary school, and be identified as having behavioural problems (Stahl 2015), both of which are associated with transition difficulties (Rice et al. 2015). Additionally, classed practices of school selection mean that the trajectories between primary and secondary school are strongly associated with class, with poorer pupils more likely to attend lower-performing and worse-resourced secondary schools (Burgess et al. 2008; Reay 2017). Not all the effects of class can be explained by difference in schools, as classed patterning of transition 'outcomes' has been found for pupils within the same school. However, the lack of attention to the role of the school in shaping different transition 'outcomes', noted in Section 2.2.4, means that this remains under-explored.

Additionally, work that does explore the role of class in the school transition frequently draws on speculative assumptions about parenting, which may reproduce pathologising representations of working-class parents. Galton and Morrison (2000, p.444) report that those who experience worse transitions are those from marginalised groups. Although poverty is not mentioned, it is implied: such pupils come from 'certain ethnic minorities, one-parent families, and live in sub-standard housing'. Other researchers hypothesise that students from more deprived backgrounds may lack parental support or familial academic support (Anderson et al. 2000; Symonds 2015). This view may be shared by professionals (Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008), highlighting the need for caution when positioning certain parenting practices or parents themselves as risky or lacking, as this risks pathologising particular practices and the parents who perform them.

Family and peer factors
Research has also examined the role of relationships in transition, exploring the role of parents, peers and others in shaping 'outcomes'. Where family and parenting are considered, these are largely positioned as variables in a similar way to gender, deprivation, and 'ability', and situated within a similar framework of individual risk/vulnerability/protection. Some studies examine the role of generalised 'parental support', whereas others identify practices or characteristics of parent-child relationships as affecting transition. Chen and Gregory (2009) studied the relationship between parental involvement and academic attainment for a group of 'low-achieving' students in their first year of high school (n=59). Students' perceptions of higher parental expectations of their attainment was associated with higher GPA (Grade Point Average) at the end of Grade Nine, and higher

classroom engagement. Although no association was found for more direct parental engagement, other studies have reported that students from families that are more 'supportive', for example participating together in leisure activities, seem to experience less difficulty with the academic aspects of transition (Rice 1997).

West et al. (2010) found family factors to be associated with both peer and academic outcomes; children with '(over)controlling' parents reported more school and peer concerns, while the converse was true for those reporting higher parental care. Similarly, Waters et al. (2014) found that pupil-reported 'parental presence' and 'parental closeness' were associated with increased odds of reporting an easy transition (see also Lord et al. 1994). A review by McGee et al. (2003, p.47) reported that a number of different aspects of 'family support' promote successful transition. These relate to the resources available to support learning; parental engagement with school and homework; and parents' role in their child's wider life, such as regulating their leisure time and 'creating a positive peer network' (see also Symonds and Galton 2014).

Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) conducted a longitudinal, qualitative study of the transition of eight children in Scotland, who were all either experiencing, or likely to experience trouble with transitioning. Seven parents and six professionals were interviewed, to explore perceptions of the transition, and the role of the children's internal attributes, family, school and community. The study concluded that successful transition was experienced by children who were 'independent, able to make friends and deal with change' and those with a 'cohesive and supportive family', and a support network of peers, neighbours and wider community (Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008, p.16). It provides a rare example of research considering the transition as situated within networks of relationships, not undertaken by a child individually.

2.2.5.   <u>Transition interventions and the good transition</u>

Extensive work has been undertaken to develop and evaluate interventions in primary and/or secondary school to improve particular transition 'outcomes'. Intervention practice commonly frames the transition as a short-term or one-off event, and emphasises the priorities of schools. Intervention research and practice has traditionally focused on the child undertaking the transition – addressing anxieties, providing information about new rules and practices, supporting the development of particular skills – and addressing discontinuities between primary and secondary schools (Galton and McLellan 2018). Interventions may be universal or targeted towards children identified as 'vulnerable', such as those who struggle academically or socially (ESTYN 2010; Bloyce and Frederickson 2012), reflecting a common tendency to distinguish between 'vulnerable' children and others (West et al. 2010; Bharara 2019; White 2020b). In England, current practice focuses largely on

short-term concerns relating to organisational aspects of the transition, rather than exploring more general aspects of secondary school that may cause difficulty or distress (Galton and McLellan 2018). Aspects of secondary school such as less supportive relationships with teachers (Bru et al. 2010), increased assessment and testing (Galton and McLellan 2018), and the presence of bullying cannot necessarily be 'adapted' to in the same way as, for example, learning to negotiate a new and bigger physical space.

2.2.6.   <u>Rethinking secondary transition as socially situated</u>

Although research exploring the role of families in secondary transition 'outcomes' goes some way to considering children within their networks of relationships, this research largely takes an individualised approach. Parenting practices are positioned as attributes an individual child may or may not possess, which shape their likelihood of experiencing (un)successful transition. This body of research looks beyond the individual child as solely responsible for their own transition success/failure, but instead positions this within the individual family, constructing some families as in deficit for not supporting their child correctly.

Jindal-Snape et al. (2019) note that parents' engagement with their child's secondary transition may be determined by the school, echoing findings from Keay et al. (2015) that teachers may view parents' involvement in the transition as a hindrance, due to their anxieties being 'contagious' (Keay et al. 2015, p.287). Osborn et al. (2006) argue that despite the role parents may play in their child's experience, their study of home-school knowledge exchange did not indicate that there was strong communication between home and school during the transition to secondary school.

The recent focus on parents in transitions research is situated within the context of education being increasingly 'outsourced' to parents, particularly mothers, who are expected to engage with their child's education in particular ways (Gillies 2005; Gillies 2006; O'Brien 2007; Reay 2008). It is argued that this expectation of increased parental involvement reproduces middle-class practices of parenting as normal, desirable and necessary, while 'responsibility is projected on to working-class parents for failing to equip their children with the right skills for social improvement' (Gillies 2005, p.849). Parenting practices are framed within outcomes literature in classed terms – ideal parental support for transition involves mobilising economic capital, cultural knowledge and resources that may be inaccessible to working-class parents (Lareau and Horvat 1999; Walkerdine et al. 2001; Gillies 2005). However, reflecting wider policy on (in)correct parenting practices (Gillies 2005), there is little acknowledgement within the literature of how material circumstances and access to capital

may shape families' possibilities for parenting. For Downes et al. (2018), the focus on transition without its wider context reproduces a narrow view of education and fails to engage with its role in reproducing inequalities.

This attitude reflects a general disregard of social context in outcomes research. Although associations between transition 'outcomes' and factors such as gender and deprivation have been explored, such research often repeats essentialising views rather than exploring empirically the processes at work. Class is rarely mentioned explicitly; rather, outcomes research uses 'socio-economic status' or other variations. Payne and Smith (2013) and Bryan (2019) argue that although identifying pupils or populations as 'at risk' may be intended benevolently, such identification reproduces these pupils as 'at risk', without querying the conditions that lead them to be so. Although they make this argument in relation to LGBTQ youth, it can be applied to other populations identified as 'risky' or 'vulnerable'.

Research documenting factors related to the 'good transition' therefore provides an indication that relationships, class and gender are implicated in the transition, but does little to elucidate. This research positions children and their families as individually responsible for their own 'success' (or otherwise) in undertaking the transition. However, children can also be viewed within this work as lacking in agency, as the factors shaping the transition are largely framed as beyond the child's control.

2.2.7.   <u>Contributions and limitations of outcomes work</u>

This part of the chapter reviewed literature on 'effects' or 'outcomes' of the secondary transition. Much of this evidence is equivocal, and limited by the lack of longitudinal work, or comparison between transition and non-transition pupils or between schools. It also lacked empirical exploration of how and why transition 'effects' may take place. Explanations for these effects, which centre on children's ability to 'cope', are frequently speculative and falsely universalise the needs of children.

Another methodological limitation of outcomes work is its tendency to only use data from one school or setting, without considering how the transition may vary between schools, localities or individuals (West et al. 2010). The necessity of exploring how the transition may vary between schools, particularly when considering its relationship with educational inequalities, will be explored in Section 2.3.7.

The 'good transition' is understood within outcomes research in terms of academic attainment and assimilation to secondary school's behaviours and requirements – becoming a 'good pupil' according to schools' priorities. This view is reproduced explicitly and implicitly throughout outcomes literature, in which the transition is positioned as a problem to be resolved through interventions.

Overall, this body of research positions the transition as a one-off event that has 'effects' on children, whose negotiation of the transition relates primarily to their own skills and attributes. Children and/or their families are positioned as individually responsible for ensuring 'successful' transition but children are also framed as largely passive, with factors beyond their control shaping the transition. This work focuses on reaching a predetermined 'good transition', frequently overlooking children's own priorities or the wider social context. In addition to the methodological limitations considered, there are significant theoretical limitations to this view of the transition.

As seen in the discussion of how certain 'outcomes' change over time, and the lack of agreement of the time period constituting 'the transition', it cannot be considered as a one-off event. This argument will be developed further in Section 2.3. Additionally, there are limitations to the framing of children undertaking the transition as separate from their social context, as relatively passive, and as frequently silent. The 'new social studies of childhood' argues that children must be understood as active and agentic in their own lives, and as situated within a social context that may shape the possibilities open to them (Holloway and Valentine 2000b; James et al. 2007; Qvortrup 2009; James 2013; Leonard 2016). There is therefore a need to consider children's active negotiation of the transition, and their own priorities when undertaking it, but also to consider the social and structural context in which this takes place. The lack of attention to structural factors within existing work is particularly notable given the differential transition 'outcomes' according to gender and class (Section 2.2.4). Furthermore, the secondary transition is situated within an education system in which stark classed and gendered inequalities continue to be reproduced (Ringrose 2007; James et al. 2010; Reay 2017; Byrne and De Tona 2019)(Reay 2017; Byrne and de Tona 2019; James et al. 2010; Ringrose 2007).

Finally, there is a need to question the assumption that a particular 'good transition' is universally accessible or desirable. The dominant view of the good transition is one of assimilation and learning how to be a 'good pupil', who adheres to the priorities of the school. This positions schools as neutral spaces, seen also in the lack of attention to schools themselves and the differences between them, in outcomes work. However, it cannot be assumed that this view of the good transition is accessible to all, nor that the priorities of schools align with the priorities or needs of pupils themselves. Consideration of how school-specific and wider constructions of the 'good transition' may enact disciplinary power, and the implications for this research, will be explored in Chapter Three.

Outcomes work is valuable in its identification of associations between the transition and particular measures of attainment, engagement, and wellbeing, and in giving insight into social patterning. This work also illuminates how the secondary transition is frequently positioned within research and practice. However, an additional body of work takes a different approach to the secondary transition, focusing instead on pupils' expectations and experiences. This work addresses many of the critiques of the outcomes work discussed in this section, but certain gaps and limitations remain. The contribution of this work, and its limitations, will be explored in the rest of this chapter.

2.3. <u>Imagining and experiencing the transition</u>

2.3.1. <u>Children's hopes and fears</u>

This section considers children's expectations before they start secondary school, and how these relate to hopes and fears identified by parents or schools. It is widely acknowledged that pupils' feelings are characterised by excitement, hope, fear and anxiety (Measor and Woods 1984; Measor and Fleetham 2005). Hopes and positive expectations are equally implicated in how children manage the transition both before and after they start secondary school. This can be seen in the prevalence of disillusionment and disappointment in students' accounts of their disengagement from school following the transition, discussed in Section 2.2.2 (see for example Galton et al. 2003).

Children's positive expectations of the transition are dominated by social aspects and differences between primary and secondary. Children in Evangelou et al.'s (2008) study commonly suggested making new friends and meeting new people (43.9% of responses) as things to look forward to, followed by more and interesting lessons, activities, clubs and facilities (17.6%). Similarly, in Ashton's (2008) mixed-method study of Year Six students (n= 1673), positive expectations focused on new friends, equipment and facilities, and increased independence. Graham and Hill (2003) surveyed children in Glasgow in their final year of primary school (n=268), and positive expectations centred on making new friends, learning new things, and doing practical subjects. Chedzoy and Burden (2005) used questionnaires to explore the expectations and experiences of children making the transition to five secondary schools in England (n=207). Pupils indicated their expectations, hopes and fears, rather than choosing these from a predetermined set. The vast majority (90%) were looking forward to starting secondary school, and 55% of the Year Six students anticipated making lots of new friends at secondary school.

This excitement at the prospect of new peers contrasts with earlier research, where children's positive expectations of secondary school were more focused on better facilities and new subjects, as well as organisational differences (Bryan 1980, p.237; Brown and Armstrong 1982). It is possible that the role of the transition in making new friends has increased since changes in education policy in the UK (*Education Reform Act 1988*) mean Year Seven pupils may come from a wide variety of primary schools. However, although the relative importance of different aspects may have changed, the common sources of positive anticipation have largely remained the same: new peers, teachers (Rudduck et al. 1996; Akos and Galassi 2004), subjects (Brown and Armstrong 1982; Graham and Hill 2003; Coffey 2013), facilities (Ashton 2008; Symonds 2009); extra-curricular activities (Coffey 2013); and travelling independently (Mellor and Delamont 2011).

Research exploring expectations has been skewed towards exploring children's concerns and anxieties (Jindal-Snape et al. 2019), which seem to have changed little over the past 40 years. Primary school pupils participating in Measor and Woods (1984) ethnography of school transition reported worrying about making or losing friends, being bullied, getting used to the size of the new school, the discipline system and work demands. Brown and Armstrong (1982), who analysed 89 pupils' essays on their feelings before and after starting secondary school, also found that pre-transition worries included getting lost, homework, bullies, being the smallest, strict teachers, and detentions. Similar concerns were reported by Year 8 students recalling the transition in a study by Harris and Rudduck (1993; see also Harris 1994), in which paired interviews were conducted with students from three comprehensive schools in different Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England.

Recent research in this area, including work that allows children to define their own concerns, supports these findings. Pupils reported being scared or concerned about bullying (Chedzoy and Burden 2005; Ashton 2008; Booth and Sheehan 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008; West et al. 2010; Rice et al. 2011; Keay et al. 2015), losing or leaving behind old friends (Ashton 2008; Jindal-Snape and Miller 2008; Dismore and Bailey 2010; Coffey 2013; Keay et al. 2015; Hammond 2016), making new ones (Hammond 2016; Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008; Booth and Sheehan 2008; Ashton 2008), and 'fitting in' (Coffey 2013). Students transitioning to secondary school also reported fear of older and bigger pupils, and of being the smallest (Graham and Hill 2003; Evangelou et al. 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008; Rice et al. 2011; Mackenzie et al. 2012; Tobbell and O'Donnell 2013).

This section has highlighted the role of the social in pupils' expectations of the transition. However, much of the research discussed in this section creates a false division between different aspects of transition. In practice, pupils' concerns about friendships both reflect and shape their general views of transition (Symonds et al. 2014). Supportive friendships may act as a 'buffer' in making students less likely to experience difficulty with other aspects of school (Topping 2011), whereas Ashton (2008)

suggests that in the transition, 'students' heads were full of the social and environmental aspects of moving school, and until these issues were resolved they were not ready to think about the content of the lessons' (Galton et al. 1999; Ashton 2008, p.180; Dalton 2009).

2.3.2. <u>**'You can just walk in and start being a different person': social changes and identity**</u>

The previous section demonstrated that social aspects of the secondary transition are central in children's hopes and fears. Children's focus on the social is connected to a view of the transition as both an opportunity and a threat in relation to their identity (Measor and Woods 1984). Pratt and George (2005) explored the transition experiences of 30 students from two inner-city primary schools in England, using questionnaires and interviews. Anticipating the move to secondary school was painful and difficult, due primarily to concern about friendship and peer relationships. Pupils expressed anxiety about negotiating new peer norms, and fear of isolation. The authors argue that both friendships and some sense of 'fitting in' are necessary for children to make sense of the new school and to develop their identity, and 'if you do not make friends the potentially damaging effect on identity formation, confidence and achievement is immeasurable' (Pratt and George 2005, p.23). This argument is reiterated in ethnographic work by George (2007), exploring girls' negotiation of friendship, including across the secondary transition. She considers identity negotiation as one of the 'functions of friendship' that drive children to invest in them. George further explains that during the secondary transition, friendships are vital sources of support, but that the threat posed by the transition to friendships also represents a threat to identity:

> *'The girls [in the study] had earned respect, esteem and acceptance from their group*
> *at primary school and now these aspects may have to be fought for all over again…*
> *The prospect of marginality in the new school setting, placed the girls in a kind of*
> *limbo where understood references used to identify themselves no longer applied'*
> (George 2007, p.101).

All these studies note that friendships often undergo significant change in anticipation of transition, for example, children may seek to develop friendships with pupils moving to the same secondary school, or to begin to 'ease out' certain friends (Lucey and Reay 2000; Pratt and George 2005, p.19; George 2007; Weller 2007; Hammond 2016). This active negotiation during Year Six of the anticipated new peer group challenges the idea of transition as a one-off process, and one in which children are passive.

Pratt and George (2005) found that pupils' concerns and hopes in relation to friendship varied according to gender, whether they were transferring alone or with others, and their position in existing peer hierarchies at primary school. Other work has found that friendships and relationships are a particular concern for pupils who have previously experienced bullying or social difficulties in primary school (Evangelou et al. 2008), and for 'sole children' who move without others from their primary school (Ashton 2008; Hammond 2016), although Jindal-Snape and Cantali (2019) found that moving with pupils from primary school was not associated with either anticipating or experiencing the transition as unproblematic.

Secondary school may also be an opportunity to end friendships. Pratt and George (2005) found that some pupils were looking forward to ending existing relationships, while others feared being 'dropped'. This echoes earlier ethnographic work by Lucey and Reay (2000) in which focus groups with 90 Year Five and Six children in London identified that for a minority of students, secondary school was seen as presenting an opportunity to make new friends and get rid of primary school 'enemies'. Moving to a new school may be seen as an opportunity for reinvention, particularly if moving without others from the same primary school, due to not being 'known' by teachers or other students (Pratt and George 2005; Weller 2007; Warin and Muldoon 2009). For Weller (2007), friendships are part of identity formation, and she reports that the friendships of participants in her study often changed as a result of children developing 'new interests and identities' in secondary school, or due to changes in the group identity of former friends. Similarly, a pupil in Lucey and Reay's study described anticipating that the different peer group and new social space would open up the possibility of a fundamental change in who it is possible to be:

'You can walk out of this school the person you've been for however many years you've been here and walk into this other school … and start being a different person.'
('Maria', quoted in Lucey and Reay 2000, p.195)

This section has argued that social aspects of secondary school are central to pupils' expectations of the transition, and that this may be connected to questions of identity. In a questionnaire-based study of school transition, 29% of participants also reported expecting that they would 'be a different person' in secondary school (Chedzoy and Burden 2005) In the research discussed, identity was understood as incorporating both knowing how to describe, identify or present oneself, and being known by others (Measor and Woods 1984). The view of the secondary transition as effecting a change in identity, and its implication for this research, will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

2.3.3.   Parents' expectations of the transition

The role of parents in their children's negotiation of the school transition was highlighted in Section 2.2.4. A small amount of research has explored parents' expectations of the transition. These seem to be largely similar to those of children, with a strong focus on social aspects. Zeedyk et al. (2003) conducted a cross-sectional survey of Year Six and Year Seven students (n=192 and n=128 respectively), parents (n=119) and teachers (n=30) in nine primary schools and one secondary school in Scotland and England, focusing on hopes and concerns of secondary school. The key concerns were similar across all groups of participants, with parents and students citing bullying as their biggest concern, as well as others such as peer relations and getting lost being identified. Only a minority of parents and children expressed concern about the child's workload.

There is therefore evidence that the concerns of pupils and parents are closely aligned. This is perhaps unsurprising given the role families may play in children's transition to secondary school (discussed in Section 2.2.4), and adds further weight to the argument that parents may experience their child's secondary transition as significant in their own lives (Osborn et al. 2006; Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008). Teachers' concerns, in contrast, are more closely connected to those addressed through intervention practice, such as academic and organisational aspects of transition (Topping 2011).

2.3.4.   Addressing anxieties

For many pupils, starting secondary school is experienced as a move from a familiar and known space to one that is unknown (Green 1997). It is therefore argued that many anxieties can be addressed using relatively minor interventions, such as providing students with additional information, space to ask questions, or a tour of the school. Ashton (2008) notes that students' experience of transition interventions (such as meeting their new teachers) seemed to have made a notable difference to their fears. For example, she reports that students who had met their new teachers said they felt reassured not only about their teachers but also more generally.

However, there remains a gap between intervention practice, which often focuses on organisational aspects of transition (Galton and McLellan 2018), and research on expectations and experiences, which highlights the importance of social aspects of transition. This not universally the case (see Keay et al. 2015 for an example of work undertaken to support children in negotiating the social aspects of transition), but social and relational aspects of transition remain largely peripheral to transition practice and research in the UK. Researchers have highlighted the need for a more 'holistic' approach to the transition that brings together individual-focused interventions with children and families, and

whole-school changes and interventions (Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008; Rice et al. 2015). Galton and McLellan (2018), in their reflection on four decades of transition work and research, argue that schools should be taking a more wide-ranging approach to transition, considering the 'social bridge' of transition (supporting children with relationships and friendships) alongside the four other 'bridges': administrative, curriculum, pedagogy and managing learning.

Additionally, there is a need to question the view that concerns about the transition are exclusively negative and in need of resolution. Interventions to familiarise new pupils with the new school may help them to feel more prepared and alleviate fears. However, familiarity does not necessarily address pupils' underlying concerns, or the difficulties that some may face. As noted by Delamont and Galton 1986, p.25, emphasis in original), 'Being *told* that there will not be any bullying is no substitute for experiencing a special first year playground with the head on duty, stopping fierce third years from stealing your crisps, football or comic'. Similarly, Hammond (2016) argues that efforts to alleviate students' concerns through identifying strategies to address anticipated problems may lead students to feel disempowered if these strategies are not effective.

Moreover, anxieties may serve an important function, and cannot always be separated from excitement (Lucey and Reay 2000), but form part of a complex emotional landscape negotiated by pupils when imagining the transition (O'Brien 2003). A report by mental health charity YoungMinds, following consultation with children making the secondary transition, argues that there may be value in allowing space for pupils' anxieties before starting secondary school. The report recommends that schools should recognise the anxiety, its relationship with excitement, and the role of such emotions in establishing new relationships (YoungMinds 2010, no page). Accordingly, there is a need to move beyond a focus on anxieties as a problem to be resolved, and consider the interactions between concerns, hopes and expectations, and the experiences of pupils as they start and continue Year Seven. Attention is needed in the areas prioritised by children when anticipating transition, and to consider children's experiences of secondary school in relation to these areas. It is also vital to consider the meanings children attribute to the transition outside these key areas. The following section considers qualitative work relating to the meaning of the transition in children's imaginings, paying attention to the role of myths and 'horror stories' in making sense of the move.

2.3.5.   Myths and horror stories: growing up and the transfer paradox

This section will explore the meanings attributed to the transition in pupils' expectations, and highlight the role of maturity and 'growing up' in how pupils make sense of the transition. This is undertaken through viewing pupils' 'rational' expectations and anxieties (Mellor and Delamont 2011)

within the wider context of the narratives and stories that circulate in relation to the transition, both official and unofficial, through which children learn what to expect.

In qualitative research exploring expectations of the transition, students commonly make two assertions: that they *will be* more grown up, and that they *will need to be* more grown up (Rudduck et al. 1996; Lucey and Reay 2000; Measor and Fleetham 2005; Mellor and Delamont 2011). These are often conflated, as in the comment from a girl in Lucey and Reay's ethnography, that '*When you go there [to secondary school], you're expected to have more sense because you're getting to be more of a teenager.*' (Lucey and Reay 2000, p.195). The shift in maturity that it is assumed will occur, requires the performance of behaviours or dispositions. Maturity is assumed to be desirable, and associated with responsibility, autonomy, and freedom. However, the requirements of secondary school may also be anticipated with trepidation.

In the studies referenced in Section 2.3.1, children's expectations focus on what they anticipate as significant differences: social changes; the school's size and new physical space; moving between lessons; travelling independently; homework; academic demands; new subjects, timetables, facilities, teachers and extra-curricular activities; and harsher disciplinary systems. These are viewed as exciting and/or scary – the 'threats, anxieties, challenges and excitements of unfamiliar environments' (Jackson and Warin 2000, p.378) – but are also significant in terms of what they, and the secondary transition, mean to children. Connections are drawn by children between different or unfamiliar aspects of secondary school and responsibility, autonomy, and maturity (Ashton 2008; Mellor and Delamont 2011). These may be welcomed as exciting by students who position themselves as having outgrown their primary school physically or emotionally, and ready for 'big school' (Measor and Woods 1984; Delamont and Galton 1986; Lucey and Reay 2000; Hodgkin et al. 2013) but seen as threatening to pupils concerned about their maturity or ability to negotiate the demands of the new school. Concerns about the size and physical space of the school, struggling to manage different work or equipment, or being bullied or squashed by older students, may reflect underlying fears and feelings of unreadiness (Pratt and George 2005; Symonds 2009). These interact with pupils' concerns about being at the bottom of the student hierarchy, as they negotiate the 'transfer paradox' whereby new students are expected to take a step up in maturity by moving to secondary school, but a simultaneous step down as they are the youngest in the new school (Hallinan and Hallinan 1992).

A child's image of the secondary transition, and the meaning they attribute to it, will be specific to individual children, drawing on past experiences of primary school, but also shaped by official and unofficial information about their school and secondary school in general (Pietarinen 2000; Pratt and George 2005). This information is made available via older siblings, parents, friends, teachers, and the transition work undertaken by schools. Through these different types of knowledge, different

representations of secondary school and what it signifies are reproduced as they circulate within peer networks, families and popular culture. Valentine (1997) and Weller and Bruegel (2009) note that many parents participate in the construction of the transition as a shift in maturity by increasing the autonomy and responsibility children are accorded. Although schools differ in their approach to the transition, they also frequently emphasise that starting secondary school involves a shift in maturity (Lahelma and Gordon 1997; Gordon et al. 1999; Evangelou et al. 2008; Symonds 2015; Symonds and Hargreaves 2016; Galton and McLellan 2018).

Additionally, when considering the meaning children attribute to the transition, it is important to explicitly consider the role of 'hot knowledge' (Ball and Vincent 1998) communicated by students, particularly the role of the myths and 'horror stories' (Measor and Woods 1984; Delamont 1991; Ashton 2008). Children's accounts of these stories may indicate underlying concerns that are not expressed in research aiming to explore 'rational' anxieties, nor addressed through transition interventions (Mellor and Delamont 2011, p.341). Despite the distinction made here between 'rational' fears and 'myths', in practice these overlap in pupils' imaginings of secondary school and are underpinned by common themes. Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) found that fears relating to aspects such as more difficult schoolwork or not knowing how to negotiate the lunch queue were intertwined with more outlandish fears, such as physical injury through being trodden on by other students (Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008, p.13). The implications of this interconnection for methodological decisions taken in this project will be considered in Chapter Four.

Lucey and Reay (2000) note that 'horror stories' about secondary schools may also serve a protective function, as a means of coping with fear. They found that such stories were attached to particular schools, with students using scary or violent stories to demonise other local schools as part of their construction of accounts of their own secondary school as desirable. Delamont's extensive work exploring the social retelling of myths and horror stories in the secondary transition (Delamont and Galton 1987; Delamont 1989; Delamont 1991; Pugsley et al. 1996), which included interviewing children about the myths they heard, and analysing essays by undergraduate students recalling myths from their childhoods, found that the 'horror stories' transmitted by students to incoming Year Seven students found these could be categorised into four main themes:

1) The lavatory story or 'hit list'– a hazing ritual, often involving the school toilets or bodily violations
2) Violence and bullying, particularly by 'gangs' of older students (more often reported by boys)
3) Fierce, strange or sexually harassing teachers;
4) Humiliation, often with undertones related to sexualisation or being the object of sexual attention (more often reported by girls - see Pugsley et al. 1996).

As can be seen in this research, and echoed in later work (Mellor 2006; Symonds 2009; Symonds 2015), myths about the secondary transition have centred on violence or humiliation enacted by older children or teachers; themes of sexuality and sexual threat; and physical or emotional demands. They also highlight the role of space in pupils' fears; the un-surveilled spaces of the playground and toilets both serve as settings for horror stories. Lucey and Reay (2000, p.197) note that such spaces are significant 'sites which hold multiple possibilities: of 'freedom', increased maturity and for some, of adolescent sexual frisson'. For Symonds (2015), myths relating to hazing or feats of emotional or physical strength reproduce the expectation that children both will and should be more mature. The view of secondary school that is conjured up by these myths is a place of adulthood – indicated by the recurrent theme of sexuality – that poses significant challenges. Myths and horror stories indicate that for many, this is underpinned by the fear that they will fail to live up to the new requirements of secondary school and hence open themselves to humiliation.

The 'transfer paradox' (Hallinan and Hallinan 1992) is central to these horror stories: older students are viewed as a threat, reflecting children's fear of entering the new school at the bottom of its age and status hierarchy. This is reflected in fears of being lost, being bullied (Symonds 2009) or being too small (Pratt and George 2005; Jindal-Snape and Cantali 2019). Notably, the anticipated shift in maturity is inseparable from expectations of the relational aspect of school, with older peers and new teachers viewed as a threat.

This section highlighted the role of maturity and growing up in pupils' expectations of the secondary transition. It argued that maturity is viewed as taking work to access, and something about which they may have little choice, and that may be a source of excitement and fear. The ambivalence about secondary school and the shift in maturity that it represents, strengthens the argument made in Section 2.3.4 that it is counter-productive to attempt to distinguish between 'positive' and 'negative' expectations of the transition.

The notion of the transition as a shift in maturity and a renegotiation of identity is key to how children make sense of the transition. Focusing on these aspects signifies a departure from much of the work exploring transition from an 'outcomes' perspective. Whereas the significance of the transition in relation to 'growing up' is acknowledged in some outcomes work (see for example Galton and Morrison 2000), the dominant view of transition within this literature is as a challenge or discontinuity to negotiate. Additionally, the dominant view of transition as a problem means there is little research exploring the complexities of what children hope, fear, or imagine. This gap in current knowledge shapes one of the questions explored in this study: 'how do children imagine the transition to secondary school?'. Additionally, if research is to centre children's meaning-making, attention

needs to be given to how the transition is experienced as a shift in identity, and viewed in relation to socially specific notions of maturity. This informs the theoretical approach taken to addressing my research questions, which will be set out in Chapter Three.

Having considered some of the key themes seen in children's expectations of the transition, the following sections will now consider research exploring children's accounts of the transition, both reflecting on this experience following the start of secondary school, and longer-term.

2.3.6.   Settling in? Transition as continued negotiation

'Most pupils exhibit a degree of anxiety, perhaps better characterized as apprehension, because it is anxiety tinged with excitement, at the prospect of moving to a larger school…However, the evidence is consistent in testifying to the fact that for the majority of pupils these fears have largely disappeared after the first term in the new school.'
 (Galton and Morrison 2000, pp.443–444).

This section considers a common claim that, for most children, anxieties relating to the transition are quickly resolved and children 'settle in' within a short time (Rice et al. 2015), as well as the view that most pupils will negotiate the transition successfully. This claim is reflected to a certain extent in students' own reflections on the transition, such as findings reported by Zeedyk et al. (2003) in which the majority (63%) of secondary school pupils reported that their experience of the new school was better than expected. Of the 207 students surveyed by Chedzoy and Burden (2005) during Year 7, 91% reported that they had enjoyed the move, a similar proportion to those who had been looking forward to it, whereas in Waters et al. (2014)'s study of the secondary transition in Australia, 69% of first-year secondary school pupils reported that the transition had been easy or somewhat easy, compared to only 45% who had anticipated this in their last year of primary school. Waters et al. (2014) also examined gender differences; none were found for expectations, but boys were more likely to report good experiences of the secondary transition than girls. Graham and Hill (2003) shows 41% of children reporting that they stopped being concerned 'almost immediately'. However, although White children in their study generally reported coping better than expected, the opposite was more common for non-white children. The role of factors such as gender in shaping expectations and experiences of the secondary transition will be considered in more detail in Section 2.3.7.

Although there is evidence that many individual concerns quickly become less of a source of anxiety, this is not universally the case. Rice et al. (2011) found that although some issues were no longer reported as concerning for secondary school pupils, other common concerns expressed by Year Six

pupils (bullying, homework, remembering equipment) remained of concern for secondary school students. Additionally, new concerns – older students, and being able to do the schoolwork – emerged for students surveyed in secondary school. This suggests that concerns relating to navigating organisational discontinuities may be resolved quickly, but that difficulties relating to significant changes may remain a concern or become challenging during Year Seven. Similar conclusions can be drawn from Jindal-Snape and Cantali's (2019) mixed-method study, in which participants recounted that although some of the difficulties anticipated before starting secondary school were resolved, others remained at the end of their second year of secondary school, and a minority of pupils reported that new difficulties had emerged.

This evidence suggests that concerns may change and develop rather than be resolved. Similarly, despite the authors reporting that 'most students appear perfectly able to resolve these [transition] issues satisfactorily' (Chedzoy and Burden 2005, p.32), pupils' reflections indicate that not all concerns were resolved. In Chedzoy and Burden's study, although some fears were reported by the Year Seven students to be unfounded, a fifth of these continued to be concerned about bullying. As noted in Section 2.2.2, students may be disappointed or disillusioned if their experience does not match their expectations (Galton et al. 2003). Students in Chedzoy and Burden's (2005) research reported that expectations such as having lots of interesting things to do and an opportunity to be 'better learners' at secondary school, were not necessarily borne out. Rather, pupils' fear of much harder work was replaced by frustration that the work was repeating content from primary school.

More research has echoed this finding, that anxieties about the social aspects of school continue long after the start of Year Seven, and that new anxieties may arise after starting school (Rice et al. 2015). For Galton and Morrison (2000) social aspects of school continue to be of concern, as the fear of not making any friends is replaced by concern about losing new friends or other peer concerns. They contend that although some initial concerns relating to horror stories or practical arrangements are quickly alleviated, 'anxiety is something that is continually present under the surface…other issues, particularly those linked to pupils' attempts to maintain their self-esteem, remain. In particular, gaining and retaining friendships are continuing problems throughout the pupils' time at school' (Galton and Morrison 2000, p.448).

This is reiterated by Anderson et al. (2000) and McLellan and Galton (2015, p.2)who include academic work in the list of concerns that may remain a 'continuing source of anxiety'. Anderson et al. (2000)'s meta-analysis of transitions research, largely from the USA, found that after transition, students report that work is harder, their teachers are stricter, and they find it more difficult to make friends and feel more alone. West et al.'s (2010) study of transition in Scotland also found that academic difficulties remained for pupils. Osborn et al. (2006) joins Rudduck et al. (1996) and Galton

and colleagues (Galton et al. 2000; Galton and Morrison 2000) in arguing that transition should not be understood as a one-off process, calling for a longer-term approach. However, as yet this approach has rarely been taken, particularly in quantitative or mixed-method research (for notable exceptions see Benner and Graham 2009; West et al. 2010; Jindal-Snape and Cantali 2019).

The centrality of friendships and peer relationships are further highlighted in research looking at experiences of the secondary transition. Pupils' accounts and observational data from ethnographic studies indicate that new friendships form quickly, particularly for students moving to a larger secondary school (Weller 2007; Ganeson and Ehrich 2009). However, the negotiation of the peer group is not simply 'resolved' once pupils make new friends, and it remains a central concern throughout their school lives. Pratt and George (2005) recount that although pupils at the end of their first term at secondary school expressed relief at having made new friends, concerns about relationships and belonging remained of vital importance throughout the academic year, and Weller's (2007) study of social capital in the secondary transition found that friendships continued to change throughout the year (Weller 2007; see also Holland et al. 2007)). Coffey (2013) highlights the need to consider changes in old friendships as well as the development of new ones, suggesting that in Year Seven, pupils may be 'grieving' for primary school friendships (Coffey 2013, p.265).

These studies highlight the need for the secondary transition to be considered as a social process. This contrasts with the tendency of outcomes research to consider peer relationships only as mediators of other 'outcomes', if at all (see Section 2.2.4). The need to engage with the social side of transition is consistent with sociological literature exploring children's accounts of secondary school beyond the transition, which demonstrates that social relationships are central to children's experiences of school (Milner 2005; Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016; Cann 2018) However, in line with the wider lack of attention to children's own voices and priorities in research on the secondary transition, there is currently a lack of research exploring pupils' negotiation of social aspects of the transition, particularly longitudinal work exploring how this is negotiated over time.

This section has argued that there is some evidence to support the common claim that anxieties relating to the secondary transition are quickly alleviated. However, some fears are not quickly resolved. Importantly, friendship and peer relationships, which are central in pupils' hopes and fears of the transition, seem to remain a concern. Additionally, new difficulties or fears may emerge after a child has started secondary school. The claim that most children quickly settle in coheres with the dominant construction of transition anxieties as a problem to be resolved. Here, the transition is viewed as a challenge to be negotiated, but one which is due largely to unfamiliarity rather than threat. However, research exploring both the underlying questions of maturity, growing up and identity, and

the continuing negotiations of friendship and other aspects of transition, suggests that this view of the transition is limited.

It may be valuable to distinguish between expectations relating to new aspects of secondary school, and aspects that retain some level of difficulty throughout the school year. This highlights the need to move beyond approaches that reduce transition to binaries: child settled/not-settled, transition easy/difficult or successful/failed, concerns resolved/not resolved. Rather, there is a need to consider the complexity of children's imaginings, moving beyond an account of the school transition as defined by largely unjustified concerns, which is prevalent in quantitative research.

This complexity is highlighted in Galton and McLellan's (2018) mixed-method exploration of school transition. The authors initially note that 'most pupils said that they had settled in at their new school within a very short time, generally in one or two weeks although for some it took a little longer' (Galton and McLellan 2018, p.269). However, the following quotation from a student three months after starting secondary school explains:

> *'I'm still settling in. I think I'll be settling in for the whole Year Seven with different things but my Mum always says, there are new challenges every day ... I mean I've got friends, know the teachers and also finding classrooms ... that was probably the biggest thing, all these classrooms ... so I do definitely feel like I've settled in.'*

This suggests that settling in is not a one-off event , and captures the complexity and contradiction experienced by pupils in relation to the transition; some initial concerns or difficulties may be quickly resolved, but 'settling in' is also as an ongoing process.

Very little research has explored the transition as an evolving, long-term process. Rather, research often either only examines expectations, or considers whether or not concerns about the transition have been 'resolved', rather than exploring expectations and experiences more holistically (Jindal-Snape 2018; Jindal-Snape and Cantali 2019). The implications for my methodological approach will be explored in Chapter Four. However, a small number of studies have taken this approach. This research, and the ways that it addresses limitations of outcomes research discussed in Section 2.2.7, will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.7.   **Transition as socially situated and school-specific**

The previous section argued that there is a need to consider the school transition as a potentially lengthy process rather than a single event. This section examines research that takes this approach, undertaking in-depth exploration of children's experiences over time. These studies of the secondary transition support the argument made in Sections 2.3.5 and 2.3.6 that both identity and social aspects of transition are central to children's accounts of negotiating the secondary transition. Additionally, they emphasise the need to consider how the transition is shaped by structural constraints.

As noted in Section 2.2.4, research considering gender and class in the school transition is limited, and much of this has either treated gender and class as predictive variables, or been largely speculative regarding how they shape the transition. However, there is evidence that these are central to how the transition is experienced. Fisher's ethnographic study of white working-class girls found that their classed and gendered positioning shaped the behaviours they adopted (Fisher 2017). This study attends to a key limitation of outcomes work: its lack of engagement with how the transition is shaped by structural factors. Gordon et al. (2000, p.111), in their ethnographic work exploring citizenship and difference in secondary schools, report that in the initial weeks of secondary school, 'patterns of friendship are infused with dominant notions of gender and gender appropriate behaviour'. Gordon et al. (1999) and Lahelma and Gordon (1997) take a post-structural view of gender, arguing that the transition to secondary school is not only shaped by gender, but that gender and other differences are actively remade in the process. Jackson and Warin (2000), drawing on Jackson's (1997) mixed-method study of the transition from primary to secondary school, found that students negotiated the transition in gendered ways, with boys 'increasing their levels of competition, status-seeking and issuing put-downs and challenges' and girls socialising and undertaking self-comparison only with other girls.

O'Brien (2003) explored the role of gender and class in shaping the secondary transition in her ethnographic study in Ireland. She found both classed and gender differences were seen in the concerns identified by students and how they expressed them. For example, concerns relating to bullying and general safety in the new school were more prevalent for working-class girls, while middle-class girls were largely confident about the transition and excited to meet new people, even if they were moving to schools in a new area without others from their primary school Similar classed patterning was found by Weller (2007) for both male and female students. O'Brien (2003) reports that stronger attachment to primary school and the relationships and support it represented, and stronger emotions about leaving, were expressed by those transitioning from convent primary schools, which are described as 'predominantly working-class'. This suggests that the

tensions faced by all students between reinvention and detachment, becoming and un-becoming (Ecclestone et al. 2010) may be experienced unequally according to class and gender.

The classed and gendered dimension of the school transition has also been highlighted in relation to academic aspects of transition. Echoing the extensive literature demonstrating that working-class children are assumed by teachers to be less 'bright' and more disruptive than middle-class children (see for example Lucey and Reay 2002). O'Brien found that working-class girls in her study reported 'not being given a 'fair chance' at their schoolwork by teachers' (O'Brien 2003, p.257), which O'Brien interprets as 'mak[ing] differentiations that shape students' identities'. Similar processes were described by Noyes (2003; 2006) and Winther-Lindqvist (2012), who explored the trajectories of two pupils from primary to secondary school, demonstrating that their identity negotiation is shaped by factors including gender, class and aspects of the school 'ethos'.

The research discussed in this section also highlights the school-specific nature of the secondary transition, the role of school 'choice' in shaping the transition, and how this interacts with class. A significant body of research demonstrates that classed practices of school 'choice' shape access to particular schools, and hence the continued concentration of poorer pupils in low-ranked and least well-resourced schools. In the UK, the *Education Reform Act (1988)* gave families the opportunity to choose a secondary school for their child rather than being allocated the closest school. Extensive research demonstrates that significant resources may be needed to secure access to the 'best' schools, meaning in practice that choice is only available to some (Ball 1993; Reay and Ball 1997; Ball and Vincent 1998; Ball 2003; Reay and Lucey 2003; Byrne and De Tona 2019).

Recalling the discussion of outcomes research in Section 2.2.4, quantitative work exploring differential transition 'outcomes' according to deprivation indicates that differences are reported both between different students in the same school, and between different schools according to their classed make-up (generally measured using free school meal entitlement as a proxy). However, Section 2.2.7 argued that research empirically exploring the role of class in the school transition is lacking, and that proposed explanations often reproduce stereotypical and pathologising claims relating to classed parenting or educational practices. This lack of engagement with class in school transitions research is seen in the general disconnection between research exploring school choice – focusing on the decision-making and application process - and research exploring the transition, which often considers only one school and does not attend to the ways the process may vary between schools (acknowledging notable exceptions: Lucey and Reay 2000; Reay and Lucey 2000; O'Brien 2003).

Exploration of experiences, however, demonstrates both that expectations and experiences of secondary school are classed, and that this cannot be separated from the classed patterning of trajectories between primary and secondary school, and hence the school 'choice' process (Reay and Lucey 2000; O'Brien 2003; Reay and Lucey 2003; Weller 2007). Weller (2007) explains that the classed differences found in children's accounts of the fear of losing friends or being alone were due in part to classed trajectories of primary-secondary transition. The children in her study who moved to a secondary school alone were 'polarised between those moving to the high achieving, popular schools some distance away, where parents used their resources to 'do the best for their child', and those moving to more local, less desirable schools that others were able to avoid' (Weller 2007, pp.348–349). Those who were moving to these 'less desirable' schools experienced more difficulty in negotiating the new school than the middle-class children who were moving to 'prestigious' secondary school, in which many of the other children also moved alone. Ashton (2008) reported that pupils' concerns about the transition varied not only according to which school they would be attending, but also whether or not they were starting at their chosen secondary school. Lucey and Reay (2000), focusing specifically on questions of identity, also argue that the possibilities for identity negotiation are structured by individual schools, with pupils in their study presenting the different secondary schools they would be attending as expanding or constraining the possibilities for their future selves.

Downes et al. (2018) call for research into school transitions to consider the spaces to and from which a student is transitioning, and the context in which this takes place. Questioning 'the background over and against which the bridge [of transition] is taking place' (Downes et al. 2018a, p.544) involves understanding the transition as socially situated and socially defined. Additionally, research on school 'choice' demonstrates that for many children and their families, their transition to secondary school starts a long time before research considering 'the secondary transition' generates data (Ball 2003; Byrne and de Tona 2019). A full consideration of the school choice process is beyond the scope of this project, however, its interconnection with class and the remaking of difference between schools must be acknowledged. There is a need to engage with school 'choice' to meaningfully consider the secondary transition as a classed process. This requires viewing the transition as stretching backwards as well as forwards, not starting at the end of Year Six. The implications for the methodology of this project will be considered in Chapter Four.

Section 2.2. argued that research exploring the 'effects' of secondary transition rarely considers how the transition may vary between schools. This section has highlighted why this is necessary. The small number of in-depth qualitative studies exploring the transition in more than one secondary school demonstrate that the multiple ways that secondary schools differ mean the transition must be understood as a school-specific process. There is a need to examine the micro-processes and

interactions that shape individuals' experiences of the transition in different schools, but also attend to the wider social processes and forces that shape these transitions.

This section has considered the small number of in-depth studies of the secondary transition that explore class and/or gender. Both the findings of the research discussed in this section, and the limitations of this work, have important implications for this project. This research addresses a key limitation of outcomes research: its lack of engagement with children's own voices and priorities. Importantly, it does not assume that a particular type of pre-determined 'good transition' is or should be a universal goal, in contrast to the outcomes work discussed so far. The work of Lahelma and Gordon (1997, pp.127–130; see also Gordon et al. 1999) is particularly valuable in problematising the 'good transition'; this will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Additionally, research exploring expectations and experiences of transition explored in this chapter emphasises the need to move beyond individualised notions of the transition that dominate in outcomes research. This work demonstrates that there is a need to consider the transition in its social context, understanding the child as situated within a network of relationships, and situating them within their wider societal and structural context. Viewing the transition as a social process is particularly salient when considering the transition in relation to difference and inequality. The secondary transition is one process within wider systems of education, currently acting under the conditions of 'austere meritocracy' in which, as will be explored in the following chapter, inequalities continue to be both reproduced and masked by claims of meritocracy (Littler 2018; Mendick et al. 2018). A lack of engagement with the transition as part of educational systems and the societies in which they are situated risks mis-identifying the problems of unequal education systems as 'transition problems', and 'potentially masking a more fundamental underlying system problem' (Downes et al. 2018a, p.543).

Although the research discussed in this chapter goes some way to addressing this, exploring the transition in relation to difference and inequality means moving beyond just considering gender and class as variables and instead considering how these and other differences are reproduced through the transition (Lahelma and Gordon 1997; Gordon et al. 1999). As will be explored in the following chapter, I will draw on Gordon and colleagues' post-structural exploration of the transition, and in concept of the 'professional pupil', in developing the approach for this project. This addresses the need for transitions research to engage with theorising of gender and class as classifying, discursive categories that exist within societies and are reproduced through both institutions and individual acts.

2.4.   **<u>Conclusions</u>**

This chapter reviewed research exploring children's expectations and experiences of the secondary transition. It has argued that the dominant view of the transition as something that is quickly resolved following a process of 'settling in' does not attend to the complexities of the transition and the negotiations children undertake throughout their first year of secondary school and beyond, particularly in relation to friendship and identity. Considering the secondary transition as a long-term process highlights the need for longitudinal research exploring the transition over time.

Additionally, the chapter reviewed the small number of studies exploring experiences of the secondary transition over time, paying particular attention to those exploring gender and/or class. This work goes some way to addressing the key limitation of outcomes research: its lack of attention to children's voices and priorities, structural inequalities and the reproduction of difference in the transition, or the salience of school 'choice' to these issues. However, the lack of work in this area, particularly in Wales, means that there remains a significant gap to be addressed. This leads me to the overarching research question for this project:

How do children imagine and negotiate the transition? How does this vary according to social context?

Additionally, there is a continued tendency in much research exploring experiences of the school transition to position class and gender as variables that shape experience, rather than engaging with them as discursive phenomena. A key exception is the work of Gordon et al. (Lahelma and Gordon 1997; Gordon et al. 1999; Gordon et al. 2000) on the production of 'professional pupils' at points of educational transition. My engagement with the work of these authors, and the way that gender, class and other key concepts are used in this study, will be explored in further detail in the following chapter, in which I set out the theoretical approach taken to honing and addressing my research questions.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Approach

3.1.   Introduction

The previous chapter explained that the secondary transition involves both the negotiation of a set of challenges, and a change to the self. Chapter Two highlighted that there is little existing research exploring the secondary transition as a social process – one in which relationships are central, and which is situated within the context of wider societal structures and processes, rather than negotiated in isolation by individual children. This chapter will set out a framework for exploring the transition, which builds on existing work, and draws on relevant theoretical and conceptual work from educational sociology, youth studies, and geographies of childhood. I develop a framework that explicitly acknowledges both the social aspects of secondary transition and the ways it is situated. I propose that the secondary transition can be understood as a process of 'being-and-becoming', which entails a shift in identity, undertaken through repeated performance. In setting out this view, I provide a theoretically grounded view of the 'professional pupil' as a subject-position and an identity, and introduce the analogous concept of 'social pupil' to explore the relational nature of the secondary transition.

3.2.   Defining identity

This section clarifies how concepts of self, identity and subjectivity were used in this thesis. My understanding of identity is based primarily on the work of Lawler (2008), who draws on sociological work on identity, including interactional and post-structural approaches. Lawler (2008, p.16-17) argues that rather than being inherent to the individual or existing outside the social world, identities are 'done'. Through situated interactions with others, individuals produce narratives of the self: of who we are and how we became that person. In telling these stories, we are making sense of the world, our place in it, and our lives, and actively constructing our identities as a 'character' within these stories (Ricoeur 1992; Britton and Baxter 1999, p.182; Lawler 2008). These narratives do not simply reflect an underlying self, but are producing it – in telling themselves, an individual is being ''made up' through making a *story* out of a *life*' (Lawler 2008, p.11, emphasis in original).

In contrast to theories of the self as 'foundational and essential', something that an individual possesses innately throughout their life, an individual always inhabits multiple identities. The appearance of a continuous 'self' is an effect of the stories we tell (Lawler 2008). This view owes much to the work of Butler (1993) on gender as both performed (actively and often consciously 'done') - and performative (bringing into being what it names through performative utterances – for example, assigning a baby the sex 'girl' or 'boy').

Drawing on Butler (1993) and on Goffman (1967) on identity as performative, identities are understood as always performed and in the process of being produced. Lawler argues that 'through this process, we become (social) persons through performing our selves', and that viewing identity in this way allows us to question how identity is achieved, rather than 'who we really are' (Lawler 2008, pp.103–104). Warin and Muldoon consider the different continuums through which identity tends to be viewed (individual - social; multiple - unitary; and historical – present). They suggest that the tension between views of identity as ever-changing and provisional, and 'a construction which draws together fragments of history, integrating them into a coherent story', can be resolved to some extent by 'recognising identity as autobiographical self-narration, activated and produced in the present' (Warin and Muldoon 2009, p.293). An individual may have a continuous sense of self, but this continuity is due to the storied way an individual tells their own identity. Although identities are told in the present, they include 'explanations of the past and intentions for the future' (Henderson et al. 2006, p.20). Lives and the stories we tell to understand them can be understood as 'both lived and understood forwards *and* backwards in a 'spiral movement' of constant interpretation and reinterpretation' (Lawler 2008, p.19). The past is always interpreted through what is known now, and interpretations of the past inform our present and future.

Identities are socially produced, requiring others to participate in their production through 'audiencing', responding to an individual's identity performance, and/or participating in the construction of identities through 'dialogue' (Bakhtin 1981; Lawler 2008; Yuval-Davis 2010). Selves and identities are fundamentally 'embedded in the social world…enmeshed in – and produced within – webs of social relations' (Lawler 2008, p.19). Narratives of the self draw on different resources, including an individual's own interpretations of their experience, and the narratives that are available in their particular cultural, historical and social position (Britton and Baxter 1999; Lawler 2008). Narratives of the self are both 'occasioned' (defined by the context and time in which they are told) and shaped by access to cultural and social resources (Henderson et al. 2006).

Accordingly, there is not a meaningful distinction between sense of self and social identity. An individual does not have unmediated access to their self but is always making sense of themselves through narratives, drawing on memories and their own view of their experiences (Somers 1994). Doing identity involves identifications – defining ourselves as part of one or more group(s), and identifying with that group, often through 'boundary work', whereby individuals construct similarity or difference between themselves and others (Jenkins 1996; Reay 2010). However, identification is understood within this thesis as only one part of identity-work. In the secondary transition, an individual may identify as a 'good pupil' but in order for this to be meaningful, they must also

perform the associated behaviours, and achieve recognition in doing so (Valentine 2007). The implications for how identities may be negotiated or constrained are explored in the following section.

Finally, the view of identity as relation has important implications for its positioning in relation to friendship. Friendship is understood here as something that has functions (such as companionship, support, and intimacy – see George 2007), is 'done' through everyday practices, which vary between friends and contexts (Spencer and Pahl 2006; Bunnell et al. 2012), and is shaped by peer cultures and wider discourses (Hey 1997). Friendship, and the networks of relationships in which we embed ourselves, are 'part of the performance of the self' (Smart et al. 2012, p.106). Friendships are both spaces for performing, negotiating, and recognising identities, and for identification – in choosing or maintaining friendships or kinship networks, we identify with others (Lawler 2008). Additionally, friendships can be seen as an 'enlargement of the self'; both having friends, and having these relationships recognised by others, form part of our work to perform and be seen as particular kinds of people (Winther-Lindqvist 2012).

3.3. <u>Agency and constraint in identity negotiation</u>

The view of identities as performed does not mean that identities are freely chosen. Rather, both identity-work and the 'fixing' of particular identities (Winther-Lindqvist 2012) are constrained. This is the case for all identity negotiation but plays out in particular ways for children and young people (Valentine 2003). Although children are viewed here as active and agentic, the limits to children's agency also need to be acknowledged (Holloway et al. 2019). Children's and young people's agency is 'bounded', limited by their structural positioning and the constraints on their opportunities to exercise power (Evans 2007; Furlong 2009; Aaltonen 2013), many of which derive from adults' ideas about children and childhood (Leonard 2016). These constraints on identity negotiation arise from the narrative, relational and situated nature of identity, how it relates to social position and available resources, and the ways it is embedded in relationships and networks of power.

Viewing identity as narrative and relational means an individual has choice in how they tell themselves. But they must draw from a finite set of existing narratives, or develop new narratives that are coherent with those that already exist (Britton and Baxter 1999; Lawler 2008). The available narratives, and hence the possibilities for identity, will vary between different societies and settings, and for different individuals. Identity narratives must be 'intelligible' to others in order for them to be recognised, and must be seen to be performed 'correctly' (Valentine and Sporton 2009; Kustatscher 2017). The role of others in identity-work also means that identities can be ascribed without a person's

consent. Behaviours and dispositions can be misrecognised and individuals may be identified in ways they do not choose (Hall et al. 2013, p.312).

The situated nature of identities means they are shaped by the spaces in which they are negotiated (Shilling 1991; Nind et al. 2012). Valentine (2007, p.19) illustrates this through exploring how the identities of a participant in her research, as gendered, wife, professional, classed, mother, disabled, culturally Deaf (capitalised to distinguish from 'deaf', which is used as a descriptor rather than an identity), heterosexual and lesbian, varied in their salience and continuity as she moved through different spaces: 'Where [she] is located is constitutive of her identity, not incidental to it, so that she has understood herself differently when at school than when in her family home, or when in the office environment rather than in the factory.' Valentine (2007) explains that in a space where almost no-one is deaf, an identity of politically Deaf may not be available; similarly, in a school where academic achievement is rare, the identity of 'high achiever' or 'gifted' may not be available. Conversely, in a space where a particular characteristics applies to everyone – in Valentine's work, the school where all students are deaf – an identity that in other spaces defines difference (such as Deaf) may not be meaningful.

Additionally, individuals' different positioning within a society will shape their possibilities for identity negotiation. I will use 'social location' or 'social position' to mean 'the positioning of people, in particular times and in particular spaces, along intersecting (or, rather, mutually constitutive) grids of social power' (Yuval-Davis 2010, pp.267–268). One such location is class, understood as both a description of where an individual is placed within a social hierarchy, and 'a name for political struggles against the effects of classification' (Tyler et al. 2015, p.507). Class describes not only wealth, but advantages and disadvantages that endure or increase over time, and the hierarchical relationships maintained by such 'stored historical baggage'. Such 'baggage' consists of different forms of capital (Savage 2015, p.46) including economic, cultural (knowledge, resources and dispositions), symbolic ('the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate' - Bourdieu 1989, p.17) and social capital – the resources or value that can be generated through social connections and networks (Weller and Bruegel 2009). Social capital may be 'bonding', inward-looking and exclusive connections within homogeneous groups, or 'bridging', outward-looking connections between heterogeneous individuals or groups (Putnam 2000). Not every aspect of life can or should be understood through notions of capital (Skeggs 2014). However, it remains a useful theoretical tool in making sense of the ways individuals and populations access and mobilise different resources, particularly at this point of transition, as demonstrated in the work of Weller (2007) on children's negotiation of social capital during the secondary transition.

Social locations are allocated or made available to individuals at birth (Skeggs 1997). They are not fixed, but the processes that work to reproduce social class mean that 'mobility' remains impossible for many (Lawler and Payne 2018). Social locations are distinct from identities, but the two are inextricable. Skeggs (1997, p.94) explains that identities are (re)produced as 'responses to social positions, through access to representational systems and in the conversion of forms of capital'. Social locations hence shape the resources an individual can access in constructing their identity. In unequal societies, 'fixing' mechanisms operate to limit the identifications available to particular individuals (Skeggs 2004), and not all are 'capable of constant self-invention' (Walkerdine 2003, p.241)

Some identities exclude others. Lawler (2008, p.3) notes that 'All identifications are relational in this sense: all rely on *not* being someone else' [emphasis in original]. Such oppositional relationships often represent hierarchical binaries, which Youdell (2011) argues are a principal way that we make meaning of the world and ourselves. Each side of these binaries is meaningful only in opposition to the other, and as 'they are products of and productive of relations of power; one side of the binary is privileged and/or normative while the other side of the binary is subjugated and/or aberrant…' (Youdell 2011, p.38). Additionally, some identities preclude others by rendering them 'impossible' (Youdell 2006). (Benjamin et al. 2003) explain that the identity of 'academically successful working-class boy' may not be possible for pupils to access due to the construction of 'working-class boy' and 'academically successful' as incompatible. Similarly, for the participant in Valentine's work, the identity of culturally Deaf within the space of the Deaf club was in conflict with her identity as a lesbian, due to the homophobia she experienced in this space (Valentine 2007, p.16).

