



***“It’s a little bit too much”*: Child and parent/carer perspectives on the educational experiences of children who experience high Environmental Sensitivity**

A Thesis Submitted to Cardiff University’s School of Psychology in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Educational Psychology

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Summary

This thesis consists of three parts: a literature review, an empirical paper, and a critical appraisal. It aims to explore the experience of high Environmental Sensitivity (ES), within UK-based educational settings, from the perspective of children, who self-identify as experiencing high ES, and their parents/carers. It further aims to outline how such children may be supported within their educational contexts.

Part One: Major Research Literature Review

Part One provides a review of the literature. It provides the context of the research, introducing the concept of ES, and exploring theory and current developments in the study of ES. It discusses the relevance of ES to Educational Psychology Practice (EPP) and documents a scoping review of literature, exploring ES within educational contexts. A rationale for the current study is provided, and research questions (RQs) are outlined.

Part Two: Major Research Empirical Study

Part Two presents an empirical paper. It begins with an overview of relevant literature, the rationale for the research, and subsequently developed RQs. A detailed methodology is presented, including research design and ethical considerations of the current study. The results section outlines findings from the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA; Braun & Clarke, 2019), which are considered in relation to the wider context and previous research in the discussion section. Implications for EPP and future research are explored, in addition to strengths and limitations of the research.

Part Three: Major Research Reflective Account

Part Three details a critical review of the study's contribution to knowledge and understanding in its field, and to the wider context of EPP. It offers a reflective and reflexive account of the researcher's journey, including appraising the decisions made and considering alternative avenues, and lenses, which could have been adopted.

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List of Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AES	Aesthetic Sensitivity
APA	American Psychological Association
ASC	Autism Spectrum Condition
ASSIA	Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts
BPS	British Psychological Society
BSCT	Biological Sensitivity to Context Theory
CASP	Critical Appraisal Skills Programme
CNS	Central Nervous System
CYP	Children and Young People/Child and Young Person
DECP	Division of Educational and Child Psychology
DST	Differential Susceptibility Theory
EHE	Electively Home Educated
EOE	Ease of Excitation
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPNET	Educational Psychology Network/Forum
EPP	Educational Psychology Practice
ERIC	Education Resources Information Centre
ES	Environmental Sensitivity
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council
HSC	Highly Sensitive Child
HSCRS	Highly Sensitive Child Rating System
HSCS	Highly Sensitive Child Scale
HSP	Highly Sensitive Person
HSPS	Highly Sensitive Person Scale
HSS	High Sensation Seeker
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LRQ	Literature Review Question
LST	Low Sensory Threshold
PCiSES	Perceived Change in School Environment Scale
PCP	Person Centred Practice

PDA	Pathological Demand Avoidance
PRISMA-ScR	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
QSPSinCh	Questionnaire on Sensory Processing Sensitivity in Children
RQ	Research Question
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
SACQ	Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire
SANRA	Scale for the Quality Assessment of Narrative Review Articles
SPD	Sensory Processing Disorder
SPS	Sensory Processing Sensitivity
SPSQ	Sensory Processing Sensitivity Questionnaire
TA	Thematic Analysis
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
US	United States
WHO-5-J	World Health Organisation Five Wellbeing Index (Japanese Version)



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Part One: Major Research Literature Review

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1. Introduction

The ability to register, process, and respond to environmental stimuli is a fundamental feature of survival seen across most organisms, including humans (Pluess, 2015). Research shows that individuals differ in their sensitivity to the environment, or Environmental Sensitivity (ES), with some being more or less sensitive than others (Pluess, 2015). Recent studies suggest that the experience of ES lies on a continuum; individuals may experience low-, medium-, or high-levels of ES (Lionetti et al., 2018). Where an individual falls on the continuum is thought to depend on several factors, including temperament/personality (Aron & Aron, 1997), genes (Belsky, 1997; Belsky & Pluess, 2009), physiology (Boyce & Ellis, 2005), and gene-environment interactions (Pluess, 2015). Research exploring the prevalence of high ES, which primarily utilises self-report measures in children, adolescents, and adults, aged 8 years and above, suggests that between 10 – 35% of the general population experience high ES (e.g., Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2005; Aron et al., 2012; Pluess et al., 2018). The prevalence of high ES is thought to be similar across age ranges, genders, and ethnicities, although cultural differences often affect one's expression of high ES (Kibe et al., 2020; May et al., 2020; Nocentini et al., 2018). The experience of high ES is characterised by deep cognitive processing and emotional reactivity, alongside a heightened awareness of environmental subtleties and propensity to feel overwhelmed when overstimulated (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2012).

Studies have shown that children who experience high ES are particularly likely to flourish when raised in supportive “stable and nurturant low-stress environments”, yet flounder when raised in environments which are the opposite (Boyce & Ellis, 2005, p. 289). Specifically, “stable and nurturant low-stress environments” are suggested to be characterised by minimal negative childhood experiences (Booth et al., 2015), predictability (Boyce & Ellis, 2005), and high levels of parental investment and quality care (Liss et al., 2005; Slagt et al., 2017). Despite between 10 – 35% of the general population experiencing high ES (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2005; Aron et al., 2012; Pluess et al., 2018), and therefore between 10 – 35% of students likely experiencing high ES, there is a paucity of research exploring the experience of high ES within the educational context, and, in particular, what constitutes a supportive educational environment for children and

young people (CYP) who experience high ES. Such research is arguably of importance within UK-based Educational Psychology Practice (EPP), since it is the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) to enhance the achievement and wellbeing of *all* CYP aged between 0- and 25-years old (Additional Learning Needs Code Wales, 2021; Additional Support for Learning Act, 2017; Gillham, 2022; Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice, 2021).

1.1. Structure of the Literature Review

The literature review is split into two main sections, as advocated for by Boland et al. (2017). The first section focuses on the context of the research, introducing the concept of ES and its relevance to EPs. A narrative-style literature review is adopted to enable flexible exploration of current research into ES (Popay et al., 2006). This narrative review section does not allow for, nor does it aim to provide, a thorough examination of the literature pertaining to ES. Rather, a broad, contextualising overview of ES, and its relevance to EPs, is sought.

The second section provides a scoping review of the literature, exploring (1) what research tells us about how the experience of ES impacts on the achievement and wellbeing of students, of any age, across worldwide educational settings, and (2) what research tells us about what constitutes a supportive learning environment for students, of any age, who experience high ES, across worldwide educational settings. This section uses transparent, systematic methods to critically explore relevant literature, before providing a comprehensive narrative synthesis of findings, aiming to draw broad and robust conclusions around the literature review questions (LRQs) (Munn et al., 2018; Popay et al., 2006).

The literature review concludes with a third section, returning to the use of a narrative-style. This section discusses findings from both sections one and two, leading to the development of a rationale for the current research, including research questions (RQs).

1.2. Search Terms and Sources

The empirical literature included in section two of this review was obtained from American Psychological Association (APA) PsychInfo, Scopus, ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre), British Education Index, and ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Index & Abstracts) online databases. Databases were selected

for their coverage of social science, education, and psychology disciplines. The Psychology of Education Review and the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) Debate magazine were searched manually. Additional searches for further literature took place via backward chaining of references within relevant articles. Searches for relevant grey literature (e.g., unpublished doctoral theses, conference papers) were completed using the search engine Google Scholar, the databases WorldCat, OpenGrey, Overton, and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses to limit publication bias (Wohlin, 2014). The researcher contacted relevant researchers to query missing data and/or English translations where necessary, further enquiring about potentially relevant unpublished work and progressing studies (Boland et al., 2017; Siddaway et al., 2019).

A sensitive search strategy was formulated, breaking down the LRQs into individual concepts to create search terms (see [Section 3.1.](#) for LRQs). The search strategy included subject mapping terms of 'environmental sensitivity' and 'educational context'. Key-word search terms were based on synonyms of these overarching key terms (see Table 1 below). The search term 'sensitivity' was initially included as a synonym of 'environmental sensitivity', although was removed to make results manageable; with 'sensitivity' included, over 4000 articles were returned. The subject mapping terms were combined with *AND*, with key-word search terms combined with *OR*. This narrowed the number of results, increasing search specificity. This search strategy was used in each database (see Appendix. 1) between September 2021 and August 2022.

Table 1: Terms Utilised in the Literature Review

Search terms	
Subject mapping terms	Key word search terms
1. "Environmental Sensitivity",	'sensitive child*', 'sensitive teen*', 'sensitive adolescent*', 'sensitive young adult*', 'sensitive personality', 'sensory processing sensitivity', 'environmental sensitivity', 'vantage sensitivity'
2. "Educational context"	'education*', 'school', 'preschool', 'nursery', 'primary', 'secondary', 'learning', 'college', 'university', 'elementary', 'student', 'pupil', 'classroom', 'academic', 'teach*', 'educational psychologist*', and 'school psychologist*'

Key: The asterisk (*) acts as the truncation character used to search for additional letters after the word (e.g., child or children).

1.3. Transparency and Reporting

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews model (PRISMA-ScR; Tricco et al., 2018) was utilised to increase methodological quality and standard of reporting (Panic et al., 2013). The researcher independently screened and reviewed articles, adhering to 22-item checklist and explanation document provided by Tricco et al., (2018). Results are reported in a flow-diagram (see Figure 1).

For section two of this review (i.e., the scoping review), only the 1 papers identified through the PRISMA-ScR process were included. For sections one and three (i.e., the narrative components), further literature was selected through a backwards snowballing technique (Wohlin, 2014) as described in Section 1.2. This aimed to identify relevant wider literature, and embed as systematic a process as possible to the narrative components of the review.

1.4. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Environmental sensitivity, in the context of education, is a relatively new field of study. Due to the subsequent scoping literature review, and corresponding exploratory nature of the current study, inclusion criteria were expansive (Munn et al., 2018). Studies were included in the scoping review if they referred to the experience of ES within worldwide educational settings, amongst students of any age. No restrictions were placed on publication date, nor methodologies employed. Worldwide publications and grey literature were included to gain broad coverage of a developing field. It is, however, recognised that there may be substantial differences in education systems between countries, and that, whilst the experience of ES is suggested to be a universal, human experience, an individual's outward display of sensitivity is likely to be heavily influenced by their cultural upbringing (May et al., 2020). Studies were excluded from the scoping review if ES was explored amongst student participants, for example convenience samples of undergraduate students, yet no subsequent exploration was made into their educational experiences (i.e., studies did not address the LRQs).

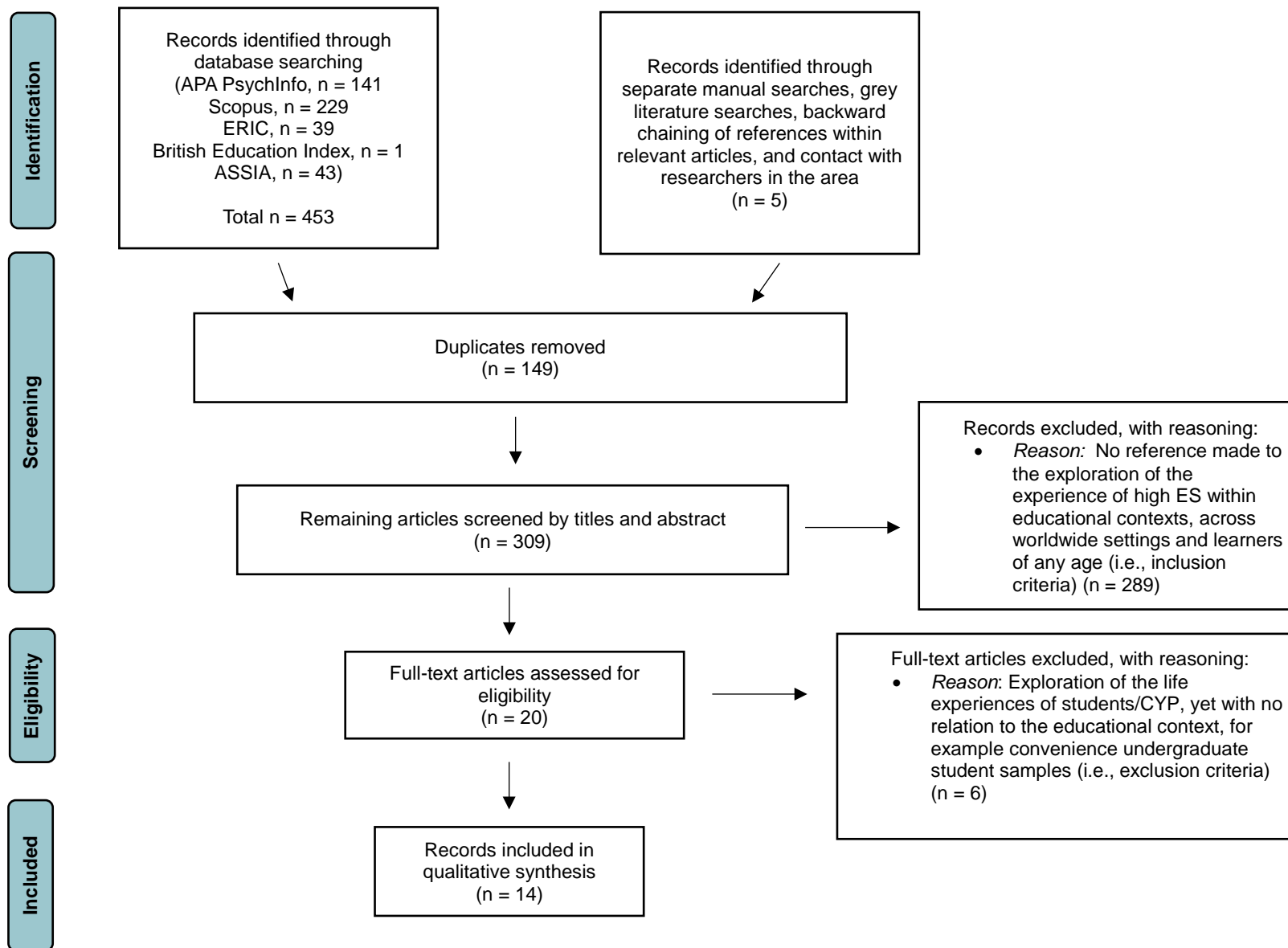


Figure 1: PRISMA-ScR Model (Tricco et al., 2018) Detailing Papers for the Scoping Literature Review (Section 2) and Narrative Components of the Overall Literature Review (Sections 1 and 3)

2. Section One: Context of the Research

2.1. What is Environmental Sensitivity?

Within the field of psychology, the individual difference of 'sensitivity' is considered a relatively new concept. Individual differences in sensitivity converge around the notion of individuals differing in their depth of cognitive processing, emotional reactivity, awareness of environmental subtleties, and propensity to feel overwhelmed when overstimulated (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2012). Whilst the earliest roots of sensitivity may be traced back to Jung's psychoanalytic concept of 'innate sensitiveness' (Jung, 1914), it was not until the mid-1990s that theories on sensitivity began to emerge. Three separate theories, Sensory Processing Sensitivity (SPS) Theory (Aron & Aron, 1997), Differential Susceptibility Theory (DST; Belsky, 1997; Belsky & Pluess, 2009), and Biological Sensitivity to Context Theory (BSCT; Boyce & Ellis, 2005), were the focus of research for the following two decades (see [Section 2.5.](#) for Theoretical Perspectives of Environmental Sensitivity). These theories each provided a unique contribution to the study of individual differences in response to the environment, whilst sharing the underlying notion that some individuals are more strongly affected by what they experience than others (Pluess, 2021).

Initial research into sensitivity was framed within a diathesis-stress model; individuals experiencing high-sensitivity to the environment were viewed as being particularly vulnerable to experiencing consequential negative outcomes in response to adversity (Monroe & Simons, 1991; Zuckerman & Riskind, 2000). For example, the tendency to perceive and process environmental stimuli more strongly was suggested to be associated with emotional overwhelm and subsequent development of related psychopathologies (Ellis et al., 2011). Arguably, early research into sensitivity failed to consider the 'bright side' of sensitivity, and how it may extend to positive environments and adaptive outcomes (Pluess & Belsky, 2013). In recent decades, however, theory, research, and public awareness around sensitivity has grown significantly (Greven et al., 2019). This has occurred alongside changing social norms, whereby individual differences in preferences, tendencies, and personalities tend to be more accepted and understood (Acevedo, 2020a). Researchers have continued to build upon early sensitivity research and have more recently begun to reframe sensitivity research

under a more positive psychology framework (Seligman, 2010). In 2013, for example, Pluess and Belsky proposed the notion of ‘vantage sensitivity’; the first theoretical framework to draw attention to the inter-individual *advantages* associated with differences in responsivity to the environment.

In 2015, Pluess continued this work, combining aspects from the three early theories of sensitivity into a single overarching meta-framework, refining the way sensitivity is now researched. This meta-framework utilises the umbrella term of ES to describe the continuum of sensitivity to the environment experienced across the human population, where individuals fall into three groups (i.e., low-, medium-, high-sensitivity) (Lionetti et al., 2018). Most notably, the ES meta-framework posits that individuals who experience high ES are more affected by both negative *and* positive environmental conditions and stimuli, thus these individuals differ in their sensitivity to both aversive *and* supportive environments (Greven et al., 2019). Since it is suggested that approximately 10 - 35% of the general population experience high ES (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2005; Aron et al., 2012; Pluess et al., 2018), sensitivity researchers are becoming increasingly interested in exploring what constitutes a supportive environment for such individuals to promote their wellbeing, for example in education and employment (Greven et al., 2019).

2.2. What Does High Environmental Sensitivity Look Like?

2.2.1. Depth of Processing

Individuals experiencing high ES process information and environmental stimuli more deeply than those experiencing lower ES (Acevedo, 2020a; Pluess, 2015). This has been associated with enhanced creativity, awareness, openness, rich imaginations, and tendencies to reflect upon personal experiences in detail (Bridges & Schendan, 2019; Jagiellowicz et al., 2020). This deeper level processing and reflexivity is suggested to explain why individuals who experience high ES often show particularly strong learning from their own experiences, and are frequently able to develop effective, creative, coping strategies toward challenges (Acevedo et al., 2014; Cater, 2022). Depth of information processing has, however, also been associated with cognitive inflexibility, cognitive overload, perfectionism, fear/anxiety, and a need for control (Weyn & Durran, 2019). Individuals who experience high ES can also have difficulty in decision-making,

owing to processing several options in great depth (Acevedo, 2020a; Greven et al., 2019).

2.2.2. Overstimulation and Sensitivity to Sensory Stimuli

The experience of high ES is associated with having a lower sensitivity-threshold where individuals perceive subtle changes in the environment, such as slight odours, sounds, small gestures, changes in tone of voice, and other delicate stimuli, more readily (Acevedo, 2020a). Individuals experiencing high ES are also suggested to have higher levels of interoception, thus displaying greater susceptibility to bodily sensations such as hunger and pain (Greven et al., 2019). When exposed to highly stimulating environments for prolonged time periods, individuals who experience high ES can additionally become hyper-aroused, overwhelmed, and/or physically fatigued (Acevedo, 2020a).

2.2.3. Emotional Responsivity and Empathy

Individuals who experience high ES display enhanced empathy and sensitivity toward others, alongside a high intensity of feelings (Aron et al., 2012). Due to their heightened awareness of their surroundings, they are often able to adjust the environment, making it more comfortable for others, demonstrating strong social adaptability (Acevedo, 2020a). Individuals who experience high ES gain intense enjoyment from emotional interactions with nature, art, and animals (Greven et al., 2019). Typically, they demonstrate a strong sense of justice and are more likely to notice others' suffering and stress (Acevedo, 2020a; Aron et al., 2012). Individuals who experience high ES are also prone to experiencing emotional overwhelm and high stress-levels, particularly when lacking self-regulation and/or coping strategies (Acevedo, 2020a). Low self-esteem and/or feelings of guilt and shame are common amongst individuals who experience high ES, where it is suggested that a fear of being misunderstood by society is often at play (Acevedo, 2020a; Iimura, 2021).

2.3. What Environmental Sensitivity is Not: A Word of Caution

2.3.1. A 'Disorder' or Mental Health Difficulty

The experience of high ES is not characterised as a 'disorder' or mental health difficulty (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020b). However, in adverse, stressful, environments, individuals experiencing high ES *are* more likely to experience

negative outcomes in relation to wellbeing as a result of their depth of processing, emotional reactivity, and propensity to feel overwhelm when overstimulated (Aron et al., 2005; Booth & Carroll, 2015). Recent evidence has shown, for example, that adolescents who experience high ES are more likely to experience lower socio-emotional wellbeing following negative life events as compared with those experiencing lower ES (Iimura, 2021). Yet, in supportive, nurturing environments, these individuals are also more likely to flourish and perform exceptionally well, for example displaying more positive, long-lasting mood in response to psychological intervention, owing to the notion of vantage sensitivity (Iimura & Kibe, 2020; Pluess & Boniwell, 2015; Slagt et al., 2017).

2.3.2. Sensory Processing Disorder

Individuals experiencing Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) display hypersensitivity to light and sounds, and may have difficulty integrating sensory signals (Acevedo, 2020a). They typically experience resultant difficulties communicating, socialising, and mobilising (Acevedo, 2020a). This contrasts with the experience of high ES, whereby individuals do not show poor coordination, disorientation to sensory signals, or communication difficulties. Whilst, when overwhelmed, individuals experiencing high ES may experience hypersensitivity to lights and sounds, and experience high-levels of fatigue or overstimulation, this experience is not related to *dysregulated* sensory processing, but, rather, *deeper* sensory processing of incoming environmental stimuli (Acevedo, 2020a).

2.3.3. Autism Spectrum Condition or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Individuals who experience high ES can show characteristics related to Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), for example, hyperresponsiveness to stimuli, high sensory sensations, difficulty concentrating in overstimulating environments, and withdrawal (Acevedo, 2020a; Acevedo et al., 2014). However, current thinking suggests that the experience of high ES is distinct from ASC and/or ADHD, a topic attracting much attention in the media at present (Acevedo, 2020a). Earlier researchers had suggested that a key difference between ASC and the experience of high ES lay with empathy and response to social stimuli, where the experience of high ES was thought to be associated with stronger empathy and responsivity to social stimuli (Acevedo, 2020a; Acevedo et al., 2014). However, it is now understood that many autistic

individuals relate to the experience of high empathy, although, typically experience stronger emotional empathy (i.e., that arising from sharing similar emotional experiences) than cognitive empathy (i.e., that arising from recognition of others' emotional states that may be different from their own) when compared with neurotypical individuals (Ishikami et al., 2022; Shalev et al., 2022; Stroth et al., 2019). Other key differences are thought to converge around one's preferred style of social-emotional reciprocity (e.g., preferences for sharing information and turn-taking may appear less 'symmetrical' amongst autistic individuals as perceived by neurotypical individuals, relating to the 'double empathy problem') and/or the existence of repetitive behaviours (Acevedo, 2020b). An individual's information processing style is also thought to differ; individuals who experience high ES engage in *depth* of processing, meaning relevant information may take longer to process and feel more intense (Jagiellowicz et al., 2011), whereas autistic individuals are thought to process a greater *volume* of information from the environment, whether directly relevant or not, thus engaging in breadth *as well as* depth of information processing (Remington et al., 2012). Such factors are, however, further complicated by the notion of 'masking', which is particularly common amongst autistic females (Corscadden & Casserly, 2021); in such situations, it may be difficult to distinguish between the experience of high ES and ASC meaning that misdiagnoses are possible (Acevedo, 2020b). Similarly, whilst the experience of high ES and ADHD can both be characterised by hyperresponsiveness to stimuli, a key difference lies in the degree of impulsivity; individuals experiencing high ES are typically more inhibited, showing more careful and thoughtful processing before decision-making due to their *depth* of information processing (Acevedo, 2020a; Acevedo et al., 2014). It is pertinent to note, however, that further research is needed exploring the difference in presentation between the experience of high ES and neurodivergence before more firm conclusions can be drawn (Greven et al., 2019). To date, no study has directly compared the two groups and/or have quantified the existence of high ES amongst neurodivergent individuals in order to explore the extent of overlapping architectures of environmental sensitivity (Greven et al., 2019).

2.3.4. Introversion

One theoretical perspective of ES suggests that it is a stable, unidimensional personality trait or temperament (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2005; Aron et al., 2012) (see [Section 2.5.1.](#) for Theoretical Perspectives of Environmental Sensitivity). Whilst Aron and Aron (1997) suggest that 70% of individuals who experience high ES self-identify as introverted, the experience of high ES is not analogous to introversion. Introversion is defined as an orientation towards the internal private world of oneself and one's inner thoughts and feelings, rather than towards the outer world of people and things (American Psychological Association [APA], 2021). Conversely, the experience of high ES centres on the way in which an individual experiences and processes environmental information (Pluess, 2015).

2.4. The Relevance of Environmental Sensitivity in an Educational Psychologist's Role

Across the UK, EPs work with CYP between the ages of 0- and 25-years (Additional Learning Needs Code Wales, 2021; Additional Support for Learning Act, 2017; Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice, 2021). The EP's role has been discussed at length for many decades, with the EP's 'unique contribution' being the focus of much research and debate (e.g., Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Burnham, 2013; Gillham, 2022). It is generally agreed that it is the role of the EP to enhance the achievement and wellbeing of *all* CYP, by working at individual-, group-, and systemic-levels (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Burnham, 2013; Gillham, 2022). It may subsequently be argued that within current EPP, it is perhaps important for EPs to (1) understand how the experience of high ES can influence CYP within educational contexts, and (2) promote evidence-based research around the experience of high ES within educational contexts, across the 0-25-years age range.

2.4.1. The Educational Psychologist's Role in Understanding the Impact of Environmental Sensitivity within Educational Contexts

Where a CYP lies on the continuum of ES is perhaps an important consideration for the EP. How an individual responds to their environment, for example their typical depth of cognitive processing, emotional reactivity, awareness of environmental subtleties, and propensity to feel overwhelmed when

overstimulated, is arguably one of the most basic, yet significant, understandings we can have of a person (Aron et al., 2012). In line with vantage sensitivity (Pluess & Belsky, 2013), CYP who experience high ES do not necessarily need to be viewed as vulnerable individuals, since, when actions are taken to reduce negative environmental influences (e.g., those which are perceived by the CYP to lead to overwhelm (Cater, 2022)), and increase supportive environmental influences (e.g., nurturing relationships with school-based staff members (Cater, 2022)), individuals who experience high ES can experience similar, or better, outcomes compared to those who experience lower ES (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020b; Pluess & Belsky, 2013). Where a CYP lies on the ES continuum may subsequently be viewed as a form of diversity, or individual difference, which can lead to enhanced, or adverse, outcomes dependent on the CYP's interaction with the environment. By understanding, more holistically, how individuals are likely to experience and respond to their environments, the EP may better formulate around any strengths or difficulties experienced, and co-construct successful pathways to preferred futures with CYP, families, and other educational professionals with whom they work. In relation, it is well-documented in the literature that, "what is good for sensitive learners is good for all learners" (Cater, 2022, p. 159). Thus, in facilitating positive systemic change at what may initially be individual-level work, the EP may ultimately enhance the wellbeing and achievement at whole-class or whole-school levels, a gold standard in EPP (Gillham, 2022; Roffey, 2015).

2.4.2. The Educational Psychologist's Role in Promoting Evidence-Based

Research Exploring Environmental Sensitivity within Educational Contexts

Awareness around ES is growing substantially from a societal perspective, in the public and media (Acevedo, 2020a). The EP, with their skills in consultation and evidence-based research, is arguably in a unique position not only to continue to promote this awareness of ES at individual-, group-, and systemic-levels, but also to contribute to the generation of novel insight into the experience of ES, particularly within the educational context, importantly giving a voice to this group (Gillham, 2022). Evidence-based research exploring the experience of high ES within the educational context is limited (see [Section Two, Major Literature Review](#)). However, such research is perhaps relevant and important. Approximately 10 – 35% of the general population experience high ES (Aron &

Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2005; Aron et al., 2012; Pluess et al., 2018); thus, within a typical classroom, between six and ten students are likely to experience high ES. Research amongst adults who experience high ES suggests that awareness and understanding around the notion of high ES can be improved. Literature highlights, for example, reflections from adults, suggesting that had they known about, and been supported with, their experience of high ES from an earlier age, some of their stress-related problems may have been prevented (Bas et al., 2021). As such, Bas et al. (2021) advocates for educators being able to recognise high ES in their students, where they may then take such individual differences into account, improving their student's educational experiences. It may be argued that research exploring (1) the presentation of high ES within educational settings, (2) the experience of high ES within educational settings, and (3) the preferred educational environments for CYP experiencing high ES, will aid in meeting this aim, and potentially have positive impact on, at least, 10 – 35% of society (Bas et al., 2021).

One theoretical perspective of ES suggests that it is a stable, unidimensional personality trait or characteristic (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2005; Aron et al., 2012) (see [Section 2.5.1](#) for Theoretical Perspectives of Environmental Sensitivity). Whilst the study of temperament and personality is a well-established area of study in psychology, and many disciplines, for example social, clinical, cognitive, and occupational psychology, have explored interactions between temperament and personality, environmental conditions, and resultant behaviour (Atherton et al., 2021), temperament personality research has received far less attention within educational psychology (Godfrey, 2022). However, it may be argued that having an understanding around an individual's temperament and personality, and an individual's typical response to the environment, is an important factor to consider when developing hypotheses during educational psychology 'casework' (Hopwood et al., 2019). Godfrey (2022), for example, notes how the lack of emphasis on temperament and personality creates potential for it to be overlooked, where behaviours and presenting difficulties may subsequently be misinterpreted and incorrectly attributed to extraneous variables. Godfrey (2022) thus advocates the importance of research exploring individual differences, such as temperament and personality styles and/or ways of responding to the environment, within EPP.

2.5. Theoretical Perspectives of Environmental Sensitivity

Three separate theories, Sensory Processing Sensitivity (SPS) Theory (Aron & Aron, 1997), Differential Susceptibility Theory (DST; Belsky, 1997; Belsky & Pluess, 2009), and Biological Sensitivity to Context Theory (BSCT; Boyce & Ellis, 2005), provided the major basis for understanding individual differences in sensitivity for over two decades. Each theory uniquely contributed to the study of individual differences in response to the environment, whilst sharing the underlying notion that some individuals are more strongly affected by what they experience than others (Pluess, 2021). In the last decade, Pluess (2015, 2018) combined aspects from each theory, creating a single overarching meta-framework of ES.

2.5.1. Sensory Processing Sensitivity Theory

The first theory to attempt to explain individual differences in sensitivity was proposed by Aron and Aron (1997), who suggested that individuals differ in 'Sensory Processing Sensitivity' (SPS). The theory of SPS was based on extensive review of animal literature and seven qualitative interview-based studies into temperament and personality, for example behavioural-inhibition, shyness, and introversion, in children and adults. Such studies, aligning with the classic diathesis-stress model (Monroe & Simons, 1991), outlined differences in sensitivity observed across over 100 species, leading Aron and Aron (1997, 2005, 2012) to propose that SPS reflects a unique, stable underlying phenotypic temperament, or unidimensional personality trait, characterised by greater depth of information processing, increased emotional reactivity and empathy, greater awareness of environmental subtleties, and ease of overstimulation.

This underlying phenotypic temperament was suggested to emerge in infancy, and influence the degree to which an individual's behaviour was influenced and guided by environmental stimuli. Individuals with high SPS were postulated to have more sensitive central nervous systems (CNSs), which reacted particularly strongly to both internal (e.g., thoughts, bodily sensations) and external (e.g., caffeine intake; childhood experiences; others' moods; visual, auditory, tactile or olfactory information) environmental stimuli (Aron & Aron, 2005, 2012). Such individuals were suggested to observe subtleties in the environment to a greater extent (Jagiellowicz et al., 2016), perceive sights, sounds, smells, and others' emotional

expressions more strongly (Aron et al., 2012), and process incoming information more deeply (Jagiellowicz et al., 2011).

Aron and Aron (1997) acknowledged that 70% of individuals high in SPS also self-reported as introverts, whilst the remaining 30% were self-reported extroverts. They reported a subgroup of individuals, scoring highly in SPS, who self-reported as 'high sensation seekers' (HSS); these individuals sought higher levels of stimulation than others scoring highly in SPS, and, although they sought and enjoyed this stimulation, frequently experienced overstimulation, leading to a need to withdraw and recover.

Aron and Aron (1997) coined the terms 'Highly Sensitive Person' (HSP) and 'Highly Sensitive Child' (HSC) and did much to support mainstream understanding of sensitivity to the environment. In 1996, Aron published, 'The Highly Sensitive Person: How to Thrive When the World Overwhelms You', followed by 'The Highly Sensitive Person Workbook' which was published in 1999. In 2001, Aron published, 'The Highly Sensitive Person in Love: Understanding and Managing Relationships When the World Overwhelms You', and in 2002 published, 'The Highly Sensitive Child: Helping Our Children Thrive When the World Overwhelms Them'. Most recently, in 2020, Aron published, 'The Highly Sensitive Parent: Be Brilliant in Your Role, Even When the World Overwhelms You'. Aron has written for psychotherapists, publishing 'Psychotherapy and the Highly Sensitive Person: Improving Outcomes for that Minority of People who are the Majority of Clients' in 2011. Within these texts, Aron refers to the D.O.E.S. acronym, describing characteristics associated with SPS (see Appendix. 2).

The SPS theory has been questioned on the grounds that there may be other temperament and personality traits moderating sensitivity to the environment, for example introversion, high-reactive temperament, openness to experience, and behavioural-inhibition (e.g., Boyce & Ellis, 2005). It has been queried whether the construct of sensitivity could already have been adequately captured by such temperament or personality traits (e.g., Smolewska et al., 2006). Recent research by Acevedo (2020a), however, summarised evidence across multiple studies (e.g., Aron & Aron, 1997, 2005, 2012), suggesting that existing personality and temperament traits, for example the Big 5 (McCrae & Costa, 1987), explain only a

modest amount of variance (approximately 35%) relating to sensitivity to the environment. Thus, it is argued that SPS is a temperament or personality type in itself. Critics have more recently questioned the notion that SPS is a *unidimensional* personality trait, or phenotypic temperament in itself. It has been suggested that it is, rather, a three-component structure, comprised of Aesthetic Sensitivity (AES), Low Sensory Threshold (LST) and Ease of Excitation (EOE) (Smolewska et al., 2006). There is current emerging evidence to suggest that there are moderate but significant correlations between these three subscales, again suggesting a general, unidimensional trait of sensitivity in addition to the three subscales (Lionetti et al., 2018).

2.5.2. Differential Susceptibility Theory

Unlike SPS theory, Differential Susceptibility Theory (DST) was developed from a purely theoretical background. With roots in developmental psychology, DST posits an evolutionary and biological perspective on sensitivity (Belsky, 1997; Belsky & Pluess, 2009). It suggests that individuals differ in their sensitivity, or susceptibility, to the environment due to genetic inheritance, whereby two alternative developmental strategies (low- and high-sensitivity) are maintained by natural selection (Belsky, 1997; Belsky & Pluess, 2009; Ellis et al., 2011).

Arguably, DST is an alternative theory to the classic 'diathesis-stress' model. Whilst DST incorporates elements of a diathesis-stress model, postulating that individuals experiencing high-sensitivity are likely to be vulnerable to experiencing problematic outcomes when facing adversity (Monroe & Simons, 1991), it also puts forward the 'bright side' of sensitivity, the vantage-sensitivity model (Pluess & Belsky, 2013), suggesting that high-sensitivity to the environment is adaptive under certain conditions. For example, by being more sensitive, and more aware of potential threats to life, this increases fitness and survival (Acevedo, 2020a). The increased empathy associated with sensitivity is also postulated to be adaptive; empathy facilitates stabilising cooperative relationships and trust, increasing mating success, social standing, and resource sharing (McNamara et al., 2009). Essentially, DST suggests that individuals who experience high-sensitivity and are more susceptible to adversity because of their genetic makeup, are simultaneously more likely to benefit from supportive or enriching experiences (Pluess & Belsky, 2013).

2.5.3. Biological Sensitivity to Context Theory

In contrast to SPS theory and DST, Biological Sensitivity to Context Theory (BSCT) focuses on physiological differences in reactivity (e.g., arterial pressure, cortisol production, immune reactivity) to environmental stimuli (Boyce & Ellis, 2005). The theory was developed from evidence on cardiovascular and immune reactivity in response to environmental adversity in 3-to-5-year-olds (Boyce et al., 1995). Studies showed that 'highly-reactive' children had the highest rates of illness in cases of high environmental adversity, consistent with the diathesis-stress model. However, 'highly-reactive' children, when living in supportive family settings, also showed the lowest illness rates, a finding inconsistent with the diathesis-stress model. It was this finding which provided the basis for BSCT (Boyce & Ellis, 2005).

Similarly to DST, and in line with the notion of vantage sensitivity (Pluess & Belsky, 2013), BSCT subsequently proposed that the same response systems that increase vulnerability to environmental adversity, increased advantageous responses in supportive environments (Boyce & Ellis, 2005). Extending this further, BSCT additionally postulated that environmental influences, whether adverse or supportive, shape individual differences in sensitivity over time, a process known as 'conditional adaptation'. In essence, individuals exposed to especially adverse, or supportive, environments develop higher physiological reactivity and, consequently, higher sensitivity to both adverse and supportive features of the environment as compared with those growing up in more moderate environments (Boyce & Ellis, 2005). To explain this, BSCT looks both to evolutionary psychology and the notion of 'gene x gene-environment' interactions. Evolutionarily, the plasticity in the stress-response system is suggested to increase the capacity of children to match their stress-response profile to anticipated developmental environments (Ellis & Boyce, 2008). Similarly, the notion of the 'gene x gene-environment' interaction suggests that genes set the 'reaction-norm', or the range to which an individual is able to adapt to the environment, and the environment, over time, alters this 'reaction-norm'. Boyce and Ellis (2005) give the example of a child with a genetic predisposition to experiencing high-sensitivity being more likely to become 'highly-sensitive' when

exposed to a very supportive or stressful childhood environment, as compared to a child that does not have such a genetic predisposition.

The finding that children who experience high-sensitivity are particularly likely to flourish when raised in supportive “stable and nurturant low-stress environments”, yet flounder when raised in environments which constitute the opposite, led to the introduction of the flower metaphor based on an analogy of a Swedish idiom – “dandelion” and “orchid” children (Boyce & Ellis, 2005, p. 289). Like Aron, Boyce worked to support mainstream understanding of sensitivity to the environment. In 2019 he published, ‘The Orchid and the Dandelion: Why Sensitive People Struggle and How All Can Thrive’. Boyce describes how ‘dandelion’ children have the ability to survive, and thrive, in whatever circumstances they encounter, in much the same way that dandelions prosper irrespective of soil, sun, drought, or rain. Boyce explains that these children are likely to be low in sensitivity. ‘Orchid’ children, however, are those who experience high-sensitivity, whose survival and flourishing is heavily dependent on the nurturing, or neglectful, state of the environment, like that of an orchid. In conditions of neglect, the orchid is said to promptly decline, yet in conditions of support and nurture, is a flower of beauty. More recently, a third group, ‘tulips’, who are an intermediate between ‘orchids’ and ‘dandelions’ in terms of their sensitivity scores, was identified (Lionetti et al., 2018).

2.5.4. Environmental Sensitivity Meta-Framework

The recently developed ES meta-framework combines aspects from SPS theory, DST, and BSCT into a single overarching meta-framework (Pluess, 2015; Pluess et al., 2018) (see Figure 2). The umbrella term of ES refers to the continuum of sensitivity to the environment experienced across the human population, whereby individuals fall into three groups: low-, medium-, or high-sensitivity (Lionetti et al., 2018). The ES meta-framework adopts a positive psychology perspective, positing that individuals who experience high ES are more affected by both negative *and* positive environmental conditions and stimuli, thus these individuals differ in their sensitivity to both aversive *and* supportive environments (Greven et al., 2019).

Building on BSCT, the meta-framework additionally introduces a paradigm shift in how we view ‘person x environment’ interactions. It suggests that it is not enough to explore the ‘person x environment’ interaction when identifying how best to promote individual health and wellbeing, but, rather, a ‘person x person’s likely response to environment x environment’ interaction should be explored.

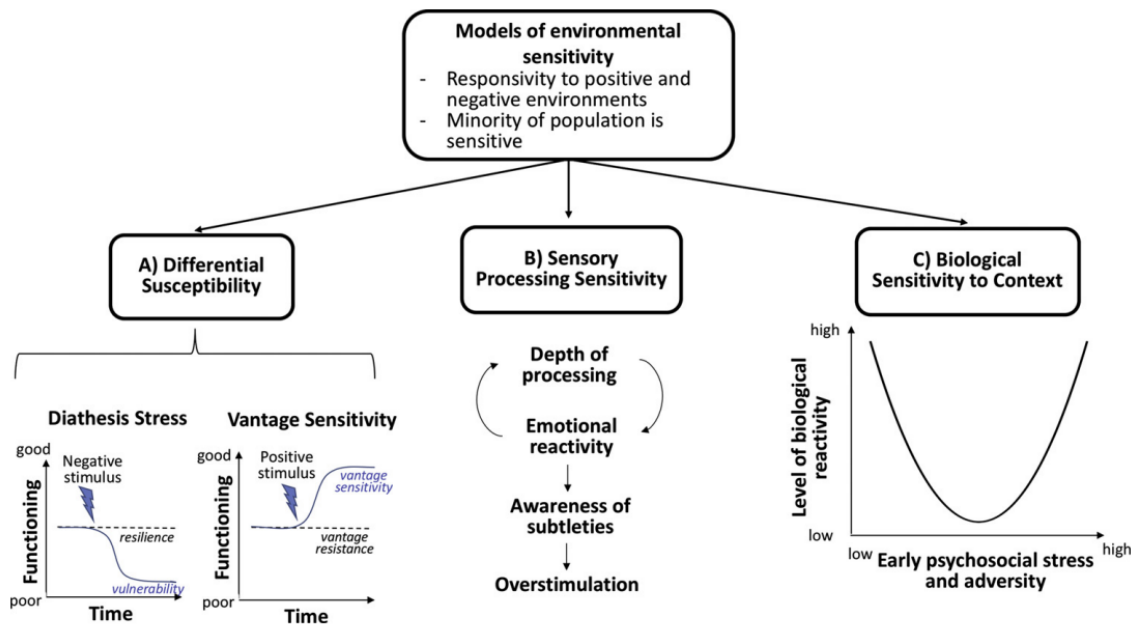


Figure 2: Meta-framework of Environmental Sensitivity Comprised of Three Earlier Models of Sensitivity to the Environment (as cited in Greven et al. (2019, p. 290))

2.6. Measures of Environmental Sensitivity

2.6.1. The Highly Sensitive Person Scale

Aron and Aron (1997) developed the first psychometric measure of sensitivity, the 27-item self-report ‘Highly Sensitive Person Scale’ (HSPS-27) for use amongst individuals aged 18 years and above. The HSPS-27 measures the proposed unidimensional construct of sensitivity by exploring the degree to which an individual is aware of, evaluates, and reacts to, both internal and external stimuli (Aron & Aron, 1997; Greven et al., 2019). The HSPS-27 includes items such as, “Do you get scared or startled easily?”, and, “Do you feel easily overwhelmed in the presence of strong sensory stimuli?” Items are rated on a 7-point Likert Scale (1 = Not at All, 7 = Extremely). Scoring above 14 indicates an individual is ‘highly-sensitive’ (Aron & Aron, 1997). The HSPS-27 has been validated within several studies (e.g., Acevedo et al., 2014; Jagiellowicz et al., 2016; May & Pitman, 2021). In 2011, Aron worked with Pluess and colleagues to adapt the 27-item HSPS,

creating a brief 12-item version, utilising a 7-point Likert Scale (i.e., HSPS-12). This measure was recently published in 2020 and can be accessed freely via Pluess' website (www.sensitivityresearch.com). Instead of employing cut-off scores for 'high-sensitivity', it is suggested that individuals scoring in the highest 35% are in the high-sensitivity category (Pluess et al., 2018). The HSPS-12 maintained the high levels of validity and reliability seen in the 27-item version, and, since its publication, is the preferred version of the HSPS amongst researchers due to its shorter nature.

Both the HSPS-27 and HSPS-12 have recently been criticised on the grounds that they are written in a deficit-focused manner. For example, items include, "*I am easily overwhelmed*", "*I am made uncomfortable by...*", "*I am annoyed when...*", and focus less on the so-called 'bright side' of sensitivity (e.g., aesthetic awareness, enhanced empathy) (Lionetti et al., 2018; Pluess et al., 2018). Aron (2022) has criticised the measures herself, acknowledging that they focus too heavily on one aspect of SPS (i.e., overstimulation), and less so on other, more positive, areas (i.e., depth of processing, emotional responsivity, empathy, sensitivity to subtle stimuli). Currently, Aron, Pluess and colleagues are developing a new version of the HSPS aiming to overcome such shortcomings (Aron, 2022).

2.6.2. The Highly Sensitive Child Scale

The 'Highly Sensitive Child Scale' (HSCS-12) was developed by Pluess et al. (2018). It is a 12-item self-report measure for CYP aged between 8 and 18 years old. Items include, "*I find it unpleasant to have a lot going on at once*", and, "*I notice when small things have changed in my environment*". Items are rated on a 7-point Likert Scale (1 = Not at All, 7 = Extremely). The HSCS was later extended to include 21 items, increasing the measure's validity and reliability (HSCS-21; Weyn et al., 2022). Weyn et al. (2022) created a 21-item parent-report measure. Items include, "*My child is bothered by noisy places*", and, "*My child seems very intuitive*". The development of this measure advantageously enabled researchers to triangulate findings between parent and child(ren) (Weyn et al., 2022). Additional research is currently underway by Pluess and colleagues into the creation of a 12-item parent-report HSCS, an extended 24-item self-report HSCS,

and a 17-item teacher-report HSCS. Pluess and colleagues suggest the measure will also be available for use other educational professionals, including EPs.

2.6.3. The Highly Sensitive Child Rating System

The 'Highly Sensitive Child Rating System' (HSCRS), made up of 10 rating scales coding global behaviours associated with sensitivity (e.g., emotional reactivity, persistency, fearfulness in novel situations), was developed by Lionetti et al. (2019). The measure enables behavioural observation assessments of ES amongst 3- and 5-years-olds and is the first tool permitting measurement of ES directly and observationally. The HSCRS shows good factorial structure and is currently being employed in longitudinal research by Pluess and colleagues exploring the specific needs of sensitive children in UK-based early-education settings (see [Section 2.8.](#) for Current and Ongoing Developments in Research).

2.6.4. The Sensory Processing Sensitivity Questionnaire

The 'Sensory Processing Sensitivity Questionnaire' (SPSQ) was developed by De Gucht et al. (2022), aiming to overcome shortcomings of the HSPS-27 and HSPS-12 (Aron, 2022). The SPSQ is a 43-item self-report measure for use amongst individuals aged 18 years and above. It measures six specific factors of SPS: (1) Sensory Sensitivity to Subtle Internal and External Stimuli, (2) Emotional and Physiological Reactivity, (3) Sensory Discomfort, (4) Sensory Comfort, (5) Social-Affective Sensitivity, and (6) Esthetic Sensitivity. The SPSQ includes items such as, *"I am sensitive to internal physical tension"*, and, *"When people feel uncomfortable, I know how to put them at ease"*, rated on a 7-point Likert Scale. Respondents indicate the extent to which the statement applies to them (1 = Not at All, 7 = Completely). A strong relationship has been found between the total score on the SPSQ and HSPS, outlining the SPSQ's strong validity and reliability in measuring SPS (De Gucht et al., 2022).

2.6.5. The Questionnaire on Sensory Processing Sensitivity in Children

The 'E-Motion' project, a Polish project introduced by researchers and practitioners to support the development of 'highly-sensitive' children, introduced the Questionnaire on Sensory Processing Sensitivity in Children (QSPSInCh; Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2021). The measure utilises a 7-point Likert Scale (1 = Definitely Not, 7 = Definitely, Yes), measuring physical, emotional, interpersonal,

and cognitive ‘spheres’ of ES. The QSPSinCh shows good factorial structure and has been validated to assess ES in children aged between 3- and 10-years-old (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2021). Four versions of the measure exist (i.e., 3-6 years parent/teacher-report, 7-10 years parent/teacher-report).

2.7. Cultural Considerations around Environmental Sensitivity

Whilst measures of ES (seen in [Section 2.6.](#)) have primarily been based on United Kingdom (UK), United States (US), and Dutch populations, they have been translated into several languages – Italian (Nocentini et al., 2018), German (Konrad & Herzberg, 2017; Tillmann et al., 2018), Turkish (Şengül-İnal & Sümer, 2020), Japanese (Kibe et al., 2020), Chinese (Jagiellowicz et al., 2011), and Icelandic (Þórarinsdóttir, 2018) – reflecting the cross-cultural and worldwide nature of research. Cultural views regarding sensitivity vary widely, where social desirability may influence the measurement of sensitivity via self-report measures (May et al., 2020). Western cultures tend to harshly discourage sensitivity, often considering it a flaw, whilst Eastern, collective cultures value sensitivity, and the group cohesion and selflessness it tends to be associated with (Aron, 2006; May et al., 2020). To illustrate, research by Carlson et al. (2004) outlined how, in China, educators viewed sensitive children as socially and academically competent, whereas in North America these children were viewed as lonely and depressed. Thus, whilst the experience of ES is suggested to be a universal, human experience, how an individual outwardly displays their sensitivity is likely to be heavily influenced by their cultural upbringing (May et al., 2020).

2.8. Current and Ongoing Developments in Research: Exploring Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings

An increasing number of researchers are becoming interested in exploring ES, the majority of whom may be located on Pluess’ researcher-led website (www.sensitivityresearch.com), launched in 2020, aiming to provide recent research and resources on sensitivity (Pluess, 2021). The researchers’ directory details researchers, worldwide, exploring ES; a small number of researchers have documented their progressing research exploring ES in educational settings (e.g., supporting school-counsellors to identify and support CYP experiencing high ES; early-intervention techniques to facilitate ‘reasonable adjustments’ for CYP experiencing high ES).

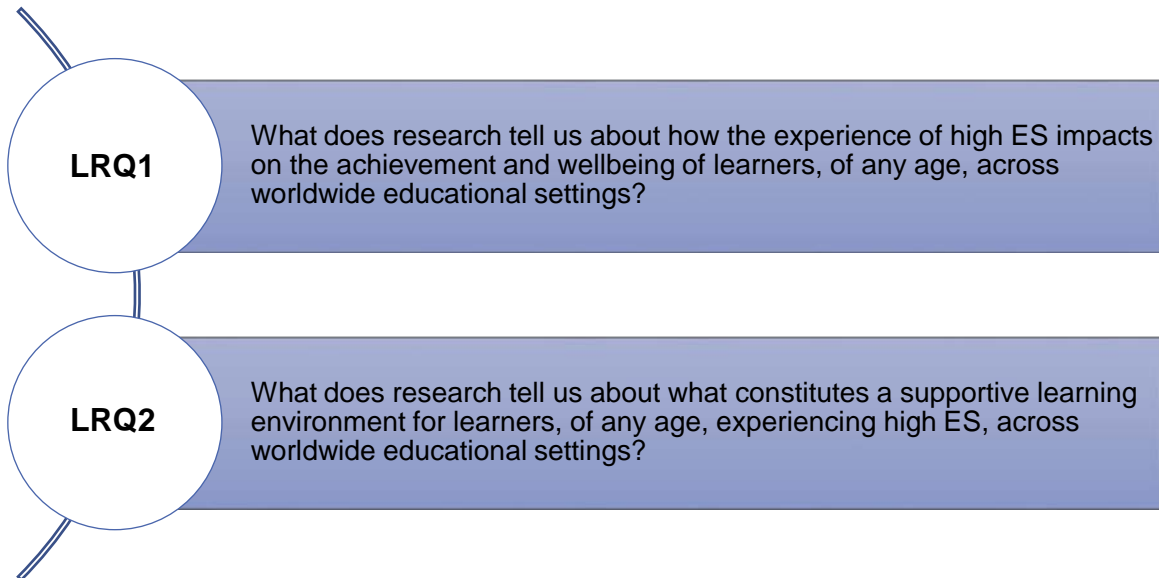
Pluess and colleagues are currently conducting a UK-based longitudinal 'Sensitivity to School' study, aiming to (1) develop a 24-item self-report HSCS, 12-item parent-report HSCS, and 17-item teacher-report HSCS, which will also be for use amongst EPs, (2) utilise the HSCRS to observe sensitive children's development in the first years of primary school, and (3) provide school-based staff with information around how to adapt the educational environment for children who experience high ES.

As part of the 'E-Motion' project, Baryła-Matejczuk et al. (2021) have recently published 'Supporting the Development of Highly Sensitive Children', summarising key research to date and providing practical recommendations based on their perception of such research. The publication is aimed at specialists working with children, aged between 3- and 10-years-old (e.g., educators, psychologists, pedagogues), and parents/carers. Recommendations include: carefully considering teaching content to protect strong empathy responses; enabling children to refrain from extensive peer contacts since they often prefer close contact with one or two peers and/or time for solitude; allowing children to withdraw from overstimulating activities; appreciating the child's love of order, regularity, and planning. This publication was *not* included in the major literature review (i.e., [Section Two](#)) however, since it summarises key research to date, providing recommendations based on author *perception* of such research, as opposed to providing recommendations based on evidence-based research.

3. Section Two: Major Literature Review

3.1. Aims of the Literature Review

A scoping literature review was conducted, exploring two literature review questions (LRQs).



A scoping review was selected to determine the scope, or coverage, of literature pertaining to the study of ES within educational contexts (Munn et al., 2018). Scoping reviews are useful to examine emerging evidence, in relatively new fields of study, particularly when researchers are less interested in answering single, or precise, questions, and more interested in mapping, reporting, and discussing key concepts derived from the literature (Munn et al., 2018). Tricco et al. (2021) postulates this flexibility provides additional benefit in enabling the summation of findings from a body of knowledge, that is heterogeneous in methods or discipline, further enabling the identification of gaps in literature to aid future research planning.

The LRQs were developed following a brief review of literature, which aimed to gain an understanding around current knowledge in the area and where further focus may be required. The broad nature of the LRQs reflect how the study of ES, in the context of education, is a relatively new field of study. Terms such as 'achievement', 'wellbeing', and 'supportive learning environment' were selected

since LRQs aimed to focus on the area of EPP, where such factors are important considerations (Beaver, 2011; Gillham, 2022).

3.2. Method

Scoping reviews follow a structured process (Munn et al., 2018). Relevant aspects of the PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (Tricco et al., 2021), a 22-item checklist, were used to ensure transparent reporting of results. With regards to the search methods, and inclusion and exclusion criteria, used for the identification of papers included, see [Section 1.2](#) and [Section 1.4](#).

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Following employment of the search strategy outlined in [Section 1.2](#), the researcher engaged in the PRISMA-ScR process (Tricco et al., 2018) (see Figure 1). Duplicate papers were removed, and the remaining 309 papers were screened with reference to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, first based on title and abstract, followed by the full-text article. Screening of titles and abstracts led to 289 papers being excluded (see Figure 1 for reasoning). Twenty papers remained for screening via full-text article. This process led to a further six papers being excluded (see Figure 1 for reasoning). A total of 14 papers were identified as relevant for critical appraisal: 10 peer-reviewed articles, one narrative literature review, one conference paper, and two unpublished doctoral theses.

To critically appraise these 14 papers, three critical appraisal tools were utilised. The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP; Singh, 2013) qualitative checklist was employed to evaluate qualitative research, the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT; Hong et al., 2018) was utilised to evaluate mixed-methods and quantitative research, and the Scale for the Quality Assessment of Narrative Review Articles (SANRA; Baethge et al., 2019) was utilised to evaluate the narrative review article. Following critical appraisal (see Appendix. 3 for critical appraisal tables), despite some variability in terms of quality and rigour, all 14 papers remained in the scoping review; all were considered to have value in answering the LRQs.

The researcher engaged in a narrative synthesis of findings to answer the LRQs. Narrative synthesis relies on the use of words and text to summarise and explain findings (Popay et al., 2006). This approach was selected due to the diverse methodologies, and resultant extensive scope of information, found within the 14

papers (Booth et al., 2021; Siddaway et al., 2019). The narrative synthesis involved the creation of a data extraction table (see Appendix. 4), where decisions regarding which data to extract from the 14 papers were guided by the LRQs (Popay et al., 2006). The extracted information was used to narratively synthesise findings from the 14 papers, answering the LRQs (see [Section 3.3.2.](#) and [Section 3.3.3.](#) for Narrative Synthesis of Findings).

3.3.1. Characteristics of Included Studies

The scoping review included 14 papers exploring the experience of high ES within worldwide educational settings, amongst students of any age: 10 peer-reviewed articles, one narrative literature review, one conference paper, and two unpublished doctoral theses.

All studies, except the narrative literature review, utilised self-report questionnaires to measure ES (n = 13). Quantitative studies (n = 9) and mixed-methods studies (n = 4) employed various additional self-report measures to explore how ES influenced various variables of achievement and wellbeing in educational settings. Mixed-methods studies employed additional qualitative methods, for example semi-structured interviews (n = 2), open-ended qualitative questionnaires (n = 2), and analysis of diary-entries (n = 1), to meet this aim.

Studies were conducted in the Czech Republic (n = 1), Germany (n = 1), Italy (n = 1), Japan (n = 3), the Netherlands (n = 1), New Zealand (n = 2), Poland (n = 1), South Africa (n = 1), the UK (n = 1), and the US (n = 2). Sample sizes ranged from 13 to 2,045 participants. Participant ages ranged from 8- to 53-years.

Whilst studies differed in design and methodology, homogeneity was seen concerning either the (1) exploration of ES and its impact on achievement and wellbeing, and/or (2) exploration of what constitutes a supportive learning environment, for students of any age, experiencing high ES, across worldwide educational settings.

3.3.2. What does research tell us about how the experience of high ES influences the achievement and wellbeing of students, of any age, across worldwide educational settings? (LRQ1)

The scoping review revealed several studies, utilising quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods, to explore the impact of high ES on student achievement and wellbeing, across world-wide educational settings. Such research, which operationalised student achievement and wellbeing in a plethora of ways, outlines that the experience of high ES has potential to lead to enhanced *or* reduced achievement and wellbeing. It is likely that this variation is due to (a) the notion of vantage sensitivity (Pluess & Belsky, 2013), meaning that the student's experience may vary dependent on whether they perceive their educational setting to be supportive, or unsupportive (e.g., Iimura & Kibe, 2020), and (b) the methodological lens (i.e., deficit-focused, strength-focused) adopted by researchers. Some studies have arguably adopted a more deficit-focused lens (e.g., Gearhart & Bodie, 2012; Zavonda, 2022), where variables such as communication apprehension, stress, and difficulties experienced within the classroom were explored in relation to the experience of high ES. Other studies (e.g., Cater, 2022) have taken a more strengths-focused, exploratory lens, aiming to identify both strengths *and* challenges associated with the experience of high ES within educational settings. This methodological difference perhaps means that, within some studies, the scope for variables of enhanced achievement and wellbeing to be identified is reduced.

3.3.2.1. Reduced Achievement and Wellbeing

Achievement and wellbeing were operationalised in several quantitative studies by exploring adjustment to one's educational setting following transition, where students experiencing high ES experienced significantly poorer post-transition adjustment. Tillmann et al. (2018), for example, explored how ES influenced variables of adjustment and wellbeing amongst 761 German secondary school students. The experience of high ES was associated with reduced levels of adjustment and wellbeing; students displayed higher levels of negative affect, and lower levels of self-efficacy, physical and psychological wellbeing, and functional capacity at school. Iimura and Kibe (2020) too explored the relationship between ES and adjustment to secondary school, amongst 412 Japanese students, finding

those experiencing higher ES experienced poorer adjustment to secondary school (i.e., obtaining lower scores on a Japanese version of the World Health Organisation's Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5-J; Awata et al., 2007) following transition). May and Pitman (2021) similarly explored the relationship between ES and adjustment to university amongst a multi-ethnic sample of 580 South African psychology undergraduates, aged between 18- and 25-years old. Students experiencing high ES experienced significantly poorer adjustment to university in domains of academic-, personal-emotional-, social-adjustment, and attachment to university (as measured via the Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1984; LaBrie et al., 2012)).

Whilst such quantitative studies did not control for variables which may have confounded the relationship between the experience of high ES and adjustment to one's educational setting following transition, such as socio-economic status, despite this being a well-known predictor of adjustment (Credé & Niehorster, 2012), nor did they explicitly explore potential reasoning behind such poor adjustment, such findings led researchers to conclude that students experiencing high ES experience poor adjustment to their educational setting when the environment is not 'supportive'. Whilst this notion of 'supportive' educational environments has not been defined within the above studies, researchers have offered brief concluding suggestions, concerning what *may* constitute a supportive educational environment for students experiencing high ES based on these findings (see [Section 3.3.3.](#)).

The scoping review identified further quantitative studies outlining a relationship between high ES and additional variables of reduced achievement and wellbeing within educational settings. Gearhart and Bodie (2012) explored the relationship between ES and communication apprehension (i.e., the tendency to experience anxiety when communicating or thinking about communicating with others (McCroskey, 1977)) and stress, amongst 304 American undergraduates. Students experiencing high ES were found to have higher levels of communication apprehension and stress, particularly academic-related stress. These students were also more likely to become stressed by loud noises, distracting lights or smells, and multi-tasking. Gearhart and Bodie (2012) hypothesised that students experienced such effects since they were more aware of their surroundings and

were, subsequently, more likely to become overwhelmed and distracted by worries around audience appraisal, leading to increased levels of academic-related stress. Gearhart and Bodie (2012) did not control for variables that may have confounded, or mediated, results (e.g., social anxiety). Whilst this raises questions around validity, Gearhart and Bodie (2012) similarly utilised their research findings to offer brief suggestions around what *may* constitute a supportive educational environment for students experiencing high ES (see [Section 3.3.3.](#)).

The scoping review identified a conference paper by Zavodna (2022) employing a mixed-methods design to explore the relationship between the experience of high ES and variables of reduced achievement and wellbeing at university. Undergraduate students (n = 353) from the Czech Republic completed a mixed-methods questionnaire, including the HSPS (Aron & Aron, 1997) and qualitative questions such as, 'Does it matter to you that your sensitivity affects you whilst you study?' Twelve voluntary participants completed additional diary-entries, exploring emotions experienced within the classroom over a period of 5-days. Participants were asked to identify difficulties experienced and rate the extent to which these difficulties were triggered by stress, anxiety, odours, noise, fear, or other disturbing elements. The most frequently reported item on the HSPS was 'other people's moods (negatively) affect me' (n = 253). Exploration into the additional qualitative questions led Zavodna (2022) to conclude that the experience of high ES was associated with difficulties relating to teaching and learning. These difficulties were organised around the following themes: inability to concentrate; shyness (i.e., difficulties in presenting or oral examinations); information overload; underestimation of own abilities; stress and anxiety around managing workload or experiencing failure; sensory overload (e.g., noise); propensity for perfection; and a dislike for teachers who induce fear and/or make students feel inferior. Analysing diary-entries, Zavodna (2022) found the most common difficulty related to reduced focus and/or concentration, where students suggested teachers were the main trigger (e.g., fear of teacher, teacher being too strict, teacher not being engaging). Other difficulties included distracting noises (e.g., technical equipment), and feelings of stress and pressure. Related triggers included: a desire to do well in assignments and 'get points'; teachers 'hovering' over students; and students feeling pressure to answer questions if no-one else had spoken up. Whilst

Zavodna (2022) advantageously offers a partial qualitative lens to understanding how the experience of high ES impacts the achievement and wellbeing of university students, the deficit-focused, and leading, nature of the research arguably extends to the conclusions drawn, where no recommendations for best practice are made.

A further mixed-methods study by Cater (2022) was identified in the scoping review, exploring the relationship between the experience of high ES and achievement and wellbeing. Cater (2022) explored both the challenges *and* benefits associated with the experience of high ES in education, amongst under- and post-graduate students (n = 13). Utilising semi-structured interviews and Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA, Braun & Clarke, 2019), Cater (2022) concluded the challenges associated with experiencing high ES in the under- and post-graduate context included: concentration difficulties resulting from low sensory thresholds (i.e., light, smell, noise, temperature, other people); high potential for overwhelm whilst being observed (e.g., during presentations, practical examinations, or when being asked to answer questions on the spot in front of others); and high potential for overwhelm in novel situations (e.g., beginning university, occasions involving lots of new people). Cater (2022) acknowledged that many of the challenges highlighted were not unique to students experiencing high ES; they applied to all students. However, students experiencing high ES were more likely to notice and be bothered by aspects of the environment due to their propensity to attend to, and process, environmental stimuli to a greater extent (Greven et al., 2019). Thus, Cater (2022) suggests that there is scope within the discourse to argue that what is supportive for students experiencing high ES is supportive for *all* students.

3.3.2.2. Enhanced Achievement and Wellbeing

Literature has also highlighted the 'bright side' of high ES, or vantage sensitivity (Pluess & Belsky, 2013), in relation to the experience of enhanced achievement and wellbeing in educational settings. As above, Cater (2022) explored the relationship between the experience of high ES and achievement and wellbeing using qualitative research methods. Cater (2022) concluded that benefits associated with experiencing high ES in the under- and post-graduate context included: high feelings of connection and motivation to meaningful learning; the ability to work independently with high levels of intrinsic motivation and self-

efficacy; use of a broad array of study management strategies (e.g., goal setting, planning, prioritising tasks) and self-care strategies (e.g., spending time with supportive people, organising the physical environment, alone time); prioritisation of work-life balance; and enjoyment of written examinations as opposed to other forms of assessment (e.g., oral examinations). Cater (2022) developed a comprehensive list of recommendations for practice based on such findings (see Appendix. 5).

The scoping review identified three quantitative studies exploring whether students, experiencing high ES, responded more positively to psycho-educational school-based interventions, for example resilience programmes (Kibe et al., 2020; Pluess & Boniwell, 2015) and anti-bullying interventions (Nocentini et al., 2018). Such studies, which have included large randomised control trials (RCTs) and have been conducted cross-culturally (e.g., Kibe et al., 2020; Nocentini et al., 2018), conclude that, universally, students experiencing high ES do indeed show more positive 'response to intervention' (RTI), where the beneficial effects are found to remain for longer time periods than is seen amongst students experiencing lower ES. Such advantageous effects are suggested to be, partially, due to students experiencing high ES having an enhanced ability to process stimuli more deeply, subsequently leading to better internalisation and continued application of acquired skills promoted by such programmes (Pluess & Boniwell, 2015). Whilst such programmes have only been evaluated across select secondary schools and year groups, and arguably have not yet explored, in any detail, the processes underlying the heightened RTI of students experiencing high ES (Nocentini et al., 2018), researchers acknowledge that student achievement and wellbeing can be enhanced via such interventions, which is suggested to be influenced, at least partially, by where a student lies on the ES continuum (Nocentini et al., 2018). Given the growing evidence that universal prevention programmes fail to equally benefit all students (Bradshaw et al., 2015), they argue importance in better understanding differences in RTI, where it appears that having an understanding of where a student lies on the ES continuum may support the prediction of those least and most likely to benefit (Nocentini et al., 2018).

Whilst studies have identified students who experience high ES to experience significantly poorer adjustment to their education settings following transition

(Tillman et al., 2018; Imura & Kibe, 2020; May & Pitman, 2021) the notion of vantage sensitivity (Pluess & Belsky, 2013) was highlighted in Imura and Kibe's (2020) study. Whilst it was established that those experiencing higher ES experienced poorer adjustment to secondary school, participants also completed a newly developed scale, the 'Perceived Change in School Environment Scale' (PCiSES; Imura & Kibe, 2020), enabling additional exploration into student perceptions regarding how the educational setting had changed (i.e., positively or negatively) following transition. The scale measured perceived changes relating to: school and classroom climate; relationships with teachers and friends; number of students in school and classroom; school rules; and class difficulty. This variable was found to moderate the relationship between ES and adjustment to secondary school; when students, experiencing high ES, perceived changes in the secondary school setting to be positive, they were more likely, than those experiencing lower ES, to experience positive adjustment to that educational setting. The researchers suggest that this is, partially, since students experiencing high ES are more likely to notice and register positive environmental cues in supportive educational settings and thus benefit from such environments during transition periods. Whilst the researchers did acknowledge how results may have captured a 'honeymoon period' in school adjustment, since analysis was limited to the short time-spans before and after transition, this study valuably outlines how experiencing high ES can be associated with enhanced achievement and wellbeing, provided that educational environments are perceived positively by students.

3.3.3. What does research tell us about what constitutes a supportive learning environment for students, of any age, experiencing high ES, across worldwide educational settings? (LRQ2)

Research exploring what constitutes a supportive educational environment arguably has great applied value since literature suggests that CYP experiencing high ES are particularly likely to flourish, and perform exceptionally well, when they experience supportive environments due to the notion of vantage sensitivity (Pluess & Belsky, 2013). The literature offers both tentative suggestions around potentially supportive educational environments (i.e., following exploration into the impact of high ES on variables of student achievement and wellbeing), and evidence-based suggestions around supportive educational environments (i.e.,

following exploration into various features of supportive educational environments and their impact on students who experience high ES). It is pertinent to note that the scoping review identified no research exploring school-based staff's understanding of, or ability to manage, the experience of high ES within the education context. This could be a useful area for future research.

3.3.3.1. Tentative, Hypothetical Suggestions around Supportive Educational Environments

Several researchers have offered brief thoughts pertaining to the notion of supportive educational environments following exploration into the impact of high ES on variables of student achievement and wellbeing. Arguably, such suggestions are largely focused on the individual (e.g., Kibe et al., 2020; May & Pitman, 2021; Nocentini et al., 2018; Pluess & Boniwell, 2015; Tillmann et al., 2018), although do occasionally extend to include systemic environmental adaptations (e.g., Gearhart & Bodie, 2012; Imura & Kibe, 2020).

To illustrate, Tillmann et al. (2018) advocate for students experiencing high ES to have individualised education plans (IEPs). Whilst they do not recommend the type of support to be included, postulating that further research is required to explore the specific environmental and instructional factors that support the achievement and wellbeing of students experiencing high ES, they suggest that this person-centred approach will reduce the likelihood of students experiencing negative outcomes relating to achievement and wellbeing. Tillmann et al. (2018) further draw on research into open-plan offices in occupational environments (e.g., Maher & Von Hippel, 2005), postulating that students experiencing high ES may become easily overwhelmed in open-plan classrooms due to the interaction between their tendency to process environmental stimuli deeply, and the constant noise, sudden and unpredictable disruptions, and lack of opportunities to retreat in open-plan classrooms.

May and Pitman (2021) maintain the importance of educators having an understanding of where students lie on the ES continuum, arguing that identification of students experiencing high ES enables targeted support and intervention, for example, school-based counselling. They note this may be particularly helpful given research indicating that students experiencing high ES

are more likely to respond positively to intervention than those experiencing lower ES (e.g., Kibe et al., 2020; Pluess & Boniwell, 2015). May and Pitman (2021) further suggest that quieter study settings, focusing on ‘uni-tasking’ (i.e., as opposed to ‘multi-tasking’) alongside connecting with other sensitive individuals, may enhance the learning environment for students experiencing high ES.

Gearhart and Bodie (2012) suggest ‘screening’ incoming students for high ES to enable access to more systemic, environmental-based interventions, for example smaller or quieter classrooms, to support students to perform at their best. Imura and Kibe (2020) highlight the importance of students themselves perceiving the educational setting to be positive, and supportive, for variables of enhanced achievement and wellbeing to ensue. They advocate the importance of working to create positive and supportive school environments since these will benefit the wellbeing of *all* students, but particularly those experiencing high ES who are most likely to attend to, notice, and internalise such support.

The scoping review further identified a more in-depth narrative style literature review paper, offered by Baryła-Matejczuk et al. (2020a), summarising findings relating to ES, from parenting and educational perspectives, to identify how parents and educators may “create appropriate conditions for the development of a highly sensitive child” (p. 59). They concluded that supportive environments centred around parents and educators equipping students experiencing high ES with age-appropriate knowledge and tools to understand and manage their high ES, and, where appropriate, providing access to “specialist practitioners” (p. 60). No clarification was provided on when this should be deemed appropriate, however. Baryła-Matejczuk et al. (2020a) further suggested that educators and parents carefully consider their discipline techniques, using careful choice of words when giving feedback and placing emphasis on the child’s strengths, since individuals experiencing high ES typically heavily internalise moral codes, which can lead to unhelpful levels of guilt and shame when met with perceived disapproval (Aron, 2002). Such suggestions, following a brief, narrative review of literature pertaining to ES within educational- and home-settings, arguably offer a helpful starting point in considering what constitutes a supportive environment for students experiencing high ES. It must be acknowledged, however, that since such suggestions do not

follow evidence-based research, but represent author opinion following a brief review of literature, they perhaps lack in scientific rigour.

3.3.3.2. Evidence-Based Suggestions around Supportive Educational Environments

The scoping review identified a small number of quantitative and mixed-methods studies exploring, in an evidence-based manner, what constitutes a supportive environment for students experiencing high ES, across world-wide educational settings. Amemiya et al. (2020) found mood states and attention control to be significantly lower amongst students experiencing high ES, and explored, amongst 20 Japanese master's students experiencing high ES, whether participation in a twice-a-week yoga course improved these variables. Practicing yoga significantly improved mood states and attention control, however, there was no statistically significant difference between the high- and low-ES group; yoga improved mood states and attention control for *all* students. Samsen-Bronsveld et al. (2022) explored whether Dutch primary school students, who experienced high ES, would be more perceptive to an educational environment higher in the principles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000) (i.e., need satisfaction), and whether this would enhance their motivation and behavioural-engagement to a greater extent than those experiencing lower ES, in line with previous research (e.g., Kibe et al., 2020; Nocentini et al., 2018; Pluess & Boniwell, 2015). Higher need satisfaction was associated with enhanced motivation and behavioural-engagement amongst all students; it was concluded that *all* students benefit from educational environments that promote greater need satisfaction, not just those experiencing high ES.

Such studies are, arguably, in direct contrast to the notion of vantage sensitivity (Pluess & Belsky, 2013), and findings from Pluess and Boniwell (2015), Kibe et al. (2020), and Nocentini et al. (2018), suggesting that students experiencing high ES benefit to a greater extent from supportive environments, as compared with students experiencing lower ES. However, it must be considered that within Amemiya et al. (2020)'s study, the researchers acknowledge that they did not obtain a high enough number of participants to achieve statistical power, nor did they have a control group, nor did they control for potentially confounding variables (e.g., participant motivation, past yoga experiences). In Samsen-Bronsveld et al.'s

(2022) study, participation was entirely self-report based, as compared with Pluess and Boniwell's (2015), Kibe et al.'s (2020), and Nocentini et al.'s (2018), studies, which utilised self-report measures in addition to experimental intervention.

Within the literature exploring what constitutes a supportive environment for students experiencing high ES, the notion of students being knowledgeable around ES, as discussed in Baryła-Matejczuk et al.'s (2020a) narrative review, is prominent. In her mixed-methods study, Cater (2016) found that providing under- and post-graduate students, experiencing high ES, with information packs and resources on the 'Highly Sensitive Person' (HSP) led them to feel that they were better able to manage their learning. All participants (n = 25) reported that knowledge around the HSP had been useful for their education, with some stating it had been life-changing. Others suggested that knowledge around the HSP had supported them in managing ongoing stresses, whilst also normalising their experience of high ES. In line with Baryła-Matejczuk et al. (2020b), Cater (2016) thus suggested that students who experience high ES should be supported to understand, and manage, their sensitivities within educational contexts, where education-settings should make information about the HSP available to all in-coming students and educators. A study by Strader-Garcia (2012) similarly found access to a 4-week expressive arts group therapy programme, focusing on the experience and management of high ES, to reduce anxiety and increase self-esteem and favourable opinions around one's sensitivity, amongst 28 American students, experiencing high ES, aged between 14- and 19- years. Whilst the study did not employ a control group, and so it is unclear whether a similar programme would have been equally beneficial amongst those scoring lower in ES, Strader-Garcia (2012) suggest that programmes focusing on managing the experience of high ES would be beneficial for use in secondary schools and counselling services with students who experience high ES.

The theme of personal knowledge was extended in Cater's (2022) research. Whilst exploring the lived experiences of 13 under- and post-graduate students experiencing high ES, institutional and tutor knowledge around ES was suggested to be an important factor in supporting students experiencing high ES to feel part of a learning community, as opposed to a marginalised minority group. It was also shown to provide enhanced opportunities for students to benefit from adjustments

relating to their experience of high ES, for example adapted physical environments (e.g., reductions in noise and light disturbances) and opportunities to develop stronger tutor and/or supervisor relationships. Cater's (2022) comprehensive list of recommendations for practice based on such findings (see Appendix. 5) is the first of its kind for students experiencing high ES, and whilst such recommendations are based on the lived experiences of 13 under- and post-graduate students, Cater (2022) advocates that similar principles will apply across the age ranges.

4. Section Three: Summary and Rationale for the Current Research

4.1. Summary

The scoping review highlighted how the experience of high ES can lead to enhanced or reduced achievement and wellbeing amongst students, across the age range, and across worldwide educational settings. Variables of enhanced achievement and wellbeing can include: high feelings of connection and motivation to meaningful learning; the ability to work independently with high levels of intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy; use of a broad array of study management and self-care strategies; prioritisation of work-life balance; enjoyment of written examinations, as opposed to other forms of assessment; and a heightened response to psycho-educational school-based interventions (Cater, 2022; Kibe et al., 2020; Nocentini et al., 2018; Pluess & Boniwell, 2015). Conversely, variables of reduced achievement and wellbeing can include: being highly affected by other people's moods; experiencing concentration difficulties and a high potential for overwhelm, particularly whilst being observed and/or in novel situations; experiencing a propensity for perfectionism and underestimating one's own abilities; experiencing increased anxiety and stress, particularly academic-related stress around managing workload and/or experiencing failure; and experiencing poorer adjustment and wellbeing following transition (Cater, 2022; Gearhart & Bodie, 2012; Iimura & Kibe, 2020; May & Pitman, 2021; Tillmann et al., 2018; Zavodna, 2022).

The scoping review identified several factors that can be considered as supportive for students experiencing high ES across the age range, and across worldwide educational settings. Such factors included: quieter study spaces (Gearhart & Bodie, 2012; May & Pitman, 2021); meaningful connection with other students experiencing high ES (May & Pitman, 2021; Strader-Garcia, 2012); gentle discipline techniques (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020b); personal and professional knowledge around ES (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020a; Cater, 2016, 2022; Strader-Garcia, 2012); and students perceiving their educational setting to be supportive (Iimura & Kibe, 2020; Pluess & Belsky, 2013). The literature further converged on the notion that, "what is good for sensitive learners is good for all learners" (Cater,

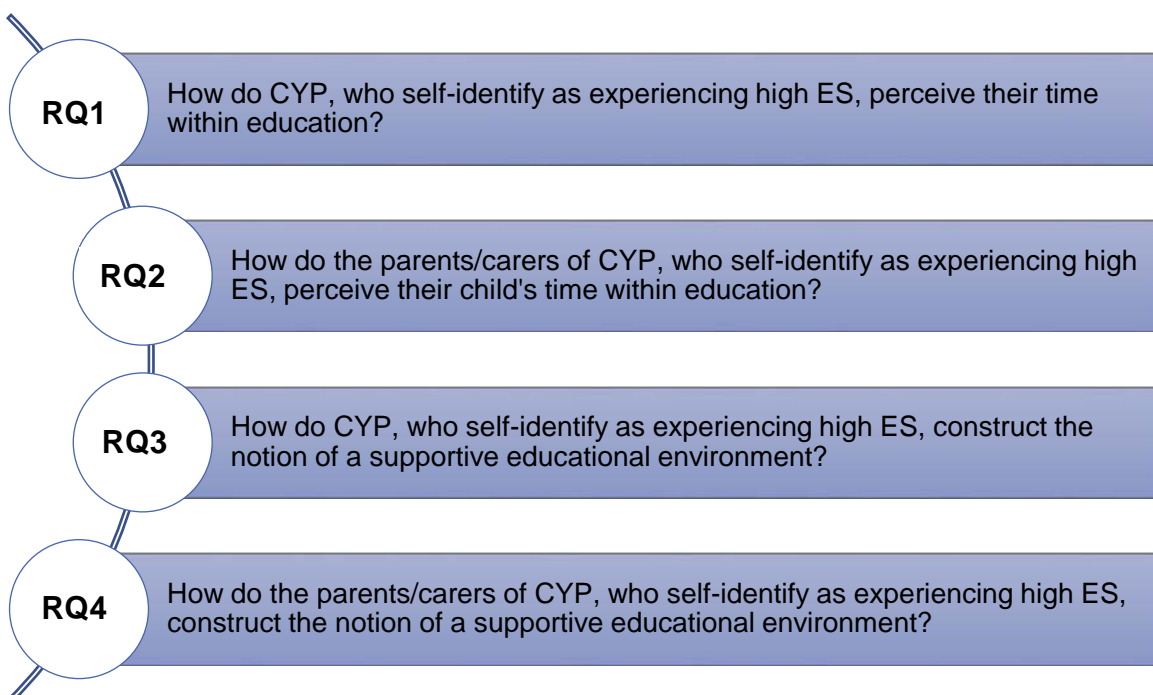
2022, p. 159); by creating positive, supportive environments for students experiencing high ES, at individual-, targeted-, and whole-school levels, *all* students are likely to experience higher achievement and wellbeing (Amemiya et al., 2020; Cater, 2022; Samsen-Bronsveld et al., 2022).

4.2. Rationale for the Current Research

Despite between 10 – 35% of the general population, and therefore between 10 – 35% of students, experiencing high ES (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2005; Aron et al., 2012; Pluess et al., 2018), there is a paucity of qualitative research exploring the experience of high ES within the educational context, and, in particular, what constitutes a supportive educational environment for CYP who experience high ES. Such research was found to be non-existent within the UK educational context, amongst the 0 – 18 years age range, and from the additional perspective of parents/carers. The current study therefore aimed to utilise qualitative research methods to explore the experience of high ES, within UK-based educational settings, from the perspective of CYP, aged between 7- and 25-years old, and their parents/carers, including suggestions around what constitutes a supportive educational environment (see [Part Two, Section 2.2.](#), for further detail around the research rationale) for such individuals.