Finally, identities and subjectivities are negotiated within regimes of power, knowledge and discourse. This thesis takes a post-structural view of knowledge and facts as not existing objectively but produced as true: 'Certain things become true, not because of any intrinsic property of the statements themselves, but because they are produced from within authoritative, powerful positions, and they accord with *other* "truth statements". They are part of a system of knowledges.' (Lawler 2008, p.58). Subjectivity will be defined here as self-understanding and meaning, constituted through discourse(s) (Lawler 2008). Discourses define what it is possible to know, and hence the ways it is possible to be known, and to know oneself. Multiple different discourses will circulate within any one space, and are open to contestation and resistance, but one or more may be dominant. Discourses produce subjects, personifications of the forms of knowledge that the discourse defines (Hall et al. 2013; Lundin and Torpsten 2018).

Within educational systems, discourses of success, good/bad behaviour, and 'ability' produce particular subjects: the 'gifted and talented' pupil, the pupil with 'emotional and behavioural difficulties', the 'bright' pupil and the pupil in need of intervention (Lloyd 2005; Youdell 2011). Discourses produce not only subjects but also subject-positions, 'a place for the subject (i.e. the reader or viewer, who is also 'subjected to' discourse) from which its particular knowledge and meaning makes most sense' (Hall et al. 2013, p.40). Not everyone in a particular society or historical period will take up the subject-position produced by dominant discourse; to become a subject, an individual must also subject themselves to the discourse and its regulations (Hall et al. 2013). Subjectivation - becoming a subject - is a process of self-knowing and of regulation, but also a fixing of identities or categorisations (Lawler 2008, p.62).

Processes of subjectivation are enacted through normalising or disciplinary power. Where judicial power works through punishment and obligation, disciplinary power works through the desire to be normal and valued. This desire, and the pleasures associated with viewing ourselves as the right sort of person, encourage practices of self-work and self-surveillance, through which the self acts on itself (Lawler 2008; Hall et al. 2013). Within schools, different discourses of success set out the possibilities for different ways of being (or failing to be) a pupil. In Benjamin's ethnographic work in a comprehensive school, different possibilities were defined by three discourses: the 'dominant discourse' of reaching academic benchmarks, the 'consolation discourse' of success through incremental improvement and hard work, and the 'really disabled discourse', all of which produce the subject 'student' in different ways (Benjamin 2003).

Even when fixed or 'sticky' (Allen and Hollingworth 2013; Ahmed 2014), identities and subjectivities are always in process and hence contingent and open to contestation (Hall 2000). Subjects, constituted through discourse, have the potential to behave in ways that mean they can be constituted otherwise (Youdell 2006). However, the possibilities of resistance should not be over-stated. In particular, processes of subjectivation necessarily produce abjects, 'value-less subjects', through processes of expulsion and abjection (Skeggs 2011; Tyler 2013). These define the 'constitutive limits' of subjectivity (Skeggs 2011), that which the subject is defined against (Butler 1993). This designation of individuals or populations as 'living under the sign of the 'unliveable'' (Butler 1993, p.3) and the stigmatising of such populations, limits the possibilities for becoming a subject.

3.4. <u>Transition as being-and-becoming someone different</u>

I now consider the identity shift that is negotiated in the secondary transition: that of the secondary school pupil. This is not simply a descriptor of the stage of education, but a different social role, one associated with increased maturity and constructed as a significant step in 'growing up'. Taking up the

identity of secondary school pupil involves performing this role in the new environment of secondary school – narrating oneself as a secondary school pupil - and being recognised as doing so. Taking on this new identity can be understood as a process of *becoming* – undergoing a change through (conscious and unconscious) future-focused work – and *being* – performing the role of secondary school pupil each day.

Views of the child as 'being' or 'becoming' reflect different paradigms within childhood studies. The 'new social studies of childhood' in the 1980s and 1990s called for a move away from viewing children only as 'human becomings' and for children to be viewed as 'beings' in their own right, worthy of studying in the present rather than only as future adults (Holloway and Valentine 2000a; Holloway and Valentine 2000b; James et al. 2007; Leonard 2016). However, recent work has argued that although children are active, agentic, and worthy of study in the present, it is also valuable to still consider them as 'becoming', to acknowledge their positioning and movement in relation to adult futures (Uprichard 2008). For Worth (2009) it is appropriate to view transitions as periods of 'becoming': rather than implying a view of children only as proto-adults, the concept of becoming invites attention to the complexity of young people's relationships with a multiplicity of possible futures and identities. Additionally, cautioning against moving wholesale from a view of the 'becoming' child to the 'being' child highlights that although children are agentic and can exercise power, this takes place within constraints (Hammersley 2017; Holloway et al. 2019).

Hanson (2017) calls for the 'being'/'becoming' binary to be disrupted through an engagement with the 'been' child, to 'more explicitly embrace children's and childhood's past' (Hanson 2017, p.281). Additionally, as identity negotiation is always situated in the context of past and future (Henderson et al. 2006), the 'been' and 'becoming' child are always present in a child's negotiation of the present. Although the 'been' child is not central in my approach to the secondary transition, I have taken heed of these calls to engage with children's past, present and future, and to explore their complex interrelationships.

The view of transitions as a rite of passage between social roles (see for example Measor and Woods 1984; Green 1997; Pratt and George 2005) assumes uni-directional movement from one role to another – perhaps reflecting a Eurocentric view of lives as linear developmental trajectories (Downes et al. 2018b). I have argued that the secondary transition should not be viewed as a linear process, or as one in which children are passive. However, youth studies literature demonstrates that it is possible to view transitions as movement into new social roles while acknowledging their potential to be multi-directional, and understanding children as agentic in these processes (du Bois-Reymond and Lopez Blasco 2003; du Bois-Reymond and te Poel 2006).

(Holloway et al. 2019, pp.467–468) argue that understanding time, and the relationship between present, past, and future, are inseparable from conceptualising children and childhood. Viewing children and transitions as both being and becoming aligns with considering past, present and future as interacting in non-linear ways. Being-and-becoming a secondary school pupil is not a one-off process; an individual must continue to perform the role, and be recognised as doing so, or risk losing access to this identity. Additionally, being-and-becoming a secondary pupil is undertaken through experiencing 'critical moments' (Thomson et al. 2002b), 'turning points' (Bruner 2001) or 'vital conjunctures' (Jeffrey 2010). These all refer to moments experienced as significant shifts. These moments are defined by the individual making the transition and may occur at any time (Holloway et al. 2019). The last day of primary and first day of secondary school may be experienced as critical moments, but so might instances that seem insignificant to an outsider. My study responds to Woodman and Wyn's (2015) call for transitions research to attend to the 'active work that young people do to create a sense of security and belonging, in the context of increasingly fragmented and unreliable institutional processes' (Woodman and Wyn 2015, p.81), an argument also made by Valentine (2003) in relation to the 'boundary crossing' between childhood and adulthood. Exploring the critical moments identified by pupils attends to the imperative to focus on children's views, and resists the tendency to construct the transition as a linear or one-off process. Henderson et al. (2006), in their 'Inventing adulthoods' study of youth transitions, illustrated how longitudinal methods can engage with young people's own narratives of their lives. The methodological implications of taking this view of the secondary transition will be considered in the following chapter.

Valentine's (2003) work on boundary-crossing discusses the movement between the social roles of 'child' and 'adult'. For Valentine (2003) this crossing may be multi-directional, and occur in different ways and at different times. This is due to both the socially defined nature of childhood and adulthood, and the different views that individual children may have of their own traversing of this boundary. A similar argument can be made of the transition from 'primary school pupil' to 'secondary school pupil', and the associated shift in societally-defined maturity. It is vital to 'pay more attention to the different ways young people themselves define and understand this boundary crossing' ((Valentine 2003, p.49), an aim I have centred in this research, through focusing on the voices of children and their own definitions and negotiations of 'success'. The ways that I sought to avoid methods that imposed or assumed linearity and allow instead for reflection, reinterpretation and retelling, and the space for children to identify their own 'critical moments', to explore both 'being' and 'becoming' in the secondary transition, are explored in Chapter Four.

3.5.   Negotiating new identities: the professional pupil

Understanding the secondary transition as a process of being-and-becoming a secondary school pupil requires some exploration of how the secondary school pupil is defined. The identity of secondary school pupil cannot be separated from its (situation-specific) performance and recognition. In contrast to how the 'good transition' is often presented in outcomes work, it is not meaningful to consider the identity of secondary school pupil as separate from its performance or the contexts in which this takes place. To consider what the identity of the secondary school pupil entails, it is necessary to consider how it is performed and recognised, and the role of schools in this process.

The previous chapter introduced the idea of schools as made up of two interacting 'worlds' – that of the pupils and that of the institution (Valentine 2000). Work exploring experiences of school in the transition, and wider sociological work on education, makes clear that the peer and institutional worlds interact in ways that may be harmonious or clashing (Valentine 2000; Noyes 2006). Conceptualising the school as made up of different worlds is complementary to views that divide the school in other ways, such as pupil-led and institutional 'systems' (Jamal et al. 2013). Gordon et al. (2000) use the image of 'layers' of the school, which include not only official and informal but also physical layers that relate to space, time, embodiment and their regulation (see Lahelma and Gordon 1997; Gordon et al. 1999; Gordon et al. 2000, p.53). In conceptualising the school in this study, I primarily used the framework of peer and institutional worlds but also drew on Gordon et al.'s (2000) three-layered framework when examining pupils' focus on space and time (see Section 3.5.3, and Chapter Five).

Taking up the identity of secondary school pupil involves being recognised as successful in either or both of the institutional and child-led worlds of secondary school. In relation to children's negotiation of the institutional world, I draw on Gordon and colleagues' concept of the 'professional pupil' (Lahelma and Gordon 1997; Gordon et al. 1999; Gordon et al. 2000). Professional pupils are defined as 'students who are able to conduct themselves competently without making mistakes or getting into conflict (unless they want to)' (Gordon et al. 1999, p.169). In their exploration of how children learn to be professional pupils in the initial weeks of secondary school, they argue that this is a process consciously enacted by the school through teaching the formal and informal rules that govern the school, and involves active work by the student to take up this role (Lahelma and Gordon 1997; Gordon et al. 1999).

The choice of 'professional' is deliberate – in negotiating the institutional world of the school successfully, professional pupils develop and display the dispositions necessary for later employment

(Gordon et al. 2000). The professional pupil reflects the priorities and requirements of individual schools in relation to behaviour, academic attainment or other attributes. The priorities of individual schools – and hence their definition of the professional pupil – are defined by the requirements of increasingly credentialised, exam-focused models of education. These are in turn shaped by the wider function served by education systems, of producing particular sorts of pupils to serve or participate in the societies in which they are embedded. Livingstone and Sefton-Green (2016, p.109) explain that in addition to providing and accrediting learning, schools 'are organised in ways that promote a particular way of being - as a member of the school community as well as becoming an academic learner'. Schools can be understood as producing both pupils and future citizens (Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016), identities that 'children take up to accomplish some of the social work of society…theoretically allow[ing] them to develop the requisite skills and maturation necessary to take their place in a complex adult social structure' (Niemi 2005, p.485).

3.5.1.   <u>Professional pupils and the ideal subject of secondary school</u>

Schools' practices, discourses and regulatory systems centre on an 'ideal student' or 'ideal subject', who possesses the characteristics against which a child's success or failure as a pupil is defined (Hempel-Jorgensen 2009; Jacklin 2018) Education policies both rely on and reproduce representations of an ideal student, which are enmeshed in broader social imaginaries of what a student and a citizen should be (Jacklin 2018). Education policy 'proceeds from an idea of the individual subject as future participant in political, economic and cultural processes and social relations, towards an idea of what the subject needs to know in order to occupy that place' (Jacklin 2018, p.258).

Archer and Francis (2007) explored the construction of the ideal pupil within 'Western' educational discourses, arguing that this is produced through a trichotomy of 'ideal', 'Other/pathologised', and 'demonised' pupils. Each is associated with a set of characteristics:

- 'Ideal' pupil - naturally talented, innovative, outside culture, leaders, enquiring/engaged, assertive, independent, active, and have 'normal' sexuality;
- 'Other/pathologised' pupil - diligent/plodding, conformist, culture-bound, followers, deferent, unquestioning, unassertive, dependent, passive, asexual/oppressed/repressed;
- 'Demonised' pupil - naturally unintelligent/lacking ability, peer-led, victims of 'bad' culture, anti-social/rebels, problematically challenged and challenging, aggressive, ungovernable, anomic, and hyper-sexual.

These distinctions are classed and raced, mapping onto middle-class, masculine and white; deserving poor, feminine/feminized and Asian/Oriental; and undeserving poor, hypermasculine/hyperfeminine

and Black/white working-class (Archer and Francis 2007). This trichotomy defines both the dispositions that are valued, and who is seen to have them. Within education policy and research, girls (as a homogeneous population) are frequently positioned as the successes of neoliberal education systems due to gendered patterns of academic attainment (Ringrose 2007), often in contrast to 'failing boys' (Harris 2004). Yet this trichotomy indicates that the 'ideal' pupil is male by default. The clash between schools' need for students who are easy to teach and do not cause trouble, and the idealising of pupils who have 'sparkle and challenge', are 'talented' and assertive (Younger et al. 1999; Warrington and Younger 2000, p.505; Charlton 2007) will be explored further in Chapters Five to Seven.

Archer and Francis (2007) explain that this trichotomy is (re)produced through misrecognition, through which certain pupils are viewed as of no value, and the dispositions associated with the 'ideal' pupil become seen as naturally present in other populations (see also Gordon et al. 2000; Niemi 2005). White middle-class boys are most likely to be viewed as naturally talented, and those who are independent and talkative, for example, may be viewed as ideal pupils, whereas Black and/or working-class girls demonstrating the same behaviours may be viewed as trouble or troubled (Lloyd 2005). This view of education sits within what Youdell (2011, p.60) refers to as 'critical pedagogies', which explore how education systems work to reproduce hierarchies across class, race, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, disability and languages spoken, both within schools and wider society. It is argued that this reproduction is not an accident but a key part of their function in unequal societies (Reay 2017).

This has received particular attention in relation to gender, with an extensive body of work exploring how gender (and heterosexuality) is reproduced in schools:

> *'Schooling practices and structures produce and reproduce the ideology of heteronormative binary gender. This ideology shapes possibilities for identity… Such practices and structures operate at various levels – from the level of the built environment and how this structures participants' use of spaces and identity as mapped onto space, to the level of social interaction and discourse, or the everyday language students and teachers use in discussing and negotiating gender and sexuality.' (Woolley 2017, p.89)*

For Gordon et al. (2000) although both 'pupil' and 'citizen' are understood as abstract, separate from social relations of gender, class and race, such abstraction masks the ways that these subject-positions are mobilised to reproduce difference. They argue that 'in the everyday life of the schools 'pupils' are particular children and young people, who tend to be perceived through natural attitudes as, for example, girls and boys' (Gordon et al. 2000, p.71). Similarly, Niemi (2005) explains that in the

'Western world', the identity of 'student' is 'built largely on an assumed frame of middle-class Whiteness…Student identities masquerade with neutered gender themes as well, as if the acquisition of knowledge, which the student is supposed to be accomplishing, happens outside the realm of gender identity development' (Niemi 2005, p.485). Within schools, gender is both rendered invisible through discourses of equality and sameness, and hyper-visible, constantly reproduced through the practices of schools, particularly through rules that control and regulate students' bodies (Paechter 2006, p.128). Gender is both reproduced and naturalised, making it 'even more powerful: gender feels natural as it resides in a student identity, thereby masking the ways in which gender and schooling interact' (Niemi 2005, p.486; see also Lahelma and Gordon 1997).

The professional pupil is distinct from, but connected to, the 'ideal pupil'. A pupil does not need to be 'ideal' to be recognised as professional, and the requirements of the professional pupil may be more accessible. Youdell (2004; 2006; 2011) argues that pupils may be produced as 'ideal' or 'acceptable' learners; the professional pupil is an acceptable learner but not necessarily an ideal one. The professional pupil may encompass different identities, including the 'good student', 'effortless achiever' and 'diligent plodder' – but this set of identities is finite. Definitions of the professional pupil are likely to share some overall characteristics due to their roots in policy and wider societal priorities. However, the enactment of policies is undertaken by individual actors within education systems (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2012). Consequently, the definition or the 'ideal' or 'professional' pupil will vary between schools, and may vary between teachers or pupils in the same school.

As noted, the production of subjects always includes a process of abjection. The construction of the professional pupil, and its associated discourses of success, mean that some pupils must be excluded from this position. Arguably, recognition as a professional pupil is necessary not only to be seen as having a 'good transition', but to be recognised as a pupil at all. (Youdell 2006; Youdell 2011) argues that individuals who are not recognised as performing behaviours defined as appropriate according to their school's regulatory system risk being 'rendered unrecognisable within and by educational discourses', and hence not accessing the identity of 'pupil'. These individuals can be understood as excluded from the possibility of accessing the 'good transition' and becoming a 'good student', and risk being defined instead as 'unacceptable, even impossible, learners' (Youdell 2006, p.30).

Formal exclusion, in which a child is formally constituted 'not-pupil', is situated within a wide and varied set of behaviours and practices through which children are included and excluded in everyday and often mundane ways. Categorising and division of children is a process of inclusion and exclusion, as are the informal everyday interactions between students and teachers. Benjamin et al. (2003) argue that inclusion/exclusion is not enacted in a one-way manner by teachers, but is enacted

moment-by-moment though interactions between teachers and pupils, as well as between pupils themselves.

3.5.2. <u>**Professional pupils in austere meritocracy**</u>

I now consider the conditions under which children and young people in the UK are making the secondary transition and negotiating this new social role. Schools are key sites in which an individual's social location may change, and are often central to policy and rhetoric on social mobility, in which education systems are presented as 'meritocratic' spaces (Littler 2018; Lawler and Payne 2018). However, meritocracy is understood within this thesis as a construct maintained as part of social reproduction. Differences in experience do not inevitably follow from 'identity, culture or personal circumstances' (Youdell 2011, p.60). Littler (2013; 2018) argues that the 'myth of meritocracy' in both education and wider society masks the reproduction of inequalities by claiming that unequal outcomes are the result of unequal 'merit'. Those who succeed in societally-approved ways despite their marginalisation are held up as evidence of meritocracy, and used to claim that 'merit', defined as talent plus hard work, will lead unproblematically to success.

Mendick et al. (2018, p.22) use 'austere meritocracy' to describe how during ten years of austerity policies in the UK, increasing poverty, inequality and uncertainty have been accompanied by 'discourses of meritocracy [which] have taken on a new tone as young people are expected to manage the insecurity of transitioning to adulthood in a society with fewer jobs and less support, and where the failure to do so is presented as evidence of moral deficiencies (laziness, irresponsibility and selfishness).' Austerity is described by Mendick et al. (2018) as not just a practice but as a subject-making state, defining the possibilities available for young people's subjectivities. Young people are exhorted to aspire to particular futures, despite the material and discursive constraints on accessing or even imagining these.

Despite the constraints on identity-work, the image of ultimate freedom in self-authorship has become embedded in policy to the extent that reflexive self-work and self-invention, 'whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self narratives' (Giddens 1991, p.244), is understood as not only possible but necessary (Walkerdine 2003; Lawler 2008, p.34). Skeggs (1997) Skeggs (1997) argues that the expectation that individuals both are and should be future-focused and self -fashioning fails to acknowledge the resources that these require, or how they are unequally distributed. Marginalised populations, who have least access to the forms of 'success' valued within neoliberal societies, are most strongly exhorted to 'address their lack of privilege themselves, individually, through cultural discourses of neoliberal meritocracy which deploy particular languages and accents

of gender, race and class….[but] these constituencies continue to face far greater difficulties in terms of both recognition and redistribution. This gap, in the face of the demand to move upwards, is a double penalty: they face a double egalitarian deficit' (Littler 2018, p.170). Just as examples of individuals who do 'succeed' despite their marginalisation are held up as evidence that meritocracy is working, a similar process can be seen in the mobilising of the 'successful', 'can-do' or 'alpha' girl (Harris 2004; Kindlon 2006; Ringrose 2007, p.472). Through narratives of girls' and women's achievements, the 'successful girl' is drawn on as evidence of 'equality, progress [and] girl power' – accessible to any girl or young woman if she works hard enough, believes in herself, and makes the right choices (Harris 2004; Ringrose 2007; Pomerantz and Raby 2011).

3.5.3. <u>**Situating the professional pupil: space, regulation and power**</u>

The view of identity-work as shaped by the spaces in which it is undertaken means that the movement into a new space alters the possibilities for identity. In the secondary transition, identities that were valued or recognised in primary school may not be available, or may require different behaviours or dispositions (Osborn et al. 2006). Additionally, Chapter Two highlighted that for many children anticipating and experiencing the secondary transition, the physical space of the school is a key feature of their narratives. In contrast to existing literature on the secondary transition, which frequently does not engage with school context, and/or views the school as neutral, considering the process of being-and-becoming a professional pupil requires considering the spaces in which this takes place.

This engages with the long tradition of research on other transitions that draws on metaphors of space and movement. Coffey (2013, p.262) explains that 'transition involves the passage from one place to another', whereas Green (1997) frames transition as a movement from known into unknown. Transition is itself a spatial and temporal metaphor, 'alluding to trajectories through a defined space in time…transitions research almost by necessity of its metaphor relies on the notion of trajectory' (Woodman and Wyn 2015, p.79). Due in part to the influential work of Galton and colleagues (see for example Galton et al. 1999), the dominant view of secondary transition over the last fifty years is as a set of discontinuities or gaps between spaces or situations, which require 'bridges' for children to cross (Galton and McLellan 2018).

The recent 'spatial turn' in educational studies highlights the need to attend to the role of space and place in education (Gulson and Symes 2007). In addition to the spatialised nature of school 'choice' and the geographical segregation of secondary education in the UK, the transition itself also represents a changed relationship between a child and their local area, as well as a negotiation of the new physical space of the school (Weller and Bruegel 2009). This thesis takes a wider view of space

that includes not only physical space and locality, but *also* social and relational space (Downes 2016; Downes et al. 2018a).

This relates to the notion already discussed of the interacting peer and institutional 'worlds' (Valentine 2000) or institutional, unofficial and physical 'layers' of each school (Gordon et al. 2000). In schools, disciplinary power is everywhere; the school is a 'hyper-regulatory space' (Cann 2018). Following Foucault (1979), Youdell (2011) explains that schools are permeated by technologies of disciplinary power, which relate to 'the spaces in which practices are organised; the ways that bodies, activities and time are managed; the ways that hierarchical classifications are developed and used; and the ways that people are created as individuals as they are documented as cases' (Youdell 2011, p.137). In schools, these are seen in the rules governing the management of students' bodies and their movement through the school; the timetable; the formal and informal rules about 'appropriate behaviour'; the ways that pupils are identified, categorised and divided in particular ways - classes, forms, sets, years, bright, struggling, bully, victim, popular, alone, weird, annoying - and the way these categories and divisions are (officially or informally) hierarchical (Gordon et al. 2000; Youdell 2011).

Both peer and institutional 'worlds' have their own systems of regulation that define what is acceptable, valued and possible for whom. Official rules about how time, space and bodies are regulated within the school interact with unofficial rules and norms governing what is valued (Youdell 2011). Drawing on Butler (2004), Cann (2018) notes that regulation involves 'being regular' – being (seen as) normal, and 'getting it right'. This requires knowledge and skill: Cann explains that 'getting it right…requires knowledge of the context, of what is permissible, as well as ensuring that what is articulated is appropriate' (Cann 2018, p.39). Gordon et al. (2000), recounting their ethnographic work in a Finnish secondary school, recall being 'struck by the variety of skills that moving through the school day required from school students… To become 'professional pupils', secondary-school students need first to learn appropriate behaviour in and outside the classroom. They have to learn the basic features of the pedagogic process, the hierarchical relations within the school, the possibilities and spaces for, as well as limits of, student agency' (Lahelma and Gordon 1997; Gordon et al. 2000, p.72), Gordon and colleagues note that a key aspect of learning how to be a professional pupil is learning which behaviours are appropriate for different spaces in the school (Lahelma and Gordon 1997), and further differentiation may be enacted by different teachers who have their own interpretations of school rules.

Children and young people who are not recognised as competent or valued in relation to either institutional or child-led 'worlds' of the school may struggle (Valentine and Sporton 2009). Lack of recognition may be 'traumatic' and bring strong affective responses; Davies et al. (2001, p.176) note that 'there is a deep anger against the one who reveals that our mastery is incomplete'. (Davies 2006)

emphasises the regulatory power of this affective aspect of feeling oneself to be 'wrong'. Citing the author's earlier work (Davies 2000), Davies notes that 'students work very hard to embody themselves as appropriate and appropriated subjects, and losing their footing—being seen to be incompetent or inappropriate— can be very painful' (Davies 2006, p.433).

This is one aspect of how the way an individual is viewed by others is central to their access to a particular identity or subject-position. In the secondary transition, the role of the gaze of teachers and other pupils is highlighted by Laws and Davies (2000). Whereas Gordon et al. (2000) describe school as a ballroom in which pupils learn different positions, dances, and roles, Laws and Davies draw on the related construction of 'repertoires' that children may take up to be 'good school students'. The available repertoires, student-, school- and situation-specific (see also Hempel-Jorgensen 2009), must be navigated alongside other 'performances', such as those valued by the peer group. Laws and Davies (2000) also highlight the role of others in validating individuals' successful achievement of 'good student' or the take-up of other 'repertoires' - they must not only be observed to be doing so, but read as 'genuine'. Teachers are key in this recognition as they produce students as 'ideal, acceptable and unacceptable' learners (Youdell 2004). To perform the role of professional pupil is necessary, but it is not sufficient to *be* a professional pupil - this is only meaningful when recognised by the school.

These accounts all highlight the complexity and work involved in 'getting it right' and being seen to do so, the variable nature of what this means, and that what is 'appropriate' may differ according to the student, the school, and/or the context. However, perspectives from the geographies of childhood recognise transition as a dynamic process between students and their schools, understanding children as agentic in this process.

When entering the new school, the school's regulatory systems and processes, its rules, its physical structures, curricula, and formal and informal rules governing how students must behave within these spaces are fixed. Pupils move into a space that was previously largely imagined. However, the new Year 7 pupils are not simply adapting to a new space but making their own. When a new cohort start secondary school, their peer cultures, status hierarchies, and classed and gendered ways of being and relating are yet to be established. This contributes to the anxiety that precedes starting secondary school, as concern with the 'conditions of membership' of the school and peer group (Harris and Rudduck 1993) cannot be easily resolved when these conditions may not yet be established, let alone known. Crafter and Maunder (2012) highlight that when transitions occur in communities of practice, these are not one-way; individuals moving into these communities adapt and negotiate, but the communities themselves are also undergoing change as people enter and exit. Similarly, students

transitioning to secondary school interact with each other, and others in their lives - actively remaking the community and culture of the school they enter.

Spaces and places shape identity and everyday life – the space in which interactions are situated has implications for what can take place there (Gordon et al. 2000, p.53; Valentine 2007) yet places and spaces are also shaped by those inhabiting them. In acknowledging the spatialised nature of the transition, I focus on the negotiation of physical and relational space within the new school. However, this is also a process of making spaces – pupils actively negotiate, respond to and sometimes resist existing systems and cultures of the new school, and shape and form their own as they negotiate new identities in secondary school.

3.5.4.   <u>Transition and the peer world – defining the social pupil</u>

My framing of transition as being-and-becoming a secondary school pupil has so far centred on the professional pupil. However, as discussed in Section 2.3.1, children may be equally or more concerned with negotiating the peer-led world of the school. Alongside and in interaction with the school's institutional world, the child-led system of the school works to regulate pupils through popularity, belonging and inclusion. Pupils work to be seen and known in particular ways by peers, and access the safety, belonging, and pleasure that are the rewards for 'fitting in' or being popular.

In addition to negotiating the requirements of the professional pupil, children are hence also negotiating with their peer group. To account for this, given the social and relational aspect of the secondary transition, I developed the concept of the 'social pupil'. This refers to the set of possible identities that may be recognised by the peer group or within an individual pupil's peer relationships. In the same way that the professional pupil may encompass various different identities, so will the social pupil: recognition by pupils may be accorded to the 'good friend', 'popular girl/boy', or 'class clown'. The different peer cultures, value systems and discourses present within any peer group mean that the possibilities for being a successful social pupil may be more varied than those for being a professional pupil. However, peers may also exercise powerful regulation. Both the peer group and individual friends have the power to include and exclude others, and exploit the fear of not 'fitting in' and the desire to be normal. The role of peers in regulating pupils' behaviour has been explored in depth in relation to gender; extensive research into peer cultures in secondary schools demonstrates that peers regulate (in)appropriately gendered behaviours and tastes (see for example (Moita-Lopes 2003; George 2007; Pomerantz and Raby 2011; Ringrose 2012; MacDonald 2016; Cann 2018). Entering secondary school brings significant changes to the peer group and its norms and requirements, and there is no guarantee that friendships, relationships, or status from primary school

will be maintained (Pratt and George 2005; Weller 2007). In undertaking the transition, the 'social pupil' must negotiate how to fit in / stand out, make, keep (or sometimes break) friendships, while also working out the rules of the peer group.

If the professional and social pupil are understood as sets of identities associated with two interacting worlds, it follows that these identities will be sometimes coherent and supportive, and sometimes in conflict. For example, in a school in which high academic attainment is expected but is not valued by the peer group, it may not be possible to access recognition as both a professional and social pupil. Additionally, as with negotiating the professional or social pupil individually, managing their interactions will be easier for particular pupils, according to their social positioning and their access to different resources.

Recognition may come from teachers, other students (peers, friends and older students) and others. Henderson et al. (2006) argue that young people's negotiation of identities centres on competence, (dis)investment, and recognition; if recognised as being good at something (attaining competence), young people are more likely to invest in that area of their life. In some schools, it may be possible for (some) pupils to access recognition as social pupils despite exclusion from being viewed as professional. However, others will find themselves lacking recognition as either a professional or social pupil. Importantly, exclusion from the position of professional and social pupil should not be viewed as distinct processes. The interactions between peer and institutional worlds mean that pupils are always negotiating both at the same time. Similarly, the processes by which pupils are included or excluded from each of these positions involve interactions between an individual, their peers and their teachers (Benjamin et al. 2003).

Acknowledging the role of the peer group in children's negotiation of the transition brings additional complexity to questions of agency and constraint. Both power and agency are something an individual can exercise, but which is not held or owned. I adopt what Valentine (2011) terms a 'social model' of agency, which 'recognises the particularity of children and the social embeddedness of the agency of both children and adults' (Valentine 2011, p.354). The agency of children overall is always partial, as it is limited by their structural positioning; childhood is 'both structured and structuring' (Leonard 2016, p.8). Additionally, the limits or constraints on agency are not equal for all children (Valentine 2011, pp.354–355). In contrast to views of children's agency as always associated with resistance, children's agency 'incorporates recognition of the relatively rigid identity categories available to them (for example: girls cannot be boys), and incorporation of the social norms and rules that make up these categories', meaning such agency works to reproduce the status quo, both within their peer cultures and more widely (Valentine 2011, p.355; Holloway et al. 2019). Consequently, there is a need to attend to 'dominant practices and discourses in the school context, and the ways in which they are

both challenged and maintained continuously by children and staff' (Kustatscher 2017). Children are both negotiating discourses in relation to themselves, and participating in their reproduction, and hence the regulation of others. Exploring the secondary transition in the context of situated power relations therefore involves considering both how children negotiate their own identities and subjectivities, and the ways they participate in the regulation and negotiation of others'.

3.6.   __Conclusions__

Taking on the identity of professional pupil involves both performing this role, and being recognised as doing so. The professional pupil is often presented as abstract and neutral, but in practice is not only school-specific but varies between children. The requirements of professionalism vary between schools, but also between different pupils. Gender, class and ethnicity shape both the requirements of the professional pupil, and pupils' ability to access recognition when they perform the required behaviours.

Negotiating transition to a new school involves identifying the behaviours required of the professional and/or social pupil (and how these apply specifically to oneself as a student), performing these behaviours, and being recognised as doing so. In the transition to secondary school, pupils face the additional complication of multiple new teachers, who may interpret the official rules of the school in different ways. The identities of professional and social pupil are not open to everyone, and may be differently accessible in ways that are socially patterned. Failure, struggle, or resistance may occur at any of the steps of becoming a pupil; not all children will try to become professional or social pupils, and not all of those who try will succeed. The negotiation of these identities over time forms the central narrative of this thesis.

This chapter has defined key ideas and concepts central to my study. Understanding the secondary transition as a process of being-and-becoming a professional and social pupil moves beyond the idea of a unitary 'good transition'. It acknowledges the school-specific nature of the goals of transition, and how discourses of 'good transition' are socially situated. This framework will be used to address the research question set out in Chapter Two:

How do children imagine and negotiate the transition? How does this vary according to social context?

The theoretical framework in this chapter allows this key question to be developed into three sub-questions. Each of these engages with a particular aspect of the transition. The view of secondary transition as narrated, imagined, remembered, and experienced, and the impossibility of separating these due to the 'spiral movement' of time and identity (Lawler 2008), led to the question:

How do children narrate and navigate their imagined transitions from primary to secondary school?

The view of transition as a change in identity and/or subjectivity, a process of being and becoming secondary school pupils, undertaken through navigation of the new school's multiple 'worlds' (Valentine 2000) or 'layers' (Gordon et al. 2000) developed the question:

How do children negotiate the new institutional and peer worlds of secondary school, and the processes of being and becoming professional and social pupils?

Finally, the view of schools as regulatory spaces that produce subjects, and subjectivities and identities as unequally available, informed the question:

Through these processes of being and becoming professional and social pupils, how is difference (re)produced within and between schools?

The methodological approach to addressing these questions, drawing on the understanding of time; children/childhood; identity and subjectivity; and power and regulation; is described in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1.   Methodological approach

4.1.1.   Initial principles

This chapter sets out the methodological approach taken in addressing the research questions. It explores how theoretical and conceptual concerns interact with both ethical and practical considerations, and how this shaped the research.

The methods were developed with the primary aims of ethically foregrounding children's knowledge and experiences. In Chapter Three, I discussed my engagement with different theoretical traditions and approaches in developing a conceptual and theoretical framework for this research. Methodological development took a similar approach, viewing the research as a process of 'bricolage' which draws on different methodological traditions and approaches (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). The 'bricoleur' works flexibly with what is available to address the research questions, draws on multiple perspectives, and is open to new questions that arise during the research process (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Kincheloe 2001; Kay 2016). This aligned with my desire to move beyond the focus in existing research of addressing the 'problem' of transition, and explore instead how the secondary transition is viewed, made meaningful and reproduced by pupils.

I was also influenced by the work of Law (2004), who argues against the need for 'methodological hygiene', the view that 'if only you do your methods properly you will lead a healthy research life – the idea that you will discover specific traits about which all reasonable people can at least temporarily agree' (Law 2004, p.9). Law calls instead for a rethinking of method that embraces heterogeneity and variation, and is allowed to be 'slow and uncertain. A risky and troubling process, it will take time and effort to make realities and hold them steady for a moment against a background of flux and indeterminacy' (Law 2004, p.10).

Therefore, rather than align myself with an existing approach with a clearly defined set of rules for how research should be undertaken, I started by identifying a set of principles on which to build a methodological approach:

1) Children are competent social actors, with knowledge about their worlds (Lomax et al. 2011; Mannay 2016).
2) Children are best placed to give accounts of their own lives, and these should be explored using methods that foreground their voices (White 2020a).

3) Children are a heterogeneous group, with different needs, preferences and competencies (James et al. 2007; James and Prout 2015);

4) Research not only describes but produces social reality (Law 2004);

5) Research interactions are social, and meaning is co-constructed through these interactions (Silverman 2001; Mason 2002; England 2006; Edwards and Holland 2013; Loughran and Mannay 2018);

6) Research should aim not to cause harm to participants.

Many of these principles follow directly from the theoretical approach set out in the previous chapter. My understanding of children as agentic social actors, and the need for research about their lives to prioritise children's voices, was explained in Section 2.2.7. Chapter Three also argued that although childhood is a structural category that has meaning and material impact for how lives can be lived, childhood and notions of 'child' are socially specific and variable, and children are not a homogeneous group. This view of children and childhood underpins points 1 to 3, and shaped my approach to involving children in this research project, particularly my decision to position children's own voices and accounts as central; the choice of methods, and how they were used.

Points 4 and 5 relate to my understanding of what research is and how it produces knowledge. I take a post-structural view of knowledge and truth as produced through discourse and power, rather than existing in isolation (Lawler 2008). Law (2004, p.5) explains, in his argument against the 'common-sense' rules often applied to research methods, that 'methods, their rules, and even more methods' practices, not only describe but also help to produce the reality that they understand.' My research is understood as not only describing but also producing the secondary transition in particular ways, within the research sessions and spreading out into participants' wider lives.

Research is understood within this study as constituted through interactions and shared processes of meaning-making (Silverman 2001; Mason 2002). The researcher can neither be removed from the generation of research data, nor can (or should) they be 'objective'. Rather, they play an active role in producing research knowledge, shaped by factors including their social location, theoretical approach, how they are viewed by participants, and their own experience of the phenomenon being investigated (England 2006; Edwards and Holland 2013). This view of knowledge as co-produced through interaction shaped the methods chosen, how they were used, my engagement with reflexivity and reflection on my own role in the research process, and my approach to analysis.

The final point (6) formed the primary ethical principle for the project. As is argued by both feminist research and those exploring the geographies of childhood, it is vital that research exploring children's lives endeavours not to cause them harm (Morrow and Richards 1996). The negotiation of this

overarching principle, its interaction with different ethical frameworks, and the implications for the research, are discussed in Section 4.6.

4.1.2. <u>Identifying a biographical and longitudinal approach</u>

This research explored the lives, subjectivities and stories told by children, and their meaning-making over time. The research was longitudinal and qualitative, informed by biographical research, an umbrella term for a diverse set of approaches exploring the narratives individuals construct about their experiences and views, how they negotiate their past and future as well as their present, and how societal changes are experienced by individuals (Roberts 2002). I developed a series of interviews with participating children, conducting four interviews starting at the end of Year 6, as a way to explore their development, reflections and experiences over time. The use of creative methods in these interviews will be explored in the following section.

By examining individuals' stories within their social and cultural context, it is possible to examine 'the relationship between the unique life (biography), the context within which it is located (structure), and the processes that it is part of (e.g. history, social mobility, intergenerational transfers)' (Henderson et al. 2006, p.13). My study examined the accounts of individuals to see how they made sense of the transition to secondary school, working 'upwards' from these accounts (Neale and Flowerdew 2003) through my analysis, to explore the transition in its social context and address the question of how difference was (re)produced through the transition.

Biographical approaches are valuable for eliciting the narratives through which individuals 'organize their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes' (Richardson 1990, p.118). Through these narratives, participants consciously or unconsciously both recount their negotiation of different identities, and perform these within the research encounter (Warin and Muldoon 2009), 'telling themselves' through narratives (Valentine 2000; Singer 2004). A longitudinal biographical approach, comprising multiple research sessions, allowed for identity to be examined over time, through exploring how it is told in the present, and considering this as a process that develops and changes. Individual research sessions were used to generate snapshots of the participants' accounts of *being* (or anticipating being) a secondary school pupil in their new school, 'mak[ing] 'scenes' from what is experienced as the everyday' (Thomson and Baraitser 2018, p.77). Additionally, undertaking repeated sessions over time allowed the transition to be explored as a process of *becoming*.

Past and future are always part of our biography and our identity. The self that we experience and perform in the present is 'a composite of selves extending into both temporal directions' (Peetz and

Wilson 2008, p.2090). Biographies construct the past from where we stand now, past experiences in turn shape how the present is understood (Neale and Flowerdew 2003), and views of the future are intertwined with action, experience, and values in the present (Henderson et al. 2006, p.29). This is particularly relevant when examining periods of transition. The way an individual negotiates a transition relates directly to their construction of, and relationship with, both their past and futures.

The identity-work undertaken in research encounters includes the construction of both memories and imagined futures (Kuhn 2010), which may be investing, aspirational, or 'future-blocked', lacking the resources to move beyond present struggle and conceive of a future (Skeggs 2004; Henderson et al. 2006; Worth 2009). For this reason, time was explicitly brought into the interviews, with participants asked at each point to reflect on the past and to consider their 'possible selves' and futures (Ruvolo and Markus 1992; Hoyle and Sherrill 2006).

This repeated looking backwards and forwards aligned with the view of time taken in this research, as not linear or evenly laid out (Holloway et al. 2019). Participants' reflection on their past and future enabled them to identify 'turning points' (Neale and Flowerdew 2003) or 'critical moments' (Thomson et al. 2002b) of importance in their accounts of the transition. This supported the aim of centring children's voices, encouraging participants to construct the transition according to their own priorities and views of success, rather than measure this against a pre-existing framework.

Longitudinal qualitative methods are uniquely positioned to explore change and continuity (Holland 2011). Reflecting repeatedly on the same events or experiences at different points was particularly valuable in challenging the impulse to try and find the one 'true' story or overarching, coherent narrative, and seeing how changes in stories or perspectives related to participants' construction of identity and the good transition. Additionally, longitudinal methods may provide space for reflection, where data from previous sessions can be re-introduced by the researcher, allowing participants to reflect on or add to this data (Nind et al. 2012). Bagnoli (2009), in her research with young people on identity and migration, describes how bringing back drawings from earlier interviews facilitated participants to re-reflect on these, look at change, and see how meaning was differently attributed at this later stage. In my work, the reflective space created by introducing artefacts from earlier research sessions allowed me to look at how participants' narratives changed over time, and how they wrote and rewrote their individual biographies of the transition as their positioning changed.

One-to-one interviews were undertaken to explore each child's individual narrative and biography without others being present (Gaskell 2000), which enabled an in-depth exploration of the children's unique experiences and views (Heary and Hennessy 2006), and allowed for flexibility in responding

to individual children's preferences in relation to both topics and how the research sessions would be conducted.

4.2. Creative methods for exploring transition

This chapter has explained the longitudinal approach taken in this research, and its engagement with biographical methods. The research also incorporated creative methods, including a mix of drawing, play-based and craft-based activities, which were presented to children during interviews. This section will now explore both the affordances and considerations when undertaking creative longitudinal research.

4.2.1. What are creative methods?

Researchers can be creative at all stages of the research process, and this can be helpful in disrupting and challenging assumptions of traditional research methods regarding how research should be done, and what counts as knowledge (Bagnoli 2009; Kara 2015). Given that the research was examining a process of change and flux, and attempting to challenge pre-existing knowledge about the school transition, it was important to consciously try to think in a way that disrupted existing assumptions, and accept uncertainty. I engaged with Gallacher and Gallagher's (2008, p.511) concept of 'methodological immaturity', which they present as 'potential… emphasizing (inter)dependence, incompetence, incompleteness and vulnerability'.

4.2.2. Advantages of creative methods

Creative methods and their advantages have been much discussed and disputed, particularly in relation to their use with children, and their intersection with 'participatory' approaches. Mannay (Mannay 2010; Mannay 2016, p.32) contends that visual methods may provide a means to 'fight familiarity', disrupt preconceived ideas about phenomena and 'open up experience'. It is argued that engaging in creative processes and communicating non-verbally can encourage participants to think in different ways and look at reality and experience differently (Gauntlett 2007; Bagnoli 2009).

Creative methods encourage slowing down and reflection, offering participants an opportunity to take time to think, considering what and how they wish to (re)present, in contrast to the more immediate responses given in an interview (Punch 2002; Prosser and Loxley 2008; Bagnoli 2009). As well as the creation itself, spaces for reflection can also be opened-up by asking participants to explain or reflect on what they have created. Accordingly, the object can play an active role in a 'three-way conversation' between creation, researcher and participant (Hall et al. 2006; Trell and Hoven 2010).

The use of creative arts in therapeutic work is testament to the value of different modes of expression in exploring and expressing different aspects of experience (Prosser 2007; Lomax et al. 2011). Furthermore, our interaction with the world is multi-dimensional, and it follows that some experiences may be better expressed through other media rather than through words alone (Bagnoli 2009). Siibak et al. (2012, p.254) claim that in methods where the participant engages 'bodily', the act of 'physically creating something…cannot be separated from the mental processes necessary for creating the artifact or visual expression'. Although this is not unique to 'physically creating', it expresses the need to understand reflection and expression as bound together.

Recalling the aim to centre children's voices and priorities, creative methods may also give participants space to guide the focus and content of research encounters, enabling these to be more open-ended and participant-led than traditional interviews. Creative tasks can allow the participant's 'agenda [to be] given priority over researcher-led questioning' and for them to set the pace of the interview (Thomas and O'Kane 1998; Prosser and Loxley 2008, p.26). Arguably, this open-endedness is not unique to creative methods, however, such methods can provide the right conditions for participants to guide the focus of the research encounter, choose the order in which topics are considered, take the discussion in unexpected directions, and raise topics and issues the researcher may otherwise not think to raise (Mannay 2016). They were therefore appropriate for the exploratory nature of my research, which aimed to investigate participants' notions of a 'good' transition, to enable participants to identify the topics and issues of importance to them, and for these to define the overall focus of the research.

In longitudinal qualitative research, participant attrition and retention are a key concern, particularly when working with young people who 'really owe you no attention at all' (Robinson and Gillies 2012, p.62). To minimise participant dropout, it was necessary to work hard to keep participants engaged in the project by making the research enjoyable. Providing a choice of methods, and the associated option of expressing themselves in different ways, can enable people with different skills and preferences to take part in research and enjoy the experience (Bagnoli 2009; Trell and Hoven 2010; Kramer-Roy 2015). While the use of creative methods simply because they are 'fun' has been criticised (Punch 2002), I considered it vital to try and make research encounters enjoyable for participants.

4.2.3.   <u>Creative methods, ontology and epistemology</u>

It is often claimed that creative methods can provide access to more 'authentic' knowledge than other methods, 'give voice' to participants, remove the 'influence' of the researcher or of others, and equalise power relations between researcher(s) and participants (Mauthner 1997; Thomas and O'Kane

1998; Punch 2002; Grover 2004; Gauntlett 2007; Siibak et al. 2012; Kramer-Roy 2015). I will briefly outline my view on these claims and how this relates to the methodological approach of this project.

Claims by authors such as (Gauntlett 2007) that creative methods can allow participants' authentic or unconscious views to be heard rely on the assumption there is some authentic knowledge that can be accessed, and that creative methods provide 'open invitations to children to express themselves or open a window onto their inner lives' (Buckingham 2009, p.634; see also Robinson and Gillies 2012). I understand the accounts produced through this research as fluid, changeable and context-specific, produced through social interactions between myself and participants, rather than existing independently of the research encounter. In particular, the view of creative methods as a window to authentic experience assumes the existence of a self-knowing subject, which is not coherent with my view of identity and self-knowledge as always contextual and produced relationally.

4.2.4.   **Limitations of creative methods**

It cannot be assumed that all children will prefer creative methods, find them more appropriate than adults might, or feel comfortable using them (Punch 2002; Thomson 2007; Gallacher and Gallagher 2008; Buckingham 2009). Children's engagement with these methods may be limited by a complex variety of interacting factors, including their perceived or actual ability, their views of the method (as childish, inappropriate, or school-like), their relationship with the researcher, incentives, and the presence of other children (Punch 2002; Holland et al. 2010).

Creative methods cannot provide neutral spaces for participants to express themselves. Even with relatively open and flexible tasks, creative methods contain underlying assumptions that may encourage participants to express themselves in particular ways. Drawing, often viewed as the easiest and most suitable creative method to use with children, may be understood as a 'school genre', with associated expectations, such as pressure to produce a 'good drawing' - which will itself be socially and culturally specific (Buckingham 2009, p.634). Creative methods bring their own assumptions and affordances that shape the data produced, and the very structure of repeated biographical interviews may encourage participants to tell linear narratives of development and progress, and exclude or reshape narratives that do not fit this model (Thomson and Holland 2003). The ways that each method may have shaped the data that was produced was borne in mind when analysing the data, and the ways this played out in practice, are discussed in the Chapters Five to Seven.

Contrary to claims made of creative methods (Trell and Hoven 2010; Kramer-Roy 2015), such methods do not stop the researcher, or the 'intrusive presence' of others such as family or friends,

having an influence over the creative outcome and ongoing research (Mannay 2013). However, as explained in Chapter Three, power was viewed within my research using a Foucauldian framework, as productive as well as repressive, and not inherently negative (Thomson 2007; Gallagher 2008; Holland et al. 2010). Rather than existing independently and able to be possessed and redistributed, power is understood as able to 'operate to constrain and empower in different sociocultural contexts…it always [exists] in relation as a social and discursive phenomenon' (Holland et al. 2010, p.362). Hence, it is not meaningful to try and equalise or remove power relations, as these will shift and change according to context and culture. Additionally, it can be argued that the claim that a particular type of research 'empowers' a population or 'gives voice' is both based on the problematic assumption that the population (in this case children) need to be 'empowered' (by adults) in order to be agentic within research or indeed the wider world, and masks the fact that project will still be 'driven by adult research agendas' (Gallacher and Gallagher 2008; Lomax 2012). This risks reproducing the very norms of research as adult-dominated that creative or participatory research may be aiming to disrupt (Hunleth 2011; Lomax 2012).

4.3.   <u>Research design: methods used</u>

This section provides an overview of the research methods and sample, followed by a more detailed discussion of the process of data generation and how particular methods worked in practice.

Participants were seventeen child-parent dyads. Research sessions were designed to be undertaken individually and to take place during the two months before the start of secondary school and across the first year of secondary school. I interviewed each child's parent twice, at the beginning and end of the fieldwork period. Four waves of data generation were undertaken over fifteen months, planned to correspond with times identified as significant within transitions literature described in Chapter Two. Each research session was an individual semi-structured interview with the children, using different creative methods to explore their expectations, experiences, and views of the secondary transition.

1) End of Year Six (July/August 2016) – child and parent, separately. Interview with drawing activity (child only)
2) Initial weeks of Year Seven (September - October 2016) – child only. Interview with timeline and emotion stickers.
3) Halfway through Year Seven (February - March 2017) – child only. Interview with sandboxing.
4) Final term of Year Seven and first term of Year Eight (August-October 2017) – child and parent, separately. Interview with timeline/collage activity (child only).

In the original research design, the final research sessions were intended to take place in final term of Year Seven. However, due to factors beyond my control, these were delayed and took place during the summer holidays following Year Seven and the first half term of Year Eight. The implications of this for the data generated and analysis are discussed in Section 4.8.

The children participating were provided with 'transition diaries', to allow space for recording and reflection in between interviews if participants chose. Additionally, I kept reflective fieldnotes of each research session, to encourage spaces outside the formal interview encounter to become part of the research data, for example, 'spaces of interruption' and 'spaces previous to' the recorded interview (Mannay and Morgan 2015).

Having developed a research timeline with indicative activities for each session, I consulted a research advisory group of 14-19-year-olds. This explored the affordances and limitations of a range of creative methods, and memories of primary-secondary transition. This supplemented my engagement with the literature to inform my identification of possible challenges of the different methods and potential topics of interest to explore in the interviews.

Following this consultation, I developed a draft topic guide for the first set of interviews, incorporating a choice of two visual methods of elicitation. I undertook a pilot research session with an 11-year-old boy, giving him the choice of methods including a timeline or drawing activity. This pilot suggested that reducing choice and making the activity as simple as possible would be beneficial to reduce the pressure felt by participants as we built a relationship in the initial encounter. I chose to remain present while participants produced their creative data within research sessions, although I would doodle or play with the materials, in an effort to not leave the participant feeling they were being watched.

4.3.1.   **Parental involvement and prioritising children's voices**

Although the study primarily focused on children's accounts of the transition, parents' accounts were also explored, to contextualise the children's accounts and consider the role of parents in shaping their child's secondary transition. Parent and child interviews were carried out separately. Although the conversations and dynamics of paired interviews can generate useful data (see for example Highet 2003; Wilson et al. 2016) time outside the official interview gave me ample opportunity to observe families interacting with each other. Providing time for participants to speak to me individually proved particularly useful when discussing experiences that were difficult or had not been discussed with other family members, and both parents and children indicated at various points that they had told me something they did not want their parent/child to know.

Importantly, seeking both parents' and children's accounts of the transition was not intended to find the one 'true' narrative, but to look at each account and experience in its own right and, through analysis, bring these into conversation. The same was true of repeated interviews over time, and both required an openness to change and apparent contradiction.

4.4.   Recruitment and sampling

4.4.1.   Recruitment process

The sample was chosen not to try and represent all children, but with sufficient diversity to allow theoretical insights to be generated from the data on the relationships between individual biographies, school context and social structures. Despite my efforts to centre children's voices, I was careful not to assume that these voices could be heard in any 'pure' form, that I was 'giving' them voice, or that these voices represented 'children' as a group.

I aimed to recruit 15-20 parent-child dyads, roughly split according to gender, attending a variety of non-fee-paying schools in Cardiff and south Wales. I began recruitment in April 2016 by contacting the providers of organised children's activities in south Wales. I originally chose not to recruit via schools for two reasons. First, a key aim of the research was to explore how experiences differed between schools. Rather than carry out case studies of a small number of schools, I recruited via non-school organisations to ensure that participants attended a range of different schools. Second, I was wary of participants seeing me as connected to their school. Approaching participants via a non-school space was one way to signify my independence from both the school and their parents.

Given the class associations with particular activities, (Lareau 2002), I contacted a mixture of sports teams, performing arts clubs, open access council-run homework clubs, and Scouts and Guides groups, with information about the project and a request to circulate project information or allow me to come and speak to children and parents attending their sessions. I was invited to speak to two Guides groups and one homework club, and information about the project was circulated by email to members of a local Scouts group and a football team.

In my initial round of contacting organisations, I also attempted to contact open-access, free after-school clubs (referred to by all who attended them as 'playcentres') that at the time ran every day in Cardiff. I was able to access two sites via a contact at an open access youth group with experience working alongside the playcentres. The playcentre convenor proved to be a key gatekeeper. She

allowed me to come along to any sessions I wished for the two playcentres she ran, identified which children were in Year Six, facilitated me to use the playcentre to undertake interviews, and helped me to regain contact with participants whom I had been unable to contact directly.

In May 2016, delays with recruitment led me to also visit a school and speak to a class of Year Six pupils, providing them with project information and details for their parents to contact me. Although this went against my initial decision not to recruit through schools, I decided that the potential disadvantages of being associated with a school were outweighed by the necessity of increasing the number of participants.

Finally, three additional participants were recruited via two free holiday play schemes where I worked on another research project during the summer of 2016. Having built a relationship with staff at the play schemes, I explained my project and sought permission to speak to parents attending to take part in family activities or pick up their children. I received contact details and expressions of interest from three girls and three boys and their parents, of whom two girls and one boy took part in the study.

4.4.2.   Final sample

The final sample, the interviews carried out, and their method of recruitment are summarised in Table 1. Orange shading indicates where participants either expressed a wish to not take part in the research (Alice, Max) or stopped responding to phone/email contact (Rosie and Helen). In a small number of cases, additional interviews were carried out in situations where the original interview was interrupted or curtailed. I also suggested an additional interview with one participant (Alice); this is discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

In total, the participants included 12 girls and five boys, attending eight secondary schools; their distribution across the schools is given in Table 2. None of the schools were fee-paying, all were English-medium, and none were faith schools, with the exception of Holy Trinity, a Roman Catholic School. All were co-educational, with the exception of St. Mary's Boys' School.

In total, I conducted 94 research sessions, generating 121 hours and 21 minutes of audio data. A more detailed summary of the data produced at each stage can be found in Appendix E.

Table 1: Participants and research sessions undertaken

Child	Ethnicity of child	Parent / carer	Relationship	Class	Recruitment method	Round 1 (July-Aug 2016)		Round 2 (Sept-Oct 2016)	Round 3 (March-April 2017)	Extra	Round 4 (Aug-Sept 2017)	
Becky (F)	White	**Nina**	Mother	Working	Playcentre	Becky	Nina	Becky	Becky	Nina	Becky	Nina
Rachel (F)	White	**Jessica**	Mother	Middle	Guides 1	Rachel	Jessica	Rachel	Rachel		Rachel	Jessica
Cerys (F)	White	**Matthew**	Father	Middle	Guides 1	Cerys	Matthew	Ann	Ann		Cerys	Matthew
Ann (F)	Dual heritage Welsh / Cuban	**Gareth**	Father	Middle	Guides 2	Ann	Gareth	Ann	Ann		Ann	Gareth
Rhiannon (F)	White	**Ashley**	Mother	Middle	Guides 1	Rhiannon	Ashley	Rhiannon	Rhiannon		Rhiann-on	Ashley
Catrin (F)	White	**Chloe**	Mother	Middle	Guides 1	Catrin	Chloe	Catrin	Catrin		Catrin	Chloe
Helen (F)	White	**Sophia**	Mother	Middle	Guides 1	Helen	Sophia					
Sara (F)	White	**Jenny**	Mother	Middle	Guides 2	Sara	Jenny	Sara	Sara		Sara	Jenny
Megan (F)	White	**James**	Father	Middle	Guides 2	Megan	James	Megan	Megan	Meg-an	Megan	James
Ayesha (F)	Bengali	**Maryam**	Mother	Middle	Holiday club 2	Ayesha	Maryam	Ayesha	Ayesha		Ayesha	Maryam
Shreya (F)	Indian	**Vivaan**	Father	Middle	Holiday club 2	Shreya	Vivaan	Shreya	Shreya		Shreya	Vivaan
Rosie (F)	White	**Steph**	Mother	Working	Playcentre	Rosie	Steph					
Alice (F)	White	**Emily**	Mother	Working	Playcentre	Alice	Emily	Alice	Alice	Alice		
David (M)	White	**Siobhan**	Mother	Middle	Scouts	David	Siobhan	David	David	Lynn	David	Siobhan
Max (M)	White	**Holly**	Mother	Working	Playcentre	Max	Holly	Holly	Holly			Holly
Dylan (M)	White	**Natasha**	Mother	Middle	School	Dylan	Natasha	Dylan	Dylan		Dylan	Natasha
Callum (M)	White	**Laura**	Grandmother	Working	Holiday club 1	Callum	Laura	Callum	Callum		Callum	Laura

Demographic information was gathered from participants through their initial interviews, to attend to one of the project's aims of exploring the reproduction of difference in the secondary transition. Gender and ethnicity were included explicitly in participants' narratives, for example, describing themselves as boys/girls, but such descriptions were rarely given in relation to class. I did not ask participants directly about their class and, as reported by others who highlight the reluctance to identify with class categories (Savage et al. 2010), this was not given, with the exception of a minority of the middle-class parents who described themselves as such. I therefore classified participants as middle- or working-class according to their occupation and where they lived – both factual information about the area, and my own impressions of the areas when I went there to interview participants. The limitations of these categories (Savage 2015), and the role of such 'classifications imposed from outside' in reproducing class (Tyler 2013), particularly as a non-local, middle-class researcher, are acknowledged; however, this was necessary to examine class as part of the research. As noted in Chapter Three, I understand class as not only classification and stratification but also 'political struggles against the effects of classification' (Tyler 2015, p.507). This understanding of class is not captured by my attribution of particular classed positions to the participants, but it was explored throughout the data generation and analysis.

The final sample inevitably shaped the production of data, and hence how the research questions could be addressed. The study mainly comprised girls, due both to the use of Guides groups as a recruitment method, and additional interest from girls attending the playcentre. Additionally, the sample was predominantly middle-class. This meant that caution was needed to avoid the silencing of working-class voices in the study but also in interpreting the findings relating to the working-class participants, especially when considering gender, as this further divided the sample.

Table 2: Characteristics of participants' secondary schools (Source: WalesOnline Real Schools Guide 2017)

School name	Participants attending	Size	% of pupils receiving free school meals (FSM)	% of BME[1] pupils	% of pupils with English as an additional language	% of pupils receiving 'School Action'[2]	% of pupils receiving 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE
Fairfields School	Ayesha, Shreya	1104	15	35	26	11	70
Fox Hill High	Catrin, Cerys, Rachel	2250	12	22	14	9	69
Holy Trinity Roman Catholic High School	David	1045	11	35	26	10	86
Ivy Tree School	Becky, Rosie, Alice, Max	552	41	40	34	21	51
Marshbrook Community School	Dylan	1711	25	84	77	15	55
Parkview School	Ann, Sara, Megan	2000	5	16	6	10	82
St. Mary's Boys' School	Callum	950	20	7	3	17	60
Wellfield High School	Rhiannon, Helen	1542	17	22	15	13	70

[1] The terms 'BME' or 'Black and Minority Ethnic' are used in the data source from which this information was drawn. These terms are used here to maintain consistency with the source, but the limitations of these terms is acknowledged.

[2] 'School Action' is a designation used in Welsh schools to indicate students who need 'more intensive help…if they are making little or no progress with the help normally available in class'. This could include, but is not limited to, individual support from a teaching assistant, small group support and/or additional equipment (Lahelma and Gordon 1997; Jackson and Warin 2000; Lucey and Reay 2000; Noyes 2003; O'Brien 2003; Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008; Winther-Lindqvist 2012).

I attended one of the schools after my fieldwork was complete, while working on another project. In all other cases, my accounts of these schools came entirely from the participants, with the exception of the information given in Table 2. This summary information was all publicly available, and represents some of the information that would have been available to the families participating in the study when undertaking secondary school application. However, I only sought it out following the third research sessions. As an outsider who did not live locally to the research sites, I lacked the local knowledge to be familiar with the histories and reputations of the schools. I therefore chose to use the opportunity to enter the research sessions without seeking official or informal knowledge of the schools, in order to allow participants' accounts of these schools not to be shaped by my own knowledge.

4.5.   Data generation / research encounters

Following the summary in Section 4.3, this section describes the research encounters in more detail. Despite preparing and offering the creative methods detailed below, participants were also encouraged to make their own suggestions for adaptations and changes, and always had the option of a straightforward semi-structured interview, rather than assuming all would be willing or able to engage unproblematically with creative methods (see Mannay 2016).

4.5.1.   Session 1 (July/August, final term of primary school / summer holidays)

The initial interviews explored participants' views of primary school, and their expectations of the secondary transition. Given the interrelationship of past, present and future, it was important to explore views of primary school while they were not yet at secondary school, as well as looking ahead. An aim of this stage of the research was to identify areas of importance to participants, to guide the focus of later rounds the fieldwork.

Drawing was chosen as an appropriate method for this initial interview due to its general accessibility (Merriman and Guerin 2006; Lyon 2020). Drawing also provides an alternative to verbal communication and a means for the participant to guide the focus of the research session.

Participants were given two sheets of paper, reproduced below (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).
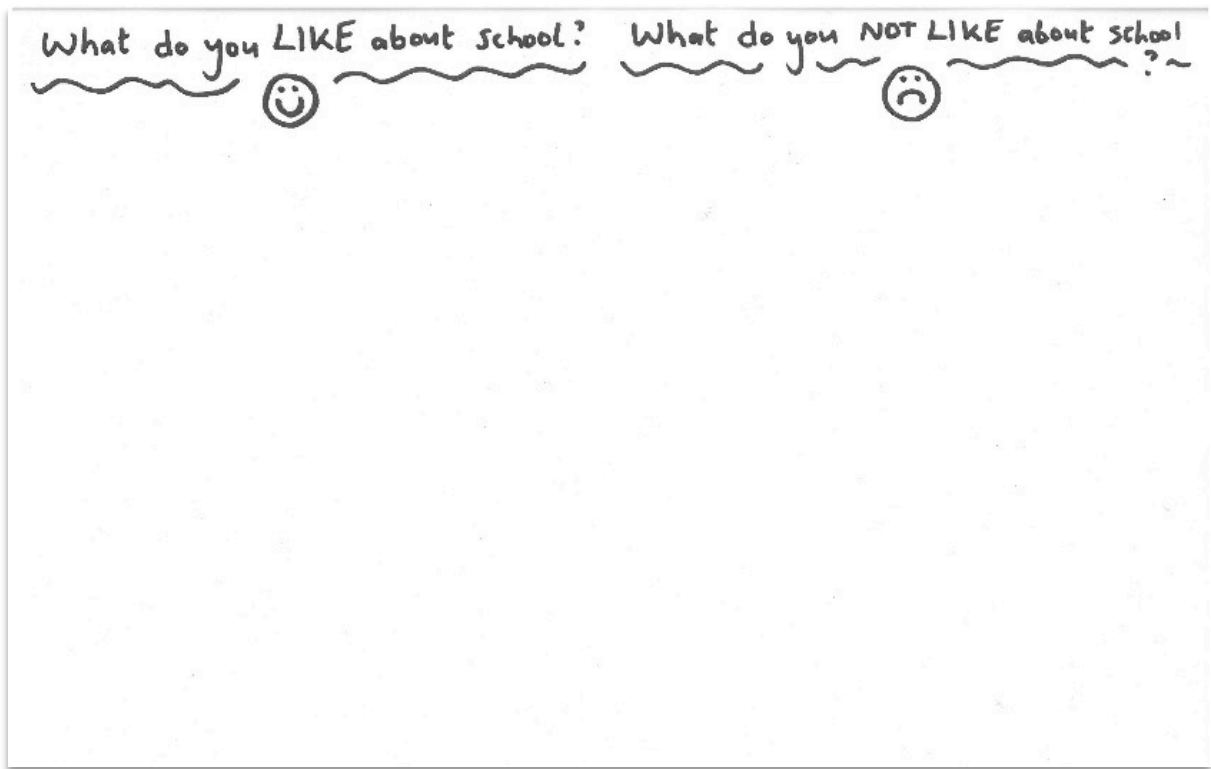
Figure 1: Activity sheet used for primary school drawing in initial interview
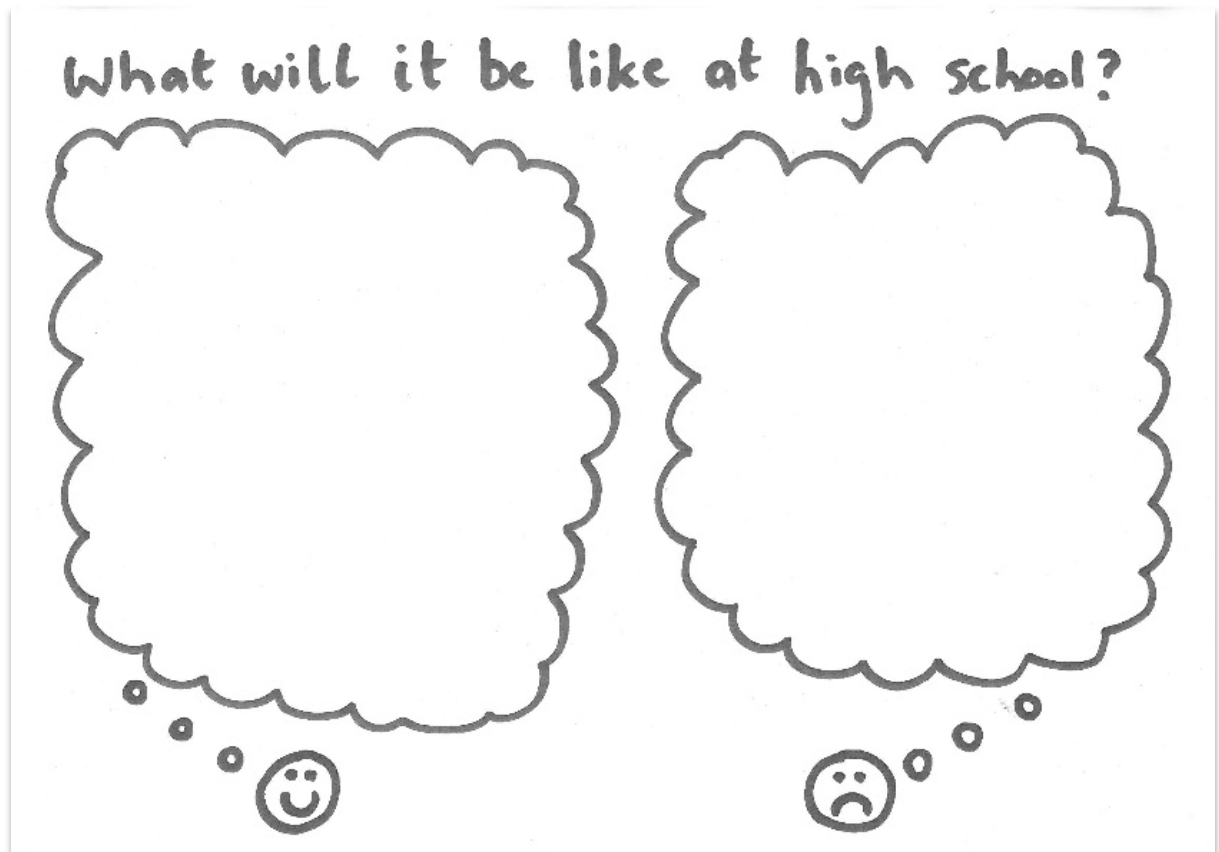
Figure 2: Activity sheet used for secondary/high school drawing in initial interview

I stressed that the aim of the task was not to draw a 'good' or 'accurate' picture, but rather to help us talk and think about school. I also offered drawing as the only 'activity' in the initial interview. This was influenced by the pilot interview, which highlighted the potential of shyness and fear of 'getting it wrong' to impact on the interview, and the difficulty children may find in making decisions when they feel under pressure, all of which may be particularly acute in the initial interview where a relationship between researcher and participant has not yet developed.

To enable children to direct the focus of the interview, where possible they were given no further instruction. If necessary, prompts were used, inviting reflection on people; places or spaces; and activities ('things you do at school') that they liked or disliked in relation to school. After each drawing, participants were asked to talk about their pictures, with follow-up questions in relation to specific aspects of the drawings.

An additional aim of the first round of interviews was to explore children's experiences of 'transition work' - activities undertaken by primary schools, secondary schools or local community groups with the explicit aim of supporting children with the transition from primary to secondary school – and their accounts of their own negotiation of their expectations. Children were asked about both formal and information transition work, and how this related to their own negotiation of the transition.

4.5.2. <u>Transition diaries</u>

At the end of the first interview, all child participants were given a 'transition diary', a blank notebook in which they were asked to record anything relating to their school transition or other important things that they might wish to discuss in future interviews, using whatever method they chose. This was provided as an additional incentive to keep participants engaged with the project, to help with recall, and as a means of creating a record of the transition while I was not present. The diaries were used as an additional elicitation method in the interviews; in a minority of cases, participants used these to support their recall in giving an account of their transition. However, I made clear to participants that they were not required to either use or share the diary. Participants did not engage very much with this method, perhaps due to its open nature or the lack of obligation, in contrast to the many other demands made during the transition. The diary data was incorporated into analysis only if participants showed me these or drew on their diary entries in their interviews. Only four were able to locate these to bring them to the final interview. I took copies of these four, and returned them to the participants by post.

4.5.3. Session 2 (Sept/Oct, term 1 of secondary school)

The second research session took place approximately six weeks after participants started secondary school. These examined participants' initial negotiation of the new school, and reflections after their first half term on the process of being-and-becoming a secondary school pupil.

The interview was exploratory, with participants encouraged to talk about aspects of their experience that were important to them, including new foci that emerged following the start of secondary school. I asked participants to reflect on their recalled expectations of the transition and consider how these related to their experience of secondary school, to explore the relationships between imagined futures and experiences. I did not want to assume that the issues raised initially would remain salient, particularly given the literature demonstrating that different concerns may change in their importance to pupils over time (Galton and Morrison 2000). However, if an area that had previously been identified as important was not mentioned, I introduced this to the discussion, to see how its salience might have changed. Participants were also asked to recall their first day at school, given the tendency for this to be viewed as a critical moment in accounts of the transition (Lahelma and Gordon 1997).

Participants were invited to construct a paper timeline of a school day, using emotion stickers to indicate how they felt at different points. This provided a framework for exploring participants' negotiation of the everyday in their new school and their identification of important aspects of their school day. The use of emotion stickers was informed by the 'emotion map' technique of using colour-coded emoticon stickers to map out patterns of affective behaviour around a space (Gabb 2009; Gabb and Fink 2015), and Mannay et al.'s (2018) use of emotion stickers in combination with timelines to encourage reflection on emotions at particular time-points in a participant's biography. This method aimed to explore participants' affective responses or attachments to parts of the school day. Emotion stickers do not require linguistic or literary skills (Gabb 2007) and provide a framework for engaging with emotions without having to articulate these verbally.

Participants were provided with long thin strips of paper, small printed word cards that they could physically arrange and/or stick down (including some blank cards), and stickers depicting smiling, straight and frowning faces. The words were based on participants' descriptions in the previous interview of their daily lives and the kinds of activities they undertook (see Appendix D for the complete list). Participants were also free to draw or write their own timelines and to augment the paper words or stickers, as seen in Ayesha's timeline (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Ayesha's timeline, on which she drew her own versions of the emotion stickers

This method provided a flexible means of exploring participants' affective responses to their new school. Participants were also asked to consider how this view of their school day was different from, or similar to, primary school. This aimed to explore participants' accounts/narratives of change and continuity, while also allowing space for participants to introduce new topics and areas of focus.

Participants interpreted the task in different ways, but their responses also had some notable similarities. I explained that the emotion stickers could be used to indicate any feelings, and that these might include anger, boredom, excitement, or fun. However, participants rarely described emotions other than 'good', 'bad', 'happy', 'sad', 'medium', and often would use the stickers as shortcuts, pointing to these in lieu of describing an emotion. These seemed to close down rather than open up exploration or expression of emotions in relation to school. It could be argued that the materials provided encouraged a particular interpretation of the task, leaning towards a limited or simplified emotional repertoire and a linear understanding of time (Bagnoli 2009). However, the activity was undertaken in this way due to participants seeming to engage more with tasks when some clear boundaries and guidance were provided. Additionally, similarity in what is produced using visual methods can also provide valuable information relating to the visual or other repertoires available to participants. The relatively homogeneous productions from session two, and the relationship between this and a focus on certain aspects of the new school and its time-space paths (Gordon et al. 2000), will be explored in Chapter Six.

From the second interview onwards, a set of plasticine was available during interviews for participants to incorporate into the interview however they liked as an additional creative outlet. Participants generally used this to make models unrelated to their accounts, and Sara used it to augment her sand-scene in the third research session, sticking a model cutlass to the figure used to represent herself when telling a story about owning a pet unicorn (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Section of Sara's sand-scene

4.5.4.   <u>**Session 3 (March/April, term 2 of secondary school)**</u>

The third research session took place halfway through the second term of secondary school, and aimed to explore participants' views of themselves in relation to the dominant view that by this time, the transition is complete and most pupils have 'settled in' (McLellan and Galton 2015). To explore the reproduction of truths about the transition, participants were also asked what they would tell a Year Six student about to undertake the transition.

This session also explored areas of the transition that had been central in previous rounds of the research. As will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six, social aspects of the transition were central in the first and second waves of the study. The third wave hence aimed to explore the social aspect of transition, using 'sandboxing', a method developed by Mannay and colleagues (Mannay et al. 2017). This adapts Lowenfeld's (1939) 'world' technique, a type of play therapy where children build 'worlds' using sand and small objects.

Participants were provided with a plastic tray of sand and a set of approximately 160 small objects. These included fairytale/fantasy characters, people representing different jobs, animals, trees, buildings, monuments, fences, shells, signs and other miscellaneous objects. Participants were invited to create a sand-scene using the deliberately open prompt 'tell me about important people in your school life'. If questioned, I elaborated that this could include 'friends, teachers or anyone else who's important to you at school or in your school life'. Having built relationships with participants by this point, it was possible to present a relatively open task and support participants to engage with this in a way they felt able. This echoes the work of Gillies and Robinson (2010; 2012) who report needing to build rapport with young people labelled 'challenging' before they would engage in research. These relationships and free 'chat' also enabled 'micro-moments' throughout the research, where participants would speak unprompted about aspects of their lives relevant to my questions (see also Holland et al. 2010, p.368). In this session, I found myself pleasantly surprised by participants' tendency to un-self-consciously engage with the task, and to enjoy playing with the sand and objects during the interview. Engendering this space of play and messiness, in contrast to school lives that participants described as increasingly regulated and often with little opportunity for creative expression, aligned with my aims to make the research enjoyable for the children participating.

This method offered both affordances and limitations. The discomfort felt by some participants with drawing, and the concern with producing something 'good', seemed less present. This may have been due to the method not requiring any artistic skill, or the transient nature of the sand-scenes. However, some initially struggled with the openness of the task and sought reassurance that they were doing it 'right'.

Additionally, the act of choosing from an extensive set of mainly non-human objects can open up a space of metaphor and creative comparisons (Mannay et al. 2017). Participants engaged with the method's potential for thinking creatively and metaphorically. They explained how the figures they chose – which frequently included animals and objects - represented friends, family and teachers. Relationships were also represented in a variety of creative ways, using the box as a boundary, drawing on spatial metaphors of closeness and distance, and in many cases using the different sets of similar figures to represent different groups of friends. Participants were also able to bury, cover or otherwise symbolically act on the objects - sometimes violently, in the case of accounts of teachers they did not like. The ways this method illuminated participants' accounts of status, identity and categorising in peer relationships will be explored in Chapter Seven.

In a project that sees identity and biography as unfixed and constantly being re-written, this method was appropriate for exploring relationships and social networks, allowing them to be re-negotiated as often as necessary. Although I took photographs of the sand-scenes, this method differs from most

arts-based methods in that there is no assumption that a finished work will emerge at some point. I encouraged participants to feel free to change or continue to play with the sandboxes during and after our discussion of their networks, and their sand-scenes remained active throughout the interviews, with participants changing their sand-scenes as we spoke, creating multiple different scenes or elaborate moving plays with the figures. In contrast to earlier paper-based methods, participants often narrated their decisions regarding their choice of figures, meaning this creation was incorporated into the interview in a more participant-led manner than in previous sessions.

However, the limitations of this method should be noted. Asking participants to map personal relationships assumes that relationships are important to young people (Bagnoli 2009), and there was not an alternative interpretation of the task if a child had not felt they had any 'important people' in their school lives. Additionally, it became apparent that the set of objects accompanying the sandbox, although large, drew on a limited repertoire, which shaped the representations that could be created. In some cases, this encouraged imaginative use of imagery, metaphor and improvisation, with participants addressing the perceived limitations of the figures in creative ways. However, the repertoire of available figures also reified norms relating to gender and ethnicity – all the human or humanoid figures seemed to be representations of whiteness, and were either fairytale characters, male-coded soldiers, or gender-stereotypical representations of jobs (male police officer, female vet). Although the children could use these in gender-nonconforming ways, providing these stereotypical figures reproduced gendered representations as normal (see also Mannay and Turney 2020)

4.5.5.   Session 4 (July/August, third term of secondary school)

The final research sessions took place as participants were finishing their first year of secondary school, with some already in Year Eight by the time of their interview. The focus was reflecting on the year as a whole, and considering key moments in their school year, to identify 'fateful moments' (Giddens 1991) they saw as important in their biography. Participants were given the choice of constructing a paper timeline using drawing, collage, or writing, or using their choice of a variety of craft materials provided.

When planning the project, I chose this as the final time-point to leave open the possibility that the transition would be framed by participants as continuing to this point or beyond. However, following my analysis of the first three rounds of interviews, it became clear that the dominant view of the transition presented by my participants was of something that was complete by the time the third interview took place. Additionally, due to personal circumstances leading me to suspend study for some months near the end of the planned fieldwork period, the final interviews took place significantly later than planned, either during the summer holidays following the end of Year Seven or

the beginning of Year Eight. Following transcription and an initial round of analysis of the Session Four data, it became clear that these interviews did not add to the conclusions drawn following the first three waves of data, and I made the decision to focus on these three research sessions to address my research questions. Therefore, data from the final round of interviews is not explored in this thesis.

4.5.6. <u>Parent interviews</u>

Parents were interviewed twice, corresponding to the first and final research sessions with the children. Parents' sessions did not use creative research methods, but a more traditional semi-structured interview. Rather than the in-depth data on the day-to-day experience of the transition gained from speaking to the children multiple times, the parent interviews sought to explore their narratives of the transition given at two points. They were also encouraged to reflect forwards and backwards; their initial interviews explored their views on the child's experience of primary school, the process of choosing and applying to secondary school; views of transition interventions, and expectations (positive and negative) and hopes for secondary school, whereas their final interviews reflected back on their expectations, fears, hopes and how the transition had been in practice, and their hopes for the child's future.

4.5.7. <u>Leaving the field</u>

Concerns are commonly raised in ethnographic research about the ethics of curtailing relationships with research participants following an extended period of being present in their lives, as well as the emotional impact that this may have on the researcher (Iversen 2009; Tickle 2017). Although I was not embedded in participants' lives and spaces as is often the case in ethnographic work, I was concerned that the relationships that had developed would mean that 'leaving the field' was not a clear-cut process. I worked to manage this carefully, explaining the structure of the research and the number of sessions each time I saw participants, and symbolically marking the completion of the fieldwork by sending cards to all children who took part in the final interview (in addition to Alice, who did not but undertook four interviews nonetheless). These cards contained my contact details, and reiterated that there would be no further sessions but that participants could contact me if they wished. A number of participants sent text messages following the final interview to acknowledge the cards and wish me luck with the rest of the project, and one parent contacted me to check I had reached home safely (in common with the tendency of the adult participants to position me as a child or not-adult) and inviting me to 'pop by if you're in the area', but none initiated further contact.

Leaving lines of communication open but not initiating contact myself meant that overall this ending of contact felt as though it had been reached mutually. In contrast to others' accounts of leaving the

field as emotionally difficult for the researcher (Watts 2008), I found this process of disengagement following fieldwork both unexpectedly straightforward, and necessary in allowing me to legitimately disengage from relationships with participants that often involved significant emotional engagement on my part, and permeated my life outside the project in ways that were not always easy to manage.

4.6.   Ethical considerations

This section explains the role of ethical and moral considerations in this project. I will discuss the different sets of ethical and moral codes, regulations, and requirements I negotiated, including my engagement with participatory principles, and the implications for how I undertook the research.

This project received ethical approval from Cardiff University's School Research Ethics Committee (SREC). This required setting out the processes I would use to address questions relating to informed consent; data management; harm to participants; harm to researcher; and anonymity and confidentiality (see Appendix A for full details of the application for, and receipt of, ethical approval from the SREC).

Although the university's institutional ethics framework was a useful starting point in developing procedures, it cannot be assumed that such frameworks ensure research is ethical according to other frameworks, such as those premised on children's rights or an ethics of care (Hammersley 2009; Hurdley 2010). Therefore, I developed my own set of ethical principles to follow during this project. These related to consent and participation; confidentiality, anonymity and authorship; and comfort, enjoyment and safety. My approach to these issues drew on feminist research, geographies of childhood, and participatory action research, and followed from the principles set out in Section 4.1.1 to avoid harming participants; centre the voices and priorities of children; and acknowledge that children are heterogeneous but societally marginalised. An additional ethical principle of the project was that power within research should not be used for domination (Gallagher 2008). My approach to ethical considerations in the project is summarised in the following sections.

4.6.1.   Consent and participation

I ensured written opt-in consent was given by all participants to take part in the project, following a written and verbal explanation of what participating would involve (see Appendix B). However, I treated consent as 'always provisional', a process negotiated iteratively throughout the research rather than 'given' once (Thomson and Holland 2003; Weller 2012). I emphasised participants' right to withdraw from the project, and regularly 'checked in' with participants throughout the project, to ascertain whether they still wanted to be involved. This approach to consent was particularly

important given the time and effort involved in participating in longitudinal qualitative research, and the knowledge that participants' desire to participate may change over time. Throughout the fieldwork period, I tried to maintain a 'distant presence' in participants' lives to maintain engagement between research sessions without overburdening participants with excessive communication or intrusion (Weller 2012, p.124). A minority of participants decided at different points that they no longer wanted to participate.

With participants' permission, I audio-recorded all research sessions. Starting to record was always preceded by an initial 'check-in' in which we reviewed confidentiality, consent and withdrawal from the project, as well as encouragement to take breaks, ask questions, make themselves comfortable in the space, and stop or pause the recorder at any time. I also sought permission to photograph their creative productions or, in the case of drawings and timelines, took copies of these before returning them to the participant.

Particular attention was paid to trying to limit any harm to participants, and to centring the voices and priorities of children. This chimes with principles of feminist research and some definitions of Participatory Action Research (PAR; see Holland et al. 2010 for a summary of the different ways this is defined in the literature). However, the aim of this project was primarily to generate knowledge rather than to directly improve the lives of participants, as is the aim of PAR (Reason and Torbert 2001). Additionally, I was aware that positioning only 'active participation' as valid - as advocated by Punch (2002) and hierarchies of participation such as Hart's 'ladder' (1997), or the 'levels of participation' set out in Shier (2001) - risks 'unwittingly reproduc[ing] the regulation of children' (Gallagher 2008, p.137). What is often framed as the 'ideal of participation' (Weller 2012) was not appropriate for my research; throughout, giving participants too much choice in tasks seemed to cause unease and disengagement. I wanted instead to ensure different sorts of participation were accepted and valued. I took an approach similar to that recounted by Gillies and Robinson (2012, p.164), prioritising working flexibly and responsively with participants and their needs and preferences, trying to make the research encounters enjoyable, and giving choice in type of expression as well as other aspects of the research sessions.

An openness to different sorts of participation was underpinned by measures taken to communicate to participants that I respected and valued their participation. One method of demonstrating that participants' time and knowledge is valued is through the provision of incentives (Sime 2008). Each child was hence given a £5 shopping voucher at the end of each interview. This was given regardless of the length of the interview. Additionally, all participants who took part in the final interview (14 out of the original 17) were sent a handmade thank-you card along with the final voucher and end-of-project debrief sheet (see Appendix D).

The decision to compensate participants in this way was made early in the project, due to the need for the project to be approved by the university's ethics board before recruitment could begin. In retrospect, a blanket decision to compensate all children but no adults meant that one family living in poverty were not compensated as the adult was interviewed rather than the child, yet all the middle-class children who were regularly receiving expensive presents and money did receive the vouchers. The question of how we value participants' contributions and whether incentives should be given universally are beyond the scope of this chapter. However, this demonstrates the constraints that may be imposed by institutional ethics frameworks, which may limit the ability of the researcher to think flexibly and apply decisions on a case-by-case basis (Hammersley 2009).

4.6.2.   <u>Confidentiality, anonymity and authorship</u>

When considering creative outputs produced in a research study, and their reproduction in journal articles or dissemination activities, participants' right to claim authorship or ownership of their work may conflict with the need to anonymise their data. Even if participants wish to be identified within a research project at the time it takes place, their view on this may change later in life (Brady et al. 2013). This is a concern in research aiming to amplify children's voices (Mannay 2016). Due both to the requirements of the institutional ethics framework and my concern that the children's views on anonymity may change over time, the data was fully anonymised at the point of transcription, with identifiable information removed or replaced. This did not address my concerns relating to authorship but was the best possibility within the available constraints. I chose pseudonyms for participants from a selection of names that were common for children of their age living in south Wales. Reflecting on this decision following the completion of fieldwork, and considering its relationship with my categorisation of participants as either 'working-class' or 'middle-class', it became apparent that in my efforts to choose names that were socially and culturally appropriate, my choices of pseudonym may have risked 'conforming to stereotyping practices and, potentially, inferring all sorts of connotative baggage onto research participants that may or may not be appropriate' (Clark 2006, p.6). It may have been more appropriate to allow participants to choose their own pseudonyms, although this also has limitations (Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016; Mendick et al. 2018).

My approach to confidentiality drew both on the ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA 2016) and my experience working with children and young people in youth work settings (OTR 2016). I informed both children and their parents participating in the research that the content of their research sessions would not be shared, but explained that confidentiality may be broken if I was concerned about the safety of the participant or someone else.

4.6.3.   Comfort, enjoyment and safety

This project was premised on the principle of limiting any harm caused to participants. I initially viewed this in terms of trying to make participants' 'comfortable', which is often presented as key in accounts of research with children and young people (see for example Caitlin 2007; Gibson 2012). However, on further reflection, it became clear that working to ensure participants are comfortable does not necessarily mean research is ethically sound, nor does it necessarily produce 'good' data. Anti-racist activist Nim Ralph (2020) cautions against conflating comfort and safety, highlighting the ways that the safety of marginalised groups is frequently positioned as of lesser importance than the comfort of those who marginalise them (see also Ng 1994; Joseph et al. 2020). Additionally, the researcher's own discomfort can be valuable in identifying areas of data to explore or ways to do this, particularly if they actively engage in a 'reflexivity of discomfort' (Pillow 2003). I therefore chose instead to work towards making the research encounter a space in which the participants were listened to, supported and respected, and where discomfort was recognised and accepted, but efforts were taken to minimise distress and harm to participants.

4.7.   Reflexivity and the role of the researcher

Research encounters are shared processes of meaning-making. The researcher and the researcher-participant relationship become perhaps more noticeable in longitudinal qualitative research (Thomson and Holland 2003). The data for each participant or family is understood as co-constructed, the product of a series of interactions, relationships and social dynamics between the researcher, participants, the space of the interview, the creative materials and tasks, others in the space, and practical factors (Hunleth 2011, p.82).

4.7.1.   Positionality of the researcher

I worked to negotiate my own performance of identity, sometimes consciously adapting how I presented myself in the research encounters. When generating and analysing the data, I considered not only my role and the impact of the perceived audience but also the social and cultural context in which the data were produced (Buckingham 2009; Luttrell and Chalfen 2010; Lomax et al. 2011; Rose 2016). However, it is of course not possible to control the identity and assumed beliefs attributed to me by participants, particularly as children are 'always in a structural relationship to the adults around them' (Morrow 1998, p.310), and it was not meaningful to attempt to remove myself from the research or be 'neutral' (Loughran and Mannay 2018).

In my interactions with the children, I tried to distance myself from the role of teacher or parent, the 'school-like' nature of some of the activities (Buckingham 2009) making it particularly necessary to symbolically distance myself from the role of teacher[3]. I aimed to present myself as neutral in relation to school, and open to the possibility that participants' views of school might be complex and change over time in non-linear ways. I was careful to encourage discussion of both positive and negative aspects of school, and to listen to frustrations as well as enthusiastically recounted stories.

I did not impose strict rules on participants during the research sessions, and I made it clear that I would defer to them in relation to the regulations of the interview location, asking them about 'the rules' rather than asking their parents or assuming these did not apply to me. Holding the interviews in participants' homes largely contributed to this aim, as being in 'their' space, we were not immediately positioned in an adult/child dynamic in the same way as in a space more clearly dominated by an adult-imposed framework, such as a school classroom (Valentine 2000). I did not challenge behaviour that might have been positioned by parents or teachers as 'misbehaviour', unless I viewed this as dangerous or harmful. Additionally, in line with my aim to encourage participants to lead the focus and direction of the research sessions, I did not discourage participants from taking tangents in the research sessions that were not obviously relevant to the research.

Acts of resistance, and unanticipated responses to methods, can be 'appropriated' as valuable data, if researchers engage with these critically rather than dismissing them as 'non-compliance' (Gallacher and Gallagher 2008; Gallagher 2008; Gillies and Robinson 2012). In some cases, being flexible and responsive to participants' wanderings (literal and metaphorical) was more successful at generating data than more directed tasks or questioning, even if this data was not as obviously relevant to the research questions. In some cases, participants seemed more comfortable and spoke more openly when chatting around different topics while they moved freely around the interview space. As well as generating data directly related to their school transition, this also enabled us to build a relationship that supported me in knowing when and how to ask more direct questions about aspects of interest.

This was particularly notable for the pupils who experienced difficulties and/or disengagement with school during the project. As will be explored more in Chapters Five to Seven, both Callum and Alice were highly resistant to talking about school at various points in the project. However, when given the chance, both appeared keen to talk about things that interested them.

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[3] The 'school-like' nature of some of the creative methods was highlighted when Natasha, the mother of Dylan, showed me an activity he had undertaken as part of the school's official transition work, which was very similar to the drawing activity used in the initial research session – although, notably, the school version examined only the positive aspects of secondary school

Nevertheless, it is important not to romanticise resistance within research. In addition to the factors shaping and limiting children's agency within research noted earlier in this section, resistance cannot be assumed to be unequivocally positive (Holloway et al. 2019). Children participating in the project resisted and exercised power in ways that were not always easy to negotiate and sometimes had a significant impact on the project, most notably by simply not attending research sessions.

4.7.2.   Insider, outsider and in-between identity

Throughout the fieldwork, I was aware of the ways I could be differently positioned as both an insider and an outsider (McNess et al. 2003), leaving me in a sometimes 'in-between' position (Milligan 2016). Participants viewing a researcher as similar to themselves can lead to an assumption of shared knowledge and hence a view that particular things do not need to be said (Mannay 2010). For me, this occurred in response to my positioning as middle-class and female. I found myself positioned largely by the children as a 'grown-up girl' (Kehily 2004, p.368)with the girls in the study sharing accounts of 'girl things' in a way that contrasted strongly with the somewhat suspicious way some the boys spoke about 'annoying girls'. I largely tried to minimise the assumption of shared knowledge, particularly in the research sessions with the children. The creative research methods were valuable in this regard, due to their ability to 'fight familiarity' (Mannay 2010). Additionally, I stressed my lack of knowledge of youth culture and how schools 'worked', emphasising my status as an adult in this aspect, to gain insights into their views. This was supported by my position as an outsider geographically. Participants commonly asked early on in the research where I lived, keen to position me in their geographies, meaning it was common knowledge that I did not live locally.

I felt when interviewing middle-class parents that I was often viewed as one of them, and that this led them to confide views that they presented as shameful or socially unacceptable, particularly when discussing school choice and views of 'bad' schools or children. Overall, however, the parents seemed to position me in a liminal space as neither child nor fully adult, due to both being a student (frequently conflated with undergraduate study) and not having children of my own. This may have closed off some discussion of aspects of parenting due to my assumed lack of knowledge or understanding.

4.7.3.   The research diary as a space of reflection

I kept detailed reflective notes of the recruitment process which became the beginning of my research diary, in which I reflected on the research sessions but also my encounters, impressions and relationships with the seventeen families who participated. These relationships were inseparable from the research and were as much a part of my analysis of the data as the words spoken during the

recorded interview, or the children's creative outputs. The concept of the 'waiting field' proved useful in negotiating my role and how to deal with the interconnections of myself, participants, and others (human and non-human) involved in the research process. Here, the research is not divided neatly into 'data' and 'not data'; rather, the researcher attends to the 'spaces' outside the formal interview encounter: 'spaces previous to', 'spaces of reflection', and 'spaces of interruption/disruption' (Mannay and Morgan 2015, pp.174–176). In the same way the children's acts of resistance and unanticipated responses in the research sessions could be 'appropriated' as valuable data (Gillies and Robinson 2012), so could these spaces, with which I actively and critically engaged.

'Spaces of interruption/disruption' featured heavily in my interviews. The majority took place in participants' homes, with others taking place in the staff office of the playcentre, participants' workplaces, a room in the university, and the café of a local leisure centre. Although my initial intention was to provide the textbook 'private, quiet and physically comfortable' space for interviews (Yeo et al. 2013, p.207), it was not possible to remove the presence of others or their role in the research. In the case of child participants, the interview space was often chosen by the parent/carer. In many cases, the ideal 'private space' was simply not available, or inhabiting it would have meant exerting authority over others to keep them out of spaces into which I had been welcomed as a guest. Interviews were hence frequently interrupted by siblings, other children, or playcentre staff. Although these felt disruptive and sometimes frustrated the participant, they gave valuable insight into participants' relationships, power dynamics and negotiation of space.

These different 'spaces' came into my research through reflective fieldnotes written immediately after each interview. Having a space for my own reflection was vital when negotiating the emotional impact of the project. Coffey 1999, p.158) highlighting the emotional nature of undertaking fieldwork, notes that 'to deny the impact of fieldwork on the construction of self rather misses the point.' When speaking to participants, I did not attempt to remain emotionless or silent about my own life. However, prioritising the participant having space to share their experiences sometimes involved moderating my own emotional response when participants discussed difficult experiences. Inevitably, given the duration of the research, both the participants and I experienced changes and 'critical moments' (Thomson et al. 2002a). Through writing reflectively, it became clear that these moments, and my life outside the research more generally, shaped both the data that was generated and the interpretations I made, as I moved between theory, data, and literature, finding resonances and new ways of viewing the data (Skeggs 1997).

4.8. Analysis

4.8.1. Creative methods and auteur theory – prioritising the author's intent

The affordances and limitations of creative methods, and in particular their assumed ability to access children's more authentic knowledge or voices, was discussed in Section 4.2. These issues are relevant to the analysis of creative data. In contrast to the claims made of such methods by some who use them (see for example Kaplan and Howes 2004), creative data is not able to 'speak for itself' any more than data produced using more traditional methods (Buckingham 2009, p.638; Fink and Lomax 2012; Hill 2013). Consequently, it was vital not to interpret the creative data in isolation. My approach to analysis aimed to centre participants' voices and meanings, but also acknowledge my own role in using their data to develop new stories and narratives that responded to the research questions.

My analysis of the creative data drew on auteur theory, the 'notion that the most important aspect in understanding a visual image is what the creator intended to show' (Rose 2016, p.32). This approach is in keeping with the origins of the 'world technique' from which the sandboxing method was developed (Mannay et al. 2017), and feminist methodologies that privilege the experiential knowledge of participants (Coen 2016). However, focusing only on talk risks reinforcing the privileging of talk and text that creative methods aim to disrupt (Dicks 2014), with the creative production repositioned as a method of eliciting verbal data (Radley and Taylor 2003; Guilleman 2004). I therefore analysed participants' verbal accounts in conjunction with the creative data and my observations of the children's processes of creation (Morrow 1998; Mand 2012). This was appropriate to my understanding of the transition as a process rather than an event, and my overall focus on 'process over product' (Gallacher and Gallagher 2008).

Although the lack of engagement with parents' narratives of the transition is a notable gap in existing transitions research, an aim of this project was to centre the voices of children. This shaped both my engagement with the parents' data, and how this is presented in this thesis. My analysis of the parents' data was led by my analysis of the data produced by the children, and in presenting my findings, I largely only refer to the parents' data where it elucidates a point made by their child. This largely occurs when parents' and children's accounts contradicted each other. This was not seen as a problem, or one version of the narrative more 'true' than the other. Rather, these points of tension, similarly to the tensions felt when the child rewrote their own narrative over time, or I had a strong emotional response to the data, were valuable analytical tools in my attempt to sort the data into 'signal' and 'noise' (Law 2004). The exception is the parents' accounts of school choice, which I discuss in

Chapter Five as this gives important insight into the classed nature of the children's expectations and experience of the school transition.

Following (Gallagher 2008, p.147) my aim was not to question 'how to avoid using power, but how power can be used to resist domination'. Acts of major and minor resistance included participants talking at length about subjects unrelated to the research, using the art materials to draw or make things unrelated to the topics we were ostensibly discussing, using my presence to exercise power over other children or adults, and taking control of the voice recorder or other materials. Rather than try to control these behaviours, I 'appropriated' actions such as informal creation with the art materials, as this seemed to enhance their enjoyment of the interview and could also prove illuminating in their own right.

4.8.2.   <u>Finding threads and telling stories out of creative data</u>

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcription formed part of my analysis, as this involved listening carefully to the audio recordings, and revisiting and recording my memories of their non-verbal responses, movement around the room, and other aspects of our interactions that were not captured in the voice recording. I also highlighted aspects of the interview that had struck me as notable, confusing, surprising or, in later interviews, connecting to previous interviews. In identifying and recording such aspects, I was already beginning to analyse the data, albeit in an un-directed way. Given the 'distinction between contemporaneous insight and retrospective hindsight' (Thomson and Holland 2003, p.243) it was vital to undertake this initial review of the data before situating the data in the context of other research sessions and my analysis of these later interviews. This initial review of the data was particularly useful in noting my initial responses to participants' identity-work during the research session.

Analysis was largely inductive, working from the data outwards rather than imposing a pre-defined framework. However, just as creative data does not 'speak for itself', themes do not 'emerge' independently but are identified by the researcher (Braun et al. 2016) I undertook multiple close readings of both audio/text and creative data, with different questions and lenses in mind. This was an iterative process, with data produced in the early stages of the project informing both the focus of later research sessions, and my analysis of the data they produced. Analysis was supported by coding the transcripts using NVivo 12, and copious writing and drawing, which I used throughout as a method to make sense of and visualise concepts or arguments.

Following transcription, subsequent re-readings involved also reviewing data and analysis from earlier sessions, to hone foci of the analysis and look for patterns, changes and continuities, and identify 'threads' that ran through the different rounds of data.

My methods produced a mass of heterogeneous data, as is common with both creative and longitudinal qualitative methods (Thomson and Holland 2003; Kara 2015). I found resonance in Law's (2004) account of the 'dazzle' of data produced through an ethnography of a laboratory, in which patterns developed 'against an endless background of noise'. In a project in which centring the voices of the participants was paramount, I found Law's (2004, p.111) account vital in making sense of my own role in telling stories from the data: 'What had been dazzle, an overwhelming out-thereness, was converted into signal on the one hand and silence (which did not resonate with the relevant pattern) on the other'.

The themes I identified in my data, were present and 'discoverable' in the data (Law 2004, p.110). However, the identification of these patterns and themes was my choice, drawing on the research questions and my own theoretical positioning. Once these were identified, returning to other data enabled me to view this differently - allowing later data to 'intervene' into earlier accounts and lead me to 'read into' the data in new ways (Lenz Taguchi and Palmer 2013, p.680) meaning the same elements may show a different picture (Thomson and Holland 2003). This in turn shaped my engagement with theory and the framing of the research questions; although my research questions were decided in advance, the details of the theoretical framing developed alongside the initial round of fieldwork. The overall approach to my data generation and analysis therefore reflects the 'spiral movement' Lawler (2008, p.19) describes in relation to how past, present and future interweave.

I examined the data through different 'lenses', developed from my research questions and theoretical grounding. These included gender; class; identity and subjectivity; the professional pupil; and the 'good transition'. Others were introduced later as part of the iterative analysis; for example, the examination of formal and unofficial regulation, and discursive and material resources, were identified as useful lenses only once the initial interviews were complete.

In the research sessions, I rarely asked explicitly about identity, instead exploring participants' accounts of their expectations and experiences of secondary school more generally. However, as explained in Chapter Three, identity was understood within this project as relational and narrative, performed in societally- and situation-specific ways through interactions with others (Lawler 2008; Yuval-Davis 2010). The interactions and encounters that make up research can be understood as spaces of identity performance, in which participants 'tell themselves' through narratives (Valentine 2000; Singer 2004). The interview sessions provided space for participants to undertake identity

performance, narrating themselves through accounts of their lives, experiences, friendships, and relationships, as well as more direct descriptions of themselves. In addition to performing identities within the interviews, participants also described processes of identification and subjectivation both by and of others, recounting their negotiation of identity and subjectivity within school (Byrne 2003).

When analysing the data, I focused on identity, subjectivity and discourse, using the lenses of the professional and social pupil to interpret participants' narratives. In particular, this approach allowed me to explore how participants' narratives related to the regulatory structures and systems they were navigating in the new school, and the ways that particular identities and subject-positions were available or unavailable to them (Byrne 2003). My analysis also aimed to situate the in-depth examination of participants' narratives within broader social contexts and processes (Henderson et al. 2006), examining social reproduction both alongside and through consideration of the emergence of individual subjects through encounters (Holloway et al. 2019).

Longitudinal qualitative research requires the researcher to 'look analytically in two directions: cross-sectionally in order to identify discourses through which identities are constructed, and longitudinally at the development of a particular narrative over time' (Thomson and Holland 2003, p.236). For example, looking at the account of an individual child over time allowed me to explore their narrative of transition, whereas examining the accounts at one time-point of all children attending a particular school, in relation to each other and to those attending a different school, was often illuminating in exploring the reproduction of difference both within and between schools. This allowed the data to 'speak' to each other in different ways.

I found that contradictions and conflict arose between parents' and children's accounts, and between accounts from the same individual at different time points. This initially made me uneasy, going against the intuitive need to try and build coherent narratives. However, as with many of the aspects of research that may at first make us uncomfortable, the contradictions were valuable once understood as 'data', rather than dismissing one or other account as unreliable. Contradictions served as a valuable reminder of the co-constructed nature of the data, and of the need to understand each account as socially situated, fluid and changeable, rather reflecting some objective truth. Engaging with contradictions can be vital in 'not only [exploring] the gaps between words and deeds but also to note how many contradictions are held together on a daily basis and are searching for coherence is an impossibility, an ideal and a fantasy' (Skeggs 1997, p.32). When examined critically, these contradictions provided valuable insight into the meanings being made by participants, between participants and researcher, and the role of time in constructing narratives – how the past is constantly being re-experienced and re-constructed as we move into the future (Worth 2009).

These strategies allowed me to identify 'threads' - themes that ran through the data over time. Such threads were not necessarily present in all three rounds of data, however, they were themes I identified as important in participants' overall narratives and in their negotiation of being-and-becoming a secondary school pupil, and the (re)production of difference through this process.

The identification of a particular thread in one round of data often led me to look forward or backward to another and see ways that this thread was present, even if this had not previously been clear. However, it was also necessary not to project my own hindsight onto the children's accounts (Thomson and Holland 2003), and to acknowledge how the accounts in each interview were temporally specific. Additionally, in constructing my own narrative of the research, I endeavoured to work against the temptation to read and present each child's account as a coherent and logical narrative, in which 'the end of the story is understood as the culmination and actualization of prior events' (Lawler 2008, p.16). I undertook at least one initial close reading of the data from each wave of the research before the next began, focusing on the account produced in that moment and the context of what was available to me at that time, before situating it within a wider context.

The research findings are presented chronologically in three discrete chapters, each relating to one of the waves of research. This is intended to present vivid and detailed insight into the temporal point of the interviews, and the critical moments often associated with these. The inclusion throughout of the connections, changes and continuities, and threads that run through the different rounds of data, as well as the participants' own reflections back and forward, move these three chapters from simply displaying 'snapshots' of the participants' lives.

A key challenge of longitudinal qualitative research, particularly when taking this iterative approach to analysis, is the lack of analytical closure; each new round of data can change or challenge previous interpretations, and it may be difficult to know when to stop revisiting the data (Thomson and Holland 2003; Holland et al. 2006). However, this fitted with my view of the secondary transition as an evolving process without a well-defined end. Viewing analysis and interpretation of the data as continuing processes rather than fixed allowed me to explore how participants' views of the secondary transition and their place within it developed and changed over time (McLeod 2000), and to avoid viewing the transition or the subject as 'finished'.

In analysing and presenting the data, it is impossible to avoid entirely the 'imprisoning process of representational essentialising whereby parts of the lives of 'others' come to epitomise the whole' (Skeggs 1997, p.31). Nonetheless, I was also wary of weaving participants' accounts into coherent and continuous narratives that did not account for the messiness of gaps, contradictions and questions that appeared throughout. The account presented here, and the excerpts from the data, therefore

represent my attempt to negotiate the desire for participants' voices and accounts to be heard, while being wary of mis-representing these accounts and those who gave them. The account given here is necessarily partial, a product of the omissions and selections of both my participants and myself.

4.9.   <u>**Conclusions**</u>

This chapter has presented the methodological approach taken in this research project, how different principles and frameworks shaped methodological decisions, and the sometimes unexpected ways that the different methods played out in practice. I will now turn to exploring the research findings. The following three chapters explore three moments: imagining the transition, learning to negotiate the new school, and reflecting on the transition from halfway through the school year. Each chapter examines one of these moments in detail, looking at the process of being-and-becoming a secondary school pupil from these three different vantage points. Additionally, the threads that ran through participants' accounts will be drawn out to examine some of the 'fluidity of life and the ebbs, flows and detours' (Neale and Flowerdew 2003, p.193) and build up a rich picture of participants' negotiation of the transition over time.

Chapter Five: Imagining the Secondary Transition

5.1.   Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the initial research sessions, which took place during the summer holidays before the participants started secondary school[4]. It explores how children narrated and navigated their imagined transitions from primary to secondary school – their views of how secondary school would be, and how they saw their future selves negotiating this new space.

In this study, past, present and future were understood as interrelated; visions of the future, which may comprise any number of possible, hoped-for and feared futures and selves, shape negotiation of the present (Harrison 2018). This examination of views of the future centralised the transition as a process of being-and-becoming that is negotiated over time (Uprichard 2008; Worth 2009). This chapter explores how participants had differential access to the resources to build or even imagine these possible futures (Skeggs 2004; Worth 2009; Skeggs 2014). It considers how gendered and classed access to different material, cultural and discursive resources for both imagining the transition and managing this imagined future – 'confronting [its] threats, anxieties, challenges and excitements' (Jackson and Warin 2000, p.378) – shaped participants' accounts and experiences.

The chapter explores the role of imagined futures in children's meaning-making practices and their negotiation of the transition, referring throughout to 'imagined futures' and 'imaginings' of the secondary transition, rather than attempting to separate participants' 'real' expectations from 'imagined' hopes, fears or horror stories. This acknowledges my focus on narrative and performance, and my aim to examine the accounts participants gave and their practices of meaning-making, rather than attempting to discern what they 'really' thought or expected. I explore how imagined futures and possible future selves ('representations of the self in the future') shaped and were shaped by participants' negotiation of the transition in the present (Hoyle and Sherrill 2006, p.1674; Peetz and Wilson 2008; Harrison 2018).

When analysing the data from this round of research, I initially considered participants' accounts in relation to anticipated social, organisational, and academic aspects of transition (Galton et al. 1999; Anderson et al. 2000), reflecting the framework used in much existing work exploring children's and/or parents' expectations of the transition (Chedzoy and Burden 2005; Ashton 2008; West et al.

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[4] All participant quotes and drawings reproduced in this chapter are taken from the initial research sessions unless otherwise stated.

2010; Topping 2011; Hodgkin et al. 2013). These arenas were useful as a way of organising the data and considering how this study built on or challenged previous research. This chapter is loosely structured around these thematic areas of the transition, initially focusing on social aspects of participants' imagined transitions, followed by discussion of academic and organisational aspects. However, divisions between social, academic, and organisational aspects of transition are not clear-cut, and participants' accounts highlighted countless overlaps and interrelation of these areas. This was apparent in relation to the social aspects of transition, which form the main focus of this chapter. These interconnections support the argument made in Chapter Two that the secondary transition must be considered as a social process.

A note on quotations: all quotations from participants are reproduced as close to verbatim as possible. Ellipses (…) are used to indicate where I have edited quotes for length by removing content, although without changing the meaning. Square brackets [] indicate where I have removed identifiable information, and/or added in any words to aid clarity. Where names of people were given by participants, I have replaced these with initials to make clear where the same individual is referred to multiple times (as in the discussion of [D] by Megan and Ann). However, these initials do not correspond to the individuals' real names. Curly brackets {} are used for additional detail relating to how participants were speaking, or non-verbal interjections such as sighs or laughter.

5.2.   Social futures: new friends, old friends and fitting in

5.2.1.   Imagined friendships, identity and boundary-work

Worth (2009) argues that transitions always engage with the social world, as young people experiencing transitions must try to reconcile 'shifts in personal identity', how they understand themselves, and 'social becoming', how they fit into a social group. The view of identity as relational that is taken within this thesis positions imagining and negotiating possible selves as a social process. In entering a new secondary school, children are navigating significant changes in who and how they are expected to be, while also working out their place in the new peer group and its hierarchies (Symonds 2015, p.83).

Social aspects of the transition dominated the children's imaginings of secondary school. All their drawings and/or written annotations featured friends, peers, older pupils or teachers, and these dominated the discussion of their imagined secondary school futures (see Figure 5 for illustrative examples. Further examples can be seen in Appendix F).

Figure 5: Drawings of high school by Alice (L) and Shreya (R)

Young people (12 out of 17) said that they were looking forward to making new friends. The expectation that changing schools would change friendships, and bring new friends, was presented as a fact, with the same inevitability as new lessons, teachers, and spaces. Ann, Rachel and Alice were excited about 'meeting my new friends', constructing friendships as inevitable, waiting to be 'met', rather than uncertain or needing active work. Although participants rarely explained why they believed the transition would bring new friends, some cited the support of existing friends, positive experiences of meeting new peers on schools' induction days, or past experiences of making new friends, which provided reassurance that they would make friends easily. Ann expressed positive expectations of secondary school, and her account of previously moving schools and making new friends in each space indicated that this experience contributed to her view of new friendships as both inevitable and exciting.

New friends were largely presented an accepted truth and an 'unmediated Good Thing' (Lawler 2008, p.83). Becky, Cerys, Ann, Sara, Catrin, Shreya and Alice all said they were looking forward to making new friends at secondary school, without further explanation. Those who did elaborate framed their excitement in terms of the quantity or variety of such friends. For David, the movement between lessons, which may bring different teachers, rules and ways of learning (Coffey 2013), was understood as an opportunity to 'make like, more friends throughout like, all the classes'. Similarly, Rachel talked at length about her expectation of 'having new friends, and having more friends'.

In contrast to other studies of friendship in school transition, few spoke of conscious strategies to 'ease out' friends (Pratt and George 2005). However, Becky, Rachel, Megan and Alice looked forward to some separation from younger siblings who would remain in primary school, despite describing close relationships with these siblings (see Hadfield et al. 2006 for similar findings). Additionally, Megan, Rachel and Rosie referred indirectly to actively separating from primary school friends. In contrast to others such as Cerys, who cited the length of existing friendships as a strength, Megan presented new friends as replacing those she had known throughout primary school.

> *Catt:*   *What are you looking forward to?*
>
> *Megan:*   *Getting new teachers, cos I'm bored of these ones. Cos I've known them for seven years... And making friends, I'm excited of making new friends. Cos I've known these ones for seven years, again.*

Negotiating friendships at this stage of the transition can be understood as a form of boundary work, through which individuals negotiate identity by presenting or seeing themselves as similar or different to others (Jenkins 1996; Reay 2010). For Megan, the relationship between changing friendships and self-work was acknowledged. New friends were part of her view of secondary transition as an opportunity, signifying a new environment, relationships, experiences, and ways of being. Others drew boundaries between friendships they hoped to maintain and those they did not. As with Megan, they presented this detachment as self-work, active movement towards or away from imagined future identities. Rachel, in addition to building new friendship and networks, framed the transition as a chance to move away from friendships that did not 'help' her work to be a professional pupil.

> *Rachel:*   *Some of my [primary school] friends, they get into like, lots of arguments. And I don't want- necessarily- don't want to be with them, just in case I get into an argument. But like, some friends I'd really want to be with, and that I really want to be with, and I think it'd really help me being with them. But there are other people who are my friends, but I'd rather not be with them.*

Similarly, Rosie anticipated that being separated into sets[5] could allow her to move away from being 'distract[ed]' by peers, as she would be placed in the top group, away from friends who 'don't concentrate at all'. In her account of primary school, Rosie presented herself as an 'effortless

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[5] 'Setting' denotes placing of students into groups ('sets') for particular subjects according to some measure of academic achievement (often formal assessment in Year 6). 'Streaming' is similar but indicates students are in one 'ability' group ('stream') for all subjects.

achiever', an identity more readily accessible to boys and middle-class girls (Jackson and Nyström 2014), laughing as she explained that 'I just…do well without trying. Because I just know. I just know. I'm just amazing at everything!' [emphasis in original – this is the case throughout unless otherwise indicated]. Rosie took pride in her high academic attainment, while negotiating this in the context of a peer group where 'concentrating' was not normative. She anticipated that moving to secondary school would require a change in academic orientation, where without 'distracting' friends she would achieve academically and work towards her aim of attending an American university. For Rachel and Rosie, some level of separation from primary school friends was presented as necessary for self-work, future-building, and becoming a professional pupil. As Smart et al. (2012, p.93) contend, distancing from former friends may be necessary in moving on from the 'ghost of…former selves'.

The desire to curtail existing friendships appeared to relate to participants' classed and gendered access to different resources. Rachel, Rosie and Megan were all participants I identified as having significant social capital, This was due to their accounts of extensive friendship networks inside and outside school, and their popularity within their primary school's peer status hierarchies, underpinned by confident negotiation of heterosexualised 'girly' femininity – clothes, makeup and (for Megan and Rosie) relationships with boys – and access to the economic capital required to engage in the consumption required to demonstrate appropriate tastes (Valentine 2000; Cann 2018). However, regardless of popularity and the presence of other friendships, ending a friendship may undermine the sense of self and ontological security (Smart et al. 2012), and participants indicated that this boundary work was not simple or painless.