4.3. Research Questions

The current study aimed to explore the following four RQs:



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***“It’s a little bit too much”*: Child and parent/carer perspectives on the educational experiences of children who experience high Environmental Sensitivity**

Part Two: Major Research Empirical Study

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1. Abstract

The ability to register, process, and respond to environmental stimuli is a fundamental feature of survival seen across most organisms, including humans (Pluess, 2015). Individuals differ in their sensitivity to the environment, or Environmental Sensitivity (ES), experiencing low-, medium-, or high-levels of ES (Lionetti et al., 2018). Between 10 – 35% of the general population experience high ES (e.g., Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2005, 2012; Pluess et al., 2018), yet there is a paucity of research exploring the experience of high ES within educational contexts, and, in particular, what constitutes a supportive educational environment for students experiencing high ES.

The current qualitative study aimed to explore the experience of high ES within UK-based educational settings, from the perspective of CYP and their parents/carers. The study comprised of four research questions: (1) How do CYP, who self-identify as experiencing high ES, perceive their time within education? (2) How do the parents/carers of CYP, who self-identify as experiencing high ES, perceive their child's time within education? (3) How do CYP, who self-identify as experiencing high ES, construct the notion of a supportive educational environment? (4) How do the parents/carers of CYP, who self-identify as experiencing high ES, construct the notion of a supportive educational environment?

Fourteen participants engaged in semi-structured virtual interviews: six children (mean age = 10.7 years, SD = 1.2), eight parents/carers (mean age of child = 14 years, SD = 2.04). Five themes were generated, per group, from a Reflexive Thematic Analysis, relating to the experience of education and construction of a supportive environment. Children experienced intense emotions; deep analysis of interpersonal interactions; sensory overwhelm. Supportive environments offered opportunity to: reflect on/develop coping strategies around intense emotions; develop meaningful connections; reduce sensory overwhelm via environmental adaptations; enhance personal/systemic knowledge around high ES. Findings are discussed in relation to previous research and the wider context, including implications for EPP. Strengths and limitations are discussed, and suggestions for future research proposed.

2. Summary of the Literature

2.1. Current Context

The ability to register, process, and respond to environmental stimuli is a fundamental feature of survival seen across most organisms, including humans (Pluess, 2015). Individuals differ in their sensitivity to the environment, or Environmental Sensitivity (ES), with some being more or less sensitive than others (Pluess, 2015). Recent studies suggest that the experience of ES lies on a continuum, where individuals may experience low-, medium-, or high-levels of ES (Lionetti et al., 2018). Where an individual falls on the continuum is thought to depend on several factors, including temperament/personality (Aron & Aron, 1997), genes (Belsky, 1997; Belsky & Pluess, 2009), physiology (Boyce & Ellis, 2005), and gene-environment interactions (Pluess, 2015). Research exploring the prevalence of high ES, which primarily utilises self-report measures in children, adolescents, and adults, aged 8 years and above, suggests that between 10 – 35% of the general population experience high ES (e.g., Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2005; Aron et al., 2012; Pluess et al., 2018). The prevalence of high ES is thought to be similar across age ranges, genders, and ethnicities, although cultural differences often affect one's expression of high ES (Kibe et al., 2020; May et al., 2020; Nocentini et al., 2018). The experience of high ES is characterised by deep cognitive processing and emotional reactivity, alongside a heightened awareness of environmental subtleties and propensity to feel overwhelmed when overstimulated (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2012).

Within EPP, awareness and understanding around the experience of high ES may be considered important. Educational Psychologists (EPs), who work with CYP aged between 0- and 25-years (Additional Learning Needs Code Wales, 2021; Additional Support for Learning Act, 2017; Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice, 2021), have a responsibility to facilitate positive change, at individual-, group-, and systemic-levels, to enhance the achievement and wellbeing of *all* CYP (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Burnham, 2013; Gillham, 2022). Having an understanding of how an individual responds to their environment is, arguably, one of the most basic, yet significant, understandings we can have of a person (Aron et al., 2012). This holistic

understanding around individual difference may better enable the EP to formulate around any strengths or difficulties experienced, and co-construct successful pathways to preferred futures with CYP, families, and other educational professionals with whom they work (see [Part One, Section 2.4.](#), for The Relevance of Environmental Sensitivity in an Educational Psychologist's Role).

Within the wider field of psychology, the individual difference of 'sensitivity' is considered a relatively new concept. Whilst its earliest roots may be traced back to Jung's psychoanalytic concept of 'innate sensitiveness' (Jung, 1914), it was not until the mid-1990s that theories on sensitivity began to emerge. Three separate theories, Sensory Processing Sensitivity (SPS) Theory (Aron & Aron, 1997), Differential Susceptibility Theory (DST; Belsky, 1997; Belsky & Pluess, 2009), and Biological Sensitivity to Context Theory (BSCT; Boyce & Ellis, 2005), were the focus of research for the following two decades, each providing a unique contribution to the study of individual differences in response to the environment, whilst sharing the underlying notion that some individuals are more strongly affected by what they experience than others (Pluess, 2021) (see [Part One, Section 2.5.](#), for Theoretical Perspectives of Environmental Sensitivity).

In recent decades, theory, research, and public awareness around sensitivity has grown significantly (Greven et al., 2019). This has occurred alongside changing social norms, whereby individual differences in preferences, tendencies, and personalities tend to be more accepted and understood (Acevedo, 2020a). Whilst initial research into sensitivity was framed within a diathesis-stress model (i.e., individuals experiencing high ES were viewed as being particularly vulnerable to experiencing negative outcomes in response to adversity (Monroe & Simons, 1991; Zuckerman & Riskind, 2000)), researchers have begun to reframe sensitivity research under a more positive psychology framework (Seligman, 2010). In 2013, for example, Pluess and Belsky proposed the idea of the 'bright side' of sensitivity, or 'vantage sensitivity', suggesting that individuals who experience high ES are more affected by both negative *and* positive environmental conditions and stimuli, thus these individuals differ in their sensitivity to both aversive *and* supportive

environments (Greven et al., 2019). Indeed, studies have shown that CYP, experiencing high ES, are particularly likely to flourish when raised in supportive “stable and nurturant low-stress environments”, yet flounder when raised in environments which are the opposite (Boyce & Ellis, 2005, p. 289). In 2015, Pluess went on to combine aspects from the three early theories of sensitivity, including the notion of vantage sensitivity, into a single overarching meta-framework of ES. This meta-framework introduced the umbrella term of ES to describe the continuum of sensitivity to the environment experienced across the human population (Lionetti et al., 2018).

Researchers are becoming increasingly interested in exploring this ‘bright side’ of ES, and what constitutes a supportive environment for those experiencing high ES, to, ultimately, promote their wellbeing (Greven et al., 2019). One context in which this is being explored is within education (see [Section Two, Major Literature Review](#)). Studies have begun to show that, across worldwide educational settings, the experience of high ES has the potential to lead to enhanced, or reduced, achievement and wellbeing, across the age range. Literature suggests that students who experience high ES can experience enhanced achievement and wellbeing in the form of: high feelings of connection and motivation to meaningful learning; the ability to work independently with high levels of intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy; use of a broad array of study management and self-care strategies; prioritisation of work-life balance; enjoyment of written examinations, as opposed to other forms of assessment; and a heightened response to psycho-educational school-based interventions (e.g., Cater, 2022; Kibe et al., 2020; Nocentini et al., 2018; Pluess & Boniwell, 2015). Conversely, these students also have potential to experience reduced achievement and wellbeing in the form of: being highly affected by other people’s moods; experiencing concentration difficulties and a high potential for overwhelm, particularly whilst being observed and/or in novel situations; experiencing a propensity for perfectionism and underestimating one’s own abilities; experiencing increased anxiety and stress, particularly academic-related stress around managing workload and/or experiencing failure; and experiencing poorer adjustment and wellbeing following transition, particularly when their educational environment is perceived to be unsupportive (e.g.,

Cater, 2022; Gearhart & Bodie, 2012; Imura & Kibe, 2020; May & Pitman, 2021; Tillmann et al., 2018; Zavadna, 2022).

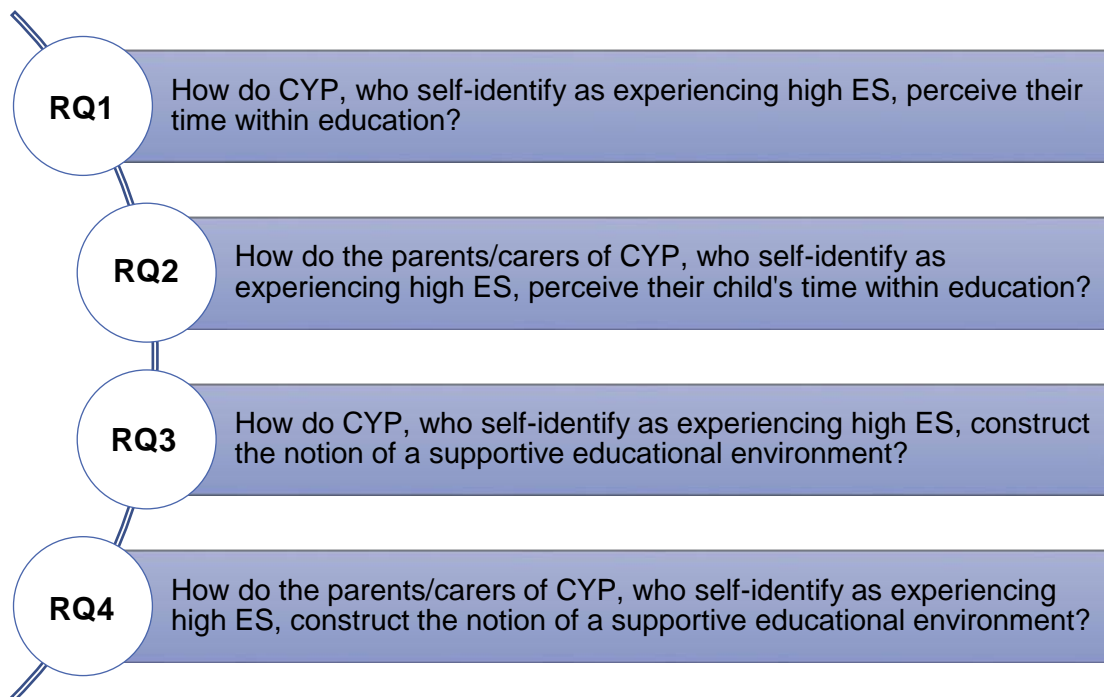
Despite between 10 – 35% of the general population experiencing high ES (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2005; Aron et al., 2012; Pluess et al., 2018), and therefore between 10 – 35% of students likely experiencing high ES, evidence-based research exploring the experience of high ES in the educational context, and more specifically what constitutes a supportive educational environment for those experiencing high ES, is in its infancy. Whilst academics have put forward tentative, hypothetical suggestions regarding what constitutes a supportive educational environment (e.g., access to quieter study spaces (Gearhart & Bodie, 2012; May & Pitman, 2021), meaningful connections with other students experiencing high ES (May & Pitman, 2021; Strader-Garcia, 2012), gentle discipline techniques (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020b), student and educator knowledge on the notion of high ES (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020a; Cater, 2016, 2022; Strader-Garcia, 2012)), such suggestions have infrequently been explored in an evidence-based manner. Indeed, the scoping review (see [Section Two, Major Literature Review](#)) identified only one study utilising evidence-based research methods to explore what constituted a supportive educational environment from the perspective of under- and post-graduate students experiencing high ES (i.e., Cater, 2022). Such research was also found to be non-existent within the UK educational context, amongst the 0 – 18 years age range, and from the additional perspective of parents/carers.

2.2. Rationale and Research Questions for the Current Study

The current lack of CYP and parent/carer voice around the experience of high ES within educational contexts is arguably in contrast to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), which states that every child has the right to express their views, feelings, and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously, and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2021), which requires EPs to centralise the views, wishes, and feelings of CYP and their parents/carers. Several researchers have also outlined the need for future research to explore how the experience of high ES impacts on achievement and wellbeing in

educational settings (e.g., Cater, 2022; Gearhart & Bodie, 2012; Imura & Kibe, 2020; Kibe et al., 2020; Nocentini et al., 2018; Pluess & Boniwell, 2015; Samsen-Bronsveld et al., 2022; Strader-Garcia, 2012; Tillmann et al., 2018). It has been suggested that qualitative research methods may offer an alternative lens through which to understand how students experiencing high ES perceive their time in education (Kibe et al., 2020; Samsen-Bronsveld et al., 2022). The current study therefore aimed to utilise qualitative research methods to explore the experience of high ES, within UK-based educational settings, from the perspective of CYP, aged between 7- and 25-years old, and their parents/carers, including suggestions around what constitutes a supportive educational environment for such individuals.

The following four research questions (RQs) were explored:



3. Methodology

3.1. Research Paradigm

The research paradigm took a critical realist-contextualism orientation; Clarke and Braun (2021, p. 179) suggest, “contextualism broadly maps onto a critical realist ontology... Social influences are acknowledged, but the thorough-going anti-foundationalism of constructionism is circumvented through a concern for ‘truth’, albeit a provisional, contextual, and liminal truth”. Such an orientation recognises that a reality, or truth, exists, independent of the researcher’s ideas about and descriptions of it, whilst acknowledging that different perspectives on, and interpretations and representations of, this reality, or truth, will be apparent for individuals dependent on their context and experiences (Clarke & Braun, 2021). Whilst the notion of high ES is arguably a measurable, real construct, or truth (Greven et al., 2019) (i.e., realism), the qualitative *experience* of high ES may differ between individuals based on their contextual perspectives, interpretations, and representations of such truth (Clarke & Braun, 2021) (i.e., *critical* realism). Moreover, as the research explored the *specific* contextual experience of high ES within education, where parent/carer participants were additionally asked about their *interpretation* of their child’s experience (which was then subsequently interpreted by the researcher), a contextualism epistemology recognised how the elicited truth was *highly* influenced by the context in which it was generated, thus findings are “provisional, contextual, and liminal” (Clarke & Braun, 2021, p. 179).

3.2. Research Design

In keeping with the orientation of the research, it is recognised that truth can be accessed through language, whether partially or completely, and that researchers play an active role in the interpretation of truth, during data collection and analysis (Madill et al., 2000). A qualitative research design was thus adopted; data were collected via semi-structured interviews and results analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA: Braun & Clarke, 2019). This enabled the researcher to employ reflexivity when analysing and interpreting results (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, interviews were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams. This additionally enabled UK-wide participation.

3.3. Participants

3.3.1. Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was utilised to recruit two participant groups from relevant social media groups. The first group comprised of parents/carers of children who self-identified as experiencing high ES. The second group comprised of these children themselves. Recruitment of parents/carers provided indirect access to child voice, which would otherwise have been difficult to identify. Facebook requires that users are a minimum of 13-years-old (Facebook Help Centre, 2023); whilst some children may have had Facebook accounts, and could theoretically have been members of relevant social media groups, indirect recruitment via parents/carers increased the potential participant pool, since the majority of group members are adults experiencing high ES themselves, and/or who are parents/carers of children experiencing high ES.

3.3.2. Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria, and rationales, for parent/carer and CYP participants is seen in Table 2 below. Criteria was detailed on the recruitment poster (see Appendix. 6), and reinstated during interview (see Appendices 7 and 8). Aligning with the critical realist-contextualism orientation (Clarke & Braun, 2021), the experience of high ES was not quantified (e.g., via the HSCS-12 (see Appendix. 10)). *Self-identification* of high ES was inferred through (1) study interest, and (2) qualitative exploration of language from the HSCS-12, confirming shared understanding of the term 'environmental sensitivity' and/or 'highly sensitive' between researcher and participant (see Appendix. 7 and 8 for examples of such language). This highlighted participants' preferred language (e.g., ES, highly sensitive), ameliorating ethical dilemmas associated with 'labelling' individuals with phenomena they do not recognise themselves as experiencing.

Table 2: Inclusion Criteria for CYP and Parents/Carers

Participant	Inclusion Criteria	Rationale
Child/Young Person	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aged between 7- and 25-years old 2. Currently attending a UK-based educational setting (e.g., primary or secondary school, sixth form, college, university, or any alternative provision, such as a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) or specialist school) 3. Self-identifies as experiencing high ES, utilising terms such as ES or 'highly sensitive' as part of their everyday language to describe their experiences 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recent developments in EPP (e.g., Additional Learning Needs Code Wales, 2021; Additional Support for Learning Act, 2017; Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice, 2021) has extended the work of EPs to include working with CYP aged between 0- and 25-years. It is therefore of current relevance to EPP to explore the broad experiences of high ES within educational settings across the 0 to 25 age range. Aligning with the critical realist-contextualism orientation of the research (Clarke & Braun, 2021), and subsequent desire to capture CYP voice via semi-structured interviews, the age range was refined to 7- to 25-years. Research suggests, "by age 7, most children have the skills necessary to provide accurate and useful information when interviewers employ methods that are developmentally appropriate" (Gibson, 2012, p. 151). 2. The scoping literature review revealed a lack of UK-based research exploring the experience of high ES within UK-based educational settings. Exploration of CYP's perceptions around their <i>current</i> school attendance avoided the potential confounding influence of retrospective participant accounts (Toma, 2011). 3. Self-identification as experiencing high ES, and subsequent use of language such as ES or 'highly sensitive', was important to avoid the potential ethical issue of parents/carers, and/or the researcher, 'labelling' CYP with phenomena they did not recognise as experiencing themselves.
Parent/Carer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parenting a CYP meeting the CYP inclusion criteria 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In addition to CYP voice, parent/carer voice is central in EPP, with CYP and parents/carers being key stakeholders in EPP (Gillham, 2022). Parents/carers were required to be parenting a CYP meeting the CYP inclusion criteria, given that the current research is centred on these CYP's experience of education.

3.3.3. Recruitment Method

A gatekeeper letter (see Appendix. 11) was sent to administrators of 10 social media groups (see Appendix. 12) requesting permission to post a recruitment poster (see Appendix. 6). Groups were selected by title (i.e., reference made to advice, guidance, support, and/or 'environmental sensitivity' and/or 'highly sensitive' individuals) (see Appendix. 12 for list of groups). Approval was granted to post on six groups; the remaining four administrators did not respond to the request. All posts were made from the researcher's private social media account between July and September 2022. The recruitment poster was posted three times, per group, at fortnightly intervals to maximise participation. Parents/carers made contact with the researcher directly, via email, to request information sheets (see Appendix.13) and consent forms (see Appendix. 14). The recruitment poster detailed that parents/carers who did not feel it appropriate for their child to participate, or whose child did not want to participate, were welcome to participate themselves. On receipt of the information sheet and consent form, participants were informed that interviews would take place on a 'first-come, first-served basis' (i.e., maximum of eight parents/carers and eight children). Participants returned electronically signed consent forms; parental consent was required for participants aged between 7- and 18-years. Interviews were scheduled at a time convenient for participants; invites were sent to parent/carer email addresses. See Appendix. 17 for a summary of this process, including information regarding re-submission to the Cardiff University School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee.

3.3.4. Demographic Information

The first group comprised of eight parent/carer participants whose children's ages ranged between 9- and 15-years (mean age = 14 years, SD = 1.2). The second group comprised of six children aged between 9- and 12-years old (mean age = 10.7 years, SD = 2.04) (see Table 3 below for full demographic information). Three children declined participation, with an additional one child not meeting inclusion criteria, having recently begun Elective Home Education (EHE) for reasons

associated with high ES. Parent/carer participants of those who declined participation reported this to be due to apprehension around engaging in discussion with an unknown adult (i.e., the researcher), and/or the need for quiet time after school and at weekends (i.e., when interviews were scheduled).

Table 3: Participant Demographics

Group 1 (Parents/Carers)	Group 2 (Children)	Education Setting	Location
Mother (1a)	Male, 11 (1b)	LA maintained mainstream school	Wales
Mother (2a)	Female, 14	LA maintained mainstream school	Scotland
Mother (3a)	Female, 15 & Male, 10	LA maintained mainstream school & Electively Home Educated	England
Mother (4a)	Female, 9 (4b)	LA maintained mainstream school	England
Mother (5a)	Male, 12 (5b) & Female, 12 (5c)	Independent Sector School & Independent Sector School	England
Mother (6a)	Male, 10 (6b)	LA maintained mainstream school	England
Mother (7a)	Female, 10 (7b)	Independent Sector School	England
Mother (8a)	Female, 9	LA maintained mainstream school	Scotland

Key:

Participant numbers are provided in brackets; parent/carer participants received participant numbers coded with 'a', child participants received participant numbers coded with 'b' (an additional 'c' was used in the case of siblings).

Individuals in Group 2 presented in blue font declined to participate. Individuals in Group 2 presented in purple font did not meet inclusion criteria to participate.

3.4. Data Collection

3.4.1. Interview Guide Approach

An interview guide (Patton, 2002) was created for parents/carers (see Appendix. 7) and CYP (see Appendix. 8). Guides included eight major questions, alongside probing questions, exploring participant perspectives on the experience of high ES within their educational settings (see Appendices 7 and 8 for interview guide rationales). Topics included: strengths and challenges associated with the experience of high ES; teachers' and peers' understanding of high ES; perceptions of supportive and unsupportive environments; access to professionals and knowledge around high ES; language used around the experience of high ES; and suggestions for individual-, group-, or systemic-level change. Question wording and ordering was contextual, developmentally appropriate, and responsive to participants' developing accounts, enabling a natural, flowing conversation to unfold (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Gibson, 2012). Participants had opportunity to discuss issues important to them, including those unanticipated by the researcher (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The researcher followed up on unanticipated issues by asking spontaneous questions, playing an active role in data collection and co-constructing meaning with participants (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Additional time was spent with the first two parent/carer and child participants to seek feedback regarding the clarity and ordering of questions, in addition to feedback relating to the opportunity for an adequate range of responses to be given in the allocated timeframe. See Appendix. 9 for resultant alterations to interview guides.

3.4.2. Conducting the Interviews

All interviews were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams. Parent/carer interviews took place first, followed by child interviews. Parents/carers and children were interviewed separately to enable each group to have their own distinct voice within the research. All interviews lasted between 45 – 60 minutes and were video-recorded. All participants answered all questions posed. No participants requested

any information to be removed. See Appendix. 18 for information relating to: informed consent; confidentiality and anonymity; right to withdraw; risk of harm and safeguarding; debriefing; dissemination; and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

3.5. Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed using Braun and Clarke's (2013) orthographic transcription system (see Appendix. 19 for transcription notation system), 24-hours following interview. In addition to utilising the Microsoft Teams transcription function, the researcher replayed video-recordings, editing transcripts, to ensure thorough, high-quality transcripts available for analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA; Braun & Clarke, 2019) was utilised to analyse data. This allowed the active interpretation of inductive and deductive themes and sub-themes at semantic and latent levels. The six-phases of RTA (see Figure 3), are distinct yet recursive; the reflexive nature requires repeated movement between phases (Terry et al., 2017). It is acknowledged that RTA is guided by the underlying philosophical positioning of the researcher, thus different researchers may have developed different themes and come to different conclusions (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). See [Part Three: Major Research Reflective Account](#) for a critical account relating to the researcher's interpretation of data, including alternative lenses that could have been adopted. Raw data (i.e., anonymised interview transcripts) are attached as two separate documents.

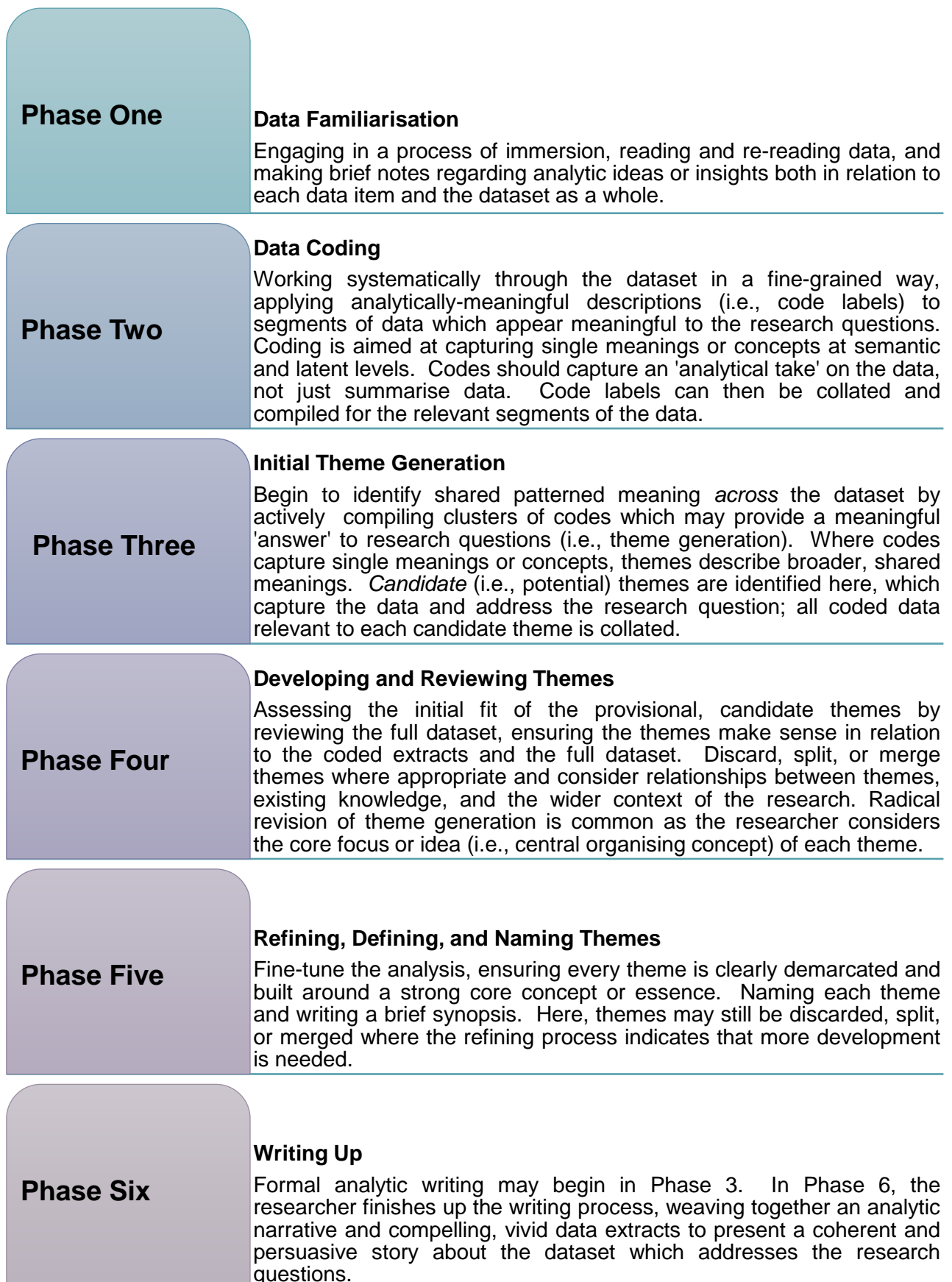


Figure 3: Six-Step Recursive Process to Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA; adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2021)

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was sought and granted by Cardiff University School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix. 16). Steps were taken to ensure no harm came to participants; ethical considerations raised are seen in Appendix. 18.

4. Results

4.1. Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Interpretation

The six-phase process of RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2019) was completed separately for each data set (i.e., child and parent/carer groups). This resulted in the development of five overarching themes, including two subthemes, for the child group, and five overarching themes for the parent/carer group. This is presented in Figures 4 and 5, and explored in detail in [Section 4.3](#) and [Section 4.4](#). Page numbers identifying selected extracts correspond to page numbers provided in the two additional attached documents (i.e., parent/carer and child interview transcripts). See Appendices 22 – 25 for *all* extracts related to each theme per participant group, including allocated and unallocated codes, and reasoning.

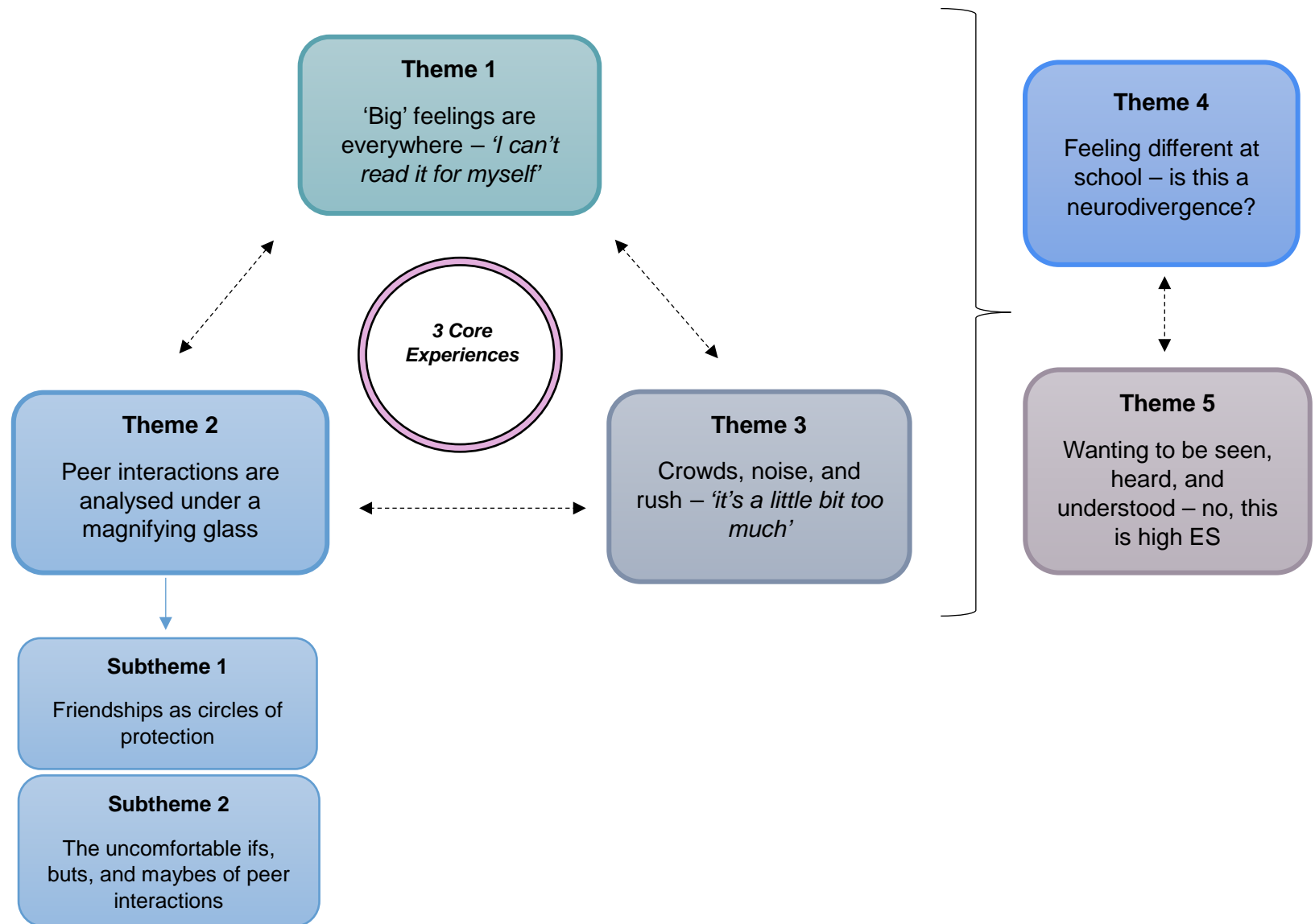


Figure 4: Thematic Map exploring how children, who self-identify as experiencing high ES, experience their time within education (RQ1), including constructions of a supportive educational environment (RQ3)

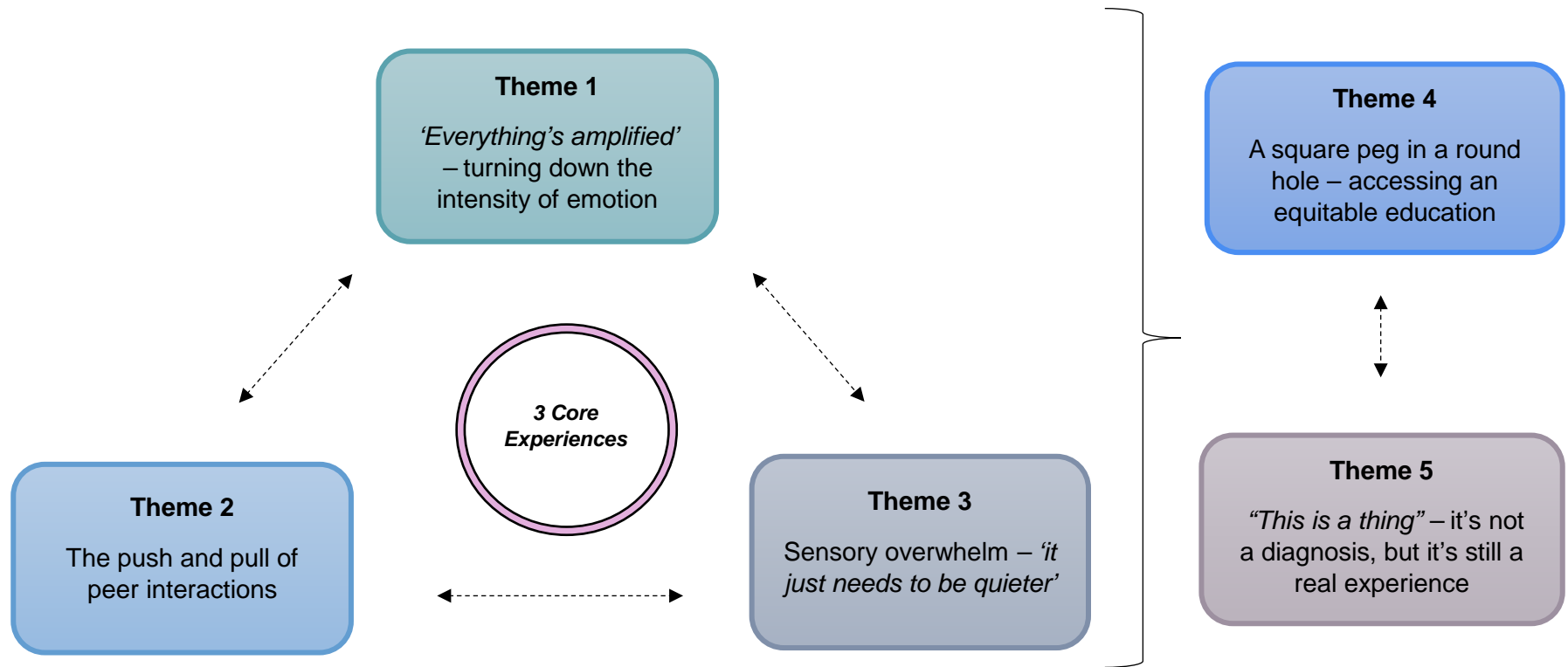


Figure 5: Thematic Map exploring how parents/carers of children, who self-identify as experiencing high ES, perceive their child's time within education (RQ2), including constructions of a supportive educational environment (RQ4)

4.2. Exploration of Themes (Child Group)

Overview	
<p>Participants shared three core experiences relating to their experience of high ES within the educational context. These experiences – ‘big’ feelings, deep analysis of peer interactions, and sensory overwhelm – led participants into feeling different to the majority of their less sensitive peers. Some participants framed this perception of difference in terms of the increasing understanding around the notion of neurodiversity, with some wondering whether they were perhaps neurodivergent (e.g., autistic). Participants ultimately shared a sense of wanting to be seen, heard, and understood within the educational context, desiring for their ‘difference’ to be seen for what <i>they</i> felt it was, an experience of high ES.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Theme 1: ‘Big’ feelings are everywhere – ‘I can’t read it for myself’</p>	
Description of Theme	Illustrative Quotes
<p>Participants shared a narrative around experiencing intense emotions within the educational context, or ‘big’ feelings. Participants explained this by focusing primarily on negative emotions experienced during times of worry and/or anxiety, for example around academic evaluations, transition periods, and interpersonal challenges. Some participants extended this to include more positive emotions, yet <i>all</i> emotional responses were experienced in an intense, deep, and enduring manner. Participants displayed limited abilities to ‘manage’ their ‘big’ feelings, which were described as “<i>over-reactions</i>” that they could not “<i>read</i>” for themselves (<i>Participant 5c, p. 46, 50</i>). Despite displaying limited ability to manage their own ‘big’ feelings, some participants shared feeling better able to understand and support others’ ‘big’ feelings. In exploring instances in which ‘big’ feelings <i>were</i> more manageable for participants, perhaps unsurprisingly given the value placed on relationships and interpersonal interactions generally (<i>as described in Theme 2</i>), several participants suggested importance in having access to support networks, in which they gained a sense of</p>	<p>Participant 1b: Most people probably usually just be a little bit angry but I’ll fall and start shouting and maybe start being a bit over the top without realising it [...] being highly sensitive, if there’s an argument, I sometimes, I lash out, like a really, really bad thing (<i>p. 5, 9</i>).</p> <p>Participant 1b: I sometimes do get [...] really, really high stress levels. I will usually just tell myself to shut up or something like that (<i>p. 51</i>).</p> <p>Participant 6b: If you’re sensitive, you can get you can be a lot more emotional [...] more scared of things normally [...] A lot more anxiety [...] Most people just ignore it. Wipe it off [but I] take it in a lot more than other people (<i>p. 59, 64</i>).</p> <p>Participant 5c: Being able to understand people that I can do quite well so I can read if someone is hurt, I can read if someone is angry, if someone is sad or if they just need some time on their own. I can. I can read it for other people but I don’t know why I can’t read it for</p>

<p>belongingness, particularly with other sensitive individuals, where they could “vent things out” (Participant 5c, p. 51).</p>	<p>myself [...] I’m the person that people tend to go to, to talk to about their feelings [...] but I’m good at answering them and I’m not good at answering myself (p. 46, 48).</p> <p>Participant 5c: I've been able to express my feelings more. I've had more outlets than I had, I only had one outlet at the start of the year. It was my sister. Now it's the rest of my family, my friends, the learning mentor at school, and the teachers as well had loads more outlets in my feelings, which means the pressure inside is lower than what it was at the start of the year because I've had those valves to vent things out [...] I'm in this safe place with a lot of other people who are sensitive (p. 44, 51).</p>	
<p>Theme 2: Peer interactions are analysed under a magnifying glass</p>		
<p>Participants placed high importance on interpersonal peer relationships, frequently engaging in deep analysis of positive, negative, and even imagined peer interactions. Participants held a metaphorical magnifying glass over such interactions, where past, present, and future considerations intertwined to create an intense depth of thought.</p>		
Subtheme	Description of Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p>Subtheme 1: Friendships as circles of protection</p>	<p>Participants highlighted the importance of close friendships in the educational context, and the intense discomfort experienced when friendships were not prioritised. Participants acknowledged a strong need to protect their friends, occasionally at their own expense, and particularly during times of perceived injustice. The depth of</p>	<p>Participant 1b: So all my friends, they understand how I feel [...] they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well (p. 52).</p> <p>Participant 7b: My best friends [are] there to kind of comfort me [...] [when my teacher] knew that I was struggling, but he didn't put me in with my best friend and he knew we were best friends [...] that kind of made me not like him at all (p. 74, 83).</p>

	<p>thought displayed around friendships perhaps reinforces the importance these children place upon protecting, and being protected by, their close friends. Language such as “<i>pack of wolves</i>” (Participant 1b, p. 52) and “<i>there to [...] comfort</i>” (Participant 7b, p. 74) highlights how these children perhaps view close friends almost as an extension of family within the educational context. These deep, important relationships being crucial to wellbeing may explain some of the intensity of thought developed around them.</p>	
<p>Subtheme 2: The ifs, buts, and maybes of peer interactions</p>	<p>Participants described an intense dislike of <i>all</i> disagreements and arguments, including those not directly involving close friends. Participants described how, due to their strong empathy, <i>all</i> negative interpersonal interactions had potential to lead them into deep rumination, worry, and anxiety, particularly around perceptions of the ‘correct’ actions they should be taking (i.e., the ‘ifs, buts, and maybes’). As</p>	<p>Participant 1b: Sometimes I kind of have a battle with myself [...] during a conversation where people are shouting and I know why they’re shouting, but I don’t know how to help [...] I think because I want the shouting to stop and I want to help people, I want to know they’re OK, but I don’t know how to help (p. 46, 47).</p> <p>Participant 5c: Someone might start getting shouted at [...] something might happen and I want to be able to take myself away from it, but I can’t because [...] with someone being shouted at I find that quite hard to go off. I can’t go off because I need to contribute to conversation as well (p. 44).</p> <p>Participant 6b: If someone you know is upset, it’s really, sometimes it’s bad because even if you don’t like the person [...] your natural thing</p>

	<p>discussed in <i>Theme 1</i>, participants suggested supportive educational environments promoted nurturing, collaborative discussions between similar peers. Such open, honest communication channels perhaps ameliorate some of the difficulty that children experience around the 'ifs, buts, and maybes' of interpersonal relationships, subsequently reducing the deep rumination, worry, and anxiety that can ensue.</p>	<p>to do would be go ask are you OK? And you would notice if [...] [they are] just sat there [...] [I] take it in a lot more than other people (p. 64).</p> <p>Participant 5c: Being in a place where we can express our feelings, that's what we're working on. Being able to express our feelings with each other a bit more. And being in a place like that is very, very helpful (p. 44).</p>
<p>Theme 3: Crowds, noise, and rush – <i>'it's a little bit too much'</i></p>		
<p>Description of Theme</p>	<p>Illustrative Quotes</p>	
<p>The experience of high ES extended from internal experiences of 'big' feelings and deep analysis of interpersonal interactions, to physical feelings of uncomfortableness in environments unsuited to children's preferences. Participants described the sensory experience of their educational environment to be overwhelming, reflecting on the loud, crowded nature of the environment, and acknowledging how this affected their emotional wellbeing and academic functioning. In exploring the impact of this overwhelm, participants outlined how the typical school day allowed them little time to recharge their energy levels, negatively influencing their wellbeing. Participants outlined multiple ways their educational context could be adapted to support them in managing this; suggestions typically included environmental changes, such as larger classrooms or private learning stations,</p>	<p>Participant 1b: Everyone is really loud and talking and I hate it [...] knowing that I'm crammed in (p. 2).</p> <p>Participant 4b: [There are] a lot of different things going on at once I don't like it [...] it's just extremely loud [...] it can make you feel a bit uncomfortable [...] [they] cram every child into one room [...] it's every single child. In one room [...] I want the classroom to be bigger because having 30 children in one small classroom. Like I don't get space to think. And I feel a bit crowded sometimes (p. 13, 22, 24).</p> <p>Participant 7b: [I would like a] very big, big uh classroom, and they'll be like section bits off for each student to have their own space [...]</p>	

<p>where, having “space to think” (<i>Participant 4b</i>, p. 22), quiet time, and opportunity to ‘recharge’ was important.</p>	<p>like a little like window things on the side [...] like a little door to shut yourself out if you think it’s a little bit too much (p. 82).</p>
<p>Theme 4: Feeling different at school – is this a neurodivergence?</p>	
<p>Description of Theme</p>	<p>Illustrative Quote</p>
<p>Perhaps owing to these three core experiences, participants shared a narrative around feeling different within their educational context. This perception of difference was framed positively and negatively, however, most commonly, participants held a negative perception of difference. For example, the experience of high ES was suggested to be associated with feeling more “worried” (<i>Participant 4b</i>, p. 23) about school, in comparison to their less sensitive peers. In the associated illustrative quotes, <i>Participant 4b</i> (p. 23) perhaps further alludes to their belief that experiencing high ES is ‘abnormal’ and potentially something that they do not want to experience. Similarly, <i>Participant 5b</i> (p. 25) perhaps indicates their desire to be less sensitive by outlining their dislike of the term ‘highly sensitive’. Some participants extended their wonderings around their sense of difference to incorporate their increasing understanding around neurodivergence (e.g., ASC). Despite self-identifying as experiencing high ES, the account shared by <i>Participant 4b</i> (p. 15, 19) perhaps indicates an attempt to make sense of their experience of difference in a way that may be understood by the majority, who “just learned about autism” (p. 19), for example. <i>Participant 5c’s</i> acknowledgement “it’s how I feel” (p. 47) also perhaps alludes to their desire to feel understood within their educational context by employing commonly understood language of neurodivergence.</p>	<p>Participant 1b: If I was like the other boys I would probably join in [upsetting the girls], but because I am sensitive uh [...] I think, I don’t know. I think I have more empathy. And I think that it also makes me feel a lot happier (p. 4).</p> <p>Participant 4b: [The ‘perfect’ classroom would consist of] a mix of highly sensitive [students] and not [highly sensitive students]. A mix is good it helps because it helps the people with highly sensitive feel like they’re not different. Just make them feel like they’re just a normal child that doesn’t have differences (p. 23).</p> <p>Participant 5b: I prefer to use [the term] just sensitive [...] Because when I think of myself as highly sensitive it just reminds me of some of the things that have happened at school in the past [...] getting teased for it (p. 25).</p> <p>Participant 4b: Yeah we just know about autism. They just learned about autism [...] because of high sensitive I’ve been able to help an autistic person in my class [...] I can understand [child] better than most people in my class [...] well you know because she is autistic I’ve got the most traits like her (p. 15, 19).</p> <p>Participant 5c: That’s kind of how I feel, I’m not diagnosed with autism or anything, but it’s how I feel (p. 47).</p>

Theme 5: Wanting to be seen, heard, and understood – no, this is high ES

Description of Theme	Illustrative Quotes
<p>Participants described wanting to be seen, heard, and understood as someone who experiences high ES within their educational contexts, something that was, currently, felt to be lacking. Participants desired for there to be more general awareness around the notion of high ES within their educational contexts, believing that this would promote more person-centred support. Building relationships with understanding others with whom they shared similarities was felt to be important, as was promoting whole-school awareness around high ES. The associated illustrative quotes perhaps reiterate how, by encouraging positive, strengths-based language of individual difference around the experience of high ES, these children may feel better supported in their desires to be seen, heard, and understood as individuals who experience high ES. Such action may additionally reduce the need, potentially felt by some children, to explain their feelings of difference in terms of, what they feel to be, more commonly understood language of neurodivergence (<i>as described in Theme 4</i>).</p>	<p>Participant 1b: They didn't know how sensitive I was [...] and that was really hard (<i>p. 5</i>).</p> <p>Participant 4b: I don't act so sensitive at school because when my Mum told my teacher that I was highly sensitive, she didn't. She didn't really know. So I want to hide it, yeah (<i>p. 17</i>).</p> <p>Participant 5c: I feel people can't see me. All of me (<i>p. 47</i>).</p> <p>Participant 6b: [If there was one thing I wish my teachers knew about me it would be] [...] how much, how much sensitivity I have? (<i>p. 70</i>).</p> <p>Participant 7b: They know nothing. They have no idea what [highly sensitive] means [...] [I would like school-based staff and my peers to] understand like who I am and to actually understand my personality (<i>p. 81, 84</i>).</p> <p>Participant 4b: My Mum understands me more than anyone else [...] I want to be home schooled because Mum knows how to fix it and the teachers don't [...] having a bunch of teachers not believing in it [...] doesn't make it easy (<i>p. 17, 22, 23</i>).</p> <p>Participant 5b: It [would] be good if every school had at least one member of staff, you'd be able to talk to about [sensitivity] (<i>p. 39</i>).</p> <p>Participant 5c: [I would like the opportunity to] do an assembly or a couple of words about sensitivity [...] So things about coping</p>

	<p>strategies, things about how sensitivity is what sensitivity is, the spectrum of it. So the different things that it can encompass. Being able to have more insight into your senses so like smells for me or hearing, or being more overwhelmed and overreacting sometimes to negative things in the school life or home life that are going on. And the way that children and young people in the school can cooperate with it and then we can hopefully have a better school life because people are listening to each other and they understand about each of them all (p. 53).</p>
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4.3. Exploration of Themes (Parent/Carer Group)

Overview	
<p>In accordance with the narrative shared by children, parents/carers described three core experiences shared by their children relating to their experience of high ES within the educational context. These experiences – intensity of emotion, the push and pull of peer interactions, and sensory overwhelm – led participants to feel that their children were perhaps ‘square pegs in round holes’, who did not ‘fit into the boxes’ set out by their educational contexts. This led some to question the extent to which their child’s educational experience was equitable. Participants advocated for greater awareness and understanding around the experience of high ES within the educational context, frequently comparing the lack of understanding around high ES to the increasing understanding around neurodivergence. Participants acknowledged that high ES not being a clinical diagnosis should not take away from the ‘realness’ of the experience, nor the importance of it being understood across society.</p>	
Theme 1: ‘Everything’s amplified’ – turning down the intensity of emotion	
Description of Theme	Illustrative Quotes
<p>Participants shared a sense that their children experienced intense emotions within the educational context. Participants related this to their children’s empathic natures, where they were felt to most often experience intense emotions following difficult interpersonal</p>	<p>Participant 1a: He had to talk to the class and choose anything you wanted [...] he struggles with that because he’s thinking not only of what he’s choosing what everybody else will think about it. Is it the right thing. Am I doing something wrong [...] He’s aware of his own</p>

interactions, or in instances where they felt observed or judged, for example during whole-class activities. Participants described how their children typically turned inward to manage, and self-regulate, these intense emotions. This was of concern to participants, who acknowledged the challenge they faced as parents/carers in both understanding, and occasionally accepting, the depth of their child's emotional reactions, particularly when such experiences led their children into poor mental health. This intensity of emotion led participants to feel that their children required additional support to 'turn the intensity of emotion down'. Participants highlighted value in nurturing relationships with key adults with whom their children could relate to, believing such relationships supported their children's emotion regulation and ability to present as their 'authentic' selves. However, largely, participants suggested that their children's educational settings currently did not present adequate opportunities for the high level of nurture, care, and compassion their children required.

emotions and knowing everybody else's emotions, and that's where it all gets tangled up in his head to the point where you get angry or frustrated or upset because you've got so much going on at the same time (p. 1, 5).

Participant 4a: She's on the most steep roller coaster you can imagine. She's up, down, up, down [...] It's like everything's amplified (p. 56, 76).

Participant 7a: Her compassion was so strong she couldn't. She couldn't suppress it. She couldn't not feel the things that she felt (p. 116).

Participant 2a: She would never naturally come to us and say anything [...] for her to come and say oh I feel I'm feeling anxious [...] I would have some champagne at that point for her to be able to verbalise things externally [...] I kind of feel like we can't talk about [child's emotions] because even asking the question is now, so shame, shaming [...] we're going through a pretty dark bit at the moment [...] A healthy, intelligent, wonderful 14-year-old who is at home. All the time, she doesn't want to see anybody. Doesn't want to do anything [...] her recent report from teachers was, you know, [child] is a delight in class [...] you know she does everything. And you're like, oh gosh, it's an amazing report [...] but, from our side, it's such a sad, it's such a sad place to be as well, because we have a totally miserable child who hates school. You know, how can you get a report now that is a glowing report? (p. 18, 19, 20).

Participant 8a: She bottles stuff up all day long [...] [and] falls apart hard at night (p. 129).

Theme 2: The push and pull of peer interactions

Description of Theme	Illustrative Quotes
<p>Participants described the ‘push and pull’ of peer interactions, sharing a sense that their children had strong desires, and abilities, to connect meaningfully with peers, yet experienced difficulty in seeking and maintaining such relationships within the educational context due to their experience of high ES. To illustrate, participants reflected on their children’s tendencies to perceive interpersonal interactions as overwhelming; this led some children to prefer spending time alone, something that was not always perceived positively by school-based staff, who questioned their children’s social skills for example. Participants suggested that the educational context may be enhanced by developing the available “[opportunities]” for their children “to connect, in a deep way” (Participant 7a, p. 111) with peers similar to themselves, in addition to providing nurturing relationships with key adults with whom they can relate to. Such safe spaces may provide children with much needed time to reflect upon feelings of overwhelm frequently associated with peer interactions, something which Participant 7a suggested took her child “a lot longer [...] to recover” (Participant 7a, p. 112) from.</p>	<p>Participant 1a: His [...] ability to connect with people, it is really, really mature (p. 4).</p> <p>Participant 1a: That's what the problem is [...] you're, picking up on everybody's emotion and bad mood. And you, you would think I've done something wrong. It's my fault. You try and put it right and then you, you know, you, you are expending a lot of energy doing that (p. 3).</p> <p>Participant 7a: In an environment where she has the [...] opportunity, to connect, in a deep way, she thrives [...] because of the deep processing, connections are important, it isn't easily achievable. There isn't the opportunity to have deep connections with the people, for example, if the classroom is regularly moved around to work with different people (p. 108, 111).</p> <p>Participant 3a: She is a good friend to people [...] I think that's sometimes quite draining for her because she takes other people's kind of worries and things on board (p. 43).</p> <p>Participant 3a: His latest teacher was said to me, you know, he's just kind of by himself sort of thing and I think well, I think he needs that down time [...] I think he needs to not be around them. So I tried to put it in terms of introversion [...] [he] needs to not be around people all the time (p. 38).</p>

	<p>Participant 1a: [My child] needs somebody sensitive themselves [...] [the extent to which my child is supported at school is] dependent on the [...] particular personality of the teacher [...] [where] quieter, more sensitive [...] kind nurturing [personalities are important] (p. 2, 10).</p> <p>Participant 2a: Without this particular person, who I think actually is also highly sensitive.. [...] [my child] wouldn't be at school (p. 17).</p>
<p>Theme 3: Sensory overwhelm – ‘it just needs to be quieter’</p>	
<p>Description of Theme</p>	<p>Illustrative Quotes</p>
<p>Participants suggested that their children experienced sensory overwhelm within their educational context, due to the noisy, crowded nature of the environment. Participants reflected on the “overwhelming [...] size of [school], the sounds of teachers shouting, children chatting” (Participant 1a, p. 14), the “chaos” of the lunch queue (Participant 3a, p. 84), and the “intolerable [...] noises, not just loud noises, breathing, chewing, sniffing” (Participant 2a, p. 14, 16), which they believed caused their children to feel “highly anxious” (Participant 2a, p. 14), and unable “to focus on [...] work” (Participant 3a, p. 33). Participants offered several thoughts pertaining to how this experience may be more effectively managed for their children. Participants suggested that typical strategies aimed at reducing auditory overwhelm, for example ear defenders, were inappropriate for their children, who were highly aware of others’ perceptions of them. Rather, participants suggested that children have access to “breaks when it becomes too much” (Participant 4a, p. 55), “quieter, smaller spaces” (Participant 2a, p. 32), and stronger classroom management styles, where school-based staff are able to confidently, and consistently, limit noise disturbance during lessons.</p>	<p>Participant 8a: I think the way I tried to remember it, it's like if I went to like a club and there was like pulsating lights and really loud music and everyone was yelling. I feel like that's what she feels when she's in a class of 30 kids all talking at the same time and actually quite a few different languages and then being in a lunch room with about 300 kids [...] I think that's how she feels it. I don't think she has [...] kind of an internal membrane between [her] and the world [...] I think she hears everything [...] I don't think she can turn off inputs. So I think for her school was just, like, nonstop (p. 128).</p> <p>Participant 2a: She felt too shy to put [ear defenders] in [...] you kind of like putting flashing lights around them, saying, like, I've got a problem. Hey, class. Hey, everybody else in the class? I've got a problem (p. 22).</p> <p>Participant 2a: The teacher [...] [needs] to be consistent to their core about maintaining a very quiet and calm atmosphere [...] it just needs to be quieter (p. 24, 32).</p>

	<p>Participant 7a: [My child requires additional time to] revisit missing elements of skills that they maybe have been present in class but weren't absorbing the information at the time (p. 114).</p>
<p>Theme 4: A square peg in a round hole – accessing an equitable education</p>	
<p>Description of Theme</p>	<p>Illustrative Quote</p>
<p>Perhaps owing to these three core experiences, participants reflected feeling that their children were 'square pegs in round holes', who did not 'fit into the boxes' set out by their educational contexts. This led to questions around the extent to which their children's educational experiences were truly equitable. Such questioning was particularly apparent within participant accounts in which Elective Home Education (EHE) or transition to an independent sector school was considered and/or chosen for reasons associated with experiencing difficulty around the notion of high ES in their educational context (e.g., <i>Participants 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a, 7a</i>). In these accounts, participants shared a sense of frustration, and increasing hopelessness, in desiring for their children's individual differences to be recognised within their educational contexts. Some wondered around their children's needs perhaps being overlooked since they were less "obvious" (<i>Participant 7a, p. 119</i>) and/or "loud" (<i>Participant 8a, p. 134</i>), with one participant reflecting on cultural norms, and how quieter, sensitive, personality types are perhaps less valued within UK contexts. Participants ultimately felt that their children were capable of thriving, yet often were not in educational contexts that enabled them to do so. Subsequently, participants felt it important to 'fight' for their children to have an equitable education. Participants discussed, for example, feeling it was important to advocate for their child to have additional information processing time, time to reflect with others upon challenging experiences, and opportunities to recharge following</p>	<p>Participant 1a: His needs aren't being met because his personality doesn't fit the [...] norm (p. 12).</p> <p>Participant 4a: I think the whole school system's not geared up for children like her [...] It's almost like we want everybody to be the same (p. 71).</p> <p>Participant 3a: Having kind of the empathy [...] being quite kind and things like that, these are all good traits. And I think the problem is, though, that people seem to want, obviously people seem to prefer extroverts [...] Japanese or something like that, they value those sorts of traits. But I think in in our society here, they aren't as many. And so being an introvert, being highly sensitive, it's it's tricky [...] that's what we, that's what we kind of view as being how kids should be, isn't it? They should be really loud (p. 37, 47).</p> <p>Participant 7a: You have more immediate obvious needs [...] misbehaving. Shouting. Throwing [...] it already has an approach. It has a pathway [...] a highly sensitive child [...] There isn't a pathway [...] the interventions that they need are not considered to be appropriate in the school system because they are by nature, care, compassion, time, patience. And those are in very short supply in the mainstream school (p. 119).</p>

<p>sensory overwhelm. However, the extent to which such adaptations were felt to be achievable within their children’s current educational contexts was questioned. Some felt so strongly that their children’s needs were not being, and would not be, met in their current provision that they felt it necessary to alter their child’s educational provision (e.g., EHE, independent sector schooling). Such decisions were described as being challenging from a parent/carer perspective, despite having a reportedly positive impact on their children’s experience of education. Participants outlined how increased awareness around the experience of high ES may promote more supportive educational environments, where person-centred environmental adaptations may be more likely to be realised. Several parents/carers alluded to how increased awareness also had potential to enhance their own confidence in approaching school-based staff to discuss their child’s experience of high ES, where they anticipated feeling less “judged” (Participant 1a, p. 12).</p>	<p>Participant 1a: I was just trying to fight for, for, for [child] to have, you know, the same as everybody else, I wanted her to be interested in understanding [child] (p. 6).</p> <p>Participant 3a: I thought [...] why not just take him out for a bit? [...] I didn’t plan my kids to not go to school [...] [but] I got to a point where it’s just like I can’t do it anymore [...] It was really quite a difficult decision to make [...] I was like, oh, completely traumatised. Don’t know how much I was doing the right thing, but it is working really well [...] it is the right thing, but it is a massive step away from everything that you’ve ever known. You know it’s [...] school (p. 34, 35, 39).</p> <p>Participant 7a: We changed school environment because we recognised that [child] was... [...] struggling with her mental health, it was being impacted heavily by the lack of sensitivity towards her needs and the lack of understanding (p. 112).</p>
<p>Theme 5: “This is a thing” – it’s not a diagnosis, but it’s still a real experience</p>	
<p>Description of Theme</p>	<p>Illustrative Quotes</p>
<p>Participants reflected that whilst high ES is not a clinical diagnosis, this should not take away from the ‘realness’ of the experience, nor the importance of it being understood. Participants believed individual differences were best understood within educational contexts when explained via diagnoses and/or labels, and thus felt that their children’s experience of high ES was frequently being viewed through, what they felt was the more well-known, lens of neurodivergence. Participants alluded to a sense of frustration around individual differences, such as neurodivergence, being increasingly understood, yet the experience of high ES receiving little attention. Whilst participants commended their children’s schools in promoting much-needed awareness and</p>	<p>Participant 3a: They thought autism [...] there isn’t really any understanding about sensitivity. I can’t even say that I’ve discussed it [...] I think it would just be [...] she’s just a parent in denial [...] [but] if they’d have that awareness they would be like, oh yeah, actually, I think that does really fit him [...] but they don’t [...] the only thing they have is autism. So that’s kind of what they go for really, because it’s like, well, you know, there is obviously some overlap isn’t there (p. 36).</p> <p>Participant 5a: I don’t think this school actually understands what a highly sensitive child is [...] they’re looking at it from an autistic point of view (p. 78, 87).</p>

understanding around neurodivergence, they were left wondering why individual differences, such as high ES, were less recognised and supported, despite such individual differences having important implications for their child's achievement and wellbeing. Some participants shared how this lack of understanding had led their children to question their individual differences themselves. Others shared how they too had sometimes felt it easier to explain their child's individual differences in terms of neurodivergence, owing to what they perceived to be the "overlap" (Participant 3a, p. 36) across presentations (e.g., ASC and high ES). Participants acknowledged feeling that their children were not neurodivergent, yet suggested that using such language, which was felt to be more typically understood within educational and community contexts, enabled them to convey some of the difficulty their children experienced in a way that would perhaps be better understood by others. Participants again advocated for increased awareness and understanding around the experience of high ES within educational contexts. They desired for educational professionals to recognise the 'realness' of high ES, reiterating, "this is a thing" (Participant 1a, p. 41). Participants suggested that increased awareness and understanding may enable educational professionals "to see things differently" (Participant 6a, p. 100), where being "upfront" (Participant 3a, p. 39) about their child's experience of high ES may then be enabled, and the need for parents/carers to use, what they felt to be, incorrect "labels" (Participant 7a, p. 116) to describe their children's experiences may be reduced.

Participant 6a: They see highly sensitive as those things, which are typical neurodiverse issues, aren't they? They are triggers that make people think they must be autistic. They must have ADHD, they must have sensory processing disorder. That's very different [...] It's hard to get them to see things differently (p. 100).

Participant 3a: [School] did say that she had said that she thought she had autism [...] she'll see things on social media probably and stuff like that, and again, she'll see the traits that probably apply to her. [...] I do think part of her still thinks that's not real thing, though, you know, I mean, it's not, not a diagnosis, it's, it's not talked about [...] basically she sees so much around autism and how autism presents in girls, and, yeah [...] you never see high sensitivity (p. 45, 46).

Participant 7a: It was only the diagnostic labels that I could think of. So ADHD, autism, SPD, PDA, all of those because it felt like in the education system, those would be the only labels that they would actually be able to engage with me on [...] I don't believe it's any of those [...] highly sensitive is a personality trait (p. 116, 122).

Participant 8a: If you say autism, people know what it means. But [high ES] [...] it's like this very long-winded explanation [...] it would be a lot easier if people understood that term [...] I have actually lied, and said she's just a on the spectrum, like done, and then people just back up, you know, that's the word they know [...] she's highly sensitive will mean absolutely nothing [...] But yeah, if you say those words, people know what it means. If you say my daughter is highly sensitive, they'll just think I'm being one of those, like, I don't know, middle class parents who, you know, worries about organic baby food (p. 125, 137).

	Participant 3a: If [school] had this awareness it would be much easier [...] If I could just be upfront with that, that would make a massive massive difference, I think (<i>p. 39</i>).
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5. Discussion

5.1. Overview

To the researcher's knowledge, this exploratory research represents the first to utilise qualitative research methods to explore the experience of high ES, within UK-based educational settings, from the perspective of children and their parents/carers. The study aimed to investigate how CYP, who self-identified as experiencing high ES, and their parents/carers, perceived the CYP's time within education, whilst also exploring constructions of a supportive educational environment. The study aimed to recruit CYP aged between 7- and 25-years old. The child group comprised of children aged between 9- and 12-years old (mean age = 10.7 years, SD = 1.2), with the parent/carer group comprising of parents/carers of children aged between 9- and 15-years old (mean age = 14 years, SD = 2.04). The findings are explored below in relation to the RQs. Implications for EPP, strengths and limitations of the research, and suggestions for future research are considered.

5.2. How do children, who self-identify as experiencing high ES, and their parents/carers, perceive their time within education? (RQ1 & RQ2)

The findings suggested that children and their parents/carers shared the perception that the child's time within education was highly impacted by their experience of high ES, and was thus different to the majority of their less sensitive peers. Children were reported to experience intense emotions, deep analysis of positive and negative interpersonal interactions, and sensory overwhelm within their educational context.

5.2.1. Experiencing Intense Emotions

The experience of intense emotions has been frequently cited within literature exploring the educational experiences of students experiencing high ES (e.g., Gearhart & Bodie, 2012; Iimura & Kibe, 2020; May & Pitman, 2021; Tillmann et al., 2018; Zavodna, 2022). In the current study, parents/carers focused on how their children were occasionally referred to by school-based staff as 'over-sensitive', with children themselves reflecting on what they, perhaps consequently, termed their emotional 'over-reactions'. Whilst some children were able to identify benefits of experiencing intense emotions, such as

enhanced empathy, findings suggested that, largely, the way in which the experience of intense emotions was ‘managed’ within the educational context, and the language used around such experiences, was leading children into believing that there was ‘something wrong’ with them. Indeed, children suggested that the experience of intense emotions led to teasing and/or bullying, which they postulated may stem from limited understanding and acceptance around the experience of high ES from peers. Parents/carers similarly discussed the ‘invalidation’ their children inadvertently experienced from school-based staff, who had little time to explore and/or support their children’s ‘big’ feelings. Such findings are arguably of concern given literature suggesting that individuals experiencing high ES often report feelings of low self-esteem, guilt, and/or shame, where underlying feelings of being misunderstood by society are purported to be at play (Acevedo, 2020a; limura, 2021).

5.2.2. Deep Analysis of Positive and Negative Interpersonal Interactions

In the current study, child and parent/carer participants associated the experience of high ES with deep analysis of positive and negative interpersonal interactions. Positive, meaningful connections with peers and school-based staff were viewed as protective, resilience factors in aiding emotional wellbeing, whilst negative interpersonal interactions were suggested to act as risk factors in experiencing poor emotional wellbeing and/or mental health difficulties. Such findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that individuals who experience high ES display enhanced empathy and sensitivity towards others, and subsequently experience a high intensity of feelings relating to interpersonal interactions, others’ moods, and subtle social cues (Acevedo, 2020a; Acevedo et al., 2014; Greven et al., 2019). Subsequently, such individuals have been shown to gain intense enjoyment from positive interpersonal interactions, yet an equally intense experience of emotional overwhelm following negative interpersonal interactions (Acevedo, 2020a; Acevedo et al., 2014; Greven et al., 2019; limura, 2021; Zavodna, 2022).

5.2.3. Experiencing Sensory Overwhelm

It is well-documented within literature that individuals who experience high ES frequently experience cognitive overload and consequential overwhelm resulting from their lower sensory thresholds, tendencies to process information

more deeply, and propensity to feel overwhelm when overstimulated (Acevedo, 2020a; Aron et al., 2005; Booth & Carroll, 2015; Greven et al., 2019). In the current study, children reported sensory overwhelm with particular relation to noise and crowd levels in their educational contexts. This was similarly shared within parent/carer accounts, who postulated that such overwhelm was associated with a reduced ability to function academically and poor mental health. This too is in accordance with earlier studies exploring the educational experiences of young people who experience high ES (e.g., Cater, 2022; Gearhart & Bodie, 2012; Zavodna, 2022).

5.2.4. Feeling Different

Perhaps owing to such experiences, children reported feeling different to the majority of their less sensitive peers, with varying accounts regarding whether such difference was felt to be understood and/or accepted within their educational context. Such findings are in accordance with Cater's (2022) research, outlining how under- and post-graduate students experiencing high ES reported a reduced sense of belongingness to their education institution, believing that they were, rather, part of a marginalised group. Parents/carers similarly reported a sense that their children perhaps did not fit into the 'boxes' that they felt were set out by their child's educational context. They perceived their children to be misunderstood and/or overlooked due to their typically quieter natures, with one participant reflecting on cultural norms, for example, the 'extrovert ideal' seen in many UK cultures (Aron, 2006; May et al., 2020; Thom, 2020). Indeed, literature suggests internalising presentations, such as that associated with depth of processing amongst individuals experiencing high ES, often receive less immediate attention in comparison to more overt, externalising needs within educational contexts (Papandrea & Winefield, 2011; Splett et al., 2019).

5.2.5. Limited General Awareness around the Notion of High ES

A novel finding from the current study reflected how parents/carers felt that the lesser well-known experience of high ES was frequently being viewed through, what they felt to be, the more well-known lens of neurodivergence by educational professionals. Parents/carers reported feeling that it was difficult to get educational professionals to 'see things differently' and shared a sense

of frustration around the experience of high ES being less acknowledged and/or understood in comparison to ASC and ADHD. Parents/carers reflected that the lack of understanding around the experience of high ES, in comparison to the increasing understanding around neurodivergence, had in fact caused their children to question their individual differences themselves, something that was echoed in children's accounts. A small number of parents/carers further suggested that it was sometimes easier to explain their child's individual differences in terms of neurodivergence. They acknowledged some 'overlap' between the experience of high ES and neurodivergence (e.g., ASC), and suggested that explaining their children's difficulties (e.g., sensory overwhelm) by referring to neurodivergence enabled educational professionals to better 'engage' with them. Parents/carers acknowledged feeling that their children were not neurodivergent, yet felt ill-equipped to advocate for their children in relation to their experience of high ES, since this did not reflect a well-known 'diagnosis' or 'label', something which was believed to be required in the educational context to access related support.

It is important to note that whilst similarities between the presentations of high ES and neurodivergence, such as ASC, cannot be disputed, current research suggests that the two are distinct entities (Acevedo, 2020a; Acevedo et al., 2014). Although, the notion of 'masking', particularly amongst autistic females, has the potential to lead to misdiagnosis (Corscadden & Casserly, 2021). The finding, from the current study, that a small number of parents/carers felt it pertinent to use 'labels' of neurodivergence to convey their children's experiences of high ES to educational professionals, perhaps highlights the importance of working to increase current levels of awareness and understanding around the notion of high ES. The potential for misperception (in either direction) from parent/carer and school-based staff perspectives is an important consideration since misunderstandings may cause difficulties amongst children and their developing self-concepts, whilst also meaning additional supports (e.g., relating particularly to neurodivergence) are inadvertently withheld. Thus, since the presentation of high ES and neurodivergence can look similar (Acevedo, 2020b; Acevedo et al., 2014; Corscadden & Casserly, 2021), there is arguably an ethical responsibility,

particularly for educational professionals such as EPs, to (1) explore a child's experience from a holistic, well-informed position, and (2) promote the use of language which best describes a child's current experiences. Such findings perhaps complement Cater's (2022) suggestion for information about high ES to be included within mainstream literature on individual difference, owing to the current lack of understanding around the experience of high ES within educational contexts.

In the current study, a further novel finding related to parents/carers believing that their children were not receiving equitable educations since the experience of high ES was not understood, nor supported, within their child's educational context. Subsequently, parents/carers reflected on a 'fight' they felt they must engage in, something which was perceived as being harmful to their own emotional wellbeing and mental health. Some parents/carers ultimately felt it appropriate to remove their child from Local Authority (LA) maintained mainstream education, with several children also reporting a desire to be educated elsewhere (e.g., EHE, independent sector). The experience of removing a child from LA-maintained mainstream education was described as being particularly distressing from a parent/carer perspective, despite reportedly having positive outcomes for their children's achievement and wellbeing.

5.3. How do children, who self-identify as experiencing high ES, and their parents/carers, construct the notion of a supportive educational environment? (RQ3 & RQ4)

The findings from the current study suggest that educational environments may be adapted in several ways to promote the achievement and wellbeing of children who experience high ES. Given the notion of vantage sensitivity, whereby individuals who experience high ES are said to respond more strongly to both aversive *and* supportive environments (Greven et al., 2019), and the recent finding that students who experience high ES are more likely to readily attend to, notice, and internalise positive, supportive environments when compared with less sensitive students (Iimura & Kibe, 2020), there is arguably great applied value in adapting educational environments to suit the individual differences, and preferences, of students who experience high ES. The utility

of this is perhaps extended further in considering the proposed notion, “what is good for sensitive learners is good for all learners” (Cater, 2022, p. 159).

5.3.1. Offering Opportunity to Reflect on, and Develop Positive Coping Strategies around, the Experience of Intense Emotions

In the current study, the experience of intense emotions was frequently reported, yet both child and parent/carer accounts outlined the tendency for children to turn inward to self-regulate such emotional responses in ineffective manners. Of concern, literature suggests that individuals who experience high ES are prone to experiencing related emotional overwhelm and high stress-levels, particularly when they lack self-regulation and/or coping strategies (Acevedo, 2020a). In the current study, supportive educational environments were suggested to be those that promoted positive coping skills, and validation, in relation to the experience of intense emotions, particularly those resulting from negative emotional responses experienced during times of worry and/or anxiety (e.g., academic evaluations, transition periods, interpersonal challenges). To promote positive coping skills, value was highlighted in children having access to nurturing relationships with key adults and peers, who displayed similarities to themselves, in which ‘check-ins’ and discussions around methods of emotion regulation could ensue. The value of such an approach complements previous research outlining how individuals who experience high ES are able to develop effective, and creative, coping strategies, provided that they have opportunity to reflect in detail upon personal experiences (Acevedo et al., 2014; Bridges & Schendan, 2019; Cater, 2022; Jagiellowicz et al., 2020). Cater (2022), for example, outlined how under- and post-graduate students, experiencing high ES, reported the experience of high ES to have many benefits, such as the related development of a broad array of self-care strategies. Given that participants had an average age of 37-years, and thus had likely experienced much opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences, it may be that by encouraging children, who experience high ES, to reflect, in depth, upon their personal experiences from a young age, they too will mature to develop the positive self-care coping strategies outlined in Cater’s (2022) research.

5.3.2. Maximising Opportunities for Meaningful Connection with Peers and School-Based Staff

In accordance with previous literature (e.g., Acevedo, 2020a; Acevedo et al., 2014; Aron et al., 2012; Greven et al., 2019; Imura, 2021; Zavodna, 2022), the current study found meaningful connections with peers and school-based staff to be highly important to children, with negative interpersonal interactions having particularly harmful, and long-lasting, effects on wellbeing. Children within the current study suggested value in emotionally supportive networks amongst peers, where they demonstrated a strong desire for the experience of high ES to be better understood by peers. Such findings align with earlier research (e.g., Cater, 2022; Gearhart & Bodie, 2012) suggesting that students who experience high ES yearn to feel part of a learning community, as opposed to a marginalised minority group, where they have opportunity to connect meaningfully with other sensitive students. Such findings may also be understood within the wider literature around belongingness. Belongingness has long been cited as an important factor in promoting wellbeing (e.g., Dewey, 1938; Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1951; Vygotsky, 1962); Wills and Shinar (2000) define school belongingness as a psychological construct related to attachment to school, underpinned by feelings of being accepted and valued by others within the school community. Enhancing children's sense of belongingness within their educational contexts, particularly through opportunities for meaningful connection with other sensitive students and increased understanding around the notion of high ES more generally, may be an important step in creating supportive educational environments for children who experience high ES. Indeed, recent research has outlined how more positive self-identities are seen amongst students who have a stronger sense of school belongingness (Allen et al., 2018).

In the current study, value was also seen in children having opportunity to connect meaningfully with nurturing key adults, enabling them to present as their 'authentic' selves. Parents/carers focused on the importance of key adults taking time to get to know their children, on a deeper level, to aid meaningful connections, which they felt should be fostered within highly nurturing classroom environments. This is consistent with previous research by Samsen-

Bronsveld et al. (2022) suggesting that a strong sense of relatedness is important to enhance motivation and behavioural-engagement amongst students, including those experiencing high ES, and Cater (2022) who found, under- and post-graduate students experiencing high ES to believe supportive educational environments constituted those in which there was a strong personal connection and relationship between the student and their educator. In relation, parents/carers in the current study further discussed the importance of school-based staff's classroom management styles, where quieter, empathic, encouraging staff members, who engaged in active listening, were preferred. Such characteristics have also been advocated for within earlier studies (e.g., Aron, 2002; Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020a), which have postulated that CYP who experience high ES require gentler discipline techniques for example, due to the high value they typically place on others' opinions, and their tendency to heavily internalise moral codes, which can lead to unhelpful levels of guilt and shame when met with perceived disapproval.

5.3.3. Minimising the Potential for Sensory Overwhelm Through Environmental Adaptations

The experience of sensory overwhelm was frequently reported by children and their parents/carers, owing to the noisy, crowded nature of the educational context. This has been highlighted throughout the literature exploring the educational experiences of CYP who experience high ES (e.g., Cater, 2022; Gearhart & Bodie, 2012; Imura & Kibe, 2020; May & Pitman, 2021; Tillmann et al., 2018; Zavodna, 2022). In the current study, participants advocated for school-based staff to demonstrate certain classroom management styles to ameliorate this experience of sensory overwhelm. Structured, relaxed classroom atmospheres were preferred, in which noise levels were kept at a minimum. This is in accordance with recent research (e.g., Cater, 2022), which found under- and post-graduate students, experiencing high ES, to report supportive educational environments to be those in which the physical environment was adapted to reduce noise disturbances.

In the current study, children also commented on how structure was important with regards to the layout of the classroom. Similarly to earlier research by Cater (2022), minimalist classroom designs were preferred to aid thinking.

Individual learning stations were discussed by children as being advantageous, in accordance with previous research by Tillmann et al. (2018) who postulated that students experiencing high ES may become easily overwhelmed in open-plan classrooms due to the interaction between their tendency to process environmental stimuli to a deeper level, and the constant noise, sudden and unpredictable disruptions, and lack of opportunities to retreat in open-plan classrooms. Both child and parent/carer participants highlighted value in children having opportunity to: engage in 'uni-tasking' (i.e., as opposed to 'multi-tasking'); have regular rest periods to avoid academic and/or interpersonal overwhelm; and have additional information processing time and opportunity to revisit newly acquired skills and/or knowledge owing to their deep information processing, which occasionally meant certain material was 'missed'. Such suggestions are echoed in the literature (e.g., Gearhart & Bodie, 2012), which highlights importance in educators being aware of where their students' lay on the ES continuum since related adjustments, for example smaller and/or quieter classrooms with a focus on 'uni-tasking', may then be adopted.

5.3.4. Promoting Personal and Systemic Knowledge around the Experience of High ES

Previous studies have outlined how personal and professional knowledge around the experience of high ES is important (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020b; Cater, 2016, 2022; Strader-Garcia, 2012). Researchers have postulated that providing students *and* educators with developmentally appropriate knowledge and tools to effectively 'manage' the experience of high ES is advantageous (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020b; Cater, 2016, 2022). Child and parent/carer participants in the current study acknowledged that, currently, there is a lack of awareness around the experience of high ES, yet supportive educational environments were suggested to be those in which the experience of high ES was understood. This limited awareness is echoed in literature (e.g., Bas et al., 2021; Black & Kern, 2020) in which adults, who experience high ES, advocate for greater societal awareness around the positive and negative aspects of ES within education and the workplace. The efficacy of such suggestions are compounded in considering studies outlining how an increased understanding around the personal experience of high ES is associated with reduced anxiety

and increased self-esteem, alongside more favourable opinions around one's sensitivity (Strader-Garcia, 2012), and research outlining that CYP experiencing high ES are particularly likely to respond positively to education-based interventions relating to wellbeing (Kibe et al., 2020; Pluess & Boniwell, 2015).

Such phenomena may be understood within the remit of social psychology and self-concept and self-connection (Klussman et al., 2022; Raskin & Rogers, 2005; Schlegel et al., 2011). It is suggested that clarity around one's self-concept enhances one's experience of self-connection (Diehl & Hay, 2011; Hanley & Garland, 2017). This promotes psychological wellbeing as an individual is supported to act in ways that reflect their 'authentic' self (Klussman et al., 2022; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000; Schlegel et al., 2009; Schlegel et al., 2012). This experience of knowing, understanding, and accepting oneself is thought to predict variables including self-actualisation, vitality, self-esteem, active-coping, psychological need satisfaction, positive affect, and wellbeing (Schlegel et al., 2009; Schlegel et al., 2011; Schlegel et al., 2012). In the current study, children were not always confident with regards to *why* they were experiencing certain characteristics associated with the experience of high ES, for example intense emotions, with some acknowledging dislike for their emotional 'overreactions' and general experience of sensitivity. Thus, aligning with earlier research (e.g., Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020b; Cater, 2016, 2022; Strader-Garcia, 2012), and participant perspectives within the current study, personal and systemic education around the experience of high ES may aid this understanding of the self, promoting self-concept, self-connection, and self-acceptance (Klussman et al., 2022; Raskin & Rogers, 2005; Schlegel et al., 2011). Given that CYP are increasingly supported to learn about emotional wellbeing and mental health at school (e.g., Welsh Government Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE; Welsh Government, 2021)), inclusion of the notion of ES amongst such curriculums may be an important next step in promoting self-awareness and self-acceptance amongst CYP who experience high ES.

In appraising the utility of promoting personal and professional knowledge around the experience of high ES, it *must* be considered that whilst individuals

who experience high ES share common characteristics, being 'labelled' as an individual within a homogenous group *may* be perceived to be constraining and/or condescending (Steinmetz et al., 2020). 'Labelling' of individuals may have additional potential to promote reductionist, stereotyped behaviours, leading to self-limiting beliefs and/or self-fulfilling prophecies (Arishi et al., 2017). Indeed, in the current study, child *and* parent/carer participants alluded to their dislike of the term 'highly sensitive', with one parent/carer participant inviting their personal preference of 'deeply sensitive' to be used throughout interview. It is vital to be cautious with the language of individual difference, taking heed of an individual's preference and views on the terminology used, and the necessity of viewing the individual holistically and as multi-faceted within their environment (Godfrey, 2022). Thus, in promoting personal and systemic knowledge around the experience of high ES this must be considered. It may be helpful for those in the position of 'trainer' to explicitly verbalise the potential advantages and disadvantages associated with such 'labelling'. It should be clarified that any language used to describe an individual's experience should be that which they understand (i.e., developmentally appropriate) and are comfortable with (i.e., *self*-identification). It would be hoped that by raising awareness around the experience of high ES, and promoting the use of an individual's preferred language to describe their experience (e.g., high ES, 'highly sensitive'), individuals will be supported to capitalise on their strengths and access support around any associated difficulties. Ultimately, taking an individualised approach, following attendance at training events, is key.

5.3.5. Summary

Children and their parents/carers shared the perception that the child's time within education was highly impacted by their experience of high ES, and was thus different to the majority of their less sensitive peers. Children were reported to experience intense emotions, deep analysis of positive and negative interpersonal interactions, and sensory overwhelm within their educational environment. Supportive educational environments were felt to be those that offered opportunity to: reflect on, and develop positive coping strategies around, the experience of intense emotions; develop meaningful connection with peers

and school-based staff; minimise the potential for sensory overwhelm through environmental adaptations; and enhance personal and systemic knowledge around the experience of high ES.