Despite Rachel's planned detachment from primary school friends, when asked if there were aspects of primary school she would miss, she expressed sadness that 'I feel- my friends, I might not be as close to all my friends'. For Rosie, looking forward to having lessons separately from current friends seemed at odds with her certainty elsewhere in the interview that she would maintain or rekindle relationships with old friends and not make new ones. For Rosie, maintaining and renewing existing friendships was presented as a choice, indicating the strength of current friendships and challenging the normative assumption that developing new friends in the secondary transition is both expected and necessary. However, both accounts indicated that the desire to maintain friendships could be in tension with needing to detach from primary school friends or peers. This tension between working towards the identity of secondary school pupil and wanting or needing to 'grow up', and the pain or difficulty of the detachment from primary school that this required, was a thread that ran throughout the participants' interviews.

Regardless of whether participants moved to their new school alone or with friends, the dominant assumption that secondary school would bring new friends (Tobbell and O'Donnell 2013) was widely cited in participants' narratives. This echoes earlier research, in which movement into a new peer group, and the implications for friendships, peer norms and identity, have been consistently found to be central to children's expectations of moving to secondary school, and a source of hope, excitement and fear (Galton et al. 1999; Graham and Hill 2003; Zeedyk et al. 2003; Pratt and George 2005; Evangelou et al. 2008; Mellor and Delamont 2011; Topping 2011). However, this was not universal, as seen in the account of Rosie. Of the 17 children participating in the initial research session, the imagined futures presented by four others (Rhiannon, Ayesha, Max and Callum) did not feature new friends. The construction of the social space of transition as a threat rather than an opportunity by Rhiannon and Ayesha, both middle-class girls moving to high-achieving state schools, will be explored in more detail in Section 5.2.6.

For Max and Callum, both working-class boys moving to local stigmatised secondary schools, not expecting to make new friends was part of a picture of secondary transition as either wholly negative or as an event they could not or would not envisage. Both Max (Ivy Tree School) and Callum (St. Mary's School) described themselves as ambivalent to or actively disliking primary school, chose not to complete the drawing task exploring expectations of secondary school, and responded with one-word answers to questions about how secondary school might be.

Catt:	*Are you looking forward to it?*
Callum:	*Not really. It's school, isn't it?*
Catt:	*Do you think it'll be different at all from primary school?*
Callum:	*Yeah. Harder*
Catt:	*Why do you reckon?*
Callum:	*It's – it's comp work, innit*

This interchange with Callum was illustrative of the accounts given by both boys, of the transition as a non-event that would bring more of the same, and/or added difficulties.

5.2.2. Situating children's imaginings of the transition: parents' views of transition as opportunity or threat

The significance of resistance to dominant narratives of friendship changing, through alternative narratives or refusing to construct a vision of the future, should not be overlooked. All of the working-class children (Rosie, Max, Callum, Alice and Becky) were moving with their primary school friends,

and all except Callum anticipated maintaining these friendships. Although parents' accounts were not the primary focus of analysis, these gave insight into how imagining and negotiating the secondary transition, particularly its social aspect, was classed and gendered.

For the working-class parents, older pupils and new peers from other schools were presented as a threat. This was situated within a view of the secondary transition as a critical moment in determining their child's future, which posed the risk of their child 'choosing the wrong path'.

> *Emily (mother of Alice):* *It's just the fact that obviously she's the youngest now in this school so you've got all the older people then like different schools are joining, it's not just her and her friends*
>
> ---
>
> *I want her to go far hopefully. Well get a good job and you know be able to, she wants to be a vet she says you know I hope she sticks to that, that's quite a good job isn't it? So yeah, I just don't want her to go round with the wrong people and go down the wrong path and not do well because she has got potential to do well I think. But I find when you go to high school that is when, that's when you pick your path whether you're going down the good path or whether you're going to…. well you either sit and listen or you act stupid with the stupid kids really don't you?*

The vivid image of the 'wrong path' was used by all the working-class parents to signify the feared futures they imagined for their child:

> *Nina (mother of Becky):* *So I said [to son] there is only one way you can make this, there's two roads in life, the nice one you want to build a life, get a good job, go through high school and get on with it. And then you've got the other route where you don't want to do high school, you get bad marks, be sat on your arse for the rest of your life or you'll end up in prison. It's your choice.*
>
> ---
>
> *Steph (mother of Rosie):* *Her starting high school do scare me because now she is only in primary school and she wants to wear kind of things that older girls like…she is quite pretty in herself and when she goes to high school I am scared of the boys and like she likes to wear skirts and if I tell her no she just carries on. So I'm worried, the boys side I'm worried about when she goes to school. Because she is getting older isn't she?*

> *I told her, you are not having a boyfriend until she's at least 40 {laughs}. She's not allowed to have children. She has to go school, college, university, get a house, get a car then she can start it you know that's what I've told her you know.*

These feared futures were highly gendered and constructed in binary opposition to aspirational futures of educational achievement and 'good job[s]'. Parents' imagined aspirational futures were similar across the sample, but whereas for the middle-class parents these typically mirrored the parent's experiences, for the working-class parents this was presented as necessitating the opposite (see also (Walkerdine et al. 2001; Allen 2014). This is seen in Steph's advice to Rosie: 'no kids, life your life first', which she explicitly contrasted with her own experience, and P1's hope that her children would be able to get higher-paid jobs than herself and her partner.

Notably, the 'path' followed was invariably presented as a choice, albeit one open to influence from peers. In the working-class parents' narratives of school choice, maintaining existing friendships with known peers, particularly for girls, was presented by parents as a tactic to minimise the likelihood of the child choosing 'wrong'. In contrast to the deficit-focused view often presented in research and policy of working-class parents as failing to make 'good choices' in relation to secondary school selection (Reay and Ball 1997; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2012; Angus 2015), there is increasing acknowledgement that this process is shaped by complex interactions between class, location, access to different forms of capital, and experiences and expectations of education (Reay and Ball 1997; Ball 2003; Burgess et al. 2008; Byrne and De Tona 2019). Working-class parents' narratives of selecting a secondary school emphasised the importance of prioritising their child's preferences, maintaining primary school friendships, and staying nearby (see also Warrington 2005). This was underpinned by the desire to maximise familiarity, safety, and closeness in the face of the uncertainty and threat represented by the secondary transition (see also Reay and Ball 1997; Warrington 2005).

These accounts gave an important counter-narrative to discourses that position individualised 'social mobility' by working-class people (particularly through education) as unequivocally positive, and fail to attend to either its limitations as a solution to social inequality, or its potential harms to those who are 'mobile' (Reay 2013; Lawler 2018). However, this is not to romanticise these parents' decisions. For Holly, the possibility of violence and bullying in the chosen school was presented as a concern, with the threat of other children often underpinned by boundary-work between themselves and non-respectable working-class parents who 'don't care' and 'don't want to work', echoing the discourses of failed parenting frequently used in media and policy to demonise working-class families, particular mothers (Gillies 2005; Gillies 2006; Littler 2013; Shildrick and MacDonald 2013). However, for Holly, this school's familiarity and locality, the presence of Max's older siblings, and the fact that this

school was favoured by Max, who was generally disengaged from school, made it the most tenable choice. Additionally, Holly's account of other children living locally who 'drink or smoke, roaming the streets 11, 12 o'clock at night', indicated that the strategy favoured by middle-class parents of working to avoid 'risky' children through selecting a particular school was not relevant to those for whom this threat was not situated exclusively within the school.

In contrast, the middle-class parents presented the transition as primarily an opportunity for their child to thrive, make new friends, be 'stretched' or 'pushed' academically or, in the rare cases where middle-class children were not described as 'bright' (see also Gillies 2005), receive the additional academic support they required. The participants moving to Parkview, who were also largely moving with their friends, all expected to make new friends, and some expected their current friendships to change. These pupils' parents, and other middle-class parents, hoped for their child to make the 'right' or 'nice' friends, with middle-class parents of girls particularly keen for their children to develop multiple friendships rather than invest in a close 'best friend' relationship. These parents described exercising extensive economic and social capital to secure a place at the 'best school for their child', echoing earlier studies of school choice (Ball 2003; Byrne and De Tona 2019). Natasha was the only middle-class parents who described choosing a school known to not be the 'best' locally, explaining that this felt like the right thing to do morally (see also (Power 2004; Crozier et al. 2008).

> Natasha: I mean some of my friends moved incredibly strategically, they rented a house and they had to move and they had like to get in that month to get into a primary school to get into the feeder for Parkview. So I do know some people who were doing that.

Despite the middle-class parents' view of the transition as an opportunity, parents across the sample expressed a similar reluctance for their child to grow up and move into the new space of secondary school and away from their protection and/or control. This was a particular concern for parents of girls, with the transition viewed as signalling movement out of protected girlhood and innocence and into an unknown space of vulnerability and threat (from other girls' bullying, from their bodies and emerging sexuality, from boys, and from the 'wrong friends' leading them astray). However, despite these discourses of risk and vulnerability, girls were largely presented as capable of managing the demands of secondary school, echoing dominant discourses of the ideal pupil which position girls as sensible, hard-working and socially competent (Warrington and Younger 2000; Francis 2005; Hempel-Jorgensen 2009). In contrast, boys were presented as liable to struggle with these aspects of secondary school, underpinned by the view that boys were less mature, drawing on discourses of essential biological difference between boys and girls (Wardman 2016).

Parents universally negotiated these fears by presenting their child as ultimately able to cope well ('he'll be fine', 'she's sensible', 'she'll manage'). However, they recounted different strategies and resources for supporting their child in navigating the transition once their secondary school was confirmed. Although working-class parents recounted giving individualised advice to 'choose the right path' and providing unequivocal support for their child, they also expressed some engagement with a more 'serendipitist disposition'/'waiting and seeing' (Stahl 2015) which contrasted with the strategic but often anxious educational future-construction more common in middle-class parents (Lucey and Reay 2002b). The middle-class parents' accounts focused instead on school choice, and intervention to resolve perceived issues; parents of those who were anticipated to have social or academic difficulties (Cerys, Ann, Rhiannon, Catrin, David) described preparing to intervene with the school or having done so already) if their child did not receive level of support seen as appropriate, or accessing paid-for academic support. Additionally, Natasha explained that her decision to send Dylan to Marshbrook was underpinned by the knowledge that Dylan could move school if he struggled.

> Natasha: *If it all went horribly wrong and he was being bullied and this and that was going on I would consider [private school], I would never say never because I don't know how principled I actually am...or if it all goes horribly wrong you might see me trying to move into Parkview..*

Although Natasha was the only parent to acknowledge the possibility of changing schools, the other middle-class parents' knowledge of how to negotiate the school application system, the presence of other 'good' schools in their local area meant that this was a viable option. This added to these parents' secondary school selection, their children's positioning as 'bright' and 'capable' and their access to other forms of capital outside school, enabled these parents to view the transition primarily as an opportunity.

5.2.3.   <u>Social capital in the transition</u>

Where participants were moving with close friends, they were generally expected to be sources of support with social and other aspects of the transition (see also Caulfield et al. 2005; Weller 2007). Becky presented her best friend [E], who was moving to the same secondary school, as supporting her with managing new lessons and potential social difficulties.

> Becky: *Cos then she can stick up with- stick up for each other and she always helps me with my work and all that, when I get stuck.*

Rachel's school had provided extensive transition work, which she said had given her a chance to navigate the new physical space with the support network of her friends and known older students. When asked if she had got lost on the first day, she responded 'No, I think I was like OK, cos I was with my friends, so I was alright'. This reflected a common view of the transition presented by both pupils and their parents, that having friends or having the 'right' friends was of central importance in negotiating not only the social but all aspects of the transition.

Pupils who took part in 'organised activities'[6] outside school drew confidence from having friendships that were separate from school. Megan, for example, who was confident about the transition, spoke of friends from her numerous sporting activities outside school, and her best friend [C], who she had known since birth and whose parents and sibling were friends with hers. In contrast to her ambivalence about being separated from primary school friends, Megan expected that her friendship with [C] would endure. Discussion of this friendship in later interviews demonstrated that it provided a space where the self-reinvention she and others anticipated at school was not necessary. There was a classed engagement in organised activities. Working-class children attended the playcentre but did not attend other organised activities outside school, whereas the middle-class children reported extensive engagement in sports, creative, educational, or religious activities. Practices of 'concerted cultivation', through which middle-class children often participate in activities outside formal education that provide them with cultural capital (Lareau 2002; Vincent and Ball 2007), seemed to support the middle-class children in anticipating the social transition.

Shreya, who was moving with Ayesha from an ethnically diverse primary to a predominantly white secondary school, knew same-age and older students from her religious community who were attending her new secondary school. She explained that older students would support her in negotiating the new physical space of the school. For ethnic minority young people, friendships with others of the same ethnicity may be particularly valuable at times of transition (Reynolds 2007), given that they may anticipate or experience increased racism as they move from primary to secondary school (Graham and Hill 2003; Caulfield et al. 2005).

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[6] Lareau (2002, p.761) distinguishes between 'informal' and 'organised' activities undertaken by children, using the latter to refer to 'Scouts, Brownies, music lessons, any type of sports lesson (e.g., gymnastics, karate), any type of league-organized sports (e.g., Little League), dance lessons, choir, religious classes (excluding religious primary school), arts and crafts classes, and any classes held at a recreation center'. The term is used here to refer to these and any other group activities requiring payment to attend, e.g. group tutoring.

Older pupils, particularly siblings, were presented as providing support and 'insider information' (Davies 2019), both at their current stage and in their vision of starting secondary school, as reported in previous studies (Demetriou et al. 2000; Gillies and Lucey 2006; Evangelou et al. 2008; Holland 2009). Both Becky and Alice anticipated that their boyfriends in the year above, who already attended the new school, would initially help them to navigate physical aspects of the school:

> Catt: *What are you looking forward to?*
>
> Becky: *My boyfriend. Cos I can spend more time with him. And er, talk about where shall I go and all that. Like, the cafeteria, classrooms...*
>
> ---
>
> Catt: *You'll walk to school?*
>
> Alice: *With my friends. And my boyfriend. On the first day I'm meeting my boyfriend outside the primary, then we'll walk us. I just wanted someone to walk with, so I asked him and he said yeah.*

Knowing older students, particularly siblings, may provide new pupils with access to status by association, access to knowledge of youth culture (Gillies and Lucey 2006; Davies 2019)(Gillies and Lucey 2006; Davies 2019), a 'bridge' to new friendships (Holland 2009, p.342), and support or protection (Gillies and Lucey 2006; Hadfield et al. 2006). Rosie explained that having older relatives who were well-known in the local community would provide her with status in the new school. However, pupils may also be labelled by teachers with their older sibling's characteristics, with inherited reputations becoming 'sticky' and difficult to change (Mellor and Delamont 2011; Davies 2019, p.219). Parents of those who had older siblings expressed concerns that teachers' treatment of the younger child would be shaped by their experience with the sibling, due to perceptions of either similarity or difference. These parents' accounts also indicated that their own imaginings of the transition drew on their experience with the older sibling(s).

In contrast to secondary transition research presenting older siblings as protective (Mackenzie et al. 2012) knowing older pupils was not presented as unproblematically supportive. Becky had older siblings at the secondary school in addition to a boyfriend in the year above. However, their presence did not address her fear that older students 'always bully' the new Year Seven pupils. This could perhaps be explained by her experience of being bullied at primary school by her older brothers and his friends; her relationships with these siblings gave her no reason to believe that older students would be supportive. The ambivalence and conflict that characterises some sibling relationships, and the gap between idealised expectations of how sibling relationships should be, and how these are lived

in practice(Edwards et al. 2005; Davies 2019) may mean these act as a hindrance as well as a source of support in the transition. The regulatory power of older pupils will be discussed further in Section 5.3.3.

Becky's account also indicated that the role of older family members in the transition varied between schools. Becky's secondary school was attended by children living locally, and most had older siblings or friends already attending the school. Therefore, simply knowing older students did not confer advantage. For Becky, the presence of her boyfriend provided some reassurance, but she gave no indication that he or her older siblings would provide her with status in the new school, whereas Rosie's connections to older ex-students provided greater access to social capital due to their reputation locally. This situation contrasted with the accounts of Catrin and Ayesha, who had older siblings and were moving to schools where connections to older students were less common and hence more highly valued.

5.2.4.   **Changing friendships? Losing touch and re-evaluating 'old' friendships**

With the exception of Max, Alice and Becky, all participants imagined futures in which current friendships would change due to individual and/or structural factors. It might be expected that 'losing touch' with friends would not be a concern for young people due to their engagement in online worlds (Ofcom 2016). The majority of the children I spoke to reported owning a mobile phone in the first interview, and between interviews one and two their phones began to play an increasingly significant role in their navigation of friendships. However, moving to different schools was generally assumed to signify the end of a friendship. The loss of old friendships was positioned as something over which the participant had little control, dependent on locality or activities in common. Shreya said she had the phone numbers of her primary school friends, but she did not expect these relationships to continue. Shreya said she would not see her primary school friends unless this happened by chance ('we'll probably see each other, like, on the streets if we're walking, we might see each other'). Dylan also noted the role of locality in maintaining or losing primary school friendships:

> Dylan: *I'll see [K – close friend] cos he lives down the road, obviously like he's the one that walks with me, I literally just turn right and [road name] is just, he just lives down there… I'm not really worried about [K], about not seeing him any more.*

Changing schools with friends is a priority for children anticipating the transition (Weller 2007; Pratt and George 2005; Ashton 2008), and the belief that primary school friendships would be maintained was highly dependent on whether these friends were moving to the same secondary school, the classed dynamics of which were discussed in Section 5.2.2. Additionally, participants' expectations relating to the maintenance of friendships with those moving to different secondary schools were also shaped by locality and class. Young people in primary school often have limited spatial mobility, and secondary school may bring a significant shift in how far they are allowed to travel independently, but also increased parental monitoring of children (Weller and Bruegel 2009; Symonds 2015). Although parents generally reported knowing their children's primary school friends, middle-class parents described being more actively involved in facilitating these friendships, particularly through transporting their children to activities or friends' homes, than the working-class parents, in which the children's friendships were negotiated more independently. The interactions between class, gender, place, and school 'choice' in shaping the curtailing or maintenance of primary school friendships will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Expected changes to friendships focused on the anticipated loss of functional aspects of the friendship (George 2007), such as providing support and company. For some, this was part of a more general expression of sadness at the prospect of leaving the familiarity and safety of primary school (see also (O'Brien 2003; Fisher 2017). With the exception of Ann and Rosie, participants had attended the same school since nursery or reception. Despite accounts of bullying and arguments, participants often described themselves as 'friends with everyone' in their primary school class or year. For Catrin, primary school was remembered as populated by friends she had known since she was 'really small', a peer group in which 'everyone's my best friend, to be honest! And they're all really nice and kind'. Although her construction of primary school was not wholly positive, she expressed a strong attachment to the relationships and 'memories' of primary school – some of which she recounted to me, co-constructing these memories within the interview (Kuhn 2010) - and the physical space of the school:

> Catt: *Are there things that you think you'll miss about primary school?*
> Catrin: *All the memories, like all the memories in…Year One and Two, because I had the same teacher both years, so I like, I had lots of memories with her, so like, it's a bit sad to leave. ..And just the place, to be honest. Like, the school, that I'll miss.*

For Catrin, this attachment to primary school was in tension with her eagerness to take on the new identity of secondary school student and 'say I'm in high school', but the uncertainty it presented engendered a reluctance to let go of what was familiar. At points of transition, children may experience a tension between the impetus to take on a new social role, and the possibilities this offers,

and what must be given up – the 'un-becoming' that runs parallel to the process of 'becoming somebody' signified by transition (Ecclestone et al. 2010). Secondary transition and its positioning in relation to maturity poses a fundamental challenge to pupils, as accessing the freedom and autonomy offered by 'growing up' requires pupils to give up some of the protection and safety offered by childhood (Lucey and Reay 2000). While working to construct themselves as mature, pupils may also seek continuity and coherence by working to minimise change and hold onto their sense of self (Warin and Muldoon 2009; Fisher 2017). This was particularly salient in relation to friendships and relationships, where participants articulated ambivalence and tension as they navigated feelings of excitement, fear, and loss. Cerys, was initially dismissive of primary school acquaintances who were moving with her to the secondary school, noting that 'There's other people going to Fox Hill High as well as me in my school, but they're not…my friends' [emphasis on original]. However, she argued that the length of time spent at primary school had created a bond with primary school peers that would be missed, and would not be replaced by the new friendships of secondary school.

A similar tension was seen in relation to teachers. Cerys spoke scathingly of her primary school teachers, describing them as inconsistent and unfair. However, when discussing what she would be happy to 'leave behind', she emphasised the value of familiarity, explained that even a disliked aspect of primary school could become something to hang onto in the face of uncertainty and the possible threat of something worse.

> Cerys: *When you think about it you might not want to [leave the teachers behind], because you miss the shoutiness, and then when you go to high school there's teachers, there's extra shouty teachers, and you wish to have the other, your old teacher back.*

In advance of leaving primary school, relationships with primary school peers who are moving to the same school may develop or become stronger, particularly for those moving without a close friend (Weller 2007; Pratt and George 2005). Here, friends and even disliked (but familiar) peers and teachers were viewed in a new light at the prospect of the separation and uncertainty of leaving them behind.

5.2.5. Moving with friends: categorising, division and ambiguous loss

All participants were moving to secondary school with at least one friend, and some with a large group. However, moving with primary school friends did not remove the fear of losing, leaving behind or missing old friends. In line with the normative imperative to make new friends (Tobbell and

O'Donnell 2013), it is common practice in secondary schools for existing friendship groups to be divided into different form groups (Mellor and Delamont 2011). Schools may also view 'the making and breaking of friendships', particularly for girls, as an inevitable part of the secondary transition (George 2007, p.107). Both Sara and Shreya expressed disappointment at being separated from their closest friends by their schools' organisational divisions. For Catrin, who was moving with primary school friends, her greatest worry was that her friendships would change beyond recognition, particularly with her best friend [B]. This 'ambiguous loss' (Mannay 2019, p.124), where 'a loved one…is physically present but psychologically absent', was described by Catrin in stark images of distance and movement, fears that friends would 'go off with other people', be 'taken away' or 'won't be there'. Although the friends were attributed agency in these acts, the central threat was the presence of new peers. For Catrin, this fear extended to friends she had yet to make. In her account, the normative expectation of new friends interacted with a powerful fear of loneliness and exclusion to construct an imagined future in which she made new friends who were then 'stolen' by another friend.

Catt: Is there anything else you're not looking forward to?

Catrin: Losing friends. {laughs} That's it, to be honest. That's really it. Just what if I'm not really, like…if I make like a really good friend, and then my friend, steals it from me. Just like, I don't really wanna lose my friends…I just don't wanna lose them.

Catt: Is that a thing that's happened before, like in primary school?

Catrin: Not really, no. But like, cos [on the induction day] my friend made this new friend [M], I'm scared she's gonna take everyone away, and I'm gonna be like…{quietly, nervously waving} 'Hey, what about me?' Just like, a circle with all them in, and me outside the circle.

The positioning of the new peer group as both opportunity and threat was also expressed by Ann, whose drawing of her imagined secondary school (see Figure 6) featured her sitting glumly on one side of the school while her closest friend, [M], sat on the other. She explained that she was scared that the formal divisions ('sides') of the school would separate her from [M], whose popularity in the context of a new peer group would mean that [M]'s time and attention would be taken up by others on her side of the school, and Ann would be pushed away.

Figure 6: Section of Ann's drawing of high school

> *Ann:*   *We have two sides, Side 1 and Side 2…so if your friend is in Side 1 then you might have lessons with them. But if not then you only get to see them at break.*
>
> *Catt:*   *OK, and is that a particular friend [in the picture] who'll be on the other side?*
>
> *Ann:*   *Yeah, [M] {sighs}. I'm sad about that because…yeah. Because she's like a really good friend. She is nice to everyone. But then I…sometimes I don't get to see her, cos…everyone is friends with her, so everyone's always with her, so I never get time to talk to her, so…and then I'll be on the other side. So. {Sighs}*

Similarly, Ayesha's account of feeling lonely on the secondary transition day was contrasted with reports from her best friend of making new friends easily:

> *Ayesha:*   *I haven't made that many new friends, cos my best friend's in a different form, and she told me that she straight away went along with ... everyone, she just said 'You're my friend now!' and then they were friends.*

George (2007) notes that when moving to a new school, popularity does not necessarily carry over to the new social space. However, the fears of the girls described here demonstrate that the perceived popularity of a friend could be seen as a threat, particularly when combined with the school's divisions. Participants in Weller's (2007) study were more likely to stay friends with primary school friends moving to different secondary schools than those coming to the same school but in different forms, suggesting that participants' concerns about changes to friendships with friends were moving

to the same school may be reflected in many pupils' transition experiences. The ways their friendships changed and developed after starting secondary school will be considered in Chapter Six.

Where participants were aware that they would be in 'ability' sets or streams this posed an additional threat to primary school friendships, interwoven with shame, pride and uncertainty in relation to academic 'ability'. Ayesha's drawing of her imagined high school future (Figure 7) included 'being in different sets', illustrated by a sad figure waving goodbye to another as they move in different directions.
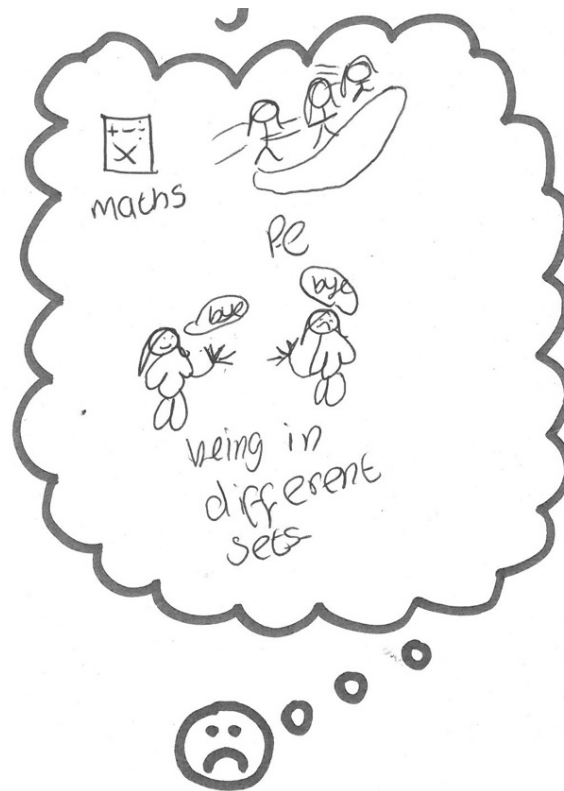
Figure 7: Section of Ayesha's drawing of high school

Ayesha explained that this concern drew on her experience of being allocated to a different Mathematics group from her friends. This separation from her 'really smart' friends, and past shame at being moved to a 'low group', were inseparable from her fear that the same would occur in secondary school.

Ayesha: [In secondary school] if you're below average you're in the low group and if you're just on average you're in the middle group and if you're above average you're in the top group...In primary school you have different tables, for if you're not that good or you're really good....most of my friends that are in my school are really smart in Maths, and then I'm

gonna be alone in my class, and then I'm gonna be embarrassed, cos I was in the second-highest group in Year Five, but then in Year Six I got moved down.

Conversely, for Dylan, who was moving to a mid-performing but stigmatised school, the allocation of many of his primary school peers and himself to the 'top' set both mediated the threat of separation from his friends, and was a source of pride in himself and his primary school. Dylan struggled for the words to describe those in his school who were not in his group: 'the least clever people in our school…like they're obviously like, not, not…not stupid, they're quite clever, they're just not clever enough to be top set', whereas Ayesha simply referred to the groups and their members in relation to (above/below) 'average' or 'good'/'bad'. The tendency to view academic attainment relationally, and ascribe it moral value, will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Setting and streaming are situated within the context of a shift upon entry to secondary school towards a focus on competition rather than individual progression, and increased opportunities for social comparison (Demetriou et al. 2000; Jackson and Warin 2000; Symonds 2015). Despite the tendency for the secondary school peer group to be larger and more heterogeneous than that of primary school, the unequal distribution of pupils to sets/streams according to class and ethnicity mean children are educated largely in groups of children of similar backgrounds as well as similar 'ability' (Gillborn and Youdell 2000; Ball 2003; Symonds 2015; Reay 2017). Although there was little discussion of setting and streaming at this stage, the accounts of Ayesha and Dylan suggest that expectations relating to academic aspects of the transition may be tied up with concerns about social changes, due in part to the impact of academic divisions on friendships. Building on earlier work reporting that pupils in the highest sets tend to view it as legitimate, and those in lowest sets are most likely to view it negatively (O'Brien 2003; Archer et al. 2018), participants' accounts indicated that social concerns in relation to setting/streaming may also be experienced differently according to pupils' place in their school's hierarchy of 'ability'.

Moving to secondary school with current friends is often cited in school transitions literature as a 'protective factor' in negotiating the transition (Topping 2011). Participants' imaginings of the transition supported this view to some extent, framing primary school friends as an important source of support in negotiating their anxiety about social and other aspects of starting secondary school. However, a minority of pupils emphasised the transition as an opportunity to make a 'fresh start', which involved curtailing old relationships. Additionally, primary school friendships were presented as a source of anxiety due to a variety of different threats beyond that posed by moving to different schools, including those connected to academic and organisational aspects of transition. The negotiation over time of the social aspect of the transition will be explored in the following chapters.

5.2.6.   New peers: opportunity or threat?

The secondary transition may be anticipated as an escape from bullying or victimisation in primary school. For Becky, although those who bullied her would be attending the same secondary school, she was hopeful that her experience would be different:

Becky: *My brother's in Ivy Tree, and I don't like it, cos he always hits me. And his friends always ignore me. [R] always hits me, and all that. Alice always shouts at me. And [U] always, like, answer me back, and all that.*

Catt: *Do you think it'll be the same at high school, with those people?*

Becky: *Different…Cos [now] when the teacher, the teachers always, like, tell 'em and all that, when they hears the things, and whenever you get into a fight, they always like, do nothing.*

Catt: *Do you think that would be different at high school?*

Becky: *Yeah. Because…you can…be nice and all that. And then if you say sorry, they can say sorry back.*

Although Becky expected the high school teachers to be 'nasty', she was able to construct a hopeful vision of secondary school in which those who bullied her would stop. However, for Rhiannon and Ayesha, the new peer group was anticipated with trepidation, threatening exclusion and friendlessness. For Ayesha, this was accompanied by fear at the anticipated loss of those who supported her when she was being excluded by others. Their drawings (Figure 8) featured poignant depictions of friendship troubles in primary school; Ayesha described bullying and exclusion as central to her experience of primary school, and Rhiannon recounted constant arguments between her friends, and the manipulative behaviour of a girl described as both friend and bully.
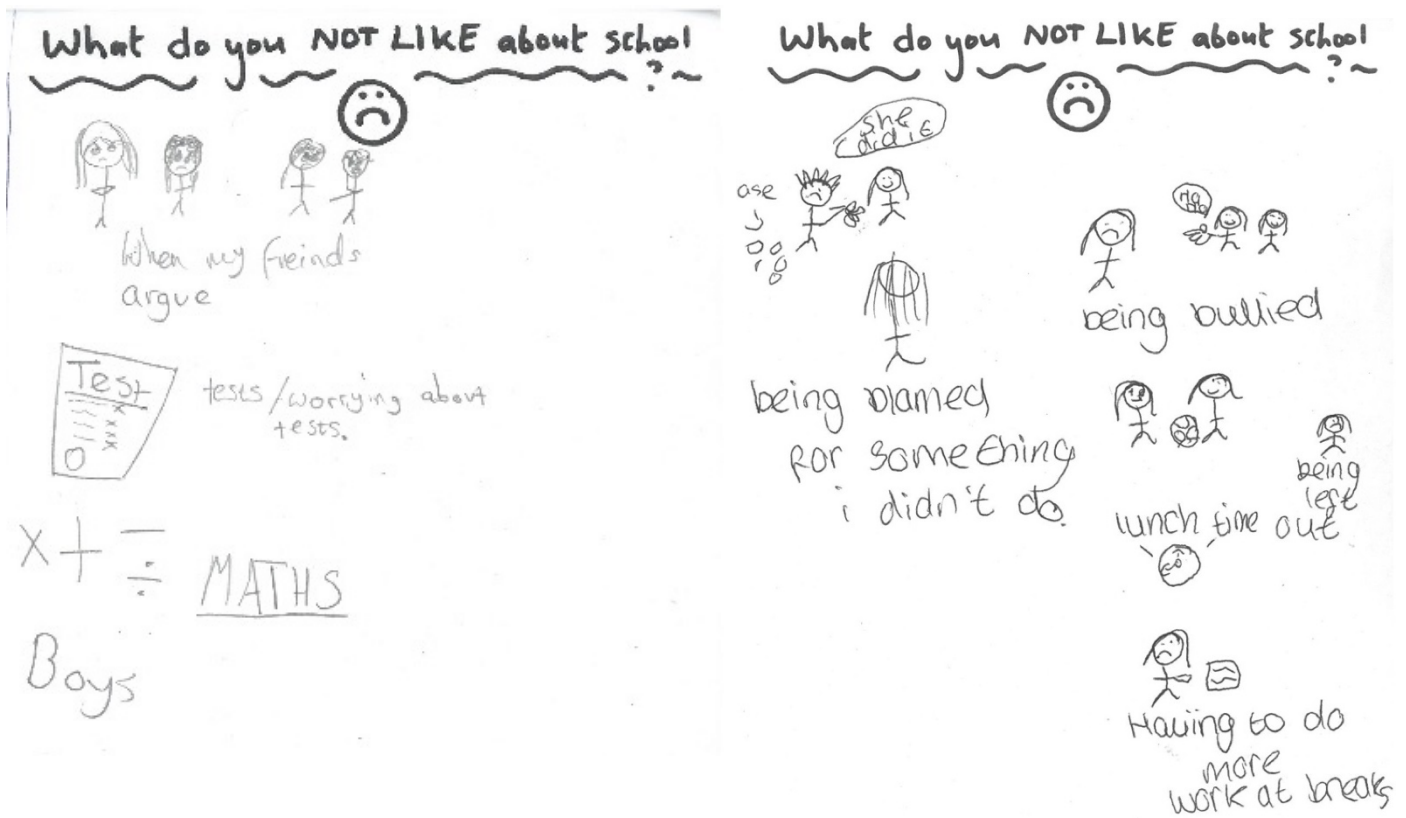
Figure 8: Sections of Rhiannion (L) and Ayesha's (R) drawings of primary school

In her secondary school drawing and the discussion that followed, Rhiannon mapped out a feared future, seen in her drawing of two sad-looking stick figures apart from a large group (see Figure 9). Although her closest friend was moving to the same school, this was not sufficient to assuage her fears; rather, she imagined herself and the friend being lonely together, unable to form or be accepted into a 'group'.

Figure 9: Section of Rhiannon's drawing of high school

As in the case of Ayesha, concerns about academic divisions in secondary school can shape expectations of how existing friendships may change. For Rhiannon, concerns about her own academic attainment also contributed to a fear that she would struggle to make new friends. Her drawing of primary school included 'tests/worrying about tests', and she expressed anxiety throughout the interview in relation to her academic attainment and 'ability'. In her imagined secondary school future, the belief that she had not achieved sufficiently highly on tests in Year Six interacted with imagined secondary school peer norms valuing academic attainment, to limit her capacity to make new friends. Actions taken by the schools to limit academic discontinuity seemed to have exacerbated rather than alleviated Rhiannon's fears about the academic aspect of the transition, due to the perceived risk that her Year Six test results would give her a 'bad reputation'.

> Rhiannon: *The [results of the] Year Six tests were going up to high school. And I didn't want to make a bad reputation, sort of thing…From the teachers and like, some of the students. Some of the people…if they find out your test score, they will be… not, not the best of…friendliest towards you. Because they will classify you as not the smartest of all the people in the class…I'm just worried that's gonna happen in high school.… even though high school people are older, I have a feeling they might not take it as seriously. Because we went to a transition [day], and there are a couple of boys that were…not really anywhere near matched to the…maturity of the boys that we have in our year…the people in from other schools, they might just make life a bit harder.*

Rhiannon drew on gendered notions of 'maturity' and behaviour in relation to her imagining of the new peer group's norms, explaining that boys in the new school were not as mature as those in her primary school, and framing this as a threat. She repeated this conflation of immaturity and misbehaviour throughout the interview when discussing boys. However, Rhiannon's account also demonstrated the complexities and tensions that participants were negotiating when considering how they would manage the requirements of the professional pupil alongside finding their place in the peer group. When discussing the new peer group of girls who would form the pool of potential new friends[7], Rhiannon expressed concern that she would struggle due to not fulfilling the norms around play in secondary school.

> Rhiannon: *I'm worried that everyone's gonna be in their own groups. And we're not gonna make friends very easily. Or there's not gonna be very many people which would rather... I'm worried that there are not gonna be many people that are like, our sort of friendship, sort of group thing...I have a feeling that they're gonna be the sort of people that would rather go around and chat, than play.*

The movement away from active or imaginative play to 'sitting and talking' was described by girls in the study as signifying increased maturity, and will be explored further in Chapter Six. Both Megan and Shreya explained that this change had been brought on by being 'more mature' in Year Six, echoing findings in ethnographic work by Winther-Lindqvist (2012; see also Gulbrandsen 2003) that movement away from activities seen as 'childish' may begin in anticipation of the secondary transition. For Rhiannon, the concern that others would not be appropriately mature was hence accompanied by a doubting of her own capacity (or desire) to undertake the behaviours associated with maturity for girls. Her account also emphasised the uncertainty regarding peer norms. At this stage, peer cultures had yet to be formed, therefore pupils anticipating the transition were left to form their own opinions, drawing on a variety of resources, of what the new rules/norms will be, and their own (in)ability to 'fit'.

5.2.7.   **Preparing to negotiate the social: self-work and being 'known'**

Rhiannon's account highlighted the role of others' views of oneself – how one is known, seen or (mis)recognised (Warin and Muldoon 2009) – in imagining the social aspects of transition. Pupils' concerns in relation to the social aspect of transition commonly focused on being known by others in

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[7] When anticipating and recounting making new friends, it was common for only same-gender peers to be viewed as potential friends. This will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

a way that they did not want, and/or which would prevent them from making friends. This was notable for Rachel, whose fears about secondary school centred on potential threats to future friendships. Such threats lay largely in her fear of not adhering correctly to the peer or school norms of Year Seven student, which could foreclose her ability to make as many friends. As with her hopes of being with friends who 'really help me', Rachel's fears illustrated the connections she made between new friendships, identity and self-work, and the role of teachers in the imagined social landscape of secondary school. Rachel's fear of not reaching her hoped-for future of many new and different friends was underpinned by her view of the secondary school as somewhere for self-(re)invention. Her fear of 'how I'm gonna be' (and, implicitly, of not being/doing correctly) was connected to a fear of being known by teachers, which in turn could limit her opportunities to make new friends and be 'better'.

> Rachel: I'm scared like, you know, like…how I'm gonna be, and if, if I don't know my place or like first impressions or something like that…I have a feeling that if like, I start off at the wrong point, then you know…say if I messed up, then I might not be able to sit with my friends.
>
> Catt: When you say if you messed up, do you mean like got into trouble?
>
> Rachel: {cuts in} –yeah, and then if, maybe I'd have that teacher and it'd be like I was, like a bad example….it might like spread the rumour, and then when I get into Year Eight, I might be like, you know, the teachers might already know me, and then, they might already know that, like, they think something different…I feel like if I make the wrong impression, some people might be like, well I don't wanna be friends with that person.

Rachel argued that failing to make the right 'first impression' would have consequences for how she was known by teachers and students, both immediately and in her subsequent school life (Noyes 2003). As with Rhiannon, this fear of being 'fixed' (Butler 1997; Francis 2009) by a 'bad impression' was powerful, perceived as a serious threat to potential friendships, relationships with teachers, and self-work to 'get better'. For Rachel, this concern was expressed as her own responsibility to avoid by making the right 'first impression'. This individualising notion of the work needed to make friends reflected a broader tendency to present the ('good') secondary transition as the responsibility of the individual pupil. Rachel's account of managing the interrelated fears of making a 'bad impression' and not making friends focused on self-work, particularly the management of her body in line with anticipated norms of classed and age-appropriate femininity (Reay 2001; Vares and Jackson 2015).

> *Catt:*   *First impressions, is that mainly like first impressions on teachers, or first impressions on other children, or...?*
>
> *Rachel:*   *I think both really. And I wouldn't wear make-up on my first day of school, I dunno why, I dunno how to explain it, but I just would- like, I- I dunno how to explain it but I just wouldn't wear makeup on my first day.*
>
> *Catt:*   *Do you think that's a thing some people would do?*
>
> *Rachel:*   *I dun- well- all of my friends at school definitely wouldn't, but I dunno, maybe other people in school would*

Rachel's efforts to emphasise that her friends would also undertake these behaviours reflected a common pattern in the girls' accounts of undertaking identity-work in the interviews through descriptions of their friends, and/or talking about themselves and their friends interchangeably (see also Finders 1997; MacDonald 2016). This work to perform the role of appropriately feminine secondary school pupil by not wearing makeup or saying the 'wrong thing' (Rachel), or achieving academically (Rhiannon), highlights how notions of the 'good transition', and appropriate ways to prepare, were gendered. To successfully navigate the new social space, girls undertook preparatory work to navigate the new requirements of femininity, and in particular the competing official and unofficial rules of bodily governance, that define the new space of secondary school (Fisher 2017; O'Neill 2003). Older friends and siblings may be particularly valuable in knowing how to negotiate these rules (Gillies and Lucey 2006). Rosie recounted asking her older uncles whether she would be allowed to wear make-up in school, and Rachel's mother explained that Rachel's older god-sister had been 'invaluable' in ensuring Rachel had shoes that suited both official and unofficial rules, allowing her access to signifiers of coolness in advance of entering a space where clothing is strictly regulated (Paechter and Clark 2010; Paechter and Clark 2016).

This chapter has so far focused on the social aspects of transition, which were central to children's imagined futures. However, academic and organisational aspects also featured in participants' accounts. These will be the focus of the following section.

5.3.   Academic and organisational aspects of transition

5.3.1.   Growing up: change and responsibility

Where children included academic aspects of transition in their drawings or discussion, they were generally positive. Participants said they were looking forward to lessons being different, specifically new subjects (Ayesha, Cerys, Ann, Rachel, David, Dylan, Megan), a change of teaching or learning

style (Ann, Catrin), and more challenging or interesting lessons (David, Dylan, Rhiannon, Sara, Alice), echoing existing work exploring pupils' expectations of the academic aspect of secondary transition (Graham and Hill 2003; Coffey 2013). Excitement at new academic experiences emphasised difference and novelty, contrasted with 'boring' or 'normal' lessons in primary school, and the prospect of new facilities and equipment. This view of lessons as vastly different from primary school echoed the ways that that academic aspects of transition had been presented on their schools' 'transition days', consistent with the findings of recent work in this area (Galton and McLellan 2018; Jindal-Snape and Cantali 2019).

> Ann: *I'm excited cos we get to do…um Maths, and new things that we don't normally do, like DT. And P.E. will be differently, I think. Cos…we don't get much time, like in P.E. I think there'll be lots of different kinds of sports... And I think, like, D.T. I think it'll be more like, crafty. Normally we just make like posters, or just like a little thing. Cos when I had a look there [at secondary school], they've made, all sorts of things cos they do woodwork there.*

> ---

> Rachel: *I'm looking forward to more responsibility. Like in…we're allowed like, carving knifes, and like, fire and that …and we'll cook in school so I'm excited about that.*

Both changes in lessons and access to different facilities and resources were valued due to what they represented: secondary school identity, difference and distance from primary school, and increased responsibility, autonomy, and choice. The image of the Bunsen burner recurred frequently as a signifier of secondary school Science, as well as new responsibility, and contrasts between primary and secondary school lessons.

Figure 10: Section of Sara's drawing of high school

*Sara: Here the person's pointing to this and saying that's a lab coat. Because they do like,
            really cool science, so they put like different kind of things in- over a Bunsen burner*

Figure 11: Section of Rhiannon's drawing of high school

> Rhiannon: *I'm excited for the [lessons] in high school, because apparently they've got a bit more, better stuff to do with science…This one [picture]'s just basically having fun things to do in lessons.*

The theme of increased autonomy and choice extended to other aspects of the pupils' narratives. Sara, Megan, Dylan Ann, Rosie and Ayesha were excited at the prospect of increased choice and better food at mealtimes, and Cerys spoke excitedly about being able to bring her own equipment (in contrast to primary school, where she recounted with disgust that 'you get into trouble for not having the right pens'). Additionally, participants anticipated increased freedom in negotiating the new and often larger physical space of the school, which they contrasted with unfair and infantilising restrictions experienced in primary school. Dylan was excited to leave behind the strict regulation of the playground common in primary schools (Thomson 2005; Baines and Blatchford 2019), whereas Rosie looked forward to moving around the school between lessons and being allowed to use her mobile phone in school.

> Dylan: *[At primary school] sometimes, in the yard, they're like, quite eager to make us not have playtime, quite a lot… it had been raining…and they said it's too slippery outside, because it's been raining. And it was just like, wet concrete, and that's not slippy!*
>
> ---
>
> Rosie: *[At secondary school] We have like ten minutes to walk around, like through the corridors and stuff. And you're allowed to eat! Through the corridors, and drink, and go on your phone. Which is so good. But then you're not allowed to talk. Although I'll talk on my phone! So that's OK.*

The following section explores the tensions that were presented between wanting the maturity and secondary school identity associated with the responsibilities and demands of secondary school, and the knowledge that accessing such maturity might be challenging, and would necessitate regulation by the school and oneself.

5.3.2. Regulation, representations of secondary school, and imagining the professional pupil

Negotiating the new lessons, physical space, and self-management were anticipated with some trepidation. Both schoolwork and homework were expected to increase in volume and difficulty, and homework was anticipated almost universally as negative. Homework, which must be completed independently and outside school, was one aspect of a broader picture of increased self-management that participants anticipated would accompany the move to secondary school. It also represented a new blurring of the boundaries between school and home, and a threat to leisure time and current activities. Unlike other aspects of self-management such as finding one's way around the school or getting the bus alone, participants did not draw any positive association between managing homework and being more responsible or mature.

Ann's view of secondary school overall was characterised by excitement. However, she expressed concern about managing homework, explaining that the secondary school had warned new pupils about the volume of homework they would receive.

> *Ann:* *{laughs nervously} Sometimes I get worried about homework cos…they've [secondary school teachers] said like you get lots, and…but, we do get a timetable and a planner, to make sure when we know our homework's in. And they also have a homework club, so that's making me feel better.*

Ann navigated her concerns about homework by anticipating how she would manage this work, drawing on the secondary school's assurance that new pupils would be supported through the timetable, planner and homework club. The salience of the timetable and planner to participants' navigation of the new regulatory order of secondary school will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Rachel related her worries about homework to the organisational change of having different teachers for each subject, and the associated concern that a lack of communication between them would lead to excessive homework. Similarly, Cerys included homework in her drawing of secondary school, and when discussing this drawing she wrinkled up her nose, groaning 'that's homework. Apparently you get a lot more'. Cerys's expectations of homework were inseparable from her ambivalent feelings about the self-management she anticipated would be required in secondary school. Although she acknowledged that the work itself might be interesting, homework signified a task to remember and manage, one of the new 'responsibilities' of secondary school.

> *Catt:* *Why's the planner in there [drawing]?*
>
> *Cerys:* *Just cos...cos it's your responsibility to...work out your own lessons. And...I think I have enough experience and I think it's something that I want to look forward to. You have a responsibility to know, to know where you're supposed to go. Cos it's a big school. And responsibility to....do your homework, and...and know...everything that you need to do, bring...yeah.*

Cerys's concerns about the transition, discussed further in Section 5.3.3 seemed at odds with her conclusion that she 'want[ed] to look forward to' increased responsibility and self-management. This tension serves as a reminder that participants' imagined futures drew on norms and discourses defining what is seen as a legitimate expectation of the transition. Cerys's account indicated an expectation that pupils will look forward to the new responsibilities of secondary school, and that this shaped how the transition was imagined.

Participants reported being warned about excessive homework, harder schoolwork, and the need to manage their own equipment and timetable, by their primary schools, their new secondary schools, older pupils, and parents. As with Ann's comment about homework club, Shreya presented harder work as a fact about how secondary school.

> *Catt:* *Have your teachers at [primary school] talked to you about what high school will be like?*
>
> *Shreya:* *Yeah. More homework! You gonna- much more hard work!*
>
> *Catt:* *Does that bother you?*
>
> *Shreya:* *Mm, a little bit. Gotta work hard!*

Those who had access to insider knowledge about secondary school from siblings or older friends generally had more positive expectations about the volume or type of work they would receive.

Throughout the children's narratives, particular views of secondary school recurred; as well as bringing more and harder work, participants frequently recounted being told that secondary school would bring 'higher expectations'. This was also reported by the parents when recounting advice given to their children about managing the transition. In this view of secondary school, the professional pupil is one who 'works hard' and fulfils these 'higher expectations'. As noted by Lahelma and Gordon (1997), the requirements of the professional pupil are often abstract or vague, meaning they can be applied and mobilised in different ways for different pupils. Variations of 'harder work' were used by participants, and reported in their discussion of messages from teachers and transition days, as an all-encompassing shorthand. It described a range of anticipated academic

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challenges, as well as changes relating to other aspects of the transition and the subject-positions associated with managing them correctly and fulfilling the (similarly ill-defined) 'higher expectations' associated with secondary school. In Catrin's narrative, 'hard lessons' were conflated with the expectations of increased self-management, and regulation of time, that she anticipated in high school.

> Catt: Is there anything else that you're a bit nervous about?
>
> Catrin: Not…really. It's just the hard lessons. Like, getting your bag ready every day, and *{exaggerated sigh}* getting up early… when I went to primary, I take my time, I'm like a sloth, just take my time…I can go a bit slower, cos primary opens…a bit later. But now I've got to…. not be a sloth! Be like *{speaks quickly and breathlessly}*, gotta get-this – got this- got that-!

Pupils' expectations of the need to 'work hard(er)' in secondary school gave insight into their view of secondary school as bringing new organisational and academic challenges. Although participants recounted their own strategies for negotiating these challenges, many expressed concerns about their own ability to do so. Secondary school was commonly viewed as bringing new rules and harsher punishments, and pupils were particularly concerned with the introduction of detentions[8]. Teachers were presented as both enacting and representing stricter regulation:

> Megan: I feel like the teacher's gonna shout at me. Because they're stricter now. About being late. And I'm scared…like what if I, like, I went to a party and got my nails done, I'm not allowed that…and then I go, like *{gasps as if in shock and puts hands to mouth so nails are visible}* and the teachers'll be like '[Megan]! you've got nail polish on!' and I'm scared I'm gonna like, have my earrings in, and they'll be like 'you have your earrings in! take them out!'

Participants' expectations of the new organisational and academic requirements of secondary school demonstrated a tension between being ready to leave primary school, and uncertainty about the anticipated challenges of secondary school. New responsibilities and privileges were anticipated with excitement, particularly due to their association with maturity, but this was in tension with participants' concerns about their own ability to fulfil the expectations/requirements of the

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[8] Detention is a common punishment used in secondary schools in the UK. This typically involves missing break or lunchtime, or staying for a set period of time after school. During detentions, pupils may be issued with tasks or expected to undertake homework. In the UK, there is no legal requirement for schools to inform parents/carers of a child's detention (UK Government 2020).

professional pupil, and the consequences of such failure. The anticipated consequences of not being able to manage the new requirements and regulations of secondary school, and particularly the role of others in recognising a new Year Seven pupil as (un)successfully performing the role of secondary school pupil, will be considered in the following section.

5.3.3.   <u>**Finding your place, older pupils and subjectivation: anticipating the transfer paradox**</u>

Previous explorations of children's expectations of transition have found that imagined changes to friendships are negotiated alongside questions of status, belonging and 'fitting in'. When starting secondary school, children take on a new role as youngest and smallest in the school, which may elicit uncertainty about their status, expressed as anxiety about the size of the school (both the number of pupils and its physical space), other pupils, and/or themselves (Measor and Woods 1984; Mellor and Delamont 2011; George 2007). For children in my study, fears about navigating the new physical space and the size of the school were intertwined with their uncertain status in the new school, and concerns about their own size in comparison to older students. A focus on the size of the school and its physical space was common in the young people's narratives, and featured as a source of excitement, hope and fear – both an opportunity to form new friendships, and a danger or threat. David, who was the youngest in his school year, drew himself in both of his high school pictures as tiny. In the second, he is a small figure looking uneasy, between two figures twice his size (see Figure 13).
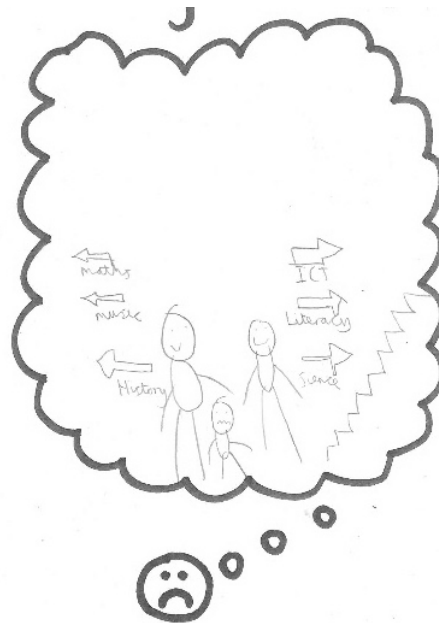
Figure 12: Section of David's drawing of high school

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David contrasted his own perceived smallness with the size of the school and the other children. His fear of getting lost in the 'way bigger' space of secondary school was frequently expressed by participants and is commonly reported in existing research (Evangelou et al. 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008). Others' concern about negotiating the new school space was explicitly connected to their imaginings of older children. Unlike much other work in this area (see for example Gordon et al. 2000; Mellor and Delamont 2011), participants in this study rarely suggested that older students would bully them or enact violent hazing rituals. Rather, older students were presented as more subtly putting new Year Seven students in their place, enacting regulation through both demonstrating how to be a secondary school pupil, and ensuring the new Year Sevens knew their position at the bottom of the student hierarchy. Although teachers communicate official and unofficial rules to new pupils, it is older pupils who demonstrate to new pupils the identity of secondary school student, and official or unofficial rules and cultures relating to both the institutional and child-led 'world' of the school (Valentine 2000).

Older students were positioned as both benevolent and threatening. Although Rosie generally presented herself as not 'nervous' or 'bothered' by the secondary transition, her imagined future was populated by older students in front of whom she would be embarrassed by being in the wrong place.

> *Catt:* You said swapping teachers each lesson might be hard?
>
> *Rosie:* Yeah. Because you're always swapping classes, you have to go to a different class - that'd be embarrassing – if you went to the wrong one! Like, walking in to a bunch of year elevens like…{embarrassed} OK!...bye!. It's gonna happen. First lesson. It is!

Similarly, Cerys's drawing of secondary school (see Figure 14), in addition to depicting homework and her fear of being late, included an angry-looking figure looming over a small, open-mouthed child, indicating older students at the school telling Year Seven students that they did not (yet?) belong at the school.

Figure 13: Cerys's drawing of high school

Cerys: *That's an older guy that's, thinking he's much bigger and better than the kiddies,*
                going {menacingly} 'Why are you here, hmmm?' sort of thing…He's saying
                that….that they don't belong here, because they're new. And that they haven't been in
                the school long. And they don't deserve to be here.

Catt: *Do you think that might happen?*

Cerys: *I don't think it will happen, it might not happen to me, because, it might happen to*
                someone else, it might…the only reason it might not happen to me is because I'll be
                keeping my distance.

Cerys explained that this image of older students drew on her experience of an induction day at the new secondary school:

Cerys: *When I went to the induction day, I went out to break where everyone else was,*
                and…I just sat on the bench the whole time, I didn't…stand up. I mainly chatted to
                other people from my school, and then…I don't- I think I'll do more walking around
                when I go to…Year Seven. Because people [older students] were …staring at us
                like…we didn't belong there.

Cerys's concerns were tied up with working out how she would fit into what she imagined as a territorialised space ('their area'). They highlighted the importance of the playground as a site for negotiating the pupil-led 'world' of secondary school, as pupils are less regulated by the rules of the official school within this space (Valentine 2000; Baines and Blatchford 2019). Older pupils were presented within this narrative as enacting the social and spatial rules of the school, menacingly questioning the belonging of the new Year Seven students. Although Cerys initially focused on older students, this extension of her fears to 'the other boys and girls' suggested a deeper feeling of anticipating being viewed as different or not belonging. In girls' later interviews, the qualities of uniqueness, individuality and confidence would in some contexts be seen as positive attributes, associated with popularity, as seen in other work (Pomerantz 2008; Raby and Pomerantz 2015; MacDonald 2016). However, at this stage, participants were largely concerned with finding friends and belonging, which were assumed to necessitate 'fitting in' (see also Pratt and George 2005).

Cerys's account presented older pupils as a threat despite having an older sister attending the secondary school, in contrast to the tendency for known older pupils to be positioned as supportive. Sara repeated myths she had received informally about secondary school – Sixth Form students as mischievously misdirecting younger students, and her peers' concern that homework would take up all of their free time – but was also able to draw on insider knowledge from an older pupil to critically engage with, and question, these myths. Her account demonstrated that older students could be simultaneously positioned as both valuable sources of information or support, and as threatening. Similarly, Megan's drawing, which listed 'Year 13's Year 12's Year 11's' in the section depicting negative aspects of secondary school, and subsequent discussion, indicated that her excitement at making new friends was tempered to a certain extent by her expectation that older students 'push you around'. However, she explained that relationships with older students in the school allowed her to prepare for navigating the school's physical space and older pupils.

> Catt: *People pushing you around, why do you think that might happen?*
> Megan: *My friends, my friends have older brothers and sisters, and they told me. My friends who have the older brothers and sisters told me a lot.*
> Catt: *The older brothers and sisters, do they go to Parkview?*
> Megan: *Yeah. And [M] told me, a girl who's in Year Seven. Going into Year Eight. I'm actually glad, because then I know that I shouldn't...*
> Catt: *Do you think it means you'll act differently?*
> Megan: *Yeah. Like...{mimes walking, carefully avoiding others}.*

The significance of having access to older pupils' knowledge and support was illustrated at other points in Megan's interview, where she talked about the extensive network of older friends and

siblings who had supported her in preparing for the organisational aspects of the new school. Knowledge from older friends was drawn on by Megan to direct her self-work to prepare for the transition; she explained that this meant she would take more care to avoid others. As seen in Rachel's concern with not wanting to say the 'wrong thing' (see Section 5.2.7), Megan's account reflected the tendency of girls in this study to recount individualised self-work as a means of preparing for the transition.

Davies (2019) explains that Smart's (2007) notion of 'embeddedness', the state of being connected to others through relationships, captures the complexities of how 'sticky' sibling relationships can be both positive and negative in young people's school experiences. Following Smart (2007), Davies (2019) emphasises that embeddedness is not itself either good or bad, but can be enacted and mobilised in supportive and/or challenging ways. This chapter has demonstrated that the same can be said of relationships in general when anticipating the transition, challenging the dominant notion within existing school transitions research of peers and family as 'protective' or 'risky'. When anticipating the transition, existing friendships may be drawn on as a source of support due to their provision of bonding or bridging social capital. However, friendships may also be viewed as a hindrance to processes of reinvention. Older friends or siblings may provide knowledge, support and status, but also enact regulation through the power/knowledge they are able to mobilise.

As with transition work undertaken by parents or schools, older pupils also demonstrate a particular vision of the school and the rules and norms that new students will be expected to follow. In demonstrating these to new students, they can be understood as supportive, helping the new Year Seven pupils learn how to navigate the new school and the challenges of taking on the new social role of secondary school pupil (Gillies and Lucey 2006), but also restrictive or regulatory. Older pupils, particularly unfamiliar ones, have traditionally been constructed within secondary transition narratives as enacting violence on younger students if they do not act in particular ways (Gordon et al. 2000; Mellor and Delamont 2011). However, their regulatory function was presented in participants' accounts as enacted partly through normalising power, communicating and demonstrating the norms of the school and the expectations of Year Seven pupils, which shaped the self-work undertaken by the new pupils in order to be 'regular' (Cann 2018). This ambivalent positioning of older students challenges a simple view of them as either 'bullies' or 'supportive' for students anticipating the transition.

5.4.   <u>**Conclusions**</u>

When undertaking the secondary transition, new pupils must negotiate the unofficial rules and expectations of the new school and the peer group, which may be coherent or in conflict with each other (Tobbell 2003; Noyes 2006; Ashton 2008; Symonds 2015). One aspect of this is the movement away from the protective and caring 'ethos' of primary school, towards a space that emphasises independence, responsibility, discipline and 'self-management' (Lahelma and Gordon 1997; Boyd 2005; Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008; Topping 2011). At a time when they are experiencing a great deal of change and uncertainty, children may seek support from friends (Pratt and George 2005; Ashton 2008), yet these friendships themselves, and children's sense of their own status, are likely to be in flux (Pratt and George 2005). In addition to negotiating changes in the functional aspects of their friendships (George 2007), children are therefore faced with questions of identity, belonging and status.

This chapter has highlighted the centrality of the social in pupils' imaginings of the secondary transition. It has also explored the place of organisational and academic aspect of the transition in pupils' narratives, in particular new lessons, freedoms, responsibilities, and challenges, which were anticipated both as enjoyable and as indicating increased maturity. However, participants expressed some concern over their own ability to negotiate the requirements of the professional pupil – the step up in maturity that is part of the 'transfer paradox' (Hallinan and Hallinan 1992). This was anticipated as problematic due to the assumed social consequences of 'getting it wrong', and/or stricter teachers and harsher punishments. Pupils, particularly girls, endeavoured to manage these concerns through individualised 'preparation', seeking out information about the requirements of the professional pupil and planning or practising how they would enact these requirements.

Participants' concern about the requirements of being a professional pupil were interconnected with worries about belonging and 'fitting in', emphasising the relationship between becoming a professional pupil and negotiating the social. Concerns about negotiating the physical space of secondary school can be understood as organisational concerns but are inseparable from pupils' view of themselves as the smallest, and fears of older pupils, who were anticipated as a threat. Participants who knew older students at the school seemed more likely to view older students as benevolent, and older students were presented as key to the new pupils' construction of an image of the new school and its (formal and unofficial) requirements, and their negotiation of a place within it.

Additionally, pupils' accounts gave insight into the regulatory function of different versions of professional and social pupil, and the ways these discourses were drawn on and reproduced through

formal and informal transition work. Participants' work to prepare for or manage the new requirements of secondary school, particularly through individualised self-work, indicated that although well-received and perhaps well-intentioned, the knowledge communicated by both older pupils and the school enacted some level of regulatory power on the pupils, in telling them how they would need to be and how they should reach this goal. The children's movement into the imagined world of secondary school, and their negotiation of both imagined and unforeseen aspects of secondary school, are explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Six: Navigating New Spaces

6.1.   Introduction

This chapter considers participants' initial navigation of secondary school. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken during September and October 2016, including a creative activity, inviting participants to construct a timeline to 'show me what your school day looks like', and use emotion stickers to indicate how they felt at different times of day. These interviews returned to areas that featured in participants' imagined futures before they moved: friendships and belonging; the physical school (Gordon et al. 2000); and increased autonomy, regulation and 'hard work'. This chapter focuses primarily on the new social space of secondary school. The connections between participants' navigation of the school's regulatory practices and their friendship work will be explored throughout, as will their relationship with performing maturity and becoming a Year Seven pupil.

6.2.   Old friends

6.2.1.   Familiarity and contingency

All the children moved with at least one friend, and acquaintances from primary school. In the second interviews, attending the same secondary school was presented as the key factor in the continuation of primary school friendships. However, maintaining relationships with those who had moved to different schools was presented as important. This indicated a clear contrast to their initial interviews, in which new friends had been the central focus, and only a small minority of participants expected to maintain friendships with those moving to different schools. Second interviews indicated a move away from an apparent acceptance that friendships would be lost, towards maintaining such friendships as morally necessary. This drew on discourses of friendship emphasising loyalty, commonly viewed as particularly important in girls' friendships (McLeod and Yates 2006), conflating longevity of friendship with closeness.

> Catt: *Why is it important to stay in touch with friends who are at different secondary*
> *schools?*
> Shreya: *Because… They're my friends. Just because we're going to different schools doesn't*
> *mean you have to just like… 'I'm not your friend any more! Don't talk to me!'*

> Catt: *Are you still friends with your primary school friends who haven't come to Holy Trinity?*
>
> David: *Yeah, yeah. Definitely.*
>
> Catt: *Why's it important to stay in touch with those friends?*
>
> David: *Well…just because we're going to a different school, it doesn't mean that we can't be friends*

Use of mobile phones increased significantly between the first and second interview, and the majority of participants maintained digital contact with primary school friends. However, few recounted having seen primary school friends who had moved to different schools. Those who did were supported by parents and/or lived locally. Developing new friendships did not prevent participants mourning primary school friends (see also Coffey 2013):

> Dylan: *I've seen [K] cos he lives really close and we're like best friends…I still see [N] every week at Park Run, it's [F] and [W] that I'm missing really. Cos I don't see them that often… I haven't seen [F] since primary school, he was one of my biggest ones as well…and I think if [F], if I saw [F] again he'd probably be my friend, but I don't think I will, because I don't really have…any contact…like, my mum knows most people, apart from [F]'s parents!*

This resonates with earlier findings that parental involvement is key to whether primary school friendships endure if pupils move to different secondary schools, particularly parents' willingness or ability to transport children to see friends, which are shaped by classed parenting cultures and perceptions of the local area as safe or dangerous (Weller 2007; Weller and Bruegel 2009). The continued influence of parents will be explored throughout this chapter.

For participants whose friends had moved with them to secondary school, friendships had generally been maintained at this stage. As reported in previous studies (Holland et al. 2007; Weller 2007), familiar peers provided bonding social capital, and a source of support during the initial navigation of the new peer group and physical space.

> Catrin: *On the first day I kind of stayed around with like [G] and [L] cos I didn't know anyone. [G] is an old friend. And then [B], my other best friend [from primary school]*

> Rachel: *I only had one person from primary school [in my form] and she wasn't really my friend…On the first day I kind of hung out with the girl from my school, sat next to her, but at break times I hung out with my friends from primary who'd come to the high school but weren't in my form.*

Old friends may be valuable in the initial weeks of school, and a 'buffer' against the challenges it poses (Hamm and Faircloth 2005). However, these 'contingency friendships' (Pratt and George 2005) were not necessarily maintained. By the time of the second interview, some had already served their time-specific function of providing an initial 'comfort zone' (Holland et al. 2007, pp.101–102) and given way to new friendships. However, for others, relationships from primary school formed the basis of new friendship groups through 'snowballing' (Weller 2007, p.349) which will be discussed in Section 6.3.2. Additionally, as explored in the following section, moving with existing peers may not be wholly positive, with existing hierarchies or difficult friendship histories challenging the possibility of making a 'fresh start' in secondary school (Gordon et al. 2000).

6.2.2.   <u>Ripples of bullying</u>

Participants who reported bullying or exclusion in their initial interviews found that this shaped how they negotiated peer relations in the transition, through direct, far-reaching and/or indirect 'ripples' (Vaswani 2014). Both Becky and Rhiannon moved with the person they described bullying them in primary school. Rhiannon explained that her former best friend [N], who had 'one day just snapped' and stopped talking to Rhiannon, was no longer bullying Rhiannon but being uncharacteristically friendly ('sickly'). However, Rhiannon explained that her previous experience with [N] led her to distrust both [N] and her new friends, leading her not to 'put too much trust in other people just in case they turn out like [N]'. This shaped her orientation towards friendship to be functional and focused on security, relying on her primary school best friend to be 'backup…my lawyer' in anticipated friendship struggles. Bullying in primary school therefore had ripples into secondary school even if a pupil was no longer actively being bullied, in line with other research highlighting the long-term impact of childhood bullying (MacDonald 2014).

The transition can offer escape from a particular bully. However, Ayesha explained that although [K], the ringleader of her primary school bullying, had moved to a different school, Ayesha's friends continued to exclude her, now led by another girl from her primary school.

> *Ayesha:*   *My friends are really weird, because sometimes they just walk away, and then I'm left on my own…And there was this group chat with all my friends and some people from another form. And this girl [B], she doesn't like me…she told Shreya that no one likes me, that's why she didn't add me in the group chat. And then Shreya added me, and I just took myself out because I didn't want anything to get ruined. But then I stopped talking to [N] and I walked away. But then she added me after…but I was actually sad because she said no one likes me.*

In girls' status hierarchies and struggles, power is typically exercised through practices of inclusion/exclusion, often through the mobilisation of valued knowledge (Paechter and Clark 2010). Such practices may be invisible to teachers and difficult to address (George 2007). For Ayesha, neither walking away, nor challenging her exclusion and eventually being added to the group chat, undid the emotional impact of being excluded. Ayesha's navigation of the new peer space was shaped by [B]'s ability to exercise power, through strategic mobilisation of the unwritten rules of inclusion/exclusion in the group chat, and the knowledge (whether true or not) that 'no one likes' Ayesha. Similar to Rhiannon, Ayesha sought friends who would 'stay with me' and remain loyal in the face of exclusion.

Becky's primary school bully [R] shaped Becky's friendships in the new school more directly. She both continued to victimise Becky, by 'calling me names and whacking me', and stopped her from making new friends.

> *Becky:*   *I'm tryina forget it, but, somehow [R] keeps on screaming and shouting at me…I was tryina forget what happens if she bullies me…I was tryina forget it because…{sighs} I just wanna be friends with her. But she wouldn't let me, so. I'm tryina forget all, what she did.*
>
> *Catt:*   *Why do you want to be friend with [R]?*
>
> *Becky:*   *Because I want more friends to like me and all that. But she wouldn't let me…Whenever I ask them to play, she always takes them off me. All my friends. So I just, plays by myself sometimes.*

In contrast to the view prevalent in psychology-driven education policy and research of 'bully' and 'victim' as stable and mutually exclusive identities, young people may take up or move away from either role (George 2007; Ringrose 2008; Carrera et al. 2011). Past and current experience of bullying shaped these girls' negotiation of the new social space of secondary school in complex ways, with bully/victim/friend neither fixed nor exclusive designations (see also Ringrose 2008; Mitchell and Borg 2013; Ringrose and Rawlings 2015; Thornberg 2018). Hopes of escaping bullying by changing schools may be at odds with a reality in which peers rearrange themselves such that someone new

takes the role of 'bully', as seen with Ayesha. Rhiannon's former bully was now working to reposition herself as a friend, but their friendship history prevented Rhiannon from accepting this, and shaped her relationships with others (see also George 2007). Additionally, both Becky and Ayesha invested significant effort in friendships with those who excluded them. Ayesha positioned her treatment as acceptable in her conclusion that 'I'm still their friend because they're not like physically mean to me', whereas Becky's account of trying to 'forget it' illustrated the mental work involved in trying to be friends with [R] and the others she seemed to control. These accounts echoed the strategies employed by girls in other studies of bullying, positioning certain behaviours as acceptable through contrasting them with others, and presenting their impact as minimal, to create distance from the position of either victim or bully (George 2007; Ringrose 2008; Forsberg 2017). Becky and Ayesha faced a tension between bully discourses that define '(good) friend' and 'bully' as opposites, and their own desire to be friends with the girls responsible for their exclusion.

These girls' accounts highlighted the conflicting feelings of participants who had experienced bullying. These challenged earlier advice to not worry about making friends, and to simply avoid bullies or report them to teachers. Bullying was an area in which the official and unofficial school often clashed significantly. Megan, in her account of the bullying of another student, described a clash between discourses positioning bullying as in need of teacher intervention, and those positioning bullying as an individual's responsibility to avoid, address or 'shake off' (Forsberg 2017). Becky reported being told by a teacher to 'walk away' or 'just run' if [R] tried to hit her, but said this did not work in practice. She also quickly learnt that that seeking support from teachers could be dangerous.

> Becky: ...whenever I tell the teacher everyone's screaming shut up at me, so I'm trying to not. I told the teacher that they bullying me and all that. Call me names. But then they [pupils] says...why did you do that for? If you do that again I'm gonna hit you or something.

Similarly, Ayesha reported that telling a teacher had proved ineffective, leading her to develop her own tactics. In Becky's case, official strategies seemed to be let down by their failure to account for peer norms that penalise 'grassing' or 'snitching' (Garpelin 2004; Oliver and Candappa 2007; Allnock and Atkinson 2019). Schools may also fail to recognise the complexities of bullying, particularly the possibility that the 'victim' and/or 'bully' may view the other as a friend, and the undesirability of inhabiting the position of 'victim' (Osler 2006; Ringrose 2008; Ringrose and Renold 2010). For both girls, trust in the effectiveness of schools' strategies to address bullying, which has been shown to decrease with age (Oliver and Candappa 2007), was seen to undergo a shift at this critical moment of learning that 'telling' was ineffective and/or dangerous.

In negotiating the new peer group, participants were not only identifying others to be their friends, but navigating the choices, acceptance and/or exclusion of others, within systems of norms and practices defining (un)acceptable ways of being a Year Seven pupil. Although the negotiation of power and pleasure in bully/friend/victim relationships is often complex (Renold and Ringrose 2008; Ringrose and Renold 2010), difference and sameness are central to young people's narratives and experiences of bullying. Being viewed as different or displaying inappropriate tastes puts a pupil at risk of exclusion and teasing (Gordon et al. 2000; Thornberg 2011; Cann 2018), which also act as processes of 'misfitting' that identify the victim as 'different' and not-normal (Thornberg 2018). My participants described bullying as due to some flaw or difference inherent in the person being bullied (see also (Thornberg 2011; Thornberg and Knutsen 2011). Although only a small number of participants recounted exclusion, 'margins are constantly present as potential positions and locations to be avoided at all costs', meaning the threat of marginalisation enacts regulatory power beyond those who are directly marginalised (Gordon et al. 2000, p.128). Bullying is often positioned as extreme behaviour positioned within individual 'problem' students and/or pathologised 'victims' (Ringrose 2008; Ringrose and Renold 2010). However, it is part of a bigger set of everyday processes of inclusion/exclusion that characterise young people's peer relationships (Pomerantz 2008) and interact with teachers' practices of inclusion/exclusion and (mis)recognition (Juva et al. 2018). The regulatory power of the peer group, and the negotiation of new peer norms and practices of (dis-)identification, inclusion and exclusion, recurred throughout these interviews and are explored further throughout this chapter.

6.2.3.   Curtailing primary friendships

Secondary transition may be an opportunity to legitimately end friendships, even if friends move to the same school (Pratt and George 2005; Weller 2007). However, participants rarely reported actively working to curtail friendships or experiencing friendship 'rupture' (Weller 2007). Only Alice, Callum and Megan reported curtailing close friendships from primary school despite the former friend(s) moving to the same secondary school.

Megan's plans to make all new friends (see Section 5.2.1) seemed to have been enacted. She did not discuss detaching from her group of primary school friends, except her previous best friend [J]. She told multiple different versions of their friendship history, including one where Megan had ended the friendship due to a slight on the part of [J], another where Megan curtailed the friendship due to its clash with Megan's temporary and fragile inclusion in the group of 'popular girls', and another where [J] had ended the friendship. However, when asked directly why they were no longer friends, Megan attributed this to the school's organisational divisions.

Callum and Alice's narratives of friendships ending related more explicitly to the behaviour of their former friends. Callum explained that three of his old friends, who he did not include when describing his friends, were now involved in fighting. Violence and working to find safety within the new school was a recurring concern; he described physical fights as commonplace, and something he worked hard to resist.

Callum:	*In school there's a <u>lot</u> of fights. People say 'scrap after school!' and some people do. But I say no, and they call me the P word.*
Catt:	*The what?*
Callum:	*{shakes his head}*
Catt:	*Do you not want to say it?*
Callum:	*Mmmm, no. The P word. Scaredy cat… But it just…happens. You bump into someone, they say 'scrap me' and then a fight starts*
Catt:	*Does that happen a lot?*
Callum:	*Yeah, quite a lot. But…I just walk away. Cos I don't like violence.*

Distancing from these friends was part of Callum's work to avoid fighting. In schools, dominant forms of masculinity often centre on sporting prowess and/or physical violence (Valentine 2000; Epstein et al. 2001; Renold 2001; Swain 2004). In contrast to primary school, which Callum described as manageable due to friends and football, his sporting prowess was no longer sufficient to outweigh his refusal to fight. Callum's low status in the school's 'hardness hierarchy' was upheld through misogynist abuse that marked Callum as misfitted, the feminised and ridiculed Other (Francis 2005; Thornberg 2018).

Despite distancing himself from those from primary school who started fights, Callum seemed wary of re-categorising them, saying instead that he 'just…don't really hang around with them'. Alice presented herself as similarly lacking agency in changes to her friendships. Having said previously that she intended to stay friends with all her current friends, she referred to [R][9] in her second

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[9] [R], who attended the same primary and secondary school as Becky and Alice, was the girl Becky described as violently bullying her (see Section 5.2.6).

interview as her 'old best friend'. Alice reported that [R] was 'in isolation[10] like every day' and that she 'don't see her, hardly, any more! She's got her own friends now'. This distancing from [R] could be seen as coherent with Alice's own work in this interview to be recognised as a professional pupil, seen in her frequent assertions that she was working hard to attain highly and be good. However, as with Callum, she was unwilling to fully detach from [R], stating they were still friends. As with Megan, when I asked directly about why her friendship with [R] had changed, Alice did not claim this was a choice; rather, they 'just ended up separating'. Although my reading of participants' accounts indicated that they had curtailed friendships for reasons of safety (Callum) or identity-work (Megan, Alice), this was presented as a natural progression or due to the school's organisational changes. This could be seen as an expression of continued loyalty to old friends. However, the following sections will argue that a similar lack of agency was seen in participants' narratives of making new friends, masking often complex negotiations of choice, agency and (dis-)identification.

6.3.   <u>New friends</u>

6.3.1.   <u>'This isn't so bad!'</u>

Realising their expectations before transition, all participants except Callum reported that they had made new friends, and that this had happened quickly and with minimal effort.

Shreya: After the first lesson I thought oh, well this isn't so bad! I had loads of new people talking to me, and…it was just really fun. Meeting new people was fun, getting to know new people, different personalities and everything.

David: Well I just…went up to talk to them [new friends] one day, and they…yeah, we just became friends then.

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[10] The regulatory practices of schools in the UK include 'isolation' or 'seclusion', in which pupils are punished through being separated from other pupils during their lessons or breaktimes. Practices vary between schools and may involve a pupil sitting alone or with other 'isolated' pupils in a classroom, or in an 'isolation booth' in which they may be physically close to other pupils but separated by barriers (Barker et al. 2010; Tillson and Oxley 2020). Exclusion, which is a more well-established punishment within the UK school system, involves a pupil being sent away from the school for a period of time, or removing the pupil permanently from a school (expulsion) (School Discipline and Exclusions 2020)

> Sara: *When I met people it was really good, it was easy to get along with people because they wanted to make friends too.*

Participants said little at this stage about friendship formation or why relationships developed with particular individuals rather than others. Making new friends was presented as happening relatively quickly and serendipitously, and none described choosing individuals or groups. Some presented their new friendships as secondary to more established relationships, which were attributed a renewed significance, amidst comments that they had yet to reach this level of security and intimacy with new friends.

Participants' unwillingness to frame their friendships as chosen mirrored their expectation that making new friends was inevitable, drawing on a discourse of friendships as naturally occurring. This was underpinned by a view of authenticity as a desirable characteristic, in contrast to 'trying too hard' and risking being viewed as a 'wannabe' (see also Read et al. 2011). Additionally, the framing of friendships as both serendipitous and not (yet) close may have reflected the time-specific function of some friendships. During the initial period of making sense of the new school and peer group (Noyes 2006) students frequently form friendships quickly to avoid feelings of exclusion, loneliness, and lack of safety or belonging (Gordon et al. 2000). Although participants did not at this stage present their new friendships as liable to change, they may have been aware that these rapidly-formed friendships were partly functional.

6.3.2. <u>New peers = new friends?</u>

New friends did not feature centrally in the narratives of Alice or Callum, who moved to Ivy Tree and St. Mary's respectively, which were both stigmatised locally and had a predominantly working-class intake. In initial interviews, those who did not repeat the dominant narrative that secondary school would bring new friends were all working-class pupils moving to these two schools. Similar to their accounts before moving, following the transition Alice and Callum were both largely ambivalent about changing schools, challenging the common assumption that this represented a critical moment. In their second interview, they presented secondary school as largely similar to primary school, and they were the only participants not to excitedly tell me about their new friends.

Callum framed pupils from other schools as a threat to be avoided, explaining that he stayed with familiar peers as 'some people from different [primary] schools, in Year Seven now, they smoke. Weed and all that'. Both Alice and Becky, who also attended Ivy Tree, reported lots of 'nasty' or 'naughty' pupils at their secondary school. This contrasted with the middle-class pupils, who largely

presented their new peers in a positive light, including those from other primary schools. The working-class pupils' view of other pupils as a threat echoed fears expressed by working-class parents, of children who would lead their child down the 'wrong path' (see Section 5.2.2). Correspondingly, Alice and Callum's accounts of staying with familiar peers rather than focusing on new friendships seemed to reflect the emphasis by the working-class parents on maximising safety and familiarity, and maintaining existing relationships (see also Warrington 2005; Reay 2007). When reflecting on these interviews, I noticed that my questions were underpinned by an assumption of differences between primary and secondary school, despite both Alice and Callum explaining early on in their second interviews that 'everything' was the same in their new schools. Nonetheless, both Callum and Alice were secure in their view that the transition was not significant, and their reasons for not seeking new friendships.

Participants moving to Ivy Tree, St. Mary's and the high-performing and oversubscribed school Parkview, explained that the majority of their primary year group were moving to the same secondary school. However, the navigation of friendship contrasted strongly between the different schools. Those attending Parkview all described forming new friendships, often based on existing relationships. This practice of 'snowballing' from primary school friendships was common in the sample overall (see also Weller 2007). However, the narratives of the more affluent middle-class pupils (Ann, Sara, Megan, David and Dylan) recounted a particular tendency to develop new networks through existing relationships from organised activities, family friendships, and old friends with whom participants had been reunited. Paechter and Clark (2007, p.318) note that in primary school, accessing out-of-school activities relies on 'parents [who] can afford both the money to pay for these activities and the time to get them there'. My interviews indicated that this held true for secondary school, as many of the middle-class participants were driven by parents to paid-for activities (see also Vincent and Ball 2007). Participation in organised activities were not limited to the students of the most affluent families, and other pupils explained that friendships outside school provided with increased confidence in anticipating the transition and a 'comfort zone' of bonding social capital when initially making new friends (see also Holland et al. 2007; Holland 2009). However, for these pupils, such friendships did not provide bridging social capital upon entry to the new school, as the children they knew did not attend their secondary schools. The somewhat closed nature of the social networks of participants attending Parkview, and the way these shaped their navigation of friendships, could be seen in the following descriptions by Sara and Ann:

> Sara: *I've got my friend... [L], we went to the same musical theatre thing when we were younger...It's been two years since she left and I haven't been in touch with her so it's nice that we're in the same form...On the first day I talked to two new people, [N] and [C]. They've become my friends now. They're [W]'s best friends.*

> *Ann:*   *I have one friend called [M] who I've known since nursery…but then she went to a different school…and then I knew her from swimming, and then she moved to my school… And she had this other friend called [I] from her school, and she joined my school as well. So…me and [M] were best friends…and we're all friends now.*

As noted in the previous chapter, parents generally lead the school 'choice' process, and indicated that this was shaped by their views of (in)appropriate friends (see also Ball 2003; Reay 2004; Byrne and De Tona 2019). Accounts of new friends made at Parkview suggested that they tended to be of similar backgrounds, and many had undertaken trajectories similar to Ann's of making multiple moves between primary schools specifically to access Parkview. Although young people actively negotiate their own social capital (Leonard 2005; Henderson et al. 2006; Offer and Schneider 2007; Weller 2007; Holland 2009), parents and the classed negotiation of school 'choice' played a significant role in these participants' initial friendship negotiation. At this stage of the transition, accumulation of social capital, and the negotiation of friendships and relationships more generally, is perhaps best understood as an interactive process within families (Weller 2010). Parents retained influence in shaping friendships and relationships, but the children themselves were also actively and sometimes strategically negotiating their own relationships and social networks.

6.3.3.   Organisational divisions and doing friendship

Before changing schools, divisions into forms and sets were anticipated as a reason that friendships might change. After starting secondary school, pupils explained that these organisational divisions shaped their friendship development in the initial weeks. All reported having friends in their form, and being in a form together was often given as the sole reason for a new friendship. The converse was also true; being placed in a different group was a common reason given for primary school friendships not being maintained.

> *David:*   *…it's literally everyone in my class I'm friends with now, so.*

> *Catt:*   *Were there people where you already thought they were going be your friends, or not?*
> *Shreya:*   *Everybody in my form was nice. I just really wanted to be friends with <u>everyone</u>.*

In the initial weeks, participants had most lessons with their form groups, although Physical Education (PE) was commonly in single-gender groups. At this stage, splitting pupils into sets or streams was not common. However, at Fairfields, form groups were allocated according to 'ability'. Ayesha, who was in the second form, explained that 'The first one [form] is the one that has the most like ability to do stuff, and then it goes down to the lowest', recalling being told by a teacher that 'the first form's better than the last form'. Ayesha's concern about separation from friends (see Section 5.2.5) had been underpinned by the fear of being allocated to a 'bad' group. She expressed relief at not being in a 'low' form, and developing friendships with 'most of the girls in the class'.

At Parkview, lessons were not undertaken in form groups or sets. Discussion of the different divisions and categorisations employed by the schools provided insight into both the practical and symbolic ways they defined who was considered a potential friend. The accounts of Ann and Megan demonstrated that where the timetable and form groups were separate, both structured friendships. The timetable defines when, where and with whom pupils are expected to be. Megan indicated that the timetable was implicated in friendship negotiation even if lessons were not held in form groups. The development of friendships within lesson time was rarely discussed, although shared lessons were presented as a common-sense reason for friendship formation. However, Megan's account demonstrated that both lesson time and moving between lessons could be sites of friendship negotiation. Megan described her new friendship group as snowballing from her new best-friend relationship with [E], which had developed serendipitously through being seated together in lessons. Conversely, Ann, another Parkview student, indicated that the form group also shaped friendship negotiation due to the significance accorded to the form group by the school. Despite only having one timetabled lesson together each week, Ann felt an attachment to her form group:

> Ann: *My [form] class is the real class I'm with, so...I've got to get used to it, and happy with it..It just feels important that I know them because they're my class...it's important to know them all, cos everything that we do, if we gotta go somewhere or do something, something's cancelled, it's our form class and I gotta know where it is, the people that's in there, cos if I needed to ask a question or something, and so I have to get to know everyone.*

The form group was presented here as a stable and familiar base from which support could be drawn, but which brought the responsibility of 'know'[ing] them all. Pupils recounted activities and practices as a form group that engendered a sense of belonging, including inter-form sports tournaments and competitive systems of 'points' for behaviour or attainment, which are frequently used in secondary schools to encourage form-group solidarity (Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016).

Viewing the form group as full of potential friends can be understood as necessary discursive work in making sense of the new peer group, and managing a situation that is still threatening. However, for Rachel the significance of the form group was a source of anxiety.

> *Rachel:*   *I've got really good friends outside my form, I seem to find that easier than making friends with my form. I don't know why. When you're in their form you want to be perfect friends with them, some people I want to be really good friends with them so I don't act as comfortable…It's easier to make friends if I'm not wanting so much to be perfect friends.*

The aspiration to be 'perfect' friends contrasts with the tendency to present friendship as serendipitous and 'natural', and is notable given the value commonly attributed to 'being yourself' in girls' friendships (George 2007; Read et al. 2011). This indicated a rare acknowledgement of the work involved in developing new friendships, and the role played by discourses of the 'good friend' and idealised images of friend(ship)s in shaping friendships.

Schools' allocation of form groups was largely opaque to both children and parents. Staff may consciously or unwittingly separate existing friends, to encourage new friendships and divide 'problem' friendship groups (Mellor 2006; George 2007). Although parents did not recount exerting influence over the initial form allocation, P8, the middle-class mother of Rhiannon, explained in her first interview that she had intervened to 'rectify' the placement of Rhiannon in a form without her friend [I]. Form allocation may therefore be open to intervention if parents are willing and able to intervene using methods deemed appropriate by the school, which are most readily accessible to middle-class parents (Ball 2003).

Additionally, the girls attending Parkview indicated that their primary and secondary schools had encouraged friendships to change, by re-allocating their form groups in Year Six (recounted by Megan), splitting existing friendships between the two 'sides' of the school (Ann, Sara and Megan), and organising a school trip for a limited number of new Year Seven students during the holidays before they started at the school (identified by Ann as one way she had made new friends). These practices seemed designed as much to encourage new friendships as to divide those identified as problematic, and they supported these girls in developing friendship networks with those across their year group.

6.3.4.   **Travel and independence**

The role of place was not an explicit focus of the interviews, but I identified this as a key thread in participants' accounts. Friendship negotiations took place not only within the school day but during travel to and from school, which may provide children's first opportunity to do friendship away from the gaze of adults (Valentine 1997; Symonds 2015). Travelling together was given as a reason to maintain a relationship from primary school or to form new friendships, and a space for cementing emerging friendships. For Dylan, the role of locality in determining which friendships endured in secondary school has already been noted. Walking to school with local friends, incorporating time at their homes on the way, quickly became part of his routine. Sara walked to school with old friends in a different form, with travel providing a space for maintaining these friendships. For Megan, walking to school provided a reason to maintain a relationship with [W], who lived nearby and had attended the same primary school but not previously been considered a friend. This friendship with [W] was presented as separate from Megan's new group of friends, who were a pre-existing group. She explained that the assumed closeness indicated by their longstanding friendship, having been friends 'from like, four year olds', and living in a different area, left her feeling somewhat separate from this group:

> Megan: *I've got loads of [area] kid friends. Literally all my friends are from [area]. They're like 'Oh I've got to run, I'll be late for the bus!' and I'm like 'Yeah, I've got to be late for...getting home! Walking home!'.*

Megan seemed to maintain this friendship with [W] largely for company travelling to and from school, to counter these feelings of difference or exclusion. Megan's ambivalent relationship with [W] will be explored further in Section 6.4.2. By the time the third interviews took place, [E] had taken up the position of 'best friend' and [W] was no longer mentioned.

Ann's account of her friendship with [F], who walked to school with Ann and had a similar educational trajectory was notable in that she did not initially mention [F] when asked about her friends, introducing her only when discussing travel. Just as sibling relationships may be enacted differently within and outside school (Gillies and Lucey 2006), friendships based on shared travel could overlap with or become in-school friendships, but also exist in parallel, with little interaction within school. Pupils exercised agency in negotiating sometimes functional friendships to provide companionship with travel, and in managing these friendships at school.

Travelling could therefore be an important site of friendship negotiation. However, pupils' opportunities for independent travel were varied. Whereas previous research indicating that middle-class parents are more likely than working-class parents to seek a place at a school some distance from where they live (Weller and Bruegel 2009), all three girls attending Parkview lived close to the school. All were permitted to walk to school without supervision, due in part to perceptions of their affluent local area as safe. David, who attended school a few miles from his home, was picked up part of the way home, but still benefited from walking some distance with new schoolfriends.

> David: *Walking home is just quite a bit of a laugh, cos we go through this little passage and we have to jump over this little river thing. It's not that deep, but, y'know.*

As the year progressed, travel became an increasing source of tension for David as he wanted to walk or cycle home with friends and spend time at their homes spontaneously but his mother was wary of this level of independence. Children's mode of travel is shaped by distance, availability of 'safe' routes, and parents' willingness and ability to transport their child, or to allow them to travel without adults. Identification of 'safe' routes is bound up with classed and gendered notions of risk, threat, and the child's ability to manage these (Valentine 1997; Weller and Bruegel 2009). Travelling independently may be viewed by parents as an opportunity for children to develop independence and learn to manage risks and develop 'street literacy' (Cahill 2000; Holland et al. 2007). For Catrin, walking to school with her older sister allowed an in-between space in which she was not entirely without supervision, and was hence allowed to walk despite the presence of a busy main road.

However, for others, travel was organised and undertaken by adults. Ayesha and Shreya, whose school (Fairfields) was in a different area to where they lived, were driven to school together each day by a different parent, following what Ayesha described as a 'timetable' organised by the mother of [S], a primary school peer. Notably, [S] was one of the girls described by Ayesha as bullying her in primary school, indicating parents' organisation of travel may shape friendships in ways that are unwelcome.

Echoing Megan's comment that she did not socialise with her new friends outside school, Ayesha also explained that most new friends lived near the school, which limited her ability to spend time with them socially. As Holland et al. (2007) report, attending a school outside the local area may limit children's opportunities to develop 'neighbourhood' social capital. They also argue that the individualised mobility deployed to secure access to particular schools 'appears to contradict policy statements that argue for the need to use social capital to build greater community cohesion and social integration' (Holland et al. 2007, p.113). Ayesha's enthusiasm about her new school was inseparable

from her distaste towards the school in her local area, which became more pronounced throughout the school year and will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

However, travelling independently was not viewed as wholly positive by the children. Shreya, the only participant who reported travelling by bus, quickly reverted to being driven. Where school buses or public transport were mentioned by parents, they were presented as spaces of danger or challenges for which their child was not yet ready. Most notably, Alice's mother Emily explained in her initial interview that this was a central reason for sending Alice to the local school.

> *Emily: That was my main, I wouldn't want them to catch a bus...I would be so worried about them going on a bus, you hear so many stories about kids on buses and things. Just kids being horrible and just you know I just wouldn't, I'd worry the whole time...*

The role of locality in school 'choice', discussed in Chapter Five, cannot be separated from views of both distance and the local area itself as safe or risky, views which continued to shape children's negotiation of secondary school.

Views of independent travel as risky were not limited to parents. Callum explained that he walked home out of necessity but was scared of travelling alone. Occupied by horror stories that were circulating about 'killer clowns' in his local area (*ITV News* 2016; Hayward 2018), he recounted the complicated survival strategy he had developed in case of coming across a clown on his walk home. Therefore, travelling without adults should not be viewed as unequivocally positive for children, particularly those such as Callum who were struggling socially and did not have the option of travelling with others.

Before children started secondary schools, many parents anticipated with trepidation the prospect of having less control and involvement over their children's lives and friendships once they changed schools. School 'choice' could be understood partly in terms of managing this anticipated lack of control, either by selecting a school with a peer group of the 'right' children, or keeping one's own children close at the local school – although this did not resolve the fear that they would make friends with the 'wrong' children or 'choose the wrong path'. However, despite widespread parental concern that they would become less involved in their children's friendships, many remained influential (see also Reynolds 2007). Although many participants reported a shift in their independent travel, their accounts challenged the view of the journey to/from school as a space for negotiating friendships away from the influence of adults.

## 6.4.	Identifying possible friends: gender, behaviour and 'bad kids'

### 6.4.1.	Gender, heterosexuality and initial friendship negotiation

Although participants described new friendships as largely serendipitous, friendships are shaped by readings of others, identification of some as potential friends, and exclusion of others from this possibility (Gordon et al. 1999; Gordon et al. 2000). This section will consider how gendered views of other students as 'good' or 'bad' shaped initial friendship negotiation.

Friendship groups in secondary school are commonly with same-gender peers (Gordon et al. 2000; Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016). Friendships are sites of gender construction, performance, and negotiation (Gulbrandsen 2003), with both the choice of friends and the ways friendship is done 'infused with dominant notions of gender and gender appropriate behaviour' (Gordon et al. 2000, p.111). All participants except Alice, when asked an open question about their friends in the second interview, listed only same-gender peers. Others (Becky, Rachel and David), when asked directly, said that they did have other-gender friends, although claims to be 'friends with everyone' often transpired to only apply to pupils of the same gender.

Where boys featured in girls' narratives, they were largely positioned as a homogeneous group, and as 'naughty' or 'silly'. Cerys described a binary whereby boys were 'shove-y and pushy and shouty' and 'evil', whereas girls 'can be quite loud as well but they just chat'. Similarly, Shreya attributed misbehaviour in her school to one boy, supported by other 'silly boys [who] don't wanna learn'. She distanced herself from this behaviour, aligning herself with others who 'make fun of him'.

> Shreya:	*There's a boy in our class who always tries to be funny, and he distracts everybody, and he disturbs the lesson. And he's not really funny...He gets shouted at, and the teacher sends him into another class to calm down.*

Misbehaviour may be valued in the child-led 'world' of school, particularly for boys (Renold 2001; Archer and Yamashita 2003; Swain 2004; Francis 2009). However, at this stage, girls positioned misbehaviour as deviant and threatening, and viewed as such by their peers (Day 1996). The figure of the singular 'naughty boy' returned later in Shreya's interviews. Her discursive work to distance herself from this pupil, and her view of his treatment by the school, were inseparable from her own work to be viewed as a professional pupil. Teachers' removal of the boy from the class was praised for 'mak[ing] sure nobody else is getting distracted', removing the threat to her own chance to be viewed as academically successful by the teachers. Similarly, Rhiannon distanced herself and her

peers from 'naughty' and 'stupid' boys, recalling that 'we were all just laughing silently' as these boys were punished. These views of misbehaviour as a personal failing, a threat to one's own achievement and self-work, and as requiring punishment, will be explored further in the following chapter.

Sara also reported that it was 'usually' boys who misbehaved. She and others described teachers punishing students with alternating boy-girl seating plans. Such practices encourage students to regulate each other's behaviour, particularly girls to regulate the behaviour of 'boisterous boys' (Gordon et al. 2000, p.115; Ivinson and Murphy 2003; Paechter 2006). This is one way in which girls are frequently positioned as 'quasi-teachers' or 'caretakers', expected to civilise and manage 'wild' boys (Hey 1997; Charlton et al. 2007). Catrin described her frustration at being positioned in this role, feeling she alone had to manage the behaviour of the boys in her Science group. She described boys as in need of management rather than potential friends, in contrast to girls, who she implied would support each other in managing boys' behaviour.

> Catrin: *I love Science, it's just, the teacher- we have groups of four, and there's thirteen girls...there's only one girl on her own and that's me! And I'm with three boys who don't listen... They don't listen, and I get like really frustrated, it's like {growls}. It's so annoying...like we're doing an experiment, and we're planning the design, and they [boys] were just blowing up the balloon, letting it go out, blowing up the balloon. I was like 'we don't need the balloon, you could put it back now!' And they were like {whines} 'Oh but I wanna use the balloon, I wanna use the balloon' but like, it's not on the design though! And all the boys are sticking up for each other and there's just you like....{trails off}...*
>
> Catt: *Does the teacher get involved?*
>
> Catrin: *Well when we were doing an experiment and I was going {speaks brusquely} 'we don't have any time, all the groups have...done their design and got all their materials, and there's us, haven't even got our design cos no-one's listening!' and then I went and got all the materials, the teacher said 'Is your group OK? Because I saw you get very frustrated!' and I was like 'Yeah, it's just like, they're just not listening very much!'...I did feel a bit like oooh, am I allowed?...I felt bad, but then, they weren't listening, so. I don't like being mean.*

Catrin was caught between needing to regulate the boys' behaviour to achieve academically, and fearing being (seen as) 'mean' by seeking teacher intervention. Her response to this tension was two-fold: attempt to regulate the boys' behaviour by telling them what to do, and take on additional work.

She commented that she no longer enjoyed Science due to this caretaking role, illustrating the effect that this role may have on girls' enjoyment and learning (Charlton et al. 2007).

Even when friendships did not fall along gender lines, participants indicated that gender was key in shaping their initial negotiation of the peer group. Rachel explained that cross-gender friendships were subject to heterosexualised teasing (see also Renold 2005; Renold 2006).

> Rachel: On the field we mix boys and girls but at break it's usually boys with boys and girls with girls…Sometimes people do make fun of you like {sing-song voice} 'oh, this person and this person' and stuff. Sometimes it does stop you being friends.

For some, the position of boyfriend/girlfriend offered a possibility for cross-gender relationships. Megan described a boy enacting behaviours she valued, but positioned him as a potential romantic partner rather than a friend, subjecting the relationship to a set of gendered governing communication.

> Megan: There is this one boy I like…He's funny, and he's in my drama class…I was in his group, and he kind of like, the drama group showed me _who he was_. Like, if he was like sensible, doing work, or if he was messing about…he didn't mess around doing it, he was sensible.
>
> Catt: Is that important?
>
> Megan: No, but just if he was like, bullying or being naughty, I don't really like _naughty naughty_. But we got a B, and I was fine with that…and he likes me. A boy told me. But I'm not to say anything, because you have to wait for the boy!

Participants largely presented romantic relationships as the realm of older students, and/or not relevant to them. The exception was Alice, who reported that such relationships were common in her year group, and that these had taken on new significance since starting secondary school as pupils were now more mature and 'knew about love'. Alice was also the only participant to describe a peer group in which boys and girls were friends with each other. However, her account was contradicted by Becky, who attended the same school and described boys and girls as generally 'nasty' to each other, in contrast to primary school. Different schools have different 'sexual geographies' shaped by class and locality (Mellor 2006), and the account of Alice, who was working-class, indicated that conclusions drawn from accounts of gendered friendship negotiation by middle-class participants could not be applied universally. However, the contrasting accounts of Becky and Alice also highlight the limitations of the small numbers of working-class pupils in the study.

6.4.2. <u>Good boys and bad girls: troubling or reinforcing gendered divisions?</u>

In the rare cases where girls described boys as actual or potential friends, this was presented as non-normative. Becky, who had made friends with a boy at her new school, described him as 'different' due to playing with Becky rather than staying with other boys. Gordon et al. (2000, p.122) explain that homogenising discourses that describe 'boys' or 'girls' in particular ways marginalise those who do not fit these characteristics. Although both the accounts of girls and the self-narratives of boys included those who challenged the view of boys-in-general as naughty or nasty, this did not necessarily challenge dominant views of normative gendered behaviours.

Rhiannon echoed the view of most of the girls, that misbehaviour in secondary school was largely confined to boys. However, she also recounted a shift in gendered behaviour norms and hierarchical gendered divisions since primary school.

> Catt: *Is there anything else that feels different about being in high school?*
>
> Rhiannon: *I feel...the boys in our high school are a lot more respectful... you do get the odd one or two boys that are just generally, they decide that they wanna pick on the girls. But it's not always the case...in some ways the girls are like, the same as the boys? They don't have any gender rule, sort of thing? The boys don't just say hey, we're better than them, like they did before.*

This can be read as indicating a challenge to the common binary view of girl/boy as good/naughty. However, agency was attributed only to boys – they had decided not to 'pick on girls' or assert themselves as superior. Additionally, Rhiannon's elaboration on her view of the 'respectful' boys suggested that this challenge to binary gendered views of behaviour and subjectivity was limited.

> Rhiannon: *The respectful boys are the kind of...they were more like some girls than they were boys, in the way they respect each other...you wouldn't <u>choose</u> to sit next to them. But they're just there, like they're not <u>horrible</u>, they're just not necessarily...the kind of person you would hang out with, you know?*

These boys could be understood as both troubling and reinforcing the girl/boy, good/bad binary, both recognisable and unrecognisable as boys (Youdell 2011). They were understood as exhibiting a girl trait (respectful), yet in describing them as 'like girls', they were marked as distinct from girls. Rhiannon also highlighted that these boys were distinct from girls in that they were not viewed as potential friends.

A similar tension could be seen in rare accounts of 'naughty' girls. As seen in Callum and Alice's accounts (see Section 6.2.3), friends' misbehaviour could present tensions between loyalty to old friends, and needing to detach for reasons of identity or safety. In Megan's discussion of a new friend [D], a similar tension was seen. She described [D], a friend, as 'really naughty…she ditched school during a lesson…she ditched school and she's on report'. Yet elsewhere, Megan commented that 'all my friends are kind of good'. She elaborated her view of [D]'s behaviour, positioning her loyalty to [D] in tension with her fear of contagion:

> Megan: I'm not just gonna ditch her because she's naughty. If she like, went to prison, I might be like I don't wanna be friends with you cos you've like, maybe like hurt someone or taken drugs. Then I wouldn't wanna be friends with her…
>
> Catt: Are there other things that people do that make you not want to be friends with them?
>
> Megan: If they do something stupid, I don't really wanna be their friend, cos they might do something stupid with me.

This fear echoed her earlier concern that the boy she liked might affect her ability to attain academically, and was present throughout her second interview. When asked what she would say to a hypothetical Year Six student, she advised them to 'choose your friends wisely, cos you don't wanna be making silly friends. They might get you into trouble.' Despite the lack of agency claimed in accounts of new friendships, the avoidance of 'silly friends' was presented as necessary.

Further tension arose for Megan in relation to the behaviour of [D] and an old friend, [C], towards [W], a girl with whom Megan recounted an ambivalent relationship in primary school but now described as a friend as they walked to school together (see Section 6.3.4).

> Megan: We're really close friends, me and [C]. But she's like really mean to [W], but I'm friends with her. It's like, I made friends with a girl called [D], who's really mean to [W]. But I'm not gonna say 'because you're mean to her, I can't be friends with you'.
>
> Catt: Were you friends with them before they started being mean?
>
> Megan: Well, I didn't <u>know</u> they would be mean to her. So I was like 'ooooh, buddies!' And then they were mean to [W]. But I'm not gonna like, quit on them, am I? Cos that's just mean.

The drive to not only *be* but *be seen as* a 'good friend', seen in earlier work exploring girls' relationships (McLeod and Yates 2006; MacDonald 2014), was evident. Megan navigated the tension between the position of 'good pupil' (who is not friends with those who are mean) and competing

requirements of the 'good friend' (who does not ditch her friends, but who is also loyal to old friends) by positioning her friends' behaviour as acceptable. She minimised their actions towards [W], echoing the discursive work undertaken by 'victims' to reframe their victimisation as *not* bullying (see Section 6.2.2; also Ringrose 2008; Forsberg 2017). Additionally, she presented [W] as partly deserving and/or responsible for her own victimisation due to her appearance and for failing to follow the unwritten rules of her friendship group (George 2007). Megan's mobilisation of both peer rules and wider societal norms of appropriately feminine appearance reflected a common tendency for bullying to be attributed to some flaw in the pupil being bullied (see Section 6.2.2; also Gordon et al. 2000; Thornberg 2018). Despite working to minimise [W]'s bullying, Megan was careful throughout the interview to distance herself from complicity. She glossed over my question about whether her friends started bullying [W] before or after she was friends with them, a similar abdication of responsibility to that seen in Lam and Liu's (2007) exploration of the 'path to bullying'. Through these discursive strategies, she was able to find space for negotiating friendships with [D] and [C] by telling them as not really 'bad'.

This section has explored the ways pupils drew on, reproduced and contested gendered discourses of the professional and social pupil and the good friend. It is clear from this discussion that 'doing friendship' cannot be separated from 'doing gender' (see also Smart et al. 2012; Gangneux 2018). The existence of individual pupils who challenged gendered norms of behaviour was acknowledged, but accounts of such pupils suggested that they were negotiated in ways that ultimately reinforced gendered behaviours and dispositions as normal. This will be explored further in Chapter Seven.

Although this chapter has primarily focused on negotiating the social space of school, this interacted with participants' navigation of other aspects that featured in their imaginings of the new school, in particular the formal and informal regulation of time, space and movement. Drawing on an argument made by Lucey and Reay (2000) that spaces of subjectivity are intertwined with physical space, this chapter now explores the connections between the critical moments of finding one's place in the physical school and finding one's place socially.

6.5. Finding your place: time, space, regulation and peer relations

6.5.1. Self-management and the physical school: responsibility, regulation and surveillance

'What are young people learning as they adjust themselves to the school day - about themselves, about their relationships with classmates, and about the institution of school?' (Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016, p.109)

Following the move, learning to navigate the physical school remained central to young people's narratives. The physical school is understood here as both the spaces themselves, and the regulation of time, movement and bodies in relation to these spaces (Gordon and Lahelma 1996; Gordon et al. 2000). Examining participants' negotiation of the timetable and playground illustrates how this initial navigation involved learning to negotiate official and informal regulatory systems.

By their second interviews, getting lost had become a rite of passage, a necessary (albeit still 'scary') step towards becoming a Year Seven pupil that participants had now completed. Those moving to unfamiliar new schools recounted quickly learning both how to locate rooms, and the self-management required to arrive at lessons on time. This was illustrated in their discussion of the timetable and planner[11], which they positioned as central to navigating the school's regulation of time, space and behaviour.

The timetable featured prominently in the students' second interviews. During these interviews, I invited them to complete a timeline of their school day, with the option of using words provided by me, and using emotion stickers to indicate how they felt at different times of the day. As illustrated in Figure 15, this produced results that were visually similar. Further similarity was seen in the dominant presence of the timetable. Participants showed me their timetables and the ways they had adapted these to record information such as favoured or disliked lessons, checked their timetables to ensure their timelines were accurate, and reproduced the details of their timetable on their timelines.

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[11] All schools had some sort of 'planner', a book containing a combination of a diary, timetable, map, school rules and space for recording homework tasks.
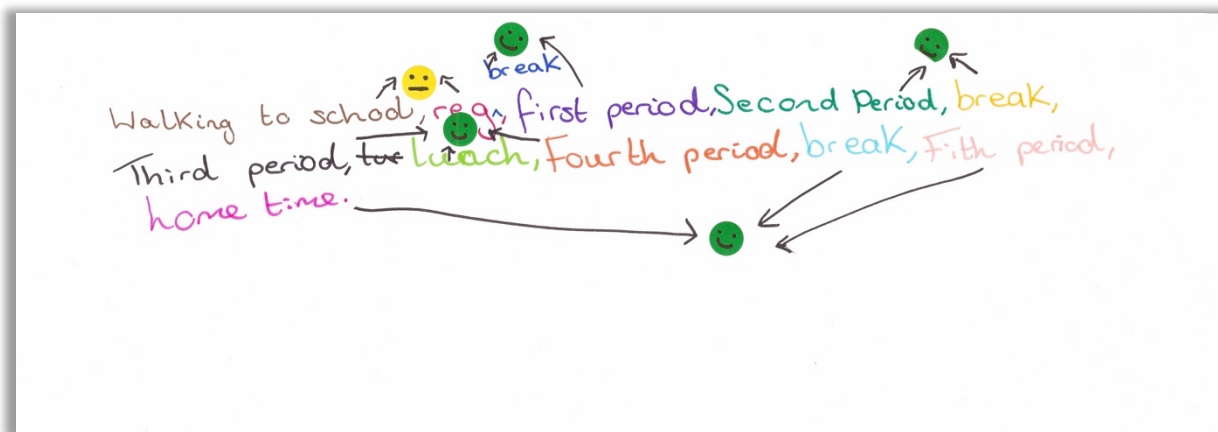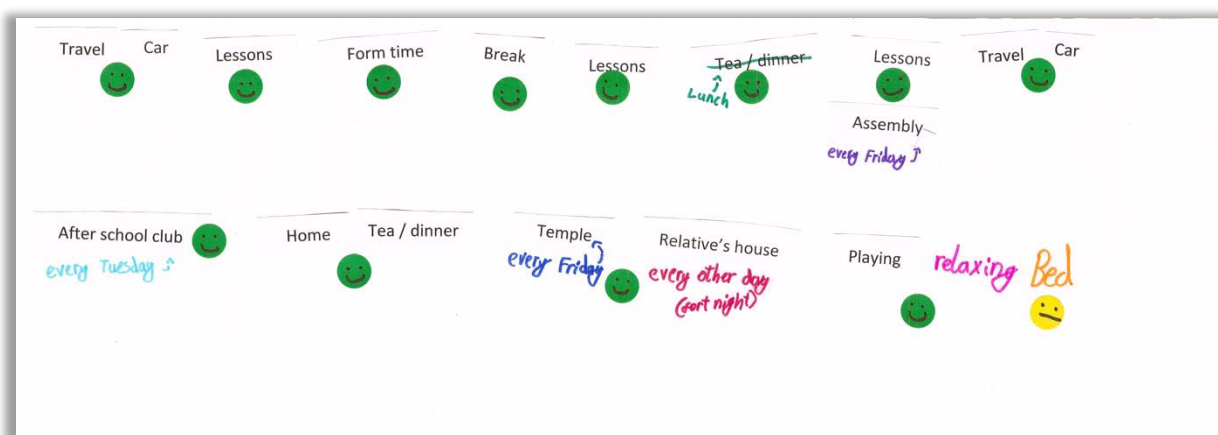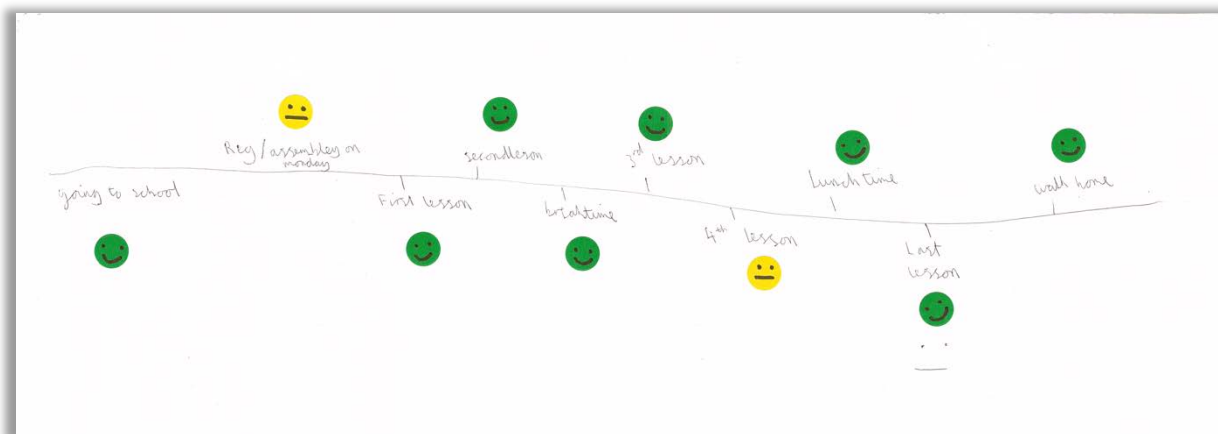
Figure 14: Timelines produced by David, Shreya and Rachel

The production of these timelines was in part shaped by the nature of the activity – 'timeline' invokes linear, regular movement through time (Bagnoli 2009; Worth 2009; Sheridan et al. 2011). The provision of prompt words including times and places may also have contributed to participants' production of timelines that mirrored their school timetables. However, similarity in creative outputs can also give valuable information about the visual and discursive repertoires available (Bagnoli

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2009); in this case, an indication of the centrality of the timetable in pupils' navigation of the new school. Many referred to their timetables before the task was introduced. Participants explained that timetables and planners were key tools for learning to navigate the new regulation of time, space, and self-management, within school and for homework. It was presented as providing valuable knowledge of the requirements of the professional pupil, and structure and predictability in the face of significant uncertainty (Jackson and Warin 2000).

> Megan: *It's different because I mostly know what classes I have next, and I know that I have six lessons a day, and I know that I have to leave my house at a certain time. In primary, it'd be fine if I got up at eight o clock. But now, if I get up at eight o clock I know I am going to be late for school!*
>
> ---
>
> Cerys: *I prefer it now. It's more organised cos we have a timetable…[On the first day] I did feel scared. But when I got to school… I wasn't really scared of anything else. Cos I had a map and I knew what room I was going to and I could look for the room on my map.*
>
> ---
>
> Ayesha: *Now I know where I'm going cos I've been there for a few weeks…On our timetable [when we started school] we had to find the room, and we had to run around the place because we didn't know where we were going! And we only get three minutes to find where we're going.*

The timetable is a technology of regulation, defining where, when and with whom students should be, and correct and incorrect movement of pupils within the school (Youdell 2011). In the tendency to recreate their timetables in the creative task, it was clear that the timetable, and its associated 'routinisation of everyday life' (Lahelma and Gordon 1997), had by this point become the default shorthand for conceptualising the school day.

Participants emphasised that they had quickly learnt how to interpret and follow their timetables, as part of the process of becoming successfully transitioned Year Seven students. Sara, Cerys and Alice included movement between classes on the timelines they produced, emphasising the importance of these in-between times, which often involved movement through 'un-owned' spaces (Astor et al.