5.4. Implications for Educational Psychologists

The EP is arguably in a unique position to promote awareness and understanding around the notion of high ES, and factors that may contribute to a supportive educational environment, as advocated for by participants in the current study. The EP may work alongside CYP, families, and educational professionals, at individual- and systemic-levels, through consultation and training, to meet this aim and, ultimately, enhance the achievement and wellbeing of CYP who experience high ES (Gillham, 2022).

5.4.1. Working Holistically at an Individual-Level

When engaging in individual-level work, knowledge around where a CYP lies on the ES continuum may be important for the EP. How an individual responds to their environment, for example their typical depth of cognitive processing, emotional reactivity, awareness of environmental subtleties, and propensity to feel overwhelmed when overstimulated, is perhaps one of the most basic, yet significant, understandings we can have of a person (Aron et al., 2012). In line with the notion of vantage sensitivity (Pluess & Belsky, 2013), CYP who experience high ES do not necessarily need to be viewed as vulnerable individuals, since, when actions are taken to reduce negative environmental influences (e.g., those which are perceived by the CYP to lead to overwhelm (Cater, 2022)), and increase supportive environmental influences (e.g., nurturing relationships with school-based staff members (Cater, 2022)), individuals who experience high ES can experience similar, or better, outcomes compared to those who experience lower ES (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020b; Pluess & Belsky, 2013). Where a CYP lies on the ES continuum may subsequently be viewed as a form of diversity, or individual difference, which can lead to enhanced, or adverse, outcomes dependent on the CYP's interaction with the environment. By understanding, more holistically, how a CYP is likely to experience and respond to their environment, the EP may better formulate around any strengths or difficulties experienced, and co-construct successful pathways to preferred futures with CYP, families, and other

educational professionals. Such pathways may include ‘supportive’ notions shared by participants in the current study (see [Section 5.3](#)). In essence, in taking such an approach, the EP may advantageously hold a wider view around factors which may be contributing to a CYP’s experience (Godfrey, 2022), yet it will, of course, be important to centralise the CYP’s views, particularly reflecting on Imura and Kibe’s (2020) finding that students who experience high ES are most likely to thrive in environments which *they* perceive to be supportive.

The psychological knowledge and skills, paired with this *holistic* meta-perspective, the EP brings to individual-level ‘casework’ (Gillham, 2022) is perhaps of further importance when considering (1) findings from the current study highlighting the similarities between, and potential confusion around, the experience of high ES and neurodivergence, and (2) current ongoing discussions within society, and amongst scholars, debating the intricacies of, and differences between, the experience of high ES and neurodivergence (e.g., Acevedo et al., 2018; Acevedo et al., 2014). Indeed, participants in the current study advocated for EPs with their *“breadth of understanding [...] [to] say, actually, it could be many of these different things, try these strategies, before we start going down the diagnosis route”* (Participant 6a, p. 106). This is perhaps an important reminder in the value key stakeholders perhaps see in EPP, where EPs remain open-minded, curious, and person-centred when becoming involved with individual-level ‘casework’.

5.4.2. Providing Systemic-Level Training

Working across multiple educational settings, where lasting relationships are built with key members of school-based staff (Gillham, 2022; Goodenough & Waite, 2012), arguably places the EP in an ideal position to deliver systemic-level training around the experience of high ES (see Appendix. 27 for suggestions around training aims and content). In providing such training, the holistic lens through which students are viewed may be promoted, as the EP ultimately ‘up-skills’ school-based staff in their ability to explore, and support, a wider range of individual differences within their educational contexts. It would be hoped that the current experiences of children, who experience high ES, would be validated through such an approach, where more positive language around the experience of high ES may be introduced and embedded within

education cultures. Such actions may support children in feeling seen, heard, and understood, enabling them to receive the person-centred educational experiences they desire.

Indeed, value in systemic-level training is outlined by studies which have shown professional development sessions to improve teacher confidence and self-efficacy in supporting various needs, which in turn have resulted in positive gains for students (Hamlen et al., 2018; Morrow, 2020). Similarly, EPs themselves have been shown to develop in their knowledge and skills following training delivered by colleagues, enhancing the quality of subsequent work undertaken in related areas (Jindal-Snape et al., 2009). Such training may additionally be cascaded down to CYP and their parents/carers, where enhanced knowledge and awareness around the experience of high ES may be beneficial in promoting understanding of the self. This is well-documented within literature to be further associated with increased self-esteem, reduced anxiety, and a more favourable opinion of one's own sensitivity (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020b; Cater, 2016, 2022; Strader-Garcia, 2012). Such actions may simultaneously support parents/carers in feeling that their children are understood and accepted within their educational contexts, subsequently reducing their sense that they must 'fight' for an equitable education for their child alone. Together, it would be hoped that such actions enhance the emotional wellbeing and mental health of CYP *and* their parents/carers, who are key stakeholders in EPP (Gillham, 2022). It must be acknowledged, however, that the critical realist-contextualism orientation (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 179) on which this research was built means that any information included from the current study in the generation of such training will reflect a "provisional, contextual, and liminal truth" owing to the *personal* and *contextual* experiences and beliefs of those who took part in the current study.

5.5. Strengths and Limitations of Research

The current study is innovative in that, to the researcher's knowledge, it represents the first to utilise a qualitative lens to explore the experience of high ES, within UK-based educational settings, from the perspective of children and their parents/carers. This exploratory research offers a unique perspective, where the systematic application of RTA suggests that the reported themes

have the “potential to give rise to actionable outcomes” (Clarke & Braun, 2021, p. 345) relevant to EPP in relation to creating supportive educational environments for children who experience high ES.

A strength of the current study was that it utilised virtual semi-structured interviews, enabling participants from across the UK to share their perspectives. Such UK-wide research is absent within literature, and perhaps highlights areas for development across UK-based education settings. The qualitative research methods advantageously enabled parent/carer and child voice to be elicited. This too has been absent in literature, and is of high importance within EPP, where CYP and their parents/carers are key stakeholders (Gillham, 2022). Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that a limitation of the current study lies with the scope of participants recruited. Parent/carer participants comprised of mothers only and children were aged between 9- and 12-years old.

A further limitation of the current study is that, due to the exploratory nature of the research, and lack of widespread awareness and understanding around the notion of high ES, participants were recruited via social media support groups. It is possible that this led to biased results concerning perceptions around how children, who experience high ES, are currently supported within UK education systems. It is conceivable that the majority of group members have, at some point, experienced difficulty in relation to their child’s education, prompting them to seek out advice, guidance, and support online. Thus, it may be that participants in the current study represent those who have experienced a more difficult time with education. Indeed, parent/carer participant narratives highlighted occasions in which they had desired to, or had acted upon desires to, off-roll their child(ren) from LA-maintained mainstream education due to the reported lack of awareness and understanding around the experience of high ES. Moreover, that child participants were exclusively aged between 9- and 12-years perhaps further biases results, since several developmental and social psychological theories suggest that younger children are more likely to share, or be influenced by, the views of their parents/carers due to the process of social transmission (Miklikowska, 2016).

Findings in relation to children potentially being viewed through the lens of neurodivergence was unanticipated. For this reason, participant exclusion criteria did not extend to participants having a diagnosis of neurodivergence. Whilst current research suggests that the experience of high ES and ASC and ADHD are distinct entities, it cannot be disputed that there are similarities across presentations (Acevedo, 2020a; Acevedo et al., 2014). The notion of 'masking', particularly amongst autistic females, further has potential to lead to misunderstanding and misdiagnosis (Corscadden & Casserly, 2021). Despite children people *self*-identifying as experiencing high ES, and parents/carers believing that their children were unlikely to be neurodivergent, it is possible that some children were experiencing neurodivergence, and/or that some parents/carers were reflecting upon experiences of their neurodivergent children. Indeed, some parent/carer participants alluded to their children having been on the 'waiting list' for ASC assessment (before parent/carer decisions were made to remove them from this 'waiting list'), yet others highlighted how their children had gone through relevant processes, yet received no diagnosis of ASC and/or ADHD.

5.6. Validity and Trustworthiness of Research

Validity and trustworthiness in qualitative research are enhanced via transparency; raw data should be clearly provided, with the researcher, who is the fundamental research instrument (Dodgson, 2019), outlining their positionality and context through a process of reflexivity (Adler, 2022). This enables readers to determine the relevance and applicability of findings for their particular context (Adler, 2022). The reflective account provided in [Part Three](#), in addition to the use of appendices documenting the research journey (see Appendices 21 – 26) and raw data (i.e., anonymised interview transcripts provided in additional documents), offer transparency, enabling the reader to consider different lenses through which the research could have progressed. The researcher additionally utilised the step-by-step approach for conducting a trustworthy thematic analysis detailed by Nowell et al. (2017) (see Appendix. 20). Suggestions to engage in 'researcher triangulation' and 'member checking' were not incorporated, however; such steps are in contrast to the *reflexive* TA approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021).

5.7. Suggestions for Future Research

The present findings are broadly consistent with the limited previous research into the experience of high ES within educational contexts. Future research may wish to use similar qualitative research methods to explore wider constructions around the experience of high ES within educational contexts, for example from the perspective of additional family members, CYP across the age range, and educational professionals, as a helpful next step in the ‘crystallisation’ of findings (Richardson et al., 2005). To increase participation from CYP, it may be advantageous to extend research methods to include qualitative questionnaire-based research methods. In the current study, some children declined participation due to apprehension around engaging in discussion with an unknown adult (i.e., the researcher). Recent research, exploring the experience of introversion within educational contexts, has benefited from such methodology (e.g., Godfrey, 2022). Studies amongst educational professionals may wish to explore current awareness and understanding around the experience of high ES from the perspectives of school-based staff, EPs, and/or other educational professionals. This may provide additional insight into the creation of supportive educational settings for CYP who experience high ES.

Future studies may also wish to extend participant recruitment inclusion criteria to incorporate the perspectives of CYP, and their parents/carers, who are EHE for reasons to do with the experience of high ES. To the researcher’s knowledge, at least one child was excluded from partaking due to being EHE. It would be of interest to explore why families are taking steps to move away from maintained LA-maintained mainstream education in relation to the experience of high ES. It may be beneficial for similar future research to introduce participant recruitment exclusion criteria in relation to the experience of neurodivergence. Participants in the current study were not asked whether they had a diagnosis of, or were exploring a potential diagnosis of, neurodivergence. Thus, it may be that results in the current study are confounded by the potential experience of neurodivergence.

6. Conclusion

The current study offers a unique exploration into child and parent/carer perspectives around the experience of high ES within UK-based educational settings. The findings suggest that: (1) children and their parents/carers perceived the child's time within education to be highly impacted by their experience of high ES and, thus, different to the majority of their less sensitive peers; (2) children experienced intense emotions, deep analysis of positive and negative interpersonal interactions, and sensory overwhelm within their educational contexts; (3) children, and their parents/carers, perceived there to be a lack of awareness and understanding around the experience of high ES within UK educational contexts, leading children to be viewed through, what they felt to be, the more well-known lens of neurodivergence; (4) parents/carers felt a responsibility to 'fight' for an equitable education for their children, owing to this perceived lack of understanding and awareness around the experience of high ES.

This first piece of UK-based evidence-based research, exploring child *and* parent/carer perspectives regarding the experience of high ES within UK-based educational settings, arguably offers a valuable foundation from which to generate further research. This research has also highlighted the potential for the role of the EP in promoting awareness, understanding, and support around the experience of high ES at individual- and systemic-levels.

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***“It’s a little bit too much”*: Child and parent/carer perspectives on the educational experiences of children who experience high Environmental Sensitivity**

Part Three: Major Research Reflective Account

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1. Introduction

This major research reflective account is presented in two sections. Section One provides a critical account of the development of the research practitioner. Section Two provides a critical account of the current study's contribution to knowledge, including information around hopes for dissemination. It is acknowledged that there are overlaps between sections; however, attempts have been made to distinguish between explicit reflections in each part of the process. I highlight, for example, how I approached my major literature review and arrived at my rationale and research questions (RQs), how ethical considerations influenced my methodological decisions, and how my 'insider researcher' positionality influenced the research process. It is hoped that this account will provide another lens through which to view my research contributions.

This account is written in first-person. Within qualitative research, researchers are urged to talk about themselves, "their presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process" (Mruck & Breuer, 2003, p. 191). This process of reflection and reflexivity aims to make visible to the reader the research process that is postulated to originate in "the various choices and decisions researchers undertake during the process of researching" (Mruck & Breuer, 2003, p. 191). Keeping a self-reflective journal is common practice in qualitative research (Etherington, 2004); many reflections provided in this account are taken from my reflection journal (see Appendix. 28 for selected extracts).

2. Section One: Critical Account of the Development of the Research Practitioner

2.1. Inception of, and Rationale for, the Thesis

I have long been interested in environmental sensitivity (ES) and understanding how ES influences a child or young person's (CYP) educational experience. I consider myself an 'insider researcher'. Learning about the experience of high ES as a young adult empowered me to reflect upon: (1) why I found the school environment overwhelming, and (2) how the experience of under- and post-graduate education enabled me to manage this overwhelm more effectively.

During July 2021, I received correspondence via *EPNET* highlighting an interest group, '*Sensory Processing Sensitivity (SPS) and Differential Susceptibility*'. I liaised with interested EPs and researchers (e.g., an EP involved in the interest group; a PhD student working on the '*Sensitivity to School*' study; and a researcher who, to my knowledge, is the first to have conducted qualitative research with under- and post-graduate students experiencing high ES). I recognised that research exploring the experience of high ES within education was lacking. A subsequent initial literature search confirmed that qualitative UK-based research with CYP and their parents/carers was non-existent.

As a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) and researcher, it is my role to advocate for stakeholders (i.e., CYP and their parents/carers). As a TEP, I have worked with a small number of CYP who have experienced difficulties at school that may have potentially reflected their experience of high ES. Whilst I have tentatively shared my knowledge around this during consultations, I have often felt the lack of evidence-based research exploring how CYP, who experience high ES, may best be supported within education, has cut discussions short. The 'real world' applicability in understanding how the experience of high ES influences a CYP's experience of education sparked my curiosity further. Thus, personal *and* professional experiences contributed to the generation of this research.

2.2. Literature Review

Conducting [Part One](#) (i.e., the Major Research Literature Review) was the most time consuming, and challenging, part of the process. I separated my literature review into two main sections as advocated for by Boland et al. (2017). I engaged in a narrative-style review, followed by a scoping-style review, before returning to a narrative-style review, drawing conclusions from both sections and identifying gaps in literature. This enabled me to contextualise the wider experience of high ES, before honing in on the experience of high ES within educational contexts (Siddaway et al., 2019). To comprehensively explore this emerging area of research, in sections one and two, I engaged in additional searches through backward chaining of references within relevant articles and explored relevant grey literature (e.g., unpublished doctoral theses, conference papers) to limit publication bias (Wohlin, 2014). Such techniques are suggested to support in identifying literature missed from database searches (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). I contacted relevant researchers to query missing data and/or English translations, further enquiring about potentially relevant unpublished work and progressing studies (Boland et al., 2017; Siddaway et al., 2019). I acknowledge the narrative components of the review were dependent upon my subjective selection of journal articles, arguably influenced by my ‘insider researcher’ positionality (see [Section 2.3.1.](#)). However, I believe that the critical approach I took (i.e., searching for further literature using backward chaining, exploring grey literature, contacting relevant researchers, using various critical appraisal tools), alongside my transparency in reporting the process, led to a balanced, objective, review of literature presented.

2.3. Ontological, Epistemological, Methodological, and Design Considerations

2.3.1. Researcher Positioning: Being an ‘insider researcher’

As an ‘insider researcher’ I share aspects of my identity with participants (Chavez, 2008). Insider research has advantages and disadvantages. Greene (2014) suggests benefits include having the ability to: ask meaningful questions where participants desire to share with someone who understands; project a truthful, authentic understanding of the culture studied; avoid stereotyping or judging participants. Disadvantages include: subjectivity interfering with

objective perception and analysis; the researcher's perception being too narrowed as too much is familiar, thus failing to raise provocative questions; risk of making assumptions based on prior knowledge and/or experience; projecting one's own views onto participants and analysis. From my previous experience with Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA; Braun & Clarke, 2019), I recognised that the reflexive nature of RTA 'managed' many of these disadvantages well (i.e., subjectivity as an analysis 'tool' (Braun & Clarke, 2019)). I further aimed to comprehensively developed my interview guide (i.e., with clarifying prompts and probes, and 'what else?' type questions), and explore with initial participants whether they felt the interview guides enabled an adequate scope of data to be collected, to limit the likelihood of collecting data too narrow in focus and/or laden with personal assumptions.

I felt further assured in selecting insider research in reading Dutton and Dukerich (2006, p. 21), who highlight value in the 'relational foundation' of research, or "the set of interaction partners whom one encounters during the course of doing research" (i.e., participants). They suggest this an underappreciated dimension of research that expands, stretches, and teaches its audience, postulating that the relational foundation is enhanced when the researcher is genuinely interested in their participants' stories and able to be vulnerable. During interview, Dutton and Dutton (2006) suggest the 'relational interviewer' will share similarities in experiences as appropriate, avoiding hiding how they are moved by participants' dilemmas. This is said to support the relational interviewer to remain cognitively and emotionally open to understanding participants' experiences. I believe that being an 'insider researcher' supported me in building this relational foundation with participants *and* in analysing data collected. I empathised with participants around their experiences from child and adult perspectives, utilising my strengths in sensitivity to others' needs, depth of processing, and reflexivity to encourage honesty from participants. I encouraged participants to elaborate on experiences which felt dissimilar *and* similar to my own, owing to Greene's (2014) suggestion that we are more likely to overlook information that does not 'stand out' to us. This also supported me to remain continually mindful of

exploring participants' *whole* subjective experience, rather than honing in on experiences that sparked my own interest, during analysis.

Ultimately, I acknowledge that my positionality *is* biased. I recognise that my experiences within the educational context as a CYP, educator, and TEP influence my perception of participants' experiences, subsequently influencing data collection and analysis. In using my subjectivity as an analysis 'tool' (Braun & Clarke, 2019), I view this as largely unproblematic, yet draw the reader's attention to [Section 2.4.2](#) to highlight alternative avenues the research may have taken, and different lenses that could have been applied.

2.3.2. Researcher Positioning: Ontological and Epistemological Stance

A critical realist-contextualism orientation (Clarke & Braun, 2021) was adopted. This recognises that whilst the notion of high ES is arguably a measurable, real, construct (Greven et al., 2019) (i.e., realism), two people with the same qualitative *experience* of high ES may not, for example, receive the same quantitative score on commonly employed positivist measures of this reality (e.g., Highly Sensitive Child Scale (HSCS-12; Pluess et al., 2018)), due to the different perspectives on, and interpretations and representations of, this reality between individuals resulting from their differing context and experiences (Clarke & Braun, 2021) (i.e., *critical realism*). Taking a *critical* realist orientation enabled exploration into this construct via qualitative discussion around the subjective experience of high ES, recognising how this 'real' construct can be experienced differently between individuals. Moreover, as I explored the *specific* contextual experience of high ES within education, where parent/carer participants were additionally asked about their *interpretation* of their child's experience (which I secondarily interpreted via shared dialogue (Madill et al., 2000)), a contextualism epistemology recognised how the elicited truth was *highly* influenced by the context in which it was generated, thus findings are "provisional, contextual, and liminal" (Clarke & Braun, 2021, p. 179).

In completing my Collaborative Research Project in Year 1, Small-Scale Research Project in Year 2, and thesis in Year 3 of the doctoral training programme, I recognise that I have adopted similar ontological and epistemological positioning, leading to the use of similar methodologies (i.e.,

semi-structured interviews and RTA). I considered whether this demonstrated my strong stance as a researcher, or perhaps a reluctance to trial new ways of working. I acknowledged how, initially, I had wondered around utilising mixed-methods in my thesis (see [Section 2.3.4.](#)). This too had been the case in my Small-Scale Research Project. I reflected on my initial tendency to want to quantify the world to develop my understanding of it, aligning with a positivist paradigm. I noticed, however, that on engaging in more thorough reflection, I typically move away from this and toward a critical-realist contextualism orientation where I desire to explore depth in others' perspectives. I recognise that I may access such perspectives, or 'truth', through language, where I play an active role in interpretation (Madill et al., 2000). I consequently value semi-structured interviews, giving me partial access to such 'truth', and RTA, which enables me to utilise my researcher subjectivity as an analysis 'tool' in interpreting such perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Thus, I argue that my tendency to adopt a critical-realist contextualism orientation, where I see value in employing semi-structured interviews and RTA, reflects the strong values I hold as a TEP and researcher, where I aspire to facilitate change by valuing people and what they have to say about their experiences.

2.3.3. Researcher Positioning: Ethical Responsibility and Within-Child Research

The topic of ES may be viewed as a within-child, deterministic construct, especially when language such as the 'Highly Sensitive Child' (HSC) or 'Highly Sensitive Person' (HSP), as coined by Aron and Aron (1997), is utilised. As a TEP and researcher, I align myself with ethical standards outlined by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and British Psychological Society (BPS), and spent time deliberating whether researching the notion of high ES within educational contexts was ethically responsible. I reflected on the 'appropriateness' of research focusing on CYP's temperaments, personalities, and ways of relating to the world, concerned that such research had potential to promote the view that CYP needed to 'change' themselves to promote their achievement and wellbeing in educational settings. Similarly, I wondered around the notion of 'labelling', and whether such research may signify that *all* CYP who experience high ES are one homogenous group, something which

may be perceived as constraining and/or condescending (Steinmetz et al., 2020).

It felt pertinent to explore the study of temperament and personality, more generally, to aid my thinking around the potential ethical dilemma I faced. Within the field of educational psychology, I found very little. Conversely, within other fields of psychology (e.g., clinical psychology), the study of temperament and/or personality was extensive. I reflected that perhaps EPs, with their focus on systemic environmental change (Gillham, 2022; Roffey, 2015), place less value on exploring constructs which could be considered within-child. I also liaised with a fellow TEP at the University of Exeter, conducting research into the educational experiences of students with introverted personality-styles. We reflected that having an understanding around an individual's temperament/personality, and/or typical response to the environment, may be an important yet under-recognised consideration in developing hypotheses during 'casework'. Acknowledging an individual's preferences or tendencies is arguably person-centred, something we strive for in Educational Psychology Practice (EPP; Gillham, 2022; Roffey, 2015), provided that we are not 'labelling' individuals with phenomena they do not recognise themselves as experiencing. Similarly, it is, of course, vital to be cautious with the language of individual difference, taking heed of an individual's preference and views on the terminology used, and the necessity of viewing the individual holistically and as multi-faceted within their environment (Godfrey, 2022). I concluded that such additional insight may be viewed as another 'piece of the puzzle' in understanding how, as educational professionals, we may promote the achievement and wellbeing of CYP, for example via environmental adaptations. I felt that I could proceed with the research in an ethical manner.

2.3.4. Considerations of Alternative Methodologies and Designs: Research with Whom?

I initially considered employing a mixed-methods design. Phase one would have comprised of a quantitative-based survey exploring current awareness and understanding around high ES amongst teachers, with phase two employing qualitative-based semi-structured interviews with teachers who had direct experience of working with CYP experiencing high ES, and potentially

these CYP themselves. Such ideas were based around reading into 'similar' research areas, for example studies exploring temperament and/or personality (i.e., shyness, quietness), or other relatively 'new' notions (i.e., Pathological Demand Avoidance, PDA), in educational contexts which had utilised similar methodologies (e.g., Barker, 2011; Spooner et al., 2005). Such research highlighted that children who considered themselves to be shy, but who were not recognised to be shy by their teachers, had significantly lower self-esteem and achievement than those who *were* recognised to be shy by their teacher, for example (Spooner et al., 2005). Studies also suggested that whilst quieter children often viewed their quietness positively (i.e., supporting listening and information processing), teachers often viewed this negatively (i.e., low engagement) (Barker, 2011). I wondered whether teacher awareness of high ES had a similar influence on CYP's wellbeing and achievement.

It felt likely, however, that only teachers who *did* have some level of awareness and understanding around the experience of ES would voluntarily complete phase one surveys, potentially resulting in skewed data. I considered the ethics of teachers 'labelling' CYP as potentially experiencing high ES, and the likelihood of teachers being able to do this accurately given the current lack of awareness and understanding around the experience of high ES (Acevedo, 2020b). This may have added further complexity, whereby I may have required additional measures of ES alongside teacher identification (e.g., HSCS teacher-report version (Pluess et al., 2018), Highly Sensitive Child Rating System (HSCRS; Lionetti et al., 2019)), which were unaligned with my ethical values (i.e., 'labelling' CYP with phenomena they perhaps did not identify as experiencing). I considered the feasibility of, and ethics around, gaining parental/carer consent to engage in interviews with CYP who had been identified as potentially experiencing high ES by their teachers. I was concerned this may signify that CYP were experiencing difficulty at school, and/or wondered around the ethics of potentially 'opening up' a discussion around challenge with no intention to 'manage' this (i.e., TEP vs. researcher role). I returned to reconsider my research hopes; at this early stage, I concluded that it felt more pertinent to gain the voice of those whom the experience of high ES affected most (i.e., self-identified CYP and their

parents/carers). This simultaneously ameliorated some of the above potential ethical issues.

2.3.5. Considerations of Alternative Methodologies and Designs: Accessing Potential Participants

It felt important to include CYP and parent/carer voice since both were missing from literature and both are key stakeholders in EPP (Gillham, 2022). This also enabled me to maximise the credibility, or trustworthiness, of data, by capturing a richness and diversity of perspectives, rather than honing in on one valid representation of it (Varpio et al., 2017). Through this process of ‘crystallisation’ (Richardson et al., 2005), I gained a richer, more rigorous and complex understanding of the experience of high ES within educational settings. I chose to recruit CYP aged between 7- to 25-years-old (see [Part Two, Section 3.3.2.](#) for inclusion criteria). Given my ontological and epistemological positioning, where generalisability of findings is suggested to be unfeasible, it did not feel important to select a more condensed age range. I recruited participants via relevant social media support groups. Given that general awareness around the experience of high ES within society is low (Acevedo, 2020b), purposive sampling offered me the greatest likelihood of recruiting participants who met inclusion criteria. I spent time exploring the ethical responsibilities of conducting research via social media, taking relevant steps to ameliorate risk (see Appendix. 18).

I aimed to recruit a maximum of eight parent/carer and eight CYP participants. I was required to provide quantification for my ethics proposal. Research is contrasting around the ideal number of participants within qualitative, interview-based research. Varpio et al. (2017, p. 45) suggest that the notion of ‘saturation’, referring to “the point in the data collection and analysis when new information produces little or no change”, is redundant in qualitative research, suggesting that “describing the amount of data required to achieve saturation in advance of starting a study is essentially guesswork”. Varpio et al. (2017, p. 46) concludes that “saturation is a thorny concept that should not be used as a general marker of rigour or quality in all qualitative research”, rather Varpio (2017) supports Malterud et al. (2016) and their notion of ‘information power’ as an alternative. They argue that sample sizes for qualitative studies depend on

five key dimensions: (1) study aim, (2) sample specificity, (3) established theory, (4) dialogue quality, (5) analysis strategy. The current study had broad aims, sample specificity was high, there is a significant amount of established theory around ES, dialogue quality within early interviews was felt to be good, and in-depth analysis via RTA was felt to be high quality. This, alongside the time constraints faced in completing the first draft of my thesis by January 2022, supported my decision to gain a maximum of 16 participants. On reflection, the 14 interviews provided a substantial amount of information that was highly relevant to the RQs. If anything, it would have been beneficial to include fewer participants to enable more in-depth analysis of the rich data collected.

2.3.6. Considerations of Alternative Methodologies and Designs: Designing Interview Guides and Utilising Semi-Structured Interviews

I contemplated how virtual interviews might benefit, or disadvantage, the interview process, particularly with CYP. Whilst disadvantages included a potential limitation in rapport building, advantages included participants potentially feeling more relaxed in their own homes (Goodenough & Waite, 2012). I concluded this was perhaps a strong advantage in gaining participation from CYP who experience high ES, who often feel overwhelmed in novel contexts, impairing their ability to articulate their thoughts and feelings (Acevedo, 2020b). I acknowledge, however, that in selecting virtual interviews, and in recruiting participants via social media groups, I restricted my population sample to those who were digitally competent, and/or who had Wi-Fi access.

I considered whether to include the HSCS-12 (Pluess et al., 2018) to quantify the experience of high ES. I reflected that such an approach aligned with a positivist paradigm. It also made explicit reference to the HSC, as opposed to the *continuum* of ES, an ethical issue (see [Section 2.3.3.](#)). Aligning with the orientation of the research (see [Section 2.3.2.](#)), I chose to utilise language from the HSCS-12 toward the beginning of interview to ensure a shared understanding between the participant and myself, and to ensure *self-identification* of the experience of high ES (see Appendices 7 and 8 for examples of how this was explored). This further enabled me to understand participants' preferred language (e.g., ES, highly sensitive), ameliorating ethical

dilemmas associated with 'labelling' CYP with phenomena they do not recognise themselves as experiencing.

In designing interview guides, I kept in mind some important questions (see Table 4 below).

Table 4: Considerations in Designing Interview Guides, adapted from Goodenough and Waite (2012)

Considerations in Interview Guide Generation

1. What am I trying to find out with this question?
Will this question generate this information?
2. Is this question likely to be meaningful to my participants?
Is this question likely to generate meaningful information?
3. Are there any problematic assumptions embedded in this question?
Do I need to re-word this question to enhance the likelihood of it being interpreted 'correctly'?
4. How might participants feel if they were asked this question?
Are participants likely to provide meaningful information in response to this question?
5. How might participants from different backgrounds feel if they were asked this question?
Are participants likely to provide meaningful information in response to this question?

I considered whether to give CYP participants access to interview guides prior to interview; the experience of high ES is suggested to be associated with depth of information processing, often meaning that additional time is required to generate and formulate an articulation of one's thoughts (Acevedo, 2020b). I explored contrasting views held by qualitative researchers around the idea of providing interviewees with questions prior to interview (e.g., via *Research Gate* forum discussions since no evidence-based research exploring this topic could be located). One strong disadvantage was the potential for parents/carers to discuss interview questions with their child prior to interview. Given that children were indirectly recruited via parents/carers, who were members of social media support groups, it was conceivable that the majority of parents/carers had, at some point, experienced difficulty in relation to their

child's education, prompting them to seek out advice, guidance, and support online. Subsequently, had interview guides been provided beforehand, parent/carer experiences might have influenced child accounts in a negative manner. I chose not to provide children with interview guides prior to interview. Rather, I utilised semi-structured interviews in a way that aimed to provide space and time for participants to engage in depth of processing. I spent time building rapport with participants to reduce any potential power imbalance, and establish a context where reflection and truthful comments could be elicited (Gibson, 2012; Rabionet, 2011). Participants were encouraged to engage in as much 'thinking time' as necessary. They were told they could make notes and/or turn off their camera. Participants were pre-warned about being asked, "Tell me more"; it was reinforced that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, and being asked to provide further information was an indication of my interest (Gibson, 2012; Rabionet, 2011). This approach worked well; all participants engaged with all interview questions. No participants took the opportunity to turn off their camera. I reflected that my empathic interviewing style (Prior, 2018) perhaps contributed.

2.3.7. Considerations of Alternative Methodologies and Designs: Data

Analysis Methods

Reflexive Thematic Analysis was chosen over other types of Thematic Analysis (TA) (e.g., Coding Reliability TA, Codebook TA, (Braun & Clarke, 2021)) since it best aligned with my ontological and epistemological positioning by fully embracing qualitative research values and the researcher's subjective skills in data collection and analysis, being termed a 'big Q' qualitative research paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I considered alternative qualitative methodologies, for example Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Eatough & Smith, 2017), however selected RTA for several reasons. Studies utilising IPA typically employ small, homogenous purposive samples (Eatough & Smith, 2017), and data collection methods which enable first-person accounts of personal experiences to be collected (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). However, I aimed to capture both CYP and parent/carer voice (i.e., a heterogeneous sample), to develop a rich, detailed understanding of the experience of high ES within educational settings. I aimed to explore how CYP, and their

parents/carers, perceived the *CYP*'s time within education; IPA would not have been appropriate since IPA studies do not typically discuss the experiences of others (Spiers & Riley, 2019). In both IPA and RTA, researcher subjectivity is fundamental in data collection and analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). In comparison to RTA however, IPA incorporates a dual analytic focus: both a thematic orientation (i.e., the identification of themes across participants) and an idiographic approach (i.e., interest and focus on the particular and unique details of each participant) (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). Moreover, IPA involves a detailed focus on the analysis of *each* participant before developing themes *across* participants, whilst RTA involves developing themes across participants from codes following coding of the entire dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). I did not aim to employ an idiographic approach, but to identify themes across a relatively large number of participants, to generate actionable outcomes in relation to *CYP* and parent/carer perspectives (Clarke & Braun, 2021). I believe that RTA enabled me to engage with the dataset in a way that met these aims.

2.4. Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation

2.4.1. Data Collection: Conducting the Semi-Structured Interviews

I hoped to recruit a maximum of eight *CYP*, and eight parent/carer, participants by the end of August 2021. By the end of July 2021, I had recruited six parents/carers and five children. In discussing informally with participants, several participants pointed to other relevant social media groups that I had not gained ethical approval to post on. It felt important to return to the ethics committee and request permission to share on these additional groups since: (1) I had hoped to gain a higher number of participants, and (2) it felt ethically responsible to provide opportunity for as many interested parents/carers and *CYP* to participate in this UK-wide research. I gained permission to share my recruitment poster on an additional seven social media groups at the end of August 2021. I also sought, and received, permission to extend the inclusion criteria age range for *CYP* from 9- to 25- to 7- to 25-year-olds. This followed more in-depth reading around the appropriate age range for semi-structured interviews, where Gibson (2012, p. 151) suggests, "by age seven, most children have the skills necessary to provide accurate and useful information when

interviewers employ methods that are developmentally appropriate". Following this, I recruited an additional two parents/carers and one child.

I recognise that I did not achieve the eight CYP participant number I set out for, and, whilst I aimed to recruit CYP aged between 7- and 25-years-old, I was only able to recruit children aged between 9- and 12-years-old. To increase the number of CYP participants, particularly those aged 12- to 25-years-old, it may have been helpful to create a recruitment poster for CYP themselves, since they were recruited indirectly via parent/carer interest in the study. This wondering was furthered by reading around children with shy personality styles, whereby, often, children perceived themselves to be shy, whereas adults did not (Spooner et al., 2005). I considered how there may be a population of CYP who experienced high ES, and/or who may have been interested in participating, whose parents/carers perhaps did not share their views, thus they were not recruited. This reflection was uncomfortable as I questioned the extent to which I had prioritised parent/carer voice over CYP voice. However, I returned to consider the avenue through which I would have promoted CYP recruitment posters, and the difficulty in gaining access to this population in such early stages of research (see [Section 2.3.4.](#)).

Child participants occasionally felt too apprehensive to partake in a virtual interview with an unknown researcher (i.e., myself). This was the case for at least two child participants (i.e., two females aged 14- and 15-years old). One parent/carer queried whether her daughter could complete written responses to interview questions (i.e., a qualitative questionnaire-based method). I reflected that whilst this would promote inclusion, such an approach did not align with the critical-realist contextualism orientation of the research. Had I included qualitative questionnaire-based methods, qualitative content analysis (QCA), as opposed to RTA, would have been required (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). Braun and Clarke (2021a) suggest that QCA aligns with post-positivist theoretical assumptions, using quality measures such as 'inter-coder agreement', and a concern to minimise researcher subjectivity and maximise the 'accuracy' of coding. They outline that QCA is often thought of as a method for producing descriptive analyses, and is subsequently the least interpretative of the qualitative analytic approaches. Regrettably, I was unable to gain the voice of

these participants, who also fell into the older age range. I acknowledged that this was perhaps a form of attrition one must anticipate within research.

Another point of reflection was around the way in which interviews were conducted (i.e., parent/carer interview first). Whilst Braun and Clarke (2019) do not recommend doing more than one interview per day, I felt it beneficial to conduct parent/carer and child interviews sequentially for reasons of feasibility and participant ease. I have wondered whether children potentially 'listening in' on their parents/carers discussing their perceptions of their child's experience inadvertently influenced what they shared within their own interviews. Indeed, research highlights that younger children (i.e., those recruited to the current study) are more likely to share, or be influenced by, the views of their parents/carers due to the process of social transmission (Miklikowska, 2016).

One other significant consideration related to wonderings around child participants potentially displaying characteristics relating to neurodivergence, and whether this was possibly being mistaken for the experience of high ES. Whilst current research suggests that the experience of high ES and ASC and ADHD are distinct entities, it cannot be disputed that there are similarities across presentations (Acevedo, 2020a; Acevedo et al., 2014). Moreover, the notion of 'masking', particularly amongst autistic females, has the potential to lead to misunderstanding and misdiagnosis (Corscadden & Casserly, 2021). Despite children *self-identifying* as experiencing high ES, and parents/carers believing that their children were unlikely to be neurodivergent, it is possible that some child participants within the current study were experiencing neurodivergence, and/or that some parents/carers were reflecting upon experiences of their neurodivergent children. This highlights the 'messy reality' of being a dual research-practitioner. I was simultaneously collecting data and writing up the Major Research Literature Review throughout the months of July, August, and September 2022. I completed data collection by September 2022 and the Major Research Literature Review by October 2022. Thus, it was not until completing the Major Research Literature Review, where I delved more extensively into the similarities in presentation between the experience of high ES and neurodivergence, that I reflected on how it would have been beneficial to include exclusion criteria in relation to neurodivergence.

2.4.2. Analysis and Interpretation: Reflexive, Recursive, and Rich

Prior to beginning data analysis I attended webinars, delivered by Braun and Clarke, where I learned to engage in a constant stream of ‘questioning dialogue’ when analysing and interpreting data. I similarly held onto their suggestion to recognise what I was highlighting and silencing based on my researcher positionality. Subsequently, following each interview, I engaged with my reflection journal, noting (1) analytic ideas and/or insights brought up by participants, (2) how these loosely related to my RQs, and (3) emotions and questions I was left with (see Appendix. 21 and 28 for selected extracts).

Phase One: Data Familiarisation

I printed hard copies of transcripts to engage in data familiarisation. I immersed myself in the dataset, reading and re-reading transcripts, over a period of two-weeks. Using an inductive approach, I ‘updated’ my initial reflection journal notes, continuing with my analytic ideas and/or insights for each transcript, and the dataset as a whole, in a more thorough manner (see Appendix. 21 for selected extracts). I found it helpful to keep certain questions in mind (see Table 5 below).

Table 5: Questions I Kept in Mind in Phase One of RTA, adapted from (Clarke & Braun, 2021)

Questions I kept in mind in Phase One of RTA

1. How is the participant making sense of the topic?
2. Why might I be reacting to the data in this way?
3. What different ways could I make sense of the data?

Phase Two: Data Coding

I worked through the data set more systematically, applying analytically meaningful descriptions (i.e., code labels) to segments of data that appeared meaningful to RQs. I utilised an inductive and deductive approach; I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2021, p. 90) suggestion to keep RQs “loosely” in mind to ensure that the bigger picture was not overlooked. Thus, I also coded data that did not directly relate to my RQs but provided meaning around participant

experiences. I valued revisiting my initial wonderings following the initial coding of each transcript, contextualising my coding in relation to how it felt when the interview was conducted. This enabled me to consider how the participant and I had perhaps co-constructed the ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ suggested to be evident in that particular interview through those particular codes.

I next returned to the transcripts as a whole, compiling each code, and the associated quotes, from the 14 transcripts into Word Documents (see Appendices 22 – 25). I used my ‘analytic sensibility’ (Clarke & Braun, 2021) to merge several codes at the end of this process due to: (1) duplication, or (2) the potential for some codes (which captured micro-differences in the dataset) to become part of other similar code clusters, providing richness and diversity, in addition to a more workable number of codes. Braun and Clarke (2021) suggest keeping a record of unallocated codes since they may become relevant further along in theme development; see Appendices 23 and 25 for a full list of allocated and unallocated codes within the RTA, including reasoning.

Phases Three & Four: Initial Theme Generation & Developing and Reviewing Themes

I utilised printed cut-out versions of codes, physically moving these around to group them into clusters, generating candidate themes and a preliminary ‘story’ relating to the dataset and RQs. I made use of thematic maps to explore relations between candidate themes and the overall ‘story’ of the dataset (see Appendix. 26 for initial, candidate thematic maps), and kept certain questions in mind (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Questions I Kept in Mind in Phase Three and Four of RTA, adapted from (Clarke & Braun, 2021)

Questions I kept in mind in Phases Three and Four of RTA

1. Is the theme distinctive and stand-alone or do themes merge into each other?
Does the theme have clear boundaries?
2. Is the theme representative of a topic summary, as opposed to a theme?
3. Does the theme capture something meaningful about the data, which relates to the RQs? What is unique and specific to the theme, and what does it contribute to the overall analysis?
4. Does the theme bring codes together (i.e., does the theme have a central organising concept)?
5. Does the theme enable richness, nuance, and diversity within the dataset to be shown?
6. Does the theme hang on more than just one quote?

I experienced challenge in ascribing to the core notion of RTA; that RTA seeks to explore themes, as opposed to topic summaries, which are described as having “shared meaning with a central organising concept” (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 15). I arguably fell victim to the common error of generating topic summaries with expansive subthemes, and extensive reworking of candidate themes was required prior to final submission (see Appendix. 26 for initial thematic maps). I became overly reliant on subthemes for fear of ‘missing’ something, or not drawing attention to a slight difference in a theme (Trainor & Bundon, 2021). Yet, Braun and Clarke (2021, p. 88) suggest that “a more layered reflexive TA is not a better reflexive TA”, and that the aim is not to represent everything that was said in the dataset. I valued the opportunity to return to the fifth phase of RTA and refine my analysis prior to final submission, recognising that the very process of RTA is time-consuming and recursive. Indeed, Braun and Clarke (2021, p. 104) acknowledge how “a common reason for going backwards to go forwards is realising that you have inadvertently developed topic summaries, rather than themes... [yet] a step or two ‘backwards’ in TA should *not* be framed as failure, but instead as having the courage to reverse on your adventure, recognising that the path you’ve gone down has proved too dull, or too complex, or is just a plain dead end, and reassess the path forwards”. It was challenging to ‘finish’ data analysis; I

continued to engage with the dataset in new ways up until final submission. However, I recognise that “no RTA is ever *final* or *complete*, because it is a subjective situated engagement with data” (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 92) and acknowledge that further refinement and insight will always be possible.

Phases Five & Six: Refining, Defining, and Naming Themes & Writing Up

I chose to generate two thematic maps, in relation to my four RQs, to highlight the distinct views of children and parents/carers. It felt pertinent to include two RQs per thematic map as this ‘stayed true’ to participant narratives, where suggestions around supportive educational environments ‘hung’ from various key ideas around the *experience* of high ES within the educational context, but not all. I aimed to explore participant narratives with more direct relation to my RQs in my discussion. In refining the analysis, I frequently returned to the idea that “data do not speak for themselves” (Clarke & Braun, 2021, p. 131); I aimed to provide interpretation of what was important about what participants were saying in context, as opposed to pure description of what was being said. I reminded myself not to ‘argue’ with the dataset (Clarke & Braun, 2021), particularly around notions which did not align with my personal views (e.g., the sense of there being ‘boxes’ children must fit into at school and/or discourse around utilising language of neurodivergence to describe children’s experiences), but to provide an account of participants’ constructions and experiences.

I recognise that I am “an active agent in the production of knowledge” (Trainor & Bundon, 2020, p. 3), thus other researchers may have drawn different interpretations and conclusions. For example, I acknowledge that the thematic maps relating to child and parent/carer experiences follow a similar pattern of themes, generating a similar ‘story’. I have considered how this may have been impacted by (1) the ordering of interviews as discussed in [Section 2.4.1.](#), (2) the similarity in interview guides, (3) researcher subjectivity, in which personal biases have impacted the data collection and interpretation processes (see [Section 2.3.1.](#)), or (4) the process of ‘crystallisation’ (Richardson et al., 2005), whereby the credibility, or trustworthiness, of data is perhaps enhanced by child

and parent/carer perspectives centring around similar notions (Varpio et al., 2017) (see [Section 2.3.5.](#)).

3. Section Two: Contribution to Knowledge and Dissemination

3.1. Contribution to the Literature

To my knowledge, this exploratory research represents the first to utilise qualitative research methods to explore the experience of high ES, within UK-based educational settings, from the perspective of children and their parents/carers. In accordance with previous literature (e.g., Acevedo, 2020b; Acevedo et al., 2014; Aron et al., 2005; Booth & Carroll, 2015; Gearhart & Bodie, 2012; Greven et al., 2019; Imura, 2021; Imura & Kibe, 2020; May & Pitman, 2021; Tillmann et al., 2018; Zavodna, 2022), participants reported the experience of high ES to be associated with experiencing intense emotions, deep analysis of positive and negative interpersonal interactions, and sensory overwhelm within the educational context. The current study additionally made several unique contributions to the literature.

Children and their parents/carers shared a narrative around the experience of high ES meaning that the child's educational experiences were different to that of their less sensitive peers. Children reported varying accounts regarding whether their experience of high ES was felt to be understood and/or accepted, with parents/carers typically reporting a sense that their children perhaps did not fit into the 'boxes' that they felt were set out by their educational context. Parents/carers reflected on the 'fight' they felt they must engage in to ensure that their children had access to equitable educations, something which was perceived to be harmful to their own mental health and wellbeing. Indeed, some parents/carers felt it appropriate to remove their child from Local Authority (LA) maintained mainstream education, with several children also reporting a desire to be educated elsewhere (e.g., EHE, independent sector).

The current study also highlighted how parents/carers felt that the lesser well-known experience of high ES was frequently being viewed through, what they felt to be, the more well-known lens of neurodivergence by educational professionals. Whilst similarities between the presentations of high ES and neurodivergence such as ASC cannot be disputed, current research suggests that the two are distinct entities (Acevedo, 2020a; Acevedo et al., 2014),

although the notion of ‘masking’ has the potential to lead to misdiagnosis, particularly amongst autistic females (Corscadden & Casserly, 2021). Parents/carers described it being difficult to get educational professionals to ‘see things differently’, and shared a sense of frustration around the experience of high ES being less acknowledged and/or understood in comparison to ASC and ADHD. Parents/carers reflected that the lack of understanding around the experience of high ES had caused their children to question their individual differences themselves, something that was also reflected in children’s accounts. A small number of parents/carers suggested that it was sometimes easier to explain their child’s individual differences in terms of neurodivergence. They acknowledged some ‘overlap’ between the experience of high ES and ASC, for example, and suggested that explaining their children’s difficulties (e.g., sensory overwhelm) by referring to neurodivergence enabled educational professionals to better ‘engage’ with them. Parents/carers acknowledged feeling that their child was not neurodivergent, yet felt ill-equipped to advocate for their child in relation to their experience of high ES, since this did not reflect a well-known ‘diagnosis’ or ‘label’, something which was believed to be required in the educational context to access related support.

The current study also made a unique contribution to the literature in highlighting an extensive range of views shared by children, who experience high ES, and their parents/carers regarding their constructions of a supportive educational environment. This has important implications for educational professionals, such as school-based staff and EPs. Supportive educational environments were suggested to be those that offered opportunity to: reflect on, and develop positive coping strategies around, the experience of intense emotions; develop meaningful connection with peers and school-based staff; minimise the potential for sensory overwhelm through environmental adaptations; and enhance personal and systemic knowledge around the experience of high ES.

In recent decades, theory, research, and public awareness around sensitivity has grown significantly (Greven et al., 2019), something which has occurred alongside changing social norms, whereby individual differences in preferences, tendencies, and personalities tend to be more accepted and

understood (Acevedo, 2020a). Indeed, the recently developed ES meta-framework introduced a paradigm shift in how we view ‘person x environment’ interactions (Pluess, 2015; Pluess et al., 2018), suggesting that it is not enough to explore the ‘person x environment’ interaction when identifying how best to promote individual health and wellbeing, but, rather, the ‘person x person’s likely response to environment x environment’ interaction. Such an approach arguably fits well with current advances in EPP, where Person-Centred Practice (PCP) is a present gold standard (Gillham, 2022; Roffey, 2015). This research is, thus, arguably a timely contribution, advocating for the exploration of factors, such as ES, which impact the ‘person x person’s likely response to environment x environment’ interaction. By understanding, for example, where an individual lies on the ES continuum, we may better predict their ‘likely response to [their] environment’, since it is well-documented that individuals who experiences high ES are likely to perceive, and respond to, the environment differently to those who experience low- or medium- ES (Greven et al., 2019).

3.2. Contribution to Further Research

In addition to that which has been suggested in [Part Two, Section 5.7.](#), it may be beneficial for future research to explore that identified in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Suggestions for Future Research

Potential areas for future research
1. The impact of developing an understanding around one's experience of high ES upon self-concept, self-connection, belongingness, achievement, and wellbeing amongst CYP.
2. The impact of 'labelling' (i.e., from self and others) upon self-concept, self-connection, belongingness, achievement, and wellbeing, amongst CYP, regarding one's experience of high ES.
3. Constructions of supportive educational contexts amongst CYP, who experience high ES, and their parents/carers, who perceive themselves to <i>currently</i> be within supportive educational environments (i.e., utilising a positive psychology framework (Seligman, 2010)).
4. The experience of education, and constructions of a supportive educational environment, from the perspective of CYP (and parents/carers) who experience low- and medium- levels of ES.
5. The difference in presentation between high ES and neurodivergence, such as ASC, ADHD, SPD.
6. The wider study of individual differences (e.g., temperament, personality) within educational contexts, and how such individual differences are recognised, understood, and supported by educational professionals (e.g., school-based staff, EPs).

3.3. Plans for Dissemination of Findings

I plan to share an infographic poster version of findings with participants via the social media groups from which they were recruited. I will create a research poster version of findings to be presented to the School of Psychology, including a question-and-answer session. As outlined in [Part Two, Section 5.4.](#), I believe it would be valuable to integrate findings from both Part One and Two of my thesis to create training for educational professionals, including school-based staff and EPs. Such training would promote awareness, understanding, and support around the experience of high ES within educational contexts, as advocated for by participants (see Appendix. 27 for suggestions around training aims and content). It must be acknowledged, however, that the critical realist-contextualism orientation (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 179) on which this research was built means that any information included from the current study in the

generation of such training will reflect a “provisional, contextual, and liminal truth” owing to the *personal* and *contextual* experiences and beliefs of those who took part in the current study.

I will take what I have learned into my practice as an EP. I aim to share, at individual-, group-, and systemic-levels, my deepened knowledge and understanding around: (1) how the experience of high ES can affect both children, and their parents/carers, positively and/or negatively, as they progress through the education system, and (2) how the experience of high ES can best be supported within educational contexts. Since completing this research, I have worked with at least one additional child whose experience of school has perhaps been impacted by his experience of high ES. In sharing awareness, insight, and knowledge around the experience of high ES, and what others have shared to be supportive, with this child, their parent, and school-based staff, a new lens through which to view this child’s behavioural expressions has advantageously been gained. I have been delighted to witness how such an alteration in mindset can enhance the wellbeing of both children and adults, where language has shifted from one of deficit, to one of individual difference and strength.

I hope to publish this research to disseminate the findings to a wider audience. I feel such research is likely to be valuable to EPs and other educational professionals (e.g., school-based staff). I believe relevant journals to include *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, and *Journal of Research in Personality, Developmental Psychology, and Journal of Environmental Psychology*.

3.3. Contribution to Professional Practice

The current study contributes to professional practice two-fold; (1) highlighting to educational professionals how children, who experience high ES, and their parents/carers, perceive their time within the educational context, (2) outlining constructions held by such individuals around supportive educational environments. Such insight has important implications for educational professionals, including EPs ([see Part Two, Section 5.4.](#) and Appendix. 27 for key findings and related implications for EPP).

It is also perhaps important to acknowledge the finding, from the current study, that a small number of parents/carers felt it pertinent to use 'labels' of neurodivergence to convey their children's experiences of high ES to educational professionals (see [Section 3.1.](#) for further detail). This perhaps highlights the importance of working to increase current levels of awareness and understanding around the notion of high ES within educational contexts. Indeed, the potential for misperception (in either direction) from parent/carer and school-based staff perspectives is an important consideration since misunderstandings may cause difficulties amongst children and their developing self-concepts, whilst also meaning additional supports (e.g., relating particularly to neurodivergence) are inadvertently withheld. Thus, since the presentation of high ES and neurodivergence can look similar (Acevedo, 2020b; Acevedo et al., 2014; Corscadden & Casserly, 2021), there is arguably an ethical responsibility, particularly for educational professionals such as EPs, to (1) explore a child's experience from a holistic, well-informed position, and (2) promote the use of language which best describes a child's current experiences.

4. Concluding Reflections

I hope that this major research reflective account has provided another lens through which to view my research contributions. I have valued the opportunity to engage in thoughtful reflection around the decisions made within the research process, and acknowledge that my research journey has been heavily influenced by my 'insider researcher' positionality and the 'messiness' of being a dual research-practitioner. I am confident that this research will enhance my practice as an EP, and have already acknowledged benefit within my 'casework' (see [Section 3.3.](#)). I hope that I may continue to move forward with my dissemination plans (see [Section 3.3.](#)) to enhance knowledge, awareness, and understanding around the experience of high ES within educational contexts, to ultimately enhance the achievement and wellbeing of CYP who experience high ES within UK-based educational contexts.

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Appendix. 1: Search Strategy

Database	Search Terms	Total Results
APA PsychInfo	(sensitive child* OR sensitive teen* OR sensitive adolescent* OR sensitive young adult* OR sensitive personality OR sensory processing sensitivity OR environmental sensitivity OR vantage sensitivity) AND (education* OR school OR preschool OR nursery OR primary OR secondary OR learning OR college OR university OR elementary OR student OR pupil OR classroom OR academic OR teach* OR educational psychologist* OR school psychologist*)	141
Scopus	(((TITLE-ABS-KEY (" sensitive child*")) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("sensitive teen*")) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("sensitive adolescen*")) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("sensitive young adult*")) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("sensitive personality")) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("sensory processing sensitivity")) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("environmental sensitivity")) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("vantage sensitivity")))) AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY ((education)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (school*)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (preschool*)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (nursery)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (primary)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (secondary)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (learning)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (college*)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (OR university*)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (elementary)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (student*)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (pupil*)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (classroom)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY (academic)) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("educational psychologist*")) OR (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("school psychologist*"))))))	229
ERIC	(" sensitive child*" OR "sensitive teen*" OR "sensitive adolescen*" OR "sensitive young adult*" OR "sensory processing sensitivity" OR "environmental sensitivity" OR "vantage sensitivity") AND (education OR school* OR preschool* OR nursery OR primary OR secondary OR learning OR college* OR university* OR elementary OR student* OR pupil* OR classroom OR academic OR teach* OR "educational psychologist*" OR "school psychologist*")	39
British Education Index	((" sensitive child*" OR ("sensitive teen*" OR ("sensitive adolescen*") OR ("sensitive young adult*") OR ("sensory processing sensitivity") OR ("environmental sensitivity") OR ("vantage sensitivity") AND (education) OR (school*) OR (preschool*) OR (nursery) OR (primary) OR (secondary) OR (learning) OR (college*) OR (university*) OR (elementary) OR (student*) OR (pupil*) OR (classroom) OR (academic) OR (teach*) OR ("educational psychologist*") OR ("school psychologist*"))	1
ASSIA	noft(" sensitive child*" OR "sensitive teen*" OR "sensitive adolescen*" OR "sensitive young adult*" OR "sensory processing sensitivity" OR "environmental sensitivity" OR "vantage sensitivity") AND noft(education OR school* OR preschool* OR nursery OR primary OR secondary OR learning OR college* OR university* OR elementary OR student* OR pupil* OR classroom OR academic OR teach* OR "educational psychologist" OR "school psychologist")	43

Appendix. 2: Summary of Aron's D.O.E.S. Acronym Outlining the Characteristics of 'Highly Sensitive People' (as cited in Aron, 2011)

Depth of Processing

Individuals high in sensitivity process incoming information more deeply than others do. This depth of processing is associated with various other characteristics, for example: displaying empathy and sensitivity toward others; conscientiousness in behaviour; intensity in experiencing feelings; vivid dreams and rich imaginations; a tendency to reflect upon various activities in detail; awareness of the long-term consequences of their behaviour; a longer processing time of new information; highly effective learning from own experiences; drawing conclusions from experiences in order to increase efficacy; apparent slowdown in activity and inhibition (i.e., observing the situation before participating); asking deep, thought-provoking questions; difficulties in making decisions due to considering many options in depth; and slow (compared to less sensitive peers) adaptation to new people and situations due to a desire to observe and reflect upon them.

Overstimulation

Ease of overstimulation is a natural consequence of deeper information processing, where individuals who experience high-sensitivity are more prone to physical and mental fatigue than those who process fewer stimuli and less information. The consequences of overstimulation can include sleep disturbances; acute reactions to change; intense reactions to noise, temperature, artificial light; discomfort; unwillingness to be in crowded places; reluctance to speak in classes or participate in team games; the desire for independence and to play alone.

Emotional Reactivity and Empathy

A tendency to analyse environmental stimuli, and to show deep interest in the environment, leads sensitive individuals to react with greater emotional intensity to positive and negative events around them. The experience of emotional intensity enables sensitive individuals to be highly aware of the emotions of others.

Sensitivity to Subtle Stimuli

Experiencing higher levels of thinking and feeling leads to a higher awareness of details, subtle sounds, touch, smell, and other delicate stimuli. This heightened awareness can translate into paying attention to the changes in the appearance of people or places; noticing subtle odours; paying attention to subtle sounds (e.g., birds singing, complex music); noticing, and reacting to, changes in the tone of voice, short glances, or small gestures. Sensitivity to subtleties can make it easier to interpret expectations of others, although this awareness of subtleties can disappear when the individual is overstimulated.

Appendix. 3: Critical Appraisal of Key Papers Identified in the Scoping Literature Review

The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT; Hong et al., 2018)													
Responses: yes, no, can't tell, N.A (researcher has included 'partially')													
Citation	Tillman et al. (2018)	limura & Kibe (2020)	Nocentini et al. (2018)	May Pitman & (2021)	Kibe et al. (2020)	Pluess & Boniwell (2015)	Zavonda (2020)	Amemiva et al. (2020)	Cater (2016)	Gearhart & Bodie (2012)	Samsen-Bronsveld et al. (2022)	Strader-Garcia (2012)	Cater (2022)
Screening questions: Are there clear RQs? Do the collected data address the RQs?	Yes Yes	Yes (but not explicitly stated) Yes	Yes (but not explicitly stated) Yes	Yes (but not explicitly stated) Yes	Yes (but not explicitly stated) Yes	Yes (but not explicitly stated) Yes	Yes Yes	Yes (but not explicitly stated) Yes	Yes Yes	Yes (but not explicitly stated) Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Qualitative: Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the RQ? Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the RQ? Are the findings adequately derived from the data? Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis, and interpretation?	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Yes Yes Yes Yes Partially	N.A.	Yes Yes Yes Yes Partially	N.A.	N.A.	Yes Yes Yes Yes Partially	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes
Quantitative RCTs: Is randomisation appropriately performed? Are the groups comparable at baseline? Are there complete outcome data? Are outcome assessors blinded to the intervention provided? Did the participants adhere to the assigned intervention?	N.A.	N.A.	Yes Yes Yes Can't tell Yes (some drop out)	N.A.	N.A.	No Can't tell Yes Can't tell Yes (some drop out)	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Quantitative non-randomised: Are the participants representative of the target population? Are measurements appropriate regarding both the outcome and intervention (or exposure)? Are there complete outcome data? Are the confounders accounted for in the design and analysis? During the study period, is the intervention administered (or exposure occurred) as intended?	Partially Yes Yes Partially N.A.	Yes Yes Yes No N.A.		Yes Yes Yes No Yes	Yes Yes Yes No Yes	Yes Yes Yes No Yes	Can't tell N.A. Yes No N.A.	Yes Yes Yes No Yes	Yes Yes Yes No Yes	Yes Yes Yes No N.A.	Yes Yes Yes No N.A.	Yes Yes Yes No Yes	Yes Yes Yes No Yes
Quantitative descriptive: Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the RQ? Is the sample representative of the target population? Are the measurements appropriate?	Partially Partially Yes	Yes Yes Yes	Yes No Yes	Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes Yes		Can't tell Can't tell Yes	Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes Partially	Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes Yes

Is the risk of non-response bias low? Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the RQ?	Yes Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes		Yes Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Mixed methods: Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the RQ? Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer to RQ? Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted? Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed? Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Yes Yes Yes No	N.A.	Yes Yes Yes No	N.A.	N.A.	Yes Yes Yes No	Yes Yes Yes Yes

Critical Appraisal Skills Programme – Qualitative Checklist (CASP; Singh, 2013) Responses: yes, no, can't tell, N.A. (researcher has included 'partially')										
Citation	Section A: Are the results valid? Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Section B: What are the results? Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Section C: Will results help locally? How valuable is the research?
Zavonda (2020)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partially	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially
Cater (2016)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Partially	Yes	Yes
Strader-Garcia (2012)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cater (2022)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Scale for the Assessment of Narrative Review Articles (SANRA; Baethge et al., 2019)

Responses: each item is scaled from 0 – 2.

Citation	Justification of the article's importance for the readership	Statement of concrete aims or formulation of questions	Description of the literature search	Referencing	Scientific reasoning	Appropriate presentation of data
Baryla-Matejcuk et al. (2020)	2	1 (research question not explicitly stated)	0	2	2	2

Appendix. 4: Data Extraction Table Providing an Overview of Key Papers Identified in the Scoping Literature Review

Researchers	Title	Year	Publication Type/Journal	Vol	Pages	Outline	Design and Methodology	Participant Information	Findings	Critique/Limitations	Conclusions and Real-world Implications
Tillman, T., Matany, K. E., & Duttweiler, H.	Measuring Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Contexts: A Validation Study with German-Speaking students	2018	Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology	8(2)	17-28	<p>Two studies were included:</p> <p>Study 1: Development and validation of a German version of the Highly Sensitive Child Scale (HSCS; Pluess et al., 2018) with the aim of measuring Environmental Sensitivity (ES) within the educational context (specifically secondary schools).</p> <p>Research questions: (1) Which already established factorial structure does the data of the present sample follow? (2) Do all items meet the required criteria (i.e., reliability and loading factor), indicating a measurement of high quality, or do some of the items have to be deleted?</p> <p>Study 2: Subsequent quantitative exploration into the validity of the German HSCS amongst a population of vocational German students, and exploration into the relationship between self-reported ES and variables of adjustment and wellbeing at school.</p> <p>Research question: How does SPS (ES) effect other school-related variables in students?</p>	<p>Two studies were included:</p> <p>Study 1: German translation and validation of the HSCS (Pluess et al., 2018) amongst a sample of academic-track German secondary school students.</p> <p>Study 2: Subsequent quantitative exploration into the validity and reliability of the German HSCS (14-item version), with regards to exploring the relationship between ES and variables of adjustment and wellbeing at school (i.e., intrinsic interest in school, school-related self-efficacy, frequency of positive and negative affect during the last four weeks, psychological wellbeing, physical wellbeing, functional capacity in school). To measure these additional variables, the German scales on the Big Five personality traits (Rammstedt, 1997) and the Ravens-Sieberer & Bullinger KINDL-r Scale (1998, 2000) were utilised. Students also indicated their last report card grades in subjects of Maths and German.</p>	<p>Study 1: 301 German academic-track secondary school students, aged between 12 and 18 years old (mean age = 16 years old).</p> <p>Study 2: 460 German vocational-track secondary school students, aged between 12 and 18 years old (mean age = 14 years old).</p>	<p>Study 1 found the initial 25-item German version of the HSCS to have good factorial structure, validity, and reliability, similar to the original HSCS (Pluess et al., 2018) created using UK-based samples. For scale improvement, the researchers eliminated 11 items from the scale, creating a 14-item German version of the HSCS.</p> <p>Study 2 found the 14-item German version of the HSCS to again have good factorial structure, validity, and reliability, similar to the original HSCS (Pluess et al., 2018). For scale improvement, the researchers eliminated a further 4 items from the scale, creating a final 10-item German version of the HSCS.</p> <p>Study 2 additionally found students reporting higher ES via the 10-item German HSCS also reported higher levels of negative affect, and lower levels of self-efficacy, physical and psychological wellbeing, and functional capacity at school. The researchers note how these relationships were found when controlling for the Big Five personality traits.</p>	<p>The research question, ‘How does SPS (ES) effect other school-related variables in students?’ was only explored amongst vocational secondary school students, as opposed to those on academic track courses. It is thus unclear whether the experience of high ES is associated with such effects amongst students undertaking academic type courses.</p> <p>The study purely employed self-report measures via questionnaires that may be biased. Questionnaires measuring variables of adjustment and wellbeing at school additionally focus on experiences within the last four weeks only.</p> <p>The researchers acknowledge how the potentially confounding/mediating variable of ‘home life’ was not explored yet home-life is likely to play an important role in students’ wellbeing, functioning, and academic interest.</p>	<p>The researchers conclude that the 10-item German version of the HSCS may be useful to assess SPS (ES) amongst secondary school students. They acknowledge that future studies should validate this final shortened version with data from another student sample.</p> <p>The researchers further conclude that students experiencing high ES are particularly likely to experience negative outcomes, such as poorer adjustment and wellbeing at school, if the environment is not supportive. Whilst they do not clarify what constitutes a supportive environment, only stating that the social environment is particularly important to Highly Sensitive Persons (HSPs), the researchers advocate for individualised education plans (IEPs) for students experiencing high ES to reduce the likelihood of them experiencing negative outcomes.</p> <p>The researchers note that this is the first study to investigate the role of ES within the secondary school context, and suggest that further exploration into the effects of ES in the school context is necessary given the finding that the experience of high ES is associated with poorer adjustment and wellbeing at school. They suggest that future research should explore environmental and instructional factors in the school environment that are supportive to those experiencing high ES. This should be done utilising both self-report and observational measures (e.g., evaluations by parents and/or teachers). It is suggested that such research could reveal important implications and practical advice for educators.</p>
Imura, S., & Kibe, C.	Highly Sensitive Adolescent Benefits in Positive School Transitions: Evidence for Vantage Sensitivity in Japanese High-Schoolers	2020	Developmental Psychology	56(8)	1565-1581	<p>Two studies were included:</p> <p>Study 1: Development and validation of a Japanese version of the Highly Sensitive Child Scale (HSCS; Pluess et al., 2018), J-HSCS.</p> <p>Research question not explicitly stated.</p>	<p>Two studies were included:</p> <p>Study 1: Japanese translation and validation of HSCS (Aron & Pluess, 2018) amongst a sample of Japanese secondary school students.</p> <p>Study 1: Confirmatory model testing approach (Widaman</p>	<p>Study 1: Two separate samples participated in Study 1. Before transition, 412 Japanese students aged between 14</p>	<p>Study 1 found the 11-item Japanese HSCS (J-HSCS) to have good factorial structure, validity, and reliability, similar to the original HSCS (Pluess et al., 2018) created using UK-based samples.</p> <p>Study 2 found the differential susceptibility model to offer the best explanation as to</p>	<p>Despite measuring variables such as socio-economic status, the study did not explore how such potentially confounding/mediating variables may have influenced the relationship between ES, wellbeing, and school adjustment.</p>	<p>The researchers conclude that a vantage sensitivity model (Pluess & Belsky, 2013) is preferred over the differential susceptibility or diathesis-stress model; if the school transition is perceived to be positive and successful by students experiencing high ES, this enables the reciprocal interaction that leads to positive youth development. The researchers suggest that this is, in part, since students experiencing high ES are more</p>

						<p>Study 2: Subsequent quantitative exploration, utilising the J-HSCS, into which model (i.e., differential-susceptibility or diathesis-stress) best reflects the development of socioemotional wellbeing across school transition amongst secondary students experiencing high ES. Research question not explicitly stated.</p>	<p>et al., 2012) utilised to evaluate which model of diathesis-stress or differential susceptibility best explains adjustment to high school in the sample population. Participants completed the J-HSCS to measure ES, along with the Japanese version of the World Health Organisation's Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5-J; Awata et al., 2007) to explore wellbeing, and the researcher-created unpublished measure, the 11-item 'Perceived Change in School Environment Scale', to measure students' perception regarding how the school environment had changed (i.e., positively or negatively) compared to the junior school. Specifically, perceived changes measured included: school and classroom climate, relationships with teachers and friends, number of students in the whole school and the classroom, school rules, and difficulty of class.</p>	<p>and 15 years old participated. After transition, 344 Japanese students aged between 15 and 16 years old participated.</p> <p>Study 2: Both samples of 412 and 344 Japanese secondary school students were employed to Study 2.</p> <p>Mean ages not stated.</p>	<p>adjustment to high school, although the researchers noted that neither model sufficiently described the data. As a result, they ran additional secondary analyses, finding that a vantage sensitivity model (Pluess & Belsky, 2013) fit the current data best. Essentially, students who reported positive high school environments post-transition were most likely to experience enhanced wellbeing in response to this positive environment if they also scored highly in ES. Those scoring lower in ES did not show such wellbeing enhancement despite viewing the high school transition to be positive.</p>	<p>The study purely employed self-report measures via questionnaires that may be biased.</p> <p>Sampling bias must be considered; although all participants were randomly recruited via online surveys, those who participated may have done so because they had positive experiences concerning secondary school adjustment.</p> <p>The researchers acknowledge that whilst the study utilised a longitudinal design, the results are limited to the short time spans just before and after school transition (i.e., 1 month before and 1 month after). It is therefore possible that the study captured a 'honeymoon period' in school adjustment; research outlines that when entering a new environment, people attend to positive information more carefully than negative information (Black & Mendenhall, 1991).</p>	<p>likely to notice and register positive environmental cues in supportive educational settings and thus benefit from such environments during transition periods. The researchers therefore advocate the importance of working to create positive and supportive school environments since these will benefit the wellbeing of all students, but particularly those experiencing high ES who are most likely to attend to, notice, and internalise such positive support.</p> <p>The researchers acknowledge that secondary school students' adjustment is multifaceted and other psychosocial constructs, as well as academic aspects, need to be explored. They note particular interest in whether students experiencing high ES would develop disproportionately negative outcomes under adverse contexts (e.g., bullying, exam stress, peer pressure) given that they are more likely to experience positive outcomes under supportive contexts (Pluess & Belsky, 2013).</p>
Nocentini, A., Menesini, E., & Pluess, M.	The Personality Trait of Environmental Sensitivity Predicts Children's Positive Response to School-Based Antibullying Intervention	2018	Clinical Psychological Science	6(6)	848-859	<p>Large randomised control trial exploring whether individual differences in ES predict response to an anti-bullying intervention at school. Research question not explicitly stated.</p>	<p>Students were randomly allocated to intervention or control conditions. Those in the intervention condition (n = 1039) took part in the KiVa anti-bullying programme (Salmivalli et al., 2010). Those in the control group (n = 1003) received no intervention. Students completed self-report measures relating to: bullying and victimisation (Florence Bullying-Victimization Scales; Palladino, Nocentini, & Menesini, 2016), ES (HSCS; Pluess et al., 2018), and internalising and externalising symptoms (Youth Self Report, Achenbach, 1991) (i.e.,</p>	<p>2, 042 students aged between 9 and 12 years old. Students attended schools (n = 13) in Tuscany, Italy.</p> <p>Mean ages not stated.</p>	<p>The anti-bullying intervention proved effective in reducing both bullying and victimisation amongst all students who took part. It was also effective in reducing externalising, and, at a marginal level, internalising problems, amongst participating students.</p> <p>Results showed that these main effects were significantly moderated by ES and gender. Students experiencing high ES were significantly more likely to benefit from the intervention via reductions in victimisation and internalising symptoms. This was particularly true for boys who scored experiencing high ES.</p>	<p>The study purely employed self-report measures via questionnaires that may be biased.</p> <p>The sample was not representative of the Italian population; reported findings are only generalisable to Italian schools that are willing to implement an antibullying programme.</p> <p>Exploration into the impact of the intervention on internalising and externalising symptoms (i.e., mental health and wellbeing) was only measurable amongst students aged 11 years and above, since the Youth Self Report (Achenbach, 1991) is only validated for use amongst those aged 11 years and above.</p>	<p>The researchers suggest that students experiencing high ES are more perceptive to intervention-induced improvements of the school and classroom context than their less sensitive peers. It is suggested that this is since students experiencing high ES have a more responsive central nervous system on which experiences register more easily and more deeply (Pluess & Belsky, 2013). However, the researchers advocate for future research to explore the specific mechanisms associated with ES and heightened response to intervention (RTI). They suggest that this is crucial for the development of specific intervention components aimed at students low in ES who seem less likely to benefit from anti-bullying interventions.</p> <p>The researchers highlight how there is growing evidence that universal prevention</p>

							anxious thoughts, aggressive behaviours) pre- and post-intervention. Only students aged 11 years and above were able to complete the Youth Self Report. Statistical analyses were employed to explore interactions between these three variables and response to the anti-bullying intervention.			A small number of participants dropped out of both the experimental (n = 85) and control group (n = 47), although analysis of effects was computed for the whole group. The study did not explore the specific processes underlying the heightened treatment response of students experiencing high ES.	programmes fail to equally benefit all students and thus it is important to better understand differences in RTI (e.g., Bradshaw, 2015). They argue that a better understanding of where students lie on the ES continuum can support the identification of those most and least likely to benefit from universal school-based interventions, such as anti-bullying programmes.
May, A. K., & Pitman, M. M.	The association between sensory processing sensitivity, the five-factor model and university adjustment amongst South African university students	2021	Current Psychology	-	1-15	Quantitative study exploring university adjustment differences between students scoring high and low in ES. The researchers also utilised quantitative methods to explore whether the effects of ES on university adjustment were (a) independent from the five-factor model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992), and (b) moderated by levels of early parental care. Research question not explicitly stated.	Students completed the 27-item self-report Highly Sensitive Person Scale (HSPS; Aron & Aron, 1997), the 55-item self-report Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1984, Labrie et al., 2012), the 25-item self-report Measure of Parental Style (MOPS; Parker et al., 1997), the 44-item self-report Big Five Inventory (BFI; John et al., 1991), and the self-report Resistance to Peer Influence Scale (RPI; Steinberg & Monahan, 2007). Statistical analyses were employed to explore relationships between variables.	Multi-ethnic sample of 580 first year South African psychology students aged between 18 and 25 years old. Mean ages not stated.	Students scoring experiencing high ES (vs. low) reported significantly worse adjustment to university (however, this effect was relatively small in size). This effect was driven by two main features of high ES – the tendency to experience heightened negative affect, and neural sensitivity. Positively, however, improved university adjustment (albeit not statistically significant) was facilitated by the tendency of those experiencing high ES to carefully process and consider behaviour before acting. ES was found to capture variation in university adjustment independent of the five-factor model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Parental care moderated the relationship between university adjustment and ES only for those scoring low in ES.	The study purely employed self-report measures via questionnaires that may be biased. These measures additionally required retrospective recall of events, which is prone to recall bias. The study was only adequately powered (80%) due to the low number of participants. The study was cross-sectional as opposed to longitudinal, thus the study design failed to address the temporal variance that university adjustment is likely to display. Plethoras of self-report measures were utilised, which may have induced confounding effects (e.g., tiredness). The researchers also acknowledge that they did not explore the potentially confounding/mediating variable of socio-economic status, despite this being a well-known predictor of adjustment (Crede & Niehorster, 2012). The researchers acknowledge that collapsing the multi-dimensional process of university adjustment to ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ adjustment may have been oversimplistic.	The researchers note that this was the first study to explore university adjustment as a function of ES. They postulated that students experiencing high ES might find university particularly overwhelming since university tends to favour those with robust emotional stability, high levels of extraversion, and strong perceptions of social support (Lidy & Kahn, 2011). Students experiencing high ES, conversely, feel more deeply, the majority are introverted (70-80%), and they are seen in low frequency in the general population (15-20%; Aron & Aron, 1997), thus they are likely to experience a degree of minority stress (Hayes et al., 2011). The researchers advocate that ES may be a useful measure to identify students who may find university adjustment particularly overwhelming, and would benefit from targeted support and intervention (e.g., access to university-based counsellors). They note that this may be particularly helpful given previous research indicating that students experiencing high ES are more likely to respond positively to intervention than those lower in ES (e.g., Pluess & Boniwell, 2015; Kibe et al., 2020). It is further suggested that by identifying students experiencing high ES, they can be supported to develop habits and environments that lower the disadvantages of negative affect and neural sensitivity, whilst accentuating the advantages of careful and thorough cognition (e.g., quieter study settings, ‘uni-tasking’, and centring practices such as yoga).

											The researchers suggest future research should extend to exploring how ES influences achievement and wellbeing within other contexts (e.g., the workplace).
Baryla-Matejczuk, M., Artymiak, M., Ferrer-Cascales, R., & Betancort, M.	The Highly Sensitive Child as a Challenge for Education: Introduction to the concept	2020	Issues in Early Education	1(48)	51-62	Literature review paper aiming to summarise available findings relating to the subject of ES from both educational and parenting perspectives. Research question not explicitly stated.	PSYInfo, Scopus and PubMed databases were searched from December 2018 to July 2019 with the key words, 'sensory processing', 'sensitive', 'environmental sensitivity', and 'education'. No limits on dates were established.	-	Summarising available literature, the researchers conclude that, in line with the differential susceptibility model, experiencing high ES is associated with particularly strong advantages, under supportive conditions, and disadvantages, under detrimental conditions in both home and educational contexts.	The description of the literature search is limited; the researchers did not clarify the number of relevant studies obtained, nor did they state how any critical appraisal took place, for example. Compounding this, the researcher outlines several recommendations for parents and educators following this review of literature. Recommendations do not follow on from any empirical research, but are rather researcher-opinion based on this brief review of literature.	The researchers suggest that educators (and parents) should work with students experiencing high ES to create supportive environments that equip them with age-appropriate knowledge and tools to understand and manage their high ES, and, where necessary, provide access to specialist practitioners who can support students experiencing high ES. Educators should also carefully consider their discipline techniques to reduce common feelings of guilt and shame seen amongst students experiencing high ES who typically internalise moral codes in natural ways.
Kibe, C., Suzuki, M., Hirano, M., & Boniwell, I.	Sensory Processing Sensitivity and Culturally Modified Resilience Education: Differential Susceptibility in Japanese Adolescents	2020	PLoS ONE	15(9)	1-15	Quantitative study exploring the efficacy of a resilience education programme, amongst Japanese high school students, experiencing high and low levels of ES. Research question not explicitly stated.	A culturally modified version of the UK developed and validated SPARK resilience programme (Boniwell & Ryan, 2009) was delivered to Japanese high school students. To explore intervention efficacy, students' levels of resilience, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and depression were measured pre-, post-, and three months following the intervention. Measures included: Japanese version of the Rosenberg's 10-item self-report Self-Esteem Scale (Sakurai, 2000), the 21-item self-report Bidimensional Resilience Scale (BRS; Hirano, 2010), the 18-item Birlson Depression Self-Rating Scale for Children (Birlson, 1981). The Japanese version of the HSCS (J-HSCS, Iimura et al., 2020) was utilised to measure ES and group participants into those experiencing low and high ES. Statistical analyses were employed to explore the effects of the intervention on students experiencing low and high ES.	407 Japanese high school students aged between 15 and 16 years old. Mean ages not stated.	The resilience education programme was effective in enhancing all students' overall self-efficacy. Students scoring highly in ES (who scored significantly lower in wellbeing than their counterparts at baseline i.e., self-esteem, depression scores) responded more positively to the intervention, and had a greater reduction in depression and promotion of self-esteem.	The programme was evaluated in one high school only. The study did not involve a randomised control trial despite exploring the efficacy of an intervention. Thus, it is unclear whether the intervention yields any greater advantages than 'treatment as usual' (i.e., no intervention). Since some students (i.e., those low in ES) showed higher wellbeing scores at the start of the intervention, it is possible that the positive effects seen amongst those experiencing high ES appear more significant than they are due to ceiling effects associated with the low ES group. The study did not explore potentially confounding/mediating variables that may have influenced the efficacy of the intervention (e.g., motivation, other interventions students were receiving at the time of study).	The researchers concluded that students experiencing high ES are more likely to benefit from interventions, such as resilience-based interventions, than those lower in ES. They argue that this highlights the importance of considering individual differences and designing personalised interventions as opposed to routinely implementing universal approaches to intervention. The researchers suggest that future research utilise randomised control trials amongst different age groups, and more qualitative research methods (e.g., interviews) to explore how wellbeing is affected following intervention programmes.