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1999; Jamal et al. 2013). Mapping out routes through the school involved navigating official and unofficial regulation of movement, learning which rules to follow and which could be resisted:

> *Megan:*   *When I was actually there [at school] it felt scary and big. Especially....you have different rooms, like…I had 1.3 , which is first floor, and I was like 'ahhhh what is this?', but then you come across a one-way corridor, so you can only go this way...That's bad, because me and my friend [E] we have this different route to our Maths class, but we have two Maths classes. So we have a route to 1.3 but we had to go to 2.1. We were like 'let's go the other way!' but we had to go the <u>other</u> way!*

> *----*

> *Catt:*   *You said there were separate boys' and girls' staircases?*
> *Cerys:*   *That's what they're called. It is because girls and boys use them. But some girls do go up the boys' stairs. I haven't seen any boys on the girls' stairs. I don't really know if you're allowed...I guess you just notice that the boys are separated from the girls, because when you walk into the block you see boys going one way and girls going the other way. So you learn quite quickly. But I didn't get told by a teacher or anything.*

Cerys's account also indicated that the everyday gendering practices of the school could extend to the physical school. These gender-specific staircases were mentioned without remark, similarly to the separation of boys and girls for PE, indicating that such gendered division was normalised. Learning how to negotiate the physical school and its time-space paths was hence gendered, with students learning which rules apply to them as boys/girls in particular spaces (Lahelma and Gordon 1997). Through such regulation, gender and its effects on pupils' bodies are both reproduced and naturalised (Niemi 2005; Paechter 2006).

Similar to the timetable, the 'planner' was cited as key in navigating new expected modes of self-management, particularly in relation to homework and equipment:

> *Ann:*   *We have this planner, so for our homework, we write it down so we don't forget it, we gotta write it in straightaway and when it's due, and tick it off when it's done….Also in the planner we've got the notes area, so I put notes and things. Things I need to remember, like PE what I need to do…I mostly write it down to remember and I check it every day.*

Learning how to use the planner was presented by participants as necessary in becoming a professional secondary school pupil, and a sign of their competence. The planner – which was a tool of self-management but also monitored by parents and teachers – was situated within systems of normalised regulation and (self-)surveillance, through which teachers', parents' and pupils' own gazes were externalised and extended. Participants recounted personalised records of 'merits' and sanctions, and digital systems allowing them to buy food and drink at school using a fob or thumbprint. These digital records, which in some cases could be viewed by parents, were described as initially exciting but had quickly become normalised, with pupils apparently willing to internalise and adhere to their school's systems of surveillance and quantification (Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016). Participants were similarly familiar with sometimes complicated systems of warnings and punishments, many of which ended in 'isolation' or 'exclusion'[2]. The role of different gazes and technologies of regulation in the construction of 'bad' or 'naughty' pupils will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

6.5.2. Time-space paths, regulation and doing friendship

Section 6.3.3. highlighted the role of the form group and shared lessons in developing friendships. Megan explained that her friendship with [E] developed partly through the shared experience of navigating the new physical space of the school. Whereas David and Shreya drew on primary school friendships to explore the new school, Megan described this co-navigation of the physical school as way of doing friendship. Her account also demonstrated the tension between peer and school norms in learning to navigate the new space:

> Megan: On the first day they were like 'The teachers will take you to lunch and you'll have to walk back with your teacher' but everyone was like {scornful} 'No, I wanna just go back on my own'. And we did that on the second day, we did the same. We didn't wait for them.

She and other pupils took the opportunity to perform the identity of autonomous and self-managing Year Seven student while rejecting the support offered by the official school, possibly negotiating peer norms that associate maturity with going against teachers' wishes (Winther-Lindqvist 2012).

For Ayesha, whose difficulties with navigating the new peer space were discussed in Section 6.2.2, managing the timetable was connected with uncertainty around friendships. She envisaged a scenario later in the year where a change in timetable would mean 'los[ing] my friends', both physically and

relationally. As seen in other cases, here the possibility of friendships ending was attributed in part to the physical school.

> Ayesha: …the things I am worried about what's gonna happen, is I'm gonna lose my friends. Cos -they'll just walk away again. And the other thing is, trying to find a new classroom, because my timetable'll probably change….then, if I'm on the third floor, and I don't know I'm on the third floor, I'll be like 'where am I?' and I'll have to look on the board that says where the things are. Or I'll have to ask someone. And I normally don't ask anyone!

Ayesha's concern with the possibility of having to 'ask someone', and assertion that she would not normally do this, echoed Megan's account of students wanting to find their classrooms independently rather than accept support from teachers. Whereas imaginings of older students in their initial interviews were often benevolent or supportive, here participants' emphasis was on negotiating the school independently.

For Rhiannon, learning how to navigate the timetable was recalled as a source of identification with some new peers, and distancing from others. In her account of the first day, she separated peers into those with whom she identified, and 'them', who she presented as responsible for both their own failure to navigate the new space correctly, and negative experiences ranging from the class receiving 'a lecture' to 'some guy punch[ing] someone in the face'.

> Rhiannon: {reading from transition diary} "We went to registration. Half of us got lost. The other half, the smart half, decided to ask someone where room 45 was. We got there on time, while some idiots were in the drama studio." I drew like a million lightyears, for how far away they were from us, in the drama studio. {continues reading} "They were lost, very lost. We took the opportunity to laugh our socks off. Twenty-five minutes later, 'Miss, we got lost'. Lol". {laughs} It was kind of obvious that they were lost, because when we were going in the right direction, they were heading towards the science block, which is right next to the drama studio…. {reads aloud from diary} "This was only registration. We had a lecture about seeds and stuff, which was all about starting a new leaf. Good job, them"
>
> Catt: Good job who?
>
> Rhiannon: You know the people who got lost? I called them 'them'. Because…I could. {reading} "And we now had break….Some guy punched someone in the face. Great job, them. Did you not hear the lecture?"

In contrast to the tendency for girls (particularly middle-class girls) in this study and other work to position themselves as 'nice' and 'helpful' (Kehily et al. 2002; Hempel-Jorgensen 2009; Paechter and Clark 2016), Rhiannon explained that she had laughed at the other pupils rather than telling them the way. This account, which came from the diary she had written away from potentially intrusive others (Mannay 2013), was a rare moment of slippage of her identity as someone who followed the rules, helped others, and worked hard. Her scorn towards 'them' emphasised her identification with the 'smart' half and distancing from the others (Snow and Anderson 1987).

The accounts of Rhiannon and Megan demonstrated that learning to navigate the physical school was inseparable from both developing and drawing on individual friendships, and wider work to categorise and (dis)identify with peers, and become a particular type of Year Seven student. Their accounts also highlighted both harmony and tension between peer and school norms and regulatory systems (Noyes 2006). A connection between knowing how to navigate the physical school and maintaining or developing friendships was also highlighted by other participants. Catrin explained that part of her drive to make new friends came from not being able to find old friends at breaktime, whereas Ann had focused her efforts on maintaining a relationship with her primary school friend [M], despite being in different forms and 'sides' of the school. The role of breaktimes in friendship negotiation, particularly for those who did not share lessons, will be explored in the following section.

6.5.3.   'It's mostly sitting and talking': regulation of breaktimes and moving away from play

Secondary transition brings a shift away from the lengthier but highly supervised breaktimes of primary school (Thomson 2005; Baines and Blatchford 2019), with pupils commonly able to choose their own activities and move relatively freely (Astor et al. 1999). Breaktimes provide space for students to negotiate identity and status, with peer groupings during these times key to pupils' establishment and negotiation of normality, sameness, difference and (dis-)identification (Valentine 2000, p.261). This is particularly salient when starting a new school due to the need to negotiate new peer hierarchies, and their gendered, classed and school-specific peer rules and value systems.

Breaktimes were described by Rachel as providing both space and time for undertaking friendship work – active and sometimes strategic negotiation of friendship (Rossetti 2011). This contrasted with the accounts of those who attended Parkview, who reported stricter regulation of their time and behaviour.

> *Megan:*   *[At break and lunch] all you do really is sit. Because it's not like in primary where you can go around and play tag...The break seems shorter, cos...if you wanna get a piece of toast you have to queue. And you have to eat your food sitting down. And you don't have hula hoops and skipping ropes, so.*

> *Catt:*   *You talked before about people changing friends in Year Six, does that happen in Year Seven?*
>
> *Megan:*   *No, cos you don't have playtime really. [Before] we had a whole hour, and now we only have twenty five minutes. So it would be hard to change friends in only twenty five minutes!*

When starting primary (Danby et al. 2012) and junior school (Blatchford 1999), playing games during breaks is central to friendship formation. However, my participants rarely described games as a means of making new friends. Playing was presented by girls as non-normative, with Ann and Sara attributing a shift away from play, and towards sitting and talking, to the new school's official regulation of time and space. Sara also associated this change in activities with growing older, relegating play to a childhood activity.

> *Ann:*   *At lunch and break it's mostly sitting and talking, we don't really run around and play... we're not allowed to play cos there's no teacher outside.*

> *Sara:*   *When we're outside we usually talk... People don't really play, they just hang around. The boys sometimes play a bit of tag but not very much... I used to play when I was younger, tag and hopscotch. I stopped in Year Six because...I just decided to stop. It was just a few of us, mainly girls, who stopped. I don't know why.*

Catrin and Becky recounted a similar change, attributing this to physical limitations of the new school space. Becky spoke wistfully of wanting 'skipping ropes and all that' as they had in primary school. She described struggling to find space to play, due in part to boys monopolising the playground, which was also described by others (see also Skelton 2001; Karsten 2003; Thomson 2005). The gendered division of playground activities and space 'reflects power differences and struggles, and often psychological or physical enforcement' (Francis 2005, p.13). In particular, girls' lack of

engagement in active play cannot be separated from their exclusion from football, which is frequently positioned within schools as the exclusive domain of boys (Clark and Paechter 2007).

These accounts emphasised the restrictions of the physical school on participants' behaviour. However, in distancing themselves from play, girls also recast primary school behaviours as childish, replaced by the 'anti-activities' of sitting and talking (Winther-Lindqvist 2012). This can be viewed as an adoption of new ways of doing femininity, part of the 'forward movement' of taking up the identity of secondary school girl (Gulbrandsen 2003). Children's perception of choice in play is inseparable from the social and spatial context in which it is situated (King and Howard 2014). The physical school includes the rules by which space is governed, including peer-defined rules; 'more than a context; it [the physical school] is an aspect in the shaping of these practices and processes producing differentiation' (Gordon and Lahelma 1996, p.303). The physical environment of the school is not simply a set of arenas in which gendered and gendering relationships and identities are negotiated; rather, both the physical environment and its norms and regulation actively shape these (Paechter and Clark 2007). The two dominant narratives in my participants' accounts – behaviour changing due to changes in the physical school and its official regulation, or changing as part of their work to perform the identity of secondary school pupil – can therefore be understood as interwoven rather than competing.

Additionally, the association of play with primary school, and hence immaturity, may be enacted through schools' discursive work. Rachel explained that the transition to secondary school brought its own language, including the renaming of 'playtime', which was policed by both teachers and other students.

> Rachel: *I feel we're growing up, in high school, cos like the bells and stuff....and I don't call it playtime, I call it Reg now. I heard this one girl call it playtime... and I was like 'No, it's Reg'. You don't call it playtime anymore, the teachers say not to call it playtime, in high school we don't play tag or anything...In the main playground it's quite busy, so some people do play tag but in the field.*

Despite initially presenting this change in language as reflecting a change in practice, her account indicated that the renaming of playtime was doing discursive work – acting as a performative utterance (Butler 1993) changing how breaktime was both viewed and enacted, rather than describing pre-existing reality. In both reproducing and policing the renaming of playtime, pupils participate in constructing this time as one in which play is absent, or at least not recognised. Rachel also associated this change in language, along with other differences between primary and secondary school, with

growing up and feeling more mature. This reflected the tendency in pupils' initial interviews to cite aspects of secondary school as evidence of maturity simply through their difference from primary school.

The relationship between girls' change in play practices and their work to become (mature) secondary school pupils was explored further in the narratives of Rhiannon and Ayesha, who presented sitting and talking as part of performing gender appropriately in the new school. Rhiannon reported that she and her friends no longer played - which she conflated with 'messing around' – as their new position as 'lowest of the low' in the school hierarchy exerted heightened pressure to behave appropriately. Rhiannon presented a delicate balance of cultivating an identity as 'quiet', which would allow her to develop a good reputation with teachers and not be 'judge[d]' by 'other people'– while at the same time trying not being ostracised by other pupils for being 'bone dry'. Ayesha, similarly, contrasted her 'silly' primary school self with a new identity as sensible and quiet.

> Catt: *Do you think you might change more over Year Seven?*
> Ayesha: *I think I'll just get used to like, being in high school. And then just like, stop being…silly. Cos I used to be really silly, in primary. But now because I don't really have time to play with my friends, or like talk to them.*

Ayesha attributed her change in behaviour to changing peer norms, and the restrictions of the new uniform ('if I did run around my shoes would fall off'), which is identified elsewhere as a factor limiting girls' active play, enacting regulation through physical restriction and through notions of modesty and acceptably feminine appearance (Happel 2013). Ayesha relegated play to 'silly boys', framing this as both immature and unfeminine. This was echoed by Shreya, who explained that during lunchtime she and her friends would 'girl gossip'. Ayesha's account also made clear that despite the shift in maturity signified by the transition, this involved active work and was in process rather than complete. In addition to presenting being-and-becoming less 'silly' as still in process, Ayesha noted that she felt 'I am my old self' as she had not yet 'grown into a high school kinda body kinda thing'. This can be read as an effort to maintain a coherent self-narrative at a time when much was in flux (Jackson and Warin 2000; Warin and Muldoon 2009).

Others indicated in these second interviews a renewed tension between the desire to be recognised as secondary school students, and the detachment that this required from primary school and its practices. An ambivalence towards maturity was seen most clearly for Becky, who recounted that she still played games during breaktimes, and Cerys, who gave no indication of being inclined to stop being 'wild':

> Cerys: *{Laughing}* [V] was trampling on [M] and then flattened my bag into the mud, so then me and [V] turned into tigers and started jumping and going crazy…and [M] put her feet up on the bench but she put them on my lap instead! I got a big mud stain on my skirt from her feet…At break we do loads of screaming and jumping around…shouting and jumping on top of each other and going wild.

Pupils who are unequivocally outside the 'popular' group, as was the case with Becky and Cerys, may be less restricted by peer norms than those who are working to maintain or access high status (Francis 2009; Paechter and Clark 2010), and may find space for 'resistive' or non-normative identities through friendships (Bunnell et al. 2012). However, although Cerys and Becky positioned themselves outside norms of appropriate behaviour of being quiet and sedentary, these were still acknowledged as normative. Additionally, although Cerys rejected the mobile phone, a key signifier of maturity in the accounts of others in the study (see also Ling 2007; Blair and Fletcher 2011) she demonstrated an awareness that some of her tastes from primary school were not appropriate for secondary school, and described a shift in her behaviour in line with new norms.

> Cerys: *I'm kinda less crazy. I dunno why. Cos when you get to high school people don't…go crazy? My sort of crazy. Liking anteaters and Jaffa cakes…I don't really know any more.*

However, Alice's narrative cautions against concluding that the secondary transition necessarily brings about a change in play. She described breaks as times for sitting and talking, but explained that this had already been the case in primary school. This was in line with her overall narrative that everything about secondary school was the same as primary, and that moving to secondary school was not a significant event. As discussed in Chapter Five, this view of the transition as largely insignificant was common in the accounts of working-class children imagining the move.

6.5.4. <u>Navigating the playground space: finding your place</u>

Negotiating breaktimes involved making sense of official regulation of time and space, as well as new systems for accessing food. The children's accounts of this were similar to those of learning to follow the timetable; official regulations were learnt, followed or resisted, and were navigated with old and/or new friends:

> Shreya: *We used to go [to the canteen], and there used to be really long queues…So now me and my friends do, we go outside first, and then we come back in when the queue is*

> *shorter, so we don't have to wait as long! {Laughs} So we can just play outside, then when it's like half past…we come back in. So we get our food straight away and then we've got just the right amount of time as well!*

Additionally, learning to navigate the physical school during breaktimes included the informal student-defined geography of the playground, a territorialised space where many were reminded of their low status (Valentine 2000). In the busy and unfamiliar new school, finding 'your' place to go with friends, away from others, was presented a critical moment, a vital step in feeling safe and belonging.

> Shreya: *I like going to that place when we come out of the canteen and then we go round, cos there's a little sitting area there. It's like, a giant hill, and then there's like, benches that are attached, so you wouldn't be able to fall… it's like a little mountain, and there's steps and you can sit on the steps… [I like it] Because there's always not many people there. And we're always there, so there's only like, us. We can just like, talk, and there's always lots of space for us to sit. And there's always flowers there so we can make daisy chains and that.*

For Cerys, learning to navigate the physical space of the school promoted a sense of safety and belonging. Her enthusiastic account of developing new friendships was situated within the spaces they inhabited during breaktimes, explaining that 'we made friends because we always sit in the same place'. However, finding one's place in the playground involved also navigating peers and older students. For Cerys, older students entering her friends' 'secret place' illustrated the fragility of the place she and her friends had designated as 'ours'.

> Cerys: *At lunch time there were these people and they were eating their lunch at the corner bench, which is like our secret place – not a secret, but no one goes there. So when the other people were there, they weren't Year Sevens, we didn't want to go to them and say they were hogging the bench so we went somewhere else.*

Similar accounts were given by participants attending different schools. Becky reported that other students left her and her friends feeling they did not have space to spend their breaks. The common practice of Year Seven students starting school a day early gave the new cohort a clear contrast between having the school space to themselves and having to negotiate older students.

> Becky: *[On the first day] we can hang around and play. But then when the Year Elevens and all that came, it started being packed. Me and my friends goes in a corner, by the*

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wall…but there's the boys push all the girls off the wall. When we're eating. They saying they're playing around, but the girls doesn't like it.

Although playground spaces are often dominated by boys, as recounted here (see also Karsten 2003; Francis 2005), boys positioned as low status may be physically marginalised and left to the 'borderland' of the playground (Newman et al. 2006). Callum, whose marginalisation was discussed in Section 6.2.3, recounted such an incident:

Callum: *There are these kids [in our year], and…there's this kid that always steals our goals? We're playing, on the astro, we were playing, and they come over and said 'we're playing' even though they got their own ball, and then we move, and then they go and start playing with their ball, so we have to move.*

Notably, Callum sought teacher intervention ('we told on them'). This clashes with peer norms of not 'grassing' (Oliver and Candappa 2007), and may have put him at risk of further marginalisation. Ayesha's negotiation of breaktimes was also shaped by her experience of bullying. In the absence of effective resolution by the official school, she reported spending breaktimes alone, which may be the only viable tactic for pupils who cannot 'escap[e] the environment in which bullying occurs' (Collins and Coleman 2008, p.287).

Finding one's place in the physical school involved navigating older pupils as well as new peers. As anticipated, older pupils were a source of knowledge and of regulatory power, ensuring the new Year Sevens knew the unofficial rules of the school and their place at the bottom of the status hierarchy. Rhiannon explained that older students would demonstrate their power over the new Year Seven students both physically and through their knowledge about the physical school.

Rhiannon: *We didn't wanna ask any of the older people [for directions], because we were just too nervous..we were afraid that they'd just go 'er….No?', you know? …I brought my hockey stick in.…and they'd often…they'd shove you? When I bring my cello for orchestra…they'd start my way but then when they went through a door… they'd make sure it closed extra hard. Just so that it closed faster therefore you had to get in faster, otherwise it's gonna slam on your…delicate object. Because I think they just think oh it's only – it's mainly Year Eights, cos they're like, hey we're not in Year Seven anymore, we can be like, top cat, you know, we're the best!*

New Year Sevens were working to perform secondary school maturity but also being reminded of their low status within the school. Older pupils' power and status was reinforced by positioning

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newcomers as vulnerable, small, 'cute', and immature; both Megan and Ann described older students ensuring they knew their place as 'little fish' (Megan). Megan recounted being reminded by older students of the need to wear the uniform correctly to fit in, but also to be identifiable as a Year Seven. She therefore wanted to avoid being seen as ambiguously aged or wearing the 'wrong' uniform by older pupils. As noted in the discussion of bullying, new pupils must negotiate a delicate balance of sameness and difference; 'following the crowd' is not valued, yet to be too different is risky (Gordon et al. 2000; Valentine 2000).

Participants positioned regulation by older students as part of being-and-becoming a Year Seven pupil. However, as seen in Rhiannon's description of the Year Eight students, emphasising their newfound status, there was an understanding that the position of youngest, smallest, and lowest status was temporary.

> Cerys: By the end of Year Seven, the new Year Sevens on their induction day will come to the school, and you'll start to feel like you're not going to be the youngest in the school. I don't mind being the youngest, but the Year Eights and Nines look down on us...They look down on us so we have to look up at them...When you're in Year Seven the first couple of weeks, you're kind of hated by the Year Eights and Nines, they're laughing at us, saying 'Oh, look at the Year Sevens, they think they're really good'.

The movement from 'listener' to 'teller' of secondary school myths as a rite of passage in becoming a secondary school pupil is well documented (Delamont 1991; Mellor and Delamont 2011). Here, pupils were aware that others would soon move in to take their place as youngest and smallest.

Away from the playground, the library provided an unofficial space for Year Seven students, often the only space inside they school they were allowed to inhabit during breaks, and a space away from the gaze of older pupils. However, Dylan explained that in his school, the library was not highly valued, due perhaps to its regulation and the presence of staff, and that his friends' decision to use this space was shaped partly by their exclusion from football:

> Dylan: A lot of the older kids, a lot of the older boys do football. But because we're in Year Seven, there's no point cos all the Year Tens and that are playing football, and there's no point in playing with them because you just wouldn't touch the ball at all. I don't think they'd even let you, some just prefer to do it with their own year.

Children's initial navigation of playgrounds can be viewed as analogous to the negotiation of a big city by 'constantly trying to reduce the complexities of living in a world of strangers' (Karsten 2003, p.458), through working to maximise the known-ness of the city and creating 'home territories'. Importantly, 'when a person's knowledge about the social, cultural and physical characteristics of a public domain increases in details and intimacy, [their] status transforms from that of 'just a visitor' into that of a 'resident'. Although Karsten examined public playgrounds rather than those attached to institutions, this process of moving from 'visitor' to 'resident' seemed to be mirrored in the ways that my participants moved through different roles and relationships to the physical school in these first few weeks of term. Some had experienced breaktimes and the playground on induction days, but their accounts of working out where to situate themselves then indicated that they remained visitors, and in some cases these events made them feel more rather than less out of place. Only once participants had started at the school, were they able to find their place, both physically and socially.

'Resident' status can equally be applied to the smaller spaces within the playground that become territories (Valentine 2000). When pupils enter a new school, they are navigating all of its different physical spaces, large and small. An important aspect of becoming a resident, according to Lofland (Lofland 1985, p.124, cited in Karsten 2003), is the work and time involved in making a space 'theirs', and the 'assert[ion of] proprietary rights over their setting, similar to the stance an individual might have towards their own home' (see also Thomson 2005). The library, although it provided a space away from older students, could not fully belong to the Year Sevens as this was regulated by the official school rather than pupils, therefore did not fully address their need for somewhere to be 'resident'.

6.6.   **Conclusions**

Participants' narratives of friendship development in the initial weeks of school suggested that although they described friendships happening 'naturally', factors within and beyond their control shaped the negotiation of friendships and the wider peer group. Accounts of friendship formation, maintenance, and rupture (Weller 2007) had a strong focus on the functional aspects of friendship, particularly finding others with whom to navigate the physical and official school. However, decisions about friendships were also 'exploratory' (Blatchford 1999) and based on the space offered for negotiation or performing particular identities. Friendship negotiation is inseparable from identity negotiation, whether or not this is undertaken consciously (Lawler 2008). The transition brings a focus on identity and status (Day 1996; Pratt and George 2005) and participants were actively 'sussing out' and making sense of their peers through categorising, inclusion/exclusion, and

(dis)identification, working out who was a potential friend, and who was different, risky, and/or should be avoided (Gordon et al. 2000; Jackson and Warin 2000; Lawler 2008). The relationship between working to be a particular kind of gendered professional pupil, making sense of the new peer group, and negotiating friendships, was particularly clear in participants' accounts of (dis)identification and boundary-work in relation to students they saw as 'bad' or 'bullies'.

Negotiating the physical school and formal regulatory systems interacted with the social. Doing friendship and negotiating space and activities during breaktimes were shaped by systems of official and informal regulation, which drew on and reproduced gendered discourses of maturity defining (in)appropriate or valued behaviours. This negotiation of breaktimes was associated with the take-up of particular identities, and ways of being known as a particular sort of Year Seven pupil. Additionally, the relationship between social and physical space was key to navigating leisure time within school. Pupils endeavoured to identify the places in which they could become 'resident', which involved negotiating the territorialisation of the school by other students. Consequently, finding one's place in the playground involved learning (or learning to manage) one's place socially.

Although friendships generally formed quickly, many participants were still both developing close friendships and learning to navigate the wider social order of the school. Participants continued to be concerned about both 'losing' friends and navigating where they fitted into the physical school during the largely peer-regulated breaktimes. Ethnographic explorations of young people's friendships argue that although friendships may stabilise over time, they remain contingent and unfixed, and involve ongoing negotiation and extensive work (George 2007; Winther-Lindqvist 2012; MacDonald 2016). Participants' continued negotiation of friendships later in the school year are considered in the following chapter.

Chapter Seven: Being a Professional and Social Pupil

7.1.   Introduction

The third interviews took place halfway through the academic year. Previous interviews presented accounts of flux, change and uncertainty, and tension between detachment from primary school and childhood. In contrast, participants now largely presented themselves as secure in their position as secondary school pupils, and as having found a place in their new school, even if this place was not one that they would have chosen.

7.2.   Defining the good transition

Dylan: *I wanna get towards my target levels, and make sure I'm getting more As for effort.*

The third interviews aimed to explore participants' relationships, following the focus on social and relational aspects of the transition in previous interviews. However, the institutional world of the school loomed large in participants narratives. I posed the question 'If you think ahead to the end of Year Seven, what would mean that the year had gone well?'.

David: *I'll look at my levels from all the assessed pieces of work I'm doing, and if I'm overachieving my minimum Year 7 target, then I'll be happy*

—

Megan: *That I got good grades. Hopefully.*

The academic demands of secondary school were a concern in initial interviews for both children and parents, yet they featured little in the second set of interviews. In the third interviews, they were a primary focus, along with a broader emphasis on institutional aspects of school and ('appropriate') behaviour.

Pupils also maintained their emphasis on the importance of the social in defining the good transition. Becky's assessment of a successful year was simply 'to stay with my friends', whereas Ann explained that a good transition meant 'it stays how it is, and all the good stuff stays how it is, and nothing bad comes in my way…friends that are just, turning mean, or…want to…get rid of me, something like that?'.

Successfully becoming a Year Seven pupil thus comprised being recognised as successfully negotiating academic, organisational and/or social changes. Different participants focused on different aspects, but made clear that they were always negotiating both the institutional and peer-led worlds of school.

Participants' social priorities were also varied. As explored in Chapters Five and Six, pupils' initial hopes included making new friends, making the 'right' friends, having lots of friends, maintaining existing friendships, fitting in, and not being bullied. The peer group and older pupils were presented as regulatory, underpinned by the implicit threat of being viewed as not-normal. By the third interviews, friendships and peer relationships were more established, and many participants reported feeling more secure in their secondary school friendships. However, friendships and peer relationships continued to be a concern. Participants also indicated that being-and-becoming a professional pupil was a social process. Negotiating the peer group, friendships and relationships continued to interact with the requirements and norms of the new school in both supportive and challenging ways. For example, Shreya's discussion of the good transition drew on both academic and social aspects of school:

> Catt: *When you get to the end of this year, how will you know if it's gone well?*
>
> Shreya: *My behaviour. My learning. My levels….I want….good levels. I want…to be a good friend. And…I don't want to be a bad person. And if I haven't been rude to anyone, or backchatting about anyone. Or…I haven't been rude to someone in front of someone.*
>
> Catt: *Why's that important?*
>
> Shreya: *Because. If you're not a good person then… people won't like you.*

Tellingly, Shreya connected actions (behaviour, learning, not being rude), academic attainment (good levels), and particular sorts of subjectivity (being a good friend, and not being a 'bad person'). For her, success was understood as being a professional pupil, who achieves academically and behaves in particular ways, but also a good friend.

7.3. Good transition as academic success

7.3.1. Formal and informal systems of evaluation and assessment: knowing your potential

Rachel: *I'd say I'm doing quite well. Like I wouldn't say I'm doing bad. Yeah, I'm doing good.*

Catt: *How do you know that?*

Rachel: *It's just like how hard I try, and how good my grades are. That stuff. I've just got like, like fours and sevens...I think it's like in levels, so if you get it in order it's like A and like B, but now we have like four plus and four minus and like that. But like, the highest I got is, I got a six plus in art, I think...*

Catt: *So if I said, how are you doing in English or in another subject, how would you know?*

Rachel: *Well I reckon I'm doing quite good, cos I've had quite good levels.*

Rachel was typical in her knowledge of systems of assessments, grades, levels, and targets. Participants were familiar with these complicated systems, what counted as success, and where they were placed in these systems. Most presented themselves as 'doing well', according to their grades, levels, or 'targets'. Evaluations of how they were managing in lessons, and how hard they were working, were also drawn on, as were the separate 'effort grades' provided in some schools. However, these were secondary to the school's assessment of attainment or 'ability'. Levels were presented as defining who, how or what a student is.

Catt: *What are levels?*

Shreya: *How well I do. In learning. So I think in our school, say in RE I got a 4C, then....4C means...you're not working at a solid, you're not a solid 4, but you're just working, and if you keep working, you're going to be a 4. A 4B means you're a solid 4, and then a 4A means...that you're not, like you're doing above your level, but you're not actually a level five...it's part of my learning. Cos after we do an assessment we get told our level straight away. I think we have three every year, or one every term, or something like that. For all our lessons.*

As seen in Livingstone and Sefton-Green's ethnographic account of a class of Year Nine students in England (Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016), pupils in my study seemed to accept the 'quantification of their learning' and to have quickly become familiar with complicated systems of

evaluating students. Dylan gave a detailed account of his school's system of assessing students and providing individualised 'targets', which were set automatically at two above a pupil's current grade. For David and Dylan, doing well (enough) was understood in terms of individualised targets. This could be understood as 'fulfilling potential'. This may be experienced as an alternative discourse of success to one of 'excellence' as defined by reaching a universal benchmark, which will not be accessible to all students and the pursuit of which may lead to 'educational triage' through which resources are disproportionately concentrated towards pupils for whom such a benchmark is within reach (Gillborn and Youdell 2000; Youdell 2004). However, the individualised understanding of success as fulfilling potential was highly regulatory. Fulfilling potential involves knowing your potential, working to realise it, and knowing your current attainment. Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016, p.128) argue that such systems may 'prioritis[e] external markers of progression over any intrinsic value of learning for its own sake'. This was reflected by David and Dylan, whose hopes for the year were framed purely in relation to 'targets'.

Others also drew on and reproduced notions of individual 'potential' or 'ability' as inherent, relatively fixed and measurable, and as something that should be known. This was seen in schools with setting or streaming, underpinned by an acceptance that pupils had naturally different abilities that could be accurately evaluated by the school. Additionally, it is notable that of the 14 children interviewed at this stage, it was the two white middle-class boys who had most clearly taken on views of success as fulfilling potential. The importance of their children 'fulfilling their potential' was a central concern of the middle-class parents in their initial interviews, and the belief in their children's inherent ability and the importance of fulfilling this were drawn on by these parents in their explanations for securing access to the 'best' schools (see also Lucey and Reay 2002; Byrne and de Tona 2019, Ball 2003; Gillies 2005). This is situated within a wider construction of 'wasted potential' as something to be feared, which Mendick et al. (2018) argue is key to the discourse of thrift that characterises austere meritocracy. Young people and their 'potential' are constructed as limited resources to be deployed appropriately, and the individualised project of 'fulfilling potential' is framed within government policy as a moral necessity (Mendick et al. 2018).

However, the way discourses of potential are mobilised serves to advantage those who are constructed as having potential to be fulfilled, who are disproportionately white and middle-class. 'Everyone can theoretically 'have' high potential, but there are great disparities in the expectations held of children from different backgrounds, normalising potential for middle-class children, while high potential is seen as exceptional for their lower SES peers' (Beauvais and Higham 2016, p.579; see also Gillborn and Youdell 2000; Ball 2003; Gillies 2005; Littler 2018; Byrne and De Tona 2019)Byrne and de Tona 2019, Gillborn and Youdell 2000; Gillies 2005; Ball 2003; Littler 2017). Accordingly, pupils identified as 'bright' are most likely to view setting/streaming practices as appropriate and fair

(Archer et al. 2018), it is notable that those who were most likely to be viewed as having inherently high potential and at risk of 'wasted potential' were the most invested in discourses of fulfilling potential.

Gillborn and Youdell (2000) explain that the notion of potential as inherent, measurable, and relatively fixed but open to change, is central to the ways that schools construct 'underachievement' – the identification of students who are seen to be attaining lower than they could or should, and who become the target of intervention (supportive or otherwise). 'Underachievement' is a gendered and classed phenomenon: teachers' tendency to view boys as inherently brighter and more talented (in contrast to girls, where academic success is attributed to hard work and diligence (Younger et al. 1999; Warrington and Younger 2000; Benjamin et al. 2003) means that 'as underachievement is about unrealized potential and as more boys are identified as underachievers, teachers may be predisposed to see potential in boys' (Jones and Myhill 2004, p.541).

As seen in Dylan's account of a student having a 'bad day' and performing poorly on a test, the limitations of tests were acknowledged. However, pupils did not question the overall validity of their schools' means of assessment, the authority of these to identify appropriate grades and targets, or the underlying notion of inherent ability. The accounts of assessments and testing given by my participants mirrored those reported by teachers in the work of Gillborn and Youdell (2000), who viewed standardised assessments as accurate measures of pupils' ability, and unexpectedly high or low marks as indicative of 'under-achievement' or a 'statistical anomaly' rather than a flaw in the means of assessment.

However, the possibility of performing 'badly' in a test remained, and participants reported extensive preparation for assessments. When I asked Shreya, who reported spending significant time revising for tests, why it was important to do well, she simply replied 'levels'. For others, tests opened up the possibility of movement in their sets, which many schools had introduced since the previous interview. Rhiannon, who expressed concern throughout about developing a 'good reputation' with peers and teachers, explained that test results could bring positive or negative recognition, and the possibility of changing sets. The time left between pupils taking the test, receiving their marks, and finding out who was changing sets, was the source of great anxiety ('it's really nerve-wracking, because I'm in the top set… you can only go down, so it's a bit more like, I gotta stay in'), underpinned by a fear of peers who judge each other by academic performance. Rhiannon said she would prefer not to be grouped in this way, in contrast to others in the top set. However, she also relied on the school's assessments for reassurance that she was doing well enough, explaining that her Maths teacher's practice of not grading their recent work left her feeling uneasy.

Rhiannon: You don't really get told, if you're doing good? Sometimes they don't say anything to you, and then you wonder, cos you might think that you're doing bad, and then you don't get said anything, and then you…you start, you do start to feel better about yourself, but then you're still worrying, you know, 'I was quite, quite low in a test', or something like that, and then you're questioning with your thoughts and the fact that you haven't been singled out yet. And then every single lesson you're just wondering, am I gonna get singled out this time…

Pupils' descriptions of how they were situated by their school's systems of assessment and evaluation indicated that academic self-surveillance – knowing one's current academic attainment– was common. In Dylan's school, this was enacted collectively through publicly displaying pupils' grades and targets on their exercise books. In Rhiannon's account, the school's academic evaluation was relied on as a source of reassurance that she was doing well, and provided the necessary knowledge to identify what level of self-work was needed. She also emphasised the emotional and affective dimension of these systems of evaluation: these could leave a pupil feeling 'ashamed' and 'like you [don't] deserve where you are'. Pupils' accounts echoed those of the Year Nine pupils in Sefton-Green and Livingstone's (2016) study, who were highly invested in their school's system of 'levels'. My participants expressed mixed feelings about these systems, but ultimately invested in them to know whether or not they were doing well enough academically.

The regulatory nature of schools' allocations of attainment and 'ability' was particularly notable in schools where setting or streaming were in place. Accounts of these practices demonstrated how the categorising of students into sets, which can be understood as an allocation of 'merit', is 'both a value judgement and a term that affects who is permitted to act and how' (Littler 2018, p.155). Both David and Sara described their placement in the top set as validating their belief that they were bright, aware to some extent of the role of such designations in producing them as 'able' (Youdell 2011). This resonated with the tendency for middle-class parents in the study to view their child(ren) as bright or exceptional (see also Ball 2003; Gillies 2005). The confidence and 'psychological capital' this engenders (Bradford and Hey 2007) was expressed by Megan, who argued that she should be in a higher set. Additionally, Dylan and David were aware that their placement opened up different possibilities of success to those available in other sets.

Catt: *Is it good at your school to be in top sets?*

Dylan: *Yeah, cos you get to do cool new lessons that other people don't do. And you don't have to do boring lessons! Cos they have these handwriting lessons that are really boring…*

Setting amplified the potential for 'ability' to be used for peer surveillance and regulation. Participants used set allocations to make sense of their own academic success but also to identify and categorise others, largely accepting accuracy and legitimacy of these allocations as reflections of "natural' (innate) 'talents' (or lack thereof)' (Archer et al. 2018, p.122; see also Gillborn and Youdell 2000). Academic divisions and categories were discussed using value-laden language, with school-defined 'ability' or attainment used to indicate how 'good' a pupil was. In schools where effort was also graded, this was also externalised to the school; Sara explained that: 'you know you've worked hard if you get an effort grade A'.

Knowing one was 'doing well' academically was taken as evidence that participants were managing the new school and its academic demands, particularly when this success was recognised by teachers. However, 'doing well' was always open to change. It was discussed in the present and constructed as contingent on the latest assessment or test result. Existing work on setting highlights the negative effects on the academic attainment and confidence of pupils in lower sets (Gillborn and Youdell 2000; Youdell 2011; Boaler et al. 2013; Higgins et al. 2016; Francis et al. 2017). Additionally, my participants' accounts indicated that those who saw themselves as academically successful and/or were in 'top' sets felt the fragility of this position, and they reported working hard and managing their own learning and setting. This highlighted the vulnerability of students occupying (or working to occupy) the position of professional pupil. At this early stage of being-and-becoming a secondary school pupil, children were always open to the risk of failure.

Livingstone and Sefton-Green (2016, p.144) suggest that 'once the system [of academic evaluation] is mastered, that seems to bring its own satisfaction, leaving little interest in asking how learning could be different with regards to process, content, or outcome'. However, the authors also caution that dominant discourses of success, failure and evaluation may become, like the 'levels' in their study, 'a running thread throughout most lessons and the primary marker for discussing not only learning but also learner identity'. Not all students uncritically accept schools' evaluations of themselves and others. However, these evaluations seemed to form the primary source of knowledge for my participants in making sense of their own and others' attainment and 'ability'.

7.3.2.   Doing well as working hard and future-building

Reports of how well pupils were doing often preceded an account of self-work to do better. Echoing earlier imaginings of secondary school, individual hard work and self-management were presented as necessary in negotiating academic demands. For some, this was told as a narrative of self-improvement, as seen in Sara's account:

Catt:	*Do you feel like you've kind of changed, since the beginning of Year Seven?*
Sara:	*Mmm, a bit. Cos like…I've got like, more…into work? I've got homework, so now I've got a homework regime, so I do it the day I get it, unless I've got like four or three pieces, then I'll do like two, and one the next day.*
Catt:	*Who's in charge of the regime?*
Sara:	*Me. I decided. Because it just makes it easier. Like, have I done that one? I didn't know. But now I always do the one that needs to be done the earliest, first.*

Her description of independently developing a 'homework regime' was a particularly evocative example of participants self-surveilling and self-improving, 'responsible for their own regulation and the management of themselves' (Walkerdine 2003, p.239).

In my participants' accounts of imagined futures, 'hard work' was used interchangeably with 'doing well', presented as not only necessary but sufficient for future success. Conversely, pupils of all backgrounds explained that failure to work hard threatened a feared future – the 'wrong path' that was central to working-class parents' imaginings of secondary school. Sara described 'doing well' as a necessary step towards a future of university and becoming a teacher or a doctor, and avoiding a feared future of not having 'anything'.

Catt:	*What is it that makes you work hard?*
Sara:	*Determination! Because I want to do well in that subject. Because like…if you don't work hard, then you won't have…anything. And if you don't like, have anything, then you won't be able to get into a university, and that means you can't get, you can't get like a job, because you won't have like a diploma or a degree or anything.*

A shift from excitement at anticipating new lessons in secondary school to disillusionment once the initial novelty has passed is well-documented (Harris and Rudduck 1993; Galton et al. 2003; Chedzoy and Burden 2005). However, my participants also described a movement towards a more functional, outcome-driven and future-focused view of lessons and of academic 'success', even among pupils who also expressed enjoyment of lessons and learning, such as Sara and Dylan. This functional view of school was expressed by participants occupying different class positions, and was not limited to those who presented themselves as successful professional pupils. However, in some cases, imagined future trajectories varied according to class. Callum, a working-class participant who expressed extreme disillusionment with school, said that given the choice, he would only take PE, Technology and ICT, subjects relevant to his imagined future as an 'animal rescuer'. Middle-class participants tended to express aspirations for traditionally middle-class professions, achieved via an expected trajectory that included university education.

Catt:	What do you think you need to do if you want to be a primary school teacher or an inventor?
David:	Probably work hard. And if I wanted to be an inventor get a degree in science or something.
Catt:	Do you see yourself going to university?
David:	Yeah, yeah I really want to go to university. Cos.. it just gives you like a bit more experience, yeah.
Catt:	OK. Do you know which one you want to go to?
David:	Probably Oxford. {laughs} I'm just joking, I dunno.

For some of the middle-class girls, particularly those attending Parkview, a functional and future-focused approach to school extended to extra-curricular activities, part of their work to 'improve' themselves. For Ann, this represented a notable change since starting secondary school. Her account of Mathletes, a programme of paid-for group tutoring, changed markedly as the project progressed. Initially described as something she enjoyed, she became increasingly ambivalent, and by her third interview it became something she denied ever having enjoyed, and undertook for purely functional reasons.

Ann:	On Thursdays I only go to half an hour of homework club cos I got Mathleeeetes {she extends this into a groan, sounding exasperated}...Booooring.
Catt:	Did you used to enjoy it?
Ann:	Erm....it's always been boring, cos I have to do it every _day_, and it's just, it's good, cos it gives me like, it teaches me, cos my dad doesn't have time to teach us some things, but then I have to do it _every_ day, and sometimes I really don't like it. And...I'm just glad that my dad's like, able to get me education, but also...I-you...sometimes you just don't wanna do maths! Cos like one day, I'm just like, having _fun_, and then my mum's like {brightly} 'Mathletes!' and I'm like oh _no_, it gets in the way sometimes. And I even have to go there next week, and it's half term.

For Sara, playing the tenor horn was a skill to be developed, rather than intrinsically valuable, and getting 'a really high grade' was an end in itself, rather than an indicator of mastery. Although she enjoyed playing the horn, this was ultimately presented as self-work, one of a number of activities she undertook to 'exercise my brain'. Rhiannon made similar comments in relation to sporting activities. Here, being skilled connects with being a 'good person', echoing the wider tendency draw a connection between hard work, attainment, and moral value.

> Catt: *You said you do judo and trampolining, why do you do them?*
>
> Rhiannon: *I guess I do it because I want to improve at those certain things. I feel like if I can do…like, if I can do this then I'm a good person, I guess.*

The role of parents in these activities was clear; Ann positioned Mathletes as an alternative to parental support (which was presented as normative), and in Sara's account, her parents were actively involved in these activities, and modelled musical practices she wanted to emulate. However, these girls presented themselves not as passively undertaking these activities. Rather, they presented themselves as 'middle-class 'subject[s] of value' (Skeggs 2004; Skeggs 2011, p.504), future-focused, working on their project of self through the acquisition of different forms of capital. School's assessment and categorisation, which permeated students' activities outside school (as found by Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016), allowed these girls to assess and measure this process of self-improvement.

In their accounts of 'doing well' academically, participants drew on discourses of ability and fulfilling potential, and individualised hard work and self-improvement as a route to future success. Participants identified as 'bright' reported working hard to maintain this identity and ultimately access their imagined futures. However, the centrality of individual 'hard work' and self-improvement, and their construction as leading unproblematically to successful futures, suggested that regardless of 'ability', working hard was understood as an important characteristic of becoming a professional secondary school pupil.

The current climate of 'austere meritocracy' constructs merit – which is seen to be the key variable defining success - as 'hard work + talent' (Littler 2013; Littler 2018; Mendick et al. 2018). The centrality of 'hard work' in young people's views of their future may seem initially at odds with previous work emphasising 'effortless achievement' as the prized mode of being a school pupil (Jackson 2006; Archer and Francis 2007; Francis et al. 2010). However, Mendick et al. (2018) explain that although the valuing of 'hard work' could be seen to unsettle this typology, in practice the ways 'hard work' is understood and mobilised serve to reinscribe classed, gendered and racialised distinctions, as access to recognition as 'hard working' is unequal (see also Littler 2013; Littler 2018)). 'Hard work' had discursive power within education settings; schools' preoccupation with 'achievement' and 'excellence', 'alongside the introduction of high-stakes testing at ever-younger ages, may explain why the post-compulsory focus on hard work noted in some earlier studies has moved down the years' (Mendick et al. 2015, p.174; see also Mendick et al. 2018). The situating of 'hard work' in relation to imagined futures in my participants' narratives is also notable. The discourse of aspiration and hard work central to Labour and Coalition policy in the early 2000s 'vests not only power but also moral virtue in the very act of hope, in the mental and emotional capacity to believe and aspire.' (Littler 2013, p.65; see also Allen 2016; Littler 2018). Participants' constructions of future

success as the inevitable product of their individual 'hard work' could hence be read as part of their work to present themselves as self-responsible and agentic, autonomous Year Seven pupils who were working with hope towards their imagined futures.

7.3.3.   <u>**Doing well enough: comparison and competition**</u>

Success is meaningful only in opposition to failure (Bradford and Hey 2007), and despite the prevalence of individualised grades and targets in my participants' accounts, these were often made meaningful through comparison with others. 'Doing well' was understood as 'doing as well as, or better than, others'. Secondary transition brings an increasingly competitive environment (Symonds 2015), with pupils encouraged to compare themselves with others in their new peer group (Jackson and Warin 2000; Beauvais and Higham 2016). Different schools enact different norms of academic attainment, and schools and families shape who is constructed as an appropriate comparison. Rachel recounted wanting to compare favourably to her step-siblings in another school, but pupils largely compared themselves to their friends or to those in the same set.

The following account accompanied Rhiannon looking through sandbox figures and selecting a full-size paintbrush to represent her primary school best friend [Y].

> Rhiannon: *Another important person that I found in my life is [Y]. She was always…the inspiration, always, I need to be as good as her, because I don't want to be the one who needs to be compared to her. I want to be…about the same. So she kind of motivates me, by just…being there. And she was always into the art, so I put the paintbrush down. She gets to be a massive paintbrush now. It'll be a dream come true. So…if she did like, a drawing, and if I also did a drawing, and if hers was like amazing, then I would be like…Next time. Make it like that.*

Rhiannon worked to compete with her friends, particularly her best friend [Y], and others in her set. She explained that 'I find that I need to get good grades to like….cos my friends are good at the subjects' and that the wider peer group would 'judge your personality depending how good you are at things'.

For Ann, her account of doing well enough in Maths was evidenced with the knowledge that she was succeeding compared with those in her set. Within elite schools, where all students are assumed to have high potential, students whose academic attainment is lower than others may be positioned as 'under-achieving', even if their attainment is significantly above average (Allan 2010b; Allan 2010a).

However, Ann found a position in which she could see herself as academically successful. This was supported by a classroom setting with access to a teaching assistant, a group of supportive friends who would help if she struggled, and her group tuition through Mathletes. This tuition allowed her to legitimately claim her place in the middle set, commenting that 'it's just like perfect for me', and to compare her academic attainment favourably to others in her set, avoiding the position of 'the other people who don't understand it'. This contrasted with Catrin, who attended a state school in an affluent area and received additional support with reading. This took place outside the classroom, in the space providing both pastoral and academical support, and the 'isolation' area where students were punished. She disliked receiving this support, partly due to missing lessons, feeling excluded and struggling to catch up when she returned. She compared herself to others in the class:

> Catrin: Like everyone knows everything and there's me, with 'what does that mean or what section do I have to do that in or what does that mean?'.

Comparison and competition were also situated within wider processes of peer regulation and inclusion. The interaction between the peer group and individuals' negotiation of academic success was school-specific, but the negative connotations of being seen to try too hard are well-documented (see Francis 2009; Skelton et al. 2010; Raby and Pomerantz 2015). This is gendered and classed: the position of 'effortlessly achieving' boy may be valued within the peer group as well as by the school, whereas girls' hard work is often both expected and accepted by peers as well as teachers (Archer and Francis 2007). However, with the exception of Rhiannon's account of Wellfield High, in which getting high marks opened up the risk of being seen to 'show off', participants rarely described tension between academic attainment and peer acceptance. Friends and peers were largely presented as supporting academic identities focused on working hard and doing well. Clashes between institutional and peer 'worlds' were seen more commonly in discussion of behaviour and 'being good', which will be explored in the following sections.

7.4.   The professional pupil and 'being good'

7.4.1.   Doing well and being good

The previous section argued that in negotiating the academic arena of secondary school, competing discourses of academic success were mobilised to reproduce difference, particularly through the categorisation of students according to 'ability'. This mobilising of the professional pupil to (re)produce difference was also seen in relation to the position of 'well behaved' pupil, due in part to the variable nature of 'appropriate behaviour', particularly according to gender (Niemi 2005).

In the third research session, all participants except Rachel, Alice and Callum presented themselves as well behaved or 'being good'. 'Good' behaviour was either left undefined or involved successfully negotiating the school's rules and being recognised by teachers as doing so. 'Being good', although ostensibly neutral (Gordon et al. 2000), was in practice experienced as highly classed and gendered.

For some, being good was easy or intuitive. Dylan explained that he did not understand why others would struggle to avoid trouble, whereas Catrin explained that she found it easy to follow the rules. Some presented being good as necessary due to the stricter regulation of secondary school, recalling earlier fears of punishment. However, more commonly, participants presented this as necessary without explanation, or as following from their view of the school rules as correct, presenting themselves as good pupils who not only knew and followed the rules but wanted to do so (Gillborn and Youdell 2000). For David and Cerys, their schools' strict disciplinary systems were part of their understanding of their schools as 'good', recalling the middle-class parents' view that discipline, 'smart' uniform and high attendance were considered indicators of a school's quality (see also Byrne and de Tona 2019).

> Catt: *What is it that makes you say that Fox Hill is a good school?*
>
> Cerys: *It's very...strict on uniform and stuff, so that means- and they're very strict on...punctualness. Like, attendance and stuff. And it's quite big, and well-known and stuff like that.*
>
> Catt: *Do you like that it's quite strict?*
>
> Cerys: *Mmm...I don't really like it, but I know why we have the rules and stuff.*

Others presented good behaviour as part of their work to be viewed as a successful pupil by teachers. For some, this was necessary in accessing their hoped-for futures, as in their accounts of hard work.

> Catt: *Do you try not to get into trouble at school?*
>
> Megan: *Yeah, I don't want to get in trouble. I just don't think it would be very good when I go to get a job, and they go 'Oh, you- you were trouble in school! I don't know if we can handle you in this job!'*

For Megan being good meant distancing herself from misbehaviour and being 'in trouble', commonly used interchangeably, and knowledge of oneself as well-behaved was partly externalised to the judgement of teachers. Additionally, there was a notable conflation in this of being in trouble and being trouble. Importantly, Megan also presented herself as both 'good' and academically successful; as well as describing herself as bright, she repeated throughout her third interview that she was well

behaved. For some girls, though, being 'good' was an alternative means of being successful professional pupils for those who were not 'doing well' academically. Cerys and Catrin, for example, did not engage with academic success, but positioned themselves as successful professional pupils because they were well behaved. However, seeing oneself as a professional pupil seemed to require being good even if they were also doing well and working hard. This builds on the finding discussed in Chapter Six that 'being good' was highly gendered, seen in the prevalence of binary distinctions of girl/boy behaviour as good/bad, with 'being good' understood as a 'girl' trait.

7.4.2. <u>Being nice and being good: peer regulation and behaviour</u>

Sara: *{talking about her sand-scene, in which she is playing with a starfish figure that she has described as 'stranded'} I help everybody. I'm helping people!*

Catt: *Do you kind of help people in your life now?*

Sara: *I want to. I try to…I help my Mum with dinner. I'll help some teachers at school sometimes. Like, if they need somebody to do something, like they need a helper, I'll help. Because it's a nice thing to do.*

Catt: *How does it make you feel?*

Sara: *Happy, because I'm helping people*

For the girls, being 'good' included not only knowing the school rules, but also being quiet, compliant, kind, and helpful, echoing traditional notions of idealised feminine school subjects (Hempel-Jorgensen 2009). There was considerable overlap between the girls' framing of 'being good' and 'being nice' (see also Reay 2001; Kehily et al. 2002; Aapola et al. 2005; Paechter and Clark 2016). These were commonly used interchangeably, and in some cases the relationship between the two was explicitly acknowledged. The role of 'helper' allowed Sara to position herself as 'nice', as a good pupil, and a good friend. As discussed in Chapter Five, teachers may position girls in a 'helper' or 'caretaker' role, managing the behaviour of other pupils (Hey 1997; Gordon et al. 2000; Charlton et al. 2007). In this role, girls are both regulated and regulating, subject to the teachers' gaze and also directing it at other students, particularly boys.

As with previous interviews, girls presented themselves as 'nice' through descriptions of themselves, accounts of their behaviour, and frequent repetition that they were 'not being mean'. The performance of niceness was also seen in their reluctance to describe other girls - even those they disliked - as not 'nice', perhaps denoting a lack of acceptable ways to express hostility or aggression (Walkerdine et al. 2001; George 2007).

Being a good friend remained central to the girls' accounts (see also McLeod and Yates 2006; MacDonald 2016) and by the third interviews, many friendships were well-established, and the middle-class girls' narratives included more exploration of their understanding of the meaning of being a 'good friend'. Being 'nice' was important and included being helpful and supportive. For Sara, the overlapping characteristics of 'nice' and 'helpful' were central to her descriptions of friends as well as herself. Both Ann and Ayesha also emphasised 'helpful' as a key characteristic of their friends. As illustrated in Figure 16, Ann used the figure of a police officer to represent her friend [M], describing her as a 'backup teacher', supporting Ann and their other friends academically and emotionally. In Ann's sand-scene, the arrangement of the figures around the baby, which represented Ann herself, related to the role of different friends and teachers in providing her with different kinds of support.

Ann: {looking through figures} I don't know what would be [M]. She's more of the clever one. She's like, really good with poetry and she's really clever. She's really good at science.

Catt: Is that a big thing, to be good at science?

Ann: Well she kinda helps me out sometimes. See, a police {adds police officer figure to sandbox}. She knows everything. And she kinda leads everyone, so…she's kinda like the leader, and helps us…cope…

Figure 15: Section of Ann's sand-scene.

Similarly, Ayesha's account of her new friends positioned support as central; her new best friend was not only being nice but specifically 'always nice to me'.

In navigating friendships and peer relationships, girls must negotiate discourses of femininity and what it means to be a girl (Winther-Lindqvist 2012). Additionally, gendered discourses of friendship, set out appropriate ways that a girl may be a 'good friend', the importance of having a 'best friend', and the qualities of these relationships (George 2007). Niceness has been shown to be a central characteristic defining girls' view of a good friend (Read 2011; Paechter and Clark 2016).

In these interviews, girls also presented being 'good' and 'nice' as necessary for peer acceptance, which relied on being liked by others. Shreya emphasised throughout her interview that she wanted to be 'friends with everyone'. This required extensive work to be friendly, kind, and helpful, all of which she considered part of being 'nice' and a 'good person':

> *Shreya:*   *Well I'm friends with everyone, because I don't wanna be enemies with someone, because…because like, I don't wanna have fights and everything…I just wanna be friends with everyone!*
>
> *Catt:*   *What do you do to try and be friends with everyone?*
>
> *Shreya:*   *Um…I.. be nice. And I speak to them, I don't blank them.*
>
> *Catt:*   *And what does it mean to be nice, what do you think?*
>
> *Shreya:*   *Well, you don't say bad stuff about them, you don't…push them or anything. And you don't…just…well, you talk to them, don't blank them!*

Others explained that not being sufficiently nice could be risky. Girls are navigating binaries with 'nice' on one side and stigmatised identities on the other, including bad, mean, bitchy, aggressive, and annoying (Charlton 2007). Not being nice could lead to 'shunning', a collective rejection by the peer group, often of someone who previously 'fit in' (Cann 2018; see also Pratt and George 2005). Ann explained this through a narrative of reinvention and redemption, through which a girl had been 'mean' and disliked by everyone, but decided to 'change and be nice', enabling her to fit in and make friends. Girls could also face exclusion from their friends for failing to be 'nice'. For Rhiannon, whose third interview focused on her friendship group of other 'quiet' girls, one of their number - described in her second interview as 'different' and 'bossy', but acceptable as a friend – had now been excluded from the group:

> *Rhiannon:*   *I did have a word and say like 'Yeah but she has this problem, and this problem, and this problem' – it's like, ruined someone else? There's this girl called [M], and she*

was OK, but then, the reason why we stopped [being friends] is she was quite rough? And she swore, and we didn't quite like that? So we didn't exactly ignore her, and just go hey, we don't like you anymore. We just gradually...moved away, over time. And she found her other friends, which is where she is now, which is the popular girls.

This account highlighted the classed connotations of niceness. The friend excluded was 'rough', commonly used by middle-class parents and children to describe individuals and localities that were not respectable and those who misbehaved in school (see also Reay 2004).

Rhiannon's account illustrates the importance of managing sameness and difference in negotiating the institutional world, the peer group, and individual friendships. In her account and Ayesha's discussion of bullying, another pupil's bullying was attributed to them being 'different' in some way. Accounts of their friendships, and of categorisation and division within the peer group, indicated that academic comparison was situated within broader practices of inclusion/exclusion according to perceived difference or similarity. Exclusion often affects those who are viewed as inappropriate or different, and even the threat of exclusion may be powerfully regulatory (Gordon et al. 2000; Cann 2018;). A certain level of difference from the peer group may be acceptable, even valued due to its association with autonomy and authenticity, yet too much difference may be threatening (Gordon et al. 2000; Valentine 2000). However, friendship rules and norms may differ from those of the wider peer group (George 2007), so such difference may be validated and valued by friends. The spaces that friendships could provide marginalised pupils for negotiating identity will be considered in the following section.