Pluess, M., & Boniwell, I.	Sensory Processing Sensitivity Predicts Treatment Response to a School-Based Depression Prevention Program: Evidence of Vantage Sensitivity	2015	Personality and Individual Differences	82	40-45	Quantitative study exploring the potential moderating effect of ES on the efficacy of a school-based intervention aimed at the prevention of depression. Research question not explicitly stated.	A two-cohort treatment/control design with one cohort serving as the control group (n = 197) and a subsequent cohort serving as the treatment group (n = 166) was utilised. Participants completed the self-20-item self-report Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CESD; Radloff, 1977), the 12-item self-report HSCS (Pluess et al., 2018), and the Positive and Negative Affect Scales (PANAS; Watson, 1988) pre-treatment and at 6- and 12-months follow-up. The treatment group received the SPARK resilience programme (Boniwell & Ryan, 2009). Statistical analyses were employed to explore the effects of the intervention on students high and low in ES.	363 11-year-old female students from an 'at-risk' (of depression) population in England (i.e., an economically deprived background). The treatment group (n = 166, mean age = 11.4 years) were a Year 7 cohort. The control group (n = 197, mean age = 12.8) were the Year 8 cohort above.	ES was found to be a significant predictor of treatment response; although participants high and low in ES did not differ in initial depression scores at baseline, participants experiencing high ES had significantly lower depression scores at 6- and 12-month follow-ups. Thus, the prevention programme successfully reduced depression scores in girls scoring highly in ES, but was not effective at all in girls scoring low in ES.	Participants were not randomly allocated to control and intervention groups, limiting the casual interpretation of findings. The study purely employed self-report measures via questionnaires that may be biased. The programme was evaluated in one high school only and amongst females only. Students were deemed to be 'at-risk' of depression purely due to coming from an economically deprived background. Those in the control group were the year group one year ahead of the intervention group. The control group were not assessed at baseline, but at the end of the intervention, and ES was not assessed in the intervention group until after the intervention took place. The study did not explore potentially confounding variables that may have influenced the efficacy of the intervention (e.g., socio-economic status, parenting quality, psychopathology of parents).	The researchers suggest that the study provides the first empirical evidence that SPS (ES) predicts treatment response consistent with a vantage sensitivity framework (Pluess & Belsky, 1997); students higher in ES show more advantageous outcomes following intervention. The researchers concluded that those experiencing high ES experienced particularly lasting positive effects from the intervention due to their enhanced ability to process stimuli more deeply, subsequently leading to better internalisation and continued application of acquired cognitive-behavioural coping strategies promoted by SPARK (Aron & Aron, 1997). The researchers advocate measuring for ES prior to conducting interventions, such as school-based resilience programmes, to predict those least and most likely to respond to such programmes. To enhance the generalisability of findings, further randomised control trials, amongst different ages groups and both sexes, are suggested by the researchers for future research.
Zavodna, L., S.	Is the Snowflake Generation More Sensitive? Research from the Teaching of the New Generation	2022	Conference Paper	-	9-24	This mixed-methods study explored the notion of the 'Snowflake Generation', describing individuals who experience high levels of ES, born between 1995 and 2010. The study draws on a controversial viewpoint, put forward by Fox (2016), suggesting that so-called 'snowflakes' are 'overprotected children who grew up to become censorious cry-babies, arrogant, hypersensitive/oversensitive, narcissistic, self-oriented thin-skinned people	University students (n = 353) from the Czech Republic completed the HSPS (HSPS; Aron & Aron, 1997) which was translated into the Czech language. Two qualitative questions were added to examine participants' subjective feeling about sensitivity: (1) Do you think you are more sensitive than your parents? (2) Does it matter to you that your sensitivity affects you whilst you study? A free space was also left at the end for any additional comments.	University students (n = 353) from the Czech Republic were recruited via university webpages, emails, and social media sites at universities. The 12 voluntary participants who completed diary entries	Students who scored highly on the HSPS (HSPS; Aron & Aron, 1997) (i.e., 10 males, 89 females) reported difficulties relating to teaching and learning that affected them whilst studying. The top most frequently marked question in the HSPS (for males and females) was 'other people's moods affect me' (159 females, 93 males). Exploring the additional comments, other difficulties were seen around the following themes: inability to concentrate, shyness (i.e., difficulties in presenting or oral examinations),	The age range of participants is not clarified, although, to take part, participants were required to be born between 1995 and 2010. Of the 353 participants included in the study, 99 scored 14 or above on the HSPS and were categorised as experiencing high ES. Despite this, 164 participants acknowledged that their sensitivity affected them whilst they studied and no information was provided concerning whether it was this group of 164, or the group of 99 participants experiencing high ES, for whom the qualitative questions were analysed. Similarly, no	Based on the suggestion that 15-20% of the population experience high ES (Aron & Aron, 1997), the researcher concluded that, since 43% of females in the participant sample were 'highly sensitive', the 'Snowflake Generation' shows higher levels of 'oversensitivity' than previous generations. The researcher also concluded that 'oversensitivity' affects studying, with 34% of males and 55% of females in the sample indicating this on the questionnaire. Whilst acknowledging limitations, the study takes into account the notion that sensitivity has some impact on the teaching and learning experiences of university students, and attempts to explore this in a qualitative

						<p>endowed with an almost belligerent sense of entitlement' (pg. 9).</p> <p>Research questions:</p> <p>(1) Is the Snowflake Generation really more sensitive (hypersensitive) than those generations before? (2) How does sensitivity affect the studies of this generation?</p>	<p>Twelve voluntary participants also completed standardised diary entries, focusing on emotions experienced within the classroom over a period of 5 days. Participants were asked to identify any difficulties they experienced within the classroom and whether these were triggered by: stress, anxiety, odours, noise, fear, focus, or other disturbing elements. They were asked to rate these triggers on a scale from 1 (low) to 7 (high).</p>	<p>were recruited from two classes at different universities in the Czech Republic.</p>	<p>information overload, underestimation of own abilities, stress and anxiety around managing workload/experiencing failure, overload of senses, propensity for perfection, and a dislike of teachers who make them feel inferior.</p> <p>Exploring diary entries, the most common difficulty experienced during class was focus/concentration problems. Students suggested teachers were the main trigger (i.e., fear of teacher, personality of teacher being too strict or not engaging). Other difficulties included distracting noises (i.e., technical equipment), and stress and pressure, with triggers including a desire to 'get points' and do well in assignments, 'helicopter' teaching, and feeling a pressure to answer if no one else has answered a question.</p>	<p>information was provided as to whether the 12 participants completing diary entries were experiencing high ES. We therefore cannot be sure that either the experiences gleaned from the additional qualitative questions, or the diary entries, relate to the experience of high ES.</p> <p>Both the qualitative questions and options given in the diary-entry activity were deficit-focused and heavily leading. This deficit-focused nature of research arguably extends to the conclusions drawn, where no recommendations for best practice are made.</p> <p>The researcher did not clarify the qualitative research methods employed to analyse results. Whilst themes are evident, there is no mention of Thematic Analysis as a research (Braun & Clarke, 2016) method, for example, potentially limiting the rigour of results.</p>	<p>manner. Further research of this nature, utilising a strengths-focused lens, would arguably be beneficial.</p>
Amemiya, R., Takahashi, G., Rakwal, R., Kahata, M., Isono, K., & Sakairi, Y.	Effects of Yoga in a Physical Education Course on Attention Control and Mental Health Among Graduate Students with High Sensory Processing Sensitivity	2020	Cogent Psychology	7(1)	1-13	<p>Pilot study exploring the effects of yoga on attention control and mood states in graduate students with high and low ES (i.e., Sensory Processing Sensitivity; SPS (ES)).</p> <p>Research question not explicitly stated.</p>	<p>Participants (n = 20) were volunteers from a yoga class in Japan. In addition to completing a twice a week yoga class for one semester, participants also completed a range of self-report measures: the 19-item Japanese version of the Highly Sensitive Person Scale (J-HSPS, Iimura et al., 2020), the Attention Control subscale of the Japanese version of the Effortful Control Scale for Adults (Yamagata et al., 2005), and the Profile of Mood States (POMS-2nd Ed.; Heuchert & McNair, 2012), before and after the yoga course. Participants were divided into two groups based on their SPS (ES) scores (i.e., high SPS</p>	<p>Twenty voluntary master's students (mean age = 25.65 years) in Japan who attended an elective yoga course twice a week, for one semester.</p>	<p>High SPS (ES) was positively correlated with negative mood states. Participants with high SPS (ES) were also found to have lower attention control.</p> <p>Results showed that practicing yoga during one semester of a physical education course could improve attention control and mood states in participants with high SPS (ES). There was not, however, a statistically significant difference between the high and low SPS (ES) group (i.e., yoga improved attention control and mood states for all participants, and not just those high in SPS (ES)).</p>	<p>The researchers acknowledge that they did not obtain a high enough number of participants (n = 20) to achieve statistical power in analyses, nor did they have a control group in this pilot study.</p> <p>The researchers also acknowledge that they did not control for potential confounding variables (e.g., participant motivation for yoga, past yoga experiences) which may have influenced results.</p> <p>Whilst the researchers conclude that practicing yoga during one semester of a physical education course can improve mental health, they base this on the understanding that participants who score low on the Profile of Mood States are exhibiting 'poor psychological conditions' (p. 6). Whilst low scores on this profile</p>	<p>The researchers concluded that individual characteristics, such as SPS (ES), might be related to mental health difficulties in graduate students, since SPS (ES) was positively associated with negative mood states. They also concluded that 'graduate students with high SPS [ES] are more likely to experience mental health problems... [yet can] regulate their mental health conditions in a daily setting such as a physical education class' (p. 10).</p> <p>The findings from this study indicate that what works for the most sensitive individuals, will also work for the least sensitive individuals.</p>

							(ES) group and low SPS (ES) group). Statistical analyses were employed to explore any differences in the effects of SPS (ES) on attention control and mood states as a result of the yoga course.			are likely to go some way to explaining differences in mental health amongst participants, it is perhaps questionable to operationalise 'poor psychological conditions' as scoring highly on this profile, which ultimately assesses 'total stress status [as experienced] over the previous week' (p. 4).	
K, Cater.	Small Shifts, Big Changes: Changing the Story for Students with Sensory Processing Sensitivity (SPS)	2016	International Journal for Transformative Research	3(2)	24-31	A mixed methods approach was utilised to explore the hypothesis that student difficulties (i.e., otherwise successful students falling behind with work while becoming overwhelmed, stressed, and anxious about managing workload and completing academic tasks) could, in part, be due to aspects of SPS (ES). Research question: Does an understanding of the Highly Sensitive Person (HSP) help students who identify as HSP to manage their learning?	Participants completed the Highly Sensitive Person Scale (HSPS; Aron & Aron, 1997) and those scoring 12 or higher were invited to take part in a semi-structured interview, which included four major questions relating to life and study. Participants were first asked to rate growing up, school, tertiary study, and managing life/study balance on a six-point Likert scale. The interviews progressed according to each participant's Likert rating for each question. At the end of the interview, participants were given an HSP information pack, including information and resources pertaining to SPS (ES). A follow-up interview was conducted several weeks later where participants were asked to rate the usefulness of an awareness of HSP, and the information and resources provided.	A sample of 179 students, from New Zealand, were recruited to the study. Of these students, 134 completed the HSPS, 80 of whom identified as HSP (i.e., scored 12 or above). Of these, 34 chose to participate in interview, with 25 completing both interviews. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 53 years. Mean age not stated.	Of the 80 participants scoring 12 or above in the HSPS, the most commonly checked item on the HSPS for these participants was 'Other people's moods affect me' (70 participants). The second most commonly checked item was 'are you conscientious?' (62 participants). The third being 'are you annoyed when people try to make you do too many things at once?' (61 participants). Of the 25 participants to partake in both interviews, 100% of participants rated the knowledge of HSP to be useful in managing life and study. All participants who completed the second interview rated the information pack to be moderately helpful. The researcher hypothesised that, by the time students have reached tertiary education, they had already developed useful metacognitive strategies that allow them to navigate their sensitives. Qualitative data were analysed by 'correlating...overall reactions to HSP awareness' (p. 28). When asked for personal reactions to knowing about HSP, students responded in such ways: 'Wow! I feel normal!', 'Knowing about HSP has helped me to deal with things better and build up ways to make me stronger as a person', 'Thank you. I can forgive myself', 'This helps me to	A tertiary learning support advisor, whose role is to support students to develop effective learning behaviours (Stickler, 2001), conducted this research. The researcher identifies as being a Highly Sensitive Person (HSP). The hypothesis was generated by this inside researcher through her observations of, and experiences with, her students. The research question was also explored amongst her own students. The researcher does not detail her ontological and/or epistemological positioning, nor does she detail any steps taken (e.g., reflection, supervision) to minimise 'insider researcher' bias. This must be taken into account when considering the trustworthiness and rigour of the results. This was arguably addressed in Cater's (2022) research, however. Qualitative data were not analysed with explicit qualitative data analysis techniques (e.g., Thematic Analysis; Braun & Clarke, 2016) which would have enabled more rigorous insight to be gained. The hypothesis regarding students having already developed useful metacognitive strategies that allow them to navigate their sensitives by the time they reach tertiary education needs to be explored before it can be claimed.	The researcher concluded that since it is others' moods that appears to be the most overwhelming factor for students experiencing high ES within the educational context, a tutor's demeanour and the overall harmony of the classroom plays a significant role in the comfort level of students experiencing high ES. The researcher also concluded that the amount and pace of workload plays an important role; a large proportion of students experiencing high ES indicated 'I get annoyed when people try to make me do too many things at once'. The researcher further outlined that, given that 100% of participants (n = 25) stated that knowledge of HSP was not only useful, but life changing, and that they think that information about SPS (ES) and HSP should be available to all students and tutors, there needs to be discussion at the institutional level about how best to provide information and make it available for staff and students. The researcher suggests that there needs to be institutional and executive buy-in to drive policy and procedures. There needs to be rigorous institutional guidelines requiring all programmes to spread workload evenly throughout the year, so as not to overload students and cause overwhelm.

									deal with ongoing stresses!', 'Now I know what I have to do!', 'So good to know what's going on!', 'Thank you. This changes everything', 'Without you I would hang out in the world like a ghost, but thank to you I am not a ghost anymore'. All participants who completed the second interview, in answer to the second question, 'What can [this school] do to help students and tutors know about HSP?', responded that they thought that the setting should make information about HSP available to all in-coming students and tutors.		
Gearhart, C. C., & Bodie, G. D.	Sensory-Processing Sensitivity and Communication Apprehension: Dual Influences on Self-Reported Stress in a College Student Sample	2012	Communication Reports	25(1)	27-39	This study investigated the relationship between Sensory Processing Sensitivity (SPS) (ES), communication apprehension (i.e., the tendency to experience anxiety when communicating or thinking about communicating with others (McCroskey, 1977)) and self-reported stress levels of college students. Research question not explicitly stated.	Participants (n = 304) completed an online survey. Included was a short 18-item forced choice (True/False) version of the Highly Sensitive Person Scale (HSPS; Aron & Aron, 1997), the 24-item self-report Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24; McCroskey et al., 1985) (i.e., exploring communication apprehension in groups, meetings, 1-1 conversations, and public speaking situations), and the self-report 21-item College Stress Inventory (CSI; Solberg et al., 1993), exploring how often respondents have experienced various stressors (e.g., academic stress, social stress, financial stress) in the past month. Statistical analyses were employed to explore these relationships.	304 undergraduate students (mean age = 20.46) enrolled in communication courses (n = 10) in an American university participated in the study.	Higher SPS (ES) scores were associated with higher communication apprehension and perceived college stress, particularly academic stress. SPS (ES) accounted for a greater amount of variance in self-reported stress than communication apprehension.	The study purely employed self-report measures via questionnaires that may be biased. The study did not explore potentially confounding variables that may have influenced the relationship between SPS (ES), communication apprehension, and self-reported stress (e.g., social anxiety). The study was cross-sectional, as opposed to longitudinal, thus did not explore how SPS (ES) influenced perceived college stress and/or communication apprehension over time. This study arguably takes a deficit-focused lens, purely exploring challenges associated with the experience of high ES.	The researchers conclude that college students experiencing high ES, who are more aware of their surroundings due to their high ES, are more likely to become mentally overwhelmed and distracted by worries about audience appraisal, resulting in increased levels of academic stress. The researchers further conclude that college students who experience high SPS (ES) are likely to become stressed by loud noises, distracting lights or smells, and multi-tasking. Taken together, it is suggested that college students who score highly in SPS (ES) are more likely to report higher levels of stress, and a proportion of this stress is likely to be due to feelings of communication apprehension. The researchers suggest that the 'practical implication for college educators is that SPS (ES) is related to college stress, most notably academic stress, and, as such, it is not wholly inappropriate to claim that the possible educational impact of high SPS [ES] on college students may be profoundly negative' (p. 35). As such, they suggest screening incoming students for high SPS (ES) to allow for possible preventative courses of action that could be developed to help students perform at their best, such as smaller classroom sizes or quieter classrooms. The researchers suggest that future research should continue to investigate the ways in

											which ES impacts on achievement and wellbeing in educational settings.
Samsen-Bronsveld, H. E., van der Ven, S. H. G., Bogaerts, S., Greven, C. U., & Bakx, A. W. E. A.	Sensory Processing Sensitivity does not Moderate the Relationship between Need Satisfaction, Motivation, and Behavioural Engagement in Primary School Students	2022	Personality and Individual Differences	195	1-8	<p>This study was part of a larger longitudinal study titled, 'Motivating gifted and non-gifted students in regular primary schools' (Hornstra et al., 2020).</p> <p>Research question: To what extent does SPS (ES) moderate the relationship between primary school students' need satisfaction and motivation, and the relationship between need satisfaction and behavioural engagement?</p> <p>Need satisfaction is suggested to lead to psychological growth, intrinsic motivation, and school engagement (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). Failure to meet these needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, relatedness) leads to extrinsic motivation or amotivation.</p>	<p>Participants completed questionnaires assessing the degree of SPS (ES), need satisfaction (i.e., autonomy, competence, relatedness as described by Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000)), motivation (intrinsic, extrinsic, amotivation), and behavioural engagement (i.e., active participation in lessons and activities in the classroom). Measures included: the Dutch version of the Highly Sensitive Child Scale (HSCS; Pluess et al., 2018; Weyn et al., 2019), the Dutch version of the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale (BPNSFS; Chen et al., 2015; Haerens et al., 2015), the Self-Regulation Questionnaire Academic (Ryan & Connell, 1989), and Nie and Lau's (2009) Behavioural Engagement Scale.</p> <p>Statistical analyses were employed to explore the relationships between variables.</p>	1,253 pupils, aged between 8 and 13 years old (mean age = 10.37), from primary schools in the Netherlands.	<p>Whilst it was hypothesised that students high in SPS (ES) would be more sensitive to the effects of perceived need satisfaction in the school environment, SPS (ES) was not found to moderate the relationship between need satisfaction and motivation. Similarly, SPS (ES) did not moderate the relationship between need satisfaction and behavioural engagement.</p>	<p>The study purely employed self-report measures via questionnaires that may be biased. In addition, the researchers acknowledge that the reliability of the Dutch version of the HSCS (Pluess et al., 2018) is not high, thus results should be interpreted with caution.</p> <p>The study did not explore potentially confounding variables that may have influenced the relationship between SPS (ES), need satisfaction, and motivation.</p>	<p>The researchers concluded that SPS (ES) does not appear to influence the positive or negative effects of the degree of need satisfaction; all students benefit from higher need satisfaction, including those with higher SPS (ES).</p> <p>The findings from this study indicate that what works for the most sensitive individuals, will also work for the least sensitive individuals.</p> <p>Whilst the researchers suggest that SPS (ES) does not appear to influence the positive or negative effects of the degree of need satisfaction, they acknowledge they did not explicitly explore what constitutes a supportive or non-supportive educational environment for students experiencing high ES. They suggest that follow-up, qualitative research could give a different perspective. They suggest that interviews with parents, students, or teachers may give important information on how students with higher SPS (ES) manage this at school.</p>
Strader-Garcia, S. S.	The Impact of an Expressive Arts Group Therapy Process on Anxiety and Self-esteem for Highly Sensitive Adolescents	2012	Unpublished doctoral thesis	-	-	<p>This mixed-methods study explored the impact of an expressive arts group therapy programme amongst secondary school students experiencing high ES. The researcher was interested in exploring any changes resulting from the programme in relation to participant opinions regarding sensitivity, anxiety, and self-esteem.</p> <p>Research question: Does an expressive arts group therapy process influence anxiety and self-esteem for highly sensitive adolescents?</p>	<p>Participants took part in a 4-week expressive arts group therapy programme. Participants completed the HSPS (Highly Sensitive Person Scale; HSPS, Aron & Aron, 1997), State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; T-Anxiety, Spielberger, 1983) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) pre- and post- each individual therapy session.</p> <p>Participants completed additional researcher-developed scales. The 'Environmental Support Scales', comprised of 4-items,</p>	Twenty-eight adolescents aged between 13 and 19 years old, were recruited from two high schools (1 public and 1 'alternative') and a counselling centre in California, USA. Mean ages not stated.	<p>A significant decrease in both state and trait anxiety, and a significant improvement in self-esteem was seen. This was particularly true for participants who had negative opinions regarding sensitivity at the start of the programme.</p> <p>Results showed that participants' opinion toward their sensitivity was related to their anxiety; those with a positive opinion regarding their sensitivity had less anxiety. Similarly, those who indicated a negative parental and school environment had higher anxiety.</p>	<p>The study did not involve a randomised control trial despite exploring the efficacy of an intervention. Thus, it is unclear whether the intervention yields any greater advantages than 'treatment as usual' (i.e., no intervention), and/or whether such effects would be seen amongst those lower in ES (i.e., those in the medium ES range).</p> <p>The study did not explore potentially confounding variables that may have influenced results (e.g., enjoyment of, or motivation toward, art).</p>	<p>The researcher proposed that this study yields a hopeful conclusion regarding the introduction of art therapy programmes for students experiencing high ES; students experiencing high ES who take part in such studies experience positive outcomes in relation to achievement and wellbeing.</p> <p>The researcher advocates for the use of such programmes within secondary schools and counselling centres, particularly amongst students, experiencing high ES, who have negative opinions towards their sensitivity and/or who view their home and/or school environments to be unsupportive. It is further postulated that such interventions could be of particular benefit during stressful times, such as exam preparation seasons.</p>

							<p>measured on a 7-point Likert scale, regarding participants' perceptions of support in their environment (i.e., 'I have a loving relationship with my parents', 'I do not feel supported in my home environment', 'School provides a supportive environment', 'I do not feel valued at school').</p> <p>The 'Opinion Scales', comprised of 2-items, measured on a 7-point Likert scale, regarding participants' opinions about their sensitivity (i.e., 'I consider my sensitivity to be a blessing', 'I consider my high-sensitivity to be a burden').</p> <p>Participants also completed two open-ended qualitative questions at the end of the study asking about the experience of programme (i.e., whether anything changed for them, which aspect was the most important for them).</p> <p>The expressive arts group therapy process involved, for example, drawing out strengths and challenges faced as a highly sensitive adolescent, drawing out the needs of the highly sensitive person, drawing out how an individual can support other highly sensitivity people at school or in the community, and then journaling about the experience of this drawing out (i.e., 'What does [the image] say? What do you say to it?'), and finally discussing the experience with a partner). During the final session, participants created a large mandala together to symbolise their experience.</p>	<p>Participants were selected using HSPS (Aron & Aron, 1997); if they answered 'true' on at least 14 of the statements, they were considered to be highly-sensitive and involve in the study.</p>	<p>The programme was beneficial for changing participants' opinions regarding their views on sensitivity. Participants rated their positive opinion about sensitivity higher at the end of the programme, although this change was not statistically significant.</p> <p>The two open-ended questions were collated to explore results. Participants described different aspects of the programme to be important to them (e.g., not feeling alone, being able to express their feelings, normalising high-sensitivity), and different changes resulting from their participation (e.g., changing perspectives, increasing self-understanding, feeling more positive about themselves).</p>	<p>Qualitative data were not analysed with explicit qualitative data analysis techniques (e.g., Thematic Analysis; Braun & Clarke, 2016) which would have enabled more rigorous insight to be gained.</p> <p>The researcher acknowledges that this study was conducted with a single person conducting the sessions, and the personality of this individual may have influenced the outcomes.</p>	<p>The researcher suggests future research should aim to utilise randomised control trials, exploring the utility of an expressive arts therapy programme amongst different researchers.</p>
Cater, K.	The Benefits and Challenges of	2022	Unpublished doctoral thesis	-	-	A mixed methods design was used to explore the primary	Study 1	Snowball recruitment	Study 1	The researcher acknowledged that the qualitative study focused on	The researcher concluded the successful identification of several positive and

<p>Environmental Sensitivity for Postsecondary Learners: Implications for Education Policy, Practice and Institutions</p>					<p>research question: What impact does ES have on student learning in post-secondary education?</p> <p>Study 1 aimed to develop a self-report tool to measure perceptions of success for tertiary students (i.e., the Perceived Success in the Study Survey, PSISS).</p> <p>Study 2 aimed to explore associations between success-promoting attitudes and strategies identified by the PSISS, and levels of sensitivity as identified by the 12-item Highly Sensitive Person Scale (HSPS-12; Pluess et al., 2020).</p> <p>Study 3 involved 13 participants who scored 14 or above on the HSPS (Aron & Aron, 1997) engaging in semi-structured interviews to explore the narrative around the lived experience of highly sensitive students in under- and post-graduate education.</p>	<p>To develop the PSISS, literature was searched and qualitative feedback was sought from under- and post-graduate students and educators (n = 39) from a broad range of disciplines and levels of study on factors believed to be important for overall student success. Responses were collated and a pilot questionnaire was designed based on these responses. Statistical techniques were employed to build and validate the questionnaire.</p> <p>Study 2 Participants (n = 365) completed the HSPS-12 (Pluess et al., 2020) and the PSISS. Statistical techniques were utilised to explore the relationship between success-promoting attitudes and strategies identified by the PSISS, and sensitivity levels.</p> <p>Study 3 Thirteen participants took part in semi-structured online interviews exploring the lived experience of high-sensitivity in the under- and post-graduate educational context (i.e., ranging from undergraduate to PhD). Participant ages ranged from 22 to 53 years (mean age = 37 years). Data were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019).</p>	<p>was utilised to gather participants via social media (i.e., personal account of the researcher on Facebook). Inclusion criteria were current or past under- and post-graduate students.</p> <p>Participants (n = 225) completed an initial survey consisting of demographic questions and the PSISS. The second survey (n = 365) additionally included the HSPS-12 (Pluess et al., 2020). Participants were invited to leave their email address if they would be happy to participate in future research (i.e., semi-structured interview) (n = 89). These 89 participants were contacted via email with 50 agreeing to complete the HSPS-12 (Pluess et al., 2020) online. Of the 50, 23</p>	<p>The 27-item PSISS demonstrated high internal reliability and validity and offers a robust, comprehensive measure of under- and post-graduate students' success-promoting attitudes, providing an overview of students' overall levels of success-promoting behaviours.</p> <p>Study 2 The results of this study confirmed that there are educational advantages contingent with high-sensitivity (e.g., use of a broad array of metacognitive study and self-care strategies, and the prioritisation of wellbeing and work/life balance). The results also showed that numerous simultaneous study demands can lead to feelings of overwhelm, although participants employed a comprehensive array of metacognitive coping strategies to manage these. The results also demonstrated that high-sensitivity could present challenges for highly sensitive students who can be negatively impacted by aspects of the physical learning environments (e.g., light, noise, indoor environmental pollutants).</p> <p>Study 3 Using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2016), 16 codes were identified under three themes (the benefits of high-sensitivity, the challenges of high-sensitivity, learning community and institutional support) in relation to the experience of ES and experiencing success within education. Benefits of high-sensitivity included seven codes (connection to meaningful learning, ability to work independently, study</p>	<p>post-education students from a variety of countries, where 90% of participants were female. Future research could explore how ES influences the learning experience of less successful students, younger students in specific geographical locations, and across a more representative sample of gender.</p> <p>Only 8 of the 13 participants interviewed were current students, thus retrospective accounts were relied upon, which may reduce trustworthiness of findings to an extent.</p>	<p>negative associations between experiencing high ES and student success. The researcher further acknowledged, however, that many of the challenges associated with the experience of high ES in the educational context are not unique to students experiencing high ES. Yet, students experiencing high ES are said to be more likely to notice and be bothered by certain aspects of the environment (Greven et al., 2019). Since the ability to function in the physical teaching and learning environments is fundamental, and for many, such environments can provide profound challenges, Cater (2022) concluded that what is good for sensitive learners is good for all learners.</p> <p>The researcher argues that since student well-being is linked with success, and educational institutions should provide environments in which all students are able to flourish, educational institutions should alter environments that create challenges for students experiencing high ES.</p> <p>The researcher also advocates for educational environments fostering awareness and understanding around ES, to help inform best practice for educational policy and practice to improve experiences for all students, including those experiencing high ES. Similarly, the researcher further advocates that educational institutions offer support for students experiencing high ES through education about strategies to harness strengths and to help navigate the challenges associated with experiencing high ES in the teaching and learning environment. To enable this, learning institutions should be made aware of the possible advantages and challenges associated with differing levels of ES to enable them to provide learning spaces that provide optimum learning environments for all students, including those with low sensory thresholds. The researcher helpfully makes several practical recommendations for learning institutions, teaching staff, learner support and disability services, and learners themselves who identify as experiencing high ES.</p>
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								<p>scores as highly sensitive and were invited to take part in semi-structured interview. A total of 13 participants did so.</p> <p>management and strategies, self-efficacy, self-care, work-life balance, exams).</p> <p>Challenges of high-sensitivity included four codes (low sensory thresholds (i.e., light, smell, noise, temperature, other people), being observed, propensity for overwhelm, exams).</p> <p>Learning community and institutional support included five codes (institutional and tutor education about ES, feeling part of a learning community, physical environment (i.e., attention being paid to creating a supportive physical environment), tutor and supervisor relationship and support, institutional support (i.e., flexibility re: content delivery, group work etc.).</p> <p>Participants also highlighted the need for under- and post-graduate institutions to provide education about ES, to allow flexibility in teaching delivery, to explore options to support students who may struggle with group-work and presentations, and to provide assessment accommodations.</p>		<p>The researcher acknowledged that this study focused on highly sensitive students and further research could look to investigate the impact of mid and low sensitivity levels on learning, particularly in the light of vantage resistance as noted with psychological interventions (i.e., students with low sensitivity are less likely to respond positively to psychoeducational type interventions (e.g., Kibe et al., 2020; Pluess & Boniwell, 2015; Noncentini et al., 2018).</p>
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Appendix. 5: Summary of Recommendations for Practice (as cited in Cater (2022, p. 162 - 170))

Recommendations									
For Learning Institutions:		For Teaching Staff:		For Learner Support and Disability Services:		For Learners:		For Education and Inclusivity:	
Open-plan classrooms	Open-plan classrooms are noisy and visually distracting. They can lead to impaired cognitive functioning, poor performance, and increased levels of stress and overwhelm. In open-plan classrooms, schedule classes at different times so that there is only one class in session at any given time.	Identifying levels of success-promoting attitudes and strategies	Students vary in their preparedness for study and identifying gaps in their personal levels of success-promoting attitudes and strategies could be useful in building metacognitive coping strategies. Additionally, the identification of gaps may help to mitigate the impact these could have for overall student success. Tutors could utilise the Perceived Success in Study Scale (PSISS; Cater, 2022) to establish possible educational opportunities to provide targeted teaching around identified cohort gaps in success-promoting attitudes and strategies, and to recommend support for individual students for whom there are identified gaps. Student total scores and factor scores on the PSISS could be used to identify strengths and capabilities and to inform the planning of individual success plans and teaching interventions. Cohort total scores and factor scores on the PSISS could be used to identify gaps in success-promoting behaviours to identify areas for inclusion in classroom teaching, and for identifying the potential need for extra tutorial or workshop scaffolding.	Determine levels of sensitivity for students seeking learning or disability assistance	Determine levels of sensitivity for students seeking learning or disability assistance. High levels of sensitivity have been found to be associated with a higher propensity to benefit from interventions than lower levels of sensitivity. Consequently, it may be useful to ascertain levels of sensitivity when students access learning or disability support so as to better plan learning interventions, and to determine if sensory sensitivity is a particular issue. Encourage use of the HSPS-12 to ascertain levels of sensitivity for students who seek learning or disability support.	Identifying gaps in personal capacity	For learners beginning their postsecondary study, or for those who wish to increase personal capacity in success-promoting attitudes and strategies, the PSISS could be useful in the identification of areas for possible improvement. Use total score or factor scores on the PSISS to identify personal gaps in success-promoting capacity. Familiarisation of course requirements to assess skills associated with meeting the requirements and plan to build personal capacity where gaps are identified.	Lack of understanding about sensitivity	In Cater's (2022), and previous research, students experiencing high ES recommend that institutions provide information about ES. Information about ES and the associated institutional support should be added to institutional literature on neurodiversity. All teaching staff should be provided with training on ES. Additional workshops should be offered on ES to support staff and students.
Visual distraction	Visual distraction reduces cognitive functioning and attention. Reduce visual clutter in learning and study spaces. Décor should be	Feedback	Feedback is essential for transitioning students into higher education, for maintaining motivation, and for building confidence and metacognitive capacity. Students experiencing high ES tend to	Possible lack of success-promoting skills	For students who struggle academically, or for those who face learning challenges, identifying gaps in success-promoting capacity could be			Create an inclusive culture	Feeling part of a learning community is essential for fostering feelings of belonging, and this can be difficult for students who feel

	<p>simple and neutral, avoiding bold patterns, colours, and wall decorations. Provide study pods or booths for students who wish to eliminate visual distractions. Where learning spaces are divided by glass barriers, use frosting to visually separate spaces.</p>		<p>plan well in advance and rely heavily on tutor feedback to scaffold them to improved performance. All tutor feedback should be timely, specific, detailed and task and outcome focused. Students need time to process feedback and apply new knowledge prior to the next assignment, so all feedback should be offered well in advance of subsequent tasks and assessments.</p>		<p>useful when planning appropriate interventions. Encourage use of the PSISS to ascertain levels of success-promoting capacity for students who seek learning or disability support.</p>				<p>marginalised in any way. Students experiencing high ES can experience feelings of marginalisation as they are a minority population group. Create a sensitivity-friendly environment modelled on inclusive environments for other minority groups, for example, the rainbow community. Create sensitivity ambassadors, who could be staff or students who understand the implications of sensitivity and are able to offer support to sensitive students. Establish a sensitivity social media group run by students for students. The group could remain virtual, or members may wish to organise social and/or academic physical gatherings. Provide workshops for students experiencing high ES to share experiences, thoughts, and strategies for negotiating their study.</p>
Noise disturbance	<p>Exposure to noise reduces cognitive functioning and increases stress levels. Keep study and social spaces separate. Provide quiet study zones that include individual study booths. Where soundproofing between learning spaces is poor,</p>	Consistency	<p>Consistency in academic task expectations and standards is essential for all students, and of particular importance for students experiencing high ES who may have a tendency to over-think and become overwhelmed by conflicting instructions and expectations. All instructions should be written, clear, and consistent. All tutorial staff should be thoroughly</p>						

	careful consideration needs to be paid to the scheduling of classes to avoid loud sessions influencing adjacent quieter sessions. New-builds or upgrades should adhere to the highest standard of noise-reduction and soundproofing.		familiar with programme guidelines, expectations, and instructions; there needs to be consistent expectations across the entire teaching team.						
Indoor environmental pollutants	Scented products are a major source of indoor environmental pollutants and reduce cognitive functioning, cause brain fog, asthma, nausea, and migraines. These chemicals are commonly used in cleaning products and colognes and perfumes. Provide institutional-wide information about the dangers of indoor environmental pollutants. Instigate an institutional scent-free policy in line with existing institutional smoke-free policies.	Environmental sensitivity education	Students experiencing high ES in Cater's (2022) research felt that it was important for teaching staff to be aware of the benefits and challenges associated with experiencing high ES. Teaching staff should familiarise themselves with the concept of ES and the impact this can have for all learners wherever they sit on the continuum.						
Lighting	Visual stress and difficulties in learning are associated with increased fluorescent lighting and visual media. Where possible, classrooms should have access to natural light. Strip and overhead fluorescent lighting should be avoided where possible. If extra lighting is needed in	Flexibility	Students experiencing high ES can find campus draining and exhausting due to lower sensory thresholds. They can benefit from flexible teaching and learning environments. Relax strict physical lecture attendance criteria and offer remote options where possible and practical. Students attending remotely could be required to sign in and/or provide feedback at the conclusion of the sessions by private						

	learning spaces, wall-mounted ambient lighting is preferable. Overhead lights could be switched off wherever possible and practical, particularly during visual media presentations.		message to the tutor. An added advantage to this option is that some students do not feel comfortable asking questions in class and remote access can provide a platform from which to ask questions privately through the messaging function.						
Seating	Institutional seating is commonly vinyl or plastic, which is often hard and uncomfortable and can cause discomfort and perspiration. For new-builds or upgrades, consider using natural materials that allow the skin to breathe, and provide comfortable padding. Ergonomic design of seating and desk configuration for new-builds and upgrades including accommodation of personal devices. Provide a range of seating options in learning spaces, including standing options.	Availability	Some students experiencing high ES respond much better meeting face-to-face with tutors than relying on email communication, where they may feel that questions remain unanswered. Where possible tutors maintain flexibility in times available for student appointments and encourage students to book individual meetings.						
Low sensory space	Students experiencing high ES are often overwhelmed by a full-day on campus due to sensory overload associated with low sensory thresholds and the presence of other people. Provide a low sensory space on campus where students can retreat to recharge or study quietly. The space should be uncluttered with neutral	Groupwork and presentations	Groupwork and presentations can be highly stressful for students in general, and more so for students experiencing high ES. Only include group work or presentations when they are necessary to meet the stated learning outcomes. Where collaboration and groupwork are not specifically required to meet the stated learning outcomes, provide alternative options for students to demonstrate their learning, for instance, by written assignment.						

	colourings, no patterns, natural lighting, and a variety of comfortable furniture options, plants, and private booths.								
Provide full course information	Students experiencing high ES take longer to process salient information and it is important for them to have all relevant information related to their study well in advance of commencement of courses. Ensure that all course information is available to students at the commencement of study, including a list of lectures and readings, lecture outlines and content, assignment outlines, assignment dates, test and exam dates.	Exams	For students experiencing high ES, exams can cause an extra layer of stress due to low sensory thresholds and distraction in the physical examination environment. Offer the option of sitting exams in private rooms with a supervisor present for students who identify as experiencing high ES.						
		Scheduling of assessments	Students experiencing high ES can become overwhelmed when faced with numerous simultaneous demands, and this includes having assessments due simultaneously or concurrently. Plan assessments so that they are spread evenly throughout the duration of the course to avoid having multiple assessments at one time.						

Research Opportunity



Are you the parent or carer of a young person who self-identifies as experiencing high levels of *environmental sensitivity*?

Do you and your child use language such as *environmental sensitivity* or *highly sensitive* at home?

Is your child aged between 10 and 24 years old?

Does your child currently attend a UK-based educational setting?

If you were able to answer 'yes' to these questions, and would like to participate in a 45 - 60 minute online interview via Microsoft Teams, please contact me on the email address provided for further information. You will also be given the opportunity to invite your child to take part in a similar online interview following your own participation. Please note that I would still be interested to hear from you if you feel that this would not be appropriate for your child, or your child would not like to take part.

Hi, my name is Danni. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at Cardiff University.

As part of my doctoral studies, I am exploring environmental sensitivity within UK-based educational settings.

I am interested in hearing about the educational experiences of young people who feel that they experience high levels of environmental sensitivity. I am also interested in hearing about how parents and carers feel their children are understood, accepted, and supported within educational settings.

Research into environmental sensitivity within the education context is lacking. I hope that this study will be able to provide valuable information to educational professionals on how best to support young people, who high levels of experience environmental sensitivity, in educational settings.



dekerckhoved@cardiff.ac.uk

Research Opportunity



Are you the parent or carer of a young person who self-identifies as experiencing high levels of *environmental sensitivity*?

Do you and your child use language such as *environmental sensitivity* or *highly sensitive* at home?

Is your child aged between 7 and 25 years old?

Does your child currently attend a UK-based educational setting?

If you were able to answer 'yes' to these questions, and would like to participate in a 45 - 60 minute online interview via Microsoft Teams, please contact me on the email address provided for further information. You will also be given the opportunity to invite your child to take part in a similar online interview following your own participation. Please note that I would still be interested to hear from you if you feel that this would not be appropriate for your child, or your child would not like to take part.

Hi, my name is Danni. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at Cardiff University.

As part of my doctoral studies, I am exploring environmental sensitivity within UK-based educational settings.

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Research into environmental sensitivity within the education context is lacking. I hope that this study will be able to provide valuable information to educational professionals on how best to support young people, who experience high levels of environmental sensitivity, in educational settings.



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Appendix. 7: Interview Guide for Parents/Carers, Including Rationale

**** Please note a separate document containing parent/carer interview transcripts has been attached with thesis submission. Page numbers have been assigned which correspond to selected extracts in [Part Two, Section 4.4](#). ****

Welcome and Introduction

- General rapport building and thanking the participant for their interest in the study.
- I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at Cardiff University, and my doctoral thesis is around exploring the experience of high ES in educational contexts, from the perspective of CYP themselves and their parents/carers. I have spent a lot of time exploring the research into ES and have found no studies that have looked into the experience of ES within UK-based educational contexts, nor studies that have included both CYP and parent/carer voice. Of the research that has been conducted, there are suggestions that CYP who experience high ES can flourish and perform exceptionally well when they are in what are called 'supportive' educational environments. However, when they are in less supportive educational environments, they are said to experience particularly negative outcomes. There is a lack of clarity around what these 'supportive' educational environments look like, and so I am hoping that by speaking to CYP who self-identify as experiencing high ES, and their parents/carers, we can learn more about what this 'supportive' educational environment looks like to inform future practice within schools.
- Do you have any questions, perhaps coming up from the Information Sheet or Consent Form, that you would like to ask before we begin?
- Please can I remind you that I will be recording our conversation so that I can re-play the video recording and transcribe, or write out, your responses. Can I check that you are still consenting for this to happen?
- Everything you share with me will be confidential and, once your video recording has been re-played and transcribed 24-hours after this interview, I will delete the recording and you will be identified by a participant number only. Any clarifying information you provide, so names of schools or people, will be omitted from the transcript. This means that your participation will also be anonymous once the recording is deleted.
- Once the interview has finished, you will have up to 24-hours to ask for your data to be removed from the study, and I will do this without question, or you having to give any reason.
- I am hoping that this interview will be more of a conversation between the two of us. I have a few very loose topics, or questions, that I hope we can talk to. If there are any questions I ask which don't make sense, please feel free to ask for clarification or for me to explain in a different way. It's important to say that I don't want you to try and look for the perfect model answer. I am just interested to hear your experience of your child's education, and so nothing you say can be wrong. Also, please take as much thinking time as you need during the conversation. If you'd like to

make notes before answering to organise your thoughts, turn the camera off, or whatever will make you feel most comfortable, please don't hesitate to do so.

- Just a final reminder that you can, at any point, ask me to stop our conversation and I will do.
- Researcher to check any queries around the functions of Teams and note that, should the Wi-Fi drop out, the researcher will restart the meeting and invite the participant back in.
- Are there any final questions? Are you happy to go ahead and for me to start to record our discussion?

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Main Question	Prompts and Probes	Rationale
<p>To start with, may I ask you what you understand by the term 'environmental sensitivity' or 'highly sensitive'?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this language you use with your child? • If we look at the Highly Sensitive Child Scale (HSCS-12) created in 2018 by Pluess and colleagues, do you notice any of these things in your child? [Follow-up relating to these areas to explore in more depth those that relate to child]. 	<p>This question aimed to utilise qualitative methods to ensure that the researcher and participant were discussing the same notion of ES. The HSCS-12 is validated for use amongst 8- to 19-year-olds, however the qualitative nature of the research enabled the researcher to adapt and/or explain statements in developmentally appropriate ways, enabling use amongst the 7- to 25-age range. This question also aimed to ensure that the CYP self-identified as experiencing high ES, by exploring with the parent/carer how such language was utilised with their child. This question further enabled the researcher to become aware of the participants preferred language (e.g., ES, highly sensitive) and use this throughout the remainder of the interview (i.e., [...]).</p>

<p>What do you feel being [high in ES] looks like for your child day-to-day (e.g., at home)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me about any strengths or benefits you feel being [high in ES] brings your child? • Can you tell me about any difficulties you feel being [high in ES] brings your child? (Thinking around Behaviours, Emotions, Relationships, Academics). 	<p>This question aimed to further explore whether the researcher and participant were discussing the same notion of ES, prior to moving into discussing being [high in ES] at school. This also gave the parent/carer participant time to ‘warm up’ to the interview, and discuss a topic they were likely to know well (i.e., how their child presents at home).</p>
<p>If we think about the educational environment next, how do you feel your child experiences being [high in ES] at [education setting]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does being [high in ES] at [education setting] bring any particular advantages or disadvantages? • Is there anything you feel that [education setting] should be doing more of, or less of, to help your child experience more of the advantages and less of the disadvantages you discussed? 	<p>This question aimed to explore parent/carer perspectives around how they felt their child experienced school generally. This question further aimed to shed light on how parents/carers felt educational settings may better promote understanding and support for children experiencing high ES.</p>
<p>If we think about the people in your child’s [education setting], how do you feel other people (e.g., school-based staff members) perceive your child?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that their [high ES] is understood and/or accepted? • Is there anything you feel that specific individuals within the educational environment should be doing more of, or less of, to support your child’s educational experience? 	<p>This question aimed to further explore parent/carer perspectives around how they felt their child experienced school, specifically around their relationships with school-based staff members. This question further aimed to shed light on how parents/carers felt educational settings may better promote understanding and support for children experiencing high ES.</p>

<p>If we think about summarising what we have just spoken about, I'm wondering to what extent you feel that your child is generally supported with their [high ES] in [education setting]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways is your child supported? • In what ways is your child not supported? • Why do you feel this is? Can you tell me more about this? • What else do you feel could be done to support your child in [education setting]? • Have you come across any resources you feel educational settings would benefit from using in relation to [high ES]? 	<p>This open question aimed to explore how parents/carers felt their child was generally supported at school, and how they felt that this could be improved. The open nature of this question aimed to enable participants to focus on aspects most pertinent to them.</p>
<p>There are different labels for sensitivity (e.g., 'highly sensitive', 'environmental sensitivity'). You mentioned using some of these terms with your child. I was wondering whether you feel language such as high ES or 'highly sensitive' are/would be helpful in your child's [education setting]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you heard these terms used in your child's [educational setting]? • Why do you think this might (not) be? • What advantages and disadvantages do you see with this 'labelling'? 	<p>This question aimed to explore parents/carers' perspectives on the terms 'environmental sensitivity' and 'highly sensitive', and the utility in such 'labels' being used at school.</p>
<p>I am wondering whether you have had any contact with support agencies for your child's [high ES] within either the home or educational context? (e.g., EPs,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact has this had, if any? • Would you have liked to have this support, if you didn't have access to it? 	<p>This question aimed to explore potential support experienced by young people with high ES, and further gauge levels of awareness at school. Participants were also able to expand on any types of support services they felt that their child required in relation to their experience of</p>

advisory teachers, parental support groups).	[high ES], providing insight into if/how parents/carers felt that they needed to advocate for their child.
Before we finish, is there anything that we haven't touched upon that you feel like you would like to add, or ask me, in relation to the experience of [high ES] within the education environment?	This question gave the participant an opportunity to add anything that they felt they would like to share, and to ask questions.
This research is also looking at the views of CYP themselves who self-identify as experiencing [high ES]. Would your child be interested in taking part in this study?	This question was asked to those participants who had not yet discussed the participation of their child. This question was for the purpose of recruitment.

Conclusion

- Thank the participant for their time and views.
- Please can I remind you that, if you would like to remove any of your data from the study, you may contact me up to 24-hours from now and I will remove part, or all, of your data, without you needing to give any reason. After this time, your data will have been transcribed, or written out, and this will no longer be possible as you will be identified by a participant number only and your participation will be anonymous. At the moment, are you still happy for this data to be included in the study?
- Please can I also remind you that I will be deleting this video recording once I have re-played it and transcribed it.
- Once the study is complete, I will be posting a poster version of the findings on the social media groups that you saw the initial recruitment poster on. This will outline the views of all the CYP and their parents/carers who took part in interviews, where I am hoping to create some kind of information for schools on how to create the optimal learning environment for CYP who experience [high ES].

-
- I will send you a debrief form tomorrow. This will detail the study that you have been involved with, what will happen to your data, where you can find the findings once it is complete, and it also gives my details and my supervisors details if you need to contact either of us about the research or any difficulties or tensions that it might have brought up.
 - Please may I ask whether there is anything you wish to ask, or discuss at this point in time?
 - Thank the participant again for their time and views.
-

Appendix. 8: Interview Guide for CYP, Including Rationale

**** Please note a separate document containing child interview transcripts has been attached with thesis submission. Page numbers have been assigned which correspond to selected extracts in [Part Two, Section 4.3](#). ****

Welcome and Introduction

- General rapport building and thanking the participant for their interest in the study.
- I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at Cardiff University, and I am doing some research looking into how CYP experience high-sensitivity at school. I've spoken to your parent to see what they think about this, and now I am hoping that we can have a similar conversation so that I can hear about what you think. Before I go any further, please can I check that you are still happy to speak to me today and that you feel like this is something that sounds like what you experience at the moment?
- Before we start, I want to give you a little recap about what you read on the Information Sheet that I sent to your parent/carer so you know what the study is looking at, and you can make sure it is something that you want to take part in. Environmental sensitivity is about how we respond to our environment. Everybody has a different level of response to the environment – some people might respond more strongly than others and these people have what we would call high ES. These people might notice small changes in the environment more easily, or they might find it easier to concentrate when there is less going on around them. They often notice things like strong smells and itchy fabrics on clothes, and can be very good at understanding what other people might be feeling or thinking. Research that has been conducted tells us that people who have high ES can do really well when the environment supports their sensitivity, but when the environment isn't right for them, they can have a bit of a hard time. My research is looking at what makes the environment at school a supportive environment; what helps CYP, who experience high ES, to do well at school and feel happy in their learning. Is there anything there that you would like me to explain a little better for you? Do you have any questions about the study so far? Do you think that this sounds like you?
- **I also need to let you know that whilst anything you tell me will be kept confidential and anonymous (meaning that what you share with me will not be attached to your name), if you do tell me anything that suggests that you are at risk of harm then I will have to pass that information on to somebody else to keep you safe. Does that make sense?**
- Are you still happy to go ahead and chat with me about your sensitivity? I will ask you later on how you would like me to refer to this idea of sensitivity. We all have different preferences for the language we like to be used and I want to make sure I'm using language that you feel comfortable with.

- Please can I remind you that I will be video recording our conversation so that I can re-play the video recording and transcribe, or write out, what you've told me later. Everything you tell me is really important and I don't want to miss anything! Are you happy for me to record our conversation?
- It's important that I tell you that everything you share with me will be confidential and, once your video recording has been re-played and I have written out everything you have told me, I will delete the video recording. After this you will be identified by a participant number, and not your name, so this means that your participation in the study is going to be anonymous once the video recording is deleted. That means that nobody will know what you told me.
- Once the interview has finished, you will have up to 24-hours to ask for anything you've said to be taken out of the study. If you'd like to do this, just let your parent/carer know and I will sort this out for you.
- When we are having our conversation, if I ask you something and I haven't explained it well enough, or it doesn't quite make sense, you can ask me to explain it differently, that's absolutely fine. The other thing I wanted to tell you before we start is that I am really just interested in hearing what you think about the questions I ask. So, whatever you tell me will be the right answer. I know you probably hear in school a lot that there is no right or wrong answer, but often there is a right and wrong answer! But here there really isn't, whatever you think is the right answer and that's what I really want to hear about. I might also ask you to 'tell me a little bit more' about some things. That won't be because you've given me any wrong answers, but just because I will be really interested in what you are saying and will want to hear you talk about it a bit more. And the last thing to say is that everyone is different with how they think about and process information, so some people can be asked a question and they know what they want to say right away, but other people might need a bit more thinking time. So, when I ask you a question, you don't need to reply right away, you can have some thinking time if you'd like, you can write something down before you tell me about it, you can turn your camera off if you want to have a think in peace, or you can reply straight away, whatever you would like to do. Does that sound OK?
- Just a final reminder that you can, at any point, ask me to stop our conversation and I will do.
- Researcher to check any queries around the functions of Teams and note that, should the Wi-Fi drop out, the researcher will restart the meeting and invite the participant back in.
- Are there any final questions? Are you happy to go ahead and for me to start to record our discussion?

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Main Question	Prompts and Probes	Rationale
<p>To start with, I'm wondering if you've heard the phrase 'environmental sensitivity' or 'highly sensitive'?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this something you talk about with your parent/carer? • Let's have a look at the Highly Sensitive Child Scale (HSCS-12). Which parts sound like you? Which parts don't sound like you? 	<p>This question aimed to utilise qualitative methods to ensure that the researcher and participant were discussing the same notion of ES. The HSCS-12 is validated for use amongst 8- to 19-year-olds, however the qualitative nature of the research enabled the researcher to adapt and/or explain statements in developmentally appropriate ways, enabling use amongst the 7- to 25-age range. This question also aimed to ensure that the CYP self-identified as experiencing high ES, by exploring the language utilised by the child and family. This question further enabled the researcher to become aware of the participants preferred language (e.g., ES, highly sensitive) and use this throughout the remainder of the interview (i.e., [...]). Use of the HSCS-12 also gave the CYP time to 'warm up' to the interview, since screen sharing and discussion of the HSCS-12 took the direct focus away from the researcher-CYP interaction.</p>

<p>If we think about your time at [education setting], how do you think your [high ES] helps you?</p> <p>And, what about how your [high ES] might make things harder for you at [education setting]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking around behaviours, emotions, relationships, and academics. 	<p>This question aimed to explore CYP perspectives around any strengths or difficulties they experienced at school, which they attributed to their [high ES].</p>
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<p>Let's think about your teachers (and other school-based staff) at [education setting]. Do you think your teachers (and other school-based staff) know about/are aware of your [high ES]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do they notice? • What don't they notice? • Do you think your teachers (and other school-based staff) understand about your [high ES]? How do you know this? 	<p>This question aimed to further explore CYP perspectives around their experience of school. Specifically, how they felt school-based staff members related to them, and whether or not they were aware of/sensitive to their experience of [high ES]. This question further enabled insight to be gained regarding the CYP's sense of inclusion and belonging to the school environment.</p>
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<p>What kinds of things do your teachers (and other school-based staff) do to help you with your [high ES] at school?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything else that teachers (or other school-based staff) could do to make things easier for you at [education setting]? • If you could go to the perfect [education setting], what would the teachers be like? • What would the other CYP be like? • What would the work be like? • What would break times be like? • Is there anything else that the perfect [education setting] would have, or not have? 	<p>This question aimed to explore how CYP felt that they were supported at school by school-based staff members, and how this could be improved. The researcher drew on principles from the Ideal School (Moran, 2001) to explore these potential improvements.</p>
<p>Let's think about the other CYP at [education setting]. Do you think they know about/are aware of your [high ES]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think they understand about it, if anything? • How do you know this? • Is there anything you would like the other CYP to do more of, or less of, to help you with your [high ES] at [education setting]? 	<p>This question aimed to further explore CYP perspectives around their experience of school. Specifically, how they felt their peers related to them, and whether or not they were aware of/sensitive to their experience of [high ES]. This question further enabled insight to be gained regarding the CYP's sense of inclusion and belonging to the school environment.</p>
<p>This is quite a big question, so feel free to take some thinking time. If there was one thing you wish your teachers knew and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why? • What would that change for you? 	<p>This question utilised solution-focused thinking/miracle questioning, as cited in Treisman's Therapeutic Treasure Deck (2017), to explore CYP views regarding an ideal world</p>

<p>understood about you, what would it be? And what about the other children at [education setting]? If there was one thing you wish they knew and understood about you, what would it be?</p>		<p>in terms of how they are related to by others. This question further enabled insight to be gained regarding the CYP's sense of inclusion and belonging to the school environment.</p>
<p>Would you like other children and staff to learn about [high ES]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why? Why not? • What would this change for you? • Would it be helpful for other people to use certain language around this (e.g., ES, highly sensitive)? 	<p>This question was added following spending additional time with the first two participants from each participant group. Parent/carer participants were asked this question and, following additional time with child participants, it felt important to gain CYP voice on this area also, given that children often alluded to school-based staff and peers being unaware of ES. This question further provided insight into CYP views on 'labelling'.</p>
<p>I'm wondering about any other people/professionals you might have talked to about your [high ES]. Has anyone spoken to you about it before, apart from your parent/carer?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been helpful? • What has been unhelpful? 	<p>This question aimed to explore potential support experienced by CYP with high ES, and further gauge levels of awareness at school.</p>
<p>Before we finish, is there anything that we haven't talked about that you would like to add? Or anything that you would like to ask me?</p>		<p>This question gave the participant an opportunity to add anything that they felt they would like to share, and to ask questions.</p>

Conclusion

- Thank the participant for their time and views.
 - Please can I remind you that if you would like to remove anything that you have shared with me from the study, you will need to tell your parent/carer, who can then contact me, and I will remove that part, or all, of what you have shared. You will need to do this within the next 24-hours, so by this time tomorrow, because after that time I will have written up what you told me and given you a participant number. This means that I won't be able to find which information was yours because your name won't be attached to anything. Are you still happy for everything you've said to be included in the study at the moment?
 - Please can I also remind you that I will be deleting this video recording once I have re-played it and written out what you told me.
 - Once the study is complete, I will be posting a poster version of the findings on the social media groups that your parent/carer saw the initial recruitment poster on. You can ask your parent/carer to share this with you if you would like to see what other CYP, and their parents/carers, had to tell me. I am also hoping to create some information for schools on how to support CYP who experience high ES, and so you might be interested in seeing this too.
 - I will send you a debrief form tomorrow. This will tell you about the study that you have been involved with, what will happen to the information you shared with me today, where you can find the findings once it is complete, and it also gives my details and my supervisors details if your parent/carer and/or you want to contact us for anything to do with the research.
 - Have you got any questions for me?
 - Thank the participant again for their time and views.
-

Appendix. 9: Alterations to Interview Guides

Viewpoint	Alterations
Parent/Carer 1	<p>At the beginning of the interview, provide information for parents/carers similar to that which was provided to child participants (i.e., there are no right or wrong answers; don't feel you must give the 'perfect' answer; take as much thinking time as you need; feel free to jot things down before answering my question if this is helpful in organising your thoughts).</p> <p>No changes suggested regarding clarity and ordering of questions. No changes suggested regarding provision of additional time to provide adequate responses.</p>
Parent/Carer 2	<p>No changes suggested regarding clarity and ordering of questions. No changes suggested regarding provision of additional time to provide adequate responses.</p>
Child 1	<p>No changes suggested regarding clarity and ordering of questions. No changes suggested regarding provision of additional time to provide adequate responses.</p>
Child 2	<p>No changes suggested regarding clarity and ordering of questions. No changes suggested regarding provision of additional time to provide adequate responses.</p>
Researcher	<p>Following additional time spent with the first two participants in each participant group, it felt important to include the additional question, "Would you like other children and staff to learn about sensitivity?" in the CYP interview guide, since parents/carers spent a significant amount of time discussing this and pupil voice on this matter also felt of high importance.</p>

Appendix. 10: The Highly Sensitive Child Scale (HSCS-12, Pluess et al., 2018)

1. I notice when small things have changed in my environment.
2. Loud noises make me feel uncomfortable.
3. I love nice smells.
4. I get nervous when I have a lot to do in a little time.
5. Some music can make me really happy.
6. I am annoyed when people try to get me to do too many things at once.
7. I don't like watching TV programmes that have a lot of violence in them.
8. I find it unpleasant to have a lot going on at once.
9. I don't like it when things change in my life.
10. I love nice tastes.
11. I don't like loud noises.
12. When someone observes me, I get nervous. This makes me perform worse than normal.

Appendix. 11: Gatekeeper Letter, July – August 2022 & September 2022 Revisions



School of Psychology, Cardiff University



Date: XX.XX.XXXX

Dear [ADMINISTRATOR NAME]

I am a Year 2 Trainee Educational Psychologist studying at Cardiff University. I am writing to you about research I am undertaking as part of my doctoral training.

I am hoping to speak with parents/carers of children and young people (aged between 10- and 25-years old) who self-identify as experiencing high levels of environmental sensitivity. I am interested to hear about how these children and young people experience their time in UK educational settings. I am also interested to find out how parents/carers feel that their child/ren are understood and supported within these UK educational settings.

I have included the recruitment poster detailing the research process for your viewing. I am writing to ask for your permission to post this research recruitment poster on the social media page 'NAME' you manage. As stated in the recruitment poster, potential participants would be required to email me at dekerckhoved@cardiff.ac.uk to obtain an information sheet and consent form. I would then arrange a mutually convenient time to engage in a semi-structured interview with participants

Once the research is complete, I will be happy to share an accessible poster version of the findings and analysis back on your page, if this is something you feel would be helpful amongst your Facebook community.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. Please let me know if you have any questions at all.

Kind regards,

Danielle de Kerckhove.

Danielle de Kerckhove

Trainee Educational Psychologist



School of Psychology, Cardiff University



Date: XX.XX.XXXX

Dear [ADMINISTRATOR NAME]

I am a Year 2 Trainee Educational Psychologist studying at Cardiff University. I am writing to you about research I am undertaking as part of my doctoral training.

I am hoping to speak with parents/carers of children and young people (aged between 7- and 25-years old) who self-identify as experiencing high levels of environmental sensitivity. I am interested to hear about how these children and young people experience their time in UK educational settings. I am also interested to find out how parents/carers feel that their child/ren are understood and supported within these UK educational settings.

I have included the recruitment poster detailing the research process for your viewing. I am writing to ask for your permission to post this research recruitment poster on the social media page 'NAME' you manage. As stated in the recruitment poster, potential participants would be required to email me at dekerckhoved@cardiff.ac.uk to obtain an information sheet and consent form. I would then arrange a mutually convenient time to engage in a semi-structured interview with participants.

Once the research is complete, I will be happy to share an accessible poster version of the findings and analysis back on your page, if this is something you feel would be helpful amongst your Facebook community.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. Please let me know if you have any questions at all.

Kind regards,

Danielle de Kerckhove.

Danielle de Kerckhove

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix. 12: Social Media Groups Participants Recruited From

Social Media Group	Approval Obtained to post Recruitment Poster?	Number of Participants Recruited (i.e., via initial parent/carer interest)
Supporting the Highly Sensitive Child	Yes	6 parents/carers 5 children
Highly Sensitive Children – Closed Group for Parents Speak Up For Your Kid	No	0
Highly Sensitive Parents (Advice, Support, Inspiration)	No	0
Highly Sensitive Persons Group UK	No	0
Highly Sensitive Person/HSP and Empath Support Group	Yes	1 parent/carer 1 child
Highly Sensitive People Support Group	No	0
The Centre for Highly Sensitive People	Yes	0
Highly Sensitive People	Yes	0
Highly Sensitive Person	Yes	0
Happy Sensitive Kids	Yes	1 parent/carer



School of Psychology, Cardiff University



Participant Information Sheet

Title of Research: Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings: Experiences and Perceptions of Children, Young People and their Parents.

You are invited to participate in a research study. Please take the time to read the following information and decide if you would like to participate.

If you have any questions regarding the research study, please contact the researcher, Danni de Kerckhove, on DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of children and young people (aged between 10- and 25-years old) with high levels of environmental sensitivity (ES) in UK educational settings. I hope to speak with both parents/carers and with children and young people themselves. I am interested to hear how parents/carers feel that their child/ren are understood and supported in educational settings. I am also interested to learn about how children and young people themselves experience their educational setting, for example, how their high ES affects them day-to-day, and how they may like to be better supported or understood within their educational setting. I hope that this study will be able to provide educational professionals with further information on how best to promote inclusion and equity for students who experience high levels of ES.

Do I have to take part?

I hope to gain as much information as possible on how children and young people (aged between 10- and 25-years old) with high levels of ES are experiencing UK educational settings. However, participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You do not have to take part.

If you do decide you would like to take part, you will need to complete an electronic informed consent form and return it to dekerckhoved@cardiff.ac.uk. I will then be able to make contact with you to arrange a semi-structured online interview, lasting between 45 – 60 minutes.

If you participate, you will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, including following your participation. At the end of your interview, you will be asked whether you still consent for your responses to be included in the study. Please note that it will not be possible to remove your responses from the study after this point (i.e., 24 hours later) as your responses

will have been transcribed (*written out*) and will no longer be traceable back to you as they will be identifiable only by a participant number.

What will I have to do?

If you decide that you would like to take part in this study, you will be asked to contact the researcher at dekerckhoved@cardiff.ac.uk to obtain an information sheet and consent form. You will need to return your completed electronic informed consent form to the researcher via email. The researcher will then arrange a mutually convenient time for the 45 – 60-minute semi-structured online interview. The researcher is only able to interview a maximum of 8 parent/carer participants. This will be done on a first come, first served basis. The interview will take place via Microsoft Teams. The interview will be recorded to enable the researcher to transcribe (*write out*) your responses after the interview ends. Only the researcher will have access to this recording, and it will be stored on the researcher's secure password protected computer. The recording will be deleted following transcription (i.e., 24 hours later).

You will also be asked if your child would like to take part in a subsequent interview and give their views. The researcher will provide you with an information sheet and consent form for your child if you feel that they would be interested. This will need to be emailed back to the researcher and a convenient time to meet for a 45 – 60-minute semi-structured online interview can then be arranged.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be identified by a participant number and not by your name. Once the researcher has transcribed (*written out*) your responses, your interview recording will be deleted (i.e., 24 hours later). This means that your responses will be anonymous.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will make up part of the researcher's doctoral thesis. This may be published in relevant academic journals. The researcher will also create an academic research poster alongside an infographic poster. The infographic poster will be available for your viewing following completion. The researcher will post a copy of this on the social media group from which participants were recruited. All participant responses will be anonymous.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any questions relating to the research, or the research brings up any difficulties or tensions for you, you may contact the researcher, Danni de Kerckhove, or research supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner, at Cardiff University. All contact details are provided below.

Contact Details:

- ❖ Researcher, Danni de Kerckhove: DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk
- ❖ Research Supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner: Stennerr@cardiff.ac.uk

Any complaints may be made to:

Secretary of the Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT Tel: 02920870707 Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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School of Psychology, Cardiff University



Participant Information Sheet

Title of Research: Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings: Experiences and Perceptions of Children, Young People and their Parents.

You have been invited to participate in a research study. Please take the time to read this information and decide if you would like to take part.

If you have any questions, you can contact the researcher, Danni de Kerckhove, on DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk.

What is environmental sensitivity?

Environmental sensitivity is about how we respond to our environment. Everybody has a different level of response to the environment. Some people might respond more strongly to the environment than others. These people might notice small changes in the environment, or find it difficult to concentrate with loud noises or strong smells around. These people might also find it easier to work in calmer, quieter classrooms and be very good at understanding what other people are thinking and feeling. People who experience high environmental sensitivity are often deep thinkers who have strong feelings and emotions. They can like things to be done in certain ways and find change difficult at times.

What is this study exploring?

This study is exploring the experiences of children and young people who experience environmental sensitivity. I am interested in talking to children and young people aged between 10- and 25-years old who attend a primary or secondary school, sixth form, college, or university in the UK.

I am interested in hearing about how children and young people who experience high environmental sensitivity experience their time within education.

I am also interested to learn about how parents and carers of these children and young people feel about their children's time within education.

I hope that information from this study will help us learn more about how we can make educational settings a better place for children and young people who experience high levels of environmental sensitivity.

Why have I been asked to take part in this study?

You have been asked to take part in this study because your parent/carer took part in an interview with me about environmental sensitivity and thought that you might like to share your views too.

Do I have to take part?

No! This study is voluntary which means that it is your choice. You do not have to take part.

Who is the researcher?



My name is Danni de Kerckhove. Here is a photo of me.

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at Cardiff University. I work with children and young people to find out about what they are good at, what might be more difficult for them, and what their dreams are for the future. I use this information to work with lots of different people, such as families and teachers, to try and help children and young people make the changes that they want to see in their lives.

What will I have to do if I take part in this study?

If you do decide to take part in this study, we can arrange a time to have a conversation online. This will happen using Microsoft Teams. You can choose to have a voice call or a video call. It is completely up to you.

The conversation will be recorded on Microsoft Teams. This is so your answers can be written up after the conversation ends. The recording will be saved on my computer. When the conversation has been typed up, I will delete the recording. Your name will not be included in any of the writing. Everything that you say will be linked to a participant number and not your name. This means that no one will know what information you shared with me.

You will also need to sign and return a consent form to me to take part. I am only able to have a conversation with up to 8 children and young people. I will do this on a first come, first served basis.

What will happen to the results of this study?

I will use the results from this study to write my doctoral thesis. This might be published for other people to read. I will also make a poster of the results which will be shared on the social media site that your parent/carer read about the study on.

What if there is a problem?

If there are any problems or questions you can contact me or my research supervisor on the details at the bottom of this page.

Contact Details:

- ❖ Researcher, Danni de Kerckhove: DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk
- ❖ Research Supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner: Stennerr@cardiff.ac.uk

Any complaints may be made to:

Secretary of the Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT Tel: 02920870707 Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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the Information Commissioner's Office should you wish to complain, can be found at the following: <https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/supporting-your-work/manage-use-and-protect-data/data-protection>



School of Psychology, Cardiff University



Participant Information Sheet

Title of Research: Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings: Experiences and Perceptions of Children, Young People and their Parents.

You are invited to participate in a research study. Please take the time to read the following information and decide if you would like to participate.

If you have any questions regarding the research study, please contact the researcher, Danni de Kerckhove, on DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of children and young people (aged between 7- and 25-years old) with high levels of environmental sensitivity (ES) in UK educational settings. I hope to speak with both parents/carers and with children and young people themselves. I am interested to hear how parents/carers feel that their child/ren are understood and supported in educational settings. I am also interested to learn about how children and young people themselves experience their educational setting, for example, how their high ES affects them day-to-day, and how they may like to be better supported or understood within their educational setting. I hope that this study will be able to provide educational professionals with further information on how best to promote inclusion and equity for students who experience high levels of ES.

Do I have to take part?

I hope to gain as much information as possible on how children and young people (aged between 7- and 25-years old) with high levels of ES are experiencing UK educational settings. However, participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You do not have to take part.

If you do decide you would like to take part, you will need to complete an electronic informed consent form and return it to dekerckhoved@cardiff.ac.uk. I will then be able to make contact with you to arrange a semi-structured online interview, lasting between 45 – 60-minutes.

If you participate, you will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, including following your participation. At the end of your interview, you will be asked whether you still consent for your responses to be included in the study. Please note that it will not be possible to remove your responses from the study after this point (i.e., 24 hours later) as your responses will have been transcribed (*written out*) and will no longer be traceable back to you as they will be identifiable only by a participant number.

What will I have to do?

If you decide that you would like to take part in this study, you will be asked to contact the researcher at dekerckhoved@cardiff.ac.uk to obtain an information sheet and consent form.

You will need to return your completed electronic informed consent form to the researcher via email. The researcher will then arrange a mutually convenient time for the 45 – 60-minute semi-structured online interview. The researcher is only able to interview a maximum of 8 parent/carer participants. This will be done on a first come, first served basis. The interview will take place via Microsoft Teams. The interview will be recorded to enable the researcher to transcribe (*write out*) your responses after the interview ends. Only the researcher will have access to this recording, and it will be stored on the researcher's secure password protected computer. The recording will be deleted following transcription (i.e., 24 hours later).

You will also be asked if your child would like to take part in a subsequent interview and give their views. The researcher will provide you with an information sheet and consent form for your child if you feel that they would be interested. This will need to be emailed back to the researcher and a convenient time to meet for a 45 – 60-minute semi-structured online interview can then be arranged.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be identified by a participant number and not by your name. Once the researcher has transcribed (*written out*) your responses, your interview recording will be deleted (i.e., 24 hours later). This means that your responses will be anonymous.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will make up part of the researcher's doctoral thesis. This may be published in relevant academic journals. The researcher will also create an academic research poster alongside an infographic poster. The infographic poster will be available for your viewing following completion. The researcher will post a copy of this on the social media group from which participants were recruited. All participant responses will be anonymous.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any questions relating to the research, or the research brings up any difficulties or tensions for you, you may contact the researcher, Danni de Kerckhove, or research supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner, at Cardiff University. All contact details are provided below.

Contact Details:

- ❖ Researcher, Danni de Kerckhove: DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk
- ❖ Research Supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner: Stennerr@cardiff.ac.uk

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School of Psychology, Cardiff University



Participant Information Sheet

Title of Research: Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings: Experiences and Perceptions of Children, Young People and their Parents.

You have been invited to participate in a research study. Please take the time to read this information and decide if you would like to take part.

If you have any questions, you can contact the researcher, Danni de Kerckhove, on DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk.

What is environmental sensitivity?

Environmental sensitivity is about how we respond to our environment. Everybody has a different level of response to the environment. Some people might respond more strongly to the environment than others. These people might notice small changes in the environment, or find it difficult to concentrate with loud noises or strong smells around. These people might also find it easier to work in calmer, quieter classrooms and be very good at understanding what other people are thinking and feeling. People who experience environmental sensitivity are often deep thinkers who have strong feelings and emotions. They can like things to be done in certain ways and find change difficult at times.

What is this study exploring?

This study is exploring the experiences of children and young people who experience high environmental sensitivity. I am interested in talking to children and young people aged between 7- and 25-years old who attend a primary or secondary school, sixth form, college, or university in the UK.

I am interested in hearing about how children and young people who experience high environmental sensitivity experience their time within education.

I am also interested to learn about how parents and carers of these children and young people feel about their children's time within education.

I hope that information from this study will help us learn more about how we can make educational settings a better place for children and young people who have experience high environmental sensitivity.

Why have I been asked to take part in this study?

You have been asked to take part in this study because your parent/carer took part in an interview with me about environmental sensitivity and thought that you might like to share your views too.

Do I have to take part?

No! This study is voluntary which means that it is your choice. You do not have to take part.

Who is the researcher?



My name is Danni de Kerckhove. Here is a photo of me.

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at Cardiff University. I work with children and young people to find out about what they are good at, what might be more difficult for them, and what their dreams are for the future. I use this information to work with lots of different people, such as families and teachers, to try and help children and young people make the changes that they want to see in their lives.

What will I have to do if I take part in this study?

If you do decide to take part in this study, we can arrange a time to have a conversation online. This will happen using Microsoft Teams. You can choose to have a voice call or a video call. It is completely up to you.

The conversation will be recorded on Microsoft Teams. This is so your answers can be written up after the conversation ends. The recording will be saved on my computer. When the conversation has been typed up, I will delete the recording. Your name will not be included in any of the writing. Everything that you say will be linked to a participant number and not your name. This means that no one will know what information you shared with me.

You will also need to sign and return a consent form to me to take part. I am only able to have a conversation with up to 8 children and young people. I will do this on a first come, first served basis.

What will happen to the results of this study?

I will use the results from this study to write my doctoral thesis. This might be published for other people to read. I will also make a poster of the results which will be shared on the social media site that your parent/carer read about the study on.

What if there is a problem?

If there are any problems or questions you can contact me or my research supervisor on the details at the bottom of this page. You can use your parent/carer's email address if you want to.

Contact Details:

- ❖ Researcher, Danni de Kerckhove: DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk
- ❖ Research Supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner: Stenner@cardiff.ac.uk

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the Information Commissioner's Office should you wish to complain, can be found at the following: <https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/supporting-your-work/manage-use-and-protect-data/data-protection>

Appendix. 14: Parent/Carer and CYP Consent Forms, July – September 2022



School of Psychology, Cardiff University



Informed Consent Form

Title of Research: Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings: Experiences and Perceptions of Children, Young People and their Parents.

I understand that my participation in this study will involve completing an online interview via Microsoft Teams regarding how I feel that my child/ren, who experiences high environmental sensitivity, is understood and supported in their educational setting. I understand that this will take approximately 45 – 60-minutes of my time.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. I understand that I can ask for my responses to be withdrawn following my participation. I understand that I will be asked whether I still consent for my responses to be included in the study at the end of my interview. I understand that, after this point, I will no longer be able to request for my responses to be removed from the study as they will have been transcribed within 24-hours and will no longer be traceable back to myself.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time, and I may contact the researcher, Danielle de Kerckhove, or research supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner, at Cardiff University, should I have any questions about the research and/or the research brought up tensions or difficulties for me. All contact details are provided below.

I understand that findings from this study will be included in the researcher's doctoral thesis and may be published in relevant academic journals. I understand that I will be able to view the findings from this study in an infographic poster format, which will be posted on the social media pages from which participants were recruited.

I understand that my online interview will be recorded on the researcher's secure, password protected computer. I understand that, following transcription (*writing out*) of the information shared, my recording will be deleted. I understand that any information I shared will then be associated with my participant number and not my name and so it will be impossible to trace this information back to me individually. I understand that any information I share will therefore remain anonymous. I understand that this anonymised information may be retained indefinitely or published.

I give my informed consent to participate in the study conducted by Danielle de Kerckhove, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, with the supervision of Dr Rosanna Stenner (***please tick***).

Full Name	
Signature	
Date	

Contact Details:

- ❖ Researcher, Danielle de Kerckhove: DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk
- ❖ Research Supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner: Stennerr@cardiff.ac.uk

Privacy Notice: The information provided on the consent form will be held in compliance with GDPR regulations. Cardiff University is the data controller and Matt Cooper is the data protection officer (inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk). This information is being collected by Danielle de Kerckhove. This information will be held securely and separately from the research information you provide. Only the researcher will have access to this form and it will be destroyed after 7 years. The lawful basis for processing this information is public interest.



School of Psychology, Cardiff University



Informed Consent Form

Title of Research: Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings: Experiences and Perceptions of Children, Young People and their Parents.

I understand that taking part in this study involves completing an online interview (conversation) with the researcher, Danni de Kerckhove, using Microsoft Teams.

I understand that Danni would like to talk with me about how I find my time in education. I understand that Danni might ask me questions like, 'What do you enjoy doing at school?' and 'What is a bit more difficult for you at school?'

I understand that the conversation will last around 45-minutes to one hour.

I understand that the conversation will be recorded on Danni's computer. This is so my answers can be typed up afterwards. I understand that only Danni will be able to view this recording. After it has been typed up, it will be deleted.

I understand that I do not have to take part in this research.

I understand that if I begin the interview and decide that I don't want to carry on, that is okay and I do not have to give a reason for this.

I understand that Danni will ask me if I am still happy for my answers to be included when we have finished talking. I understand that I can still ask for my answers to not be included and I do not have to give a reason for this.

I understand that, after this, my answers will be typed up and given a number. This means that I won't be able to ask for my answers to be removed from the study anymore as Danni will not know which my answers were.

I understand that my name will not be included in any writing about the study. I will be given a number instead. This means that no one will know what I have said.

I understand that I can ask Danni questions at any point.

I understand that Danni will be using my answers to complete her doctoral studies. I understand that I will be able to see what results the study found once this has happened. I understand that Danni will create a poster of the findings which my parent/carer can share with me.

I give my informed consent to participate in the study conducted by Danni de Kerckhove, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, with the supervision of Dr Rosanna Stenner (***please tick***).

My full name	
My age	
The Local Authority or County I live in	
My Parent/carer's full name	
My signature	
Date	

Contact Details:

- ❖ Researcher, Danielle de Kerckhove: DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk
- ❖ Research Supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner: Stennerr@cardiff.ac.uk

Privacy Notice: The information provided on the consent form will be held in compliance with GDPR regulations. Cardiff University is the data controller and Matt Cooper is the data protection officer (inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk). This information is being collected by Danielle de Kerckhove. This information will be held securely and separately from the research information you provide. Only the researcher will have access to this form and it will be destroyed after 7 years. The lawful basis for processing this information is public interest.



School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Debrief Form



Title of Research: Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings: Experiences and Perceptions of Children, Young People and their Parents.

Thank you very much for taking part in this research. Your contribution has been greatly appreciated.

What was the purpose of the study?

This research aimed to better understand the experiences of children and young people (aged between 10- and 25-years old) who experience high environmental sensitivity (ES) in UK educational settings. I was interested to hear how parents/carers feel that their child/ren are understood and supported in educational settings. I was also interested to learn about how children and young people themselves experience their educational setting, for example, how their high ES affects them day-to-day, and how they may like to be better supported or understood within their educational setting. I hope that information gathered from this study will be able to provide educational professionals with further information on how best to promote inclusion and equity for students who experience high levels of ES.

What will happen to my information?

You have been identified by a participant number. This means any information you shared will be attached to this number, and not your name. Your interview recording will be securely stored on the researcher's password protected computer. Only the researcher will have access to this. Once the researcher has transcribed (*written out*) your responses, your interview recording will be deleted. At the end of your interview, you were given the option to remove your responses from the study. If you have agreed for your responses to be included in the study, you will no longer be able to request that they are now removed. This is because your responses will have been transcribed (*written out*) and will no longer be traceable back to you as they will be associated only with a participant number. Your transcribed responses will only be accessible by the researcher. Any information which is included in the doctoral thesis and research posters will be anonymous.

How do I find out the results of the study?

The results of the study will make up part of the researcher's doctoral thesis. This may be published in relevant academic journals. The researcher will also create an academic research poster alongside an infographic poster. The infographic poster will be available for your

viewing following completion. The researcher will post a copy of this on the social media group from which participants were recruited.

What if there was a problem?

If you have any questions relating to the research and/or the research brought up any tensions or difficulties for you, please contact the researcher, Danielle de Kerckhove, or research supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner at Cardiff University. All contact details are provided below.

Contact Details:

- ❖ Researcher, Danielle de Kerckhove: DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk
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School of Psychology, Cardiff University



Debrief Form

Title of Research: Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings: Experiences and Perceptions of Children, Young People and their Parents.

Thank you very much for taking part in this research!

What did this study explore?

This study explored how children and young people, like yourself, feel about their environmental sensitivity.

I was interested in talking to children and young people aged between 10- and 25-years old who attend a primary or secondary school, sixth form, college, or university in the UK. I was interested in hearing about their time in education.

I was also interested to learn about how parents and carers of these children and young people feel about their children's time in education.

I hope that information from this study will help us learn more about how we can support children and young people who experience high environmental sensitivity in the educational context.

What will happen to my information?

Any information that you shared with Danni was recorded so that it could be typed up when the conversation ended. Danni will keep this information on her computer in a locked folder. Only Danni will be able to see this. When the conversation has been typed up, Danni will delete the recording.

Anything that you shared with Danni will stay private. Your name will not be included in anything and so nobody will know what information you shared with Danni.

How do I find out the results of the study?

Danni will use the results from the study to write her doctoral thesis.

Danni will also create a poster of the results. This will be posted on the social media site your parent heard about the study on.

What if there was a problem?

If there are any problems or questions you can contact Danni using the email address below. You can also contact the research supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner using the email address below.

Contact Details:

- ❖ Researcher, Danielle de Kerckhove: DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk

❖ Research Supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner: Stennerr@cardiff.ac.uk

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School of Psychology, Cardiff University



Debrief Form

Title of Research: Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings: Experiences and Perceptions of Children, Young People and their Parents.

Thank you very much for taking part in this research. Your contribution has been greatly appreciated.

What was the purpose of the study?

This research aimed to better understand the experiences of children and young people (aged between 7- and 25-years old) who experience high environmental sensitivity (ES) in UK educational settings. I was interested to hear how parents/carers feel that their child/ren are understood and supported in educational settings. I was also interested to learn about how children and young people themselves experience their educational setting, for example, how their high ES affects them day-to-day, and how they may like to be better supported or understood within their educational setting. I hope that information gathered from this study will be able to provide educational professionals with further information on how best to promote inclusion and equity for students who experience high levels of ES.

What will happen to my information?

You have been identified by a participant number. This means any information you shared will be attached to this number, and not your name. Your interview recording will be securely stored on the researcher's password protected computer. Only the researcher will have access to this. Once the researcher has transcribed (*written out*) your responses, your interview recording will be deleted. At the end of your interview, you were given the option to remove your responses from the study. If you have agreed for your responses to be included in the study, you will no longer be able to request that they are now removed. This is because your responses will have been transcribed (*written out*) and will no longer be traceable back to you as they will be associated only with a participant number. Your transcribed responses will only be accessible by the researcher. Any information which is included in the doctoral thesis and research posters will be anonymous.

How do I find out the results of the study?

The results of the study will make up part of the researcher's doctoral thesis. This may be published in relevant academic journals. The researcher will also create an academic research poster alongside an infographic poster. The infographic poster will be available for your viewing following completion. The researcher will post a copy of this on the social media group from which participants were recruited.

What if there was a problem?

If you have any questions relating to the research and/or the research brought up any tensions or difficulties for you, please contact the researcher, Danielle de Kerckhove, or research supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner at Cardiff University. All contact details are provided below.

Contact Details:

- ❖ Researcher, Danielle de Kerckhove: DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk
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Title of Research: Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings: Experiences and Perceptions of Children, Young People and their Parents.

Thank you very much for taking part in this research!

What did this study explore?

This study explored how children and young people, like yourself, feel about their environmental sensitivity.

I was interested in talking to children and young people aged between 7- and 25-years old who attend a primary or secondary school, sixth form, college, or university in the UK. I was interested in hearing about their time in education.

I was also interested to learn about how parents and carers of these children and young people feel about their children's time in education.

I hope that information from this study will help us learn more about how we can support children and young people who experience high environmental sensitivity in the educational context.

What will happen to my information?

Any information that you shared with Danni was recorded so that it could be typed up when the conversation ended. Danni will keep this information on her computer in a locked folder. Only Danni will be able to see this. When the conversation has been typed up, Danni will delete the recording.

Anything that you shared with Danni will stay private. Your name will not be included in anything and so nobody will know what information you shared with Danni.

How do I find out the results of the study?

Danni will use the results from the study to write her doctoral thesis.

Danni will also create a poster of the results. This will be posted on the social media site your parent heard about the study on.

What if there was a problem?

If there are any problems or questions you can contact Danni using the email address below. You can also contact the research supervisor, Dr Rosanna Stenner using the email address below.

Contact Details:

- ❖ Researcher, Danielle de Kerckhove: DeKerckhoveD@cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix. 16: Ethical Approval from Cardiff University School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee April 2022 & August 2022

Ethics Feedback - EC.22.03.08.6536R



The Ethics Committee has considered your revised PG project proposal: Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings: Experiences and Perceptions of Young People and their Parents (EC.22.03.08.6536R).

Your project proposal has received a **Favourable Opinion** based on the information described in the proforma and supporting documentation.

Conditions of the favourable opinion

The favourable opinion is subject to the following conditions being met:

- You must retain a copy of this decision letter with your Research records.
- Please note that if any changes are made to the above project then you must notify the Ethics Committee.
- Please use the EC reference number on all future correspondence.
- The Committee must be informed of any unexpected ethical issues or unexpected adverse events that arise during the research project.
- The Committee must be informed when your research project has ended. This notification should be made to psyethics@cardiff.ac.uk within three months of research project completion.

The Committee reminds you that it is your responsibility to conduct your research project to the highest ethical standards and to keep all ethical issues arising from your research project under regular review.

You are expected to comply with Cardiff University's policies, procedures and guidance at all times, including, but not limited to, its Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants, Human Material or Human Data and our Research Integrity and Governance Code of Practice.

Ethics Feedback - EC.22.03.08.6536RA



The Ethics Committee has considered the amendment to your PG project proposal: Environmental Sensitivity in Educational Settings: Experiences and Perceptions of Young People and their Parents. (EC.22.03.08.6536RA).

Your amended project proposal has received a **Favourable Opinion** based on the information described in the proforma and supporting documentation.

Conditions of the favourable opinion

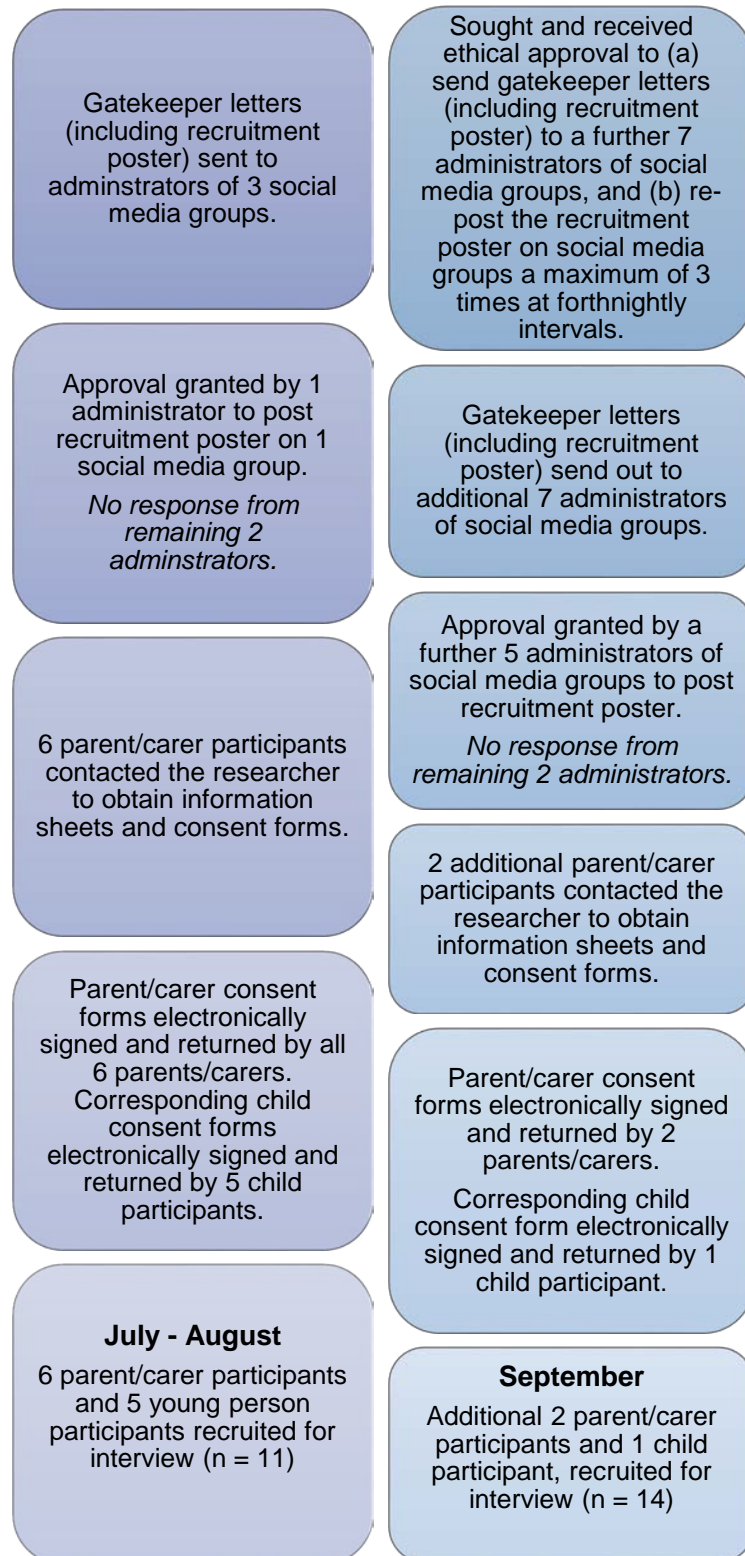
The favourable opinion is subject to the following conditions being met:

- You must retain a copy of this decision letter with your Research records.
- Please note that if any changes are made to the above project then you must notify the Ethics Committee.
- Please use the EC reference number on all future correspondence.
- The Committee must be informed of any unexpected ethical issues or unexpected adverse events that arise during the research project.
- The Committee must be informed when your research project has ended. This notification should be made to psyethics@cardiff.ac.uk within three months of research project completion.

The Committee reminds you that it is your responsibility to conduct your research project to the highest ethical standards and to keep all ethical issues arising from your research project under regular review.

You are expected to comply with Cardiff University's policies, procedures and guidance at all times, including, but not limited to, its Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants, Human Material or Human Data and our Research Integrity and Governance Code of Practice.

Appendix. 17: Recruitment Process



Appendix. 18: Ethical Considerations Raised by the Current Study

Ethical Consideration	How this was addressed
Informed Consent	Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were provided with developmentally appropriate information sheets (see Appendix. 13) detailing the purpose of the study before consenting. Participants were required to provide written assent/consent; developmentally appropriate consent forms (see Appendix. 14) were required to be electronically signed and sent to the researcher. At the beginning of the interviews, the researcher checked that participants had understood the nature of the research and were consenting to participate. This was particularly important for child participants since they were recruited indirectly via parent/carer interest in the study.
Confidentiality and anonymity	All participants' video recordings were stored on the researchers' password protected computer, accessible only to the researcher. Video recordings were used for transcription purposes 24-hours following the interview, and the video recordings then deleted. Whilst considered confidential, recorded interviews cannot be considered anonymous, although following the transcription process video recordings (i.e., participant voices, faces) were deleted and participants were then allocated a random participant number. Participants were informed that any identifiable information disclosed would be omitted from the transcript (e.g., names replaced with [child]). Transcribed interviews were therefore anonymous as any identifiable information disclosed in the interviews was omitted.
Right to withdraw	All participants were informed in the information sheet, consent form, debrief form, and at the beginning and end of the interview that they had a right to withdraw from the study at any point, without having to give reason. All participants were informed that following transcription of their responses 24-hours after interview, withdrawal of responses would no longer be possible due to their data being identified by participant number only.

Risk of harm and safeguarding Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point in the study, without having to give reason. They were informed that they may ask that their data be withdrawn from the study up to 24-hours after interview, after which point withdrawal of responses would no longer be possible due to their data being identified by participant number only.

Sensitive questions were, by nature of the topic of study, explored. The researcher remained conscious of the participants' wellbeing at all times, and was available for questions prior to, during, and following the interview. The researcher aimed to ensure that participants left the interview in the same emotional state that they entered the interview in.

Parent/carer interviews were held prior to child interviews so that parents/carers could make an informed decision regarding whether the study would be appropriate for their child, and/or ask the researcher any questions relating to their child's participation. All participants were also informed in the information sheet, consent form, debrief form, and at the beginning and end of the interview that they may contact the researcher and/or research supervisor should they feel they need to discuss any element of the research or difficulties/tensions it brought up.

Should any disclosures have been made during interview by children, and/or should there have been a need to contact relevant professionals in instances of safeguarding, child consent forms requested participant's full name, age, country and county of residence, and their parent/carer's full name. This meant that the researcher would be able to contact relevant safeguarding officers if necessary.

Debriefing All participants were provided with a developmentally appropriate debrief form following the study, including dissemination information (see Appendix. 15).

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) This study ensured compliance with GDPR. Participants were informed as to what personal data would be collected and how it

would be stored, and for how long. They were also informed as to how their privacy would be protected (see Appendices 6, 13, 14, and 15).

Appendix. 19: Transcription Notation System (Braun & Clarke, 2013, adapted from Jefferson, 2004)

Feature	Notation and Explanation of Use
[...]	Redacted passages (e.g., start of interviews relating to rapport building, questions around the functions on Microsoft Teams etc.)
(.)	Short pause (second or less)
((pause))	Significant pause, lasting a few seconds or more
Spoken abbreviations	If someone speaks an abbreviation, this abbreviation is used
((laughs))	Speaker laughing
((laughter))	Participant and researcher laughing
((inaudible))	Word/brief phrase unclear
<i>Italics</i>	Name of media (e.g., television programmes, books etc.)
Non-verbal utterances (e.g., erm, er, mm-hm)	Non-verbal utterances are spelled as best felt to that specific part of the interview
- (dash)	Cut off speech
<u>Underlining</u>	Emphasis on particular words
?	Punctuation '?' used to signal a speaker's rising intonation of a question
[identifying information]	Identifying information will be changed, replacing it with marked generic descriptions indicated by square brackets (e.g., child's name, school name, geographical location).

Appendix. 20: Establishing Trustworthiness During Each Phase of Thematic Analysis (as cited in Nowell et al., 2017)

Phases of Thematic Analysis	Means of Establishing Trustworthiness
Phase 1: Data Familiarisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with reflection journal following each interview to explore (1) analytic ideas and/or insights brought up by participants, (2) how these loosely related to RQs, and (3) emotions and questions I was left with. • Engaging with data of a period of two-weeks (i.e., prolonged engagement with data) to document theoretical and reflective thoughts (i.e., inductive and deductive analytic ideas and/or insights for each transcript and the dataset as a whole). • Storing raw data in well-organised archives. • Keeping records of all transcripts and reflective journal entries.
Phase 2: Data Coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documenting thoughts about potential codes/themes (i.e., inductive and deductive). • Following Braun and Clarke’s (2021, p. 90) suggestion to keep RQs “loosely” in mind to ensure that the bigger picture is not overlooked. • Revisiting reflection journal and initial wonderings following initial coding of each transcript to (1) contextualise coding in relation to how it felt when the interview was conducted, and (2) consider how the researcher-participant relationship had led to co-construction of truth. • Audit trail of coding, including those merged and/or not allocated in RTA write-up, including reasoning.
Phase 3: Initial Theme Generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with reflection journal detailing the development and hierarchies of concepts and themes. • Audit trail of coding and themes, including those merged and/or not allocated in RTA write-up, including reasoning. • Audit trail of thematic maps generated to make sense of theme connections.

Phase 4: Developing and Reviewing Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing the fit of provisional, candidate themes by reviewing the full dataset, ensuring themes make sense in relation to the coded extracts and the full dataset. • Audit trail of coding and themes, including those merged and/or not allocated in RTA write-up, including reasoning. • Documenting of supervision sessions around analysis.
Phase 5: Refining, Defining, and Naming Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine-tuning analysis, ensuring every theme is built around a strong core concept or essence. • Documenting of supervision sessions around analysis.
Phase 6: Writing Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing the process of coding and analysis in sufficient detail. • Providing contextual information and outlining researcher positionality. • Reporting on reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the research. • Documenting of supervision sessions around analysis. • Clear description of the audit trail as a whole.

Appendix. 21: Selection of Extracts Relating to Initial Thoughts on Interview Data Collected

Participant Number	Initial thoughts relating to child's <i>experience</i>	Initial thoughts relating to constructions of a <i>supportive educational environment</i>
Participant 1a	<p>Parent's experience of child's experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of having someone to speak with when overwhelmed/relationship difficulties amongst peers • Wanting to get things right – overthinking how people will judge your efforts (links with perfectionism) • Being very affected by other people's emotions and moods • Quieter, slower pace of learning better – doing one thing at once • Some teachers getting it and some not – teaching for CYP who experience high ES depending on teacher's personality and if it fits with theirs • When having supportive environment (e.g., ELSA) doing particularly well and getting lots out of it • Feeling that teachers think you are mollycoddling your child but feeling like you need to fight to get their rights heard • Parents feeling that they need to educate teachers and explain things in terms of how high ES is like any other 	<p>What parent wants to see happen to improve learning environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling that ES is not well understood in school – it is not a 'diagnosis' and so it doesn't have much awareness as teachers are now focused heavily on diagnoses and documentation • Desire for more knowledge to be shared on high ES within schools and how personalities are different (i.e., this is done for learning styles, mental health, why not high ES or personality in general?) • Importance of teachers having an awareness and being able to support especially for those children who may not be supported or understood at home either • Wanting child to have positive role models who understand and can feed positivity and normalise high ES (seeking outside agencies for this e.g., squash classes). • "All we want is for people to be understood and to be accepted"

individual difference/'diagnosis' (?) to get recognition (e.g., ADHD, ASC), but without the actual 'diagnosis' (but then also not wanting to 'diagnose'/label your child)

- Not having to build resilience up in your child “why should you have to change yourself to be able to take that?”

Participant 1b Child's experience:

- Sensitivity being linked with strong emotions (e.g., anger, sadness, happiness, gratefulness)
- Sensitivity being linked with high empathy
- Disliking being crammed into tiny spaces
- Disliking loud environments with lots of shouting and talking
- Dislike changes in my life
- Getting really worried and really nervous about some work tasks (e.g., wondering if it won't be very good or if people will laugh)
- Enjoying working in a clean environment (e.g., no drawings on the tables, no gum under tables)
- Feeling that sometimes people tease me because of my sensitivity and how easy I can feel strong emotions (e.g., cry), especially as a male
- Being very thoughtful/reflective/self-aware (e.g., “I didn't really need to be worried about that”, “if someone watches me, I'm going to most likely stutter before I

What child wants to see happen to improve learning environment:

- More people to understand about sensitivity at school because “if they knew I was sad because of that, they might listen”/“when I talk to my friends about a problem, although they say yes, OK, like I don't always think that they really understand” (i.e., children not teasing because of sensitivity and strength of emotional reactions)
- Quieter learning environment
- Cleaner learning environment
- Teachers who are positive, cheerful, supportive and strict with 'not nice' children
- Someone to talk to when there is drama going on at school “I just feel as though being highly sensitive, if there's an argument...I lash out”

“speak”, “I know I’m bringing it up again”, “sorry, I’m saying I don’t know quite a lot”, “taking deep breaths”)

- Enjoying working with teachers who are cheerful, happy, supportive, and who are strict with ‘not nice’ children
- Disliking working with teachers who get angry and shout a lot

Participant 2a Parent’s experience of child’s experience:

- Intensely dislikes/hates school – finds it overwhelming/intolerable – size of it, teachers shouting/being stern with other peers, children chatting – makes her highly anxious/withdrawn
- Previously stopped going to school some days – thought of teachers shouting in certain lessons meant she couldn’t get out of bed
- If things aren’t a very relaxed pace, she finds it overwhelming
- Disliking changing plans
- Not many friends due to overwhelm of maintaining relationships
- Value in guidance teacher – someone with similar personality who understands her
- Experiences perfectionism and shame often

What parent wants to see happen to improve learning environment:

- So many strategies been tried (e.g., noise cancelling headphones, time out of class, working in a cupboard, days at home, letter to teacher to explain sensitivity, grounding/CBT/DBT exercises/HS counsellor), more about systemic understanding and key adults?
- Value in guidance teacher – without her she wouldn’t be at school
- School can’t do anymore but the environment just doesn’t suit her (it would be ideal if she could work alone) – queries around whether to take her out of school vs. wanting her to learn to adapt to this extroverted world
- More awareness around HS – setting up the environment for the minority to benefit all (calm environment, teacher’s having good classroom management strategies) “it just needs to be quieter”

- Can discuss emotions with prompting but internalises most things
- Academically capable but low self-esteem and belief in ability – feeling she won't be able to do exams
- Motivation important if she is to engage with work – relief she can focus on something she is interested in and this takes away from everyday worries and overwhelm

- Secondary schools – not having 6 lessons a day, not moving classrooms

Participant 3a Parent's experience of child's experience:

Son

- Affected by noise – distracted – not completing work – issue for the school – now home schooled – works well in quiet
- Some teachers being better than others (e.g., caring, nurturing, supportive, patient he picks up on what people think about him)
- Takes a while to come out of his shell and for teachers to warm to him
- Cautious, observes before gets involved
- Every time he began a new year, teacher had to get him out of his shell – no history maintained, frustrating
- Academically capable
- Not many friendships, keeps himself to himself
- Intuitive to people's emotions

What parent wants to see happen to improve learning environment:

Son

- Classroom set up – not low ceilings as increases noise
- Better transitions – teachers knowing more about him when he moves up, he takes a while to come out of his shell – giving him time to warm up and get to know new children in class
- Not so many performance type activities e.g., assemblies, parties, hands up answering, it's really stressful and too much noise which makes him feel uncomfortable
- School not making it an issue that he wants to keep to himself at playtime
- School not pushing for ASC diagnosis – more understanding and awareness around high ES – allowing him to be himself

Daughter

- Good friend but can be draining as takes on other people's problems/opinions
- Academically excellent but perfectionist
- Mature and popular with teachers
- Able to have in-depth conversations

- School being more understanding around differences in personality – not feeling like mother is making this up
- Somewhere for him to go for quiet breaks
- Spending more time doing independent online work with the positive feedback/alone time
- Not feeling as a parent that you have to ask for things for him to be different (e.g., can he not be involved in a play, can he just watch) this just being something that is ok and teachers can do this without parents having to ask and it becoming a 'thing'
- Having more choice in class
- Labels being self-identified

Daughter

- More understanding so less misdiagnosis (e.g., anxiety)
 - Not being sat next to disruptive children as a role model/class management technique
 - Better classroom management as she finds noise and the chaos of naughty children challenging, especially supply teachers
 - School counselling to link in more with family so know what discussed so can help at home – she thought was autistic as she sees this a lot in media and not much about sensitivity
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<p>Participant 4a</p>	<p>Parent's experience of child's experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligent, quick, switched on, able to generalise her learning easily • Mature, cements her learning by teaching other children • Self-aware, self-contained • Reads people like a book • Extreme emotions, roller coasters • Strong senses • Very observant, notices small changes • Strong sense of justice • Not competitive, no perfectionism • High empathy • Hanger • Can sometimes use high ES as an excuse for meltdowns • Never melts down at school – can control - goes to bathroom to compose herself • Dislikes hair being brushed and certain textures/feels (e.g., clothes) • Best friend and one or two others – happy to move to a secondary school with none of her friends • Wants to be home-schooled; can choose what she learns and get more done • Can entertain herself for hours 	<p>What parent wants to see happen to improve learning environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School don't recognise sensitivity, can be defensive about it when I try to talk to them about it – more awareness around sensitivity – teachers to be aware of who is sensitive in their class, especially during yearly transitions to keep an eye – as much awareness as ASC/ADHD • More opportunity in schools to talk about differences and diversity e.g., she could spend more time talking about who and what she is • More breaks when things are too much e.g., quiet room • Teachers to send her off for individual study so she can meet her potential • Teachers to talk to her like she is an adult
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- Having to explain her daughter to school; “if anything I support other people dealing with her”

Participant 4b Child’s experience:

- Experiencing ‘hanger’
- Disliking loud noises or lots of noise at once
- Disliking multi-tasking
- Disliking certain texture clothing
- High-sensitivity helping me to help other children in the class (e.g., ones who have ASC) both academically and also because I understand them (“I’ve got most traits like her”)
- Being highly academic and being ahead of myself (“I’m catching on to things a lot quicker than other children”) – wanting to be home schooled and to work at own pace
- My teacher doesn’t know or understand about sensitivity
- “My mum knows how to fix things but my teacher doesn’t” – I want to be home schooled
- Being highly sensitive helps me to speak with other children and makes friends – I love being around people and high-sensitivity makes me not nervous to talk to anyone

What child wants to see happen to improve learning environment:

- More opportunities to have snacks and rests during the day (e.g., playtime is before lunch and then I am too tired to eat my lunch/concentrate and listen in class)
- Children with high-sensitivity or autism should have time to go out of the room and calm down in their own space (e.g., hanger)
- Children who are quicker with learning should be given the work and sent to another room to get on with it and then bring it back to get marked
- I would like classrooms to be bigger so I’m not so enclosed with too many children in the same space – too many children on the table turns into an argument
- I want there to be less on the walls – sometimes I want to look up and have a space where nothing’s going on in my mind to distract me
- I want only my age group on the playground so it’s not so crowded and not the older children – it will make the playground calmer

- More teachers who understand sensitivity and can help – who can take you out of the room and talk to you and find out what’s wrong

Participant 5a Parent’s experience of child’s experience:

- Questions around ASD for both children
- Very intelligent, emotionally mature children
- Child B emotionally regulates herself when overwhelmed e.g., twiddles, picks, bites nails
- When moved to secondary school, didn’t tell school about sensitivities and not sure if this was a good or bad decision
- Difficulties around friendships at times from children not being understood by peers
- Difficulties around textures and food sensitivities
- Disliking change
- Noticing when small things change in the environment
- Sensitive to smell
- Disliking having lots to do in small time and count downs
- Musically talented
- Finding it difficult to have nothing to do – brain always on the go
- Extroverted children
- Child B needing processing time to answer questions

What parent wants to see happen to improve learning environment:

- More awareness around sensitivity and acceptance of diversity
- Taken more seriously when discussions arise around ASD and high ES
- Idiosyncrasies not to be made such a big deal in school

Participant 5b	<p>Child's experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to use the word sensitive as highly sensitive reminds me of being teased for crying too much/crying because people were teasing me for crying • Able to pay attention to detail in lessons, especially when I am interested in the lesson • Get distracted in non-lesson situations because I notice all things in the environment • "Strong emotions to more general things – sometimes don't know how to put it into words" • Support staff more than teachers understand my sensitivity • Spending time in the library as an escape, relatable characters • Enjoy when teachers aren't strict and allow chatting in class as long as it's about the world • When teachers are enthusiastic about their subject it is good • Intelligent, self-aware, knows how they learn best • Interested in complicated ideas and psychology and therapy • Deep thinker "If I had to find an answer it would take me days of thinking" 	<p>What child wants to see happen to improve learning environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of diversity and different personalities in the classroom and no one being bullied because that makes the classroom miserable • Wanting there to be a member of staff you can talk to about sensitivity and learning styles and worrying about being teased for being sensitive • Awareness around sensitivity e.g., one lesson on gender norms changed the boys letting her play football "thank goodness for that lesson" • Not wanting people to ask about habits/wanting to keep some things to herself and not a big deal made about it • Extra form time or time to chill out (I do get enough time but could do with more)
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- Some teachers I can talk to
- One teacher gave me a fidget toy
- Disliking shouting and lots of people talking at once
- Getting stressed if lots to do in short period (e.g., going to dance)

Participant 5c

Child's experience:

- Runs in the family, different ways of processing things, sometimes deeply
- Strong sense of justice, forceful about my opinions
- Wanting to stick up for people and contribute to important conversations
- Wanting to know that people are ok
- Disliking shouting and arguments
- Separation anxiety from sister, wanting to know where she is in school in case he needs her, a fear of being lost or forgotten
- Strong sense of smell and hearing
- Empathy skills – knowing when someone is upset and how to cheer them up (being better at helping others than myself)
- Sometimes getting in a battle with myself e.g., over-reacting, feeling miserable all day if something bad happens, needing alone time

What child wants to see happen to improve learning environment:

- Not having much time at school to relax/have my own time – more down time to sketch etc. would be good
- Learning mentor important – wanting someone to go to like her who can help solve problems on days she's not there – "it's been good having someone to talk to at school"
- Wanting to do an assembly on sensitivity and coping strategies so people can understand each other better – this is important but it's not a priority – being able to tell people about things that are close to you (meaningful conversations)
- Wanting teachers to know that he is a good emotional support for other children – wanting to be a mentor/have responsibility
- Having more of subjects and clubs he is interested in

- Feeling like people “can’t see the whole me”
- Sometimes people at school being mean to me because of sensitivity (fidgeting)
- Friends who stick up for me – pack mentality, sick and injured at the front

Participant 6a Parent’s experience of child’s experience:

- Big disconnect between home and school – poorer behaviour in school
- School thinking automatically ASC, ADHD, ODD – referrals say not this
- Very aware of emotions – his and others
- Absorbent of what is going on around him – internalising things
- Very intelligent and intuitive
- Dislikes people who command respect
- Dislikes when people make him feel stupid
- Picky about textures and clothes/food
- Overthinker (e.g., space, reincarnation, death) – can become obsessed – needs time and patience to be able to ask questions and talk subject to death and then he can move on
- High anxiety – trauma experiences

What parent wants to see happen to improve learning environment:

- Less strict teachers – doesn’t do well with strict teachers – fight or flight
- Less focus from schools on diagnosis, funding and more open mind, strategies in toolkit
- Less shaming of behaviour
- Less working for rewards – not helpful, if misses one reward, what’s the point of trying the next day?
- Less focus on the negatives and more on the positives – what went well
- More of an understanding around mental health and seeing this as a form of diversity just as worthy as neurodiversity
- More opportunity for child to have relationship with key member of staff and feel they can go to them whenever (as opposed to having one to one in class for academics which makes him feel stupid, he only needs support with

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- He's like a China plate – if you tell him off, he thinks you hate him, takes a long time to repair relationships
 - Can struggle with too much noise in classroom not because it's noise but because it's noise on top of overthinking and doubting himself in classwork
 - Fussy baby
 - Life experiences made high ES go wild
 - Low pain tolerance
 - High ES can make him feel stupid – why can't I just do that?
- emotion regulation) – someone he can talk subjects to death with
 - Awareness and understanding around high ES – wanting school to 'get him' in the way the recent clinical psychologist report did
 - Teacher's not showing negative emotions because he can pick up on them and internalise them/think things are his fault – sways his own feelings
 - Being supported with social difficulties (e.g., boy in class he disliked, making him very moody and upset)
 - Finding new ways of assessing for learning that don't stress him out
 - EHCP just so he is on radar at secondary and gets support – “hate that I've had to do that” – could've got him diagnosed with ASC/ADHD/ODD, I know how, but that would be failing him because it's not that (but that would get him more support) – “you are failing my child by not understanding him”
 - EPs and professionals coming in with an open mind and not diagnosis-led
 - Professionals coming in and better supporting teachers (i.e., taking the burden off them when parents ask them 'what's wrong with my child?', letting teachers teach, and
-

people who have experience of a range of difficulties
identify the difficulty at play)

- Space to blow off steam if he needs to, to take his trainers off and ground himself if he needs to
 - Being given the emotional support he needs – even if it's below his chronological age
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Appendix. 22: Child Participant Group – Codes Allocated to RTA and All Associated Extracts

Theme 1: 'Big' feelings are everywhere – 'I can't read it for myself'

Code	Extract(s)	Participant
Child experiencing performance anxiety	“my presentation... I got really worried and really nervous about it... because I thought it wouldn't be very good and people would laugh”	Participant 1b
Child experiencing transitions as being difficult	<p>“I'm really nervous [about transitioning to Year 7]. I think that most people that I said I'm gonna be in Year 7 next year to, they say oh you will be excited, I said no. I was saying no. I'm kinda nervous... I'm really nervous about that like... sometimes I just think, well, it's not gonna be good.”</p> <p>“if you're sensitive, you can get you can be a lot more emotional and a bit more hyper and more scared of things normally... Maybe nerves maybe going doing something or anxiety about you're about to go somewhere big and you're like, oh, what's it gonna be like?”</p>	Participant 1b Participant 6b
Managing 'big' feelings: child feels that they are able to understand peers' emotions better than their own	<p>“Being able to understand people that I can do quite well so I can read if someone is hurt, I can read if someone is angry, if someone is sad or if they just need some time on their own. I can. I can read it for other people but I don't know why I can't read it for myself as much as I can read it for other people.”</p> <p>“like I said, reading people's feelings. So I'm quite good at that. I'm the person that people tend to go to, to talk to about their feelings... And I don't know why I do this but I'm good at answering them and I'm not good at answering myself.”</p> <p>“I sometimes do get really high stress levels really, really high stress levels. I will usually just tell myself to shut up or something like that.”</p>	Participant 5c
Child experiencing what they feel to be as heightened emotions	<p>“it makes me happier, like really happy, like somebody giving something to me like a gift, I get really happy and really thankful.”</p> <p>“so I have big happy emotions as well. I have like big sad emotions”</p>	Participant 1b

	<p>“Most people probably usually just be a little bit angry but I’ll fall and start shouting and maybe start being a bit over the top without realising it”</p> <p>“I just feel as though being highly sensitive, if there’s an argument, I sometimes, I lash out, like a really, really bad thing.”</p> <p>“I was really offended, just like, offended [when the teacher corrected me]”</p> <p>“I don’t think that was right [what the teacher said] but she said that, I remember she was being on his side when at least, in my opinion, he was more in the wrong than me and my friends, so I went up to tell again... I was just crying until the end of the day.”</p> <p>“If somebody’s being rude to me I straight away get really angry.”</p> <p>“I don’t use [the term highly sensitive] very often. I prefer to use just sensitive... Because when I think of myself as highly sensitive it just reminds me of some of the things that have happened at school in the past... getting teased for it, because that did happen a few times at primary school... [I was teased for] just crying too often. I don’t know how to put it into words sometimes, but strong emotions to more general things... Which I think is thought to be a problem... [they would be] disliking me crying too much, I’d start crying because of that. There, it’s almost a vicious circle.”</p> <p>“if you’re sensitive, you can get you can be a lot more emotional and a bit more hyper and more scared of things normally... Maybe nerves maybe going doing something or anxiety about you’re about to go somewhere big and you’re like, oh, what’s it gonna be like?”</p> <p>“if someone you know is upset, it’s really, sometimes it’s bad because even if you don’t like the person your your you, you, your natural thing to do would be go ask are you OK? And you would notice if if it’s just sat there. And you notice if someone like is maybe being a bit rude? Most people ignore it. Wipe it off. Be like yeah yeah, whatever. But sometimes you can take it in a lot more than other people.”</p> <p>“[disadvantages of my sensitivity are] over-reactions. When I enter a distrusting situation like I’ve been hurt or someone else has been hurt or something bad happened, I tend to overreact. And I overreact in other ways as well. So during a math lesson, for example, I do not like math, but sometimes I don’t like it so much that I battle</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>
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	<p>with myself again, but in a different context... So for example [I might over-react] on my phone I sometimes completely don't answer messages at all, or sometimes I completely go bananas and say everything... It depends on how I feel that day. So if I've had a generally good day, I don't over-react as much as I do when I've had a bad day...like it is a battle with myself in whatever context I am in, if it is maths, or because someone has been hurt or I can't find my sister, I can feel thoroughly miserable for the whole day.”</p> <p>“I sometimes do get really high stress levels really, really high stress levels. I will usually just tell myself to shut up or something like that.”</p> <p>“[being highly sensitive means that] some things like, for, say in my life, some things, um, uh, hit me in a different impact, like more, and makes me more upset.”</p>	Participant 7b
Child experiencing apprehension around new things	<p>“if you're sensitive, you can get you can be a lot more emotional and a bit more hyper and more scared of things normally... Maybe nerves maybe going doing something or anxiety about you're about to go somewhere big and you're like, oh, what's it gonna be like?”</p>	Participant 6b
Managing 'big' feelings: Child having access to a social support network, promoting a sense of belongingness, aids wellbeing at school	<p>“It may sound, I mean, you know, it may sound a bit, I don't know what's the word, kind of strange, because, you know, she's a teacher, and I shouldn't be saying this, but she was just kind of mean. And I found her quite, just, not very good... She wasn't really there to talk to.”</p> <p>“I think it would be good [if people knew more about high ES] because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen.”</p> <p>“When I talk to my friends about a problem, although they say yes, OK, like I don't always think they really understand. So, it's really, it's really good to have somebody to talk to as well as my Mum.”</p> <p>“[if there was one thing I wish my teachers knew about me it would be] how much, how much sensitivity I have?”</p> <p>“I think it will be good if every school had at least one member of staff, you'd be able to talk to... For instance, some learning mentor... [You could talk about] issues with sensitivity, learning methods. All the rest of that.”</p> <p>“I think it would [make a difference if the other children understood more about sensitivity] ... I know this is completely off topic, but my favourite lesson I ever had. And this was in primary Year Three, when we were talking about gender stereotypes. Especially after an incident. So there was a game where you could play things like football, basketball, cricket and a few other things. And one of those, the boys who at the time was</p>	Participant 1b Participant 4b Participant 5b

in Year Six said that you couldn't go in just because I was a girl. Thank goodness for that lesson... It [changed] how they thought about it. And I only wanted to go in there because some of my [male] friends were in there."

"It's getting so much easier... I've been able to express my feelings more. I've had more outlets than I had, I only had one outlet at the start of the year. It was my sister. Now it's the rest of my family, my friends, the learning mentor at school, and the teachers as well had loads more outlets in my feelings, which means the pressure inside is lower than what it was at the start of the year because I've had those valves to vent things out."

"sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well."

"I was thinking actually to ask my form tutors... if I could do an assembly or a couple of words about sensitivity because it's something that is a lot, there's a lot of it in my year and there's lots of people who feel the same as me but in different ways... [It would be about] coping strategies, things about how sensitivity is what sensitivity is, the spectrum of it. So the different things that it can encompass. Being able to have more insight into your senses so like smells for me or hearing, or being more overwhelmed and over-reacting sometimes to negative things in the school life or home life that are going on... And the way that children and young people in the school can co-operate with it and then we can hopefully have a better school life because people are listening to teach other and they understand about each of them all."

"being in a place where we can express our feelings, that's what we're working on. Being able to express our feelings with each other a bit more. And being in a place like that is very, very helpful. And the fact that I can now do that much more than I could. It's making me think that, well, OK, I mean it's opening up lots of new windows for me, I'm in this safe place with a lot of other people who are sensitive and I've known them all my life, so hey."

Participant 5c

"I kind of have separation anxiety when I'm away from my sister... And at school that hits me very hard at school. That hits me hard and yeah... Very hard... Not knowing where my sister is and where to go if there's something up. So if I hurt myself, I have done a couple of times this year. I don't know why my sister is to tell her what happened or I don't know where my friends are or anything. It's almost becoming a fear of being lost or forgotten... It's not like I need to see people's locations all the time, like I need them smack bang in front of me, but... Just being able to know where people are, who I can talk to about something."

"[it would be ideal if my peers were] well educated about sensitivity in more detail, which is why I wanted to do the assembly thing cause that plants the acorn that starts it. Being able to be understood by more people would help me and most other people in my year as well a lot"

"One of [my teachers understands about sensitivity] ... She's the learning mentor. She's the one that everyone goes to. Everyone loves. She's the one that everyone talks to when they got a problem. She always knows how to solve it... So she's helped. She actually helped me out of things on a number of occasions, and she's the one who she's one of the only teachers actually at school where I can truly be myself and talk to properly... Because some teachers, I wouldn't go near. Because I find them... scary... She's got her own room next to the library, which is the calmest part of the school... There's lots of squishy chairs in there and she knows exactly what to do... So anything in any situations, so if someone's having a bad day, or if something has gone wrong, she knows exactly how to solve it."

"sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well."

"[the perfect teacher would be] like the learning mentor but also able to teach their own subject... Not all of them are exactly as good as the learning mentor. It's solving problems... Just having more teachers around who you see every day, you know in lessons in the staffroom and the corridors who say, is something wrong? If you can just ask them for a minute and talk to them."

	<p>“[the perfect teacher] they’ll be strict, they’ll be more tightening on things like bullying, racism and things like that towards other students, which are very offensive.”</p> <p>“the learning mentor... she is not always there... those days are harder if she’s not there, like Wednesday is a hard day.”</p> <p>“I just feel like they, they, they, they understood me a bit, you know, I felt really happy about it.”</p> <p>“[if my teachers did understand about sensitivity] I think it would be better. It wouldn’t stop all the sensitivity and upset and stuff, but it’ll it might help you calm down when you’re digging a hole for yourself.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would be] very kind and they will, instead of putting you down, they’ll try and bring you up and make you happy. They would understand my needs. And what what will help me and what wouldn’t. And they always always listen to your answer not interrupting at all.”</p> <p>“all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I’m highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it’s like because they’ve been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it’s nice.”</p>	<p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child overthinking interactions with peers, resulting in strong emotional reactions</p>	<p>“[it is difficult at school when] you go out to play play sometimes. When when you’re playing and some of your friends don’t wanna play with you, you might get a bit um more upset because you don’t you you’ll have no one to play with... you feel like if they say no, you kind of feel like oh. What? What? And then you look at, sometimes I look at my other friends and look what they’re doing. And I just think no. Doesn’t seem like my my thing. And then when you look back at them, you’re like, really wanna do that? Because I like what they’re doing. But if they just say no, I just feel like I’ve been left out. What do I do now? Just sit for the rest of break or do something anyway?”</p> <p>“if someone you know is upset, it’s really, sometimes it’s bad because even if you don’t like the person your your you, you, your natural thing to do would be go ask are you OK? And you would notice if if it if it’s just sat there. And you notice if someone like is maybe being a bit rude? Most people ignore it. Wipe it off. Be like yeah yeah, whatever. But sometimes you can take it in a lot more than other people.”</p>	<p>Participant 6b</p>

Theme 2: Peer interactions are analysed under a magnifying glass

Subtheme 1: Friendships as circles of protection

Code	Extract(s)	Participant
Child valuing the ability to empathise with peers and be a source of support in times of need	“I think like the last Friday, it helped that I was like, helping the girls feel better. Like if I was like the other boys, I would probably join in, but I because I am sensitive... I think I have more empathy.”	Participant 1b
	“me being really happy or something, that helps others”	
	“Being able to understand people that I can do quite well so I can read if someone is hurt, I can read if someone is angry, if someone is sad or if they just need some time on their own. I can. I can read it for other people but I don’t know why I can’t read it for myself as much as I can read it for other people.”	Participant 5c
	“like I said, reading people’s feelings. So I’m quite good at that. I’m the person that people tend to go to, to talk to about their feelings... And I don’t know why I do this but I’m good at answering them and I’m not good at answering myself... So they often finish with a smile on their face... I like being able to make people laugh and having that thing where I can just exactly read how someone’s feeling and know the remedy for it is a thing that I think was quite special.”	
	“people, when they come to me, they often ask such things, which make them feel better. So they asked me if they they can do anything and I’m always the person who people go to. But another thing is that when I make people laugh they don’t really laugh that way with many other people because I can kind of strike that cord with people, when I can understand what they’re feeling, I kind of strike that cord with people and so help I them understand what’s going on.”	
“[I would like] the opportunity to speak to more people, so being able to have the opportunity to ask if we can do an assembly about the things that are troubling us and how people can cope with them... just to be, well, there for other people and to have more of that knowledge of sensitivity, which is why I want to spread it more, having		

	that knowledge being able to help other people and having to opportunity to be able to tell other people about it. So their friends, their family, to be able to spread it further.”	
Child desiring to ensure others are okay; wanting to stick up for others and protect them	<p>“Sometimes I kind of have a battle with myself... So, one of those situations is where I feel stressed or being pulled to my limit... For example, during a conversation where people are shouting and I know why they’re shouting, but I don’t know how to help, I have snapped a couple of times... I think because I want the shouting to stop and I want to help people, I want to know they’re OK, but I don’t know how to help, especially if it’s an adult conversation... I find it at school as well... So having to battle myself constantly is not fun, to be honest.”</p> <p>“someone might start getting shouted at... something might happen and I want to be able to take myself away from it, but I can’t because we need to be together and also in a conversation with someone being shouted at I find that quite hard to go off. I can’t go off because I need to contribute to the conversation as well.”</p> <p>“I always protected her before and my I’d always take the blame because I was fine with that.”</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
Child placing high value on friendships (e.g., best friends)	<p>“people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well.”</p> <p>“It would kind of make me feel uncomfortable in my old class because none of my best friends were there to kind of comfort me.”</p> <p>“in my old class it, to be honest, it wasn’t. It was quite terrible because um like especially in Class Four because it was really scary for me because I only had one best friend in that class”</p> <p>“I’d make sure [if I had to do pair or group work] it’s not what my PE teacher did because he knew that I was struggling, but he didn’t put me in with my best friend and he knew we were best friends. So that kind of made me not like him at all.”</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
Child valuing opportunities to connect with peers emotionally in a ‘safe pace’	<p>“being in a place where we can express our feelings, that’s what we’re working on. Being able to express our feelings with each other a bit more. And being in a place like that is very, very helpful. And the fact that I can now do that much more than I could. It’s making me think that, well, OK, I mean it’s opening up lots of new windows for me, I’m in this safe place with a lot of other people who are sensitive and I’ve known them all my life, so hey.”</p>	Participant 5c

<p>Managing 'big' feelings: Child having access to a social support network, promoting a sense of belongingness, aids wellbeing at school</p>	<p>“[if there was one thing I wish my teachers knew about me it would be] how much, how much sensitivity I have?”</p> <p>“It’s getting so much easier... I’ve been able to express my feelings more. I’ve had more outlets than I had, I only had one outlet at the start of the year. It was my sister. Now it’s the rest of my family, my friends, the learning mentor at school, and the teachers as well had loads more outlets in my feelings, which means the pressure inside is lower than what it was at the start of the year because I’ve had those valves to vent things out.”</p> <p>“sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well.”</p> <p>“I was thinking actually to ask my form tutors... if I could do an assembly or a couple of words about sensitivity because it’s something that is a lot, there’s a lot of it in my year and there’s lots of people who feel the same as me but in different ways... [It would be about] coping strategies, things about how sensitivity is what sensitivity is, the spectrum of it. So the different things that it can encompass. Being able to have more insight into your senses so like smells for me or hearing, or being more overwhelmed and over-reacting sometimes to negative things in the school life or home life that are going on... And the way that children and young people in the school can co-operate with it and then we can hopefully have a better school life because people are listening to teach other and they understand about each of them all.”</p> <p>“[it would be ideal if my peers were] well educated about sensitivity in more detail, which is why I wanted to do the assembly thing cause that plants the acorn that starts it. Being able to be understood by more people would help me and most other people in my year as well a lot”</p> <p>“One of [my teachers understands about sensitivity] ... She’s the learning mentor. She’s the one that everyone goes to. Everyone loves. She’s the one that everyone talks to when they got a problem. She always knows how to solve it... So she’s helped. She actually helped me out of things on a number of occasions, and she’s the one who she’s one of the only teachers actually at school where I can truly be myself and talk to properly... Because some teachers, I wouldn’t go near. Because I find them... scary... She’s got her own room next to the</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>
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	<p>library, which is the calmest part of the school... There's lots of squishy chairs in there and she knows exactly what to do... So anything in any situations, so if someone's having a bad day, or if something has gone wrong, she knows exactly how to solve it."</p> <p>"sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well."</p> <p>"I think it would [make a difference if the other children understood more about sensitivity] ... I know this is completely off topic, but my favourite lesson I ever had. And this was in primary Year Three, when we were talking about gender stereotypes. Especially after an incident. So there was a game where you could play things like football, basketball, cricket and a few other things. And one of those, the boys who at the time was in Year Six said that you couldn't go in just because I was a girl. Thank goodness for that lesson... It [changed] how they thought about it. And I only wanted to go in there because some of my [male] friends were in there."</p> <p>"I just feel like they, they, they, they understood me a bit, you know, I felt really happy about it."</p> <p>"[if my teachers did understand about sensitivity] I think it would be better. It wouldn't stop all the sensitivity and upset and stuff, but it'll it might help you calm down when you're digging a hole for yourself."</p> <p>"all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I'm highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it's like because they've been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it's nice."</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child having meaningful connection (i.e., feeling similar to others) is important</p>	<p>"being in a place where we can express our feelings, that's what we're working on. Being able to express our feelings with each other a bit more. And being in a place like that is very, very helpful. And the fact that I can now do that much more than I could. It's making me think that, well, OK, I mean it's opening up lots of new windows for me, I'm in this safe place with a lot of other people who are sensitive and I've known them all my life, so hey."</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>

Subtheme 2: The uncomfortable ifs, buts, and maybes of peer interactions

Code	Extract(s)	Participant
Child experiencing an intense dislike of disagreements and arguments	“it used to happen a lot, Year 5 and early in Year 6 too but it’s much better now, there’s much less drama involved”	Participant 1b
	“Well, the classrooms, I want to be a bit bigger. So I don’t feel like I’m enclosed with too many children in the same space... too many children on the same table, cause it always turns into a bit of an argument, and it’s really loud because everyone wants to do a certain thing. But there’s too many people on each table.”	Participant 4b
	“someone might start getting shouted at... something might happen and I want to be able to take myself away from it, but I can’t because we need to be together and also in a conversation with someone being shouted at I find that quite hard to go off. I can’t go off because I need to contribute to the conversation as well.”	Participant 5c
	“[disadvantages of my sensitivity are] over-reactions. When I enter a distrusting situation like I’ve been hurt or someone else has been hurt or something bad happened, I tend to overreact. And I overreact in other ways as well. So during a math lesson, for example, I do not like math, but sometimes I don’t like it so much that I battle with myself again, but in a different context... So for example [I might over-react] on my phone I sometimes completely don’t answer messages at all, or sometimes I completely go bananas and say everything... It depends on how I feel that day. So if I’ve had a generally good day, I don’t over-react as much as I do when I’ve had a bad day...like it is a battle with myself in whatever context I am in, if it is maths, or because someone has been hurt or I can’t find my sister, I can feel thoroughly miserable for the whole day.”	
	“Sometimes I kind of have a battle with myself... So, one of those situations is where I feel stressed or being pulled to my limit... For example, during a conversation where people are shouting and I know why they’re shouting, but I don’t know how to help, I have snapped a couple of times”	
	“[it’s a little bit too much when] someone [is] shouting or like if the teachers shouting at the student and, like, when I hear people shouting in my old school, I just automatically cry because that’s what I do and. Yeah, I don’t like people shouting at people because when the moment someone starts shouting at me, either just locked myself in a room or just start crying.”	Participant 7b
Child having meaningful connection (i.e., feeling	“being in a place where we can express our feelings, that’s what we’re working on. Being able to express our feelings with each other a bit more. And being in a place like that is very, very helpful. And the fact that I can now do that much more than I could. It’s making me think that, well, OK, I mean it’s opening up lots of new	Participant 5c

<p>similar to others) is important</p>	<p>windows for me, I'm in this safe place with a lot of other people who are sensitive and I've known them all my life, so hey."</p>	
<p>Managing 'big' feelings: Child having access to a social support network, promoting a sense of belongingness, aids wellbeing at school</p>	<p>"[if there was one thing I wish my teachers knew about me it would be] how much, how much sensitivity I have?"</p> <p>"It's getting so much easier... I've been able to express my feelings more. I've had more outlets than I had, I only had one outlet at the start of the year. It was my sister. Now it's the rest of my family, my friends, the learning mentor at school, and the teachers as well had loads more outlets in my feelings, which means the pressure inside is lower than what it was at the start of the year because I've had those valves to vent things out."</p> <p>"sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well."</p> <p>"I was thinking actually to ask my form tutors... if I could do an assembly or a couple of words about sensitivity because it's something that is a lot, there's a lot of it in my year and there's lots of people who feel the same as me but in different ways... [It would be about] coping strategies, things about how sensitivity is what sensitivity is, the spectrum of it. So the different things that it can encompass. Being able to have more insight into your senses so like smells for me or hearing, or being more overwhelmed and over-reacting sometimes to negative things in the school life or home life that are going on... And the way that children and young people in the school can co-operate with it and then we can hopefully have a better school life because people are listening to teach other and they understand about each of them all."</p> <p>"[it would be ideal if my peers were] well educated about sensitivity in more detail, which is why I wanted to do the assembly thing cause that plants the acorn that starts it. Being able to be understood by more people would help me and most other people in my year as well a lot"</p> <p>"One of [my teachers understands about sensitivity] ... She's the learning mentor. She's the one that everyone goes to. Everyone loves. She's the one that everyone talks to when they got a problem. She always knows how to solve it... So she's helped. She actually helped me out of things on a number of occasions, and she's</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>

	<p>the one who she's one of the only teachers actually at school where I can truly be myself and talk to properly... Because some teachers, I wouldn't go near. Because I find them... scary... She's got her own room next to the library, which is the calmest part of the school... There's lots of squishy chairs in there and she knows exactly what to do... So anything in any situations, so if someone's having a bad day, or if something has gone wrong, she knows exactly how to solve it."</p> <p>"sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well."</p> <p>"I think it would [make a difference if the other children understood more about sensitivity] ... I know this is completely off topic, but my favourite lesson I ever had. And this was in primary Year Three, when we were talking about gender stereotypes. Especially after an incident. So there was a game where you could play things like football, basketball, cricket and a few other things. And one of those, the boys who at the time was in Year Six said that you couldn't go in just because I was a girl. Thank goodness for that lesson... It [changed] how they thought about it. And I only wanted to go in there because some of my [male] friends were in there."</p> <p>"I just feel like they, they, they, they understood me a bit, you know, I felt really happy about it."</p> <p>"[if my teachers did understand about sensitivity] I think it would be better. It wouldn't stop all the sensitivity and upset and stuff, but it'll it might help you calm down when you're digging a hole for yourself."</p> <p>"all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I'm highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it's like because they've been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it's nice."</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child overthinking interactions with peers, resulting in strong emotional reactions</p>	<p>"[it is difficult at school when] you go out to play play sometimes. When when you're playing and some of your friends don't wanna play with you, you might get a bit um more upset because you don't you you'll have no one to play with... you feel like if they say no, you kind of feel like oh. What? What? And then you look at, sometimes I look at my other friends and look what they're doing. And I just think no. Doesn't seem like my my thing. And then when you look back at them, you're like, really wanna do that? Because I like what they're doing. But if</p>	<p>Participant 6b</p>

	<p>they just say no, I just feel like I've been left out. What do I do now? Just sit for the rest of break or do something anyway?"</p> <p>"if someone you know is upset, it's really, sometimes it's bad because even if you don't like the person you're you, you, your natural thing to do would be go ask are you OK? And you would notice if if it's just sat there. And you notice if someone like is maybe being a bit rude? Most people ignore it. Wipe it off. Be like yeah yeah, whatever. But sometimes you can take it in a lot more than other people."</p>	
<p>Child valuing opportunities to connect with peers emotionally in a 'safe place'</p>	<p>"I think it would [make a difference if the other children understood more about sensitivity] ... I know this is completely off topic, but my favourite lesson I ever had. And this was in primary Year Three, when we were talking about gender stereotypes. Especially after an incident. So there was a game where you could play things like football, basketball, cricket and a few other things. And one of those, the boys who at the time was in Year Six said that you couldn't go in just because I was a girl. Thank goodness for that lesson... It [changed] how they thought about it. And I only wanted to go in there because some of my [male] friends were in there."</p> <p>"being in a place where we can express our feelings, that's what we're working on. Being able to express our feelings with each other a bit more. And being in a place like that is very, very helpful. And the fact that I can now do that much more than I could. It's making me think that, well, OK, I mean it's opening up lots of new windows for me, I'm in this safe place with a lot of other people who are sensitive and I've known them all my life, so hey."</p> <p>"all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I'm highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it's like because they've been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it's nice."</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>

Theme 3: Crowds, noise, and rush – *‘it’s a little bit too much’*

Code	Extract(s)	Participant
Child experiencing school as too busy (i.e., too many people)	<p>“all of us crammed in one small tiny space... when everybody is waiting for lunch. Usually when we go down, we go down a bit early, so it’s just a giant like circle of people and just crammed... and I hate it.”</p> <p>“knowing that I’m crammed in.”</p>	Participant 1b
	<p>“Well, the classrooms, I want to be a bit bigger. So I don’t feel like I’m enclosed with too many children in the same space... too many children on the same table, cause it always turns into a bit of an argument, and it’s really loud because everyone wants to do a certain thing. But there’s too many people on each table.”</p>	Participant 4b
	<p>“[I would like] soundproof walls [at school] ... [and] assemblies, they’re, they cram every child into one room from, it’s every child in each year, not even one group or key stage two and key stage one. Sometimes it’s every single child. In one room, sometimes it’s just half the school in one room, but it’s very it gets very crowded cause you sometimes there’s children who can’t even fit in there to stand outside and watch... [it] makes me feel uncomfortable because there’s people in front of me behind me and also... they’ve got their arms around their legs, their legs up and they couldn’t really fit. The teachers barely notice cause of how many children are and they don’t pay attention to height. So in the Year Six leaving play no one could actually see what was happening at the back”</p>	
Child experiencing school as too noisy	<p>“usually in class [loud noises make me feel uncomfortable], like, especially if, you know, with all of us being crammed in one small tiny space, and we’re all being really loud. Like, for example, when it, it hasn’t been happening too much, because I absolutely hate it, but when everybody is waiting to go for lunch. Usually when we go down, we go down a bit early, so it’s just a giant like circle of people and just crammed and everyone is really loud and talking and I hate it.”</p>	Participant 1b
	<p>“It’s usually more people talking really loudly, like that example at lunch. But not like fireworks, I’m fine with that. But people talking really loudly, shouting, I really don’t like that.”</p>	
	<p>“[I would like the classroom to be] not like completely silent, but a bit of talking, but not like super-duper loud. Like I don’t know, maybe just no shouting. That’s what usually happens and it’s just really annoying.”</p> <p>“A lot of different sounds at once or a lot of different things going on at once I don’t like it. I wouldn’t like that.”</p>	Participant 4b

	<p>“Well, the classrooms, I want to be a bit bigger. So I don’t feel like I’m enclosed with too many children in the same space... too many children on the same table, cause it always turns into a bit of an argument, and it’s really loud because everyone wants to do a certain thing. But there’s too many people on each table.”</p> <p>“And lunchtimes sometimes well the teachers deal with lines but sometimes they they go quite close and shout. The don’t stand in the middle like all the time. Sometimes they’re right next to a certain child. And that’s really loud. They shout really loud, and sometimes they’re standing right next to me or one of my friends, or someone in one of those classes or year groups. And it’s just extremely loud.... it can make you feel a bit uncomfortable.”</p> <p>“[People chatting] ... It’s just sometimes it gets annoying.”</p> <p>“sometimes it’s people shouting [that makes me feel uncomfortable]. Or if there is lots going on at once, because, that’s that’s sort of limited, most people’s brains, that allows them to only listen to one set of words at once rather than multiple.”</p> <p>“concentrating [is difficult at school] ... cause normally you’re you’re always like I said earlier, with the tennis ball, if someone’s bouncing it, you’ll hear it really. But the things that make you bit unconcentrating is if you’re trying to concentrate on writing, you get a bit like oh, um, when you get pressure and you think you you you feel very, once you get a bit of pressure, you feel unnerved, you feel you feel. I feel like it’s really hard to concentrate sometimes.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would be] someone that would, um, let you go outside and play... just to keep you calm... Maybe just to get away from all the all the work, all the noise and just give yourself the time that you want to have for a minute.”</p> <p>“we were getting the new building in the school and it...[affected] our studying time because it went on for like a year and I couldn’t concentrate. No one can concentrate... because we [were] literally right next to that area. So yeah, it was quite loud and I couldn’t concentrate.”</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child experiencing overwhelm and/or finding it</p>	<p>“there’s only one time in the morning that you’re allowed to eat, and then there’s lunchtime, and that’s all we eat at school. And sometimes I forget to bring a snack, so I only have lunch, and then the afternoon and and</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p>

<p>difficult to regulate throughout the school day</p>	<p>in the morning, I don't have enough energy because we have to have playtime... And that well it just makes me really tired at school and hangry.”</p> <p>“I think that they should give certain children with highly sensitive or autism to have time to like go out the room and just calm down in their own space... Like after break times. When they've had, like in Year Five and Six. And they have a break time first... And also I wouldn't have eaten since breakfast... It makes me tired because you're running around. And sometimes it's a bit more in the heat and sometimes it's really cold... And sometimes it's just normal temperature. So I'd be a bit knackered after running around in different temperatures each day... like can I have an extra like some children need to have more than one snack in the afternoon, as well as in the morning.”</p> <p>“[being low on energy] affects the way I listen, because sometimes I zone out and then I don't know what I'm doing... I've been working out [at playtime], so I'm tired.”</p> <p>“[the perfect classroom would have] not too many things on the walls because sometimes when I look up, I just want to see some space where there's nothing going into my mind, nothing distracting me.”</p> <p>“sometimes it's people shouting [that makes me feel uncomfortable]. Or if there is lots going on at once, because, that's that's sort of limited, most people's brains, that allows them to only listen to one set of words at once rather than multiple.”</p> <p>“Usually I get quite easily distracted unless it's in a lesson setting, because there's nothing to distract me.”</p> <p>“The food would be more filling [in the ideal school] ... we don't get large enough portions to be able to fill us up through the whole day.”</p> <p>“concentrating [is difficult at school] ... cause normally you're you're always like I said earlier, with the tennis ball, if someone's bouncing it, you'll hear it really. But the things that make you bit unconcentrating is if you're trying to concentrate on writing, you get a bit like oh, um, when you get pressure and you think you you you feel very, once you get a bit of pressure, you feel unnerved, you feel you feel. I feel like it's really hard to concentrate sometimes.”</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p> <p>Participant 6b</p>
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Child desiring access to breaks when feeling overwhelmed	“I think that they should give certain children with highly sensitive or autism to have time to like go out the room and just calm down in their own space.”	Participant 4b
	“I can remember at primary school the old photography room was turned into a sensory room... I did go there for quite a lot during Year Three and Year Four but then I realised that the library is about the quietest room... I started going to the library much more often.”	Participant 5b
	“[I enjoy the library because of] all the books... Sometimes there were relatable characters. But usually I just read fantasy because it provided an escape... [from] nothing in particular.”	
	“[the perfect teacher would be] someone that lets you go out for breaks literally whenever you need it”	Participant 6b
	“[they understand me because] I like, what type, like, if, when, maybe if I’m a bit upset, they just say, [child], if if if you’re upset, you don’t wanna talk right now, I’ll come back in about 10-15 minutes and check on you. Maybe you calm yourself down by then or something.”	
	“[the perfect teacher would be] someone that would, um, let you go outside and play... just to keep you calm... Maybe just to get away from all the all the work, all the noise and just give yourself the time that you want to have for a minute.”	
	“you always like want to be doing something fun and something energetic or something really relaxing, so it can’t just be in between. Like doing work. You want something either, I don’t know. Like kinetic sand that helps me calm down. Or maybe some things that want to help me calm down or help me feel a bit better is going outside and I don’t know, playing football for a bit.”	
“I’m one of those people that likes if, um, asks to go outside, if if it’s not fun, ask can I go with the tennis ball outside and just and catch, throw it against the wall, catch it? I don’t know. Whatever will help. That’s the type of person I think I am.”		
“I do flexi-schooling... I go Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.”	Participant 7b	
Child desiring more opportunities to recharge	“I want lunch before playtime because when it drains all your energy and you don’t have any to eat lunch.”	Participant 4b
	“I feel like I get quite a lot [of time to recharge in the day], but still not quite enough.”	Participant 5b

<p>their energy levels throughout the school day</p>	<p>“[the perfect teacher would be] someone that lets you go out for breaks literally whenever you need it... I snack a lot”</p> <p>“The food would be more filling [in the ideal school] ... we don't get large enough portions to be able to fill us up through the whole day.”</p>	<p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>‘Uni-tasking’, as opposed to multi-tasking, felt to reduce overwhelm in the classroom</p>	<p>“When people keen on asking me to do things at school, they're always asking me to do things, but I'm only halfway through this other thing. That's annoying”</p> <p>“[the perfect classroom would have] not too many things on the walls because sometimes when I look up, I just want to see some space where there's nothing going into my mind, nothing distracting me.”</p> <p>“sometimes it's people shouting [that makes me feel uncomfortable]. Or if there is lots going on at once, because, that's that's sort of limited, most people's brains, that allows them to only listen to one set of words at once rather than multiple.”</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p>
<p>Child desiring physical change to the school environment to reduce the sensory experience of overwhelm</p>	<p>“[I would like the classroom to be] not like completely silent, but a bit of talking, but not like super-duper loud. Like I don't know, maybe just no shouting. That's what usually happens and it's just really annoying.”</p> <p>“Well, the classrooms, I want to be a bit bigger. So I don't feel like I'm enclosed with too many children in the same space... too many children on the same table, cause it always turns into a bit of an argument, and it's really loud because everyone wants to do a certain thing. But there's too many people on each table.”</p> <p>“[the perfect classroom would have] not too many things on the walls because sometimes when I look up, I just want to see some space where there's nothing going into my mind, nothing distracting me.”</p> <p>“Playground... have one for each different year. I want it to be more so it's more age, age type because sometimes when we're with the Year Sixes as Year Fours... It feels weird to be around people who are a lot older than you... [if it were just my year] it would make the playground a lot calmer, because then you don't have the older children taking up more space.”</p> <p>“I need to work more at my pace and just be able to deal with what's around me because since there's only me and my brother in this house and a bunch of animals, it gives me more space to think, and there's not things all around the walls. It's not it's not too much. It's more, normal.”</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p>

	<p>“I want the classroom to be bigger because having 30 children in one small classroom. Like I don’t get space to think. And I feel a bit crowded sometimes.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would make sure the children were] getting down to work, just not too loud, they can talk but not too loud and to talk about the work, to talk to your friends while you work.”</p> <p>“[I would like] soundproof walls [at school]”</p> <p>“Some of the teachers in my school have got quite close to what I’d imagine as the perfect teacher... Not that strict. I can remember having a really strict teacher in Year Five who kept aiming for a quiet classroom, but I prefer it when and we’re allowed to chat a bit, but only about the work... I quite like with teachers is when they’re enthusiastic about their subjects.”</p> <p>“I don’t think [any of my teachers] understand about sensitivity... no, even the teacher right now... Because when I tell them it, they they go, yeah, we’ll try that next time. Next time I get upset or angry and frustrated, they don’t try it... Then they they and they don’t ask, they don’t try, always try to help. They try to make things work sometimes.”</p> <p>“I’d want it to be very comfy and and for the desks in the classroom. To have, like those round chairs that you can spin on... There’d be like a bean bag area like the library in my school. And there be a fish tank because that calms me down... It just would be like, right, really comfy and for the playground to have lots of stuff to do. Because in my old school it will be kind of like, it would only be tarmac and stuff on the floor... And the classroom would be very big, like an entire, like. Well, not mile, but a mile long... just to give like, have your own space, like your own privacy, and in a way they’ll be like a little like window things on the side. So you can say hi to your friends...To have like a little door to shut yourself out if you think it’s a little bit too much.”</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
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Theme 4: Feeling different at school – is this a neurodivergence?

Code	Extract(s)	Participant
<p>Child feeling different to their peers</p>	<p>“if I was like the other boys I would probably join in, but because I am sensitive... I think I have more empathy.”</p>	Participant 1b
	<p>“[the not very nice children are] sheeple, as I called them and they will do the same stuff.”</p>	
	<p>“Since I am a bit, I don’t know how to say it, I am a bit, like I can like work quicker than usual and I learn things quick, like shown it once and I’ve learnt it, I find it, well I can go way above the year I am. Way above my age, yeah. And, well, it’s just the class goes really slow for everyone else. I’m catching on to things a lot quicker than other children... I don’t need to work hard, not really.”</p>	Participant 4b
	<p>“I don’t use [the term highly sensitive] very often. I prefer to use just sensitive... Because when I think of myself as highly sensitive it just reminds me of some of the things that have happened at school in the past... getting teased for it, because that did happen a few times at primary school... [I was teased for] just crying too often. I don’t know how to put it into words sometimes, but strong emotions to more general things... Which I think is thought to be a problem... [they would be] disliking me crying too much, I’d start crying because of that. There, it’s almost a vicious circle.”</p>	Participant 5b
	<p>“[my friend] ... he has problems as well.”</p>	Participant 6b
<p>Child viewing themselves through the more well-known lens of neurodivergence</p>	<p>“all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I’m highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it’s like because they’ve been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it’s nice.”</p>	Participant 7b
	<p>“because of high sensitive I’ve been able to help an autistic person in my class... I can understand [child with ASC] better than most people in the class... Well you know because she is autistic I’ve got the most traits like her... Like we both like similar things and she acts a bit worse than me sometimes, but she acted a bit like me... Well, once she started a tantrum [a bit like me], and she leaves the room. She always leaves at one of the doors that we have when she has a tantrum.”</p> <p>“I think that they should give certain children with highly sensitive or autism to have time to like go out the room and just calm down in their own space... Like after break times. When they’ve had, like in Year Five and Six.</p>	Participant 4b

	<p>And they have a break time first... And also I wouldn't have eaten since breakfast... It makes me tired because you're running around. And sometimes it's a bit more in the heat and sometimes it's really cold... And sometimes it's just normal temperature. So I'd be a bit knackered after running around in different temperatures each day."</p> <p>"No [the other children don't know about sensitivity], they know about autism. They mentioned it once when we were having an assembly... Yeah we just know about autism. They just learned about autism."</p> <p>"I think it would be a good thing [if we learned more about sensitivity at school] because having a bunch of teachers not believing in it and just one person coming in [my Mum], it would be a lot easier if more than one person came in, so there was like more people who can help with children there because only one person and a bunch of highly sensitive and all autistic people in a few different classrooms and only one person to help it doesn't make it easy."</p> <p>"that's kind of how I feel, I'm not diagnosed with autism or anything, but it's how I feel. I can't, people, I don't feel like people can see me in my home or anywhere. I feel people can't see me. All of me... Because there are such things as an inner identity and outer identity, outer identity is how I just plainly present myself, and it's largely unchanged. It largely doesn't change my inner identities. The things that I kept keep really close. I can't stop people from now knowing about it. They try and find out if something's wrong but I just say I'm fine... I feel like I'm not being seen or heard at school or at home, really. As often as I should be feeling."</p>	Participant 5c
<p>Child not wanting to feel different to their peers</p>	<p>"[the perfect class would be] a mix of highly sensitive and not. A mix is good it helps because it helps the people with highly sensitive feel like they're not different. Just makes them feel like they're just a normal child that doesn't have differences. They just feel like, they feel like they can make things like make friends easier, and they wouldn't be worried about school."</p> <p>"I don't use [the term highly sensitive] very often. I prefer to use just sensitive... Because when I think of myself as highly sensitive it just reminds me of some of the things that have happened at school in the past... getting teased for it, because that did happen a few times at primary school... [I was teased for] just crying too often. I don't know how to put it into words sometimes, but strong emotions to more general things... Which I think is thought to be a problem... [they would be] disliking me crying too much, I'd start crying because of that. There, it's almost a vicious circle."</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p>

	“all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I’m highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it’s like because they’ve been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it’s nice.”	Participant 7b
Child having meaningful connection (i.e., feeling similar to others) is important	“being in a place where we can express our feelings, that’s what we’re working on. Being able to express our feelings with each other a bit more. And being in a place like that is very, very helpful. And the fact that I can now do that much more than I could. It’s making me think that, well, OK, I mean it’s opening up lots of new windows for me, I’m in this safe place with a lot of other people who are sensitive and I’ve known them all my life, so hey.”	Participant 5c

Theme 5: Wanting to feel seen, heard, and understood – no, this is high ES

Code	Extract(s)	Participant
Child feeling misunderstood by school-based staff and/or peers	<p>“Miss always puts me together with two people, like they’re just my friends [but they bully me]”</p> <p>“My last teacher, I know that she did [understand about high ES], but my Year 3, I don’t think she really did.”</p> <p>“I think it would be good [if people knew more about high ES] because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen.”</p> <p>“I know I’m bringing it up again, but like, I would like the boys to do less of these things. Like there is this one person called [name] and he calls me [full name], which is my full name. But I don’t wanna be called that, I know it’s weird and silly but I really don’t like that... I wish they would do less of that.”</p> <p>“what used to happen was cause a lot of people knew, no, they they didn’t know how sensitive I was, I don’t think I ever knew, but they knew that I could easily cry and easily get angry and upset. So, they always just pretty mean to me and say and do mean things to me and that was really hard. And I I was really, really bad. On free day, they wrote on my pencil case that I had. And there is some really, really bad and rude ones... they do annoy me by calling me [full name] and I really don’t like it.”</p>	Participant 1b

	<p>“I don’t think that was right [what the teacher said] but she said that, I remember she was being on his side when at least, in my opinion, he was more in the wrong than me and my friends, so I went up to tell again... I was just crying until the end of the day.”</p> <p>“Some people [knowing about high ES is a good thing], yes, some people [knowing about high ES is a bad thing] ... Like most of the boys know, and I wish they didn’t, because at the end of the day they probably try and tease me more. But the other people, I think it would be good because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen.”</p> <p>“I think I would say not at all really [people don’t understand about high ES at school], well sometimes, a little bit, but not very much.”</p> <p>“My Mum understands me more than anyone else.”</p> <p>“I don’t act so sensitive at school because when my Mum told my teacher that I was highly sensitive, she didn’t. She didn’t really know. So I want to hide it”</p> <p>“I want to be home schooled because Mum knows how to fix it and the teachers don’t.”</p> <p>“When [child who I think is highly sensitive] gets annoyed, he leaves the classroom, he goes to the cloakroom. They don’t understand it, they just get another teacher to come and help... And my teacher they can’t really do anything because they didn’t really understand it. There is one teacher who does and she can help because she does understand it, but she is the other class teacher so she will come when he goes in the cloakroom... [she helps because] she has a room with a bunch of stuff in it. And if children aren’t really happy or annoyed or they’re not doing, they’re a bit upset, she’ll take them to her room and just ask them what’s wrong and stuff... [she is] one that actually understands the children... the teacher will then give time to help the other children who aren’t OK while everyone else does their work... [I am] a person that would like help.”</p> <p>“No [the other children don’t know about sensitivity], they know about autism. They mentioned it once when we were having an assembly... Yeah we just know about autism. They just learned about autism.”</p> <p>“They don’t know that if you ask them about it, they’d have no clue.”</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p>
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	<p>“I don’t use [the term highly sensitive] very often. I prefer to use just sensitive... Because when I think of myself as highly sensitive it just reminds me of some of the things that have happened at school in the past... getting teased for it, because that did happen a few times at primary school... [I was teased for] just crying too often. I don’t know how to put it into words sometimes, but strong emotions to more general things... Which I think is thought to be a problem... [they would be] disliking me crying too much, I’d start crying because of that. There, it’s almost a vicious circle.”</p> <p>“in high school no [school staff aren’t aware of my sensitivity] ... But thinking back to primary school, I’m not so sure. It was mainly support staff that knew that... I think it was a bit easier with those people.”</p> <p>“there are a couple of teachers, I’d be able to talk to... I’ve spoken to one of them [about sensitivity]. And she gave me a little fidget toy for use in class. That’s all. I have this habit of fidgeting with things... I don’t know whether it helped me in lessons necessarily, because it still felt really wrong.”</p> <p>“that’s kind of how I feel, I’m not diagnosed with autism or anything, but it’s how I feel. I can’t, people, I don’t feel like people can see me in my home or anywhere. I feel people can’t see me. All of me... Because there are such things are an inner identity and outer identity, outer identity is how I just plainly present myself, and it’s largely unchanged. It largely doesn’t change my inner identities. The things that I kept keep really close. I can’t stop people from now knowing about it. They try and find out if something’s wrong but I just say I’m fine... I feel like I’m not being seen or heard at school or at home, really. As often as I should be feeling.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher] they’ll be strict, they’ll be more tightening on things like bullying, racism and things like that towards other students, which are very offensive.”</p> <p>“I don’t think [any of my teachers] understand about sensitivity... no, even the teacher right now... Because when I tell them it, they they go, yeah, we’ll try that next time. Next time I get upset or angry and frustrated, they don’t try it. Then they they and they don’t ask, they don’t try, always try to help. They try to make things work sometimes.”</p>	Participant 5c
	<p>“I think [one thing I wish teachers knew about me would be] to understand like who I am and to actually understand my personality. And to, like, um, know who I am and not just think that I’m just an average student that needs to be taught how to fit in with society”</p>	Participant 6b

	<p>"they know nothing. They have no idea what [highly sensitive] means."</p> <p>"I wasn't on the exact same table as my best friend, but this horrible girl... She was my bully... she smirked at me and that really hurt my feelings."</p> <p>"I was like the golden student, like I did everything right, did everything nearly perfectly. But the thing is, everything I did was like nearly perfect. But if I did one slip up, like when we were doing English, which is my top thing, I can never fail at English. I'm always like 100 and I was daydreaming and what I was going to write about. And when we got onto it, I asked what are we doing? I forgot. And then she just let it off of me and she just started shouting at me and said I thought you were like, a really good student. Why did you not listen to me and. And she didn't give me any help"</p> <p>"in Class Four it was the terrible last time because I have this dreadful assistant teacher called [name] and she was really rude to me and that's one of the reasons why I moved out the school because of her. Because she'd always pick on me"</p> <p>"I just don't think they would change because they just have their own very strong opinion"</p>	Participant 7b
<p>Child acknowledging the benefits of feeling seen, heard, and understood as a sensitive individual within the education context</p>	<p>"Some people [knowing about high ES is a good thing], yes, some people [knowing about high ES is a bad thing] ... Like most of the boys know, and I wish they didn't, because at the end of the day they probably try and tease me more. But the other people, I think it would be good because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen."</p> <p>"sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well."</p> <p>"I would say a few people [understand about high ES]. Like at least, I don't know, five people."</p> <p>"My last teacher, I know that she did [understand about high ES]"</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p>

	<p>“I think she did [understand about high ES]. I don't, I don't know if she knew that I was highly sensitive, but she was just really nice.”</p> <p>“When [child who I think is highly sensitive] gets annoyed, he leaves the classroom, he goes to the cloakroom. They don't understand it, they just get another teacher to come and help... And my teacher they can't really do anything because they didn't really understand it. There is one teacher who does and she can help because she does understand it, but she is the other class teacher so she will come when he goes in the cloakroom... [she helps because] she has a room with a bunch of stuff in it. And if children aren't really happy or annoyed or they're not doing, they're a bit upset, she'll take them to her room and just ask them what's wrong and stuff... [she is] one that actually understands the children... the teacher will then give time to help the other children who aren't OK while everyone else does their work... [I am] a person that would like help.”</p> <p>“in high school no [school staff aren't aware of my sensitivity] ... But thinking back to primary school, I'm not so sure. It was mainly support staff that knew that... I think it was a bit easier with those people.”</p> <p>“there are a couple of teachers, I'd be able to talk to... I've spoken to one of them [about sensitivity]. And she gave me a little fidget toy for use in class. That's all. I have this habit of fidgeting with things... I don't know whether it helped me in lessons necessarily, because it still felt really wrong.”</p> <p>“All, all my friends right now understand it... Some of my friends from primary school had an idea and I enjoyed playing with them”</p> <p>“I think it will be good if every school had at least one member of staff, you'd be able to talk to... For instance, some learning mentor... [You could talk about] issues with sensitivity, learning methods. All the rest of that.”</p> <p>“One of [my teachers understands about sensitivity] ... She's the learning mentor. She's the one that everyone goes to. Everyone loves. She's the one that everyone talks to when they got a problem. She always knows how to solve it... So she's helped. She actually helped me out of things on a number of occasions, and she's the one who she's one of the only teachers actually at school where I can truly be myself and talk to properly... Because some teachers, I wouldn't go near. Because I find them... scary... She's got her own room next to the library, which is the calmest part of the school... There's lots of squishy chairs in there and she knows exactly what to do... So anything in any situations, so if someone's having a bad day, or if something has gone wrong, she knows exactly how to solve it.”</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>
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	<p>“sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well.”</p> <p>“I just feel like they, they, they, they understood me a bit, you know, I felt really happy about it.”</p> <p>“[they understand me because] I like, what type, like, if, when, maybe if I’m a bit upset, they just say, [child], if if you’re upset, you don’t wanna talk right now, I’ll come back in about 10-15 minutes and check on you. Maybe you calm yourself down by then or something.”</p> <p>“all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I’m highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it’s like because they’ve been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it’s nice.”</p> <p>“[at my new school my new teachers] know lots about [high-sensitivity] ... that makes a very big difference... they just like know how to comfort you when you’re feeling stressed, like in my old school. They just like, shove a bathroom pass in your face or like they just show.... like, say, you can just go off to the toilet like, have your like 15 minutes to yourself, like they wouldn’t. They don’t know how to actually help you and comfort you... [In my new school] we’ve got this library where it’s quite comfy in there and there’s lots of pillows where you can sit down and breathe as like a little cosy corner. So that’s what I do when I feel stressed, I ask if I can go in the library and or I just sit on a table and just think for a couple of minutes and they’ll come and check on me.”</p>	<p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child desires there to be increased awareness and understanding around the notion of high ES within their education context</p>	<p>“I would say [it is helpful when we learn about differences in school]”</p> <p>“Some people [knowing about high ES is a good thing], yes, some people [knowing about high ES is a bad thing] ... Like most of the boys know, and I wish they didn’t, because at the end of the day they probably try and tease me more. But the other people, I think it would be good because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen.”</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p>

	<p>“My Mum understands me more than anyone else... I want to be home schooled because Mum knows how to fix it and the teachers don’t.”</p> <p>“[if there was one thing I wish my teachers knew about me it would be] how much, how much sensitivity I have?”</p> <p>“I think it will be good if every school had at least one member of staff, you’d be able to talk to... For instance, some learning mentor... [You could talk about] issues with sensitivity, learning methods. All the rest of that.”</p> <p>“I think it would [make a difference if the other children understood more about sensitivity] ... I know this is completely off topic, but my favourite lesson I ever had. And this was in primary Year Three, when we were talking about gender stereotypes. Especially after an incident. So there was a game where you could play things like football, basketball, cricket and a few other things. And one of those, the boys who at the time was in Year Six said that you couldn’t go in just because I was a girl. Thank goodness for that lesson... It [changed] how they thought about it. And I only wanted to go in there because some of my [male] friends were in there.”</p> <p>“[I would like] the opportunity to speak to more people, so being able to have the opportunity to ask if we can do an assembly about the things that are troubling us and how people can cope with them... just to be, well, there for other people and to have more of that knowledge of sensitivity, which is why I want to spread it more, having that knowledge being able to help other people and having to opportunity to be able to tell other people about it. So their friends, their family, to be able to spread it further.”</p> <p>“I was thinking actually to ask my form tutors... if I could do an assembly or a couple of words about sensitivity because it’s something that is a lot, there’s a lot of it in my year and there’s lots of people who feel the same as me but in different ways... [It would be about] coping strategies, things about how sensitivity is what sensitivity is, the spectrum of it. So the different things that it can encompass. Being able to have more insight into your senses so like smells for me or hearing, or being more overwhelmed and over-reacting sometimes to negative things in the school life or home life that are going on... And the way that children and young people in the school can co-operate with it and then we can hopefully have a better school life because people are listening to teach other and they understand about each of them all.”</p> <p>“[it would be ideal if my peers were] well educated about sensitivity in more detail, which is why I wanted to do the assembly thing cause that plants the acorn that starts it. Being able to be understood by more people would help me and most other people in my year as well a lot”</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>
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	<p>“The only way they would really understand me is if they have, they have, they were sensitive, like the reason why Mum understands me I think is cause she gets sensitive. She she’s oversensitive sometimes so she can notice things so well... if you’re highly sensitive, if somebody is highly sensitive as a teacher they would notice like just before I’m gonna blow up and get angry. They would notice it because you can notice a lot things a lot quicker because my Mum notices when I’m upset really a lot, really upset. Or maybe she notices when I’m playing football if I’m like, I can’t do this. I can’t do this, but she knows when I’ve actually hurt myself or it’s just something that will go away eventually.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would be] very kind and they will, instead of putting you down, they’ll try and bring you up and make you happy. They would understand my needs. And what what will help me and what wouldn’t. And they always always listen to your answer not interrupting at all.”</p> <p>“[if my teachers did understand about sensitivity] I think it would be better. It wouldn’t stop all the sensitivity and upset and stuff, but it’ll it might help you calm down when you’re digging a hole for yourself.”</p>	Participant 6b
<p>Child desires to be better understood as a unique individual within their education context</p>	<p>“I don’t act so sensitive at school because when my Mum told my teacher that I was highly sensitive, she didn’t. She didn’t really know. So I want to hide it”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would be] very kind and they will, instead of putting you down, they’ll try and bring you up and make you happy. They would understand my needs. And what what will help me and what wouldn’t. And they always always listen to your answer not interrupting at all.”</p> <p>“I think [one thing I wish teachers knew about me would be] to understand like who I am and to actually understand my personality. And to, like, um, know who I am and not just think that I’m just an average student that needs to be taught how to fit in with society”</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>