7.4.3.   Tensions and alternatives: variable access to 'good' and 'nice', and finding different spaces

Although some level of 'nice' was frequently presented as necessary in order to be accepted by the peer group and to make friends, girls must also negotiate the apparent contradiction that being either too 'nice' or too 'good' may be associated with low status (Reay 2001; Currie et al. 2007; Svahn and Evaldsson 2011; Paechter and Clark 2016). In Rhiannon's account discussed above, the exclusion of her former friend for being 'rough' was accompanied by the other girl becoming friends instead with 'the popular girls'. Girls' different positioning in their new school's social hierarchy and their proximity to popularity may shape how they negotiate the need to be 'good'. Additionally, girls must negotiate the limitations of being 'nice' or 'good' - as well as being devalued within the peer group, niceness also provides limited possibilities for behaviour and identity.

The girls were differently invested in the identities of 'good' and 'nice', due to interactions between their gender and class positioning, friendship histories, social position in school, and their school's institutional and peer cultures. The social priorities of my participants contrasted with existing work emphasising girls' desire to know and be known by lots of people once they enter secondary school (Duncan 2004). Those for whom popularity seemed within reach (Megan and Dylan) spoke of popularity and the 'popular group' disdainfully, emphasising its regulatory nature (see also Paechter and Clark 2016), whereas those describing themselves as not popular did not present this as something they wanted. Although this may be due to the stigma attached to being a 'wannabe' (Currie et al. 2007), the overall view was of popularity as undesirable. Participants' priorities focused instead on fitting in to the peer group, having friends (and specifically having enough friends or the 'right' friends), being a good friend, and being liked.

In positioning themselves in relation to notions of 'good behaviour', girls must manage pressures to be 'good' with the risks and limitations of these positions. The accounts of Becky and Alice indicated that being 'nice' or 'good' could be both inaccessible and risky for working-class girls. Becky continued to have low status in her peer group, but had developed a group of friends. They provided Becky with support for her work to be 'good', despite this being devalued within her peer group. In contrast, Alice had a more high-status position in her school's peer hierarchy, which provided recognition as a social pupil but meant that stigmatised 'good' behaviours posed a greater risk. She also explained that her friends misbehaved, which in turn brought higher status in the peer group. Despite this, Alice recounted trying to follow rules and work hard. However, she explained that she struggled to be recognised as good by teachers, and had become labelled as in need of intervention. This combined with peer norms to limit the incentive to work towards being a 'good pupil'. By her third interview, Alice's account of school was almost wholly negative, angrily repeating 'I just don't like school! It's just school. I don't like school!'.

Alice seemed unsure how to negotiate this tension between peer and school worlds, and she presented her 'changed attitude' as not within her control but due to being led astray by the 'wrong gangs'. In the second part of her third interview[12], she cheerfully set out plans for her imagined future while drawing a picture on the theme of 'dreams' (see Figure 17), in which the hot tub is labelled '(maybe)'

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[12] Alice's third interview was undertaken in two parts. In the initial third interview, she was largely monosyllabic and seemed to become increasingly frustrated at my questions about school. I asked if she would prefer to curtail the session, with the option of continuing it another day. We met again a week later in a different space, and I introduced a drawing-based activity through which Alice could select from a variety of topics as elicitation devices to discuss, model and/or draw.

as 'I can't guarantee it' - suggesting that the rest, in contrast, was guaranteed. However, the account she gave alongside this drawing reflected some of the tensions she was managing.

> Alice: *The teacher just said…oh you've been bullying [N] in lessons, I goes no I haven't, I goes she's the one that's been bullying me, and she goes what do you mean? And I said, over the phone, called me a thieving little sket and all that…She was calling me thieving, calling me a thieving little slut and all things like that. For no reason. {reading aloud from dream picture} Two kids, a car, nice house. Hot tub! I got one of them already. I done maybe, in brackets, for the hot tub. Cos I can't guarantee it.*

Figure 16: Alice's picture on the theme 'dream'

Alice's discussion of wanting to achieve academically but both struggling to work 'hard enough' and being positioned as naughty suggested a disconnect between her clear aspirations, and the subject-positions available to her within this school, which failed to provide a 'map of life' towards this imagined future (Jeffrey 2010). Overall, her view of school was as somewhere to spend time with friends, but otherwise boring and restrictive, and a space in which she was positioned in the abject position of bully.

Pupils' negotiation of the peer and school systems depends in part on the importance attributed to each by the particular pupil. Fear of feeling out of place is a powerful mechanism through which social rules are learnt and taken on (Bourdieu 1999), and the salience of this fear in relation to the official school has been seen throughout. However, if a pupil is not concerned with feeling out of

place, this fear holds little power (Noyes 2006). In schools where dominant peer and school cultures are at odds with each other, strong engagement with one may limit a pupil's ability to be 'in place' in relation to the other.

Due to the limited numbers of working-class participants who undertook a third interview, conclusions here are tentative. However, the accounts of Becky and Alice indicated that in their school, the incentives and penalties for being 'nice' and 'good' differed from those in the middle-class girls' accounts. Their accounts also highlight the need to avoid homogenising the experience of not only girls in general but particular groups of girls (in this case, working-class girls). For these two, their differing social status, friendship groups, and access to different forms of recognition interacted to make the position of 'good girl' differently accessible.

Although this chapter has focused on pupils' accounts of being professional pupils, it has also highlighted the continued importance of the social. Peer regulation of girls' work to be 'nice' and 'good' was one aspect of a continued emphasis on friendship and belonging. A full exploration of pupils' accounts of being a social pupil is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it should be noted that friendships and 'fitting in' were presented as vital in negotiating the new school, and for some were an alternative source of identity and recognition.

By this point, friendship groups were more established and were known to others as having particular characteristics. Participants recounted both ascribing and taking on group identities – fixing the informal sussing out of the peer group that was discussed in the previous chapter. Categorisation related in some cases to characteristics of the professional pupil, such as attainment or behaviour, as well as divisions related to other characteristics valued within peer cultures. As with individual identities, a group identity could provide comfort and security in the knowledge that one's group was known and had a place within the wider peer group, but it could also be a means of exclusion or marginalisation. For participants who viewed their friends or peers as made up of multiple identifiable groups, these were frequently in hierarchical relationships with each other. In Rachel's account, the 'lots of different friends' that featured throughout her account were depicted in her sandbox using different types of figures (aliens, soldiers, dinosaurs), each represented a different group of friends with different status in the wider peer group.

Figure 17: Rachel's sand-scene

Similarly, in Dylan's sand-scene (Figure 19), each figure or set of figures indicated a group of peers taking on a different role and position in the peer hierarchy. The lion represented those at the top, who he described as powerful and viewed as cool by the wider peer group. Others were chosen and placed according to their relationship to the 'lions'. The lioness was used to represent those who were friends with the 'lions', 'quite popular, but not <u>as</u> popular', knights for those who fought and 'don't like [and were abjected by] the popular kids', and others who either avoided or tried to disrupt fights between the 'lions' and others. At the bottom of the hierarchy, a snake represented a boy named as a 'sneak' by other children, and aliens represented those whom 'people think [are] weird, and not normal'. Dylan himself took the position of 'messenger' between the groups, indicated by a bottle that he moved around the sandbox to indicate the different positions he took in relation to the 'lions'. He explained that this hierarchy was both relational and dynamic; individuals took up different roles in relation to the 'lions', as documented in relation to the movement between different roles in girls' friendship groups (George 2007), and recounted in earlier discussion of bullying (see Section 6.2.2). Dylan, as the bottle/messenger, positioned himself as liminal, outside the groups and roles indicated by other figures, but as identifying an identity and role in this relational social structure.

Figure 18: Dylan's sand-scene, shown from two viewpoints

The salience of friendships to identity-work was particularly clear for participants with experience of bullying. Ayesha incorporated her earlier bullying into a narrative of reinvention, explaining that she had moved away from the role of 'victim' by both cultivating behaviours and dispositions

incompatible with bullying (self-confidence, not being shy, not caring what others think), and forming friendships with others with similar characteristics. Rhiannon, who had made a conscious choice to maintain friendships with 'the right friends' who would support her work to be a professional pupil, her friendship group's ascription of the identity of 'weird' by their peer group had been re-appropriated as a source of pride and comfort. Rhiannon, Becky and Cerys all experienced some level of marginalisation by the wider peer group, which for Rhiannon and Becky was presented as due in part to a clash between their work to be professional pupils and conflicting peer norms. For these three pupils, their group of friends enacted a functional role but also provided shared identity and space for belonging – a space to be recognised as normal. For Becky and Rhiannon this supported their work to be professional pupils, whereas for Cerys, who seemed largely unconcerned with recognition as professional, friendships with others designated by the school as vulnerable (indicated by time spent together at 'Miss [P]'s) provided support and safety within a peer group that was not always accepting of difference:

> Cerys: *Sometimes if people are getting bullied or they're not feeling like they fit in, they go to Miss [P]'s and they have like, talk with her, and... yeah. Oh and you also go there if you're like, being bullied or something, it makes you feel happier. Because like, everyone there's my friend. Because like, even though I don't know some of them, they're still my friend, cos they just...nobody there is like, mean to anyone, or mean...because they all know. What it's like. So we all get along.*

Alice and Callum's accounts also highlighted the importance of friendships in finding a liveable space within secondary school. For Alice, whose labelling as 'trouble' or 'troubled' (Lloyd 2005) placed her outside the position of professional pupil, friendships and social status provided an alternative means of recognition, which she seemed to be prioritising. For Callum, who did not present being a professional pupil as a viable possibility, friendships provided a space for managing a school life that was challenging in part due to their exclusion from the peer group.

7.5.   Being a professional pupil as not being bad

7.5.1. The spectre of the 'bad kid' in narratives of good behaviour

This chapter now considers the other side of the good/bad pupil binary - how 'badness' was understood, negotiated and mobilised. Being-and-becoming a professional Year Seven pupil involved negotiating one's own behaviour and dispositions, and their regulation by the school's system of

evaluation, assessment, rules, rewards, and punishments. This also involved learning the rules and expectations defining how not to be. In the third interviews, this was frequently bound up with accounts of misbehaviour, and a process of othering that positioned the interviewee as good by contrast. These accounts gave insight into participants' role in producing others as 'bad', both through action within school (such as collaborating in the punishment of 'bad' pupils), and discursively in the interview (such as describing others as 'bad' due to their behaviour). It became clear that being recognised as competently performing the role of 'well behaved' pupil (Davies et al. 2001; Davies 2006) involved not only regulating one's own behaviour, but also collaborating in the positioning of others in ways that maintain the classroom order (Laws and Davies 2000).

7.5.2. <u>**Constructing the 'bad kid'**</u>

Given the subjective nature of 'appropriate behaviour', becoming a professional pupil involves learning what is officially forbidden and punishable, and also what - and who - is identified as 'bad' in practice. Participants' demonstration of their familiarity with the complicated systems of reward and punishment forming their schools' official regulatory order, and their accounts of misbehaviour, were an important aspect of their narratives of themselves as successful professional pupils. These accounts invoked an all-encompassing 'bad kid', guilty of misbehaviour, not working hard, and/or 'not caring'. Misbehaving was used interchangeably with 'being bad', situating misbehaviour as both an action and an indication of being a particular kind of ('bad' or 'naughty') person. This was also seen as the result of individual 'bad' choices, as risky and contagious, and as justifying punishment. Girls offered most of this representational work. However, variations of the 'bad kid' also featured in the boys' accounts.

As in their second interviews, misbehaviour continued to be constructed as primarily a 'boy' trait. There was little in girls' accounts about 'bad' girls; although other girls could be described as 'annoying' or 'rude', misbehaviour and badness were largely attributed to boys. Boys' misbehaviour was frequently mentioned in passing, presented as unremarkable, common, and expected. In some cases, boys' misbehaviour was presented as inherent or natural.

> *Catt:*   *What are the boys like?*
> *Cerys:*   *Annoying! And naughty.*
> *Catt:*   *Is it mostly boys who are naughty?*
> *Cerys:*   *Some of the girls might be a bit cheeky, but that's it.*

> *---*

> *Catt:*   *Is anyone ever naughty at school?*
>
> *Sara:*   *Sometimes the boys are…messing around. Sometimes they talk when the teacher's talking. And {quizzically} some of the boys are breaking pencils with their heads…and then they're like {mimes throwing something} throw it at a boy behind them. They're really weird.*

As seen in the second interviews in Rhiannon's description of the 'respectful boys' who were 'more like some girls' (see Section 6.4.2), participants did acknowledge the presence of 'good' boys, but in ways that seemed to strengthen binary gendered notions of normative behaviour. For Megan, boys in general were described as 'not nice' and 'stupid'. Those who behaved, and were hence the only two boys included in her sand-scene of 'important people' (see Figure 20), were an anomalous minority.

Figure 19: Section of Megan's sand-scene.

Megan:	And [I'm putting in] a beware sign.
Catt:	What are we beware-ing?
Megan:	All the boys. They are just... {blows a raspberry}. Yeah, that's what they are. They're not nice.
Catt:	Is that all of them?
Megan:	The boys who were here {in sandbox} anyway, they don't do that. They sit down and actually eat their food. [J] and [M]. But mostly the boys are... just stupid.

In Sara's description of her fellow pupils, despite her acknowledgement of both girls and boys who did not fit the good/bad girl/boy binary, her description of girls who misbehaved as 'like boys' reinforced the notion of misbehaviour as a boy trait.

Catt:	What are the girls like?
Sara:	Most of them are... there are like, different people. Some of them are a bit like the boys. And then some of them are…well, not all the boys are like that. And then some of the girls are like…are like in the middle. So they're not like, intrigued by work and stuff, but then they're not like, can't be bothered.

Descriptions of others' behaviour in these gendered terms echoed accounts of potential friends in the second interviews. Additionally, the third interviews highlighted how the positioning of misbehaviour as a boy trait was emphasised by peer norms and status hierarchies, mirroring the regulation of girls by the peer group in ways that encouraged them to be 'good' and 'nice'. Boys and girls described boys' misbehaviour as not only normal and expected, but also as associated with high status within the peer group. This seemed to apply in all schools apart from Holy Trinity, where David presented misbehaviour as absent.

As discussed, for girls, 'nice' could provide space at the intersection of peer and institutional 'worlds' of the school but could simultaneously be devalued by both teachers and pupils. For boys, the expectation of misbehaviour, and the status accorded such misbehaviour, may cause dissonance between the requirements of the social and professional pupil. Some could balance recognition as a professional pupil and some level of misbehaviour. Dylan, Ayesha and Shreya described boys whose misbehaviour was accepted by teachers because they were funny. However, only particular boys have the resources to balance the competing requirements of the 'good' pupil and acceptable masculinity. This was contingent on peer norms, academic 'ability' and access to other forms of capital. For Dylan, his ability to maintain status and access recognition from teachers seemed to be due to a combination of his sporting aptitude, ability to attain academically without trying (and hence inhabit the acceptable position of 'effortless achiever'), existing friendships with boys from primary school whose

popularity had carried over, extensive knowledge of the workings of his peer group's status hierarchies and relationships (explored in great detail through his sand-scene), and an ability to maintain a level of misbehaviour that was always slightly less bad than others in the class.

In schools where gendered peer norms and the school's definition of appropriate behaviour were in conflict, boys could struggle with this tension. This was seen most clearly for Callum. Recounting being reprimanded by a teacher for being muddy after playing football at lunchtime, he seemed both frustrated and incredulous at the teacher's scolding, exclaiming 'I'm a boy! I do get muddy!… I'm not the one who controls the bloody mud, am I?' In being muddy at school, he had crossed a line, gone against school rules about how the body must be managed, yet for him this was an inevitable consequence of undertaking expected 'boy' activities of play-fighting and football. Callum was also negotiating norms of masculinity with which he did not align. As one of few pupils presenting themselves as frequently misbehaving, it is also notable that he did not present it as a source of status. In contrast to Alice, whose misbehaviour was presented partly as a means of maintaining status or fitting in with friends, Callum presented his misbehaviour as beyond his control, but not sufficient to counteract his marginalisation by the peer group due to his rejection of the violent masculinity that was dominant in his school.

Rhiannon's account gave particular insight into the interactions between peer and school norms in producing misbehaviour as both desirable (especially for boys) and transgressive. Throughout the project, she described the gaze of peers as powerful and difficult to navigate, and emphasised the importance of being known by peers, even if this meant being known for 'being bad'. Rhiannon described the most popular pupils as misbehaving, and lacking the appropriate subjectivity of a professional pupil - they 'don't care'. She explained that 'class fame' could be achieved - for boys in particular - by misbehaving, whereas boys who were 'nerdier' were victimised and/or excluded.

The tendency for participants to position popularity as neither a desirable or legitimate aspiration has been noted. Although Rhiannon explained that misbehaviour could be a source of status for boys, she rejected my description of the boys as famous, clarifying that this situation-specific 'class fame' was limited to 'a couple of boys' viewing this behaviour as positive, in contrast to 'the people with sense', who viewed it as undesirable. This highlights the tension pupils may face in relation to peer and school systems of acceptable behaviour and the different gazes of school, friends, and peers. For boys, being a failed or unacceptable school subject may occur at the same time as being a cool or successful boy in relation to particular discourses of masculinity (Youdell 2011). Rhiannon, who was highly invested in being a successful professional pupil, acknowledged the status accorded to misbehaving boys but worked to construct them in her narrative as transgressive and outside the limits of acceptability.

Additionally, not specifically related to boys, the view of misbehaviour as transgressive was strengthened by the official school. Rhiannon's school's 'super-form' system of rewards, through which the form groups competed against each other, meant that misbehaviour posed a threat to the form group's collective recognition as 'good'. Similarly, Catrin described being on 'class report' due to the misbehaviour of a minority of students in her class. In participants' accounts of mobilising allegiance to the form group, the systems of collective delivery of reward and punishment can be understood as a regulatory technology (Youdell 2011), through which pupils are incentivised to regulate the behaviour of others in their form. This responsibility of managing peers' behaviour falls disproportionately on girls (see Section 6.4.1). The responsibility to 'counteract this wildness' and 'tone down excesses of boisterous boys' (Gordon et al. 2000, p.114) is another aspect of the 'helper' role, the position of 'quasi-teacher' (Francis 2005). For girls who did not distance themselves from misbehaviour, therefore, an acceptable orientation to those who misbehaved was to position oneself as the 'helper'.

> Ayesha: *{describing sand-scene} They [friends]'re fun. And specially [Z], she's really kooky. And she would do anything as a joke. but that's the thing, she gets in trouble a lot. So I tell her don't, and she's like 'OK', but she still does it!*
>
> *…*
>
> Ayesha: *I have a friend…he's kinda crazy. Like a monkey! Like, he loves monkeys. And stuff. And he'll go around the class, when the teacher's not in, he'll run around the class, being a monkey! {laughs} And..yeah. he's really funny. But sometimes he's annoying, so. And I get scared, sometimes. Cos the teacher's, some teachers are outside waiting, and I'm like, 'sit down!' And he's like 'No', and I'm like, {sighs} 'You're gonna get in trouble!' And he's like, 'I don't care'.*

Here Ayesha, whose friends were central to her third interview narrative of reinvention, belonging and confidence, recounts having a friend identified by the school as misbehaving. Rather than posing a threat to their friendship, such friends were incorporated into her narrative by her taking on the role of 'helper' or civilising influence.

7.5.3. **Misbehaviour as contagious or polluting**

Rhiannon: *{Describing sand-scene} These are the boys who don't care. So they're like the boys that are quite nasty... their reputation, of being the annoying ones, that I don't want to be part of. So these are the boys, and they tend to fight, and I know they tend to fight, ... So I tend to avoid them, because I know they cause trouble. If I go with them, I could end up getting all C2s, C3s, that sort of thing.*

The construction of misbehaviour as contagious or polluting, a threat to one's own reputation or behaviour, was common. In the only detailed account of a 'naughty' girl, this pupil was constructed as a threat whose behaviour could 'rub off' on others. Megan's ambivalent relationship with [D], a new friend at secondary school, was discussed in Section 6.4.2. Whereas Megan was initially focused on defending her decision to be friends with [D] through minimising [D]'s bullying of Megan's friend [W], by her third interview Megan had distanced herself from the friendship with [D], explicitly contrasting herself with imagined or hypothetical (male) others who would view misbehaviour as desirable. The regulatory power of niceness and friendship rules invoked previously to explain why she could not 'quit on' [D], were again visible. However, this was now balanced against the fear of contagion, and the threat to Megan's own identity as a professional pupil, confirmed here by the report card that provided official recognition that Megan was behaving well. Echoing her earlier use of complicated and nuanced notions of friendship, bullying and closeness (see also George 2007), Megan constructed a spectrum of friendship that allowed her to maintain some connection with [D], but minimise the closeness and authenticity, and hence the risks, of the friendship:

Megan: *There's a girl called [D] who gets into trouble. She smokes. She does drugs and stuff. And then there's a boy called [M] who's just naughty, just naughty anyway, a naughty person.*

Catt: *Are they friends of yours?*

Megan: *Well I'm like kind of friends with [D]. She thinks we're like, best friends. She's like {simpers} and I'm just like {looks unimpressed}. I think just cos I like, chatted with her on Instagram, I said hi hi hi hi hi , y'know like, just for the sake of it.*

Catt: *Why did you chat to her?*

Megan: *I don't know. It was on Snapchat as well, cos she posted a photo of her fingers, cos she got fake nails, and I was like oh lush, but they were really pretty. So she was like oh thanks, and I was just like...not thinking, oh she smokes, I don't wanna be friends with her, gross, ew...Some people are like, oh he's naughty, I wanna be friends with him, hahahaha. But I don't wanna be friends with someone who's naughty. I'll be*

friends with them, friends but not like, friends friends friends, cos it might rub off on me. Their naughtiness. I have a pretty clean record! I haven't gotten into any trouble. On my report card I had all ones, apart from IT where I got a two. That means he or she behaves extremely well in class.

Megan did not explain her reasons for not distancing entirely from [D]. This may have been necessary to remain 'nice'. However, maintaining some relationship with [D] may also have been a strategic decision to maintain access to popularity. Megan described [D] elsewhere as one of the 'popular girls' at Parkview, meaning she possessed symbolic capital that may have made her friendship desirable to those like Megan who were proximal to popularity (Paechter and Clark 2010). The division between school and the online realm of Instagram and Snapchat is also notable; Megan, who was comfortable negotiating the unwritten rules of online and offline communication and friendship work, was able to undertake friendship work with [D] online but maintain distance from her at school, where her behaviour was presented as more of a threat.

Similarly, the account of Ann, who attended the same school, demonstrated a tension between loyalty to [D] and the need to distance herself from [D] in telling herself as 'good'. Reflecting the common tendency to conflate misbehaving with being bad, Ann described [D]'s changed behaviour in terms of [D]'s subjectivity. Having previously been 'nice', [D] was now firmly positioned through her misbehaviour as naughty: not just her actions but [D] herself had changed.

> Ann: *{playing with the small handcuffs in the sandbox} Well there's this girl called [D]...And she erm, she just, she used to be really nice... But she's being... suspended from the school. Cos of all the things she's done.*
> Catt: *What kind of things?*
> Ann: *I don't really know, but there are rumours. People are saying, like, er...she tried burning down the school, with...I dunno. And she apparently, people said she tried beating up a disabled person. I dunno, these are just things people say.*

In both Ann and Megan's accounts, [D] was not only misbehaving but criminal, highlighting the ways girls and women who do not adhere to norms of 'niceness' and 'goodness' may be pathologised and constructed as doubly deviant for transgressing both norms of acceptable behaviour and the requirements of femininity, and made monstrous through myths and rumours (Lloyd 2005; Osler 2006).

Recalling parents' accounts of their hopes that their child would choose the 'right path' and make the 'right friends', the children's accounts now engaged with similar discourses of corruption and

pollution of 'good' young people by 'bad' (Mendick et al. 2018). In girls' narratives, these discourses were mobilised in gendered ways: boys' misbehaviour was constructed as polluting but not in need of such violent abjection as the 'naughty girl', whose closeness threatens the possibility of becoming bad in a way the naughty boy does not. For these two middle-class girls, the naughty girl was constructed as a pathological and mythologised figure, not only naughty but criminal (Lloyd 2005). In contrast, the naughty boy was a threat to girls' learning but generally not to their own behaviour or subjectivity. In line with the construction of misbehaviour as natural or unproblematic for boys, boys' accounts did not feature discourses of pollution or contagion. For David, this was not presented as a relevant concern as he denied the presence of misbehaviour in his school. Dylan presented misbehaviour as a logical response that any student might have to a situation with which they were unhappy, and not a threat to him. Callum presented himself as misbehaving so was not in a position to fear contagion from others; although he distanced himself from others' fighting, but explained this in terms of self-protection from physical violence rather than contagion. As will be argued in Section 7.5.5, the fear of contagion may also be at odds with the requirements of masculinity that position fear as feminine and therefore denigrated.

7.5.4. Misbehaviour, 'bad choices' and consent for punishment

Catt:	*What are the people in your class like?*
Becky:	*Rude. Cos the boys won't stop shouting at the teachers…I don't like it. Cos it's wasting our time to learn.*
Catt:	*What happens when they shout?*
Becky:	*They get parked. Like moved to a different class where they sit and be quiet.*

Punishment was usually described as happening to other people, for reasons that were endorsed by the participants. Following the discussion of the 'bad' girl [D] in the previous section, Ann did not mention [D] again or include her in the sand-scene. She explained that she did not see [D] at school due to her being 'always in isolation', mirroring Alice's earlier explanation for no longer being as close to her 'old best friend'. Ann's account of [D]'s suspension illustrated a tendency for participants to distance themselves from schools' enactment of punishment. Ann expressed no regret at [D]'s suspension, and explained that her misbehaviour meant she was 'not important'. There was also a relationship between constructing misbehaviour as contagious and risky, and collaborating in the school's identification and punishment of those who misbehaved.

> Catt: *Are there people at your school who do things they're not allowed to do?*
>
> Shreya: *Yeah. There was one really bad kid, who's...reeeeeally naughty. But he's left now, thank god! He was very bad, he used to disturb people in lessons. He'd snatch away our stuff, and just...yeah. But he's gone now. But there's still some kind of bad people.*
>
> Catt: *With the boy that you said was really bad, what happened with him leaving?*
>
> Shreya: *Oh, I dunno. He just said 'guys, I'm leaving tomorrow', and then everyone started screaming 'yayyyy!'. And then he just didn't come in the next day...everyone was happy about it. Cos he was very bad and he used to distract us during lesson time.*

As seen in her earlier account of everyone making fun of the boy who 'always tries to be funny' (see Section 6.4.1), Shreya described this boy's removal as celebrated by 'everyone'. This was situated within a narrative of her own school, Fairfields, as a place to which she felt great attachment. Although she acknowledged misbehaviour at her school, she explained that none of the 'bad people' from her primary school had come to Fairfields. These pupils instead attended Marshbrook, the stigmatised school she had considered attending, and which was the closest secondary school to Shreya's home.

> Catt: *Are you happy with that decision, that you're at Fairfields?*
>
> Shreya: *Yeah, so happy. Cos all of the bad people went to Marshbrook. The naughty people.*

Participants' negotiation of misbehaviour was both school-specific but inseparable from their view of their own school and others as 'good' or 'bad'. Section 7.4.1 noted that participants' views of their school's strict disciplinary systems as justified were in some cases presented as evidence that their school was 'good'. This connection between good behaviour, strict discipline and school quality was made again in discussion of misbehaviour. David, who was secure in his knowledge that his school was 'good', constructed whole populations of children in other schools as 'bad', while denying that anyone at his school misbehaved. Similarly, both Ayesha and Shreya acknowledged the presence of misbehaviour in their own schools but projected real badness onto another school. For these girls, this caused tension as they were negotiating attachment to this other school due to its locality, and attendance at the other school by family and friends, while also positioning it as a repository for bad behaviour and bad kids. The tensions and contradictions in their accounts highlighted the complexity and pains of 'mobility' that are often overlooked in accounts of school choice that position access to the 'best' secondary schools as unequivocally good. In contrast, Becky, Alice and Dylan, who attended schools that were stigmatised, worked against the designations of themselves as bad, partly through constructing distance between themselves and Others (really bad kids) in their schools - bullies and/or those who were violent.

Although similar discourses were at work in relation to misbehaviour as an individual choice, there was also noticeable difference between the schools. Much as the professional pupil and the possibilities for being 'good' is school-specific, so are the possibilities for misbehaviour and being 'bad'. The accounts David and Callum indicated that discourses of good/bad schools and good/bad pupils could shape the possibilities for identity negotiation in different ways. David explained that there was little space for 'naughty' pupils in his school, his description of which characterised the discourse described by (Lundin and Torpsten 2018, p.579) as the 'perfect school discourse', in which 'the school is described as having a flawless environment'. In contrast, Callum's account, the possibility of being a good pupil was not considered, raised the question of how the professional pupil is understood and negotiated in schools where misbehaviour was normalised. Callum's response was to seek recognition and competence outside school entirely, seen in his enthusiastic account of his hobbies, pets and skills, which contrasted sharply to a solid refusal to talk at length about school. Becky, who attended the same school as Alice, indicated that it was possible to access recognition as a professional pupil, but it was unclear whether this could be compatible with peer acceptance, or possible without the support of friends.

Schools' punishments served to identify behaviour that was officially unacceptable. Although such responses are enacted by teachers, Ann, Megan and Shreya collaborated in marking the 'naughty' child as outside the position of professional pupil, through their celebration or disinterest in the punishment (often through removal or exclusion) of 'bad' pupils. Ignoring misbehaviour was also a possible response, echoing earlier discussion of schools' suggested strategies for dealing with bullying and victimisation. Although ignoring may seem passive, it has power in the peer realm, where being 'known' underpins status and identity. A pupil ignored is marked as unseen and hence not present as a pupil: as recounted by (Youdell 2011, p.92) in describing a teacher's exhortations to a class to ignore 'Paul', a boy who was insulting another, '[Paul] speaks but cannot be heard, he is silenced, he is not-human'.

Additionally, misbehaviour was commonly presented as a result of individual 'bad choices'. Catrin considered a hypothetical scenario in which a friend of hers misbehaved. In contrast to the common claim in the girls' second interviews that they would not want a 'naughty' friend, Catrin explained that she would not avoid such friendship, because she was confident in her own ability to stay out of trouble regardless of her friends' behaviour. Carefully maintaining her presentation as both nice and good, she asserted repeatedly that she was 'not [intending] to be mean or anything', but it would be 'their fault that they're doing it'.

> Catt: *Would it bother you if you had a friend who got into trouble?*
>
> Catrin: *Not really, it wouldn't bother me, because it's their fault. Not to be mean or anything, but it's kind of their fault and I wouldn't want to get into it and get it to be my fault, I wouldn't want to be that involved with it cos I get in trouble then.*
>
> Catt: *If you had a friend who was being rude to a teacher or something, what would you do?*
>
> Catrin: *I just wouldn't do anything, because it's their fault that they're doing it, not to be mean or anything but it's not really mean! Yeah… it's up to them, they want to do it they can do it. I just wouldn't agree with it.*

Her emphasis on the individual responsibility of the imagined friend, and her own capacity to make the choice to resist contagion, allowed her to tell herself as nice and good while reproducing (imagined) naughtiness as due to individual failure and/or choice.

The relationship between becoming a secondary school pupil and taking on self-regulation and individual autonomy has been noted throughout the thesis. Participants anticipating becoming secondary school students framed independence and autonomy as both required and desirable, and preparing for and undertaking the transition were largely understood as individual endeavours. The discussion of academic attainment in this chapter noted that although 'doing well (enough)' academically was often understood through comparison with others, this was situated within a framework of individualised assessment, goals, and self-work. It is unsurprising, therefore, that misbehaviour and punishment were largely conceived of as individual choices and/or flaws. Laws and Davies (2000, pp.210–211) argue that it is vital for schools that students understand themselves to have choice and control over their own actions, and learn that being able to make the right choices is central to being recognised as competent:

> *'We [as students] come to believe that schooling involves a freedom to choose, through observing "choices" taking place. As teachers we position ourselves and the students within discourses which entail the making of choices…Thus choosing to do good behaviour in school makes a "good student" and a "good child" - and a "good person", that is, one who recognisably "knows" how to behave and does so willingly.'*

Laws and Davies (2000) argue that this choice does not need to be 'real' to have regulatory power, including the power to position those who misbehave as subject to their own bad choices. They suggest that to encourage pupils to behave in ways that maintain order, schools also work to instil a belief in 'consequences' - predictable reactions to both good and bad behaviours - through formal and informal punishments and rewards. This accords with my participants' shared position that learning

the 'consequences' of particular actions was part of learning to be a professional pupil. As the regulatory technologies of the timetable and planner were described in Chapter Six as reassuring in the uncertainty of navigating the new school, the predictability of knowing how rules and punishments operated was preferable to inconsistency, which was symbolised by teachers who were 'unfair' or unpredictable. Pupils were developing their own views of what constituted good/bad and appropriate/inappropriate behaviour, but they were also aware that this was ultimately subject to teachers' endorsement.

The presentation of punishment as an inevitable consequence of misbehaviour both supports and depends on the construction of misbehaviour as an individual choice. Catrin, discussing boys who were 'on report' and 'always get told off', commented that 'like, of course, they talk, why wouldn't they be on report?'. Here, their punishment was, if not justified, presented as inevitable. Seeing punishment as an inevitable consequence of 'bad' behaviour was prevalent in participants' accounts, and it was notable how normalised the systems of rules and punishments - which had been anticipated as scary and strict - had become. The schools' regimes, which commonly included some version of 'isolation' where a pupil was physically separated from their peers, were presented as unremarkable, often recounted without comment or described as justified.

> *Catt:*   *Apart from isolation, what else happens if someone gets in trouble?*
> *Becky:*   *They go to Behaviour Support.*
> *Catt:*   *What's that?*
> *Becky:*   *Where naughty people go, after isolation. They just, they ring for a teacher, and if they don't leave, they go to Behaviour Support.*

> ---

> *Catrin:*   *{Describing pastoral area} It's just like a room, and then there's like a room with windows, and that's for isolation, if you've been really naughty, you go in there and you're not allowed your phone.*
> ---

> *Cerys:*   *{Constructing a sand-scene of a classroom} This one's a single desk. For the naughty people.*

These descriptions of the spaces attached to punishments suggested that punishments were seen to mark particular pupils as naughty/bad. As with investment in academic systems of categorising pupils

according to 'ability', participants took on and reproduced the schools' identification of 'naughty' pupils. Additionally, many participants described punishments as not only inevitable but necessary.

> Catt: Is she [teacher] nice to everyone?
>
> Shreya: Yeah, if you behave. If you don't then obviously she's gonna shout at you, because. You can't just be bad.

> Ann: My Maths teacher, his name is Mr. [P], and he's really nice. Like, if you're naughty he tells you off, but he's like {gently} 'Don't do that', he's not like shouty voice, like the rest of the teachers.
>
> Catt: Is that important?
>
> Ann: I don't know. Cos if he was nice, cos he doesn't want to tell them off cos he feels bad, but then sometimes I guess he has to tell the people off who's not behaving, cos then they do it again, cos like, if you just tell them in a soft voice, they don't really care, and like, do it again, but then like if you really shout at them they get scared and then they really listen.
>
> Catt: Has that happened before, people needing to be like properly told off?
>
> Ann: Yeah. They just mess around, they don't do their work, and they like, they throw things across the classroom.

Some participants' accounts of punishment as necessary drew on a discourse of 'law and order', which defines misbehaviour as deserving punishment and invests in the school's responsibility and ability to deliver justice (McLeod 2000). However, Ann's account also suggests punishment was viewed as a necessary teaching mechanism, offering the possibility for redemption through becoming good (learning how to 'really listen'). These discourses are coherent with the view of misbehaviour as an individual flaw due to bad choices. Regardless of the different regulative discourses deployed by schools and/or drawn on by pupils (Hempel-Jorgensen 2009), misbehaviour was understood through individualised models of deviance (Lloyd 2005), and as requiring individualised intervention.

Overall, accounts of misbehaviour and participants' orientations to such behaviours demonstrated that in producing themselves as good, participants produced other pupils as both 'bad'. This was undertaken in gendered ways, but overall reproduced the idea that misbehaviour was the responsibility of individuals and needed to be punished. When punishment was questioned - typically through challenging teachers' ability to identify misbehaviour, or the punishment of particular individuals - this was not presented as a challenge the overall system of regulation.

Although teachers are responsible for identifying pupils as misbehaving and enacting punishment, participation of pupils in this regulation is necessary; teachers and pupils interact to construct 'bad' pupils (Laws and Davies 2000; Benjamin et al. 2003; Hempel-Jorgensen 2009). The production of pupils as 'bad', risky and in need of punishment has parallels with wider practices of state intervention in and punishment of groups. Tyler (2013) and Tyler and Slater (2018) argue that stigma towards marginalised populations is constructed and mobilised by governments and other state actors to allow punitive welfare policies to be framed as necessary and justifiable. This follows a long history of pathologising and criminalising 'bad' behaviour, and constructing it as an individual choice, as justification for state intervention through which working-class people in particular are 'helped or coerced to become included citizens' (Gillies 2005, p.838; Gillies et al. 2017).

A dominant view of misbehaviour among my participants, particularly girls, was as something situated within the individual (who is different from 'us') and due to bad choices. However, the choice to (mis)behave needs to be considered in relation to its 'conditions of possibility'. Both what is possible, desirable, and recognised as an acceptable form of subjectivity (Laws and Davies 2000; Davies et al. 2001; Brunila and Siivonen 2016), and differential recognition of (mis)behaviour, shape who is produced as good/bad. As discussed, 'being good' as not equally accessible to all students or even all girls, despite its construction as normative for girls. My participants' narratives demonstrated that pupils had different incentives and disincentives for (mis)behaving, that the attribution of the identity of 'good', 'bad' or 'naughty' was not directly related to behaviour, and not all had alternative options for recognition.

7.5.5. <u>Being made bad: exclusion from the professional pupil and telling oneself otherwise</u>

This section has so far focused on participants who positioned themselves as professional pupils, and their construction of others as 'bad'. However, the accounts of those being positioned in this way must also be considered. Both Alice and Callum reported being positioned as naughty or bad by their schools, and both were unhappy with this positioning. Callum explained that he did not understand how he was supposed to follow the school rules (see Section 7.4.2), and Alice noted that she felt she was being labelled as bad and over-surveilled, which was both unjustified and posed a barrier to being recognised as a professional pupil (Section 7.4.3). Both also reported tension in their negotiation of the peer world of school, Callum in his rejection of violence and Alice due to tensions between her friends' behaviours and her own desire to do well in school. Considering their accounts over time highlighted an important tension; throughout, the transition was described as a relatively minor

change, bringing either no difference or simply 'more school', yet at this point both noted that 'everything' or 'everyone' was different in high school, 'high school changes you' (Callum). This challenged my earlier conclusion that for the working-class children moving to familiar secondary schools with all their friends, the transition did not pose a significant shift. Rather, these later reflections suggested that the transition was experienced as a significant change, but not experienced as an exciting new opportunity in the same way as for many of the middle-class families.

Callum's disengagement from school developed throughout the project, and by his third interview he was struggling with both official and informal aspects of school, positioned as naughty by teachers and continuing to be excluded by peers. In his third interview, his identity-work centred on not being scared. Recalling his second interview, he had distinguished between legitimate fear (of 'killer clowns') and illegitimate fear of violence, emphasising (unprompted) that he was 'not scared' of fights at school.

> Catt: Is there stuff that people do get into trouble for? Like you talked about people fighting-
>
> Callum: No, they don't scare me
>
> Catt: Are there things that do scare you?
>
> Callum: No, nothing. Nothing in the school.
>
> Catt: Were you scared about it before you started?
>
> Callum: No

Distancing himself from the position of 'scaredy-cat', discussed in the previous chapter (see Section 6.2.3), became more central in his third interview. He emphasised that he was not scared of those who tried to fight him, but that they continued to view him as a 'pussy'. He explained that working against this designation involved significant work, including regularly demonstrating his physical strength by hurting others, presumably in order to make clear that he was choosing not to fight, rather than avoiding this because he was scared of losing. However, this 'not scared' also seemed to have permeated his whole identity as a pupil. Importantly, this work to appear not-scared seemed incompatible with work to be a professional pupil. When I asked whether he tried to follow the school rules, he responded that there was no need as he was not scared of teachers. This framing of being good as only a response to fear of teachers suggests that for Callum, there was no inhabitable subject position of 'good boy' who was not at risk of being viewed as 'scared', which was dangerous. Callum's work to cultivate an identity as not-scared therefore seemed to provide a way of negotiating the secondary school that was safe and in which he was largely left alone, but this both took extensive work, and was not compatible with recognition as a professional pupil.

7.6.   <u>Conclusions</u>

The third set of interviews provided a particularly valuable opportunity for reflection on the transition, the pupils' definitions of success, and their negotiation of its requirements. In line with my aim to move beyond the tendency to frame the transition as something with a universally desirable or accessible end-point, this chapter started from children's own evaluations of their secondary transition, exploring their reflections, priorities, and meanings.

In contrast to earlier interviews, academic aspects of school were central to participants' responses to the question of what it would mean to have 'done well' at the end of Year Seven. A focus on academic aspects of school, and successfully navigating the challenges of being a professional pupil more generally, was seen in participants' accounts of their school lives and the everyday negotiations of being-and-becoming (successful) Year Seven pupils, and their reflections on the transition. Despite my focus on encouraging participants to define their own versions of the 'good transition', dominant discourses of both 'doing well' and 'being good' were central to their narratives.

As seen in previous chapters, participants' accounts in these third interviews highlighted that peer and institutional 'worlds' - and the possibilities for recognition as professional and social pupils - could be harmonious or clashing (see also Noyes 2006). Additionally, the focus on being-and-becoming a professional pupil was not universal. Some participants, particularly those for whom peer and official school seemed to clash, presented the peer realm as key.

Pupils' third interviews demonstrated that they found value, recognition, power, and pleasure in different arenas of school, and through the gazes of different actors within it. In the majority of cases, they told themselves as successful according to neoliberal ideas of ideal educational subjects - attaining academically, working hard, being good, and enacting appropriate self-management and self-regulation - which played out in gendered ways. However, the stories participants told me of their own success framed this in terms a wide range of different areas and priorities. This involved both considering different interpretations of available educational subjectivities and a continued emphasis on finding recognition - or at least a liveable space - within the peer 'world' of school.

This chapter and the previous two have highlighted the continued work involved in negotiating the requirements of the professional and/or social pupil. However, it was also common for participants note that the transition had been easier than expected, and that they had been unnecessarily nervous:

> *Shreya:*   *[Before moving] I was really nervous about, are people gonna like me? And the teachers, like if they were very strict, and if they shouted at you for just...moving about or something.*
>
> *Catt:*   *How was it, compared to what you were expecting?*
>
> *Shreya:*   *Well the teachers aren't that bad. I mean, they're...they're bad to you if you're naughty, and...the friends, they're not that bad either! They're not mean, or horrible!*
>
> *Catt:*   *And how was it making new friends?*
>
> *Shreya:*   *Well if you're nice to them, they'll be nice to you. Yeah, it was easy.*

Shreya's account of making friends, as a simple cause-effect process that was up to the individual, was notable given her earlier acknowledgement of the work involved in being friends with everyone. This reflected a wider tendency to position aspects of the transition as easy once they had been mastered, seen in the previous chapter in relation to negotiating the timetable, the physical school and making friends. Once participants had learned to manage the requirements of the professional and/or social pupil, they took up the role of 'teller' (Delamont 1991; Mellor and Delamont 2011) in reproducing knowledge about the transition to the next cohort of pupils. They reproduced this telling in the interviews, in response to the question 'what would you tell a Year Six pupil about the transition?', performing 'teller' to an imagined Year Six pupil. Through this, they repeated the accepted truth that the transition was easier than expected, and that successful transition was down to the individual to manage. In repeating this as 'true', they were reproducing this knowledge for future cohorts, as well as telling themselves as 'successfully transitioned', 'settled in' - as individuals who had not only undertaken this successfully, but found it easy. In glossing over both their own difficulties and the support they received in managing these, the process of being-and-becoming a professional pupil was recounted as one that was ultimately straightforward, and the responsibility of the individual.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

The preceding three chapters have each explored in detail a particular moment in the transition: imagining, initial negotiation and being a secondary school pupil. This chapter now brings together key themes and findings across the three chapters, returning to the research questions to reflect on how these have been addressed. I also consider the empirical, methodological and theoretical contribution of this work, the limitations of this study, and directions for further research.

8.1.   Responding to the research questions

8.1.1.   How do children narrate and navigate their imagined transitions from primary to secondary school?

Children's imaginings of the transition primarily focused on the social changes they anticipated. Where organisational and academic aspects of transition featured, this was due to their relationships with the social, or to their assumed relationship to maturity. The significance of the social echoes the findings of existing work exploring children's expectations and experiences of the transition (Chedzoy and Burden 2005; Pratt and George 2005; Weller 2007; Ashton 2008; Evangelou et al. 2008) and adds to the argument made in Chapter Two (see 2.2.6) that there is a need for transitions research to attend to the social.

The transition was generally viewed as significant, a chance to move into a more mature social role, and it was anticipated with a mixture of excitement and fear. However, for some working-class children, the transition was viewed at this stage as a non-event, simply signifying 'more school'. This is a notable contrast to the dominant narrative of the transition as a key milestone in young people's lives (see for example Measor and Fleetham 2005; Galton and McLellan 2018).

Parents' expectations of the transition were also explored in relation to this question, as their views and experiences of the transition are rarely considered in existing work, despite the knowledge that they are significant in their child's negotiation of the transition (West et al. 2010; Symonds and Galton 2014). Parents' imaginings of the transition provided valuable insight into their children's expectations. Parents of all backgrounds recounted working to manage their fears through the selection of a secondary school for their child, although this negotiation varied according to class. This supports the argument made in Chapter Two (see 2.3.7) for the secondary transition to be viewed as a process that may begin far before the end of Year Six. Parents' accounts indicated a clear class

divide in how the transition was viewed: as an opportunity (although not without anxiety) by middle-class parents, and as a threat by working-class parents. Additionally, middle-class parents also recounted being prepared to intervene at the level of the school if things went wrong, whereas working-class parents focused more on their child's own behaviour and choices, encouraging their child to choose the 'right path'.

Additionally, the children's accounts illuminated their meaning-making and active negotiation of the transition, which is frequently overlooked in transitions literature, particularly the dominant 'outcomes' approach (see Section 2.2.7). Although children's concerns focused on the social, they framed this as primarily beyond their control, and their efforts to prepare for the transition related more to academic and organisational aspects, which are often the focus of school-based transition interventions (Galton and McLellan 2018). Children worked to navigate their imaginings of the transition by seeking information from official and unofficial sources and, for girls, undertaking individualised self-work to prepare. Their views of the transition and their preparation drew on a view of the professional and social pupil reproduced through formal and informal transition work, as self-managing, sensible, hard-working and mature. Additionally, inside knowledge from older siblings or friends was presented as both supportive and regulatory in relation to official and unofficial rules. Rather than being viewed in polarised terms as either sources of fear (Symonds 2009; Rice et al. 2011) or as protective, older pupils were described as both setting out how to be a secondary school pupil and regulating this negotiation.

8.1.2.   How do children negotiate the new institutional and peer worlds of secondary school, and the processes of being and becoming professional and social pupils?

The exploratory, child-led approach taken in this study, and the explicit attention to the social aspect of transition, allowed for the negotiation of both peer and institutional worlds to be explored from children's point of view. Navigation of institutional and peer worlds of secondary school was undertaken simultaneously, in ways that were constantly interacting, rather than the somewhat separate ways that social and other aspects of transition have been considered previously (see for example West et al. 2010). These worlds, their navigation, and the available possibilities for being a professional and social pupil, were sometimes in harmony and sometimes dissonant (see also Noyes 2006), depending on both the school and the child. The role of space and place, which was not identified in the research questions as a focal point of the study, was also a thread that ran through participants' accounts, with the navigation of physical space inseparable from the negotiation of social space, and identified as a critical moment in becoming a secondary school pupil. Future work in this

area may benefit from exploring in more detail the physical 'layer' of the school (Gordon et al. 2000) in order to more fully attend to the transition as a spatialised process.

This study also explored the negotiation of being-and-becoming a professional and/or social pupil over time. Participants' views of the professional and social pupil - what these meant, their importance, and their accessibility to the child - and the 'good' transition changed over time in non-linear ways. Following a focus on the social before and immediately after starting secondary school, participants' third interviews engaged more extensively with the professional, particularly the academic aspect of transition, although the social remained important. However, rather than being unable to concentrate on negotiating the institutional world of school while initially 'preoccupied with friendships' (Galton et al. 1999; see also Ashton 2008), participants were always negotiating both, but their relative importance waxed and waned over time.

The professional and social pupils were present throughout participants' narratives, first as imagined identities or subject-positions, and then as identities they were actively learning to negotiate. At each stage of the research, new aspects or requirements of the secondary school pupil were presented as mastered by participants, and in telling themselves as successful this was frequently told as 'easy' (for example, in their accounts of learning to navigate the physical school, and its new regulatory systems, and forming new friendships). By the third interview, the transition itself was commonly presented as something that participants had managed to negotiate with minimal difficulty. The longitudinal nature of this study was particularly valuable in examining how views of the transition changed over time, according to the different position of participants in relation to this process.

Although participants recounted learning the requirements of the professional and social pupil over time, and in some cases learning to define themselves according to these requirements, it was also clear that accessing recognition as a professional and/or social pupil was not a one-off or one-way process. This was seen most clearly in the account of Alice, who initially told herself as a professional pupil but by her third interview was being repositioned as no longer successfully professional, having been identified by teachers as misbehaving and requiring intervention. Additionally, being-and-becoming a social pupil was not presented as having a defined end-point. Although initial friendships formed quickly, the negotiation of friendships and the peer group, and their practices of inclusion, exclusion, and regulation, continued to require effort and engagement throughout the participants' negotiation of their first school year.

8.1.3. Through these processes of being-and-becoming secondary school pupils, how is difference (re)produced within and between schools?

A key aim of this study was to explore the transition as a space in which difference and inequalities may be reproduced, addressing the tendency in existing research for secondary transition to be viewed as separate from its social context (Rice et al. 2011; Tobbell and O'Donnell 2013). At all stages of the transition explored in this study, the reproduction of difference both within and between schools was seen in participants' accounts.

From the first imaginings of the transition presented in the initial interviews and drawings, the transition and its navigation were gendered, classed and school-specific. The schools that children attended were shaped by class; with the exception of Dylan, middle-class participants attended better-resourced and higher-ranking schools in affluent areas, whereas working-class children attended poorly-resourced, stigmatised schools in areas of high deprivation. Through this classed navigation of school 'choice' and in other ways, their social position shaped parents' and children's imaginings of the transition, and their resources for managing these transitions.

The complexities of how class and school specificity interact could not be unpicked in this project, due to the classed trajectories of school choice. However, where possible I examined difference both within and between schools. Different schools offered different possibilities for recognition as a professional and/or social pupil, and pupils' desire and ability to display the appropriate dispositions and be recognised as a professional and/or social pupil was gendered, classed and school-specific. This study emphasised that while learning to navigate the institutional world of secondary school, participants were also negotiating peer-led practices of inclusion and exclusion, relating a set of norms and valued characteristics that in some cases differed from those required of the professional pupil.

Additionally, participants' accounts indicated that the transition is a space for the reproduction of gender within schools, in ways that may prove difficult for pupils of all genders to negotiate, and/or limit the possibilities open to them. The reproduction of gender within peer cultures, often viewed as a separate process to those through which gender is regulated by teachers, was shown to be inseparable from the institutional world of the school, seen most clearly in the regulation of middle-class girls' behaviour through the need to be both 'good' and 'nice' in order to inhabit a space at the intersection of peer and institutional cultures.

For the middle-class girls whose accounts form a primary focus of Chapter Seven, being both a professional and social pupil was possible in their particular schools - if they could be 'good' and

'nice', and appropriately academically successful (do 'well enough'). Recognition also required adherence to the unwritten peer rules that seemed to exclude some, such as [W], the girl described by Megan as bullied by Megan's friends. In contrast, for Callum, the combination of his positioning as a working-class boy who refused hegemonic forms of masculinity, and the school he attended, left him in a position in which he seemed to have no available version of the professional or social pupil that he could be/become. As argued by Benjamin et al. (2003) and Youdell (2006; 2011), processes and moments of inclusion/exclusion, categorising and (dis)identification are central to children's negotiation of school life, and my participants' accounts indicated that the inclusion/exclusion processes enacted by both pupils and teachers shaped the possibilities available to them in being-and-becoming secondary school pupils. Importantly, not only do children have access to different possibilities for being-and-becoming professional and/or social pupils, but also the peer and institutional worlds may interact in ways that mean certain pupils are excluded from the possibility of being/becoming either professional or social pupils. The transition is hence a process through which difference is reproduced according to the type of professional and/or social pupil it is possible or desirable to be/become, and between those who access one or both of these positions and those who are excluded.

8.2.   **Limitations of this study**

This study is not without its limitations. Arguably, the framing of the transition as being-and-becoming a professional and/or social pupil does not give adequate space to those for whom this is not possible or desirable. Although the accounts of two such pupils (Callum and Alice) have been explored, it is possible that the framing of the transition in this way risks re-inscribing particular versions of the transition as normal or normative. Further research in this area could consider how to adapt this framework to more explicitly make space for the ways that children who do not become professional or social pupils experience the transition.

Certain limitations were presented by the study methodology. Its longitudinal, in-depth nature necessarily limited the breadth of both sample, and the topics that could be both explored in the research and presented in this thesis. The study took place in one small area of south Wales, meaning its findings cannot be generalised to wider populations of children. Additionally, the over-representation of middle-class white girls means that the voices of this group sometimes dominate, although I have endeavoured to present the findings in ways that do not reproduce their narratives as normative. The lack of in-depth exploration of the experiences of boys, working-class children, and children of minoritised ethnicities, is a notable limitation of this study and an important area for further research.

Additionally, the methods chosen had limitations as well as affordances. Although drawing was chosen for the initial research session due to its assumed simplicity, this did not prevent some participants being concerned with the quality of their drawing or interpretation of the task. The more directive approach and materials provided for the timelines in the second research session arguably encouraged participants towards a linear view of time and exploration of a limited range of emotions. Sandboxing, used in the third session, still raised some concern about undertaking the activity 'correctly', despite my intention that this would be avoided due to the lack of artistic skill needed to engage with the method. Additionally, the limited repertoire of characters in the sandboxing set may have reproduced particular representations as normative (girls as fairies and princesses, boys as soldiers and knights). If using this method in future, a more varied repertoire of characters could be sought, or humanoid figures avoided entirely. Additionally, the use of this method to explore participants' view of the 'important people in your school life' assumes the existence of such people; it may be more appropriate to present an alternative for children who did not feel they had any 'important people' in their school lives.

These limitations were identified through the reflexive practices I employed, particularly the research diary. This allowed me to bear these limitations in mind when analysing the data, and their role in shaping the data and my conclusions has been explored where relevant throughout the thesis. However, given the tendency for creative methods to be viewed as a panacea for undertaking research with children (as discussed in Section 4.2), I consider it important to note these limitations here.

Finally, as noted in Chapter Four, practical factors made it necessary to deviate from my original research plan, which would have explored children and parents' accounts during the third term of Year Seven. The three waves of data explored here allowed me to address the research questions, giving ample insight into the anticipation and negotiation of the transition. However, if undertaking similar work in future it would be valuable to explore children and parents' accounts at the critical moment of approaching the end of Year Seven.

8.3.   Implications for future research, policy and practice

Directions for future research, and recommendations for policy and practice, follow both the key findings of the research and its limitations.

A key aim of this study was to address the lack of attention in school transitions research to the social. Friendships and relationships were highlighted as central to children's accounts and experiences but due to the participant-led nature of this project, this was not the sole focus of the research. Future research exploring the secondary transition would hence benefit from further exploration of the social, both within and outside school, and exploring this in detail over time. Additionally, future work in this area could address the methodological limitations of this study, focusing on the narratives and experiences of groups of pupils under-represented in this sample. Finally, the role of the school 'choice' process in the secondary transition has been noted at various points, as has the need for school transitions work to consider the transition as a process that may begin before Year Six. Future research on the transition would benefit from more explicitly exploring the secondary selection and application process as part of the transition, particularly as the fixing of primary-secondary school trajectories has been shown in this study to be a critical moment in the reproduction of class through the secondary transition.

Although this study did not aim to explore intervention practice, the children's accounts of transition work and their transition more broadly provided insight into how schools could better support pupils making this transition. Children gave largely positive accounts of their schools' intervention work in the initial transition, supporting the assertion by Ashton (2008) and Lucey and Reay (2000) that even relatively minor interventions may make the transition more enjoyable and less difficult for children. In particular, practices that familiarised and/or helped pupils with navigating the physical school were cited as supportive by participants. However, in line with their overall concern with social aspects of transition, particularly before and immediately following the start of secondary school, pupils also highlighted the supportive role of existing relationships and older friends or siblings, through both bonding and bridging social capital, and the provision of 'insider information' (Davies 2019). It was common for pupils to cite relationships as key in preparing them for the transition, indicating that for pupils who do not have existing connections to older pupils, it may be valuable for schools to provide opportunities to meet and speak with older pupils in advance of starting secondary school.

However, pupils' accounts of the continued negotiation of friendships, inclusion/exclusion and victimisation make clear that there is a need to move beyond a view of the transition as a one-off or short-term process, as is common in both research and practice (see Chapter Two). Rather, pupils continue to actively (re)negotiate being a professional and social pupil throughout the year. This should be borne in mind when developing practices to support pupils with the transition, particularly in relation to social aspects. The value of supportive spaces for pupils who struggle socially was emphasised, particularly in the accounts of Becky and Cerys in Chapter Seven. However, the role of such spaces and their associated labelling practices in reproducing particular pupils as 'vulnerable' or 'at risk' should also be noted.