Appendix. 23: Child Participant Group – Codes Allocated and Unallocated to RTA, Including Reasoning, and All Associated Extracts

Codes <u>Allocated</u> in Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), including location within RTA (seen in ‘Code’ column in blue font)		
Code	Extract(s)	Participant
<p>Child experiencing performance anxiety</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 1: ‘Big’ feelings are everywhere – ‘I can’t read it for myself’</p>	<p>“my presentation... I got really worried and really nervous about it... because I thought it wouldn’t be very good and people would laugh”</p>	Participant 1b
<p>Child experiencing transitions as being difficult</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 1: ‘Big’ feelings are everywhere – ‘I can’t read it for myself’</p>	<p>“I’m really nervous [about transitioning to Year 7]. I think that most people that I said I’m gonna be in Year 7 next year to, they say oh you will be excited, I said no. I was saying no. I’m kinda nervous... I’m really nervous about that like... sometimes I just think, well, it’s not gonna be good.”</p> <p>“if you’re sensitive, you can get you can be a lot more emotional and a bit more hyper and more scared of things normally... Maybe nerves maybe going doing something or anxiety about you’re about to go somewhere big and you’re like, oh, what’s it gonna be like?”</p>	Participant 1b Participant 6b
<p>Managing ‘big’ feelings: child able to understand peers’ emotions better than their own</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 1: ‘Big’ feelings are everywhere – ‘I can’t read it for myself’</p>	<p>“Being able to understand people that I can do quite well so I can read if someone is hurt, I can read if someone is angry, if someone is sad or if they just need some time on their own. I can. I can read it for other people but I don’t know why I can’t read it for myself as much as I can read it for other people.”</p> <p>“like I said, reading people’s feelings. So I’m quite good at that. I’m the person that people tend to go to, to talk to about their feelings... And I don’t know why I do this but I’m good at answering them and I’m not good at answering myself.”</p>	Participant 5c

	<p>“I sometimes do get really high stress levels really, really high stress levels. I will usually just tell myself to shut up or something like that.”</p>	
<p>Child experiencing what they feel to be as heightened emotions</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 1: ‘Big’ feelings are everywhere – ‘I can’t read it for myself’</p>	<p>“it makes me happier, like really happy, like somebody giving something to me like a gift, I get really happy and really thankful.”</p> <p>“so I have big happy emotions as well. I have like big sad emotions”</p> <p>“Most people probably usually just be a little bit angry but I’ll fall and start shouting and maybe start being a bit over the top without realising it”</p> <p>“I just feel as though being highly sensitive, if there’s an argument, I sometimes, I lash out, like a really, really bad thing.”</p> <p>“I was really offended, just like, offended [when the teacher corrected me]”</p> <p>“I don’t think that was right [what the teacher said] but she said that, I remember she was being on his side when at least, in my opinion, he was more in the wrong than me and my friends, so I went up to tell again... I was just crying until the end of the day.”</p> <p>“If somebody’s being rude to me I straight away get really angry.”</p> <p>“I don’t use [the term highly sensitive] very often. I prefer to use just sensitive... Because when I think of myself as highly sensitive it just reminds me of some of the things that have happened at school in the past... getting teased for it, because that did happen a few times at primary school... [I was teased for] just crying too often. I don’t know how to put it into words sometimes, but strong emotions to more general things... Which I think is thought to be a problem... [they would be] disliking me crying too much, I’d start crying because of that. There, it’s almost a vicious circle.”</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p>

	<p>“if you’re sensitive, you can get you can be a lot more emotional and a bit more hyper and more scared of things normally... Maybe nerves maybe going doing something or anxiety about you’re about to go somewhere big and you’re like, oh, what’s it gonna be like?”</p> <p>“if someone you know is upset, it’s really, sometimes it’s bad because even if you don’t like the person your your you, you, your natural thing to do would be go ask are you OK? And you would notice if if it if it’s just sat there. And you notice if someone like is maybe being a bit rude? Most people ignore it. Wipe it off. Be like yeah yeah, whatever. But sometimes you can take it in a lot more than other people.”</p> <p>“[disadvantages of my sensitivity are] over-reactions. When I enter a distrusting situation like I’ve been hurt or someone else has been hurt or something bad happened, I tend to overreact. And I overreact in other ways as well. So during a math lesson, for example, I do not like math, but sometimes I don’t like it so much that I battle with myself again, but in a different context... So for example [I might over-react] on my phone I sometimes completely don’t answer messages at all, or sometimes I completely go bananas and say everything... It depends on how I feel that day. So if I’ve had a generally good day, I don’t over-react as much as I do when I’ve had a bad day...like it is a battle with myself in whatever context I am in, if it is maths, or because someone has been hurt or I can’t find my sister, I can feel thoroughly miserable for the whole day.”</p> <p>“I sometimes do get really high stress levels really, really high stress levels. I will usually just tell myself to shut up or something like that.”</p> <p>“[being highly sensitive means that] some things like, for, say in my life, some things, um, uh, hit me in a different impact, like more, and makes me more upset.”</p>	<p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>Child experiencing apprehension around new things</p> <p>Location in RTA</p>	<p>“if you’re sensitive, you can get you can be a lot more emotional and a bit more hyper and more scared of things normally... Maybe nerves maybe going doing something or anxiety about you’re about to go somewhere big and you’re like, oh, what’s it gonna be like?”</p>	<p>Participant 6b</p>

<p>Theme 1: 'Big' feelings are everywhere – 'I can't read it for myself'</p>		
<p>Managing 'big' feelings: child having access to a social support network, promoting a sense of belongingness, aids wellbeing at school</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u></p> <p>Theme 1: 'Big' feelings are everywhere – 'I can't read it for myself'</p> <p>&</p> <p>Theme 2, Subtheme 1: Friendships as circles of protection</p> <p>&</p> <p>Theme 2, Subtheme 2: The uncomfortable ifs, buts, and maybes of peer interactions</p>	<p>"[if there was one thing I wish my teachers knew about me it would be] how much, how much sensitivity I have?"</p> <p>"It's getting so much easier... I've been able to express my feelings more. I've had more outlets than I had, I only had one outlet at the start of the year. It was my sister. Now it's the rest of my family, my friends, the learning mentor at school, and the teachers as well had loads more outlets in my feelings, which means the pressure inside is lower than what it was at the start of the year because I've had those valves to vent things out."</p> <p>"sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well."</p> <p>"I was thinking actually to ask my form tutors... if I could do an assembly or a couple of words about sensitivity because it's something that is a lot, there's a lot of it in my year and there's lots of people who feel the same as me but in different ways... [It would be about] coping strategies, things about how sensitivity is what sensitivity is, the spectrum of it. So the different things that it can encompass. Being able to have more insight into your senses so like smells for me or hearing, or being more overwhelmed and over-reacting sometimes to negative things in the school life or home life that are going on... And the way that children and young people in the school can co-operate with it and then we can hopefully have a better school life because people are listening to each other and they understand about each of them all."</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>

	<p>“[it would be ideal if my peers were] well educated about sensitivity in more detail, which is why I wanted to do the assembly thing cause that plants the acorn that starts it. Being able to be understood by more people would help me and most other people in my year as well a lot”</p> <p>“One of [my teachers understands about sensitivity] ... She’s the learning mentor. She’s the one that everyone goes to. Everyone loves. She’s the one that everyone talks to when they got a problem. She always knows how to solve it... So she’s helped. She actually helped me out of things on a number of occasions, and she’s the one who she’s one of the only teachers actually at school where I can truly be myself and talk to properly... Because some teachers, I wouldn’t go near. Because I find them... scary... She’s got her own room next to the library, which is the calmest part of the school... There’s lots of squishy chairs in there and she knows exactly what to do... So anything in any situations, so if someone’s having a bad day, or if something has gone wrong, she knows exactly how to solve it.”</p> <p>“sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well.”</p> <p>“I think it would [make a difference if the other children understood more about sensitivity] ... I know this is completely off topic, but my favourite lesson I ever had. And this was in primary Year Three, when we were talking about gender stereotypes. Especially after an incident. So there was a game where you could play things like football, basketball, cricket and a few other things. And one of those, the boys who at the time was in Year Six said that you couldn’t go in just because I was a girl. Thank goodness for that lesson... It [changed] how they thought about it. And I only wanted to go in there because some of my [male] friends were in there.”</p> <p>“I just feel like they, they, they, they understood me a bit, you know, I felt really happy about it.”</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p>
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	<p>“[if my teachers did understand about sensitivity] I think it would be better. It wouldn’t stop all the sensitivity and upset and stuff, but it’ll it might help you calm down when you’re digging a hole for yourself.”</p> <p>“all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I’m highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it’s like because they’ve been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it’s nice.”</p>	Participant 7b
<p>Child overthinking interactions with peers, resulting in strong emotional reactions</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 1: ‘Big’ feelings are everywhere – ‘I can’t read it for myself’ & Theme 2, Subtheme 2: The uncomfortable ifs, buts, and maybes of peer interactions</p>	<p>“[it is difficult at school when] you go out to play play sometimes. When when you’re playing and some of your friends don’t wanna play with you, you might get a bit um more upset because you don’t you you’ll have no one to play with... you feel like if they say no, you kind of feel like oh. What? What? And then you look at, sometimes I look at my other friends and look what they’re doing. And I just think no. Doesn’t seem like my my thing. And then when you look back at them, you’re like, really wanna do that? Because I like what they’re doing. But if they just say no, I just feel like I’ve been left out. What do I do now? Just sit for the rest of break or do something anyway?”</p> <p>“if someone you know is upset, it’s really, sometimes it’s bad because even if you don’t like the person your your you, you, your natural thing to do would be go ask are you OK? And you would notice if if it if it’s just sat there. And you notice if someone like is maybe being a bit rude? Most people ignore it. Wipe it off. Be like yeah yeah, whatever. But sometimes you can take it in a lot more than other people.”</p>	Participant 6b
<p>Child valuing the ability to empathise with peers and be a source of support in times of need</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u></p>	<p>“I think like the last Friday, it helped that I was like, helping the girls feel better. Like if I was like the other boys, I would probably join in, but I because I am sensitive... I think I have more empathy.”</p> <p>“me being really happy or something, that helps others”</p>	Participant 1b

<p>Theme 2, Subtheme 1: Friendships as circles of protection</p>	<p>“Being able to understand people that I can do quite well so I can read if someone is hurt, I can read if someone is angry, if someone is sad or if they just need some time on their own. I can. I can read it for other people but I don’t know why I can’t read it for myself as much as I can read it for other people.”</p> <p>“like I said, reading people’s feelings. So I’m quite good at that. I’m the person that people tend to go to, to talk to about their feelings... And I don’t know why I do this but I’m good at answering them and I’m not good at answering myself... So they often finish with a smile on their face... I like being able to make people laugh and having that thing where I can just exactly read how someone’s feeling and know the remedy for it is a thing that I think was quite special.”</p> <p>“people, when they come to me, they often ask such things, which make them feel better. So they asked me if they they can do anything and I’m always the person who people go to. But another thing is that when I make people laugh they don’t really laugh that way with many other people because I can kind of strike that cord with people, when I can understand what they’re feeling, I kind of strike that cord with people and so help I them understand what’s going on.”</p> <p>“[I would like] the opportunity to speak to more people, so being able to have the opportunity to ask if we can do an assembly about the things that are troubling us and how people can cope with them... just to be, well, there for other people and to have more of that knowledge of sensitivity, which is why I want to spread it more, having that knowledge being able to help other people and having to opportunity to be able to tell other people about it. So their friends, their family, to be able to spread it further.”</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>Child desiring to ensure others are okay; wanting to stick up for others and protect them</p> <p>Location in RTA</p>	<p>“Sometimes I kind of have a battle with myself... So, one of those situations is where I feel stressed or being pulled to my limit... For example, during a conversation where people are shouting and I know why they’re shouting, but I don’t know how to help, I have snapped a couple of times... I think because I want the shouting to stop and I want to help people, I want to know they’re OK, but I don’t know how to help, especially if it’s an adult conversation... I find it at school as well... So having to battle myself constantly is not fun, to be honest.”</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p>

<p>Theme 2, Subtheme 1: Friendships as circles of protection</p>	<p>“someone might start getting shouted at... something might happen and I want to be able to take myself away from it, but I can’t because we need to be together and also in a conversation with someone being shouted at I find that quite hard to go off. I can’t go off because I need to contribute to the conversation as well.”</p>	Participant 5c
<p>Child placing high value on friendships (e.g., best friends)</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 2, Subtheme 1: Friendships as circles of protection</p>	<p>“I always protected her before and my I’d always take the blame because I was fine with that.”</p> <p>“people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well.”</p> <p>“It would kind of make me feel uncomfortable in my old class because none of my best friends were there to kind of comfort me.”</p> <p>“in my old class it, to be honest, it wasn’t. It was quite terrible because um like especially in Class Four because it was really scary for me because I only had one best friend in that class”</p> <p>“I’d make sure [if I had to do pair or group work] it’s not what my PE teacher did because he knew that I was struggling, but he didn’t put me in with my best friend and he knew we were best friends. So that kind of made me not like him at all.”</p>	Participant 7b Participant 5c Participant 7b
<p>Child valuing opportunities to connect with peers emotionally in a ‘safe place’</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 2, Subtheme 1: Friendships as circles of protection</p>	<p>“I think it would [make a difference if the other children understood more about sensitivity] ... I know this is completely off topic, but my favourite lesson I ever had. And this was in primary Year Three, when we were talking about gender stereotypes. Especially after an incident. So there was a game where you could play things like football, basketball, cricket and a few other things. And one of those, the boys who at the time was in Year Six said that you couldn’t go in just because I was a girl. Thank goodness for that lesson... It [changed] how they thought about it. And I only wanted to go in there because some of my [male] friends were in there.”</p>	Participant 5b

<p style="text-align: center;">& Theme 2, Subtheme 2: The uncomfortable ifs, buts, and maybes of peer interactions</p>	<p>“being in a place where we can express our feelings, that’s what we’re working on. Being able to express our feelings with each other a bit more. And being in a place like that is very, very helpful. And the fact that I can now do that much more than I could. It’s making me think that, well, OK, I mean it’s opening up lots of new windows for me, I’m in this safe place with a lot of other people who are sensitive and I’ve known them all my life, so hey.”</p> <p>“all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I’m highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it’s like because they’ve been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it’s nice.”</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child experiencing an intense dislike of disagreements and arguments</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 2, Subtheme 2: The uncomfortable ifs, buts, and maybes of peer interactions</p>	<p>“it used to happen a lot, Year 5 and early in Year 6 too but it’s much better now, there’s much less drama involved”</p> <p>“Well, the classrooms, I want to be a bit bigger. So I don’t feel like I’m enclosed with too many children in the same space... too many children on the same table, cause it always turns into a bit of an argument, and it’s really loud because everyone wants to do a certain thing. But there’s too many people on each table.”</p> <p>“someone might start getting shouted at... something might happen and I want to be able to take myself away from it, but I can’t because we need to be together and also in a conversation with someone being shouted at I find that quite hard to go off. I can’t go off because I need to contribute to the conversation as well.”</p> <p>“Sometimes I kind of have a battle with myself... So, one of those situations is where I feel stressed or being pulled to my limit... For example, during a conversation where people are shouting and I know why they’re shouting, but I don’t know how to help, I have snapped a couple of times”</p> <p>“It makes me quite stressed... with a teacher it makes me stressed because... if you get in a fight you go to detention. Or if it’s that bad, you get suspended. That’s type of stuff and you can’t run away from them. Like you can’t go to the toilet because you’ve got to ask them. They’ll usually say no”</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>

	<p>“[it’s a little bit too much when] someone [is] shouting or like if the teachers shouting at the student and, like, when I hear people shouting in my old school, I just automatically cry because that’s what I do and. Yeah, I don’t like people shouting at people because when the moment someone starts shouting at me, either just locked myself in a room or just start crying.”</p>	
<p>Child having meaningful connection (i.e., feeling similar to others) is important</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 2, Subtheme 1: Friendships as circles of protection & Theme 2, Subtheme 2: The uncomfortable ifs, buts, and maybes of peer interactions & Theme 4: Feeling different at school – is this a neurodivergence?</p>	<p>“being in a place where we can express our feelings, that’s what we’re working on. Being able to express our feelings with each other a bit more. And being in a place like that is very, very helpful. And the fact that I can now do that much more than I could. It’s making me think that, well, OK, I mean it’s opening up lots of new windows for me, I’m in this safe place with a lot of other people who are sensitive and I’ve known them all my life, so hey.”</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>Child experiencing school as too busy (i.e., too many people)</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u></p>	<p>“all of us crammed in one small tiny space... when everybody is waiting for lunch. Usually when we go down, we go down a bit early, so it’s just a giant like circle of people and just crammed... and I hate it.”</p> <p>“knowing that I’m crammed in.”</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p>

<p>Theme 3: Crowds, noise, and rush – ‘it’s a little bit too much’</p>	<p>“Well, the classrooms, I want to be a bit bigger. So I don’t feel like I’m enclosed with too many children in the same space... too many children on the same table, cause it always turns into a bit of an argument, and it’s really loud because everyone wants to do a certain thing. But there’s too many people on each table.”</p> <p>“[I would like] soundproof walls [at school] ... [and] assemblies, they’re, they crown every child into one room from, it’s every child in each year, not even one group or key stage two and key stage one. Sometimes it’s every single child. In one room, sometimes it’s just half the school in one room, but it’s very it gets very crowded cause you sometimes there’s children who can’t even fit in there to stand outside and watch... [it] makes me feel uncomfortable because there’s people in front of me behind me and also... they’ve got their arms around their legs, their legs up and they couldn’t really fit. The teachers barely notice cause of how many children are and they don’t pay attention to height. So in the Year Six leaving play no one could actually see what was happening at the back”</p>	
<p>Child experiencing school as too noisy</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u></p> <p>Theme 3: Crowds, noise, and rush – ‘it’s a little bit too much’</p>	<p>“usually in class [loud noises make me feel uncomfortable], like, especially if, you know, with all of us being crammed in one small tiny space, and we’re all being really loud. Like, for example, when it, it hasn’t been happening too much, because I absolutely hate it, but when everybody is waiting to go for lunch. Usually when we go down, we go down a bit early, so it’s just a giant like circle of people and just crammed and everyone is really loud and talking and I hate it.”</p> <p>“It’s usually more people talking really loudly, like that example at lunch. But not like fireworks, I’m fine with that. But people talking really loudly, shouting, I really don’t like that.”</p> <p>“[I would like the classroom to be] not like completely silent, but a bit of talking, but not like super-duper loud. Like I don’t know, maybe just no shouting. That’s what usually happens and it’s just really annoying.”</p> <p>“A lot of different sounds at once or a lot of different things going on at once I don’t like it. I wouldn’t like that.”</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p>

	<p>“Well, the classrooms, I want to be a bit bigger. So I don’t feel like I’m enclosed with too many children in the same space... too many children on the same table, cause it always turns into a bit of an argument, and it’s really loud because everyone wants to do a certain thing. But there’s too many people on each table.”</p> <p>“And lunchtimes sometimes well the teachers deal with lines but sometimes they they go quite close and shout. The don’t stand in the middle like all the time. Sometimes they’re right next to a certain child. And that’s really loud. They shout really loud, and sometimes they’re standing right next to me or one of my friends, or someone in one of those classes or year groups. And it’s just extremely loud.... it can make you feel a bit uncomfortable.”</p> <p>“[People chatting] ... It’s just sometimes it gets annoying.”</p> <p>“Sometimes it’s people shouting [that makes me feel uncomfortable]. Or if there is lots going on at once, because, that’s that’s sort of limited, most people’s brains, that allows them to only listen to one set of words at once rather than multiple.”</p> <p>“concentrating [is difficult at school] ... cause normally you’re you’re always like I said earlier, with the tennis ball, if someone’s bouncing it, you’ll hear it really. But the things that make you bit unconcentrating is if you’re trying to concentrate on writing, you get a bit like oh, um, when you get pressure and you think you you you feel very, once you get a bit of pressure, you feel unnerved, you feel you feel. I feel like it’s really hard to concentrate sometimes.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would be] someone that would, um, let you go outside and play... just to keep you calm... Maybe just to get away from all the all the work, all the noise and just give yourself the time that you want to have for a minute.”</p> <p>“we were getting the new building in the school and it...[affected] our studying time because it went on for like a year and I couldn’t concentrate. No one can concentrate... because we [were] literally right next to that area. So yeah, it was quite loud and I couldn’t concentrate.”</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
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<p>Child experiencing overwhelm and/or finding it difficult to regulate throughout the school day</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 3: Crowds, noise, and rush – <i>‘it’s a little bit too much’</i></p>	<p>“there’s only one time in the morning that you’re allowed to eat, and then there’s lunchtime, and that’s all we eat at school. And sometimes I forget to bring a snack, so I only have lunch, and then the afternoon and and in the morning, I don’t have enough energy because we have to have playtime... And that well it just makes me really tired at school and hangry.”</p> <p>“I think that they should give certain children with highly sensitive or autism to have time to like go out the room and just calm down in their own space... Like after break times. When they’ve had, like in Year Five and Six. And they have a break time first... And also I wouldn’t have eaten since breakfast... It makes me tired because you’re running around. And sometimes it’s a bit more in the heat and sometimes it’s really cold... And sometimes it’s just normal temperature. So I’d be a bit knackered after running around in different temperatures each day... like can I have an extra like some children need to have more than one snack in the afternoon, as well as in the morning.”</p> <p>“[being low on energy] affects the way I listen, because sometimes I zone out and then I don’t know what I’m doing... I’ve been working out [at playtime], so I’m tired.”</p> <p>“[the perfect classroom would have] not too many things on the walls because sometimes when I look up, I just want to see some space where there’s nothing going into my mind, nothing distracting me.”</p>	Participant 4b
	<p>“sometimes it’s people shouting [that makes me feel uncomfortable]. Or if there is lots going on at once, because, that’s that’s sort of limited, most people’s brains, that allows them to only listen to one set of words at once rather than multiple.”</p> <p>“Usually I get quite easily distracted unless it’s in a lesson setting, because there’s nothing to distract me.”</p>	Participant 5b
	<p>“The food would be more filling [in the ideal school] ... we don’t get large enough portions to be able to fill us up through the whole day.”</p>	Participant 5c

	<p>“concentrating [is difficult at school] ... cause normally you’re you’re always like I said earlier, with the tennis ball, if someone’s bouncing it, you’ll hear it really. But the things that make you bit unconcentrating is if you’re trying to concentrate on writing, you get a bit like oh, um, when you get pressure and you think you you you feel very, once you get a bit of pressure, you feel unnerved, you feel you feel. I feel like it’s really hard to concentrate sometimes.”</p>	Participant 6b
<p>Child having access to breaks when feeling overwhelmed</p> <p>Location in RTA Theme 3: Crowds, noise, and rush – ‘it’s a little bit too much’</p>	<p>“I think that they should give certain children with highly sensitive or autism to have time to like go out the room and just calm down in their own space.”</p> <p>“I can remember at primary school the old photography room was turned into a sensory room... I did go there for quite a lot during Year Three and Year Four but then I realised that the library is about the quietest room... I started going to the library much more often.”</p> <p>“[I enjoy the library because of] all the books... Sometimes there were relatable characters. But usually I just read fantasy because it provided an escape... [from] nothing in particular.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would be] someone that lets you go out for breaks literally whenever you need it”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would be] someone that would, um, let you go outside and play... just to keep you calm... Maybe just to get away from all the all the work, all the noise and just give yourself the time that you want to have for a minute.”</p> <p>“I do flexi-schooling... I go Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.”</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child desiring more opportunities to recharge their energy levels throughout the school day</p> <p>Location in RTA</p>	<p>“I want lunch before playtime because when it drains all your energy and you don’t have any to eat lunch.”</p> <p>“I feel like I get quite a lot [of time to recharge in the day], but still not quite enough.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would be] someone that lets you go out for breaks literally whenever you need it... I snack a lot”</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p>

<p>Theme 3: Crowds, noise, and rush – ‘it’s a little bit too much’</p>	<p>“The food would be more filling [in the ideal school] ... we don’t get large enough portions to be able to fill us up through the whole day.”</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>‘Uni-tasking’, as opposed to multi-tasking, felt to reduce overwhelm in the classroom</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 3: Crowds, noise, and rush – ‘it’s a little bit too much’</p>	<p>“When people keen on asking me to do things at school, they’re always asking me to do things, but I’m only halfway through this other thing. That’s annoying”</p> <p>“[the perfect classroom would have] not too many things on the walls because sometimes when I look up, I just want to see some space where there’s nothing going into my mind, nothing distracting me.”</p> <p>“sometimes it’s people shouting [that makes me feel uncomfortable]. Or if there is lots going on at once, because, that’s that’s sort of limited, most people’s brains, that allows them to only listen to one set of words at once rather than multiple.”</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p>
<p>Child desiring physical change to the school environment to reduce the sensory experience of overwhelm</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 3: Crowds, noise, and rush – ‘it’s a little bit too much’</p>	<p>“[I would like the classroom to be] not like completely silent, but a bit of talking, but not like super-duper loud. Like I don’t know, maybe just no shouting. That’s what usually happens and it’s just really annoying.”</p> <p>“Well, the classrooms, I want to be a bit bigger. So I don’t feel like I’m enclosed with too many children in the same space... too many children on the same table, cause it always turns into a bit of an argument, and it’s really loud because everyone wants to do a certain thing. But there’s too many people on each table.”</p> <p>“[the perfect classroom would have] not too many things on the walls because sometimes when I look up, I just want to see some space where there’s nothing going into my mind, nothing distracting me.”</p> <p>“Playground... have one for each different year. I want it to be more so it’s more age, age type because sometimes when we’re with the Year Sixes as Year Fours... It feels weird to be around people who are a lot older than you... [if it were just my year] it would make the playground a lot calmer, because then you don’t have the older children taking up more space.”</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p>

	<p>“I need to work more at my pace and just be able to deal with what’s around me because since there’s only me and my brother in this house and a bunch of animals, it gives me more space to think, and there’s not things all around the walls. It’s not it’s not too much. It’s more, normal.”</p> <p>“I want the classroom to be bigger because having 30 children in one small classroom. Like I don’t get space to think. And I feel a bit crowded sometimes.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would make sure the children were] getting down to work, just not too loud, they can talk but not too loud and to talk about the work, to talk to your friends while you work.”</p> <p>“[I would like] soundproof walls [at school]”</p> <p>“Some of the teachers in my school have got quite close to what I’d imagine as the perfect teacher... Not that strict. I can remember having a really strict teacher in Year Five who kept aiming for a quiet classroom, but I prefer it when and we’re allowed to chat a bit, but only about the work... I quite like with teachers is when they’re enthusiastic about their subjects.”</p> <p>“I’d want it to be very comfy and and for the desks in the classroom. To have, like those round chairs that you can spin on... There’d be like a bean bag area like the library in my school. And there be a fish tank because that calms me down... It just would be like, right, really comfy and for the playground to have lots of stuff to do. Because in my old school it will be kind of like, it would only be tarmac and stuff on the floor... And the classroom would be very big, like an entire, like. Well, not mile, but a mile long... just to give like, have your own space, like your own privacy, and in a way they’ll be like a little like window things on the side. So you can say hi to your friends... To have like a little door to shut yourself out if you think it’s a little bit too much.”</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child feeling different to their peers</p> <p>Location in RTA</p>	<p>“if I was like the other boys I would probably join in, but because I am sensitive... I think I have more empathy.”</p> <p>“[the not very nice children are] sheeple, as I called them and they will do the same stuff.”</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p>

<p>Theme 4: Feeling different at school – is this a neurodivergence?</p>	<p>“Since I am a bit, I don’t know how to say it, I am a bit, like I can like work quicker than usual and I learn things quick, like shown it once and I’ve learnt it, I find it, well I can go way above the year I am. Way above my age, yeah. And, well, it’s just the class goes really slow for everyone else. I’m catching on to things a lot quicker than other children... I don’t need to work hard, not really.”</p> <p>“I don’t use [the term highly sensitive] very often. I prefer to use just sensitive... Because when I think of myself as highly sensitive it just reminds me of some of the things that have happened at school in the past... getting teased for it, because that did happen a few times at primary school... [I was teased for] just crying too often. I don’t know how to put it into words sometimes, but strong emotions to more general things... Which I think is thought to be a problem... [they would be] disliking me crying too much, I’d start crying because of that. There, it’s almost a vicious circle.”</p> <p>“[my friend] ... he has problems as well.”</p> <p>“all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I’m highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it’s like because they’ve been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it’s nice.”</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child viewing themselves through the more well-known lens of neurodivergence</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 4: Feeling different at school – is this a neurodivergence?</p>	<p>“because of high sensitive I’ve been able to help an autistic person in my class... I can understand [child with ASC] better than most people in the class... Well you know because she is autistic I’ve got the most traits like her... Like we both like similar things and she acts a bit worse than me sometimes, but she acted a bit like me... Well, once she started a tantrum [a bit like me], and she leaves the room. She always leaves at one of the doors that we have when she has a tantrum.”</p> <p>“I think that they should give certain children with highly sensitive or autism to have time to like go out the room and just calm down in their own space... Like after break times. When they’ve had, like in Year Five and Six. And they have a break time first... And also I wouldn’t have eaten since breakfast... It makes me tired because you’re running around. And sometimes it’s a bit more in the heat and sometimes it’s really cold... And sometimes it’s just normal temperature. So I’d be a bit knackered after running around in different temperatures each day.”</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p>

	<p>“No [the other children don’t know about sensitivity], they know about autism. They mentioned it once when we were having an assembly... Yeah we just know about autism. They just learned about autism.”</p> <p>“I think it would be a good thing [if we learned more about sensitivity at school] because having a bunch of teachers not believing in it and just one person coming in [my Mum], it would be a lost easier if more than one person came in, so there was like more people who can help with children there because only one person and a bunch of highly sensitive and all autistic people in a few different classrooms and only one person to help it doesn’t make it easy.”</p> <p>“that’s kind of how I feel, I’m not diagnosed with autism or anything, but it’s how I feel. I can’t, people, I don’t feel like people can see me in my home or anywhere. I feel people can’t see me. All of me... Because there are such things are an inner identity and outer identity, outer identity is how I just plainly present myself, and it’s largely unchanged. It largely doesn’t change my inner identities. The things that I kept keep really close. I can’t stop people from now knowing about it. They try and find out if something’s wrong but I just say I’m fine... I feel like I’m not being seen or heard at school or at home, really. As often as I should be feeling.”</p>	Participant 5c
<p>Child not wanting to feel different to their peers</p> <p>Location in RTA Theme 4: Feeling different at school – is this a neurodiversity?</p>	<p>“[the perfect class would be] a mix of highly sensitive and not. A mix is good it helps because it helps the people with highly sensitive feel like they’re not different. Just makes them feel like they’re just a normal child that doesn’t have differences. They just feel like, they feel like they can make things like make friends easier, and they wouldn’t be worried about school.”</p> <p>“I don’t use [the term highly sensitive] very often. I prefer to use just sensitive... Because when I think of myself as highly sensitive it just reminds me of some of the things that have happened at school in the past... getting teased for it, because that did happen a few times at primary school... [I was teased for] just crying too often. I don’t know how to put it into words sometimes, but strong emotions to more general things... Which I think is thought to be a problem... [they would be] disliking me crying too much, I’d start crying because of that. There, it’s almost a vicious circle.”</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p>

	<p>“all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I’m highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it’s like because they’ve been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it’s nice.”</p>	Participant 7b
<p>Child feeling misunderstood by school-based staff and/or peers</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 5: Wanting to feel seen, heard, and understood – no, this is high ES</p>	<p>“I think it would be good [if people knew more about high ES] because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen.”</p> <p>“what used to happen was cause a lot of people knew, no, they they didn’t know how sensitive I was, I don’t think I ever knew, but they knew that I could easily cry and easily get angry and upset. So, they always just pretty mean to me and say and do mean things to me and that was really hard. And I I was really, really bad. On free day, they wrote on my pencil case that I had. And there is some really, really bad and rude ones... they do annoy me by calling me [full name] and I really don’t like it.”</p> <p>“I don’t think that was right [what the teacher said] but she said that, I remember she was being on his side when at least, in my opinion, he was more in the wrong than me and my friends, so I went up to tell again... I was just crying until the end of the day.”</p> <p>“I think I would say not at all really [people don’t understand about high ES at school], well sometimes, a little bit, but not very much.”</p> <p>“My Mum understands me more than anyone else.”</p> <p>“No [the other children don’t know about sensitivity], they know about autism. They mentioned it once when we were having an assembly... Yeah we just know about autism. They just learned about autism.”</p> <p>“They don’t know that if you ask them about it, they’d have no clue.”</p> <p>“that’s kind of how I feel, I’m not diagnosed with autism or anything, but it’s how I feel. I can’t, people, I don’t feel like people can see me in my home or anywhere. I feel people can’t see me. All of me...”</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>

	<p>Because there are such things are an inner identity and outer identity, outer identity is how I just plainly present myself, and it's largely unchanged. It largely doesn't change my inner identities. The things that I kept keep really close. I can't stop people from now knowing about it. They try and find out if something's wrong but I just say I'm fine... I feel like I'm not being seen or heard at school or at home, really. As often as I should be feeling."</p> <p>"I think [one thing I wish teachers knew about me would be] to understand like who I am and to actually understand my personality. And to, like, um, know who I am and not just think that I'm just an average student that needs to be taught how to fit in with society"</p> <p>"they know nothing. They have no idea what [highly sensitive] means."</p>	Participant 7b
<p>Child acknowledging the benefits of feeling seen, heard, and understood as a sensitive individual within the education context</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 5: Wanting to feel seen, heard, and understood – no, this is high ES</p>	<p>"Some people [knowing about high ES is a good thing], yes, some people [knowing about high ES is a bad thing] ... Like most of the boys know, and I wish they didn't, because at the end of the day they probably try and tease me more. But the other people, I think it would be good because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen."</p> <p>"When [child who I think is highly sensitive] gets annoyed, he leaves the classroom, he goes to the cloakroom. They don't understand it, they just get another teacher to come and help... And my teacher they can't really do anything because they didn't really understand it. There is one teacher who does and she can help because she does understand it, but she is the other class teacher so she will come when he goes in the cloakroom... [she helps because] she has a room with a bunch of stuff in it. And if children aren't really happy or annoyed or they're not doing, they're a bit upset, she'll take them to her room and just ask them what's wrong and stuff... [she is] one that actually understands the children... the teacher will then give time to help the other children who aren't OK while everyone else does their work... [I am] a person that would like help."</p> <p>"in high school no [school staff aren't aware of my sensitivity] ... But thinking back to primary school, I'm not so sure. It was mainly support staff that knew that... I think it was a bit easier with those people."</p>	Participant 1b Participant 4b Participant 5b

	<p>“All, all my friends right now understand it... Some of my friends from primary school had an idea and I enjoyed playing with them”</p> <p>“I think it will be good if every school had at least one member of staff, you’d be able to talk to... For instance, some learning mentor... [You could talk about] issues with sensitivity, learning methods. All the rest of that.”</p> <p>“One of [my teachers understands about sensitivity] ... She’s the learning mentor. She’s the one that everyone goes to. Everyone loves. She’s the one that everyone talks to when they got a problem. She always knows how to solve it... So she’s helped. She actually helped me out of things on a number of occasions, and she’s the one who she’s one of the only teachers actually at school where I can truly be myself and talk to properly... Because some teachers, I wouldn’t go near. Because I find them... scary... She’s got her own room next to the library, which is the calmest part of the school... There’s lots of squishy chairs in there and she knows exactly what to do... So anything in any situations, so if someone’s having a bad day, or if something has gone wrong, she knows exactly how to solve it.”</p> <p>“sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well.”</p> <p>“I just feel like they, they, they, they understood me a bit, you know, I felt really happy about it.”</p> <p>“[they understand me because] I like, what type, like, if, when, maybe if I’m a bit upset, they just say, [child], if if you’re upset, you don’t wanna talk right now, I’ll come back in about 10-15 minutes and check on you. Maybe you calm yourself down by then or something.”</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p> <p>Participant 6b</p>
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	<p>“all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I’m highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it’s like because they’ve been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it’s nice.”</p> <p>“[at my new school my new teachers] know lots about [high-sensitivity] ... that makes a very big difference... they just like know how to comfort you when you’re feeling stressed, like in my old school. They just like, shove a bathroom pass in your face or like they just show... like, say, you can just go off to the toilet like, have your like 15 minutes to yourself, like they wouldn’t. They don’t know how to actually help you and comfort you... [In my new school] we’ve got this library where it’s quite comfy in there and there’s lots of pillows where you can sit down and breathe as like a little cosy corner. So that’s what I do when I feel stressed, I ask if I can go in the library and or I just sit on a table and just think for a couple of minutes and they’ll come and check on me.”</p>	Participant 7b
<p>Child desires there to be increased awareness and understanding around the notion of high ES within their education context</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 5: Wanting to feel seen, heard, and understood – no, this is high ES</p>	<p>“I would say [it is helpful when we learn about differences in school]”</p> <p>“Some people [knowing about high ES is a good thing], yes, some people [knowing about high ES is a bad thing] ... Like most of the boys know, and I wish they didn’t, because at the end of the day they probably try and tease me more. But the other people, I think it would be good because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen.”</p> <p>“My Mum understands me more than anyone else... I want to be home schooled because Mum knows how to fix it and the teachers don’t.”</p> <p>“[if there was one thing I wish my teachers knew about me it would be] how much, how much sensitivity I have?”</p> <p>“I think it would be a good thing [if we learned more about sensitivity at school] because having a bunch of teachers not believing in it and just one person coming in [my Mum], it would be a lost easier if more than one person came in, so there was like more people who can help with children</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p>

	<p>there because only one person and a bunch of highly sensitive and all autistic people in a few different classrooms and only one person to help it doesn't make it easy... It would make more of the teachers understand... that would make a lot of other children's school life a lot easier."</p> <p>"I think it would [make a difference if the other children understood more about sensitivity] ... I know this is completely off topic, but my favourite lesson I ever had. And this was in primary Year Three, when we were talking about gender stereotypes. Especially after an incident. So there was a game where you could play things like football, basketball, cricket and a few other things. And one of those, the boys who at the time was in Year Six said that you couldn't go in just because I was a girl. Thank goodness for that lesson... It [changed] how they thought about it. And I only wanted to go in there because some of my [male] friends were in there."</p>	Participant 5b
	<p>"I was thinking actually to ask my form tutors... if I could do an assembly or a couple of words about sensitivity because it's something that is a lot, there's a lot of it in my year and there's lots of people who feel the same as me but in different ways... [It would be about] coping strategies, things about how sensitivity is what sensitivity is, the spectrum of it. So the different things that it can encompass. Being able to have more insight into your senses so like smells for me or hearing, or being more overwhelmed and over-reacting sometimes to negative things in the school life or home life that are going on... And the way that children and young people in the school can co-operate with it and then we can hopefully have a better school life because people are listening to teach other and they understand about each of them all."</p> <p>"[it would be ideal if my peers were] well educated about sensitivity in more detail, which is why I wanted to do the assembly thing cause that plants the acorn that starts it. Being able to be understood by more people would help me and most other people in my year as well a lot"</p> <p>"[I would like] the opportunity to speak to more people, so being able to have the opportunity to ask if we can do an assembly about the things that are troubling us and how people can cope with them... just to be, well, there for other people and to have more of that knowledge of sensitivity, which is why I want to spread it more, having that knowledge being able to help other people and having to</p>	Participant 5c

	<p>opportunity to be able to tell other people about it. So their friends, their family, to be able to spread it further.”</p> <p>“The only way they would really understand me is if they have, they have, they were sensitive, like the reason why Mum understands me I think is cause she gets sensitive. She she’s oversensitive sometimes so she can notice things so well... if you’re highly sensitive, if somebody is highly sensitive as a teacher they would notice like just before I’m gonna blow up and get angry. They would notice it because you can notice a lot things a lot quicker because my Mum notices when I’m upset really a lot, really upset. Or maybe she notices when I’m playing football if I’m like, I can’t do this. I can’t do this, but she knows when I’ve actually hurt myself or it’s just something that will go away eventually.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would be] very kind and they will, instead of putting you down, they’ll try and bring you up and make you happy. They would understand my needs. And what what will help me and what wouldn’t. And they always always listen to your answer not interrupting at all.”</p> <p>“[if my teachers did understand about sensitivity] I think it would be better. It wouldn’t stop all the sensitivity and upset and stuff, but it’ll it might help you calm down when you’re digging a hole for yourself.”</p>	Participant 6b
<p>Child desires to be better understood as a unique individual within their education context</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 5: Wanting to feel seen, heard, and understood – no, this is high ES</p>	<p>“I don’t act so sensitive at school because when my Mum told my teacher that I was highly sensitive, she didn’t. She didn’t really know. So I want to hide it”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would be] very kind and they will, instead of putting you down, they’ll try and bring you up and make you happy. They would understand my needs. And what what will help me and what wouldn’t. And they always always listen to your answer not interrupting at all.”</p> <p>“I think [one thing I wish teachers knew about me would be] to understand like who I am and to actually understand my personality. And to, like, um, know who I am and not just think that I’m just an average student that needs to be taught how to fit in with society”</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>

Codes Not Allocated in Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), including reasoning (seen in 'Code' column in blue font)

<p>Child experiencing anxiety</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child experiencing what they feel to be as <i>heightened</i> emotions' (Theme 1)</p>	<p>"if you're sensitive, you can get you can be a lot more emotional and a bit more hyper and more scared of things normally... Maybe nerves maybe going doing something or anxiety about you're about to go somewhere big and you're like, oh, what's it gonna be like?"</p>	<p>Participant 6b</p>
<p>Child finding it difficult regulate negative emotions</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child experiencing what they feel to be as <i>heightened</i> emotions' (Theme 1)</p>	<p>"[disadvantages of my sensitivity are] over-reactions. When I enter a distrusting situation like I've been hurt or someone else has been hurt or something bad happened, I tend to overreact. And I overreact in other ways as well. So during a math lesson, for example, I do not like math, but sometimes I don't like it so much that I battle with myself again, but in a different context... So for example [I might over-react] on my phone I sometimes completely don't answer messages at all, or sometimes I completely go bananas and say everything... It depends on how I feel that day. So if I've had a generally good day, I don't over-react as much as I do when I've had a bad day...like it is a battle with myself in whatever context I am in, if it is maths, or because someone has been hurt or I can't find my sister, I can feel thoroughly miserable for the whole day."</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>Child's coping strategies not supporting them</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child experiencing what they</p>	<p>"Sometimes I kind of have a battle with myself... So, one of those situations is where I feel stressed or being pulled to my limit... For example, during a conversation where people are shouting and I know why they're shouting, but I don't know how to help, I have snapped a couple of times"</p> <p>"I sometimes do get really high stress levels really, really high stress levels. I will usually just tell myself to shut up or something like that."</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>

<p>feel to be as <i>heightened emotions</i>' (Theme 1)</p>		
<p>Value in child having a trusted adult to share with, who engages in active listening</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Managing 'big' feelings: Child having access to a social support network, promoting a sense of belongingness, aids wellbeing at school' (Theme 1)</p>	<p>"It may sound, I mean, you know, it may sound a bit, I don't know what's the word, kind of strange, because, you know, she's a teacher, and I shouldn't be saying this, but she was just kind of mean. And I found her quite, just, not very good... She wasn't really there to talk to."</p> <p>"I think it would be good [if people knew more about high ES] because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen."</p> <p>"When I talk to my friends about a problem, although they say yes, OK, like I don't always think they really understand. So, it's really, it's really good to have somebody to talk to as well as my Mum."</p> <p>"I think it will be good if every school had at least one member of staff, you'd be able to talk to... For instance, some learning mentor... [You could talk about] issues with sensitivity, learning methods. All the rest of that."</p> <p>"being in a place where we can express our feelings, that's what we're working on. Being able to express our feelings with each other a bit more. And being in a place like that is very, very helpful. And the fact that I can now do that much more than I could. It's making me think that, well, OK, I mean it's opening up lots of new windows for me, I'm in this safe place with a lot of other people who are sensitive and I've known them all my life, so hey."</p> <p>"I kind of have separation anxiety when I'm away from my sister... And at school that hits me very hard at school. That hits me hard and yeah... Very hard... Not knowing where my sister is and where to go if there's something up. So if I hurt myself, I have done a couple of times this year. I don't know why my sister is to tell her what happened or I don't know where my friends are or anything. It's almost becoming a fear of being lost or forgotten... It's not like I need to see people's locations all the time, like I need them smack bang in front of me, but... Just being able to know where people are, who I can talk to about something."</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>

	<p>“One of [my teachers understands about sensitivity] ... She’s the learning mentor. She’s the one that everyone goes to. Everyone loves. She’s the one that everyone talks to when they got a problem. She always knows how to solve it... So she’s helped. She actually helped me out of things on a number of occasions, and she’s the one who she’s one of the only teachers actually at school where I can truly be myself and talk to properly... Because some teachers, I wouldn’t go near. Because I find them... scary... She’s got her own room next to the library, which is the calmest part of the school... There’s lots of squishy chairs in there and she knows exactly what to do... So anything in any situations, so if someone’s having a bad day, or if something has gone wrong, she knows exactly how to solve it.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would be] like the learning mentor but also able to teach their own subject... Not all of them are exactly as good as the learning mentor. It’s solving problems... Just having more teachers around who you see every day, you know in lessons in the staffroom and the corridors who say, is something wrong? If you can just ask them for a minute and talk to them.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher] they’ll be strict, they’ll be more tightening on things like bullying, racism and things like that towards other students, which are very offensive.”</p> <p>“the learning mentor... she is not always there... those days are harder if she’s not there, like Wednesday is a hard day.”</p> <p>“[the perfect teacher would be] very kind and they will, instead of putting you down, they’ll try and bring you up and make you happy. They would understand my needs. And what what will help me and what wouldn’t. And they always always listen to your answer not interrupting at all.”</p>	Participant 6b
<p>Child valuing having a trusted adult to go to when they need emotional support</p>	<p>“When [child who I think is highly sensitive] gets annoyed, he leaves the classroom, he goes to the cloakroom. They don’t understand it, they just get another teacher to come and help... And my teacher they can’t really do anything because they didn’t really understand it. There is one teacher who does and she can help because she does understand it, but she is the other class teacher so she will come when he goes in the cloakroom... [she helps because] she has a room with a bunch of stuff in it. And if children aren’t really happy or annoyed or they’re not doing, they’re a bit upset, she’ll</p>	Participant 4b

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Managing 'big' feelings: Child having access to a social support network, promoting a sense of belongingness, aids wellbeing at school' (Theme 1)</p>	<p>take them to her room and just ask them what's wrong and stuff... [she is] one that actually understands the children... the teacher will then give time to help the other children who aren't OK while everyone else does their work... [I am] a person that would like help."</p> <p>"I kind of have separation anxiety when I'm away from my sister... And at school that hits me very hard at school. That hits me hard and yeah... Very hard... Not knowing where my sister is and where to go if there's something up. So if I hurt myself, I have done a couple of times this year. I don't know why my sister is to tell her what happened or I don't know where my friends are or anything. It's almost becoming a fear of being lost or forgotten... It's not like I need to see people's locations all the time, like I need them smack bang in front of me, but... Just being able to know where people are, who I can talk to about something."</p>	
<p>Child has strong friendships and wants to protect friends</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child desiring to ensure others are okay; wanting to stick up for others and protect them' (Theme 2)</p>	<p>"I always protected her before and my I'd always take the blame because I was fine with that."</p>	Participant 7b
<p>Child feeling left out by peers</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child overthinking interactions with peers, resulting in</p>	<p>"[it is difficult at school when] you go out to play play sometimes. When when you're playing and some of your friends don't wanna play with you, you might get a bit um more upset because you don't you you'll have no one to play with... you feel like if they say no, you kind of feel like oh. What? What? And then you look at, sometimes I look at my other friends and look what they're doing. And I just think no. Doesn't seem like my my thing. And then when you look back at them, you're like, really wanna do that? Because I like what they're doing. But if they just say no, I just feel like I've been left out. What do I do now? Just sit for the rest of break or do something anyway?"</p>	Participant 6b

<p>strong emotional reactions' (Theme 2)</p>		
<p>Child's coping strategies supporting them</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Managing 'big' feelings: Child having access to a social support network, promoting a sense of belongingness, aids wellbeing at school' (Theme 2)</p>	<p>"It's getting so much easier... I've been able to express my feelings more. I've had more outlets than I had, I only had one outlet at the start of the year. It was my sister. Now it's the rest of my family, my friends, the learning mentor at school, and the teachers as well had loads more outlets in my feelings, which means the pressure inside is lower than what it was at the start of the year because I've had those valves to vent things out."</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>Social support highly important to child</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Managing 'big' feelings: Child having access to a social support network, promoting a sense of belongingness, aids wellbeing at school' (Theme 2)</p>	<p>"sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well."</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>

<p>Child aware of subtle changes in the school environment and this impacting on their achievement and wellbeing</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into codes, 'Child desiring access to breaks when feeling overwhelmed' & 'Child desiring physical change to the school environment to reduce the sensory experience of overwhelm' (Theme 3)</p>	<p>"I think that they should give certain children with highly sensitive or autism to have time to like go out the room and just calm down in their own space... Like after break times. When they've had, like in Year Five and Six. And they have a break time first... And also I wouldn't have eaten since breakfast... It makes me tired because you're running around. And sometimes it's a bit more in the heat and sometimes it's really cold... And sometimes it's just normal temperature. So I'd be a bit knackered after running around in different temperatures each day... like can I have an extra like some children need to have more than one snack in the afternoon, as well as in the morning."</p> <p>"[the perfect classroom would have] not too many things on the walls because sometimes when I look up, I just want to see some space where there's nothing going into my mind, nothing distracting me."</p>	Participant 4b
<p>Child disliking multi-tasking</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, "Uni-tasking", as opposed to multi-tasking, felt to reduce overwhelm in the classroom' (Theme 3)</p>	<p>"When people keen on asking me to do things at school, they're always asking me to do things, but I'm only halfway through this other thing. That's annoying"</p> <p>"[the perfect classroom would have] not too many things on the walls because sometimes when I look up, I just want to see some space where there's nothing going into my mind, nothing distracting me."</p>	Participant 4b
<p>Child valuing a comfortable, relaxing</p>	<p>"I'd want it to be very comfy and and for the desks in the classroom. To have, like those round chairs that you can spin on... There'd be like a bean bag area like the library in my school. And there be a</p>	Participant 7b

<p>classroom environments</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child desiring physical change to the school environment to reduce the sensory experience of overwhelm' (Theme 3)</p>	<p>fish tank because that calms me down... It just would be like, right, really comfy and for the playground to have lots of stuff to do. Because in my old school it will be kind of like, it would only be tarmac and stuff on the floor... And the classroom would be very big, like an entire, like. Well, not mile, but a mile long... just to give like, have your own space, like your own privacy, and in a way they'll be like a little like window things on the side. So you can say hi to your friends...To have like a little door to shut yourself out if you think it's a little bit too much."</p>	
<p>Child desiring access to different methods of teaching/assessment</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child desiring physical change to the school environment to reduce the sensory experience of overwhelm' (Theme 3)</p>	<p>"[the perfect teacher] would help people out with work if the needed it. Maybe they could make work a bit easier if people find it hard."</p> <p>"I think that they should give certain children with highly sensitive or autism to have time to like go out the room and just calm down in their own space."</p> <p>"I need to work more at my pace and just be able to deal with what's around me because since there's only me and my brother in this house and a bunch of animals, it gives me more space to think, and there's not things all around the walls. It's not it's not too much. It's more, normal."</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p>
<p>Child knows how to support themselves in terms of their experience of high ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>"I can remember at primary school the old photography room was turned into a sensory room... I did go there for quite a lot during Year Three and Year Four but then I realised that the library is about the quietest room... I started going to the library much more often."</p> <p>"[they understand me because] I like, what type, like, if, when, maybe if I'm a bit upset, they just say, [child], if if if you're upset, you don't wanna talk right now, I'll come back in about 10-15 minutes and check on you. Maybe you calm yourself down by then or something."</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p>

<p>Merged into code, 'Child desiring physical change to the school environment to reduce the sensory experience of overwhelm' and/or code: 'Child desiring access to breaks when feeling overwhelmed' (Theme 3)</p>	<p>"you always like want to be doing something fun and something energetic or something really relaxing, so it can't just be in between. Like doing work. You want something either, I don't know. Like kinetic sand that helps me calm down. Or maybe some things that want to help me calm down or help me feel a bit better is going outside and I don't know, playing football for a bit."</p> <p>"I'm one of those people that likes if, um, asks to go outside, if if it's not fun, ask can I go with the tennis ball outside and just and catch, throw it against the wall, catch it? I don't know. Whatever will help. That's the type of person I think I am."</p> <p>"I don't think [any of my teachers] understand about sensitivity... no, even the teacher right now... Because when I tell them it, they they go, yeah, we'll try that next time. Next time I get upset or angry and frustrated, they don't try it.. Then they they and they don't ask, they don't try, always try to help. They try to make things work sometimes."</p> <p>"[the perfect teacher would be] someone that would, um, let you go outside and play... just to keep you calm... Maybe just to get away from all the all the work, all the noise and just give yourself the time that you want to have for a minute."</p>	
<p>Value in private learning stations</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child desiring physical change to the school environment to reduce the sensory experience of overwhelm' (Theme 3)</p>	<p>"I'd want it to be very comfy and and for the desks in the classroom. To have, like those round chairs that you can spin on... There'd be like a bean bag area like the library in my school. And there be a fish tank because that calms me down... It just would be like, right, really comfy and for the playground to have lots of stuff to do. Because in my old school it will be kind of like, it would only be tarmac and stuff on the floor... And the classroom would be very big, like an entire, like. Well, not mile, but a mile long... just to give like, have your own space, like your own privacy, and in a way they'll be like a little like window things on the side. So you can say hi to your friends...To have like a little door to shut yourself out if you think it's a little bit too much."</p>	<p>Participant 7b</p>

<p>Child values feeling similar to peers</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child not wanting to feel different to their peers' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I'm highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it's like because they've been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it's nice."</p>	<p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child not wanting to feel different</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child not wanting to feel different to their peers' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"[the perfect class would be] a mix of highly sensitive and not. A mix is good it helps because it helps the people with highly sensitive feel like they're not different. Just makes them feel like they're just a normal child that doesn't have differences. They just feel like, they feel like they can make things like make friends easier, and they wouldn't be worried about school."</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p>
<p>Child feeling unheard or misunderstood by teachers</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child feeling misunderstood by school-based staff and/or peers' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"Miss always puts me together with two people, like they're just my friends [but they bully me]"</p> <p>"I think it would be good [if people knew more about high ES] because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen."</p> <p>"I don't think that was right [what the teacher said] but she said that, I remember she was being on his side when at least, in my opinion, he was more in the wrong than me and my friends, so I went up to tell again... I was just crying until the end of the day."</p> <p>"My Mum understands me more than anyone else."</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p>

<p>Child not feeling seen or heard</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child viewing themselves through the more well-known lens of neurodiversity (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"that's kind of how I feel, I'm not diagnosed with autism or anything, but it's how I feel. I can't, people, I don't feel like people can see me in my home or anywhere. I feel people can't see me. All of me... Because there are such things are an inner identity and outer identity, outer identity is how I just plainly present myself, and it's largely unchanged. It largely doesn't change my inner identities. The things that I kept keep really close. I can't stop people from now knowing about it. They try and find out if something's wrong but I just say I'm fine... I feel like I'm not being seen or heard at school or at home, really. As often as I should be feeling."</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>Child feeling that teachers understand ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child acknowledging the benefits of feeling seen, heard, and understood as a sensitive individual within the education context' (Theme 5)</p>	<p>"My last teacher, I know that she did [understand about high ES]"</p> <p>"I think she did [understand about high ES]. I don't, I don't know if she knew that I was highly sensitive, but she was just really nice."</p> <p>"When [child who I think is highly sensitive] gets annoyed, he leaves the classroom, he goes to the cloakroom. They don't understand it, they just get another teacher to come and help... And my teacher they can't really do anything because they didn't really understand it. There is one teacher who does and she can help because she does understand it, but she is the other class teacher so she will come when he goes in the cloakroom... [she helps because] she has a room with a bunch of stuff in it. And if children aren't really happy or annoyed or they're not doing, they're a bit upset, she'll take them to her room and just ask them what's wrong and stuff... [she is] one that actually understands the children... the teacher will then give time to help the other children who aren't OK while everyone else does their work... [I am] a person that would like help."</p> <p>"in high school no [school staff aren't aware of my sensitivity] ... But thinking back to primary school, I'm not so sure. It was mainly support staff that knew that... I think it was a bit easier with those people."</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p>

“there are a couple of teachers, I’d be able to talk to... I’ve spoken to one of them [about sensitivity]. And she gave me a little fidget toy for use in class. That’s all. I have this habit of fidgeting with things... I don’t know whether it helped me in lessons necessarily, because it still felt really wrong.”

“One of [my teachers understands about sensitivity] ... She’s the learning mentor. She’s the one that everyone goes to. Everyone loves. She’s the one that everyone talks to when they got a problem. She always knows how to solve it... So she’s helped. She actually helped me out of things on a number of occasions, and she’s the one who she’s one of the only teachers actually at school where I can truly be myself and talk to properly... Because some teachers, I wouldn’t go near. Because I find them... scary... She’s got her own room next to the library, which is the calmest part of the school... There’s lots of squishy chairs in there and she knows exactly what to do... So anything in any situations, so if someone’s having a bad day, or if something has gone wrong, she knows exactly how to solve it.”

“I just feel like they, they, they, they understood me a bit, you know, I felt really happy about it.”

“[they understand me because] I like, what type, like, if, when, maybe if I’m a bit upset, they just say, [child], if if you’re upset, you don’t wanna talk right now, I’ll come back in about 10-15 minutes and check on you. Maybe you calm yourself down by then or something.”

“all the good stuff in my new school is that, that, uh, you get way more much more. Well, I get way much more help because I’m highly sensitive and all the teachers know what it’s like because they’ve been, they have special teachers in that school and all the other kids are highly sensitive like me. And it’s nice.”

“[at my new school my new teachers] know lots about [high-sensitivity] ... that makes a very big difference... they just like know how to comfort you when you’re feeling stressed, like in my old school. They just like, shove a bathroom pass in your face or like they just show... like, say, you can just go off to the toilet like, have your like 15 minutes to yourself, like they wouldn’t. They don’t know how to actually help you and comfort you... [In my new school] we’ve got this library where it’s quite comfy in there and there’s lots of pillows where you can sit down and breathe as like a little cosy corner. So

Participant 5c

Participant 6b

Participant 7b

	that's what I do when I feel stressed, I ask if I can go in the library and or I just sit on a table and just think for a couple of minutes and they'll come and check on me."	
<p>Child wants more focus on who they are as a person at school</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child desires to be better understood as a unique individual within their education context' (Theme 5)</p>	<p>"I think [one thing I wish teachers knew about me would be] to understand like who I am and to actually understand my personality. And to, like, um, know who I am and not just think that I'm just an average student that needs to be taught how to fit in with society"</p>	Participant 7b
<p>Child feeling that peers understand ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child acknowledging the benefits of feeling seen, heard, and understood as a sensitive individual within the education context' (Theme 5)</p>	<p>"I would say a few people [understand about high ES]. Like at least, I don't know, five people."</p> <p>"Some people [knowing about high ES is a good thing], yes, some people [knowing about high ES is a bad thing] ... Like most of the boys know, and I wish they didn't, because at the end of the day they probably try and tease me more. But the other people, I think it would be good because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen."</p> <p>"All, all my friends right now understand it... Some of my friends from primary school had an idea and I enjoyed playing with them"</p> <p>"sometimes some of them are downright mean about it. Otherwise other others people actually come and stand by my side... So all my friends, they understand how I feel. When I tell them they understand what they need to do. And so they usually stand by my side, just imagine a pack of wolves, the injured and the sick go in front and lead the hunt whilst the others, the stronger ones, stay behind. So I am</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>

	<p>the injured in that in that in that instance and they are the stronger ones who were standing by me and helping me through. Sometimes I take their place as well.”</p>	
<p>Child feeling that teachers don't understand ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child feeling misunderstood by school-based staff and/or peers' (Theme 5)</p>	<p>“My last teacher, I know that she did [understand about high ES], but my Year 3, I don't think she really did.”</p> <p>“I think I would say not at all really [people don't understand about high ES at school], well sometimes, a little bit, but not very much.”</p> <p>“I don't act so sensitive at school because when my Mum told my teacher that I was highly sensitive, she didn't. She didn't really know. So I want to hide it”</p> <p>“I want to be home schooled because Mum knows how to fix it and the teachers don't.”</p> <p>“When [child who I think is highly sensitive] gets annoyed, he leaves the classroom, he goes to the cloakroom. They don't understand it, they just get another teacher to come and help... And my teacher they can't really do anything because they didn't really understand it. There is one teacher who does and she can help because she does understand it, but she is the other class teacher so she will come when he goes in the cloakroom... [she helps because] she has a room with a bunch of stuff in it. And if children aren't really happy or annoyed or they're not doing, they're a bit upset, she'll take them to her room and just ask them what's wrong and stuff... [she is] one that actually understands the children... the teacher will then give time to help the other children who aren't OK while everyone else does their work... [I am] a person that would like help.”</p> <p>“in high school no [school staff aren't aware of my sensitivity] ... But thinking back to primary school, I'm not so sure. It was mainly support staff that knew that... I think it was a bit easier with those people.”</p> <p>“I don't think [any of my teachers] understand about sensitivity... no, even the teacher right now... Because when I tell them it, they they go, yeah, we'll try that next time. Next time I get upset or angry</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 4b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p>

	<p>and frustrated, they don't try it.. Then they they and they don't ask, they don't try, always try to help. They try to make things work sometimes.”</p> <p>“[if there was one thing I wish my teachers knew about me it would be] how much, how much sensitivity I have?”</p> <p>“I was like the golden student, like I did everything right, did everything nearly perfectly. But the thing is, everything I did was like nearly perfect. But if I did one slip up, like when we were doing English, which is my top thing, I can never fail at English. I'm always like 100 and I was daydreaming and what I was going to write about. And when we got onto it, I asked what are we doing? I forgot. And then she just let it off of me and she just started shouting at me and said I thought you were like, a really good student. Why did you not listen to me and. And she didn't give me any help”</p> <p>“in Class Four it was the terrible last time because I have this dreadful assistant teacher called [name] and she was really rude to me and that's one of the reasons why I moved out the school because of her. Because she'd always pick on me”</p> <p>“they know nothing. They have no idea what [highly sensitive] means.”</p> <p>“I just don't think they would change because they just have their own very strong opinion”</p>	Participant 7b
<p>Child desire to feel understood in terms of their experience of high ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child desires there to be increased awareness and</p>	<p>“[if there was one thing I wish my teachers knew about me it would be] how much, how much sensitivity I have?”</p>	Participant 6b

<p>understanding around the notion of high ES within their education context' (Theme 5)</p>		
<p>Child experiencing teasing and/or bullying around their experience of high ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child feeling misunderstood by school-based staff and/or peers' (Theme 5)</p>	<p>"what used to happen was cause a lot of people knew, no, they they didn't know how sensitive I was, I don't think I ever knew, but they knew that I could easily cry and easily get angry and upset. So, they always just pretty mean to me and say and do mean things to me. and that was really hard. And I I was really, really bad. On free day, they wrote on my pencil case that I had. And there is some really, really bad and rude ones... they do annoy me by calling me [full name] and I really don't like it."</p> <p>"Some people [knowing about high ES is a good thing], yes, some people [knowing about high ES is a bad thing] ... Like most of the boys know, and I wish they didn't, because at the end of the day they probably try and tease me more. But the other people, I think it would be good because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen."</p> <p>"I know I'm bringing it up again, but like, I would like the boys to do less of these things. Like there is this one person called [name] and he calls me [full name], which is my full name. But I don't wanna be called that, I know it's weird and silly but I really don't like that... I wish they would do less of that."</p> <p>"I don't use [the term highly sensitive] very often. I prefer to use just sensitive... Because when I think of myself as highly sensitive it just reminds me of some of the things that have happened at school in the past... getting teased for it, because that did happen a few times at primary school... [I was teased for] just crying too often. I don't know how to put it into words sometimes, but strong emotions to more general things... Which I think is thought to be a problem... [they would be] disliking me crying too much, I'd start crying because of that. There, it's almost a vicious circle."</p> <p>"sometimes some of them are downright mean about it... in some ways I don't even understand how they're being mean, but they're being mean to me and they say something which I don't like. So they mentioned. Sometimes people call me Twitch at school as well because I fidget a lot. And it's</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>

	<p>something that people make fun of me of a lot. I don't really get it as often as I did at the start of the year because I've learned to control that fidgeting... But it's still irritating when people call me Twitch."</p> <p>"[the perfect teacher] they'll be strict, they'll be more tightening on things like bullying, racism and things like that towards other students, which are very offensive."</p> <p>"I wasn't on the exact same table as my best friend, but this horrible girl... She was my bully... she smirked at me and that really hurt my feelings."</p>	Participant 7b
<p>Child desiring peers who are aware of high ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child acknowledging the benefits of feeling seen, heard, and understood as a sensitive individual within the education context' (Theme 5)</p>	<p>"Some people [knowing about high ES is a good thing], yes...I think it would be good because they would understand, and I would feel better because if they knew that I was sad because of that, they might listen"</p>	Participant 1b
<p>Child desiring peers who aren't aware of high ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child acknowledging the benefits of feeling seen,</p>	<p>"Some people [knowing about high ES is a good thing], yes, some people [knowing about high ES is a bad thing] ... Like most of the boys know, and I wish they didn't, because at the end of the day they probably try and tease me more."</p>	Participant 1b

<p>heard, and understood as a sensitive individual within the education context' (Theme 5)</p>		
<p>Child feeling that strategies given to them by school staff to support their experience of high ES are not working</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child feeling misunderstood by school-based staff and/or peers' (Theme 5)</p>	<p>"there are a couple of teachers, I'd be able to talk to... I've spoken to one of them [about sensitivity]. And she gave me a little fidget toy for use in class. That's all. I have this habit of fidgeting with things... I don't know whether it helped me in lessons necessarily, because it still felt really wrong."</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p>
<p>Child feeling teachers have almost given up on them</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child feeling misunderstood by school-based staff and/or peers' (Theme 5)</p>	<p>"I don't think [any of my teachers] understand about sensitivity... no, even the teacher right now... Because when I tell them it, they they go, yeah, we'll try that next time. Next time I get upset or angry and frustrated, they don't try it. Then they they and they don't ask, they don't try, always try to help. They try to make things work sometimes."</p>	<p>Participant 6b</p>
<p>Child desiring teachers who are engaged in teaching</p>	<p>"They didn't care. They didn't care about anything. My old teacher. She literally said out loud to us. I'm only teaching you to get money... It made me feel a little bit sad because I thought she actually cared about me"</p>	<p>Participant 7b</p>

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Child's maturity level above that of peers' maturity level</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"When I talk to my friends about a problem, although they say yes, OK, like I don't always think they really understand."</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p>
<p>Child feeling that teachers dislike them</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I was like the golden student, like I did everything right, did everything nearly perfectly. But the thing is, everything I did was like nearly perfect. But if I did one slip up, like when we were doing English, which is my top thing, I can never fail at English. I'm always like 100 and I was daydreaming and what I was going to write about. And when we got onto it, I asked what are we doing? I forgot. And then she just let it off of me and she just started shouting at me and said I thought you were like, a really good student. Why did you not listen to me and. And she didn't give me any help"</p>	<p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child confident in their own abilities (e.g.,</p>	<p>"I think most of the problem with school is the work is so easy"</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p>

<p>academic, emotional, social)</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"[child with ASC who I help] thinks that I can do better than the teaching assistant."</p> <p>"Since I am a bit, I don't know how to say it, I am a bit, like I can like work quicker than usual and I learn things quick, like shown it once and I've learnt it, I find it, well I can go way above the year I am. Way above my age, yeah. And, well, it's just the class goes really slow for everyone else. I'm catching on to things a lot quicker than other children... I don't need to work hard, not really."</p> <p>"friendships, [sensitivity] makes it, it makes it feel a bit more normal. And when I'm making friends, it's just. You just come up to them and talk to them because you you're not nervous to talk to anyone. That's what my highly sensitive does. It just makes me not nervous... if I'm doing something that I just want to do myself I'll be an introvert, but when I'm around people at school, I love it. I'm quite a confident person at school and in general."</p> <p>"some teachers push you to do greater depth learning, children like me and some of my friends. Which helps me learn quick"</p> <p>"[I would like the teachers] to be able to give me and the other people like a different room to go to. Be given the slides and just like slides on paper and just go through it and keep the work. Come back in. Just continue... So I can just work at my own pace because when I was in Year Two I was doing Year Six work and when we were in lockdown I could work at my own pace completely so that's why I want to be home schooled so I can just get on with it really."</p> <p>"I feel like the biggest positive [of being highly sensitive], I think I can pay more attention in lessons because usually, so if I am in a geography lesson, I find geography is one of my least favourite subjects, but now I'm OK with it because instead of not listening at all, I've listened to every little bit... I get really high test percentages... The highest percentage I got in any of my end of year was 90, was it 96%?... sometimes I find it easier to pay attention in lessons I enjoy like chemistry because of all the fun practical's."</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 5c</p>
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	<p>“like I said, reading people’s feelings. So I’m quite good at that. I’m the person that people tend to go to, to talk to about their feelings... And I don’t know why I do this but I’m good at answering them and I’m not good at answering myself... So they often finish with a smile on their face... I like being able to make people laugh and having that thing where I can just exactly read how someone’s feeling and know the remedy for it is a thing that I think was quite special.”</p> <p>“people, when they come to me, they often ask such things, which make them feel better. So they asked me if they they can do anything and I’m always the person who people go to. But another thing is that when I make people laugh they don’t really laugh that way with many other people because I can kind of strike that cord with people, when I can understand what they’re feeling, I kind of strike that cord with people and so help I them understand what’s going on.”</p> <p>“in class if if you’ve got it and you don’t want else, anyone else to say it and you’re like oh I’ve got it, but no one’s looking at you. They’re looking at the other side of the room. You just feel like you have to shout it out. Tell them. Sometimes in school I do that. But I get told off.... And when they get it wrong, you just like I told you. I told you.”</p> <p>“I can enjoy homework”</p> <p>“because I was a smart kid. And I would be put in a harder section with the other kids”</p> <p>“I was like the golden student, like I did everything right, did everything nearly perfectly. But the thing is, everything I did was like nearly perfect. But if I did one slip up, like when we were doing English, which is my top thing, I can never fail at English. I’m always like 100 and I was daydreaming and what I was going to write about. And when we got onto it, I asked what are we doing? I forgot. And then she just let it off of me and she just started shouting at me and said I thought you were like, a really good student. Why did you not listen to me and. And she didn’t give me any help”</p>	<p>Participant 6b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child feeling that teacher’s don’t respect</p>	<p>“It makes me quite stressed... with a teacher it makes me stressed because... if you get in a fight you go to detention. Or if it’s that bad, you get suspended. That’s type of stuff and you can’t run away from them. Like you can’t go to the toilet because you’ve got to ask them. They’ll usually say no”</p>	<p>Participant 7b</p>

<p>them/allow them freedom</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>There would be school uniform in the 'perfect school'</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"in my new school, there's no uniform. I completely hate that because I loved my old uniform and I actually made my own uniform in my new school... I just like it that it's like everybody looks the same and they can't like, show off or our. What different clothes they wear."</p>	<p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child would like adult support to extend social network</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for</p>	<p>"I'd like my teachers to know about is the fact that I am a good person for pupils to go to rather than go straight to another teacher that they could talk to me and I could talk to them because I'm getting better at talking about things cause having more people to talk to is going to be much better."</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>

<p>compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Child would like opportunities to engage in clubs with peers around interests</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"more stem opportunities, I think because I love stem and I'm kind of getting better at maths now and I love engineering. Mechanical engineering in particular... There's not enough of that in school... [I'd like] more things I'm interested in, and I know lots of people in my class like mechanics as well. So it would be nice to have a club where we can do that."</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>Child would like more academic support</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"that school that I went to wasn't didn't have a lot of help at all, and like my best friend, she couldn't help me"</p> <p>"In my old school I had this perfect teacher... she knew I was struggling, so she gave me extra help"</p>	<p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child would like opportunity to engage in more meaningful learning to them</p>	<p>"I had to go into Class Five which really hurt my feelings and I was very depressed in that time because... I'm not saying it's wrong, but she only talked about God and religion stuff. But I'm not really into religion"</p>	<p>Participant 7b</p>

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Child desiring enhanced opportunities to utilise their skills in empathy to promote the wellbeing of others</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I'd like my teachers to know about is the fact that I am a good person for pupils to go to rather than go straight to another teacher that they could talk to me and I could talk to them because I'm getting better at talking about things cause having more people to talk to is going to be much better."</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>Child desiring peers who are generally empathetic, caring, understanding</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for</p>	<p>"[the perfect peers] would be empathetic. Kind. Nice. Not be mean to other people. Not be jealous."</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p>

<p>compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Desire for teachers to tackle bullying relating to the experience of high ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"[the perfect teachers] would be... a bit strict with the not very nice [children]."</p> <p>"Miss always puts me together with two people, like they're just my friends [but they bully me]"</p> <p>"[I don't want anyone in my class] who's going to start bullying people because that just makes the classroom miserable."</p> <p>"In my old school I had this perfect teacher... she always told [child] off because she always knew about [child] because she was in the exact same class as me the entire time, and she realised the pattern of [child] bullying me. So every time she'd put [child] on the other side of the classroom, she knew I was struggling, so she gave me extra help"</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 5b</p> <p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child being able to pay attention to details in lessons more easily</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I feel like the biggest positive [of being highly sensitive], I think I can pay more attention in lessons because usually, so if I am in a geography lesson, I find geography is one of my least favourite subjects, but now I'm OK with it because instead of not listening at all, I've listened to every little bit... I get really high test percentages... The highest percentage I got in any of my end of year was 90, was it 96%?... sometimes I find it easier to pay attention in lessons I enjoy like chemistry because of all the fun practical's."</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p>
<p>Child shows strong sense of justice and fairness</p>	<p>"I don't think that was right [what the teacher said] but she said that, I remember she was being on his side when at least, in my opinion, he was more in the wrong than me and my friends, so I went up to tell again... I was just crying until the end of the day."</p> <p>"If somebody's being rude to me I straight away get really angry."</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p>

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"the really frustrating part about at my particular secondary school is that it seems to encourage the students to go to university... If they go to do something else, like an apprenticeship, and then it sort of fades into the background."</p>	Participant 5b
	<p>"if someone you know is upset, it's really, sometimes it's bad because even if you don't like the person your your you, you, your natural thing to do would be go ask are you OK? And you would notice if if it if it's just sat there. And you notice if someone like is maybe being a bit rude? Most people ignore it. Wipe it off. Be like yeah yeah, whatever. But sometimes you can take it in a lot more than other people."</p>	Participant 6b
	<p>"[I would like to have friends who] won't just dump you in a second, they'll be your friends, ones that will always listen to you when, or always, or try to play your game. If they don't like it though, they'll ask can we play a different one? ... Ones that are kind and caring and always if you hurt yourself or if you're upset and lonely will say come and play with us."</p>	
	<p>"someone might start getting shouted at... something might happen and I want to be able to take myself away from it, but I can't because we need to be together and also in a conversation with someone being shouted at I find that quite hard to go off. I can't go off because I need to contribute to the conversation as well."</p>	Participant 5c
	<p>"[the perfect teacher] they'll be strict, they'll be more tightening on things like bullying, racism and things like that towards other students, which are very offensive."</p>	
	<p>"[in the perfect school] there wouldn't be any rules, but if I was the head teacher, I would teach the kids because in the class there wouldn't be any rules. Yes, they could do whatever they want, but I'd teach them that even though there isn't any rules to stop you from doing, it doesn't mean you have to actually do it anyways."</p>	Participant 7b

<p>Child likes to be doing either high intensity, or relaxing, activities</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"you always like want to be doing something fun and something energetic or something really relaxing, so it can't just be in between. Like doing work. You want something either, I don't know. Like kinetic sand that helps me calm down. Or maybe some things that want to help me calm down or help me feel a bit better is going outside and I don't know, playing football for a bit."</p>	<p>Participant 6b</p>
<p>Child has a good memory</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I do have quite a good muscle memory and photographic memory so... I'm one of the only people in the class who fully knew where the DT lab was... So it's like I almost have a constant map inside of my head."</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>Child viewing older children as scary</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for</p>	<p>"it's really scary for me going on the older kids side of the school."</p>	<p>Participant 7b</p>

<p>compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Child showing dislike for self at times (relating to the experience of high ES)</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I sometimes do get really high stress levels really, really high stress levels. I will usually just tell myself to shut up or something like that."</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>Child feeling safe around others they know well</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I kind of have separation anxiety when I'm away from my sister... And at school that hits me very hard at school. That hits me hard and yeah... Very hard... Not knowing where my sister is and where to go if there's something up. So if I hurt myself, I have done a couple of times this year. I don't know why my sister is to tell her what happened or I don't know where my friends are or anything. It's almost becoming a fear of being lost or forgotten... It's not like I need to see people's locations all the time, like I need them smack bang in front of me, but... Just being able to know where people are, who I can talk to about something."</p>	<p>Participant 5c</p>
<p>School needs to be more person centred and value the aspirations and needs of all</p>	<p>"the really frustrating part about at my particular secondary school is that it seems to encourage the students to go to university... If they go to do something else, like an apprenticeship, and then it sort of fades into the background."</p>	<p>Participant 5b</p>

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Child experiences difficulties with uniform</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"the uniform... it's supposed to be trousers. [Child] won't wear trousers. She just won't, you know, like she won't wear anything with buttons basically. So she wears leggings, and that's not actually school uniform. But I told them, like, years ago, you know, my child just won't. And I'm buying her leggings and no one ever like came back to me with a complaint about that."</p>	<p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Child experiencing anxiety around interpersonal interactions with adults</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I'm going to most likely stutter before I speak. If somebody is like, for example if I got my hair cut or something like that, sorry, I'm saying I don't know quite a lot, but for example, if somebody cut my hair and they're trying to chat with me, I'm just like, stuttering, and like a bit nervous"</p> <p>"maybe if a pencil breaks and you're in the middle of a really important something, you might get a bit like how do I do this? And maybe if someone doesn't want you to interrupt but something bad just happened or or you've hurt yourself and it's really bad and you don't want, what, you get really anxious and worried and angry, frustrated as well."</p>	<p>Participant 1b</p> <p>Participant 6b</p>

<p>Child experiencing overwhelm, leading to daydreaming and/or deep processing, causing difficulties in the classroom</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I was like the golden student, like I did everything right, did everything nearly perfectly. But the thing is, everything I did was like nearly perfect. But if I did one slip up, like when we were doing English, which is my top thing, I can never fail at English. I'm always like 100 and I was daydreaming and what I was going to write about. And when we got onto it, I asked what are we doing? I forgot. And then she just let it off of me and she just started shouting at me and said I thought you were like, a really good student. Why did you not listen to me and. And she didn't give me any help"</p>	<p>Participant 7b</p>
<p>Child wanting more independence and choice to be able to push themselves academically</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"[I would like the teachers] to be able to give me and the other people like a different room to go to. Be given the slides and just like slides on paper and just go through it and keep the work. Come back in. Just continue... So I can just work at my own pace because when I was in Year Two I was doing Year Six work and when we were in lockdown I could work at my own pace completely so that's why I want to be home schooled so I can just get on with it really."</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p>
<p>Child wants to be home schooled</p>	<p>"I want to be home schooled because Mum knows how to fix it and the teacher's don't."</p>	<p>Participant 4b</p>

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"[I would like the teachers] to be able to give me and the other people like a different room to go to. Be given the slides and just like slides on paper and just go through it and keep the work. Come back in. Just continue... So I can just work at my own pace because when I was in Year Two I was doing Year Six work and when we were in lockdown I could work at my own pace completely so that's why I want to be home schooled so I can just get on with it really."</p>	
<p>Child wanting to/having moved schools as a result of high ES and its impact</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"so far in my life it's been good and I kind of like the changes like moving to my new school"</p> <p>"Class Four it was the terrible last time because I have this dreadful assistant teacher called [name] and she was really rude to me and that's one of the reasons why I moved out the school because of her."</p> <p>"I do flexi-schooling... I go Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday."</p>	Participant 7b
<p>Child gets easily distracted if things aren't very structured</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"Usually I get quite easily distracted unless it's in a lesson setting, because there's nothing to distract me."</p>	Participant 5b

Appendix. 24: Parent/Carer Participant Group – Codes Allocated to RTA and All Associated Extracts

Theme 1: *‘Everything’s amplified’* – turning down the intensity of emotion

Code	Extract(s)	Participant
<p>Child experiencing heightened emotions</p>	<p>“He’s aware of his own emotions and knowing everybody else’s emotions, and that’s where it all gets tangled up in his head to the point where you get angry or frustrated because you’ve got so much going on at the same time”</p>	Participant 1a
	<p>“she’s on the most steep roller coaster you can imagine. She’s up, down, up, down and literally it can be seconds between an up and a down... [She can get] so overwhelmed with excitement... It’s amazing because she, she goes so up, but then, yeah, so in the next breath, she can be on the floor... It’s hard work”</p>	Participant 4a
	<p>“It’s like everything’s amplified for them. So no, if something goes wrong, it’ll go wrong bigger for them if no. If that even down to some of them probably won’t be able to cope with things like fire alarms... Or just everybody being noisy in the classroom.”</p>	
	<p>“this is HSP all over. He’s completely over thought it. The pain is extreme. He’s very, very he’s very, very painful for him... But that’s the other thing with school. I don’t think, I think they brush it off... It’s real. Yeah, give him that, give him that time and that acknowledgement. And that’s something that as a parent I’ve learned. I never say I’m too busy to talk about something. He needs to talk about it. Express it. Talk it to death.”</p>	Participant 6a
	<p>“Her compassion was so strong she couldn’t. She couldn’t suppress it. She couldn’t not feel the things that she felt. And so was harshly critical of herself on an academic perspective.”</p>	Participant 7a

<p>Child internalises heightened emotions</p>	<p>“He’s aware of his own emotions and knowing everybody else’s emotions, and that’s where it all gets tangled up in his head to the point where you get angry or frustrated because you’ve got so much going on at the same time”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>
	<p>“She would never naturally come to us and say anything so, so for her to come and say oh I feel I’m feeling anxious about something. You know I would, I would have some champagne at that point for her to be able to verbalise things externally. But I can tell when she is particularly worried about things. So, I would then have to to ask her, I’m noticing, you know, that you’ve been sitting on your bed, that you’re under your duvet. I’m wondering if you’re feeling... But it’s from my side. So, if I was to, I didn’t notice or I didn’t have the time or couldn’t be bothered was exhausted, whatever, it wouldn’t come out without my prompting.”</p> <p>“She’s very, you know, she’s able to, kind of, uh, I don’t know, mask really. And then I’ve got these children, they come home, I’ve got friends whose children come home and just lose it at home as a release after having the whole day at school and these busy environments. But she doesn’t actually do that, she just goes in her room and is quiet.”</p> <p>“she would then become withdrawn. And I know some highly sensitive children are very kind of external, you know would be shouting, screaming and she would rather withdraw.”</p> <p>“A healthy, intelligent, wonderful 14-year-old who is at home. All the time, she doesn’t want to see anybody. Doesn’t want to do anything. Umm. It’s just that’s really quite, as a parent, that’s just a very, very sad place to be. So, she hates school and she was really looking forward to not being at school, but then it’s the overwhelm of having things to do in the holidays, it has been too much, so you know, like I said, we finish school the end of June. So, at some point prior to June, we would have the conversation. Oh you know, holidays coming up. I know you’re looking forward to all this. What would you like to do? It’s all oh I don’t know. OK, well, you know, we can talk about it another day to the point where I kind of feel like we can’t talk about it again because even asking the question is now, so shame, shaming that she doesn’t have an answer... It’s just complete withdrawal... And that’s, I suppose it’s hopelessness, really, isn’t it?”</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>

	<p>“she’s physically violent... but she’s also very good at managing it. That she she never shows a sign of it at school.”</p> <p>“I mean, [child] does that at school. She’ll she’ll excuse herself to the toilet when she’s... when somebody’s upset, as she said, she said, she said, she just, she loses it. Like, literally. She’s like, I’m gonna lose it at school. That’s how I deal with it... she’s very good. She’s never ever lost it at school.”</p> <p>“she has certain behaviours. Umm, where she will emotionally regulate herself. So, for instance, at the moment what she does is bites her nails literally down to the quick. And this is a new thing. She never started biting her nails until last year. She always had, like, beautiful nails. But before that, it’d be something like she’d pick her nose... And she did have a period where she pulled her hair out... And and she just she she she likes to twizzle with things like when she’s calming down, she’ll take herself off. She’s quite aware of when she needs to go and be by herself and she’ll like to find something to twizzle with or something while she’s reading a book. And that that sort of thing and so that was how. That’s how she’s kind of how it manifests with her, how she deals with all of the, I suppose. It’s just how she regulates”</p> <p>“I know this is common with sensitive kids and she’s really good all day at school. And then she, like falls apart hard at night... I think she bottles stuff up all day long.”</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Child displaying poor mental health</p>	<p>“I think we’re going through a pretty dark bit at the moment as well, um, it’s just very sad.”</p> <p>“A healthy, intelligent, wonderful 14-year-old who is at home. All the time, she doesn’t want to see anybody. Doesn’t want to do anything. Umm. It’s just that’s really quite, as a parent, that’s just a very, very sad place to be. So, she hates school and she was really looking forward to not being at school, but then it’s the overwhelm of having things to do in the holidays, it has been too much, so you know, like I said, we finish school the end of June. So, at some point prior to June, we would have the conversation. Oh you know, holidays coming up. I know you’re looking forward to all this. What would you like to do? It’s all oh I don’t know. OK, well, you know, we can talk about it another</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>

day to the point where I kind of feel like we can't talk about it again because even asking the question is now, so shame, shaming that she doesn't have an answer... It's just complete withdrawal... And that's, I suppose it's hopelessness, really, isn't it?"

"there's a total difference between being, you know, content, self-regulated in your room, doing things that you are happy to do, rather than just isolating, which is where she is just, yeah."

"it could be to the point where she can't. She couldn't get up in the morning because the thought of going to English and Period four where her teacher was possibly going to shout at everybody... You know that was too much. That was the only thing that she was concentrating on. So she literally could not get out of bed."

"academically, she is you know, you can't ask anymore, but in fact that also then goes into perfectionism where she's very she loves maths. She's very good at it. But she might get 85. She actually got 100% in a maths test this year... And she still wasn't, yeah, she wasn't happy with it though... It was maybe too easy or other people also got hundreds, so maybe it wasn't that difficult."

"It's perfectionism, which ultimately is fear really, isn't it?"

"she's, she's already said that she's not going to manage to do her [exams] because she's going to be too stressed and worried about them... intellectually she is probably capable"

"kind of black and white, inflexible, perfectionist thinking... You know, it has to be this, or it's that. Asking me is it this, or is it that, no you know maybe we could consider, it's black and white, you know, the plan. And that's a joke in our house is so the plan. It's never the plan, you know, you want things to go, you know, she might already have, you know, 40,000 details of how she thinks the day's going to go. And then by the time she's going down the stairs, something like, oh, something happened. Not amazing but you know there's no milk for breakfast? Something like that. And she finds that very difficult. But that's also another part of the the it's difficult to not have things going exactly as you want them."

	<p>“anxiety is something which presented in her”</p> <p>“when she’s sort of gone back to school [post-lockdowns) ... she is anxious and she says the noise bothers her a lot now. And it didn’t really, she’s never even mentioned that before, but now it just does seem to bother her quite a bit.”</p> <p>“she’s definitely a perfectionist and she just gives herself a really hard time about stuff, you know, and and she she gets excellent marks.”</p>	Participant 3a
	<p>“because this anxiety, they’ve got some counselling in school now. So she’s been involved with that.”</p>	Participant 5a
	<p>“I got to the point where, I got the local authority involved. I rang them up and said you need to come and see my child in this setting because pastoral support is not working. He threatened to self-harm at home because he didn’t wanna go to school anymore. He was threatening to stab himself, didn’t want to live anymore and at seven years old, that’s just not acceptable.”</p>	Participant 6a
	<p>“we did a telephone consultation and she said, you’re right he doesn’t have ADHD and I’m comfortable to say it’s no autism. She said your son is highly, highly anxious...”</p> <p>“he was going through some very dark times over the last year even just going about space in class, for weeks we had conversations around reincarnation, death, the sun, blowing up, what if my children, my children’s children’s children die, and what if I get reincarnated and I come back in 200 years and I’m living under ground and I can’t breathe.”</p> <p>“it’s my son’s mental health that is the problem here... I said, so you are literally lumping him in with all the other children that have got behavioural problems? I said I’m not having it.”</p>	

	<p>“So we’ve recently changed. Well, a year ago, we changed school environment because we recognised that [child] was struggling with her mental health, it was being impacted heavily by the lack of sensitivity towards her needs and the lack of understanding.”</p> <p>“[her poor mental health presented as] self-loathing... That she needed to change who she was in order to be accepted.”</p> <p>“it wasn’t like anyone raised any issues with me. It was more like me, like knowing that she was coming home upset and knowing that she was just uncomfortable in her own skin.”</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation</p>	<p>“he was taken out of lesson for half a couple of hours. I think it was in meetings and to speak to [teacher] and that was to do with a lot with working through emotions and expressing. And so that was the support, a properly supported environment. It was recommended for him and he did get a lot out of it. Then he took a bit of a break and then he went back again... because my grandmother died, and I think he was finding it very difficult. It’s the first death he’s experienced... And so, he felt like he needed some extra help. So, he went... I think it was a group, not just the one-on-one, I think in a group and just dealing with, you know, talking about emotions and journalling and, you know, things like that.”</p> <p>“He’s able to go back [to small group support] if he was upset. He could go to her office and chat to her. So, if the teacher wasn’t around or, you know, say [the group] was missed, if the group couldn’t run, he would just make a beeline for [teacher] because he knew she just got it.”</p> <p>“he’s the only one out of the three of them that will come home and tell me exactly what he’s done... I have a rundown literally as soon as he comes in from school. I have the this happened that happened or we did this.... I think he needs to talk to me and give me a rundown of what he’s done, you know... anything that was interesting, anything that he achieved, anything that he struggled with.”</p> <p>“they need to just have somebody... that gives him some time and space to listen and be patient. I think it’s patience and, and, sort of, yes, rather than being too in your face and too, you know, just</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>

somebody that will listen and understand and somebody that he can go to if he's feeling overwhelmed for whatever reason."

"[he needs] somebody sensitive themselves. I think that's it. Possibly quieter, more sensitive"

"They're very similar personalities. Very, quite, quite quiet. But just lovely, kind nurturing. And they'll listen. I think he needs somebody that is patient and will listen to his worries and you know, whatever they might be."

"she just got it. Yeah, she was just caring I think yeah."

"the deputy head [related well to [child]], even without knowing about sensitivity, but just being understanding, there is a crossover, isn't there?"

"I've been there when he's teaching [child squash] and he's got such a positive attitude and... I was trying to get [child] to engage, to have and hear somebody say all those positive things feeds in to your consciousness or semi-consciousness and makes you feel good about yourself and it gives you that confidence"

"[the degree to which my child is supported is] dependent on the teachers, the particular personality of the teacher."

"without this particular person, who I think actually is also highly sensitive. I don't think she realises that. And without this person, she wouldn't be at school."

"She's just incredible...[she] is very observant and is there for you, that is needed with highly sensitive children I think."

"oh, there was a bit of a dispute and... she's, with the help of her amazing guidance teacher at school, she tried to, to sort that out at the end of term, but I think she's feeling so ashamed that she told her

Participant 2a

	<p>friend that she didn't want to speak to her again. She, she just can't, can't really kind of contemplate it."</p> <p>"If you're that kind of shouty personality, it's unlikely that you are highly sensitive, I imagine, and you're probably it's never even considered to you the effect that you're having on somebody else. I mean, no, no teachers are doing that deliberately, so there probably does need to be a lot more awareness done as to the consequences of this."</p> <p>"it has been very affected up and down the years depending on the teachers he's had, he's had some much better years than others... for example, Year One was a very positive year for him, but you have quite like a caring, nurturing type of teacher in that class. And there were two teaching assistants as well, and they were really, really supportive"</p> <p>"It's about him having again that relationship with someone that he feels that he can tell him anything and they won't judge him... And they won't hold it against him. And if he wants to blow off some steam, or if he wants to take off his trainers and walk around in bare feet just to ground himself that they'll let him do that and not say they can't do that."</p> <p>"It's real. Yeah, give him that, give him that time and that acknowledgement. And that's something that as a parent I've learned. I never say I'm too busy to talk about something. He needs to talk about it. Express it. Talk it to death."</p> <p>"the school feel he needs a permanent one to one. Now [child] doesn't need a permanent one to one. He needs somebody that gets him in that class that can help with manage his emotions... I think that is where schools are missing the trick massively in that they think everyone that needs support in the classroom has got a learning difficulty."</p> <p>"That is where with him the relationship is the biggest thing with him. The second they get that relationship... he'll open up."</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>
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	<p>“They also do a thing at school... it’s about emotions... they talk about, like, coloured emotions... And then as they work their way up... it becomes more purposeful. So she, you can hear her, something about like oh well, we learned in school that if we get upset we should make ourselves a corner of a room to sit in, you know, and calm down.”</p> <p>“she had this amazing teacher in P3 and P4... She really helped [child] find things she was good at and gave her lots and lots of encouragement and actually kind of gave her permission to be proud of herself... she really gave [child] opportunities to do the things she was good at. And even encouraged her, so we’re Jewish and they’re the only Jewish kids at school. And [child] actually stood up in front of the class, like told them all about some of the Jewish holidays.”</p> <p>“They give her permission to, you know, like they kind of don’t make a big deal about the things she doesn’t join in on, they give her lots of opportunities to shine.”</p>	Participant 8a
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Theme 2: The push and pull of peer interactions

Code	Extract(s)	Participant
<p>Child values meaningful connection with peers</p>	<p>“he was able to get up on screen, the different coloured pictures to show what he sees [as a colour-blind person] and what everyone else sees. So, they were able to understand, you know, a little bit about him as well. Lovely, you know, to feel like that.”</p> <p>“that is one of his strengths... that is a big strength. It’s about human connection. I said, you know, school isn’t just about learning, you know, science, maths, English. It is about interacting with other human beings and understanding the differences and how we think and how we, you know, how er react with the people and so I think, for me... I think his connection, his ability to connect with people, it is really, really mature and I think it’s a really, a big, a really big bonus for him to be like that, to be in touch with his feelings and emotions.”</p>	Participant 1a

	<p>“[child] is also completely non-competitive, so she never wants to be the best. She’s not bothered... So she she oh her and her friend have got an agreement. Now, if we’re gonna get a times table badge at school, we’ll get it on the same day... They will wait.”</p> <p>“So she’s got a best friend... who she was very close to.”</p> <p>“You know, being with her peer group, connecting with people, being able to engage and interact with those people that she feels safe with. But, equally, because of the deep level of processing and then like that maturity level, um, her ability to, I guess understand that other people aren’t that deep and aren’t that mature is very difficult”</p> <p>“because of the deep processing, connections are important”</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child displays strong empathy towards peers</p>	<p>“he was able to understand what the girls were feeling and comfort them and hug them”</p> <p>“that is one of his strengths... that is a big strength. It’s about human connection. I said, you know, school isn’t just about learning, you know, science, maths, English. It is about interacting with other human beings and understanding the differences and how we think and how we, you know, how er react with the people and so I think, for me... I think his connection, his ability to connect with people, it is really, really mature and I think it’s a really, a big, a really big bonus for him to be like that, to be in touch with his feelings and emotions.”</p> <p>“but I’m trying to make him understand that he didn’t, it didn’t have anything to do with him and I think that’s what the problem is, you know, with people, you know, like myself and [child], that you feel like everything is because you’re, you’re picking up on everybody’s emotion and bad mood. And you, you would think I’ve done something wrong. It’s my fault. You try and put it right and then, you know, you, you are expending a lot of energy doing that, you know, as well as everything else.”</p> <p>“oh, there was a bit of a dispute and... she’s, with the help of her amazing guidance teacher at school, she tried to, to sort that out at the end of term, but I think she’s feeling so ashamed that she told her</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p>

	<p>friend that she didn't want to speak to her again. She, she just can't, can't really kind of contemplate it."</p> <p>"she's very mature for her age as well... she just has that maturity and she's very sensible and so I think that's a strength... she also is quite affected by people being quite mean, you know, saying mean things either to her or to other people."</p> <p>"[she takes] on board people's opinions I think, some of the things are really about other people, which is causing [her anxiety] ... I mean they've probably offloaded their problem onto her, they're feeling better."</p> <p>"She is a good friend to people... But I think that's sometimes quite draining for her because she takes other people's kind of worries and things on board."</p> <p>"she's very self-aware, very wide awake to everything... she can read people like a book"</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 4a</p>
<p>Child experiences protective, and resilience promoting, friendships</p>	<p>"I asked her if she wanted to go [to the Halloween disco] this year. She hasn't decided if she wants to. I have a feeling if her best friend wants to go, she'll wanna go and they'll probably just kind of go in for one dance and then leave again... It encourages her. She can do almost anything with [her best friend]."</p>	<p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Friendships can be difficult</p>	<p>"He's very, he's very mature, and you know... he finds some friendships difficult... he has a very strong understanding."</p> <p>"a lot of the girls were crying and he got it. He understood it, whereas the boys were being very noisy, teasing, trying to make the girls cry even more and then he got upset at that as well. He said they were spoiling the last day."</p> <p>"I think you know a lot of the problems that he's had have been to do with relationships and friendships and the difficulties he doesn't like arguments and disagreements and drama. Basically, it's just it's just the drama, you know, he internalises that."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>

	<p>“she doesn’t really have many [friends] at all due to the overwhelm.”</p> <p>“she has one, she has one or two, but she hasn’t seen them, so we’re not into the fourth week of our summer holidays and she hasn’t seen them at all.”</p> <p>“oh, there was a bit of a dispute and... she’s, with the help of her amazing guidance teacher at school, she tried to, to sort that out at the end of term, but I think she’s feeling so ashamed that she told her friend that she didn’t want to speak to her again. She, she just can’t, can’t really kind of contemplate it.”</p> <p>“there’s a total difference between being, you know, content, self-regulated in your room, doing things that you are happy to do, rather than just isolating, which is where she is just, yeah.”</p> <p>“nobody really wants to be a hermit, not as a 14-year-old girl.”</p> <p>“she feels that she’s a bad person. And that she doesn’t have a right to really have fun and to have a lot of friends and to be really popular.”</p>	Participant 2a
	<p>“he’s tended to keep himself to himself quite a lot. And again, that was quite an issue for the school. So he did have, you know, he did have, like, a sort of a couple of friends over the years. It’s quite a big school as well. So the classes change, like, every year, basically... he’s really quite sociable at home.”</p> <p>“his latest teacher said to me, you know, he’s just kind of by himself sort of thing and I think well, I think he needs that down time though... I think he needs to not be around them. So I tried to put it in terms of introversion, we, you know, introvert, needs to not be around people all the time.”</p> <p>“she’s really like kind of sailed through school. She’s really high performing and she just did really well... I think for her its more issues with her peers, since lockdown actually I think they’re both really happy, being locked down at home she was honestly really happy.”</p>	Participant 3a

	<p>“she’s very mature for her age as well... she just has that maturity and she’s very sensible and so I think that’s a strength... she also is quite affected by people being quite mean, you know, saying mean things either to her or to other people.”</p> <p>“So she’s got a best friend, who, she’s very occasionally fallen out with like kids do, and she did have a best friend, [child], who she was very close to... She’s only got two or three friends.”</p> <p>“[child] had, like, a a special friend at primary school”</p> <p>“she really struggled with friendships... But since we’ve been at senior school, she has got a friend. She’s got a special friend. She’s got a friendship circle and they they accept [child] for how she is, you know, all of her little things. And you know, it’s been lovely, actually for me as a Mum, cause I’ve had lots of issues where I felt that the other girls just did. They just don’t get [child]. And if you don’t get her, then you’re never gonna understand her or, you know. And of course, all the girls at Junior school they just didn’t get her... So luckily she’s found some friends that understand her, and it’s been lovely”</p> <p>“[child]... he’s struggled now with finding somebody who he can get on with”</p> <p>“I think the children have always known that they were different because they are so clever... I don’t know how you describe them really, just that they are different and I think Junior school it was easier for them to just get on and the other kids just accepted them for who they are”</p> <p>“ending year four and starting year five his behaviour was erratic to say the least. He would get really angry about something and and flip out, his friendships got quite strained. He was really oversensitive to everything. Very, very negative when he was coming home about everything. I was getting cross... It was just really difficult time... it was more about the school just not getting it right for him.”</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>
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	<p>“I think one of the big advantages that she has because of her high-sensitivity is that depth of connection. And that depth of care and consideration. You know she can ask the most profound questions... very mature conversations and that depth of processing and actually for her to be able to lead that level of conversation is such a huge strength... maturity, which again sets her apart from her peers...”</p> <p>“You know, being with her peer group, connecting with people, being able to engage and interact with those people that she feels safe with. But, equally, because of the deep level of processing and then like that maturity level, um, her ability to, I guess understand that other people aren’t that deep and aren’t that mature is very difficult because if you are, you only ever see that as being a negative... Because in the school environment it isn’t a skill that’s embraced.”</p> <p>“I guess the disadvantage is the, um, the need for home to be a safe place... The need for it to be, um, orderly, timely, calm, quiet... you know the, the, the kind of spontaneity. That’s difficult in the home... She needs time... you know when you wake up in the morning, oh it’s a beautiful day. Let’s go out... No... [she needs to know the plan] and to be able to build that into time. So it’s kind of a disadvantage... it can mean, therefore, that she isn’t able to take part in things with her friends. For example, at last minute.”</p>	Participant 7a
<p>Maintaining meaningful connections can be difficult in changeable educational environments</p>	<p>“the other thing I’ve tended to see is, well, it is, it’s taken teacher a while to kind of get to see what he’s like. So at first he’s very much kind of in his shell quite a lot. You know, he’s kind of very, you know, cautious, observes things, doesn’t get stuck in like the other kids do really holds back from activities, things like that. And again some teachers are kind of not very understanding around that. So they’re like kind of like, you know this sort of thing and. And so we tend to see again at the beginning of school. It’s all a bit like that. then as they get more used to, he’ll come up the shell a bit more and then it’s a bit more positive as time goes on. So you’ll finish [the year] on a very positive note. And his Year Four teacher was, you know kind of got what he was like and then back in Year Five we were back to quite negative again and sort of oh, we get quite fed up really going through this all the time.”</p>	Participant 3a

	<p>“maybe taking a bit more time, particularly at the beginning of the school year, so maybe a bit more work on transition as well and would be really helpful and also transition kind of between teachers as well. So, I was, I felt I was starting again every year, you know, that the school had never had this child before... They wouldn’t really know anything about the history. So every year after repeating, this is where this is what happened and this is where we’ve been before and this is sort of like quite what’s like every year... They should know that already... With a new teacher that is gonna take some time to warm up. So just give him that time. Just don’t be so straight away.”</p> <p>“Towards the end, the last three months of year five was really bad. But that happened when he found out he was moving teachers when we mapped it back. We can map it back to literally the same week that he found out he wasn’t going to have the same teacher... And it was like you hate me. You’re leaving me. I’m gonna be the child that I think I am. Because you’re leaving me and this is it. It was a massive. Now we know.”</p> <p>“because of the deep processing, connections are important, it isn’t easily achievable. There isn’t the opportunity to have deep connections with the people, for example, if the classroom is regularly moved around to work with different people... Or if there are staff changes, uh, from a job share perspective... so she’s got potential for very deep, strong relationships, but sometimes the layout, the set out, the way school is doesn’t always, you know, enable her to do that... similar thing. You know, being with her peer group, connecting with people, being able to engage and interact with those people that she feels safe with.”</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child experiences overwhelm due to overthinking interpersonal interactions</p>	<p>“but I’m trying to make him understand that he didn’t, it didn’t have anything to do with him and I think that’s what the problem is, you know, with people, you know, like myself and [child], that you feel like everything is because you’re, you’re picking up on everybody’s emotion and bad mood. And you, you would think I’ve done something wrong. It’s my fault. You try and put it right and then, you know, you, you are expending a lot of energy doing that, you know, as well as everything else.”</p> <p>“I think you know a lot of the problems that he’s had have been to do with relationships and friendships and the difficulties he doesn’t like arguments and disagreements and drama. Basically, it’s just it’s just the drama, you know, he internalises that.”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>

	<p>“oh, there was a bit of a dispute and... she’s, with the help of her amazing guidance teacher at school, she tried to, to sort that out at the end of term, but I think she’s feeling so ashamed that she told her friend that she didn’t want to speak to her again. She, she just can’t, can’t really kind of contemplate it.”</p> <p>“You know, people are, you know, not in a bad mood or not stressed. But you’re doing things faster than a very relaxed pace. And she does find that overwhelming.”</p>	Participant 2a
	<p>“she does have some god friends. But there are some mean kids... I think with my son, I think he kind of shut himself off from it a bit... keeping himself to himself... but she wants to be involved in it. But then it’s hard, it’s just hard in different ways.”</p> <p>“[she takes] on board people’s opinions I think, some of the things are really about other people, which is causing [her anxiety] ... I mean they’ve probably offloaded their problem onto her, they’re feeling better.”</p> <p>“I think he kind of picks up on what people think about him, if you know what I mean”</p> <p>“She is a good friend to people... But I think that’s sometimes quite draining for her because she takes other people’s kind of worries and things on board.”</p> <p>“she’s very mature for her age as well... she just has that maturity and she’s very sensible and so I think that’s a strength... she also is quite affected by people being quite mean, you know, saying mean things either to her or to other people.”</p>	Participant 3a
	<p>“your negativity towards him, he’s absorbing it. He’s feeling it. He hates himself.... I started to realise he was very, very aware of everyone’s emotions. Very, very absorbent of what was going on. Very, very, he then starts to internalise all that about himself. So he hated himself. He was a bad child. He was no good. No one likes him. No one wanted him. There was no relationship there.”</p>	Participant 6a

	<p>“I think what I realised with HSP is, is we’re all very different in you what know gets the best out of us is very different and you know with [child] it’s relationships. It’s not being treated like he’s thick and it’s being treated with the emotional intelligence that he is, I think, with highly sensitive children, we’ve gotta stay on a level. You can’t show your emotions with them because they pick up on it and it can really sway their own internal feelings.”</p> <p>“[child] was very, very challenging at the beginning of this year for a few months at school, and he made some teachers, you know, get upset... things are said to him and and done in front of him to make him feel horrendously bad about himself. That then can’t be repaired by just, you know, coming in tomorrow fresh slate. They’ve gotta rebuild with him. The thing is with highly sensitive children, you can’t just treat them like Tonka toys. I often compare [child] and other children to Tonka toys and China plates. You know, if you told them off. Yeah. Next minute I’ll come up to you and give you a cuddle. I love you. If you tell [child] off, he’d cry and think you hated him. So for him the big thing around HSP is is relationships and and that knowing that even though he’s different or he sees things differently or he wants to ask you one thousand questions about the sun that you’ve gotta give him what he needs”</p> <p>“because of the highly sensitive trait, the perception of body language of tone, of voice, of gestures. Umm, you know, teachers being stressed with 30 plus children with differing needs. I am highly sensitive, a person will interpret those behaviours considerably differently from another, and then it then can then take a lot longer for that highly sensitive person to recover from that interaction, to then be able to relax again and feel safe and connected to them, be able to learn.”</p> <p>“they look at the perception of the body language, the eye contact, the tone of voice towards them. Then they then have a deep level of shame. About the fact. Well, how come I don’t seem to be able to do this like the others do? And then when they asked the teacher for help. Because it isn’t a learning difficulty, the teacher just tells them they’re fine and they just need to try harder.”</p>	Participant 7a
Nurturing relationships with key adults support	“he was taken out of lesson for half a couple of hours. I think it was in meetings and to speak to [teacher] and that was to do with a lot with working through emotions and expressing. And so that	Participant 1a

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was the support, a properly supported environment. It was recommended for him and he did get a lot out of it. Then he took a bit of a break and then he went back again... because my grandmother died, and I think he was finding it very difficult. It's the first death he's experienced... And so, he felt like he needed some extra help. So, he went... I think it was a group, not just the one-on-one, I think in a group and just dealing with, you know, talking about emotions and journalling and, you know, things like that."

"He's able to go back [to small group support] if he was upset. He could go to her office and chat to her. So, if the teacher wasn't around or, you know, say [the group] was missed, if the group couldn't run, he would just make a beeline for [teacher] because he knew she just got it."

"he's the only one out of the three of them that will come home and tell me exactly what he's done... I have a rundown literally as soon as he comes in from school. I have the this happened that happened or we did this.... I think he needs to talk to me and give me a rundown of what he's done, you know... anything that was interesting, anything that he achieved, anything that he struggled with."

"they need to just have somebody... that gives him some time and space to listen and be patient. I think it's patience and, and, sort of, yes, rather than being too in your face and too, you know, just somebody that will listen and understand and somebody that he can go to if he's feeling overwhelmed for whatever reason."

"[he needs] somebody sensitive themselves. I think that's it. Possibly quieter, more sensitive"

"They're very similar personalities. Very, quite, quite quiet. But just lovely, kind nurturing. And they'll listen. I think he needs somebody that is patient and will listen to his worries and you know, whatever they might be."

"she just got it. Yeah, she was just caring I think yeah."

	<p>“the deputy head [related well to [child]], even without knowing about sensitivity, but just being understanding, there is a crossover, isn’t there?”</p> <p>“I’ve been there when he’s teaching [child squash] and he’s got such a positive attitude and... I was trying to get [child] to engage, to have and hear somebody say all those positive things feeds in to your consciousness or semi-consciousness and makes you feel good about yourself and it gives you that confidence”</p> <p>“[the degree to which my child is supported is] dependent on the teachers, the particular personality of the teacher.”</p> <p>“without this particular person, who I think actually is also highly sensitive. I don’t think she realises that. And without this person, she wouldn’t be at school.”</p> <p>“She’s just incredible...[she] is very observant and is there for you, that is needed with highly sensitive children I think.”</p> <p>“oh, there was a bit of a dispute and... she’s, with the help of her amazing guidance teacher at school, she tried to, to sort that out at the end of term, but I think she’s feeling so ashamed that she told her friend that she didn’t want to speak to her again. She, she just can’t, can’t really kind of contemplate it.”</p> <p>“If you’re that kind of shouty personality, it’s unlikely that you are highly sensitive, I imagine, and you’re probably it’s never even considered to you the effect that you’re having on somebody else. I mean, no, no teachers are doing that deliberately, so there probably does need to be a lot more awareness done as to the consequences of this.”</p> <p>“it has been very affected up and down the years depending on the teachers he’s had, he’s had some much better years than others... for example, Year One was a very positive year for him, but you</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p>
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	<p>have quite like a caring, nurturing type of teacher in that class. And there were two teaching assistants as well, and they were really, really supportive”</p> <p>“It’s about him having again that relationship with someone that he feels that he can tell him anything and they won’t judge him... And they won’t hold it against him. And if he wants to blow off some steam, or if he wants to take off his trainers and walk around in bare feet just to ground himself that they’ll let him do that and not say they can’t do that.”</p> <p>“It’s real. Yeah, give him that, give him that time and that acknowledgement. And that’s something that as a parent I’ve learned. I never say I’m too busy to talk about something. He needs to talk about it. Express it. Talk it to death.”</p> <p>“the school feel he needs a permanent one to one. Now [child] doesn’t need a permanent one to one. He needs somebody that gets him in that class that can help with manage his emotions... I think that is where schools are missing the trick massively in that they think everyone that needs support in the classroom has got a learning difficulty.”</p> <p>“That is where with him the relationship is the biggest thing with him. The second they get that relationship... he’ll open up. I think the other thing with HSP kids, they feel stupid. They think, they’ll go, why why why can’t I just put gravy on that?... Now I don’t even ask because I think I’m just making him feel really stupid... Actually, if he doesn’t want it like that, he doesn’t have to have it like that.”</p>	Participant 6a
	<p>“They also do a thing at school... it’s about emotions... they talk about, like, coloured emotions... And then as they work their way up... it becomes more purposeful. So she, you can hear her, something about like oh well, we learned in school that if we get upset we should make ourselves a corner of a room to sit in, you know, and calm down.”</p> <p>“she had this amazing teacher in P3 and P4... She really helped [child] find things she was good at and gave her lots and lots of encouragement and actually kind of gave her permission to be proud of herself... she really gave [child] opportunities to do the things she was good at. And even encouraged</p>	Participant 8a

her, so we're Jewish and they're the only Jewish kids at school. And [child] actually stood up in front of the class, like told them all about some of the Jewish holidays."

"They give her permission to, you know, like they kind of don't make a big deal about the things she doesn't join in on, they give her lots of opportunities to shine."

Theme 3: Sensory overwhelm – *'it just needs to be quieter'*

Code	Extract(s)	Participant
<p>Child experiences overwhelm in busy, loud educational environments</p>	<p>"school's very busy. There's 35 in his class and that seems to have steadily increased... It seems to be, you know, a very large, very large class. There's a lot of noise, a lot of goings on. So, I think that's very disadvantaged for him, you know, with bigger classes."</p>	Participant 1a
	<p>"all of it, all of it is overwhelming... it's just all overwhelming the size of it, the sounds of teachers shouting, children chatting."</p>	
	<p>"[Loud noises making her] uncomfortable isn't, isn't a strong enough word, but yes."</p>	Participant 2a
	<p>"[Loud noises make her] highly anxious... [they are] intolerable."</p>	
	<p>"You know, people are, you know, not in a bad mood or not stressed. But you're doing things faster than a very relaxed pace. And she does find that overwhelming."</p>	
	<p>"many noises, not just loud noises, breathing, chewing, sniffing."</p> <p>"[child] cannot tolerate the teacher shouting, but I'm not sure the teacher even does shout... I mean I don't know what she would do if the teacher did shout at her, she would never do</p>	

anything to cause the teacher to shout at her, but she can't even cope with somebody being stern."

"it could be to the point where she can't. She couldn't get up in the morning because the thought of going to English and Period four where her teacher was possibly going to shout at everybody."

"we spoke to her teacher and well, it's the noise. It's one thing. So we got really good noise cancelling headphones. And we looked at various, various strategies that you know of leaving the room is another one. You could have a card or you just put it on your desk to say, hey, let's leave the room. But both of these, when you've got very, very shy person, totally lacking social confidence, you know, you're kind of like putting flashing lights around them, saying, like, I've got a problem. Hey, class. Hey, everybody else in the class? I've got a problem."

"[the perfect environment], the classroom probably a single, you know, she would just be on her own. Or maybe with one or two people that she liked and that she knew that they were quiet people and they would get on with their work... she would work in the library, but even you go to the school library now and a library is not, not not a very quiet place, you know, in times gone by you were pretty scared to talk in the library and you wouldn't dare make a noise. But they are different places now. I think it is the society we are in... With the curriculum, and people having, you know students having much more of a say with how their learning takes place. That just makes more noise, and if you are not an extrovert or if you're noise sensitive, it's just it's just too much."

"we even tried where she's been in the kind of the teachers cupboard in between two classrooms and that kind of worked. But then another teacher came in and said, what are you doing in there? Who didn't know anything about [child] and, you know, that was, you know, that's not going to work"

“while they’re very good noise cancelling headphones and they would work, she she felt too shy to put them in.”

“So there’s things you could do with the environment... the teacher, is actually perhaps even more critical in being part of the environment. So for someone like [child], she needs a teacher who is not terrifying. They need to be consistent to their core about maintaining a very quiet and calm atmosphere. She needs to know that people are not just going to get away with talking and chatting. Even the sound of whispering, if she’s feeling very stressed, the sound of whispering can be too much... and she does have one or two teachers like that who just don’t take nonsense from anybody. But I think that’s the minority these days. Classrooms are just much more informal places.”

“she doesn’t have lunch because the lunch queue is just chaos, even though there’s a screamy teacher standing trying to keep everybody quiet.”

“I think he is quite affected by noise. That’s probably one of his main challenges I would say in school... I think he finds it very distracting. So it would stop him from being able to focus on his work. So therefore there is more of an issue for school as well.”

“I think some activities that are in schools are quite difficult for kind of introverted, you know, if you’re an introvert as well as being highly sensitive, which lot, lots of highly sensitive people are introverts. So lots of hands up if you know performances, assemblies, parties, these sorts of things, which obviously most kinds really enjoy can be quite stressful for sensitive kids, noise, it’s really uncomfortable and very high noise levels. And one thing about the noise as well... he spent three [years] in like a hut type thing... not like a proper classroom... a lot of the noise levels are worse in there I think than a classroom because the ceiling is quite low, and obviously it’s quite small as well. So when you’ve got like 30 kids or whatever in that sort of space quite, quite noisy.”

Participant 3a

	<p>“I’ve noticed even when we’re at home... when his sister’s around, she’s making a lot of noise. He’s a bit like, he’s quite distracted by that... normally it’s just me and him. It’s really quiet. We’re working.”</p> <p>“I think they had tried ear defenders at school, but I’m not really sure how kind of, how much that works. It’s a bit stigmatising, almost to have those ear defenders on.”</p> <p>“I think the noise is quite hard to escape from as if you have that as a particular sensitivity, it’s quite difficult I think.”</p> <p>“I think one thing that was helpful which is worth mentioning is that in one of the school years... they had kind of like an online system that they used sometimes for like comprehension and things like that. And he really enjoyed that... he probably enjoyed the quiet and time from it as well... [and] a bit more choice [of learning strategies].”</p> <p>“when she’s sort of gone back to school [post-lockdowns] ... she is anxious and she says the noise bothers her a lot now. And it didn’t really, she’s never even mentioned that before, but now it just does seem to bother her quite a bit.”</p> <p>“we got some ear defenders again at, this is a school thing because they said that [child] said he doesn’t like the noise in the corridors when they change class... he just kept leaving them at home”</p> <p>“She struggles with loud noises”</p> <p>“I think the way I tried to remember it, it’s like if I went to like a club and there was like pulsating lights and really loud music and everyone was yelling. I feel like that’s what she feels when she’s in a class of 30 kids all talking at the same time and actually quite a few different languages and then being in a lunch room with about 300 kids... I think that’s how she feels it. I don’t think she has, you know, like we have, or other people have... an internal membrane</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>
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	<p>between you and the world... I just don't think she has that. I think she hears everything... I don't think she can turn off inputs. So I think for her school was just, like, nonstop.”</p> <p>“I did ask... she was struggling to eat because it was so noisy. So I asked if she could eat her lunch in the nurture room because obviously if she gets hungry, then we're just going backwards in life.”</p> <p>“So this will be the first year of the Halloween disco because we went in P1 and she cried the whole time and we went and P2 and she wore headphones. You know, the ear defenders...”</p>	
<p>Child experiences overwhelm when attention placed upon them</p>	<p>“I remember myself. You know, you want to answer, because you want that recognition that you, that you got the right answer, you know and there's no other way of doing that. You know you're right answering in your head, but you're too nervous to say, you know, to say it.”</p> <p>“she plays cello at school...if another teacher comes into the room just to watch, see how she's getting on. She would find that very, very off putting.”</p> <p>“we looked at various, various strategies that you know of leaving the room is another one. You could have a card or you just put it on your desk to say, hey, let's leave the room. But both of these, when you've got very, very shy person, totally lacking social confidence, you know, you're kind of like putting flashing lights around them, saying, like, I've got a problem. Hey, class. Hey, everybody else in the class? I've got a problem.”</p> <p>“while they're very good noise cancelling headphones and they would work, she she felt too shy to put them in.”</p> <p>“so it's all very welcome, you know, all these, you know, solutions, and that's as a parent as a teacher, everybody's constantly, or as an Ed Psych, is like let's find a solution possible solution to that. But if the person in question is either not able or willing, able is the world that comes, it's not can't, well, actually the word is can't. It's not won't they? They genuinely they can't do it. Then you can have all these strategies in the world, but they're not gonna. They're not</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p>

	<p>gonna help... There was no way she would physically be able to stand up and walk to the teacher's desk or catch their eye and then leave the room? ... It's just not working. It will not work. You know."</p> <p>"we even tried where she's been in the kind of the teachers cupboard in between two classrooms and that kind of worked. But then another teacher came in and said, what are you doing in there? Who didn't know anything about [child] and, you know, that was, you know, that's not going to work"</p> <p>"she came up with these [strategies], you know, with a lot of support as well. But as she feels that she can't, she's too self-conscious to do it."</p> <p>"I think they had tried ear defenders at school, but I'm not really sure how kind of, how much that works. It's a bit stigmatising, almost to have those ear defenders on."</p>	Participant 3a
<p>Experience of overwhelm meaning child requires access to quieter, more relaxed educational environments to promote achievement and wellbeing</p>	<p>"school's very busy. There's 35 in his class and that seems to have steadily increased... There's a lot of noise, a lot of goings on. So, I think that's very disadvantaged for him, you know, with bigger classes. So, he would have probably suited like 27, you know, children."</p> <p>"it's sort of yeah, being able to try and support those particular students that you might recognise that have a high-sensitivity and dislike noise for whatever reason. You know to help them sit an exam, in certain schools they have quieter spaces."</p> <p>"the time was a big issue, that time wasn't pressed [working from home], he didn't have to think quick. I think he's a bit, you know, if he's in the headlights, gotta come up with an answer, come up with an idea quickly, he struggles. But it was quieter. He was able to just sit on his own and just think, yeah, this is what I'm gonna do."</p> <p>"We are introverted and this is the best way that we learn, you know, some people learn better in smaller groups and might find it difficult talking in big groups."</p>	Participant 1a

	<p>“I said, what, you know, what could the school do to kind of make things better? So she said, you know, noise or teachers kind of telling people to be quiet... because they just seem to tolerate that noise level... well to whatever level really, particularly supply teachers, which is quite prevalent with the pandemic and sickness and things like that... and also you know, actually teaching classes, not just letting things go and not saying anything... she finds it quite difficult to not have that lesson go through, not have things followed you know.”</p> <p>“I think schools, I think teachers should be given, I think all teachers should have at least half a day on what high-sensitivity is so that there can be aware of it... Because I would say it’s like. It’s like everything’s amplified for them. So no, if something goes wrong, it’ll go wrong bigger for them if no. If that even down to some of them probably won’t be able to cope with things like fire alarms... Or just everybody being noisy in the classroom, I think every classroom or every school should have a quiet area that’s quiet for highly sensitive.”</p> <p>“her mind, is very busy and all the time... it must be exhausting for her brain to just be on the go so much”</p> <p>“I remember [child] when she was little. I once tried to do that. You know, the counting down thing to get her to do something. And she literally freaked out. I never did it again.”</p> <p>“we were quite big on if you do that, you get this... If you can score more goals, you can get there. And we started to notice that the more pressure you put on him the worse he behaved or the worse that he, is it more pressure on the rewards, keep it on himself, and the worse it got, football was a prime example of that. If you said if you score three goals, you get a fiver or if you score one goal, you get a quid. He he would not score goals, but if you didn’t say anything and he went on there have a great game.”</p> <p>“he definitely doesn’t cope well with strict teachers and strict people”</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>
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	<p>“in an environment where she has the ability to connect, no, not ability, she’s got the ability, in school where she has the opportunity, to connect, in a deep way, she thrives, so smaller class sizes.”</p> <p>“they are able to revisit missing elements of skills that they maybe have been present in class but weren’t absorbing the information at the time”</p> <p>“A small teaching environment [would be ideal], where the teachers’ main goal is the children feeling safe.”</p> <p>“how does taking her from a larger setting into a smaller setting change how she feels? About being in either environment, because ultimately it’s about how that highly sensitive child then feels in the smaller environment. If the child feels less safe in the smaller environment than in the bigger environment because she then feels excluded, spotlights on them. Is there gonna be more pressure because there’s an expectation don’t forget here, from teachers and the system, that because they’ve made some special allowance that therefore it will work. So there’s a lot of expectation and pressure on that child then too.”</p> <p>“No uniform. They have slippers that they can wear during the day.”</p>	Participant 7a
<p>Experience of overwhelm meaning child needs additional time to recharge and recover throughout the school day</p>	<p>“[child] just takes loads of food with her. She manages it in the breaks... They need a snack”</p> <p>“that was when I talked about a growing and thriving orchid, how to how to make them thrive. And that was aimed at the school as well, because it’s like, you know, giving them breaks when it becomes too much and that’s what they do, they do that with [friends 10-year-old child, who is highly sensitive] to an extent.”</p> <p>“[child] actually wangled it herself, that she sits with a little girl who’s got ADHD? No, she’s, she’s autistic. Her friend [name]’s autistic and she’s wrangling it to she’s [child]’s partner in class, so when [child] gets a break, [child] gets a break.”</p>	Participant 4a

	<p>“as kids get older, people expect you to have certain ways of reacting to things you know, and she just doesn’t always do that. And it can be quite difficult, especially if she’s like tired or hungry.”</p> <p>“I mean, she was happy at nursery... It wasn’t like she was desperately unhappy or anything. It was just more like you could tell when she’d been like very busy and had had enough, and she wasn’t the kind of kid, you know, some of my friends would be like, oh, after nursery we’re going out to dinner and then we’re going on a walk or whatever. She she can’t do that she needs, she still does, we can’t, like, go for the whole day.”</p>	Participant 8a
<p>Experience of overwhelm meaning child needs additional processing time during class-based activities</p>	<p>“he’s never really busy. I think he can only really concentrate on one thing at a time. It’s one thing at a time”</p> <p>“And we did a topic last week. He had to talk to the class and choose anything you wanted. So, it was quite broad and, he, I know he struggles with that because he’s thinking not only of what he’s choosing, what everybody else will think about it. Is it the right thing? Am I doing something wrong, and, you know, what the reaction of the teacher will be, what the reaction of the children will be. So, he’s, he’s, he’s not just thinking, oh yeah, I like that, I’ll do that, whatever.”</p> <p>“There’s one thing going on in the brain.”</p> <p>“They’re not very good at organising. [child] is terrible at organising. [child] is better, but he’s yeah if he’s got too much to do, he gets overwhelmed by it all and we’ve been working on that”</p> <p>“if they aren’t aware, you know teachers, I mean, I don’t know about teacher training. I haven’t trained as a teacher. But, you know, they may be made aware of learning difficulties, but the highly sensitive trait isn’t a learning difficulty. It’s a depth of processing, so you can imagine a child that is highly sensitive, that has depth of processing which is far more advanced than her peers. And then she’s asked to put her hand up to answer her question on the spot. Or she’s given a timer in time to do her spellings, and then the teacher’s getting frustrated because she’s</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>

	<p>not actually listening to what's being said to her and actually being able to do what's required of her within the time scale that the teacher wants. Well, none of those are because she's not behaving well, she's not listening or she doesn't have the capability. That is all an element of the deep processing that she needs in order to be able to achieve what's asked of her."</p> <p>"they look at the perception of the body language, the eye contact, the tone of voice towards them. Then they then have a deep level of shame. About the fact. Well, how come I don't seem to be able to do this like the others do? And then when they asked the teacher for help. Because it isn't a learning difficulty, the teacher just tells them they're fine and they just need to try harder."</p>	
<p>Experience of overwhelm leading to preference for smaller, quieter learning-based activities (i.e., individual or pair work as opposed to large group work)</p>	<p>"I remember myself. You know, you want to answer, because you want that recognition that you, that you got the right answer, you know and there's no other way of doing that. You know you're right answering in your head, but you're too nervous to say, you know, to to say it."</p> <p>"Well, a report, her recent report from teachers was, you know, [child] is a delight in class. You know the only kind of could do better was kind of maybe that she could contribute a little more in class, but you know she's hard working and polite, follows instructions in lessons, you know she does everything."</p> <p>"[the perfect environment], the classroom probably a single, you know, she would just be on her own. Or maybe with one or two people that she liked and that she knew that they were quiet people and they would get on with their work... she would work in the library."</p> <p>"we even tried where she's been in the kind of the teachers cupboard in between two classrooms and that kind of worked. But then another teacher came in and said, what are you doing in there? Who didn't know anything about [child] and, you know, that was, you know, that's not going to work"</p> <p>"there's an assumption that kids really like... I think there's an assumption that kids need to learn to accommodate the group. So she hates team sports. I think it would be brilliant, you</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>

	<p>know, they make her really uncomfortable, I think it would be brilliant if in PE there could be like an option to just, you know, like skip rope in a corner or whatever. You know, like she loves, she's very athletic, she loves individual stuff... If I could just opt her out of football for the rest of her life, I would. You know, she, she hates it. And things like all the school events, you know, it's like a school disco, a school cinema night. You know, like there isn't always. We're trying, because I'm on the PTA now, we're trying to always have like a quiet corner, a quiet room or whatever. But the school doesn't always, like, have that. And without her having one-on-one support, which she doesn't need, she can't have that. You know, it's not like because they did invite all the autistic kids to, like, go to the nurture room. If there's something like that happening, but they wouldn't invite her"</p>	
<p>Experience of overwhelm meaning child prefers structured rules and routines throughout the school day</p>	<p>"she finds it quite difficult to not have that lesson go through, not have things followed you know."</p> <p>"I think for her school was just, like, nonstop. It got better as she got older because she loves a routine...P One, it's like a lot of, like, free play and running around and kids like learning how to stand in a queue and stuff. But she's in P 6 now and it's like, you do this from 9 to 10. You do this from 10 to 11, lots of working in a workbook kind of stuff. And she's, like, thriving with that. So she loves it. She loves knowing what to expect. And she loves the quiet time... So school got, like, easier and easier for her as everybody else probably started liking it less and less. She started liking it more and more."</p> <p>"I think she just needs to like to know what's going to happen every day... and in school, you know, they know."</p> <p>"if...she has, like a plan, she can do amazing things."</p> <p>"I know that there's a lot of people who say, like, you know, for different sorts of sensitive kids, schools like Montessori schools are stuff really suit them because they're really free and you can, like, move at your own pace. For [child], that would be absolutely the wrong thing for her..."</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>

Theme 4: A square peg in a round hole – accessing an equitable education

Code	Extract(s)	Participant
<p>Child doesn't fit into boxes set out by school</p>	<p>"I feel as a parent that he his needs aren't being met because his personality doesn't fit the, you know, the the the norm or whatever"</p>	Participant 1a
	<p>"The teachers are all very, you know I speak to them on parents evening and they are all genuine. They, they want the best for everybody, as you know, which is great. I wouldn't be expecting a teacher, the teacher's not just there for one, my daughter. You know, they've got hundreds of pupils. And you just have to fit in. And that's the that's the problem."</p>	Participant 2a
	<p>"I think some activities that are in schools are quite difficult for kind of introverted, you know, if you're an introvert as well as being highly sensitive, which lot, lots of highly sensitive people are introverts. So lots of hands up if you know performances, assemblies, parties, these sorts of things, which obviously most kinds really enjoy can be quite stressful for sensitive kids."</p>	Participant 3a
	<p>"having kind of the empathy and the sort of friendly and being quite kind and things like that, these are all good traits. And I think the problem is, though, that people seem to want, obviously people seem to prefer extroverts to people like, you know, really kind of, introverted, you know... chatty all the time... I think in our society, because you read, sometimes... like Japanese or something like that... they value those sorts of traits. But I think in our society here, there aren't as many... so being an introvert, highly sensitivity, it's it's tricky."</p>	
	<p>"that's what we, that's what we kind of view as being how kids should be, isn't it? They should be really loud."</p>	
	<p>"I didn't hear about the term highly sensitive children until the children were what at school 5 or 6. And it changed my perception of how I dealt with my children... I discovered and by another parent at school who had a child who she'd obviously researched and she'd found highly sensitive. And the Facebook page actually. And as soon as I went on there and I and I read what other people were</p>	Participant 5a

	<p>saying about their children and I, then obviously the highly sensitive child book and all the rest of it, not that I've read it, but I was just, I just everything like just slotted into place and I understand I thought that's my children. That's why my children are different from other children. It's there's nothing wrong with them. They they, it's their personality and and unfortunately with school they always want to just put children into boxes and if they don't fit in that box the there must be something wrong with them and that's wrong."</p>	
	<p>"Not a lot [could be done to improve school for my daughter]. I think the whole school system's not geared up for children like her... It needs a complete overhaul of the school system... It's almost like we wanna get every child to the same point. Which means those who are at the top of end the scale, get held back, and those who are at the bottom end of the scale get dragged to a point that is potentially uncomfortable, it's almost like we want everybody to be the same, where in reality we're all very different"</p>	Participant 4a
	<p>"I think the big thing with school is it's a so homogenised and it's so you know, everybody's treated the same when in reality nobody's the same"</p>	
	<p>"I've said to them about testing... stop testing my son... you're going to cause more problems by testing him because err that environment, you want the best for the 80% of kids that are in there that are perfect or got a TA or whoever, for the 20% like my son, who just don't fit that box, you've gotta find another way of testing, you know, finding out whether he's academically, where he used to be and leave it at that."</p>	Participant 6a
	<p>"It isn't... an inclusive environment. They're not saying whatever your needs are we will embrace them. No, whatever your needs are, they need to fit the square box. And if they don't, we'll call it early intervention. And what we'll do is we'll build shame and judgement into your educational experience from day one."</p>	Participant 7a
	<p>"Definitely awareness is massive because if not, we run the risk. Well, it's already happening of parents getting desperate to fit their kids into a system that isn't meeting their needs, and if they don't</p>	

fit the pressure is on the parent to make them fit because there aren't alternative provisions. And then it feeds into the fear that, well, what if my child can't go to school? How can I work if my child's not at school?... And then. There's extra worries... And and and and all of that is felt by the deeply sensitive child."

"the teacher's role is to teach the child to read and write and achieve a certain level by a certain target to date... that is their number one... If you were to give a EYFS teacher thirty children. And out of those thirty children, you've got six highly sensitive children. The time and patience and dedication and environment that you're going to have to give those six far outweigh the energy resources you have available, and so you will give it to the other twenty-four. Because the numbers are, the actually the system works for the twenty-four."

"unfortunately the experience we had from a school environment was that I think you know from [child's] particular experience was that she was classed and referred to as being oversensitive... And then, well, her interpretation of that was that there was something wrong with her... she said, I wish I wasn't highly sensitive because, you know, I wish I didn't have to have all these habits"

"in a class of thirty children, you have more immediate obvious needs. You already have a system that intervenes with those. So if you have boys, for example, who are misbehaving. Shouting. Throwing physically... it already has an approach... so, you are a highly sensitive child or deeply sensitive child... experiencing the class differently. There isn't a pathway. That is immediately obvious, and actually the interventions that they need are not considered to be appropriate in the school system because they are by nature, care, compassion, time, patience. And those are in very short supply in mainstream school."

"it's also about what your goal is, right? Like if my goal is for her to conform to everything everyone else is doing, then I'm not achieving that because she isn't. But if my goal is for her to be like happy, and, you know, I think she's very likely to, like, move out to a farm in the countryside or, you know, just do something really odd, go work with llamas or something. She likes animals a lot. But you know, not like go to uni, get a job, go work in an office."

Participant 8a

<p>Sensitive personality types overlooked in the classroom</p>	<p>“having kind of the empathy and the sort of friendly and being quite kind and things like that, these are all good traits. And I think the problem is, though, that people seem to want, obviously people seem to prefer extroverts to people like, you know, really kind of, introverted, you know... chatty all the time... I think in our society, because you read, sometimes... like Japanese or something like that... they value those sorts of traits. But I think in our society here, there aren't as many... so being an introvert, highly sensitivity, it's it's tricky.”</p> <p>“that's what we, that's what we kind of view as being how kids should be, isn't it? They should be really loud.”</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p>
	<p>“in a class of thirty children, you have more immediate obvious needs. You already have a system that intervenes with those. So if you have boys, for example, who are misbehaving. Shouting. Throwing physically... it already has an approach... so, you are a highly sensitive child or deeply sensitive child... experiencing the class differently. There isn't a pathway. That is immediately obvious, and actually the interventions that they need are not considered to be appropriate in the school system because they are by nature, care, compassion, time, patience. And those are in very short supply in mainstream school.”</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
	<p>“the loud kids are the ones who get attention. So the kids who are throwing things and, you know, yelling and hitting teachers and stuff, of course they get immediate attention every time and they have the nurture room and they have the calm down corner and they have all these things, the kids who are on the absolute opposite side of the spectrum... But I think, I think what is missing is... if your kid is just struggling. You know, there's options if they're being loud and disruptive, but if your kid's just, like, not very happy, I don't know. Like what happens like, you know... I mean, with [child]... I do feel like two months into P1 when she still wasn't speaking. Somebody probably should have said something or noticed or, you know, like made me aware, but they didn't until like six months had gone by. And when they were like oh, wow, she's talking now. And it's like, well, like, how would I have known she wasn't?.. You know, and I think genuinely they just, they know they don't have the time like to worry about the quiet kids who are lining up as they're supposed to and eating their lunch nicely and, you know, like she's a good kid.”</p>	<p>Participant 8a</p>

<p>Child displaying EBSA type behaviours resulting from difficulties associated with experiencing high ES within the education context</p>	<p>“she would not go if, if she had the choice.”</p> <p>“if I was being diplomatic, I would probably say that she dislikes it intensely. I could probably more informally say that she hates it.”</p> <p>“it’s quite difficult not to walk on egg shells around about even asking her to do some things... it could be having a shower, brushing teeth, getting ready for school... You know, you wouldn’t think it was unreasonable.”</p> <p>“A healthy, intelligent, wonderful 14-year-old who is at home. All the time, she doesn’t want to see anybody. Doesn’t want to do anything. Umm. It’s just that’s really quite, as a parent, that’s just a very, very sad place to be. So, she hates school... It’s just complete withdrawal... And that’s, I suppose it’s hopelessness, really, isn’t it?”</p> <p>“Well, a report, her recent report from teachers was, you know, [child] is a delight in class... you’re like, oh gosh, it’s an amazing report. And then... it’s amazing, but, from our side, it’s such a sad, it’s such a sad place to be as well, because we have a totally miserable child who hates school. You know, how can you get a report now that is a glowing report?”</p> <p>“Well, the, I mean we’ve, we’ve been through a whole, we took her timetable and we took every, every class and then we, we kind of traffic light it for the whole week... but it could be to the point where she can’t. She couldn’t get up in the morning because the thought of going to English and Period four where her teacher was possibly going to shout at everybody.”</p> <p>“We had an Ed Psych for a while, but [child] seemed to be doing so well in school. She was kind of for a little while not managing to go into school for one day a week when this first started. We were kind of shocked... as long as you’ve got a good relationship with the guidance teacher and they know that you’re kind of on it and that you’re aware of things then they’re happy for you to not be in school, which is quite incredible actually.”</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>
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	<p>“with COVID as well, you know there is a boom in online courses, so, so some, I’m not sure all of them, but she could probably do a lot of her umm qualifications online and you know it has. It has been so miserable, it’s got to the point where, like, well, well, what’s the point, shall we just, do we do that?”</p> <p>“I got to the point where, I got the local authority involved. I rang them up and said you need to come and see my child in this setting because pastoral support is not working. He threatened to self-harm at home because he didn’t wanna go to school anymore. He was threatening to stab himself, didn’t want to live anymore and at seven years old, that’s just not acceptable.”</p>	Participant 6a
<p>Systemic change is required to support CYP who experience high ES</p>	<p>“so it’s all very welcome, you know, all these, you know, solutions, and that’s as a parent as a teacher, everybody’s constantly, or as an Ed Psych, is like let’s find a solution possible solution to that. But if the person in question is either not able or willing, able is the world that comes, it’s not can’t, well, actually the word is can’t. It’s not won’t they? They genuinely they can’t do it. Then you can have all these strategies in the world, but they’re not gonna. They’re not gonna help... She was getting distressed by the teacher, was just shouting. There was no way she would physically be able to stand up and walk to the teacher’s desk or catch their eye and then leave the room? She just, you know, cause we’ve talked about this, so, so, that is a strategy to then go outside and do some, you know, some deep breathing, some grounding... It’s just not working. It will not work. You know.”</p> <p>“[the perfect environment], the classroom probably a single, you know, she would just be on her own. Or maybe with one or two people that she liked and that she knew that they were quiet people and they would get on with their work... she would work in the library, but even you go to the school library now and a library is not, not not a very quiet place, you know, in times gone by you were pretty scared to talk in the library and you wouldn’t dare make a noise. But they are different places now. I think it is the society we are in... With the curriculum, and people having, you know students having much more of a say with how their learning takes place. That just makes more noise, and if you are not an extrovert or if you’re noise sensitive, it’s just it’s just too much.”</p> <p>“I’m wondering if, couldn’t an environment actually set up for the minority, so that you have just the most noisy, chatty, chilled person, could still actually totally function, but that you’ve kind of flipped</p>	Participant 2a

the whole environment around so that you are supporting these orchids and everybody else can fit into that anyway. You know, given, given the research that if, if they actually do get the support they need, they flourish much more than other people do.”

“we even tried where she’s been in the kind of the teachers cupboard in between two classrooms and that kind of worked. But then another teacher came in and said, what are you doing in there? Who didn’t know anything about [child] and, you know, that was, you know, that’s not going to work”

“So there’s things you could do with the environment... the teacher, is actually perhaps even more critical in being part of the environment. So for someone like [child], she needs a teacher who is not terrifying. They need to be consistent to their core about maintaining a very quiet and calm atmosphere. She needs to know that people are not just going to get away with talking and chatting. Even the sound of whispering, if she’s feeling very stressed, the sound of whispering can be too much... and she does have one or two teachers like that who just don’t take nonsense from anybody. But I think that’s the minority these days. Classrooms are just much more informal places.”

“I have got confidence in the school but with the current system, I don’t think there’s a huge amount more... without changing the whole point. So you don’t have six lessons in a day. You know, without fundamentally changing the whole system of of doing different subjects at different times of the days. I don’t, I’m not sure what else because we’ve tried to work on on skills and you know things to solve, things to help in the current building, the current setup... even as a parent having to come to terms with, I have to accept that she won’t drink anything during the day because she doesn’t want to go to the bathrooms because there’s girls. Older girls are people, girls swearing or something in the bathroom.”

“highly sensitive is not a negative trait. It’s not a trait that stops them fitting into an environment necessarily, it doesn’t have to be... if you do it right, they can do [it]... They can actually do it in the right environment”

	<p>“Not a lot [could be done to improve school for my daughter]. I think the whole school system’s not geared up for children like her... It needs a complete overhaul of the school system... It’s almost like we wanna get every child to the same point... where in reality we’re all very different”</p>	Participant 4a
	<p>“You can’t have him working in the hallway because he’s had an explosion while you’re watching a movie about something that’s upset him or some emotional circuit... And this this is something a lot of the schools touched on curriculum wise, and I know it comes from above, so it’s not their fault, but they’re touching on so many little things that they think they’re doing the right thing, but it doesn’t account for that percentage of children that isn’t the norm.”</p>	Participant 6a
	<p>“It’s only now I feel able to actually approach her head teacher, which I have and said, are you aware of the highly sensitive person trait? Are you aware of high-sensitivity and what it means and how it can be enhanced in a learning environment?... And how you could actually change the physical environment and the the the sensory experience for somebody to actually enable them... And so I’ve literally just started having that conversation”</p>	Participant 7a
	<p>“in a class of thirty children, you have more immediate obvious neds. You already have a system that intervenes with those. So if you have boys, for example, who are misbehaving. Shouting. Throwing physically... it already has an approach... so, you are a highly sensitive child or deeply sensitive child... experiencing the class differently. There isn’t a pathway. That is immediately obvious, and actually the interventions that they need are not considered to be appropriate in the school system because they are by nature, care, compassion, time, patience. And those are in very short supply in mainstream school.”</p>	
	<p>“it has been proven that if you can nurture a highly sensitive child. They will flourish... [there needs to be a pathway] ... The first thing would be educating, ensuring that the teachers, the staff that those children are going to interact with are trauma informed... So that they understand what is happening to a child’s nervous system from a highly sensitive... perspective... And then you would move to the child’s opinion then what they would like to see?... Because you know, just asking the questions, what</p>	

	<p>do you need?... Because these children. If you allow them to have their voice. Without judging, shaming, or blaming them, they actually know what they need. They know.”</p> <p>“You know, you look back at it now. You know that first year teacher. That first-year teacher made such a negative impact... If you were to give a EYFS teacher thirty children. And out of those thirty children, you’ve got six highly sensitive children. The time and patience and dedication and environment that you’re going to have to give those six far outweigh the energy resources you have available, and so you will give it to the other twenty-four. Because the numbers are, the actually the system works for the twenty-four.”</p> <p>“the loud kids are the ones who get attention. So the kids who are throwing things and, you know, yelling and hitting teachers and stuff, of course they get immediate attention every time and they have the nurture room and they have the calm down corner and they have all these things, the kids who are on the absolute opposite side of the spectrum... But I think, I think what is missing is... if your kid is just struggling. You know, there’s options if they’re being loud and disruptive, but if your kid’s just, like, not very happy, I don’t know. Like what happens like, you know</p>	Participant 8a
<p>A ‘fight’ for an equitable education</p>	<p>“I felt like she was against me, and she thought, you know, I was just one of those parents, you know, mollycoddling parents. I was just trying to fight for, for, for [child] to have, you know, the same as everybody else, I wanted her to be interested in understanding [child]. This is why, if you say this to him, you know, if you, you know, this is why he reacts in this way.”</p> <p>“he had a lot of difficulty actually because she didn’t seem to get it... she didn’t understand... him”</p> <p>“This particular teacher said that he’s emotionally immature and, I know, if anything he is very emotionally mature”</p> <p>“I got very, very frustrated with her, because she, she made it, she made his life very, very difficult and, like I said, she wasn’t the type of teacher, I didn’t feel that she was in the job, that she was basically in the job because it was a job, it didn’t feel like she got children’s differences, you know, personality.”</p>	Participant 1a

	<p>“I wanted her to to be interested in understanding [child]. This is why, if you say this to him, you know, if you, you know, this is why he reacts in this way.”</p> <p>“I felt there was very little understanding perhaps from [teacher]”</p> <p>“there was no recognition of sensitivity. No terminology around it in school.”</p> <p>“I think it was just nice to have that person in school, you know, you as a parent going into school and feeling that I’m not gonna be judged as like, one of those, you know mollycoddling parents, because I feel like [child] needs extra support in certain things without having an ADHD or autism diagnosis. Just his personality. Because I feel as a parent that he his needs aren’t being met because his personality doesn’t fit the, you know, the the the norm or whatever... I can say that without being judged or [child] feeling that ohh I’m different, because it’s all about fitting in, isn’t it? It’s all about not sticking out like a sore thumb.”</p> <p>“so it’s all very welcome, you know, all these, you know, solutions, and that’s as a parent as a teacher, everybody’s constantly, or as an Ed Psych, is like let’s find a solution possible solution to that. But if the person in question is either not able or willing, able is the world that comes, it’s not can’t, well, actually the word is can’t. It’s not won’t they? They genuinely they can’t do it. Then you can have all these strategies in the world, but they’re not gonna. They’re not gonna help... It’s just not working. It will not work. You know.”</p> <p>“I did get that feeling [that I am being judged]. Eventually, this little, you know, like, feeling, like I said to one of his teachers, you know that I think again it was a performance and you know, does he sort of, can he just sit and watch if he wants? You just have to join. And just like, well, you know, you don’t want him to be, but now you’re asking for him to be treated differently.”</p> <p>“he’s tended to keep himself to himself quite a lot. And again, that was quite an issue for the school... he’s really quite sociable at home. But I think they would really feel like there’s something not quite</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p>
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right with him. I mean, I should mention straight away where they thought autism. Autism is the big thing that they're, we're gonna, you know, they're constantly kind of, I mean, my feeling is there isn't really any big understanding about sensitivity. I can't even say that I've discussed it with them because I think it would just be like, do you know what, she's just a parent in denial. She just doesn't want to accept that about her child... [sensitivity is] never mentioned... people have said on plenty of occasions things like, well, you know, the spectrum is huge. So it's like, yeah... I don't feel that it is [autism] because I mean, obviously, you now, I've had him since being a baby and he's always been very sociable at home, is always that way with us, you know. He's always talking to us. He's not really withdrawn in the same way, but yeah."

"I do feel that if I had just talked about it, but it was towards the end [before he was home schooled]. I did start to think perhaps I should, but I just think they just didn't want to listen."

"he's really is a happy kid and he was always happy enough to go to school, to be honest. It was never particularly happy there though, it was more that they that it was a problem for them. I think more so than him."

"[school] don't recognise it, I don't know, I actually went in to say I made a special PowerPoint... she was quite defensive... and was very much I know what I'm doing. This is the technique I use... I broke it down enough so she she'd accept that children, some children are sensitive, but she only really acknowledged the ones who are what I call the struggling orchids. So the ones who... don't thrive, she didn't acknowledge, actually, that the ones who are thriving. OK. It's like [child]. They also need extra support."

"Yeah, they're not recognising it because they're, I think because they're, they're choosing not to. It's almost an arrogance that, how can a parent of our school know more than we do?... The think they know it all."

"There's probably nobody that knows her better than I do.... if anything I support other people dealing with her."

Participant 4a

“this is another thing... we made the decision not to tell the school that there were any sensitivities with them... I don't know whether it was a good thing or a bad thing, but we just didn't want them to be labelled as anything. We just see them as being different to maybe main, you know, the vast majority of children, I mean, all children are different and wonderful, but we didn't want them to be labelled with anything. So of course school were unaware that we knew that she chews. We know what their little idiosyncrasies are... the last few months, they've been reaching out to us and saying, well, you know, this behaviour isn't quite right. Blah blah, which is why I think they're going for the autism diagnosis. But I don't know... I don't think, I don't, I don't think so... I think the children have always known that they were different because they are so clever... I don't know how you describe them really, just that they are different and I think Junior school it was easier for them to just get on and the other kids just accepted them for who they are”

“[sensitivity wasn't discussed at school]. It was only when they started probing down the autistic autistic route. And the way that they did it made me very defensive. And I just said that they are highly sensitive children. Then I said, have you, you know, do you understand what that is? And you know, one of the teachers sort of said yes, but I don't, I, I'm not convinced that they do actually understand what it means... they made out that it was the children that wanted this diagnosis of autism because then once they've got the diagnosis, they they can, like, get all this support... But yeah I'm quite defensive about it, which I try not to be... obviously, I want my children to thrive. And you know, they are thriving at school. And, but the way school have put it is that, you know, they can have mental health issues further down the line if they don't get a diagnosis and therefore support that that comes with that... I did switch off a little bit when they were talking about it because I just thought no.”

“I suppose the teachers are trying to do their best... But I just think because they don't understand what they're dealing with... they're looking at it from an autistic point of view. So the support that the children are getting are like the ear defenders and the chewy thing... so that was supportive in a way. And although, how I saw it was well, you need to be looking at why she's chewing it, because it might be like because she's regulating something. There's, she's overwhelmed. It could be she's just

Participant 5a

	<p>bored. And if she's just bored at school, then you need to do something about it. That was my. But that's not how they viewed it."</p> <p>"I was really unhappy with how they dealt with it... I said... I don't see how I can continue having him at the school. And so I left. We left the school."</p> <p>"So we started to really look at doing another pastoral support programme with him, but the language in it was always very negative. And again, I started noticing the strategies were all very samey as it had been before, and I was like, these don't work because these have the opposite effect. You're putting, you're badging him again the same as the old school were as a neurodiverse child. And they don't work with him."</p> <p>"He went back in a small class size because I basically begged them to let him back into some sort of routine."</p> <p>"ending year four and starting year five his behaviour was erratic to say the least... it was more about the school just not getting it right for him."</p> <p>"You can't have him working in the hallway because he's had an explosion while you're watching a movie about something that's upset him or some emotional circuit"</p> <p>"[High-sensitivity] it's not on their radar because when you use those words they they they don't, we had, we went in February to explain about high-sensitivity and they're not, if it doesn't have any funding attached to it, they're not interested"</p> <p>"the school feel he needs a permanent one to one. Now [child] doesn't need a permanent one to one. He needs somebody that gets him in that class that can help with manage his emotions... I think that is where schools are missing the trick massively in that they think everyone that needs support in the classroom has got a learning difficulty."</p>	Participant 6a
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“I’ve written to you, I’ve come in, I’ve given you presentations on high-sensitivity... I’ve given you all of this help and support because it’s my son’s mental health that is the problem here... I said, so you are literally lumping him in with all the other children that have got behavioural problems? I said I’m not having it.”

“It’s only now I feel able to actually approach her head teacher, which I have and said, are you aware of the highly sensitive person trait? Are you aware of high-sensitivity and what it means and how it can be enhanced in a learning environment?... And how you could actually change the physical environment and the the the sensory experience for somebody to actually enable them... And so I’ve literally just started having that conversation. I found a really good article because I’m not able to necessarily articulate it as well as I would like to because, I, I don’t feel I’m a, I’m kind of a lived experience person and I could speak to people about it to offer that. But because there’s, you know, usually in education, you need to be a you need to have a certificate of some description for people to take seriously or you need to be behind an organisation that promotes it. You can’t. You’re not valued as a parent’s voice to advocate for your child yet from a highly sensitive person trait.”

“I think the main thing was the invalidation that she could tell that she wasn’t experiencing the classroom environment in the same way as other people were, and she couldn’t understand why... But when she’d say to her teachers, I need help. Because she always tried her best. Always had a smile on her face, was lovely. She was told she was fine. And she didn’t feel that she was fine. She felt that she needed help, and she did. So they just, invalidated her.”

“You know, you look back at it now. You know that first year teacher. That first-year teacher made such a negative impact...”

“when we complained after we took [child] out because lots of information has come out since about the behaviours at school and how she was treated. One of the particular ones I mentioned in there was they have a duty of care that when they knew that that environment was not meeting [child’s] needs, they should have said that... we don’t know exactly what’s going on. We haven’t experienced

Participant 7a

	<p>this before. We aren't able to make any more accommodations. We really think maybe you should look for a different environment."</p>	
<p>Consideration of, or action upon, change in education provision in relation to the experience of high ES within education contexts</p>	<p>"with COVID as well, you know there is a boom in online courses, so, so some, I'm not sure all of them, but she could probably do a lot of her umm qualifications online and you know it has. It has been so miserable, it's got to the point where, like, well, well, what's the point, shall we just, do we do that?"</p> <p>"My son 10, yeah... it's been a real roller coaster with him... he's a very up and down experience [and is now home schooled]"</p> <p>"I thought, why not really, you know, why not just take him out for a bit?... [he's] still really following the curriculum because I don't know whether he might go back at some point... but it worked out well, so I kind of thought you know, it hadn't been something that, you know, it was really quite a difficult decision to make... I have to say I was really, you know, I never expected to do that with my kids... I was like, ohh, completely traumatised. Don't know how much I was doing the right thing, but it is working really well. It's been really good. He's really enjoying it... I think it is the right thing, but it is a massive step away from everything that you've ever known. You know it's, you know, school, you know, I didn't plan my kids to not go to school and that's it really."</p> <p>"I mean. My my husband spoke because, to be honest, I got to a point where it's just like I can't do it anymore. You know, I've just, and he's brought it to the head teacher... we hadn't spoken to her before basically, you know, he just said that he felt that, you know, they were always saying that he needed to kind of have one to one support and this sort of thing or he wouldn't get on with his work. When he could have that at home. So I think they were a bit like, well, can't really argue with that really, because he isn't getting that school."</p> <p>"I said it doesn't really make sense for you at this point [to be home schooled]. If she'd been younger, I would have given her that option if she wanted to. But because she's kind of midway through and she does kind of manage alright, you know... it wouldn't be a very sensible move for her. So she was a bit upset about it first"</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p>

	<p>“She sees schooling as an inconvenience... She wants to go to school where I live until she’s 14. and then she said I’m going to home school myself. She wants to be home schooled. Ever since they did school from home. She’s wanted to be home schooled... Because she she can do what she can choose what she’s she does and she can do things quicker because they hold her back so she’ll so, she said. They were doing some tests and she came home. She she said it was so slow, she said because the teacher was reading the questions, should have it finished by the time she finished reading the questions... They don’t have capacity to cope. She’s almost like as much as children at the other end of the scale need a one to one. If she had a one to one, she’d be amazing. Or if they could take her out the class and say, actually, you know what, you go and learn about this. You go and do some separate, you know, individual study.”</p> <p>“I was really unhappy with how they dealt with it... I said... I don’t see how I can continue having him at the school. And so I left. We left the school.”</p> <p>“He went back in a small class size because I basically begged them to let him back into some sort of routine.”</p> <p>“So we’ve recently changed. Well, a year ago, we changed school environment because we recognised that [child] was was struggling with her mental health, it was being impacted heavily by the lack of sensitivity towards her needs and the lack of understanding.”</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Desire for enhanced awareness and understanding around the experience of high ES within educational contexts</p>	<p>“I didn’t myself fully understand really. You know, why would I? Until more is out there, you know, I think, it won’t be understood.”</p> <p>“[I would like to see] just that understanding I suppose that that it could be a high-sensitivity, you know, situation, and this is how, you know, this is how you, this is what might help that individual student”</p> <p>“Yeah, because [schools] talk about difference, they do it more recently, don’t they?... I think it would be a good idea to see what type of personalities we are. We are introverted and this is the best way</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>

	<p>that we learn, you know, some people learn better in smaller groups and might find it difficult talking in big groups. So, so, normalise it in the sense of tying it in with how we learn with how we are as people. You know, what sort of setting, category, we fit into as a person, and what help we might need, or how we could achieve things better.”</p> <p>“All we want is for people to be understood and to be accepted and to feel that we’ve got, you know, somewhere that we can go or, you know, we’ve got a voice”</p> <p>“I think there’s a lot of awareness to be done and I think until it becomes kind of the norm. It might be quite tricky for people to really get what it what it means.”</p> <p>“If you’re that kind of shouty personality, it’s unlikely that you are highly sensitive, I imagine, and you’re probably it’s never even considered to you the effect that you’re having on somebody else. I mean, no, no teachers are doing that deliberately, so there probably does need to be a lot more awareness done as to the consequences of this.”</p> <p>“She did, uh a while ago, she actually, which was an amazing thing to have done, she wrote a letter to her guidance teacher, then passed it onto her class teacher saying that she had these, you know, difficulties and challenges about noise sensitivity, people shouting, people chatting in class.”</p> <p>“her guidance teacher is amazing and the senior management of the the secondary school are fantastic as well. So they totally get it. You know, they they would have a meeting with you and go this is very interesting, totally understand that. Totally supportive. But they are not in the class, you know they don’t sit with the classes.”</p> <p>“my feeling is there isn’t really any big understanding about sensitivity... [sensitivity is] never mentioned”</p> <p>“I do feel that if I had just talked about it, but it was towards the end [before he was home schooled]. I did start to think perhaps I should, but I just think they just didn’t want to listen.”</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p>
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“just a general understanding of differences I think would be really helpful. So sensitivity being one of those, but just generally like that introvert, extrovert, just knowing that not all kids love to go perform on stage, love to be the centre of attention, answering questions you know, getting picked on to read out loud, things like that.”

“if they had this awareness it would be much easier wouldn't because I would be able to go in and say, you know what he has had these sensitivities, you know these are his particular triggers this is what would really help him... If I could just be upfront with that, that would make a massive massive difference, I think”

“if you read [Elain Aron's] books as 15 to 20% of the population [are highly sensitive], which is, which is absolutely huge, isn't it?”

“I thought amazing, I thought it was amazing you were doing this because I was like for people to know about this because this is like, this is a thing really, you know.”

“I didn't mention [sensitivity]. They didn't mention it... But I do think part of her still things [sensitivity] isn't a real thing, though, you know, I mean, it's not, not a diagnosis, it's, it's not talked about... but the more like, the more things I send to her, I'll find articles and links and things and send it, you know, read this. You know, like she did the test and she, she scored really high... I just think, you know, basically she sees so much around autism and how autism presents in girls, and, yeah... If you see all of that, you never see high-sensitivity... So all you see is that.”

“it would be better if everybody knew about it. So not even not even just school, but, umm so for example we went out for, for a meeting with extended family at the weekend and he was very quiet. And out of his cousins he's the youngest, his one cousin, he's really, really loud and there's quite a few really loud in the family, and he's really quiet and I'm thinking, they must be thinking why is he so quiet, you know? But again, if you could say to them about sensitivity, but then they would be like,

	<p>what's she on about or never heard of that she just making it up you know... And I said to my husband, you know, I just, well, honestly, I think I prefer quiet.”</p> <p>“Awareness more awareness will make a massive, massive difference. I really do think it would have been a massive difference to particularly to him”</p> <p>“I think people around them being aware that they are highly sensitive is important.”</p> <p>“acknowledgement of if they were to understand highly sensitive in schools as much as they can, you know, they understand ADHD and ASD. And I think that would help a lot.”</p> <p>“I think schools, I think teachers should be given, I think all teachers should have at least half a day on what high-sensitivity is so that there can be aware of it. Because if you've got no, you've got a class full of children, and no understanding, if XYZ over there are highly sensitive. Then you, you you can be more attuned to what might happen and what those children might be going through. Because I would say it's like. It's like everything's amplified for them. So no, if something goes wrong, it'll go wrong bigger for them”</p> <p>“I personally think [it would be a positive thing for language around high-sensitivity to be used in schools] ... but I know that people, some people don't like the term highly sensitive because it seems like it's a bad thing, but to me it's I I think both me and my husband and we're probably both highly sensitive as well, so, I don't see it as a bad thing. I see, I think there's more positives as well. There's nothing negative about it, it's just other people's perceptions of it. That's the negative.”</p> <p>“I just think just having an awareness of it is the main the main thing... I don't know what more they could do other than just being more aware of it.”</p> <p>“we question all the time whether we should have told school about our children before they went, but we did cause it said when we were filling in the forms. And there are any other things that you you perhaps need to tell us about your child? And we just thought do we say anything? And we thought</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 5a</p>
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	<p>well, we didn't want to because we just thought it's not a big deal, that was the the issue. It's really difficult. It's not a big deal that they're highly sensitive and but then you want them to be treated and supported... I don't know. It's a really tricky one because it is... it's a personality trait. It's not. It's not a disorder. It's just how they are.”</p> <p>“[I think more awareness would be good], yes, I I think if they had it as part of part of their toolbox they call it... where they got strategies to deal with things”</p> <p>“when you're highly sensitive, it's not just about... the fabric and the clothes and the touch and the look and the feel, and that's what [school] miss, they see highly sensitive as those things, which are typical neurodiverse issues, aren't they? They are triggers that make people think they must be autistic. They must have ADHD, they must have sensory processing disorder. That's very different... I've also got a friend that's got a child that's diagnosed with SPD and she keeps saying oh that's what [child] has got and I'm like no it isn't... It's hard to get them to see things differently.”</p>	Participant 6a
	<p>“I think the the the educational psychologist... I would say for them to have an open mind about the child before they start talking about diagnosis... I think they need to be holistic in what they're in, what they're doing... So for me, the HSP part of it comes in between a teacher knowing there's a problem or challenge or a difference and then having it in their toolbox to try these different things”</p> <p>“they may be made aware of learning difficulties, but the highly sensitive trait isn't a learning difficulty. It's a depth of processing”</p> <p>“when we were having the challenges that we were having and at the time it was only the diagnostic labels that I could think of. So ADHD, autism, SPD, PDA, all of those because it felt like in the education system, those would be the only labels that they would actually be able to engage with me on.”</p> <p>“it has been proven that if you can nurture a highly sensitive child. They will flourish... [there needs to be a pathway] ... The first thing would be educating, ensuring that the teachers, the staff that those</p>	Participant 7a

children are going to interact with are trauma informed... So that they understand what is happening to a child's nervous system from a highly sensitive... perspective... And then you would move to the child's opinion then what they would like to see?... Because you know, just asking the questions, what do you need?... Because these children. If you allow them to have their voice. Without judging, shaming, or blaming them, they actually know what they need. They know.”

“Definitely awareness is massive because if not, we run the risk. Well, it's already happening of parents getting desperate to fit their kids into a system that isn't meeting their needs, and if they don't fit the pressure is on the parent to make them fit because there aren't alternative provisions. And then it feeds into the fear that, well, what if my child can't go to school? How can I work if my child's not at school?... And then. There's extra worries... And and and and all of that is felt by the deeply sensitive child.”