Additionally, this study highlighted the continued centrality of gender in shaping pupils' transition to secondary education, but also suggested that the transition may pose a valuable opportunity for disrupting or challenging this. When entering secondary school, pupils expect and are faced with new formal and informal systems and practices, which at present reinforce binary gendered views of acceptable and valued behaviour. However, given the construction of the transition as a significant shift in social role and an entrance into new space, schools may be able to use this as an opportunity to actively work against potentially harmful gender stereotypes and divisions.

8.4.   Key contributions of the study

Overall, the study makes a novel empirical, theoretical, and methodological contribution to research on the secondary transition in the UK.

This study provides in-depth insight into the transition over time, addressing a key gap in existing transitions research, which frequently treats the transition as a short-term or one-off process. It addresses the tendency for existing work to frame schools as neutral spaces and examine transition from the point of view of schools' priorities, and instead explores the transition from children's own point of view. This child-led approach led to extensive exploration of the social aspect of transition, in contrast to the general lack of attention to this aspect in previous work. The inclusion of parents in this work provided a further empirical contribution, with their data enabling insights into the relationship between the school 'choice' process and the secondary transition. Finally, this work highlights the role of the transition as a process through which gender and class were reproduced. It demonstrates that although the transition and its meaning (or lack of significance) are highly personal and school-specific, this must be understood in the context of the set of discourses, social structures and relationships that shape young people's lives.

These empirical developments were enabled by the study's innovative methodological approach. It was unique in transitions research in using a variety of different creative methods in addition to interviews, in ways that allowed participants to engage with the methods and communicate in ways that worked for them. Although time-consuming and labour-intensive, the longitudinal application of a 'bricolage' approach, using creative methods flexibly and responsively, both proved engaging for participants (indicated in their enjoyment of the research sessions, which in some cases stretched over multiple hours) and allowed the production of a great deal of rich, in-depth data on children's views and experiences over time (see Appendix E).

Undertaking multiple research sessions with each participant was particularly valuable in exploring change, continuity, and development over time, and examining how the transition is reproduced discursively by those experiencing it as well as schools, families, policy, and the media. Different creative methods, each with their own affordances, allowed different moments in the transition to be explored. Drawing proved appropriate for initial interviews, due to not requiring extensive materials or artistic skills, and the guided nature of the initial activity enabled participants to guide the focus of the interview, without being so open that participants were unsure how to respond to the activity. The flexibility and tactile nature of the timeline activity used in the second research session was valuable for working with children's different preferences and styles of communication. Using emotion stickers facilitated an exploration of affective attachments to different aspects of the everyday, which contrasted with the often short responses given when I questioned how participants felt about things; however, this method may benefit from further development, such as providing a wider range of emotion stickers. Finally, the use of sandboxing in the third research session gave valuable insight into relational aspects of transition, with different aspects of the sandbox including the choice of figurines, their arrangement in the box, and the use of the box and sand, all employed in participants' accounts of their relationships. The abstraction and necessity for metaphor was particularly valuable in opening up space for participants to creatively describe their friends and others in their school lives, and this method also provided space for play and messiness, making the research enjoyable for participants.

Overall, these methods seemed to engage participants and allow the sessions to be flexible and child-led, without requiring specialist equipment (with the exception of the sandbox) or artistic expertise from myself or participants. A similar approach could be applied to explore other processes, particularly other transitions that take place and are renegotiated over time.

Finally, I have set out a new way of thinking of the secondary transition, which addresses many of the limitations to current work identified in Chapter Two: the tendency to view the transition as a one-off, one-way process negotiated by a child in isolation, and as a problem to be resolved in order to support children in fulfilling the requirements of schools and/or reach a universally desirable 'good transition'. Building on Gordon et al.'s (2000) concept of the professional pupil, I have developed the analogous concept of the social pupil to allow for a fuller exploration of the social aspects of the transition. Explicitly examining children's negotiation of both institutional and peer worlds of the school indicated that the requirements and possibilities of these two worlds, and their relative importance, varied over time and between children. Additionally, it elucidated the ways that these two worlds were always being negotiated simultaneously, and interacted in mutually affecting ways, with

behaviour, friendship and identity-work inseparable from children's negotiation of the kind of professional and social pupil it is possible or desirable to be/become.

Understanding the transition as a process of being-and-becoming a professional and/or social pupil hence provides a way of considering the transition as a long-term, multi-directional, social process that has different meaning for different children, a meaning that may change over time as they negotiate the transition and the new identities available to them. Additionally, using this framework to examine different children's accounts over time illuminates how, although the transition is experienced as highly personal, its meaning and negotiation are shaped by dominant notions of the professional and social pupil, and the good transition, as well as the wider set of discourses, social structures and relationships that shape young people's lives.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Documents relating to ethical approval

Document 1: Application for ethical approval from Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Version 3.0 January 2016

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

SREC Ref No:	

STAFF, MPhil/PhD & PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE RESEARCH PROJECTS
Ethical Approval Application Form

Must be submitted at least TWO WEEKS before a School Research Ethics Committee (SREC) meeting to:
Deborah Watkins, Research and Graduate Studies Administrator
(Email: WatkinsD2@cardiff.ac.uk / Tel Extension: 79051 / Room 0.23 Glamorgan Building)

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please tick relevant project type:	**Staff Project** Yes ☐	**PhD Project** Yes ☒	
Title of Project:	How does the transition from primary to secondary school impact on young people's health and wellbeing? A longitudinal, qualitative study		
Project Start Date:	January 2016	**Project End Date: December 2018**	
Project Funder:	ESRC Wales Doctoral Training Centre		
Name of Researcher(s) / Student:	Catt Turney		
Signature of Lead Researcher / Student:	Catt Turney		
Student Number:	**1530209**		
Student's Email Address:	**TurneyC@cardiff.ac.uk**		
Supervisors:	**1 Dr. Adam Fletcher**	**2 Dr. Dawn Mannay**	
Supervisors' Signatures:	**1 Adam Fletcher**	**2**	

Before completing, please now read the Application Guidance Notes at the end of this form

SECTION A: PROJECT SUMMARY

1. Below, please provide a concise general description of your dissertation project

   This transition from primary to secondary school is a key stage in young people's development, and their experiences of this transition can have far-reaching implications for young people's health and wellbeing. Although schools invest in various ad-hoc actions, young people's own accounts of the complex ways the primary-secondary school transition influences their wellbeing remain under-researched and under-theorised. Schools' actions may have unintended, harmful consequences, and may not relate to young people's own needs, anxieties or positive expectations.

   This project will use creative, qualitative methods with a sample of 20-25 young people to create and analyse in-depth longitudinal data exploring their experiences of the primary-secondary transition and how

this related to their health and wellbeing. These young people's parents, guardians and other family members (e.g. siblings) will also be interviewed to develop a comprehensive understanding of family-based and other contextual factors involved in young people's experiences of the transition. Documentary evidence, observations and interviews with school staff will be used to understand different school contexts and how this shapes transitions and their health impact.

This research will support the development of new theory on relationships between the school transition and young people's health and wellbeing, and contribute to the development of new, theoretically-informed interventions to promote a more positive school transition.

2.	What are the research questions ?
	- How do young people and their families describe the period of transition from primary to secondary school and what connections do they make to health and wellbeing?
	- How does this vary according to school context and sociodemographic factors?
	- What policies and intervention methods offer the greatest potential to improve the transition for young people?

3.	Who are the participants ?
	- School students aged 10-12 ('primary participants')
	- Parents/guardians of primary participants
	- Additional family members of primary participants
	- School staff

4.	How will the participants be recruited ?
	- Participants will be recruited via young people's groups such as sports teams, arts organisations and youth groups (e.g. young people's theatre groups, Scouts/Brownies). Due to the longitudinal nature of the research, primary participants will be over-recruited to account for likely attrition. 25-30 young people will be included in the initial sample, with the expectation that approximately 20 will remain in the project until completion.
	- 3-4 young people's groups will be purposively sampled to ensure diversity according to gender and socioeconomic background. For each young people's group, the relevant gatekeeper will be given information about the project and invited to pass on recruitment information to potential participants (children and parents) or asked to allow the researcher to attend the group and speak to young people and/or parents/guardians about the project directly. Primary participants will be offered shopping vouchers to recompense them for the time taken to participate the project.
	- Parents/guardians will be invited to participate at the same time as their consent is sought for their children to participate. They will be invited at this stage to take part in one interview at baseline (when the child is at the end of year 6) and one during the child's final term of year 7. Parents/guardians will also be asked at this point if they would like to invite other family members, such as siblings or grandparents, to participate. Snowball sampling via parents may also be used to recruit additional primary participants and their parents. Parents/guardians will be invited to provide contact details for additional participants (parents/guardians) or to pass on written information about the project.
	- After baseline interviews, school staff will be recruited at participants' primary and secondary schools. They will be interviewed and asked to supply other sources of data about school context (e.g. policy documents). If relevant, staff will be asked if the researcher may attend and observe transition activities organised by the school.

	What sort of data will be collected and what methods will you use to do this?
	Up to four in-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted with all primary participants, exploring their expectations and accounts of their transition from primary to secondary school. These will correspond approximately to the following timeline:
	1. May-July 2016 (third term of year 6)
	2. September 2016 (beginning of year 7)
	3. January - March 2017 (second term of year 7)
	4. May-July 2017 (final term of year 7)
	The interviews will use creative and visual methods, including mapping out 'future selves', and bringing personal artefacts (e.g. an object related to their primary school) to the interview. Ethical approval is being sought for a

range of methods so that these can be presented to the young people, to allow them to exercise choice in the research instruments and processes. For each method ethical protocols will be established with the participants to guide how the activities are undertaken.

Participants will also be invited to generate data in relation to their experiences of their school life at certain points between interview times, using their choice of methods including drawing, writing and photos (either hard copy or digital, depending on participants' access and existing practice in relation to technology), and bring these to the interview.

Participant-generated data will act as a point of discussion during interviews. Participant-generated data such as drawings and writing may be copied/photographed, as relevant, by the researcher, so these can be referenced when analysing interview data. The researcher will not have independent access to participants' photos. Copies of photos containing identifiable people or places will not be taken.

Additionally, in-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted with parents/guardians and other family members of primary participants before and after the transition to secondary school (end of year 6 and final term of year 7). These will explore their views of the primary participant's transition and its relationship with their health and wellbeing. Parents/guardians may also be invited to bring artefacts or photos in relation to their child's transition to secondary school, to be discussed in the interviews.

Staff at participants' primary or secondary schools will also be invited to take part in in-depth semi-structured interviews exploring their views on the primary-secondary transition and the school's actions to support this. For reasons of confidentiality, staff will not be informed which children are taking part in the research, so will not be asked to discuss individual participants' transition experiences.

Interviews will largely take place face-to-face but where more convenient for participants, interviews may take place via phone or Skype.

Interview data will be audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically.

If feasible, observational data will be collected during transition activities organised by participants' primary or secondary schools. Detailed fieldnotes will be taken during these observations but no data will be audio recorded. Documentary analysis of data relating to school context and transition activities (e.g. school policies) will also be undertaken.

6.	How and where (venue) are you undertaking your research?
	
	   - Participants (or their parent(s)/guardian(s), where relevant) will be invited to choose whether interviews take place in their home, school or at Cardiff University, or to suggest an alternative location convenient to them.
	   - All participants will be informed of the limits to confidentiality if the interview takes place in a public place.
	
	What is the reason(s) for using this particular location ?
	
	- To maximise convenience and comfort for participants.
	
	Observations of transition activities are likely to take place at participants' primary or secondary schools.

7.	(a) Will you be analysing secondary data (that is, data collected by other for research purposes) ? No
	(b) Will you be using administrative data (that is, data collected by other for registration, transaction or record keeping purposes) ? No

SECTION B: RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

8.	(a) Does your project involve children or young people under the age of 18? If No, go to 10	Yes ☒	No ☐
	(b) If so, have you consulted the University's guidance on child protection procedures, and do you know how to respond if you have concerns?	Yes ☒	No ☐
9.	(a) Does your project involve one-to-one or other *unsupervised* research with children and young people under the age of 18 ?	Yes ☒	No ☐

	If No, go to 9(b) If Yes, go to 9(c)		
	(b) If your project involves only *supervised* contact with children and young people under the age of 18, have you consulted the head of the institution where you are undertaking your research to establish if you need a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check? If Yes, and you do need a DBS check, then go to 9(c); if you do not need a DBS check, then go to Question 10.	Yes ☐	No ☐
	(c) Do you have an up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check ? (*Please give details below if you have a pending application*)	Yes ☒	No ☐
10.	Does your project include people with learning or communication difficulties?	Yes ☐	No ☒
11.	Does your project include people in custody?	Yes ☐	No ☒
12.	Is your project likely to include people involved in illegal activities?	Yes ☐	No ☒
13.	Does your project involve people belonging to a vulnerable group, other than those listed above?	Yes ☐	No ☒
14.	Does your project include people who are, or are likely to become your clients or clients of the department in which you work?	Yes ☐	No ☒

SECTION C: CONSENT PROCEDURES

15.	Will you obtain written consent for participation ?	Yes ☒	No ☐
16.	What procedures will you use to obtain informed consent from participants ? Written opt-in consent will be sought from all participants being interviewed, and from a parent/guardian for all participants under 16. In addition to consent to participate in the project, primary participants will be asked to provide written consent for anonymised participant-generated data (e.g. participants' drawings or writing produced as part of the project) to be included in published work and dissemination activities. Before consent is sought, all participants, and parents/guardians of participants under 16, will be provided with an information sheet containing written information about the project. This will include age-appropriate information about the project, its aims and what is involved for participants; confidentiality and anonymity; withdrawal; and contact details of the researcher if they have any questions about the project. The project information sheet will also be summarised verbally to participants (and parent(s)/guardian(s) where relevant), and they will be given an opportunity to discuss the project with their parent/guardian/child and ask the researcher any questions, before the first interview takes place. As the study is longitudinal, 'check-in' activities will be held at the beginning of each interview including reminders of the purpose of the study, the right to withdraw, confidentiality and disclosures, methods to be employed, and how the data will be recorded in that session. For observations of transition activities, written opt-in consent will be sought from the member of school staff facilitating the researcher's visit, and a senior member of school staff. Opt-*out* consent will be used for students, staff and family members taking part in the event. All will be issued with a project information sheet, and given the opportunity to opt out of the research if they wish.		

17.	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed ?	N/A ☐	Yes (see above) ☒	No ☐
18.	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?		Yes ☒	No ☐
19.	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reasons ?		Yes ☒	No ☐
20.	Will you give potential participants a significant period of time to consider participation ?		Yes ☒	No ☐

21.	Does your project provide for people for whom English / Welsh is not their first language?	Yes ☐	No ☒

SECTION D: POTENTIAL HARMS ARISING FROM THE PROJECT

22.	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?	Yes ☒	No ☐
23.	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing a detriment to their interests as a result of participation?	Yes ☐	No ☒
24.	Below, please identify any potential for harm (to yourself or participants) that might arise from the way the research is conducted (see related guidance: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/research/researchethics/guidance/index.html) PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE BOX BLANK		

Participants

Given the project's focus on a transition that often causes anxiety, it is possible that some participants may find aspects of the research give rise to troubling thoughts. It is also possible that safeguarding concerns (e.g. in relation to mental health issues or bullying) may be identified during the research, particularly given that the researcher will have multiple contacts with participants over a long period of time.

Researcher
There may be an emotional impact for the researcher of carrying out participatory research on this subject with young people and their families. There is also a risk of potential harm to the researcher arising from lone working with participants.

25.	Below, please set out the measures you will put in place to control possible harms to yourself or participants (see related guidance: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/research/researchethics/guidance/index.html) PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE BOX BLANK		

Risk of distress to participants
At the outset, before any data is generated, participants (and parent(s)/guardian(s) for those aged under 16) will be made aware in writing and verbally of the nature of the project and its subject matter, at which point they have the option to decline participation. Participants will be reminded verbally before each interview of the subject matter, and their right to withdraw, not to answer any question, or to take a break at any time. Participants will also be provided at first contact with written information on age-appropriate sources of support and relevant information, such as Childline and NSPCC.

Identification of safeguarding concerns
If any safeguarding concerns are disclosed or identified, the researcher will consult with the project's supervisors and follow Cardiff University's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy. The University's Designated Safeguarding Officer will be contacted if any additional advice is required.

Participants will be made aware from the outset that what they share with researchers will be confidential where possible, but that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in all cases (e.g. where there is risk of serious harm to self or others).

Lone-working researcher practices
Cardiff University guidance on safety in fieldwork for lone workers will be followed to minimise the risk of harm to the researcher when undertaking fieldwork alone.

Risk of emotional harm to researcher
If any episode of fieldwork is distressing, the researcher will undertake a de-briefing session with one or both of the project's supervisors, and access additional services if necessary.

SECTION E: RESEARCH SAFETY

Before completing this section, you should consult the document 'Guidance for Applicants' – and the information in this under 'Managing the risks associated with SOCSI research':
http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/research/researchethics/guidance/index.html

26.	Are there any realistic safety risks associated with your fieldwork?	Yes ☐	No ☒
27.	Have you taken into account the Cardiff University guidance on safety in fieldwork / for lone workers ?	Yes ☒	No ☐

SECTION F: DATA COLLECTION

The SREC appreciates that these questions will not in general relate to research undertaken in SOCSI. However, for further University guidance and information please see the links below.

28.	Does the study involve the collection or use of human tissue (including, but not limited to, blood, saliva and bodily waste fluids)?	Yes ☐	No ☒
	If Yes, a copy of the submitted application form and any supporting documentation must be emailed to the Human Tissue Act Compliance Team (HTA@cf.ac.uk). A decision will only be made once these documents have been received. For guidance on the Human Tissue Act: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/govrn/cocom/humantissueact/index.html		
29.	Does the study include the use of a drug ?	Yes ☐	No ☒
	If Yes, you will need to contact Research Governance before submission (resgov@cardiff.ac.uk)		

SECTION G: DATA PROTECTION

30.	(a) Are you collecting sensitive data? [Defined as: the racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs (or similar), trade union membership, physical or mental health, sexual life, the commission or alleged commission any offence, or any proceedings for any offence committed or alleged to have been committed the disposal of such proceedings or the sentence of any court in such proceedings.]	Yes ☒	No ☐
	If Yes, how will you employ a more rigorous consent procedure ? Participants may discuss sexuality and/or gender identity, mental health or ethnic origin during data production. Participants, and parent(s)/guardian(s) of those aged under 16, will be provided with detailed written and verbal information about the project, to ensure they are aware of the subject matter. They will be given the opportunity to discuss the project with their parent/guardian/child and to raise any questions with the researcher before giving consent and before each interview takes place. Content will be piloted for acceptability and participants will be reminded before each interview of their right to decline or withdraw from participation and/or not answer any questions. I will ensure participants only disclose what they are comfortable with sharing and ensure their data is securely stored.		
	(b) Are you collecting identifiable data ? [Please note, this includes recordings of interviews/focus groups etc.]	Yes ☒	No ☐
	If Yes, how you will anonymise this data ? Interview data Consent forms will be kept separate to participants' interview data. All names and other identifying information, such as name of school or sports team, will be removed from interview data at the point of transcription. No identifying information from interview data will be included in any publication or dissemination activity (e.g. conference presentation) arising from this project. Observational data Consent forms and names of participants opting out of observations will be kept separate from fieldnotes. All names and other identifying information will be removed from fieldnotes at the earliest opportunity. Participant-generated data		

	Copies/photographs of participant-generated data will be kept separate from participants' consent forms. Any identifying information will be removed from participant-generated data (such as drawings or writing) before publication or use in any other dissemination activity.		
	(c) Will any non-anonymised and/or personalised data be retained ?	Yes ☒	No ☐
	If **No**, what are the reasons for this ?		
	(d) Data (i.e. actual interview recordings, not just transcripts) should be retained for at least five years or two years post-publication. Have you noted and included this information in your Information Sheet(s) ?	Yes ☒	No ☐
31.	**Below,** please detail how you will deal with data security. Please note, personal laptops (even password protected) stored in personal accommodation are not acceptable. Storage on University network, or use of encrypted laptops is required.		

Personal data will only be accessed by the researcher and project supervisors.

Participant consent forms will be kept separate from their data. Consent forms and hard copies of non-anonymised participant-generated data will be stored in locked filing cabinets in the researcher's university office.

Electronic versions (digital photos) of non-anonymised participant-generated data, and audio files of interviews, will be saved in a password-protected folder on the university network, accessible only to the researcher. Any originals or photocopies of participant-generated data will be stored in a locked cabinet.

All identifying information will be removed from interview data at the point of transcription, and replaced with unique ID numbers. Any identifying information will be removed from fieldnotes at the earliest opportunity.

Anonymised transcripts will be stored on a password-protected folder on the university network, accessible only to the researcher. A document linking participants' names to ID numbers will be stored in a password-protected folder on the university network, accessible only to the researcher.

Electronic data will be regularly backed up onto a password-protected external hard-drive that will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's university office.

If there are any other potential ethical issues that you think the Committee should consider please explain them on a separate sheet. It is your obligation to bring to the attention of the Committee any ethical issues not covered on this form.

Document 2: Letter from the Cardiff University SREC confirming ethical approval.

Note that this is a copy of the original signed letter, as this could not be retrieved for inclusion due to restrictions on travel during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3rd March 2016

Our ref: SREC/1829

Catherine Turney
PhD Programme
SOCSI

Dear Catt

Your project entitled *'How does the transition from primary to secondary school impact on young people's health and wellbeing ? A longitudinal, qualitative study'* has been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University, at its meeting on 2nd March 2016 <u>subject to the following</u> (you do not need to respond to the Committee):

☐ You should arrange for an allocated teacher or counsellor to be available immediately to deal with any students who become distressed.

If you need clarification concerning this, please contact me.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored every 12 months and it is a condition of continued approval that you complete the monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Professor Alan Felstead
<u>Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee</u>

cc: H Vincent / Supervisors: A Fletcher & D Mannay

Document 3: Application to SREC for minor amendment to ethics form

From: Catt Turney
Sent: 24 May 2016 10:17
To: Deborah Watkins
Subject: Amendment to ethics form SREC/1829

Dear Deb,

I hope you are well.

Could I please request an amendment to the ethics form entitled ''*How does the transition from primary to secondary school impact on young people's health and wellbeing ? A longitudinal, qualitative study'*, which was approved at the SREC meeting on 2 March (ref number SREC/1829)?

The amendment I am proposing is to recruit participants via primary schools as well as young people's groups. The amendment is shown in red below, and relates to Section A, question 4.

How will the participants be recruited ?

> Participants will be recruited via young people's groups such as sports teams, arts organisations and youth groups (e.g. young people's theatre groups, Scouts/Brownies). Participants will also be recruited via primary schools. Due to the longitudinal nature of the research, primary participants will be over-recruited to account for likely attrition. 25-30 young people will be included in the initial sample, with the expectation that approximately 20 will remain in the project until completion.
>
> 3-4 young people's groups and two primary schools will be purposively sampled to ensure diversity according to gender and socioeconomic background. For each young people's group, the relevant gatekeeper will be given information about the project and invited to pass on recruitment information to potential participants (children and parents) or asked to allow the researcher to attend the group/school and speak to young people and/or parents/guardians about the project directly. Primary participants will be offered shopping vouchers to recompense them for the time taken to participate the project.

Would it be possible to pass this on to the chair of the Research Ethics Committee for review? Please let me know if anything additional is needed.

Thanks and best wishes,
Catt

Catt Turney

PhD student
DECIPHer
Cardiff School of Social Sciences
Cardiff University
1-3 Museum Place
Cardiff
CF10 3BD

Document 4: Letter from Cardiff University SREC confirming approval for amendment to ethics form

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY
PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD

School of Social Sciences
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol
Head of School, Pennaeth yr Ysgol
Professor, Yr Athro Amanda Coffey FAcSS

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www.cardiff.ac.uk/social-sciences

Prifysgol Caerdydd
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Rhodfa'r Brenin Edward VII
Caerdydd CF10 3WT
Cymru, Y Deyrnas Unedig

Ffôn +44(0)29 2087 5179
Ffacs +44(0)29 2087 4175

www.caerdydd.ac.uk/social-sciences

6th June 2016

Our ref: SREC/1829

Catherine Turney
SOCSI (DECIPHer)

Dear Catt

Your proposed amendment to your project entitled '*How does the transition from primary to secondary school impact on young people's health and wellbeing ? A longitudinal, qualitative study*' has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University and you can now commence this aspect of the project.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored every 12 months and it is a condition of continued approval that you complete the monitoring form. Please inform the SREC when the project has ended. Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Professor Alan Felstead
Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

cc: H Vincent / Supervisors: A Fletcher & D Mannay

Document 4: Invitation letter for children

Cardiff School of Social Sciences
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol Caerdydd

Would you like to take part in the
school transitions project?

I am inviting children in **Year 6** in South Wales and their parents/carers to take part in a new research project looking at **children's experiences of moving from primary school to secondary school**.

What is involved?
You will be asked take part in individual interviews at the end of Year 6 and during Year 7. In these interviews, you will be asked about your/your child's move from primary to secondary school and how you feel about this. Children's interviews will also involve fun creative activities.

Each child will receive a £5 gift voucher after every interview to thank them for taking part.

To get involved in the project or to find out more, please contact Catt Turney, the researcher carrying out the project:
[email address and phone number redacted]

If you have any other questions, you can also contact the researchers supervising the project:

Dr. Adam Fletcher
[email address and telephone number redacted]

Dr. Dawn Mannay
[email address and telephone number redacted]

Document 5: Invitation letter for parents/carers

Dear Parent/Carer,

My name is Catt Turney, I am a PhD student at Cardiff University. I would like to invite you and your child to take part in a new University research project on the transition from primary to secondary school.

The aim of this research is to better understand how children and their parents/carers experience the transition from primary to secondary school, and what can be done to make this a more positive experience. I am inviting children who are at the end of **Year 6** and attending schools in South Wales to take part in the project.

What is involved?
Children and their parents will be asked take part in individual interviews before and after the move from primary to secondary school. In these interviews, they will be asked about their/their child's move from primary to secondary school and how they feel about this. The children's interviews will also involve fun creative activities.

Each child will receive a £5 shopping voucher after every interview to thank them for taking part.

Do I have to take part?
No. It is up to each child and their parent/carer(s) to decide whether or not they take part. Each child and their parent/carer(s) will be given full information about the project and asked to sign a consent form before they take part in the project. All information from the interviews will remain confidential and the school will not be told which pupils are taking part.

Spaces on the project will be allocated on a first come, first served basis, so please get in touch soon if you would like to be involved.

If you are interested in taking part or would like more information about the project, please contact me (Catt Turney): [email address and telephone number redacted]

If you have any other queries, you can also contact the researchers supervising the project:

Dr. Adam Fletcher	Dr. Dawn Mannay
[email address and telephone number redacted]	*[email address and telephone number redacted]*

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best wishes,
Catt Turney
[email address and telephone number redacted]

Appendix C: Project information sheets and consent forms

Document 6: Project information sheet and consent form for children

School transitions project:
Year 6 pupil project information

My name is Catt Turney, I am a researcher at Cardiff University. I would like to ask you and your parent/carer(s) to take part in a new research project.

This information sheet tells you all about the project and what is involved. You don't have to take part, so please read through this information carefully before deciding. If you want to, you can talk it over with your parent/carer or someone else. If there is anything you don't understand, please ask.

What is the project?
I am carrying out a research project to find out what children and their parents/carers think about the move from primary to secondary school. I want to help make this transition better for pupils in the future.

What is involved?
If you are happy to take part in the project, I will ask you to take part in four interviews. One interview will be in the last term of year 6, and the other three will happen when you are in Year 7.

In these interviews, I will ask you some questions about your school life and how you feel about moving from primary to secondary school. The aim of the interviews is to find out about your thoughts and experiences, so there are no right or wrong answers.

In some interviews, I will ask you to do an activity. These might include things like drawing a map of your journey to school, or taking a photo of something that is important to you. You will not have to do any activity you don't want to do.

You will be given a £5 gift voucher after each interview to say thank you for giving your time and views.

I will also ask your parent/carer(s) to be interviewed separately from you, at the beginning and end of the study. I will not tell them anything you have said in your interviews. I will not tell you what your parent/carer(s) has said in their interviews.

What will happen to the information from the interviews?
If you agree, I will audio-record the interviews and write a record of what is said. This record will not contain your name or anything that identifies you, your school or any other people or places.

You will be able to keep any other work you make during the project activities (such as drawings, maps of photos) but I might ask to take copies of these, to use in pieces of writing or to show to people in public talks. I won't show anyone anything you

have made/written that identifies you or anyone else, and you don't have to let me take copies of things you have made if you don't want to.

Will anyone know what I've said?
I will not tell anyone that you are taking part in the study, or anything that you say in the interviews, unless I think that you are in danger or someone has been harmed. If this happens, I would have to tell someone, to make sure you are safe. If this happens, I would discuss this with you first.

Do I have to take part?
No. It is up to you and your parent/carer(s) to decide whether or not you take part. If they say it's OK for you to take part but you don't want to, you don't have to.

Can I decide later to stop taking part in the project?
Yes. You can decide to stop taking part in the project at any time, and you do not have to explain why. If you don't want to be in the project any more, I will not use the information I have collected from you. This will not affect you or your school in any way.

Thank you for reading! If you have any questions, please ask me. If you want to speak to me at any point during the study, please contact me (Catt Turney) on [email and phone number redacted]

If you are happy to take part in the research, please sign the consent form. Your parent/carer will also be asked to sign a separate consent form.

School transitions project:
Year 6 pupil consent form

If you are happy to take part in the research project, please fill in and sign the consent form below. If you have any questions, please ask.

Please circle 'YES' or 'NO' for each statement	
I have read the information sheet.	**YES / NO**
Someone has explained the project to me.	**YES / NO**
I have had the chance to talk about the project with an adult.	**YES / NO**
I understand what the project is about.	**YES / NO**
I have had the chance to ask any questions that I want to ask.	**YES / NO**
I understand that I can choose to take part or not.	**YES / NO**
I understand that I can stop taking part at any time.	**YES / NO**
I agree that work that I produce as part of the project (such as drawings) can be used in published work in the future.	**YES / NO**
I agree to take part in the research project.	**YES / NO**

FULL NAME …………………………………………………………………………………………………

DATE ………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's signature ……………………………………………………………………………

Date……………………………………………………………………………………………………

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Document 7: Project information sheet and consent form for parents/carers

Cardiff School of Social Sciences
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol Caerdydd

School transitions project: parent/carer project information

I would like to invite you and your child to take part in a new research project on the transition from primary to secondary school. This information sheet explains why the research is being done, and what is involved in taking part. Please read the following information carefully. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why is the research being done?
The aim of this research is to better understand how children and their parents/carers experience the transition from primary to secondary school, and what can be done to make this a more positive experience. I am undertaking this research as part of my PhD at Cardiff University.

What is involved?
Your child will be asked take part in four interviews, each lasting around one hour. These will take place at the following times:
1. In their last term of Year 6 or in the summer holidays (June - August 2016)
2. At the beginning of year 7 (September - October 2016)
3. In their second term of Year 7 (January - March 2017)
4. In their final term of Year 7 (May-July 2017)

In these interviews, your child will be asked some questions about their school life and how they feel about the move from primary to secondary school. Some interviews will also involve activities such as drawing a map of the journey to school, or taking photos of things that are important to them.

Your child will receive a £5 shopping voucher after each interview to thank them for taking part.

You will be asked to take part in two interviews, separately from your child, each lasting around one hour. These will take place:
1. In your child's last term of Year 6 (June – July 2016)
2. In their last term of Year 7 (May – July 2017).

In these interviews, you will be asked some questions about your child's move from primary to secondary school and your views on this transition. I will not discuss with your child anything that you say in your interviews, or vice versa.

What will happen to the information from the interviews?
I will audio-record the interviews and produce a written record of what is said. This will not contain any information that identifies you, your child, or any other people or places.

Any other work created by your child (such as drawings, maps or photos) will remain the property of your child, but I may ask to take copies of these for use in published journal articles or presentations at conferences. All identifying information will be removed.

All data will be stored securely, in line with the Data Protection Act. Only I and my supervisors, Dr. Dawn Mannay and Dr. Adam Fletcher, will have access to the files.

I will analyse the information and use this as the basis for my PhD thesis. In the future, results from this project may also be used in published journal articles and presentations at conferences.

Confidentiality and safeguarding

I will not repeat anything that is said in the interviews, unless you or your child report an incident where someone's well-being is seriously at risk or where significant harm has already occurred. In this case my supervisors and I would follow the safeguarding procedures of Cardiff University. If this happens, we will first discuss it with you and/or your child, as appropriate.

The research has been given ethical approval by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Cardiff University.

Do my child and I have to take part?

No. It is up to you and your child to decide whether or not **they** take part. It is up to you to decide whether or not **you** take part. If you and/or your child are happy to take part in the project, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will both be asked to sign a consent form.

Can I decide to withdraw from the study later on?

You or your child are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. If you/they withdraw we will not use the information we have collected from you/them.

Contact details

If you have any questions about the research now or in the future, please feel free to contact me or either of my supervisors using the following details:

Catt Turney	**Dr. Adam Fletcher**	**Dr. Dawn Mannay**
(PhD student carrying out the research)	(supervisor)	(supervisor)
[Email address and telephone number redacted]	*[Email address and telephone number redacted]*	*[Email address and telephone number redacted]*

If you are happy for yourself and your child to take part in the research, please sign the consent form. Your child will also be asked to sign a consent form to take part.

Appendix D: Materials used in research sessions

Document 8: Example interview topic guide: initial research session (children)

Research Session 1 – child (July/August 2016)

Before interview
Go through info sheet and consent forms **with child and parent together**. Verbally explain:

- *This is to hear your views, not to try and test you – there's no right or wrong answers to anything we're going to talk about today, and anything you say will be really useful.*
- *I will be recording today, but it shouldn't get in the way, so try and just ignore the recorder. I won't play the recording to anyone, it's just so I don't have to keep making loads of notes.*
- *I will be writing about what people say in the interviews, but I won't include your name or anything that means people will know it's you – so no-one will know what you've said.*
- *Confidentiality – I won't repeat anything you tell me unless there's a risk of harm. If I need to tell anyone anything that you've said today because I'm worried that you or someone else is being harmed, I'll try to talk to you (whoever's interview it is) about it first.*
- *Free not to answer any questions, or to leave at any point if you want to.*
- *Phones mess up the recording, so if you've got a phone with you today can you please either turn it off (not just silent) or go and give it to someone outside the room to look after.*

Any questions?

- Ask both child and parent/carer to sign consent forms. Check if parent or someone else will be around if needed. Ask parent to leave.

- Check with child they're OK for recorder to start. If yes, start recording. Use the following for guidance, not strict script – follow up areas introduced by child.

1. Introduction

Intro: We're going to be talking today about how you feel about your primary school and being in year 6, and then a bit about what you're expecting when you move to secondary school in September. There'll be some activities, which I'll explain in a minute, but first I just want to ask a few questions about you.

- First name and how old you are?
- What school do you go to at the moment?
- What school are you going to in September?
 - What's your favourite thing to do when you're not at school?

Today I'm going to be asking you to tell me a bit about your thoughts on primary school and secondary school. But rather than just talking, I've going to ask you to draw a picture, which we can then talk about afterwards. You don't have to do it, we can just talk or you can think about the topic in a different way if you prefer.

2. Looking back - primary school

Explain task:
On this piece of paper, the idea is to draw some of the things you like about going to school at the moment. On the other side (show), the idea is to draw some things you don't like so much. You can draw whatever you want, and it doesn't have to be pretty, it's just to get down on paper some of the things you can think of that are good and bad about school.

If needed, can suggest particular aspects of school to explore:

- *Places or spaces within the school*
- *Who are the people there that are important to you (iked or disliked!)*
- *Things you like or don't like doing when you're there*
- *What lessons you like or don't like*
- *What you like doing when you're not in lessons (like at lunchtime or before school), and what you don't like doing*
- *Anything else about school that's good or makes you happy, and anything else that you don't like so much or that makes you sad or angry or bored.*

If not doing the drawing, use any of the following exploratory questions about school – follow up as needed.

- How do you find school at the moment?
- Do you like it?
- What do you like about it?
- What do you not like so much?
- What's your favourite thing to do at school?
- What's a thing you really don't like doing?
- What will you miss about primary school?
- What are you looking forward to leaving behind?

3. Transition interventions

Sometimes, before children start a new school, there'll be things organised by the primary school or the secondary school or your local community, where you might go to the secondary school, maybe meet some of the children at the school or who are going to be in your class, or have an adult talk to you about secondary school and what to expect.

- Have you been involved in anything like that, where you've gone to the school or met the teachers or anything like that?
- If yes, what did you do? Can you tell me about the days/activities?
- Do you know what the aim of it/them was?
- How did you find it?
- Has anyone else – your family or school or friends, or any other groups you go to - have they done anything to make sure that you're prepared/ready to change schools?
- Have you talked to your friends or family about moving to high school and what it might be like?

4. Looking forward – secondary school

Explain task:
Now there's another activity for you to do if you'd like to. I'm going to ask you to draw another picture, but this time, thinking about secondary school and how you're feeling about it. On this side of the paper, you can draw some things you're looking forward to about high school, things you think will be good or that you're excited about. And then on this side, you can draw anything you're worried about or not looking forward to at high school.

Try not to worry about it being messy or about filling up the whole page, or if the things don't look like you want them to, we'll talk about the picture in a minute so you can tell me about it.

- Anything else you're looking forward to? Anything else you're not looking forward to?
- (If needed) Do you think this (aspects of drawing) will be the same as primary school, or different?

Where possible, explore where these views/expectations of secondary school come from (e.g. why they think X).

And/or if needed…

Thinking about what secondary school itself will be like….

- How are you feeling about it, overall?
- What are you looking forward to?
- What are you not looking forward to?
- What do you think might be different from primary school?
- Has anyone told you any stories about your high school, or about high school in general?
- If you're not feeling nervous now, do you remember ever being nervous about changing schools? If so, when/ how did that change?

6. Wrapping up
+ Vouchers & thankyou page
+ Check-in – are they OK? Support if needed.
+ Written info about next interview (rough timing, I'll be in touch in advance to organise, etc) and diary.
+ Explain in-between interview activity – transition diary! This is for them, they don't have to show it to me but will ask them next time if there's anything in it they'd like to talk about. Can do what they want in it – draw/write/collage.
+ Debrief/support info – list of useful organisations. Make sure both child and parent have my contact details.

Document 9: Explanatory text for transition diary

This text was stuck into the front cover of the notebook given to each child at the end of their first research session:

Welcome to your school transition diary. As part of the school transitions research project, you've been given this diary to record anything important that happens in relation to **school** or **your life** between interviews.

At the next interview, I will ask you about how you found your first week at high school. So to start with, you might want to record what happens in your first week at your new school and what is good and bad about it.

You can draw, write, collage, or stick things in – it's your diary and how you use it is totally up to you.

If you can, please bring the diary along each time we meet up for an interview. It's your diary, though, so **you don't have to show it to me.**

Even if you don't want to use the diary now, hold on to it in case you want to use it later in the year.

If you have any questions, contact me on *[email address and telephone number redacted]*

Enjoy!

Catt

Document 10: Word cards provided for timeline activity (second research session)

The following were provided (each on an individual piece of paper) for optional use when creating a timeline in the second research session. Blank pieces of paper were also included for children to add their own words.

Home	Home	After school club
School dinner	Car	Assembly
Packed lunch	Lessons	Friends
Sports	Break	Bus
School	Lessons	Registration
After school club	Lessons	Breakfast
Assembly	Playing	Walking
Friends	Lunch	Form time
Bus	Break	Tea / dinner
Registration	Bus	Cycling
Breakfast	Travel	Lessons
Walking	Travel	Playcentre
Form time	Home	Out
Tea / dinner	School dinner	Friend's house
Cycling	Packed lunch	Relative's house
Lessons	Sports	Mosque
Playcentre	School	Temple

<u>Document 11: Debrief information provided to children following final research session.</u>

Similar information was provided following each research session, with debrief information in earlier sessions also including information on how to withdraw from the study. This information and the final £5 shopping voucher were sent to all children who participated in a fourth interview, enclosed in a handmade thank-you card.

<u>Thank you for being part of my project!</u>

Thank you for taking part in all the interviews for this project. It's been great getting to know you over the year and speaking to you each time. Thank you for your time and for talking to me about your experiences.

This envelope contains a £5 shopping voucher for you, to say thank you.

Next steps:

I will produce a written record of what you said in all your interviews. This will not have anyone's name in it, or anything that identifies your school. I will use what you and other children say in their interviews to try and understand more about what it is like to move from primary to secondary school.

If you need to get in touch with any questions about the research, or for any other reason, you can email or contact me by phone using the following details:

[Email address and telephone number redacted]

Wishing you all the best for the future, and thanks again for being part of my project!

Catt

Appendix E: Summary of research sessions conducted and data produced

Round 1 (July-Aug 2016)				
Participant (child)	**Duration (mins)**	**Creative outputs**	**Participant (parent/carer)**	**Duration (mins)**
Becky	46	Primary drawing; secondary drawing	Nina	34
Rachel	68	Primary drawing; secondary drawing	Jessica	55
Cerys	78	Primary drawing; secondary drawing	Matthew	45
Ann	76	Primary drawing; secondary drawing	Gareth	60
Rhiannon	86	Primary drawing; secondary drawing	Ashley	47
Catrin	69	Primary drawing; secondary drawing	Chloe	60
Helen	45	Primary drawing	Sophia	55
Sara	61	Primary drawing; secondary drawing	Jenny	47
Megan	85	Primary drawing; secondary drawing; 2 drawings illustrating friendship negotiations in Year Six	James	62
Ayesha	68	Primary drawing; secondary drawing	Maryam	63
Shreya	46	Primary drawing; secondary drawing	Vivaan	62
Rosie	66	Primary drawing	Steph	43
Alice	57	Primary drawing; secondary drawing	Emily	40
David	30	Primary drawing; secondary drawing	Siobhan	39
Max	18		Holly	72
Dylan	72	Primary drawing; secondary drawing	Natasha	79
Callum	33	Primary drawing	Laura	47

Round 2 (Sept-Oct 2016)		
Participant	**Duration (mins)**	**Creative outputs**
Becky	79	Handwritten timeline with emotion stickers
Rachel	59	Handwritten timeline with emotion stickers
Ann	79	Timeline using word cards and emotion stickers; various plasticine models (not related to what we were discussing).
Ann	102	Timeline using word cards and emotion stickers
Rhiannon	89	Did not do timeline activity; read extensively from transition diary used between Int1 and Int2 (no copy made of transition diary as Rhiannon did not bring it to final research session).
Catrin	97	
Sara	53	Handwritten timeline with emotion stickers
Megan	60	Handwritten timeline with emotion stickers
Ayesha	88	Hand-drawn timeline, with emotion faces drawn on
Shreya	78	Timeline using word cards and emotion stickers
Alice	60	Handwritten timeline with emotion stickers
David	47	Handwritten timeline with emotion stickers
Holly	105	
Dylan	101	Handwritten timeline with emotion stickers
Callum	68	Used emotion stickers and word cards to make physical timeline

Round 3 (March – April 2017)		
Participant	**Duration (mins)**	**Creative outputs**
Becky	85	Sand-scene of important people
Rachel	86	Sand-scene of important people
Cerys	136	Multiple different sand-scenes illustrating different experiences of secondary school. Cerys used the camera to take photos of the different sand-scenes and the movement of figures within and between the different scenes.
Ann	112	Sand-scene of important people
Rhiannon	114	Sand-scene of important people; various plasticine figures (not related to what we were discussing).
Catrin	138	Sand-scene of important people. Following the interview, Catrin used the sandbox and its objects to play an elaborate game with me, which involved hiding its objects in the sand, and developed rules as we played.
Sara	115	Sand-scene of important people, using plasticine to augment the figures.
Megan	127	Sand-scene of important people
Ayesha	118	Sand-scene of important people
Shreya	95	Sand-scene of important people
Alice	72	Sand-scene of important people
David	65	Sand-scene of important people
Holly	79	
Dylan	134	Sand-scene of important people. Dylan moved the figures around through the interview, creating multiple different scenes to illustrate different roles taken by different children in the social hierarchy.
Callum	135	Sand-scene of important people. Callum also used the camera to try and capture images of both of us throwing a particular figure (indicating a disliked teacher) in the air, although no clear photos were produced.

Extra (March – April 2017)		
Participant	**Duration (mins)**	**Creative outputs**
Nina (mother of Becky)	141	
Megan	61	
Alice	57	Drawing on the theme 'dream'

Round 4 (Aug – Sept 2017)				
Participant	**Duration (mins)**	**Creative outputs**	**Participant**	**Duration (mins)**
Becky	167	Drawing of Becky's cat	Nina	91
Rachel	58	Transition diary - Rachel had used the front cover and 4 pages to draw pictures from Disney films.	Jessica	69
Cerys	114	Transition diary - Cerys had stuck in the creative outputs from earlier research sessions, and used the diary as a scrapbook to draw, write and collage about recent holidays. She also used 52 pages of the book to draw, write and paint in throughout the year, which she explained was mostly unrelated to school.	Matthew	70
Ann	124	Plasticine and paper models of key moments in Year Seven; transition diary – Ann had used 7 pages to record information and thoughts about secondary school, and documents I had given her during the fieldwork (e.g. debrief sheets).	Gareth	65
Rhiannon	128	String/paper/bead /drawing timeline of Year Seven	Ashley	64
Catrin	106	Reviewed transition diary (used throughout the project) – Catrin had used 5 pages to stick in printed photos of herself, friends and family.	Chloe	149
Sara	75	String/pipe cleaner/bead timeline of key moments in Year Seven, string/pipe cleaner/bead sculpture	Jenny	86
Megan	93	String/glitter/paper timeline of Year Seven	James	49
Ayesha	144	Played with plasticine and beads but did not 'make' anything	Maryam	110

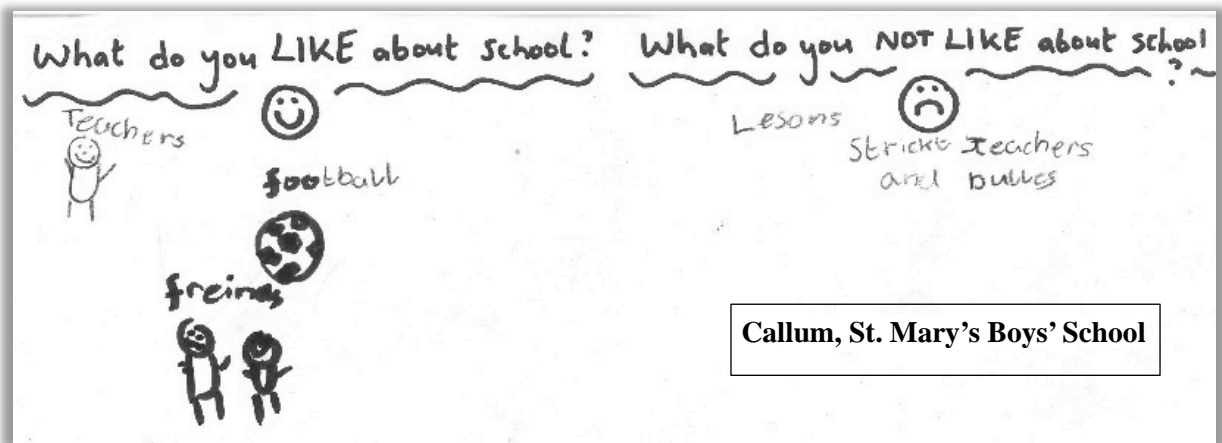|					
Shreya	85	String/glitter/paper/bead timeline of Year Seven		Vivaan	43
David	33			Siobhan	113
Dylan	64			Natasha	54
Callum	111			Laura	29
				Holly	38

Total number of research sessions: 94
Total duration of research sessions: 7281 mins, just over 121 hours

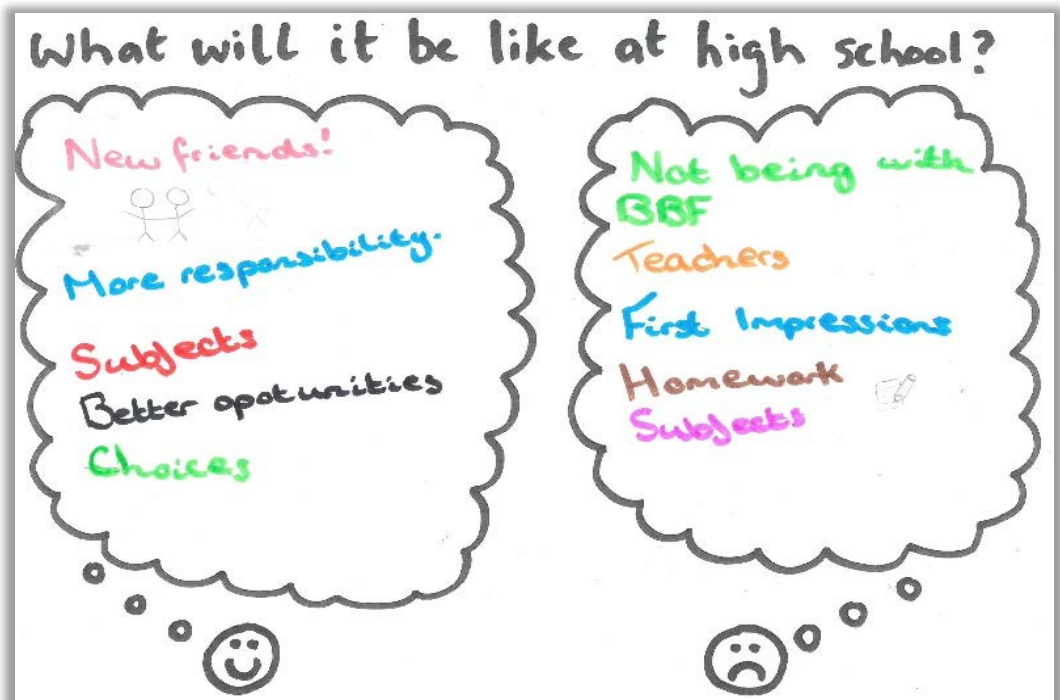# Appendix F: Examples of creative outputs produced by children

Examples of drawings produced in initial research session
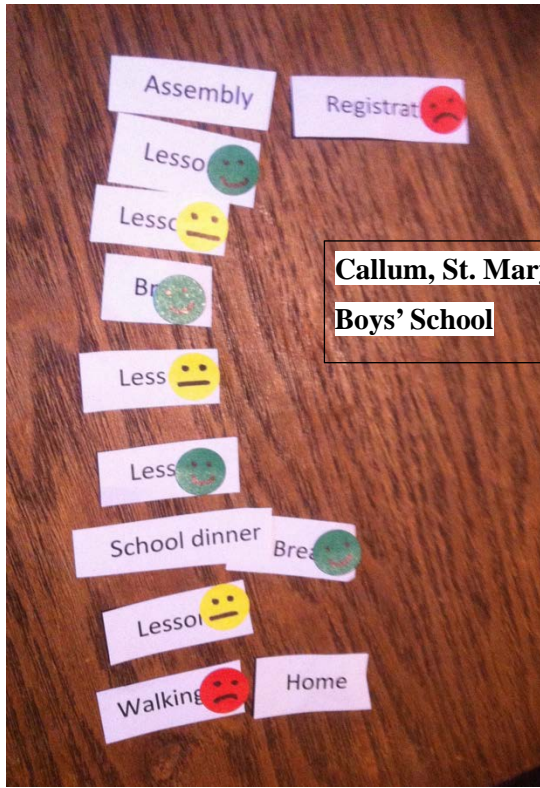
Cerys, Fox Hill High School

What do you LIKE about school? What do you NOT LIKE about school?~

What do you LIKE about school? What do you NOT LIKE about school?~

Teachers
football
freinds

Lesons
Strickt Teachers and bulles

Callum, St. Mary's Boys' School

Rachel, Fox Hill High School

What will it be like at high school?

New friends!
More responsibility.
Subjects
Better opotunities
Choices

Not being with BBF
Teachers
First Impressions
Homework
Subjects

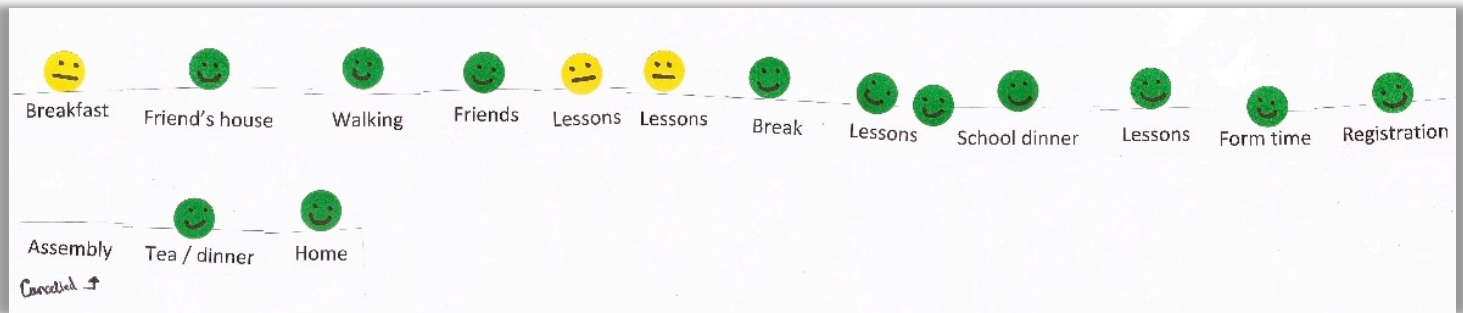## Examples of timelines produced in second research session
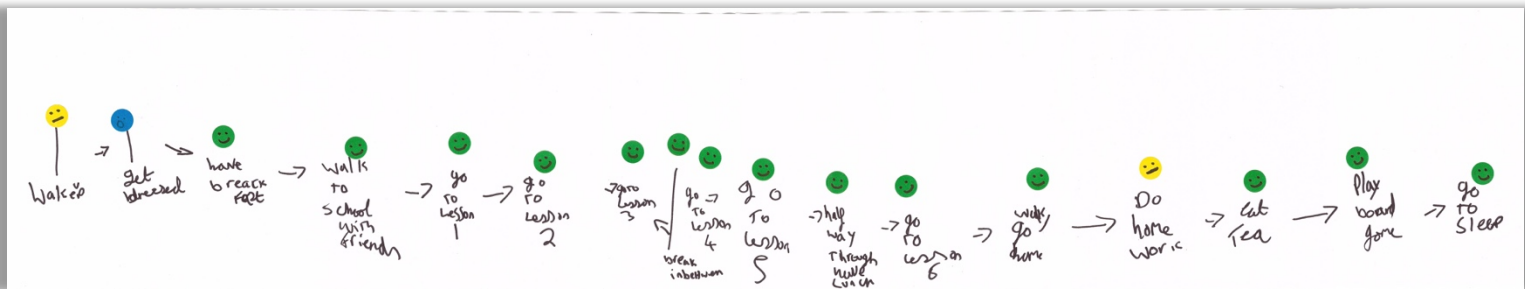

Callum, St. Mary's Boys' School

last day on and I sleped
friday We afer her House
add a a apter t sleeped.
assembly
and at I Whent Home
Play time and I Played
time iWas with my I
Playing tag Pad.
with or my
friends
After School
I Went to
my friends
House.
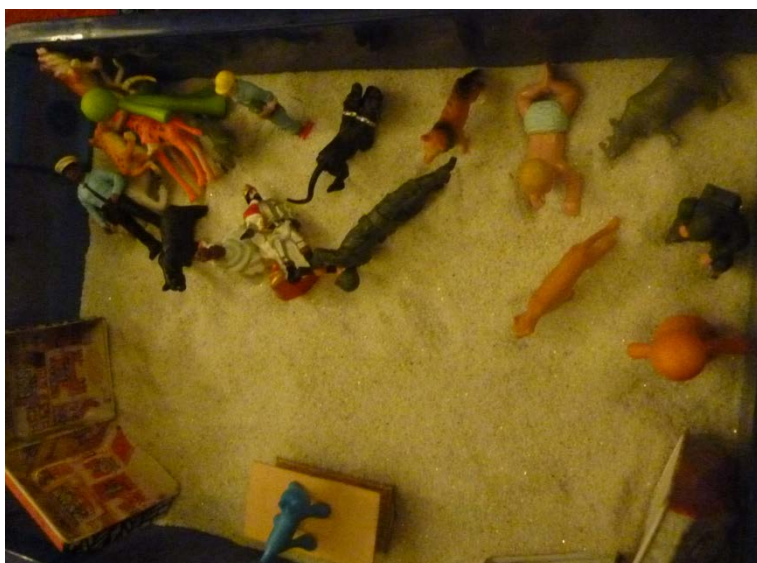
Becky, Ivy Tree School

Ann, Parkview School

Sara, Parkview School

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Examples of sand-scenes produced in third research session

Cerys, Fox Hill High. These photos depict five of the numerous different sand-scenes Cerys produced throughout the course of this interview.
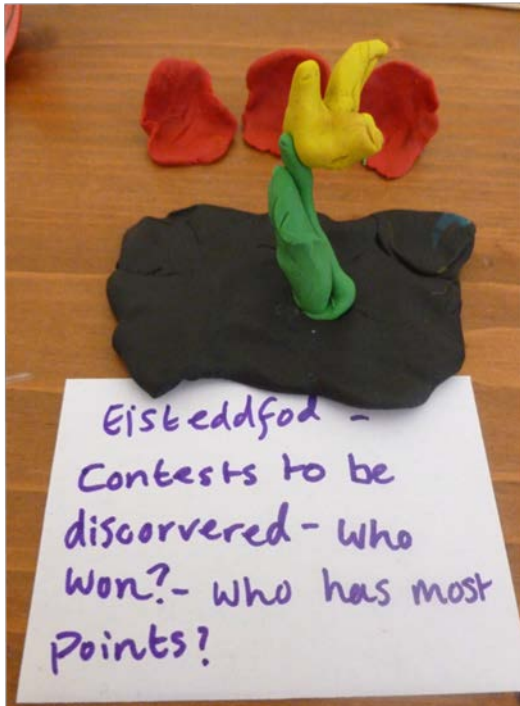
Rhiannon, Wellfield High School

Catrin, Fox Hill High School

Examples of timelines and other creative outputs produced in fourth research session

Ann, Parkview School

Eisteddfod – Contests to be discovered – who won? – who has most points?

Shreya, Fairfields School

1st day of school – nervous

New friends

writing lists ugh!

sports day!

national tests!!! !!!

End of the year! almost year 8! Bye bye friends

Megan, Parkview School