“I think it'd be much easier [if the term highly sensitive or environmental sensitivity was used more]. You know, if you say autism, people know what it means. But if I'm putting [child] into like a new something, a new class or a new school year, I it's like this very long-winded explanation like this is my daughter. She struggles to speak to strangers and also loud noises. And sometimes it's too bright for her in the world. Like it's just it would be a lot easier if people understood that term”

“it felt too hard to explain [her sensitivity] ... with the noise [at lunch], I did say she was struggling. I don't think I used the word [sensitivity] specifically because I don't think, I don't think people know what it means”

Participant 8a

Theme 5: “This is a thing” – it’s not a diagnosis, but it’s still a real experience

Code	Extract(s)	Participant
<p>Clinical, diagnosis-driven language is required for educational contexts to take heed of phenomena such as high ES</p>	<p>“I was trying to explain it in those terms [sensitivity, autism, ADHD], although that is not his diagnosis. If you could look at it in the, the the way that you support those children, that’s the type of support [child] needs sometimes.”</p>	Participant 1a
	<p>“I think it’s not as well recognised as, say, ADHD or autism. It doesn’t have that kind of diagnosis that teachers are prepared and know about. So, it depends on the particular teacher, as to, you know, their approach”</p>	
	<p>“I feel like [child] needs extra support in certain things without having an ADHD or autism diagnosis. Just his personality”</p>	
	<p>“But we’re not getting him diagnosed, it’s not that process. And I think that’s difficult sometimes for particularly modern teachers to understand because everything is document, everything is, you know what I mean?”</p>	
	<p>“there was no recognition of sensitivity. No terminology around it in school.”</p>	
	<p>“I’m kind of anti-labels, I have to say, but I do think in that in in the case of that I would have been quite happy if he was labelled [highly sensitive], because I think it fits him and I think maybe the, maybe what the issue we had with labels in the past is that the label was not quite right [e.g., autism] ... I didn’t really want him labelled with something I didn’t really think applied to him.”</p>	Participant 3a
<p>“I think the main thing was the invalidation that she could tell that she wasn’t experiencing the classroom environment in the same way as other people were, and she couldn’t understand why...”</p>	Participant 7a	

	<p>But when she'd say to her teachers, I need help. Because she always tried her best. Always had a smile on her face, was lovely. She was told she was fine. And she didn't feel that she was fine. She felt that she needed help, and she did. So they just, invalidated her."</p>	
<p>Without there being a diagnostic lens to the experience of high ES, there is poor understanding (i.e., high ES is "lumped in" with other neurodiversities)</p>	<p>"I think it's not as well recognised as, say, ADHD or autism. It doesn't have that kind of diagnosis that teachers are prepared and know about. So, it depends on the particular teacher, as to, you know, their approach"</p> <p>"I thought amazing, I thought it was amazing you were doing this because I was like for people to know about this because this is like, this is a thing really, you know."</p> <p>"highly sensitive children, according to <i>Elaine Aron</i> and her 20% of the population, you know, it's not nothing, what's the, the rates of autism? Yeah, ADHD, I mean, they are much lower than that... And they have a lot more, you know, profile and awareness everywhere."</p> <p>"I mean, I should mention straight away where they thought autism. Autism is the big thing that they're, we're gonna, you know, they're constantly kind of, I mean, my feeling is there isn't really any big understanding about sensitivity. I can't even say that I've discussed it with them because I think it would just be like, do you know what, she's just a parent in denial. She just doesn't want to accept that about her child... [sensitivity is] never mentioned... people have said on plenty of occasions things like, well, you know, the spectrum is huge. So it's like, yeah... I don't feel that it is [autism]"</p> <p>"I did start to think perhaps I should [speak up more about my child being highly sensitive], but I just thought I just think they just didn't want to listen."</p> <p>"Now what I will say is we did have him on the waiting list for autism assessment at one point. But then we decided to take him off because I just. I just didn't feel it was right... I didn't feel it really fits him and I think if you get, I could see how we could get the diagnosis. I don't think he would do particularly well in the tests. That's another thing about highly sensitive kids. You know, I think you kind of wouldn't interact maybe with somebody you don't know, and with what the school was saying, he doesn't do his work, you know, I think then that maybe we could have achieved that diagnosis</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p>

because you know we got a checklist for autism and there's very little that we could tick on that for him from our perspectives at home. But I do feel that he might have got that diagnosis if we had have gone down that path and then would that really have been right for him?"

"I think if they'd have that awareness [around sensitivity], that would have made a massive difference, actually, because I don't think it would have taken that much for him to be able to be himself more then, because it's it was very, very up and down as some teachers were a lot better than others. And I think if you could have, if people have that awareness, they would be like, oh yeah, actually, I think that doe really fit him and what he's like, but they don't. That awareness is the only thing they have is autism. So that's kind of what they go for really, because it's like, well, you know, there is obviously some overlap isn't there, you know, noises and that."

"basically, I think [school] they're always coming from the well, you know, if you were just getting diagnosed with autism, basically it would be fine because you can then have one to one... They would say things like, well, if he gets a diagnosis, you'll get one to one support. And I just know that isn't true necessarily. So because obviously autism is huge... he was never gonna get, never gonna get his needs met because his needs, whether he got diagnosed or not, are his needs, if you see what I mean."

"I do think there's a lot of misdiagnosis. I mean, I'm on a lot of home education Facebook groups and things like this now and again, and nobody ever mentions [sensitivity] on there, but there are so many kids who were like being taken out of school because of anxiety. This type of thing, they're going through ASD assessment and I'm thinking I don't know whether that's the right thing."

"because this anxiety, they've got some counselling in school now. So she's been involved with that. So I had a few chats with them about it, but again I didn't mention [sensitivity]. They didn't mention it, but they did say that she had said that she thought she had autism... because you'll see things on, so she'll see things on social media probably and stuff like that, and again, she'll see the traits that probably apply to her. But they said, oh, we've spoken to teachers and stuff and like nobody, nobody said that, you know, no, no, don't think any of that. And you know, I mean, it was totally out of the

blue for me. I was like, what?... But I do think part of her still things [sensitivity] isn't a real thing, though, you know, I mean, it's not, not a diagnosis, it's, it's not talked about... but the more like, the more things I send to her, I'll find articles and links and things and send it, you know, read this. You know, like she did the test and she, she scored really high... I just think, you know, basically she sees so much around autism and how autism presents in girls, and, yeah... If you see all of that, you never see high-sensitivity... So all you see is that."

"[school] don't recognise it, I don't know, I actually went in to say I made a special PowerPoint she was quite defensive... and was very much I know what I'm doing. This is the technique I use... I broke it down enough so she she'd accept that children, some children are sensitive, but she only really acknowledged the ones who are what I call the struggling orchids. So the ones who.. don't thrive, she didn't acknowledge, actually, that the ones who are thriving. OK. It's like [child]. They also need extra support."

"Yeah, they're not recognising it because they're, I think because they're, they're choosing not to. It's almost an arrogance that, how can a parent of our school know more than we do?... The think they know it all."

"[High-sensitivity] it's not on their radar because when you use those words they they they don't, we had, we went in February to explain about high-sensitivity and they're not, if it doesn't have any funding attached to it, they're not interested [researcher]"

"So we did see an educational psychologist. I think a couple of times. I think reception and then year two I think.... she basically, well she's an autism specialist as well... So again, [sensitivity] was never mentioned... I don't even know if I brought it up with her, sensitivity, you know, she wouldn't know about it. To be honest, I don't know."

"I suppose the teachers are trying to do their best... But I just think because they don't understand what they're dealing with... they're looking at it from an autistic point of view."

Participant 4a

Participant 5a

"I'm kind of anti-labels, I have to say, but I do think in that in in the case of that I would have been quite happy if he was labelled [highly sensitive], because I think it fits him and I think maybe the, maybe what the issue we had with labels in the past is that the label was not quite right [e.g., autism] ... I didn't really want him labelled with something I didn't really think applied to him."

"they are intelligent children and we made the mistake. It's not, I say, a mistake, but we we they read an awful lot and [child] has got a psychology book. So she has been reading all up on everything. So which is why, [child], I think decided that he had got autistic traits which you can look at some of his behaviours and see that they could be construed as that. And so yeah, I don't know some some of it I'm just not sure whether it's real or not."

"I think it's just autism or ADHD [that school understands]"

"I still see them as high, highly sensitive as the main thing not autism"

"we did a telephone consultation and she said, you're right he doesn't have ADHD and I'm comfortable to say it's no autism. She said your son is highly, highly anxious... And I said now that I've ruled all of that out I said what the hell am I gonna do because this can't continue."

"when you're highly sensitive, it's not just about... the fabric and the clothes and the touch and the look and the feel, and that's what [school] miss, they see highly sensitive as those things, which are typical neurodiverse issues, aren't they? They are triggers that make people think they must be autistic. They must have ADHD, they must have sensory processing disorder. That's very different..., I don't know it's hard to explain to a person. Teachers or parents that have gone down the medical diagnosis process. It's hard to get them to see things differently."

"I think teachers can just maybe teach and stay in their lane and get a professional then like yourselves who's got a breadth of understanding that can say, actually, it could be many of these different things, try these strategies, before we start going down the diagnosis route... Because a lot of these are borderline. You know, if you look up ADHD, and trauma, a lot of the symptoms are the

Participant 6a

same. In a child. And I hate to think, you know, mix that with HSP as well, how many children have been diagnosed with ADHD and currently drugged up to the eyeballs.”

“I think the the the educational psychologist... I would say for them to have an open mind about the child before they start talking about diagnosis... I think they need to be holistic in what they’re in, what they’re doing... So for me, the HSP part of it comes in between a teacher knowing there’s a problem or challenge or a difference and then having it in their toolbox to try these different things. And I think before you go down that road of it’s ADHD, ODD, autism, whatever, cos parents are, I put my teachers under pressure. I did. Do you think there’s anything wrong with my child? This can’t carry on. What do you think’s wrong with them? In your opinion, do you think this, do you think that. I did put my school under pressure... I think it’s for them to say we have to keep an open mind. It could be a range of things... They went straight to diagnosis, medical diagnosis, clinical stuff without thinking –

“I do make allowances for a lot of his little foibles that he has without thinking it’s some autistic trait... I just accept that, you know, he’ll grow out of something or he won’t, and he is gonna be who he is and I think that’s where schools don’t, they try, they want everyone to be the same, they want you all to be the same, they want you all to sit there, all to do your SATs and you know... It’s not life.”

“the EHCP was playing the game really for him to go to secondary school and be on a radar of somebody... I hate that I’ve had to do that because you know, and I joked to my friend the other day, if I’d have just signed that form, you know, I know exactly how to fill that out and get him diagnosed with ADHD, ODD, autism, the lot... But I would be failing my kid”

“So [child] went to Lego Therapy for a bit in Year Five. He hated it because he was put in with the children with autism.”

“when we were having the challenges that we were having and at the time it was only the diagnostic labels that I could think of. So ADHD, autism, SPD, PDA, all of those because it felt like in the

Participant 7a

education system, those would be the only labels that they would actually be able to engage with me on.”

“I was going down the route of what diagnosis is that ADHD, it is autism? And actually I don’t believe it’s any of those... highly sensitive is a personality trait”

“it’s a combination of things, so on the side she’s also diagnosed with social anxiety... which I think it overlaps a lot. I think that possibly the GP, you know that’s it’s a diagnosis that they can give. They don’t give a diagnosis of highly sensitive or environmentally sensitive or anything. So so the things that gave her that diagnosis was being, you know, really stressed out in crowds or with strangers or loud noises, so she knows that she’s certainly old enough now to know that she struggles at times her friends don’t.”

“I think it’d be much easier [if the term highly sensitive or environmental sensitivity was used more]. You know, if you say autism, people know what it means. But if I’m putting [child] into like a new something, a new class or a new school year, I it’s like this very long winded explanation like this is my daughter. She struggles to speak to strangers and also loud noises. And sometimes it’s too bright for her in the world. Like it’s just it would be a lot easier if people understood that term. I mean I know what I mean by it but also it’s like with with autism, you know it’s a spectrum and different kids have different bits... it would be a nice starting point because I don’t have, you know, I say social anxiety, which isn’t really it, it’s more than that, but yeah, then they can kind of have a starting point if I say that.”

“But [child] I mean you could tell from when she was a baby that, you know, I was actually wondering about autism for a little while and things like that... Because she just wasn’t comfortable. She’s gone through a lot of her life, just being uncomfortable...[but I moved away from wondering around autism] because once she gets used to things, she’s a different kid... Like it’s just new things or kind of pushing comfort levels. It’s just, you know, she has a hard, hard wall, which is just you can’t go past. But she’s I I have plenty of friends with kids around the autism spectrum, and it’s, I know with girls it’s different. Like, you know, it’s lots of masking and things but but it doesn’t feel like the right word for

Participant 8a

her. I did wonder when she was younger, like when she was, you know a toddler and she was just not engaging with people very much at all. But then once she got older and I think got used to things a bit better... you know, when you start Googling, like my kid is being odd or different or whatever, you know, it's the first thing that comes up every time. So I had to kind of dig to find out. Like, no, actually, that's not it. It's more like if I touch her with something scratchy she totally freaks out. And, like, I took her to messy play... all the other babies were like rolling around in it and delighted and like having you know it all over their hair and stuff, and [child] was sitting on the edge of it like what is happening, and then she just like, went into a corner and that was that."

"they talked about things like, umm, selective mutism as well, which I think possible could have been a, you know, I didn't know because, you know, they they go off to school and you don't actually know what happens in there. But it was like... they have like a student teacher meeting and said like [child] has started talking now. And I was like, I didn't know she wasn't talking."

"with the uniform I, to be honest, I didn't actually raise [the reasoning behind her not being able to wear trousers] ... I raised her eczema because it felt too hard to explain [her sensitivity] ... with the noise [at lunch], I did say she was struggling. I don't think I used the word [sensitivity] specifically because I don't think, I don't think people know what it means, so I might as well just explain the, the... like the impact"

"I know it's not diagnosable exactly, but it would be nice because I don't think the diagnosis she has is exactly it... it feels like [social anxiety] ... that's not actually what she has, but it does, it's an easy way to shut down certain things, you know, like, like she can't order. Well, she can't yet... Kind of like little kids you expect that of, but she's almost 10... I'm just like, no, she's, you know, she has social anxiety. So please don't try. Because sometimes people think they just need to, like, encourage kids. And actually, the more she gets encouraged, the less likely she is to do it... I have actually lied, and said she's just on the spectrum, like done, and then people just back up, you know, that's the word they know. And I would, I feel like in some ways sensitivity is along a very long spectrum of these, kind of environmental things... I don't think it's totally off the spectrum. So it's not a lie exactly

	<p>but it's not exactly what she is either. But when she shuts down, I mean, she shuts down hard... So I have to jump in with something, and she's highly sensitive will mean absolutely nothing."</p> <p>"I mean, they, uh, they were, she was, they were playing around with the diagnosis, just because of her, I mean selective mutism. You know it's not again, it's on a spectrum. And I think in some ways that would fit her decently just because she really can't do it, it's not her being like, obstinate or, you know, trying. Yeah, she just can't... so she's definitely kind of prone to being anxious anyway, which I think sensitivity and anxiety and selective mutism. And you know, like it's all this like thing... But yeah, if you say those words, people know what it means. If you say my daughter is highly sensitive, they'll just think I'm being one of those, like, I don't know, middle class parents who, you know, worries about organic baby food or whatever."</p>	
<p>The uncomfortableness of advocating for your child when there is no diagnostic lens to fall back on</p>	<p>"I think it was just nice to have that person in school, you know, you as a parent going into school and feeling that I'm not gonna be judged as like, one of those, you know mollycoddling parents, because I feel like [child] needs extra support in certain things without having an ADHD or autism diagnosis. Just his personality. Because I feel as a parent that he his needs aren't being met because his personality doesn't fit the, you know, the the the norm or whatever... I can say that without being judged or [child] feeling that ohh I'm different, because it's all about fitting in, isn't it? It's all about not sticking out like a sore thumb."</p> <p>"this is another thing... we made the decision not to tell the school that there were any sensitivities with them... I don't know whether it was a good thing or a bad thing, but we just didn't want them to be labelled as anything. We just see them as being different to maybe main, you know, the vast majority of children, I mean, all children are different and wonderful, but we didn't want them to be labelled with anything. So of course school were unaware that we knew that she chews. We know what their little idiosyncrasies are... the last few months, they've been reaching out to us and saying, well, you know, this behaviour isn't quite right. Blah blah, which is why I think they're going for the autism diagnosis. But I don't know... I don't think, I don't, I don't think so... I think the children have always known that they were different because they are so clever... I don't know how you describe them really, just that they are different and I think Junior school it was easier for them to just get on and the other kids just accepted them for who they are"</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 5a</p>

	<p>“I think that would help [if there was more parent-teacher communication]. I mean I do we we question all the time whether we should have told school about our children before they went, but we did cause it said when we were filling in the forms. And there are any other things that you you perhaps need to tell us about your child? And we just thought do we say anything? And we thought well, we didn't want to because we just thought it's not a big deal, that was the the issue. It's really difficult. IT's not a big deal that they're highly sensitive and but then you want them to be treated and supported... I don't know. It's a really tricky one because it is... it's a personality trait. It's not. It's not a disorder. It's just how they are.”</p> <p>“It's only now I feel able to actually approach her head teacher, which I have and said, are you aware of the highly sensitive person trait? Are you aware of high-sensitivity and what it means and how it can be enhanced in a learning environment?... And how you could actually change the physical environment and the the the sensory experience for somebody to actually enable them... And so I've literally just started having that conversation. I found a really good article because I'm not able to necessarily articulate it as well as I would like to because, I, I don't feel I'm a, I'm kind of a lived experience person and I could speak to people about it to offer that. But because there's, you know, usually in education, you need to be a you need to have a certificate of some description for people to take seriously or you need to behind an organisation that promotes it. You can't. You're not valued as a parent's voice to advocate for your child yet from a highly sensitive person trait.”</p>	Participant 7a
<p>Education setting querying exploration into neurodivergence for child</p>	<p>“I mean, I should mention straight away where they thought autism. Autism is the big thing... people have said on plenty of occasions things like, well, you know, the spectrum is huge. So it's like, yeah... I don't feel that it is [autism]”</p> <p>“just recently school have wanted to actually get both children assessed for ASD... we haven't actually gone down that route as far as I'm concerned I don't actually think that either of them are. I think they have, that they are highly sensitive and that's that's the term that I would choose to use for them.”</p> <p>“I think they're going down the route more of an attention deficit kind of thing with her.”</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 5a</p>

"I think they've just picked up on various things that he said. I don't know everything that's been discussed because it was just between him and the teacher and but yeah, so that's that's why they wanted to just see if they could get them both [assessed for ASD], I think it is how they've put it to me because I'm quite, I'm not anti them being labelled autistic as such but I just don't think that they are, and I don't think this school actually understands what a highly sensitive child is."

"when they first went to primary school. So they were in Reception. And one of the teachers picked up on [child]. And particularly just with eye contact and how she was around other children. And so she was referred to an educational psychologist. He came in, observed her, talked to her and his outcome at that stage, which was when she was what, five or six, was that there's no autism here. She's just a very intelligent, highly mature emotional child. And she could read way before she was three... So they're just very they are very intelligent. They're, they're way more intelligent than me... And so and yeah, so she was looked at but then that was it."

"We know what their little idiosyncrasies are... the last few months, they've been reaching out to us and saying, well, you know, this behaviour isn't quite right. Blah blah, which is why I think they're going for the autism diagnosis. But I don't know... I don't think, I don't, I don't think so"

"It was only when they started probing down the autistic autistic route. And the way that they did it made me very defensive. And I just said that they are highly sensitive children. Then I said, have you, you know, do you understand what that is? And you know, one of the teachers sort of said yes, but I don't, I, I'm not convinced that they do actually understand what it means... they made out that it was the children that wanted this diagnosis of autism because then once they've got the diagnosis, they they can, like, get all this support... But yeah I'm quite defensive about it, which I try not to be... I did switch off a little bit when they were talking about it because I just thought no."

"There was all sorts of very very typical neurodiverse, in their minds, behaviours."

"School had no interest in... my concerns that it was a mental health problem, they just wanted me to get him assessed for autism, ADHD."

Participant 6a

“So they they had, unbeknown to me, put him forward for community paediatric assessment. Even though I said no... And so I started to fill it in thinking actually maybe this is the right way to go. Maybe I am wrong. Maybe I’ve got this wrong. I I told them I was furious about it, but you know what? If he, if he, if you’re right and I’m wrong, I’ll hold my hands up. So I filled in”

“that’s when the teacher said to me my daughter is diagnosed with ADHD and we’ve got a great community paediatric team. Why don’t I have a word with them and see if they can assess [child]. You know, rather than go through the system, why don’t I see if I can pull some strings?... I said, well, I don’t really think that that’s right. I said let’s wait and see. We’ve only been back at school six weeks. Let’s wait and see... if we’re still seeing these bad behaviours, I’ll, I’ll, I’ll consider it. And that is what I said. But she went ahead and did it anyway... And I said to her if he had autism or ADHD or ODD then these things wouldn’t necessarily help and then not help because what I understand with those neurodiversity is that it’s a pattern that happens constantly... And I said it’s not happening at home because by that point home was really good.”

Appendix. 25: Parent/Carer Participant Group – Codes Allocated and Unallocated to RTA, Including Reasoning, and All Associated Extracts

Code	Extract(s)	Participant
Codes <u>Allocated</u> in Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), including location within RTA (seen in ‘Code’ column in blue font)		
<p>Child experiencing heightened emotions</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 1: ‘Everything’s amplified’ – turning down the intensity of emotion</p>	<p>“He’s aware of his own emotions and knowing everybody else’s emotions, and that’s where it all gets tangled up in his head to the point where you get angry or frustrated because you’ve got so much going on at the same time”</p> <p>“she’s on the most steep roller coaster you can imagine. She’s up, down, up, down and literally it can be seconds between an up and a down... [She can get] so overwhelmed with excitement... It’s amazing because she, she goes so up, but then, yeah, so in the next breath, she can be on the floor... It’s hard work”</p> <p>“It’s like everything’s amplified for them. So no, if something goes wrong, it’ll go wrong bigger for them if no. If that even down to some of them probably won’t be able to cope with things like fire alarms... Or just everybody being noisy in the classroom.”</p> <p>“this is HSP all over. He’s completely over thought it. The pain is extreme. He’s very, very he’s very, very painful for him... But that’s the other thing with school. I don’t think, I think they brush it off... It’s real. Yeah, give him that, give him that time and that acknowledgement. And that’s something that as a parent I’ve learned. I never say I’m too busy to talk about something. He needs to talk about it. Express it. Talk it to death.”</p> <p>“Her compassion was so strong she couldn’t. She couldn’t suppress it. She couldn’t not feel the things that she felt. And so was harshly critical of herself on an academic perspective.”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child internalises heightened emotions</p>	<p>“He’s aware of his own emotions and knowing everybody else’s emotions, and that’s where it all gets tangled up in his head to the point where you get angry or frustrated because you’ve got so much going on at the same time”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>

Location in RTA

Theme 1: 'Everything's amplified' – turning down the intensity of emotion

"She would never naturally come to us and say anything so, so for her to come and say oh I feel I'm feeling anxious about something. You know I would, I would have some champagne at that point for her to be able to verbalise things externally. But I can tell when she is particularly worried about things. So, I would then have to to ask her, I'm noticing, you know, that you've been sitting on your bed, that you're under your duvet. I'm wondering if you're feeling... But it's from my side. So, if I was to, I didn't notice or I didn't have the time or couldn't be bothered was exhausted, whatever, it wouldn't come out without my prompting."

"She's very, you know, she's able to, kind of, uh, I don't know, mask really. And then I've got these children, they come home, I've got friends whose children come home and just lose it at home as a release after having the whole day at school and these busy environments. But she doesn't actually do that, she just goes in her room and is quiet."

"she would then become withdrawn. And I know some highly sensitive children are very kind of external, you know would be shouting, screaming and she would rather withdraw."

"A healthy, intelligent, wonderful 14-year-old who is at home. All the time, she doesn't want to see anybody. Doesn't want to do anything. Umm. It's just that's really quite, as a parent, that's just a very, very sad place to be. So, she hates school and she was really looking forward to not being at school, but then it's the overwhelm of having things to do in the holidays, it has been too much, so you know, like I said, we finish school the end of June. So, at some point prior to June, we would have the conversation. Oh you know, holidays coming up. I know you're looking forward to all this. What would you like to do? It's all oh I don't know. OK, well, you know, we can talk about it another day to the point where I kind of feel like we can't talk about it again because even asking the question is now, so shame, shaming that she doesn't have an answer... It's just complete withdrawal... And that's, I suppose it's hopelessness, really, isn't it?"

"she's physically violent... but she's also very good at managing it. That she she never shows a sign of it at school."

Participant 2a

Participant 4a

	<p>“I mean, [child] does that at school. She’ll she’ll excuse herself to the toilet when she’s... when somebody’s upset, as she said, she said, she said, she just, she loses it. Like, literally. She’s like, I’m gonna lose it at school. That’s how I deal with it... she’s very good. She’s never ever lost it at school.”</p> <p>“she has certain behaviours. Umm, where she will emotionally regulate herself. So, for instance, at the moment what she does is bites her nails literally down to the quick. And this is a new thing. She never started biting her nails until last year. She always had, like, beautiful nails. But before that, it’d be something like she’d pick her nose... And she did have a period where she pulled her hair out... And and she just she she she likes to twizzle with things like when she’s calming down, she’ll take herself off. She’s quite aware of when she needs to go and be by herself and she’ll like to find something to twizzle with or something while she’s reading a book. And that that sort of thing and so that was how. That’s how she’s kind of how it manifests with her, how she deals with all of the, I suppose. It’s just how she regulates”</p> <p>“I know this is common with sensitive kids and she’s really good all day at school. And then she, like falls apart hard at night... I think she bottles stuff up all day long.”</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Child displaying poor mental health</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u></p> <p>Theme 1: ‘Everything’s amplified’ – turning down the intensity of emotion</p>	<p>“I think we’re going through a pretty dark bit at the moment as well, um, it’s just very sad.”</p> <p>“A healthy, intelligent, wonderful 14-year-old who is at home. All the time, she doesn’t want to see anybody. Doesn’t want to do anything. Umm. It’s just that’s really quite, as a parent, that’s just a very, very sad place to be. So, she hates school and she was really looking forward to not being at school, but then it’s the overwhelm of having things to do in the holidays, it has been too much, so you know, like I said, we finish school the end of June. So, at some point prior to June, we would have the conversation. Oh you know, holidays coming up. I know you’re looking forward to all this. What would you like to do? It’s all oh I don’t know. OK, well, you know, we can talk about it another day to the point where I kind of feel like we can’t talk about it again because even asking the question is now, so shame, shaming that she doesn’t have an answer... It’s just complete withdrawal... And that’s, I suppose it’s hopelessness, really, isn’t it?”</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>

“there’s a total difference between being, you know, content, self-regulated in your room, doing things that you are happy to do, rather than just isolating, which is where she is just, yeah.”

“it could be to the point where she can’t. She couldn’t get up in the morning because the thought of going to English and Period four where her teacher was possibly going to shout at everybody... You know that was too much. That was the only thing that she was concentrating on. So she literally could not get out of bed.”

“academically, she is you know, you can’t ask anymore, but in fact that also then goes into perfectionism where she’s very she loves maths. She’s very good at it. But she might get 85. She actually got 100% in a maths test this year... And she still wasn’t, yeah, she wasn’t happy with it though... It was maybe too easy or other people also got hundreds, so maybe it wasn’t that difficult.”

“It’s perfectionism, which ultimately is fear really, isn’t it?”

“she’s, she’s already said that she’s not going to manage to do her [exams] because she’s going to be too stressed and worried about them... intellectually she is probably capable”

“kind of black and white, inflexible, perfectionist thinking... You know, it has to be this, or it’s that. Asking me is it this, or is it that, no you know maybe we could consider, it’s black and white, you know, the plan. And that’s a joke in our house is so the plan. It’s never the plan, you know, you want things to go, you know, she might already have, you know, 40,000 details of how she thinks the day’s going to go. And then by the time she’s going down the stairs, something like, oh, something happened. Not amazing but you know there’s no milk for breakfast? Something like that. And she finds that very difficult. But that’s also another part of the the it’s difficult to not have things going exactly as you want them.”

“anxiety is something which presented in her”

Participant 3a

	<p>“when she’s sort of gone back to school [post-lockdowns) ... she is anxious and she says the noise bothers her a lot now. And it didn’t really, she’s never even mentioned that before, but now it just does seem to bother her quite a bit.”</p> <p>“she’s definitely a perfectionist and she just gives herself a really hard time about stuff, you know, and and she she gets excellent marks.”</p> <p>“because this anxiety, they’ve got some counselling in school now. So she’s been involved with that.”</p> <p>“I got to the point where, I got the local authority involved. I rang them up and said you need to come and see my child in this setting because pastoral support is not working. He threatened to self-harm at home because he didn’t wanna go to school anymore. He was threatening to stab himself, didn’t want to live anymore and at seven years old, that’s just not acceptable.”</p> <p>“we did a telephone consultation and she said, you’re right he doesn’t have ADHD and I’m comfortable to say it’s no autism. She said your son is highly, highly anxious...”</p> <p>“he was going through some very dark times over the last year even just going about space in class, for weeks we had conversations around reincarnation, death, the sun, blowing up, what if my children, my children’s children’s children die, and what if I get reincarnated and I come back in 200 years and I’m living under ground and I can’t breathe.”</p> <p>“it’s my son’s mental health that is the problem here... I said, so you are literally lumping him in with all the other children that have got behavioural problems? I said I’m not having it.”</p> <p>“So we’ve recently changed. Well, a year ago, we changed school environment because we recognised that [child] was struggling with her mental health, it was being impacted heavily by the lack of sensitivity towards her needs and the lack of understanding.”</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
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	<p>“[her poor mental health presented as] self-loathing... That she needed to change who she was in order to be accepted.”</p> <p>“it wasn’t like anyone raised any issues with me. It was more like me, like knowing that she was coming home upset and knowing that she was just uncomfortable in her own skin.”</p>	Participant 8a
<p>Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u></p> <p>Theme 1: <i>‘Everything’s amplified’</i> – turning down the intensity of emotion</p> <p>&</p> <p>Theme 2: The push and pull of peer interactions</p>	<p>“he was taken out of lesson for half a couple of hours. I think it was in meetings and to speak to [teacher] and that was to do with a lot with working through emotions and expressing. And so that was the support, a properly supported environment. It was recommended for him and he did get a lot out of it. Then he took a bit of a break and then he went back again... because my grandmother died, and I think he was finding it very difficult. It’s the first death he’s experienced... And so, he felt like he needed some extra help. So, he went... I think it was a group, not just the one-on-one, I think in a group and just dealing with, you know, talking about emotions and journalling and, you know, things like that.”</p> <p>“He’s able to go back [to small group support] if he was upset. He could go to her office and chat to her. So, if the teacher wasn’t around or, you know, say [the group] was missed, if the group couldn’t run, he would just make a beeline for [teacher] because he knew she just got it.”</p> <p>“he’s the only one out of the three of them that will come home and tell me exactly what he’s done... I have a rundown literally as soon as he comes in from school. I have the this happened that happened or we did this.... I think he needs to talk to me and give me a rundown of what he’s done, you know... anything that was interesting, anything that he achieved, anything that he struggled with.”</p> <p>“they need to just have somebody... that gives him some time and space to listen and be patient. I think it’s patience and, and, sort of, yes, rather than being too in your face and too, you know, just somebody that will listen and understand and somebody that he can go to if he’s feeling overwhelmed for whatever reason.”</p> <p>“[he needs] somebody sensitive themselves. I think that’s it. Possibly quieter, more sensitive”</p>	Participant 1a

“They’re very similar personalities. Very, quite, quite quiet. But just lovely, kind nurturing. And they’ll listen. I think he needs somebody that is patient and will listen to his worries and you know, whatever they might be.”

“she just got it. Yeah, she was just caring I think yeah.”

“the deputy head [related well to [child]], even without knowing about sensitivity, but just being understanding, there is a crossover, isn’t there?”

“I’ve been there when he’s teaching [child squash] and he’s got such a positive attitude and... I was trying to get [child] to engage, to have and hear somebody say all those positive things feeds in to your consciousness or semi-consciousness and makes you feel good about yourself and it gives you that confidence”

“[the degree to which my child is supported is] dependent on the teachers, the particular personality of the teacher.”

“without this particular person, who I think actually is also highly sensitive. I don’t think she realises that. And without this person, she wouldn’t be at school.”

“She’s just incredible...[she] is very observant and is there for you, that is needed with highly sensitive children I think.”

“oh, there was a bit of a dispute and... she’s, with the help of her amazing guidance teacher at school, she tried to, to sort that out at the end of term, but I think she’s feeling so ashamed that she told her friend that she didn’t want to speak to her again. She, she just can’t, can’t really kind of contemplate it.”

“If you’re that kind of shouty personality, it’s unlikely that you are highly sensitive, I imagine, and you’re probably it’s never even considered to you the effect that you’re having on somebody else. I mean,

Participant 2a

	<p>no, no teachers are doing that deliberately, so there probably does need to be a lot more awareness done as to the consequences of this.”</p> <p>“it has been very affected up and down the years depending on the teachers he’s had, he’s had some much better years than others... for example, Year One was a very positive year for him, but you have quite like a caring, nurturing type of teacher in that class. And there were two teaching assistants as well, and they were really, really supportive”</p> <p>“It’s about him having again that relationship with someone that he feels that he can tell him anything and they won’t judge him... And they won’t hold it against him. And if he wants to blow off some steam, or if he wants to take off his trainers and walk around in bare feet just to ground himself that they’ll let him do that and not say they can’t do that.”</p> <p>“It’s real. Yeah, give him that, give him that time and that acknowledgement. And that’s something that as a parent I’ve learned. I never say I’m too busy to talk about something. He needs to talk about it. Express it. Talk it to death.”</p> <p>“the school feel he needs a permanent one to one. Now [child] doesn’t need a permanent one to one. He needs somebody that gets him in that class that can help with manage his emotions... I think that is where schools are missing the trick massively in that they think everyone that needs support in the classroom has got a learning difficulty.”</p> <p>“That is where with him the relationship is the biggest thing with him. The second they get that relationship... he’ll open up.”</p> <p>“They also do a thing at school... it’s about emotions... they talk about, like, coloured emotions... And then as they work their way up... it becomes more purposeful. So she, you can hear her, something about like oh well, we learned in school that if we get upset we should make ourselves a corner of a room to sit in, you know, and calm down.”</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>
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	<p>“she had this amazing teacher in P3 and P4... She really helped [child] find things she was good at and gave her lots and lots of encouragement and actually kind of gave her permission to be proud of herself... she really gave [child] opportunities to do the things she was good at. And even encouraged her, so we're Jewish and they're the only Jewish kids at school. And [child] actually stood up in front of the class, like told them all about some of the Jewish holidays.”</p> <p>“They give her permission to, you know, like they kind of don't make a big deal about the things she doesn't join in on, they give her lots of opportunities to shine.”</p>	
<p>Child values meaningful connection with peers</p> <p>Location in RTA</p> <p>Theme 2: The push and pull of peer interactions</p>	<p>“he was able to get up on screen, the different coloured pictures to show what he sees [as a colour-blind person] and what everyone else sees. So, they were able to understand, you know, a little bit about him as well. Lovely, you know, to feel like that.”</p> <p>“that is one of his strengths... that is a big strength. It's about human connection. I said, you know, school isn't just about learning, you know, science, maths, English. It is about interacting with other human beings and understanding the differences and how we think and how we, you know, how er react with the people and so I think, for me... I think his connection, his ability to connect with people, it is really, really mature and I think it's a really, a big, a really big bonus for him to be like that, to be in touch with his feelings and emotions.”</p> <p>“[child] is also completely non-competitive, so she never wants to be the best. She's not bothered... So she she oh her and her friend have got an agreement. Now, if we're gonna get a times table badge at school, we'll get it on the same day... They will wait.”</p> <p>“So she's got a best friend... who she was very close to.”</p> <p>“You know, being with her peer group, connecting with people, being able to engage and interact with those people that she feels safe with. But, equally, because of the deep level of processing and then like that maturity level, um, her ability to, I guess understand that other people aren't that deep and aren't that mature is very difficult”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>

<p>Child values meaningful connection with peers</p> <p>Location in RTA Theme 2: The push and pull of peer interactions</p>	<p>“because of the deep processing, connections are important”</p> <p>“he was able to get up on screen, the different coloured pictures to show what he sees [as a colour-blind person] and what everyone else sees. So, they were able to understand, you know, a little bit about him as well. Lovely, you know, to feel like that.”</p> <p>“that is one of his strengths... that is a big strength. It’s about human connection. I said, you know, school isn’t just about learning, you know, science, maths, English. It is about interacting with other human beings and understanding the differences and how we think and how we, you know, how er react with the people and so I think, for me... I think his connection, his ability to connect with people, it is really, really mature and I think it’s a really, a big, a really big bonus for him to be like that, to be in touch with his feelings and emotions.”</p> <p>“[child] is also completely non-competitive, so she never wants to be the best. She’s not bothered... So she she oh her and her friend have got an agreement. Now, if we’re gonna get a times table badge at school, we’ll get it on the same day... They will wait.”</p> <p>“So she’s got a best friend... who she was very close to.”</p> <p>“You know, being with her peer group, connecting with people, being able to engage and interact with those people that she feels safe with. But, equally, because of the deep level of processing and then like that maturity level, um, her ability to, I guess understand that other people aren’t that deep and aren’t that mature is very difficult”</p> <p>“because of the deep processing, connections are important”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child displays strong empathy towards peers</p> <p>Location in RTA Theme 2: The push and pull of peer interactions</p>	<p>“because of the deep processing, connections are important”</p> <p>“he was able to understand what the girls were feeling and comfort them and hug them”</p> <p>“that is one of his strengths... that is a big strength. It’s about human connection. I said, you know, school isn’t just about learning, you know, science, maths, English. It is about interacting with other human beings and understanding the differences and how we think and how we, you know, how er react with the people and so I think, for me... I think his connection, his ability to connect with people,</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>

	<p>it is really, really mature and I think it's a really, a big, a really big bonus for him to be like that, to be in touch with his feelings and emotions."</p> <p>"but I'm trying to make him understand that he didn't, it didn't have anything to do with him and I think that's what the problem is, you know, with people, you know, like myself and [child], that you feel like everything is because you're, you're picking up on everybody's emotion and bad mood. And you, you would think I've done something wrong. It's my fault. You try and put it right and then, you know, you, you are expending a lot of energy doing that, you know, as well as everything else."</p> <p>"oh, there was a bit of a dispute and... she's, with the help of her amazing guidance teacher at school, she tried to, to sort that out at the end of term, but I think she's feeling so ashamed that she told her friend that she didn't want to speak to her again. She, she just can't, can't really kind of contemplate it."</p> <p>"she's very mature for her age as well... she just has that maturity and she's very sensible and so I think that's a strength... she also is quite affected by people being quite mean, you know, saying mean things either to her or to other people."</p> <p>"[she takes] on board people's opinions I think, some of the things are really about other people, which is causing [her anxiety] ... I mean they've probably offloaded their problem onto her, they're feeling better."</p> <p>"She is a good friend to people... But I think that's sometimes quite draining for her because she takes other people's kind of worries and things on board."</p> <p>"she's very self-aware, very wide awake to everything... she can read people like a book"</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 4a</p>
<p>Child experiences protective, and resilience promoting, friendships</p>	<p>"I asked her if she wanted to go [to the Halloween disco] this year. She hasn't decided if she wants to. I have a feeling if her best friend wants to go, she'll wanna go and they'll probably just kind of go in for one dance and then leave again... It encourages her. She can do almost anything with [her best friend]."</p>	<p>Participant 8a</p>

	<p>“she feels that she’s a bad person. And that she doesn’t have a right to really have fun and to have a lot of friends and to be really popular.”</p> <p>“he’s tended to keep himself to himself quite a lot. And again, that was quite an issue for the school. So he did have, you know, he did have, like, a sort of a couple of friends over the years. It’s quite a big school as well. So the classes change, like, every year, basically... he’s really quite sociable at home.”</p> <p>“his latest teacher said to me, you know, he’s just kind of by himself sort of thing and I think well, I think he needs that down time though... I think he needs to not be around them. So I tried to put it in terms of introversion, we, you know, introvert, needs to not be around people all the time.”</p> <p>“she’s really like kind of sailed through school. She’s really high performing and she just did really well... I think for her its more issues with her peers, since lockdown actually I think they’re both really happy, being locked down at home she was honestly really happy.”</p> <p>“she’s very mature for her age as well... she just has that maturity and she’s very sensible and so I think that’s a strength... she also is quite affected by people being quite mean, you know, saying mean things either to her or to other people.”</p>	Participant 3a
	<p>“So she’s got a best friend, who, she’s very occasionally fallen out with like kids do, and she did have a best friend, [child], who she was very close to... She’s only got two or three friends.”</p>	Participant 4a
	<p>“[child] had, like, a a special friend at primary school”</p>	Participant 5a
	<p>“she really struggled with friendships... But since we’ve been at senior school, she has got a friend. She’s got a special friend. She’s got a friendship circle and they they accept [child] for how she is, you know, all of her little things. And you know, it’s been lovely, actually for me as a Mum, cause I’ve had lots of issues where I felt that the other girls just did. They just don’t get [child]. And if you don’t get her, then you’re never gonna understand her or, you know. And of course, all the girls at Junior</p>	

	<p>school they just didn't get her... So luckily she's found some friends that understand her, and it's been lovely"</p> <p>"[child]... he's struggled now with finding somebody who he can get on with"</p> <p>"I think the children have always known that they were different because they are so clever... I don't know how you describe them really, just that they are different and I think Junior school it was easier for them to just get on and the other kids just accepted them for who they are"</p> <p>"ending year four and starting year five his behaviour was erratic to say the least. He would get really angry about something and and flip out, his friendships got quite strained. He was really oversensitive to everything. Very, very negative when he was coming home about everything. I was getting cross... It was just really difficult time... it was more about the school just not getting it right for him."</p> <p>"I think one of the big advantages that she has because of her high-sensitivity is that depth of connection. And that depth of care and consideration. You know she can ask the most profound questions... very mature conversations and that depth of processing and actually for her to be able to lead that level of conversation is such a huge strength... maturity, which again sets her apart from her peers..."</p> <p>"You know, being with her peer group, connecting with people, being able to engage and interact with those people that she feels safe with. But, equally, because of the deep level of processing and then like that maturity level, um, her ability to, I guess understand that other people aren't that deep and aren't that mature is very difficult because if you are, you only ever see that as being a negative... Because in the school environment it isn't a skill that's embraced."</p> <p>"I guess the disadvantage is the, um, the need for home to be a safe place... The need for it to be, um, orderly, timely, calm, quiet... you know the, the, the kind of spontaneity. That's difficult in the home... She needs time... you know when you wake up in the morning, oh it's a beautiful day. Let's go out... No... [she needs to know the plan] and to be able to build that into time. So it's kind</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
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	<p>of a disadvantage... it can mean, therefore, that she isn't able to take part in things with her friends. For example, at last minute."</p>	
<p>Maintaining meaningful connections can be difficult in changeable educational environments</p> <p>Location in RTA Theme 2: The push and pull of peer interactions</p>	<p>"the other thing I've tended to see is, well, it is, it's taken teacher a while to kind of get to see what he's like. So at first he's very much kind of in his shell quite a lot. You know, he's kind of very, you know, cautious, observes things, doesn't get stuck in like the other kids do really holds back from activities, things like that. And again some teachers are kind of not very understanding around that. So they're like kind of like, you know this sort of thing and. And so we tend to see again at the beginning of school. It's all a bit like that. then as they get more used to, he'll come up the shell a bit more and then it's a bit more positive as time goes on. So you'll finish [the year] on a very positive note. And his Year Four teacher was, you know kind of got what he was like and then back in Year Five we were back to quite negative again and sort of oh, we get quite fed up really going through this all the time."</p> <p>"maybe taking a bit more time, particularly at the beginning of the school year, so maybe a bit more work on transition as well and would be really helpful and also transition kind of between teachers as well. So, I was, I felt I was starting again every year, you know, that the school had never had this child before... They wouldn't really know anything about the history. So every year after repeating, this is where this is what happened and this is where we've been before and this is sort of like quite what's like every year... They should know that already... With a new teacher that is gonna take some time to warm up. So just give him that time. Just don't be so straight away."</p> <p>"Towards the end, the last three months of year five was really bad. But that happened when he found out he was moving teachers when we mapped it back. We can map it back to literally the same week that he found out he wasn't going to have the same teacher... And it was like you hate me. You're leaving me. I'm gonna be the child that I think I am. Because you're leaving me and this is it. It was a massive. Now we know."</p> <p>"because of the deep processing, connections are important, it isn't easily achievable. There isn't the opportunity to have deep connections with the people, for example, if the classroom is regularly moved around to work with different people... Or if there are staff changes, uh, from a job share</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>

	<p>perspective... so she's got potential for very deep, strong relationships, but sometimes the layout, the set out, the way school is doesn't always, you know, enable her to do that... similar thing. You know, being with her peer group, connecting with people, being able to engage and interact with those people that she feels safe with."</p>	
<p>Child experiences overwhelm due to overthinking interpersonal interactions</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 2: The push and pull of peer interactions</p>	<p>"but I'm trying to make him understand that he didn't, it didn't have anything to do with him and I think that's what the problem is, you know, with people, you know, like myself and [child], that you feel like everything is because you're, you're picking up on everybody's emotion and bad mood. And you, you would think I've done something wrong. It's my fault. You try and put it right and then, you know, you, you are expending a lot of energy doing that, you know, as well as everything else."</p> <p>"I think you know a lot of the problems that he's had have been to do with relationships and friendships and the difficulties he doesn't like arguments and disagreements and drama. Basically, it's just it's just the drama, you know, he internalises that."</p> <p>"oh, there was a bit of a dispute and... she's, with the help of her amazing guidance teacher at school, she tried to, to sort that out at the end of term, but I think she's feeling so ashamed that she told her friend that she didn't want to speak to her again. She, she just can't, can't really kind of contemplate it."</p> <p>"You know, people are, you know, not in a bad mood or not stressed. But you're doing things faster than a very relaxed pace. And she does find that overwhelming."</p> <p>"she does have some good friends. But there are some mean kids... I think with my son, I think he kind of shut himself off from it a bit... keeping himself to himself... but she wants to be involved in it. But then it's hard, it's just hard in different ways."</p> <p>"[she takes] on board people's opinions I think, some of the things are really about other people, which is causing [her anxiety] ... I mean they've probably offloaded their problem onto her, they're feeling better."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p>

	<p>“I think he kind of picks up on what people think about him, if you know what I mean”</p> <p>“She is a good friend to people... But I think that’s sometimes quite draining for her because she takes other people’s kind of worries and things on board.”</p> <p>“she’s very mature for her age as well... she just has that maturity and she’s very sensible and so I think that’s a strength... she also is quite affected by people being quite mean, you know, saying mean things either to her or to other people.”</p> <p>“your negativity towards him, he’s absorbing it. He’s feeling it. He hates himself.... I started to realise he was very, very aware of everyone’s emotions. Very, very absorbent of what was going on. Very, very, he then starts to internalise all that about himself. So he hated himself. He was a bad child. He was no good. No one likes him. No one wanted him. There was no relationship there.”</p> <p>“I think what I realised with HSP is, is we’re all very different in you what know gets the best out of us is very different and you know with [child] it’s relationships. It’s not being treated like he’s thick and it’s being treated with the emotional intelligence that he is, I think, with highly sensitive children, we’ve gotta stay on a level. You can’t show your emotions with them because they pick up on it and it can really sway their own internal feelings.”</p> <p>“[child] was very, very challenging at the beginning of this year for a few months at school, and he made some teachers, you know, get upset... things are said to him and and done in front of him to make him feel horrendously bad about himself. That then can’t be repaired by just, you know, coming in tomorrow fresh slate. They’ve gotta rebuild with him. The thing is with highly sensitive children, you can’t just treat them like Tonka toys. I often compare [child] and other children to Tonka toys and China plates. You know, if you told them off. Yeah. Next minute I’ll come up to you and give you a cuddle. I love you. If you tell [child] off, he’d cry and think you hated him. So for him the big thing around HSP is is relationships and and that knowing that even though he’s different or he sees things differently or he wants to ask you one thousand questions about the sun that you’ve gotta give him what he needs”</p>	Participant 6a
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	<p>“because of the highly sensitive trait, the perception of body language of tone, of voice, of gestures. Umm, you know, teachers being stressed with 30 plus children with differing needs. I am highly sensitive, a person will interpret those behaviours considerably differently from another, and then it then can then take a lot longer for that highly sensitive person to recover from that interaction, to then be able to relax again and feel safe and connected to them, be able to learn.”</p> <p>“they look at the perception of the body language, the eye contact, the tone of voice towards them. Then they then have a deep level of shame. About the fact. Well, how come I don’t seem to be able to do this like the others do? And then when they asked the teacher for help. Because it isn’t a learning difficulty, the teacher just tells them they’re fine and they just need to try harder.”</p>	Participant 7a
<p>Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation</p> <p>Location in RTA Theme 2: The push and pull of peer interactions</p>	<p>“he was taken out of lesson for half a couple of hours. I think it was in meetings and to speak to [teacher] and that was to do with a lot with working through emotions and expressing. And so that was the support, a properly supported environment. It was recommended for him and he did get a lot out of it. Then he took a bit of a break and then he went back again... because my grandmother died, and I think he was finding it very difficult. It’s the first death he’s experienced... And so, he felt like he needed some extra help. So, he went... I think it was a group, not just the one-on-one, I think in a group and just dealing with, you know, talking about emotions and journalling and, you know, things like that.”</p> <p>“He’s able to go back [to small group support] if he was upset. He could go to her office and chat to her. So, if the teacher wasn’t around or, you know, say [the group] was missed, if the group couldn’t run, he would just make a beeline for [teacher] because he knew she just got it.”</p> <p>“he’s the only one out of the three of them that will come home and tell me exactly what he’s done... I have a rundown literally as soon as he comes in from school. I have the this happened that happened or we did this.... I think he needs to talk to me and give me a rundown of what he’s done, you know... anything that was interesting, anything that he achieved, anything that he struggled with.”</p>	Participant 1a

“they need to just have somebody... that gives him some time and space to listen and be patient. I think it’s patience and, and, sort of, yes, rather than being too in your face and too, you know, just somebody that will listen and understand and somebody that he can go to if he’s feeling overwhelmed for whatever reason.”

“[he needs] somebody sensitive themselves. I think that’s it. Possibly quieter, more sensitive”

“They’re very similar personalities. Very, quite, quite quiet. But just lovely, kind nurturing. And they’ll listen. I think he needs somebody that is patient and will listen to his worries and you know, whatever they might be.”

“she just got it. Yeah, she was just caring I think yeah.”

“the deputy head [related well to [child]], even without knowing about sensitivity, but just being understanding, there is a crossover, isn’t there?”

“I’ve been there when he’s teaching [child squash] and he’s got such a positive attitude and... I was trying to get [child] to engage, to have and hear somebody say all those positive things feeds in to your consciousness or semi-consciousness and makes you feel good about yourself and it gives you that confidence”

“[the degree to which my child is supported is] dependent on the teachers, the particular personality of the teacher.”

“without this particular person, who I think actually is also highly sensitive. I don’t think she realises that. And without this person, she wouldn’t be at school.”

“She’s just incredible...[she] is very observant and is there for you, that is needed with highly sensitive children I think.”

Participant 2a

	<p>“oh, there was a bit of a dispute and... she’s, with the help of her amazing guidance teacher at school, she tried to, to sort that out at the end of term, but I think she’s feeling so ashamed that she told her friend that she didn’t want to speak to her again. She, she just can’t, can’t really kind of contemplate it.”</p> <p>“If you’re that kind of shouty personality, it’s unlikely that you are highly sensitive, I imagine, and you’re probably it’s never even considered to you the effect that you’re having on somebody else. I mean, no, no teachers are doing that deliberately, so there probably does need to be a lot more awareness done as to the consequences of this.”</p> <p>“it has been very affected up and down the years depending on the teachers he’s had, he’s had some much better years than others... for example, Year One was a very positive year for him, but you have quite like a caring, nurturing type of teacher in that class. And there were two teaching assistants as well, and they were really, really supportive”</p> <p>“It’s about him having again that relationship with someone that he feels that he can tell him anything and they won’t judge him... And they won’t hold it against him. And if he wants to blow off some steam, or if he wants to take off his trainers and walk around in bare feet just to ground himself that they’ll let him do that and not say they can’t do that.”</p> <p>“It’s real. Yeah, give him that, give him that time and that acknowledgement. And that’s something that as a parent I’ve learned. I never say I’m too busy to talk about something. He needs to talk about it. Express it. Talk it to death.”</p> <p>“the school feel he needs a permanent one to one. Now [child] doesn’t need a permanent one to one. He needs somebody that gets him in that class that can help with manage his emotions... I think that is where schools are missing the trick massively in that they think everyone that needs support in the classroom has got a learning difficulty.”</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>
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“You know, people are, you know, not in a bad mood or not stressed. But you’re doing things faster than a very relaxed pace. And she does find that overwhelming.”

“many noises, not just loud noises, breathing, chewing, sniffing.”

“[child] cannot tolerate the teacher shouting, but I’m not sure the teacher even does shout... I mean I don’t know what she would do if the teacher did shout at her, she would never do anything to cause the teacher to shout at her, but she can’t even cope with somebody being stern.”

“it could be to the point where she can’t. She couldn’t get up in the morning because the thought of going to English and Period four where her teacher was possibly going to shout at everybody.”

“we spoke to her teacher and well, it’s the noise. It’s one thing. So we got really good noise cancelling headphones. And we looked at various, various strategies that you know of leaving the room is another one. You could have a card or you just put it on your desk to say, hey, let’s leave the room. But both of these, when you’ve got very, very shy person, totally lacking social confidence, you know, you’re kind of like putting flashing lights around them, saying, like, I’ve got a problem. Hey, class. Hey, everybody else in the class? I’ve got a problem.”

“[the perfect environment], the classroom probably a single, you know, she would just be on her own. Or maybe with one or two people that she liked and that she knew that they were quiet people and they would get on with their work... she would work in the library, but even you go to the school library now and a library is not, not not a very quiet place, you know, in times gone by you were pretty scared to talk in the library and you wouldn’t dare make a noise. But they are different places now. I think it is the society we are in... With the curriculum, and people having, you know students having much more of a say with how their learning takes place. That just makes more noise, and if you are not an extrovert or if you’re noise sensitive, it’s just it’s just too much.”

“we even tried where she’s been in the kind of the teachers cupboard in between two classrooms and that kind of worked. But then another teacher came in and said, what are you doing in there? Who didn’t know anything about [child] and, you know, that was, you know, that’s not going to work”

“while they’re very good noise cancelling headphones and they would work, she she felt too shy to put them in.”

“So there’s things you could do with the environment... the teacher, is actually perhaps even more critical in being part of the environment. So for someone like [child], she needs a teacher who is not terrifying. They need to be consistent to their core about maintaining a very quiet and calm atmosphere. She needs to know that people are not just going to get away with talking and chatting. Even the sound of whispering, if she’s feeling very stressed, the sound of whispering can be too much... and she does have one or two teachers like that who just don’t take nonsense from anybody. But I think that’s the minority these days. Classrooms are just much more informal places.”

“she doesn’t have lunch because the lunch queue is just chaos, even though there’s a screamy teacher standing trying to keep everybody quiet.”

“I think he is quite affected by noise. That’s probably one of his main challenges I would say in school... I think he finds it very distracting. So it would stop him from being able to focus on his work. So therefore there is more of an issue for school as well.”

“I think some activities that are in schools are quite difficult for kind of introverted, you know, if you’re an introvert as well as being highly sensitive, which lot, lots of highly sensitive people are introverts. So lots of hands up if you know performances, assemblies, parties, these sorts of things, which obviously most kinds really enjoy can be quite stressful for sensitive kids, noise, it’s really uncomfortable and very high noise levels. And one thing about the noise as well... he spent three [years] in like a hut type thing... not like a proper classroom... a lot of the noise levels are worse in there I think than a classroom because the ceiling is quite low, and obviously it’s quite small as well. So when you’ve got like 30 kids or whatever in that sort of space quite, quite noisy.”

Participant 3a

	<p>“I’ve noticed even when we’re at home... when his sister’s around, she’s making a lot of noise. He’s a bit like, he’s quite distracted by that... normally it’s just me and him. It’s really quiet. We’re working.”</p> <p>“I think they had tried ear defenders at school, but I’m not really sure how kind of, how much that works. It’s a bit stigmatising, almost to have those ear defenders on.”</p> <p>“I think the noise is quite hard to escape from as if you have that as a particular sensitivity, it’s quite difficult I think.”</p> <p>“I think one thing that was helpful which is worth mentioning is that in one of the school years... they had kind of like an online system that they used sometimes for like comprehension and things like that. And he really enjoyed that... he probably enjoyed the quiet and time from it as well... [and] a bit more choice [of learning strategies].”</p> <p>“when she’s sort of gone back to school [post-lockdowns] ... she is anxious and she says the noise bothers her a lot now. And it didn’t really, she’s never even mentioned that before, but now it just does seem to bother her quite a bit.”</p> <p>“we got some ear defenders again at, this is a school thing because they said that [child] said he doesn’t like the noise in the corridors when they change class... he just kept leaving them at home”</p> <p>“She struggles with loud noises”</p> <p>“I think the way I tried to remember it, it’s like if I went to like a club and there was like pulsating lights and really loud music and everyone was yelling. I feel like that’s what she feels when she’s in a class of 30 kids all talking at the same time and actually quite a few different languages and then being in a lunch room with about 300 kids... I think that’s how she feels it. I don’t think she has, you know, like we have, or other people have... an internal membrane between you and the world... I just don’t</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>
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	<p>think she has that. I think she hears everything... I don't think she can turn off inputs. So I think for her school was just, like, nonstop."</p> <p>"I did ask... she was struggling to eat because it was so noisy. So I asked if she could eat her lunch in the nurture room because obviously if she gets hungry, then we're just going backwards in life."</p> <p>"So this will be the first year of the Halloween disco because we went in P1 and she cried the whole time and we went and P2 and she wore headphones. You know, the ear defenders..."</p>	
<p>Experience of overwhelm meaning child requires access to quieter, more relaxed educational environments to promote achievement and wellbeing</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 3: Sensory overwhelm – ‘it just needs to be quieter’</p>	<p>"school's very busy. There's 35 in his class and that seems to have steadily increased... There's a lot of noise, a lot of goings on. So, I think that's very disadvantaged for him, you know, with bigger classes. So, he would have probably suited like 27, you know, children."</p> <p>"it's sort of yeah, being able to try and support those particular students that you might recognise that have a high-sensitivity and dislike noise for whatever reason. You know to help them sit an exam, in certain schools they have quieter spaces."</p> <p>"the time was a big issue, that time wasn't pressed [working from home], he didn't have to think quick. I think he's a bit, you know, if he's in the headlights, gotta come up with an answer, come up with an idea quickly, he struggles. But it was quieter. He was able to just sit on his own and just think, yeah, this is what I'm gonna do."</p> <p>"We are introverted and this is the best way that we learn, you know, some people learn better in smaller groups and might find it difficult talking in big groups."</p> <p>"You know, people are, you know, not in a bad mood or not stressed. But you're doing things faster than a very relaxed pace. And she does find that overwhelming."</p> <p>"[the perfect environment], the classroom probably a single, you know, she would just be on her own. Or maybe with one or two people that she liked and that she knew that they were quiet people and they would get on with their work... she would work in the library."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p>

“we even tried where she’s been in the kind of the teachers cupboard in between two classrooms and that kind of worked. But then another teacher came in and said, what are you doing in there? Who didn’t know anything about [child] and, you know, that was, you know, that’s not going to work”

“It just needs to be quieter. I think as a start and that’s not just sensitive children, there’s, you know, a lot of neurodivergent children noises and is a massive part of their threat response, isn’t it?”

“So for someone like [child], she needs a teacher who is not terrifying. They need to be consistent to their core about maintaining a very quiet and calm atmosphere. She needs to know that people are not just going to get away with talking and chatting. Even the sound of whispering, if she’s feeling very stressed, the sound of whispering can be too much”

“I think having quieter, smaller spaces would definitely help.”

“I think being able to perhaps take a break if it was getting too much, go somewhere a bit quieter, so quieter area or something like that. And again at break times. Lunchtime maybe”

“I think one thing that was helpful which is worth mentioning is that in one of the school years... they had kind of like an online system that they used sometimes for like comprehension and things like that. And he really enjoyed that... he probably enjoyed the quiet”

“I said, what, you know, what could the school do to kind of make things better? So she said, you know, noise or teachers kind of telling people to be quiet... because they just seem to tolerate that noise level... well to whatever level really, particularly supply teachers, which is quite prevalent with the pandemic and sickness and things like that... and also you know, actually teaching classes, not just letting things go and not saying anything... she finds it quite difficult to not have that lesson go through, not have things followed you know.”

Participant 3a

	<p>“I think schools, I think teachers should be given, I think all teachers should have at least half a day on what high-sensitivity is so that there can be aware of it... Because I would say it’s like. It’s like everything’s amplified for them. So no, if something goes wrong, it’ll go wrong bigger for them if no. If that even down to some of them probably won’t be able to cope with things like fire alarms... Or just everybody being noisy in the classroom, I think every classroom or every school should have a quiet area that’s quiet for highly sensitive.”</p>	Participant 4a
	<p>“her mind, is very busy and all the time... it must be exhausting for her brain to just be on the go so much”</p>	Participant 5a
	<p>“I remember [child] when she was little. I once tried to do that. You know, the counting down thing to get her to do something. And she literally freaked out. I never did it again.”</p>	
	<p>“we were quite big on if you do that, you get this... If you can score more goals, you can get there. And we started to notice that the more pressure you put on him the worse he behaved or the worse that he, is it more pressure on the rewards, keep it on himself, and the worse it got, football was a prime example of that. If you said if you score three goals, you get a fiver or if you score one goal, you get a quid. He he would not score goals, but if you didn’t say anything and he went on there have a great game.”</p>	Participant 6a
	<p>“he definitely doesn’t cope well with strict teachers and strict people”</p>	
	<p>“in an environment where she has the ability to connect, no, not ability, she’s got the ability, in school where she has the opportunity, to connect, in a deep way, she thrives, so smaller class sizes.”</p> <p>“they are able to revisit missing elements of skills that they maybe have been present in class but weren’t absorbing the information at the time”</p> <p>“A small teaching environment [would be ideal], where the teachers’ main goal is the children feeling safe.”</p>	Participant 7a

	<p>“how does taking her from a larger setting into a smaller setting change how she feels? About being in either environment, because ultimately it’s about how that highly sensitive child then feels in the smaller environment. If the child feels less safe in the smaller environment than in the bigger environment because she then feels excluded, spotlights on them. Is there gonna be more pressure because there’s an expectation don’t forget here, from teachers and the system, that because they’ve made some special allowance that therefore it will work. So there’s a lot of expectation and pressure on that child then too.”</p> <p>“No uniform. They have slippers that they can wear during the day.”</p>	
<p>Experience of overwhelm meaning child needs additional time to recharge and recover throughout the school day</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 3: Sensory overwhelm – ‘it just needs to be quieter’</p>	<p>“[child] just takes loads of food with her. She manages it in the breaks... They need a snack”</p> <p>“that was when I talked about a growing and thriving orchid, how to how to make them thrive. And that was aimed at the school as well, because it’s like, you know, giving them breaks when it becomes too much and that’s what they do, they do that with [friends 10-year-old child, who is highly sensitive] to an extent.”</p> <p>“[child] actually wangled it herself, that she sits with a little girl who’s got ADHD? No, she’s, she’s autistic. Her friend [name]’s autistic and she’s wrangling it to she’s [child]’s partner in class, so when [child] gets a break, [child] gets a break.”</p> <p>“as kids get older, people expect you to have certain ways of reacting to things you know, and she just doesn’t always do that. And it can be quite difficult, especially if she’s like tired or hungry.”</p> <p>“I mean, she was happy at nursery... It wasn’t like she was desperately unhappy or anything. It was just more like you could tell when she’d been like very busy and had had enough, and she wasn’t the kind of kid, you know, some of my friends would be like, oh, after nursery we’re going out to dinner and then we’re going on a walk or whatever. She she can’t do that she needs, she still does, we can’t, like, go for the whole day.”</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>

<p>Experience of overwhelm meaning child needs additional processing time during class-based activities</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u></p> <p>Theme 3: Sensory overwhelm – ‘it just needs to be quieter’</p>	<p>“he’s never really busy. I think he can only really concentrate on one thing at a time. It’s one thing at a time”</p> <p>“And we did a topic last week. He had to talk to the class and choose anything you wanted. So, it was quite broad and, he, I know he struggles with that because he’s thinking not only of what he’s choosing, what everybody else will think about it. Is it the right thing? Am I doing something wrong, and, you know, what the reaction of the teacher will be, what the reaction of the children will be. So, he’s, he’s, he’s not just thinking, oh yeah, I like that, I’ll do that, whatever.”</p> <p>“There’s one thing going on in the brain.”</p>	Participant 1a
	<p>“They’re not very good at organising. [child] is terrible at organising. [child] is better, but he’s yeah if he’s got too much to do, he gets overwhelmed by it all and we’ve been working on that”</p>	Participant 5a
	<p>“if they aren’t aware, you know teachers, I mean, I don’t know about teacher training. I haven’t trained as a teacher. But, you know, they may be made aware of learning difficulties, but the highly sensitive trait isn’t a learning difficulty. It’s a depth of processing, so you can imagine a child that is highly sensitive, that has depth of processing which is far more advanced than her peers. And then she’s asked to put her hand up to answer her question on the spot. Or she’s given a timer in time to do her spellings, and then the teacher’s getting frustrated because she’s not actually listening to what’s being said to her and actually being able to do what’s required of her within the time scale that the teacher wants. Well, none of those are because she’s not behaving well, she’s not listening or she doesn’t have the capability. That is all an element of the deep processing that she needs in order to be able to achieve what’s asked of her.”</p>	Participant 7a
	<p>“they look at the perception of the body language, the eye contact, the tone of voice towards them. Then they then have a deep level of shame. About the fact. Well, how come I don’t seem to be able to do this like the others do? And then when they asked the teacher for help. Because it isn’t a learning difficulty, the teacher just tells them they’re fine and they just need to try harder.”</p>	

<p>Experience of overwhelm leading to preference for smaller, quieter learning-based activities (i.e., individual or pair work as opposed to large group work)</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 3: Sensory overwhelm – <i>‘it just needs to be quieter’</i></p>	<p>“I remember myself. You know, you want to answer, because you want that recognition that you, that you got the right answer, you know and there’s no other way of doing that. You know you’re right answering in your head, but you’re too nervous to say, you know, to to say it.”</p> <p>“Well, a report, her recent report from teachers was, you know, [child] is a delight in class. You know the only kind of could do better was kind of maybe that she could contribute a little more in class, but you know she’s hard working and polite, follows instructions in lessons, you know she does everything.”</p> <p>“[the perfect environment], the classroom probably a single, you know, she would just be on her own. Or maybe with one or two people that she liked and that she knew that they were quiet people and they would get on with their work... she would work in the library.”</p> <p>“we even tried where she’s been in the kind of the teachers cupboard in between two classrooms and that kind of worked. But then another teacher came in and said, what are you doing in there? Who didn’t know anything about [child] and, you know, that was, you know, that’s not going to work”</p> <p>“there’s an assumption that kids really like... I think there’s an assumption that kids need to learn to accommodate the group. So she hates team sports. I think it would be brilliant, you know, they make her really uncomfortable, I think it would be brilliant if in PE there could be like an option to just, you know, like skip rope in a corner or whatever. You know, like she loves, she’s very athletic, she loves individual stuff... If I could just opt her out of football for the rest of her life, I would. You know, she, she hates it. And things like all the school events, you know, it’s like a school disco, a school cinema night. You know, like there isn’t always. We’re trying, because I’m on the PTA now, we’re trying to always have like a quiet corner, a quiet room or whatever. But the school doesn’t always, like, have that. And without her having one-on-one support, which she doesn’t need, she can’t have that. You know, it’s not like because they did invite all the autistic kids to, like, go to the nurture room. If there’s something like that happening, but they wouldn’t invite her”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Experience of overwhelm meaning child prefers</p>	<p>“she finds it quite difficult to not have that lesson go through, not have things followed you know.”</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p>

<p>structured rules and routines throughout the school day</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 3: Sensory overwhelm – ‘it just needs to be quieter’</p>	<p>“I think for her school was just, like, nonstop. It got better as she got older because she loves a routine...P One, it’s like a lot of, like, free play and running around and kids like learning how to stand in a queue and stuff. But she’s in P 6 now and it’s like, you do this from 9 to 10. You do this from 10 to 11, lots of working in a workbook kind of stuff. And she’s, like, thriving with that. So she loves it. She loves knowing what to expect. And she loves the quiet time... So school got, like, easier and easier for her as everybody else probably started liking it less and less. She started liking it more and more.”</p> <p>“I think she just needs to like to know what’s going to happen every day... and in school, you know, they know.”</p> <p>“if...she has, like a plan, she can do amazing things.”</p> <p>“I know that there’s a lot of people who say, like, you know, for different sorts of sensitive kids, schools like Montessori schools are stuff really suit them because they’re really free and you can, like, move at your own pace. For [child], that would be absolutely the wrong thing for her...”</p>	<p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Child doesn’t fit into boxes set out by school</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 4: A square peg in a round hole – accessing an equitable education</p>	<p>“I feel as a parent that he his needs aren’t being met because his personality doesn’t fit the, you know, the the the norm or whatever”</p> <p>“The teachers are all very, you know I speak to them on parents evening and they are all genuine. They, they want the best for everybody, as you know, which is great. I wouldn’t be expecting a teacher, the teacher’s not just there for one, my daughter. You know, they’ve got hundreds of pupils. And you just have to fit in. And that’s the that’s the problem.”</p> <p>“I think some activities that are in schools are quite difficult for kind of introverted, you know, if you’re an introvert as well as being highly sensitive, which lot, lots of highly sensitive people are introverts. So lots of hands up if you know performances, assemblies, parties, these sorts of things, which obviously most kinds really enjoy can be quite stressful for sensitive kids.”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p>

	<p>“having kind of the empathy and the sort of friendly and being quite kind and things like that, these are all good traits. And I think the problem is, though, that people seem to want, obviously people seem to prefer extroverts to people like, you know, really kind of, introverted, you know... chatty all the time... I think in our society, because you read, sometimes... like Japanese or something like that... they value those sorts of traits. But I think in our society here, there aren't as many... so being an introvert, highly sensitivity, it's it's tricky.”</p> <p>“that's what we, that's what we kind of view as being how kids should be, isn't it? They should be really loud.”</p> <p>“I didn't hear about the term highly sensitive children until the children were what at school 5 or 6. And it changed my perception of how I dealt with my children... I discovered and by another parent at school who had a child who she'd obviously researched and she'd found highly sensitive. And the Facebook page actually. And as soon as I went on there and I and I read what other people were saying about their children and I, then obviously the highly sensitive child book and all the rest of it, not that I've read it, but I was just, I just everything like just slotted into place and I understand I thought that's my children. That's why my children are different from other children. It's there's nothing wrong with them. They they, it's their personality and and unfortunately with school they always want to just put children into boxes and if they don't fit in that box the there must be something wrong with them and that's wrong.”</p>	Participant 5a
	<p>“Not a lot [could be done to improve school for my daughter]. I think the whole school system's not geared up for children like her... It needs a complete overhaul of the school system... It's almost like we wanna get every child to the same point. Which means those who are at the top of end the scale, get held back, and those who are at the bottom end of the scale get dragged to a point that is potentially uncomfortable, it's almost like we want everybody to be the same, where in reality we're all very different”</p> <p>“I think the big thing with school is it's a so homogenised and it's so you know, everybody's treated the same when in reality nobody's the same”</p>	Participant 4a

	<p>“I’ve said to them about testing... stop testing my son... you’re going to cause more problems by testing him because err that environment, you want the best for the 80% of kids that are in there that are perfect or got a TA or whoever, for the 20% like my son, who just don’t fit that box, you’ve gotta find another way of testing, you know, finding out whether he’s academically, where he used to be and leave it at that.”</p>	Participant 6a
	<p>“It isn’t... an inclusive environment. They’re not saying whatever your needs are we will embrace them. No, whatever your needs are, they need to fit the square box. And if they don’t, we’ll call it early intervention. And what we’ll do is we’ll build shame and judgement into your educational experience from day one.”</p>	Participant 7a
	<p>“Definitely awareness is massive because if not, we run the risk. Well, it’s already happening of parents getting desperate to fit their kids into a system that isn’t meeting their needs, and if they don’t fit the pressure is on the parent to make them fit because there aren’t alternative provisions. And then it feeds into the fear that, well, what if my child can’t go to school? How can I work if my child’s not at school?... And then. There’s extra worries... And and and and all of that is felt by the deeply sensitive child.”</p>	
	<p>“the teacher’s role is to teach the child to read and write and achieve a certain level by a certain target to date... that is their number one... If you were to give a EYFS teacher thirty children. And out of those thirty children, you’ve got six highly sensitive children. The time and patience and dedication and environment that you’re going to have to give those six far outweigh the energy resources you have available, and so you will give it to the other twenty-four. Because the numbers are, the actually the system works for the twenty-four.”</p>	
	<p>“unfortunately the experience we had from a school environment was that I think you know from [child’s] particular experience was that she was classed and referred to as being oversensitive... And then, well, her interpretation of that was that there was something wrong with her... she said, I wish I wasn’t highly sensitive because, you know, I wish I didn’t have to have all these habits”</p>	

	<p>because they are by nature, care, compassion, time, patience. And those are in very short supply in mainstream school.”</p> <p>“the loud kids are the ones who get attention. So the kids who are throwing things and, you know, yelling and hitting teachers and stuff, of course they get immediate attention every time and they have the nurture room and they have the calm down corner and they have all these things, the kids who are on the absolute opposite side of the spectrum... But I think, I think what is missing is... if your kid is just struggling. You know, there’s options if they’re being loud and disruptive, but if your kid’s just, like, not very happy, I don’t know. Like what happens like, you know... I mean, with [child]... I do feel like two months into P1 when she still wasn’t speaking. Somebody probably should have said something or noticed or, you know, like made me aware, but they didn’t until like six months had gone by. And when they were like oh, wow, she’s talking now. And it’s like, well, like, how would I have known she wasn’t?.. You know, and I think genuinely they just, they know they don’t have the time like to worry about the quiet kids who are lining up as they’re supposed to and eating their lunch nicely and, you know, like she’s a good kid.”</p>	Participant 8a
<p>Child displaying EBSA type behaviours resulting from difficulties associated with experiencing high ES within the education context</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 4: A square peg in a round hole – accessing an equitable education</p>	<p>“she would not go if, if she had the choice.”</p> <p>“if I was being diplomatic, I would probably say that she dislikes it intensely. I could probably more informally say that she hates it.”</p> <p>“it’s quite difficult not to walk on egg shells around about even asking her to do some things... it could be having a shower, brushing teeth, getting ready for school... You know, you wouldn’t think it was unreasonable.”</p> <p>“A healthy, intelligent, wonderful 14-year-old who is at home. All the time, she doesn’t want to see anybody. Doesn’t want to do anything. Umm. It’s just that’s really quite, as a parent, that’s just a very, very sad place to be. So, she hates school... It’s just complete withdrawal... And that’s, I suppose it’s hopelessness, really, isn’t it?”</p> <p>“Well, a report, her recent report from teachers was, you know, [child] is a delight in class... you’re like, oh gosh, it’s an amazing report. And then... it’s amazing, but, from our side, it’s such a sad, it’s</p>	Participant 2a

	<p>such a sad place to be as well, because we have a totally miserable child who hates school. You know, how can you get a report now that is a glowing report?”</p> <p>“Well, the, I mean we’ve, we’ve been through a whole, we took her timetable and we took every, every class and then we, we kind of traffic light it for the whole week... but it could be to the point where she can’t. She couldn’t get up in the morning because the thought of going to English and Period four where her teacher was possibly going to shout at everybody.”</p> <p>“We had an Ed Psych for a while, but [child] seemed to be doing so well in school. She was kind of for a little while not managing to go into school for one day a week when this first started. We were kind of shocked... as long as you’ve got a good relationship with the guidance teacher and they know that you’re kind of on it and that you’re aware of things then they’re happy for you to not be in school, which is quite incredible actually.”</p> <p>“with COVID as well, you know there is a boom in online courses, so, so some, I’m not sure all of them, but she could probably do a lot of her umm qualifications online and you know it has. It has been so miserable, it’s got to the point where, like, well, well, what’s the point, shall we just, do we do that?”</p> <p>“I got to the point where, I got the local authority involved. I rang them up and said you need to come and see my child in this setting because pastoral support is not working. He threatened to self-harm at home because he didn’t wanna go to school anymore. He was threatening to stab himself, didn’t want to live anymore and at seven years old, that’s just not acceptable.”</p>	Participant 6a
<p>Systemic change is required to support CYP who experience high ES</p> <p>Location in RTA</p>	<p>“so it’s all very welcome, you know, all these, you know, solutions, and that’s as a parent as a teacher, everybody’s constantly, or as an Ed Psych, is like let’s find a solution possible solution to that. But if the person in question is either not able or willing, able is the world that comes, it’s not can’t, well, actually the word is can’t. It’s not won’t they? They genuinely they can’t do it. Then you can have all these strategies in the world, but they’re not gonna. They’re not gonna help... She was getting distressed by the teacher, was just shouting. There was no way she would physically be able to stand up and walk to the teacher’s desk or catch their eye and then leave the room? She just, you know,</p>	Participant 2a

Theme 4: A square peg in a round hole – accessing an equitable education

cause we've talked about this, so, so, that is a strategy to then go outside and do some, you know, some deep breathing, some grounding... It's just not working. It will not work. You know."

"[the perfect environment], the classroom probably a single, you know, she would just be on her own. Or maybe with one or two people that she liked and that she knew that they were quiet people and they would get on with their work... she would work in the library, but even you go to the school library now and a library is not, not not a very quiet place, you know, in times gone by you were pretty scared to talk in the library and you wouldn't dare make a noise. But they are different places now. I think it is the society we are in... With the curriculum, and people having, you know students having much more of a say with how their learning takes place. That just makes more noise, and if you are not an extrovert or if you're noise sensitive, it's just it's just too much."

"I'm wondering if, couldn't an environment actually set up for the minority, so that you have just the most noisy, chatty, chilled person, could still actually totally function, but that you've kind of flipped the whole environment around so that you are supporting these orchids and everybody else can fit into that anyway. You know, given, given the research that if, if they actually do get the support they need, they flourish much more than other people do."

"we even tried where she's been in the kind of the teachers cupboard in between two classrooms and that kind of worked. But then another teacher came in and said, what are you doing in there? Who didn't know anything about [child] and, you know, that was, you know, that's not going to work"

"So there's things you could do with the environment... the teacher, is actually perhaps even more critical in being part of the environment. So for someone like [child], she needs a teacher who is not terrifying. They need to be consistent to their core about maintaining a very quiet and calm atmosphere. She needs to know that people are not just going to get away with talking and chatting. Even the sound of whispering, if she's feeling very stressed, the sound of whispering can be too much... and she does have one or two teachers like that who just don't take nonsense from anybody. But I think that's the minority these days. Classrooms are just much more informal places."

	<p>“I have got confidence in the school but with the current system, I don’t think there’s a huge amount more... without changing the whole point. So you don’t have six lessons in a day. You know, without fundamentally changing the whole system of of doing different subjects at different times of the days. I don’t, I’m not sure what else because we’ve tried to work on on skills and you know things to solve, things to help in the current building, the current setup... even as a parent having to come to terms with, I have to accept that she won’t drink anything during the day because she doesn’t want to go to the bathrooms because there’s girls. Older girls are people, girls swearing or something in the bathroom.”</p> <p>“highly sensitive is not a negative trait. It’s not a trait that stops them fitting into an environment necessarily, it doesn’t have to be... if you do it right, they can do [it]... They can actually do it in the right environment”</p> <p>“Not a lot [could be done to improve school for my daughter]. I think the whole school system’s not geared up for children like her... It needs a complete overhaul of the school system... It’s almost like we wanna get every child to the same point... where in reality we’re all very different”</p> <p>“You can’t have him working in the hallway because he’s had an explosion while you’re watching a movie about something that’s upset him or some emotional circuit... And this this is something a lot of the schools touched on curriculum wise, and I know it comes from above, so it’s not their fault, but they’re touching on so many little things that they think they’re doing the right thing, but it doesn’t account for that percentage of children that isn’t the norm.”</p> <p>“It’s only now I feel able to actually approach her head teacher, which I have and said, are you aware of the highly sensitive person trait? Are you aware of high-sensitivity and what it means and how it can be enhanced in a learning environment?... And how you could actually change the physical environment and the the the sensory experience for somebody to actually enable them... And so I’ve literally just started having that conversation”</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
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“in a class of thirty children, you have more immediate obvious needs. You already have a system that intervenes with those. So if you have boys, for example, who are misbehaving. Shouting. Throwing physically... it already has an approach... so, you are a highly sensitive child or deeply sensitive child... experiencing the class differently. There isn't a pathway. That is immediately obvious, and actually the interventions that they need are not considered to be appropriate in the school system because they are by nature, care, compassion, time, patience. And those are in very short supply in mainstream school.”

“it has been proven that if you can nurture a highly sensitive child. They will flourish... [there needs to be a pathway] ... The first thing would be educating, ensuring that the teachers, the staff that those children are going to interact with are trauma informed... So that they understand what is happening to a child's nervous system from a highly sensitive... perspective... And then you would move to the child's opinion then what they would like to see?... Because you know, just asking the questions, what do you need?... Because these children. If you allow them to have their voice. Without judging, shaming, or blaming them, they actually know what they need. They know.”

“You know, you look back at it now. You know that first year teacher. That first-year teacher made such a negative impact... If you were to give a EYFS teacher thirty children. And out of those thirty children, you've got six highly sensitive children. The time and patience and dedication and environment that you're going to have to give those six far outweigh the energy resources you have available, and so you will give it to the other twenty-four. Because the numbers are, the actually the system works for the twenty-four.”

“the loud kids are the ones who get attention. So the kids who are throwing things and, you know, yelling and hitting teachers and stuff, of course they get immediate attention every time and they have the nurture room and they have the calm down corner and they have all these things, the kids who are on the absolute opposite side of the spectrum... But I think, I think what is missing is... if your kid is just struggling. You know, there's options if they're being loud and disruptive, but if your kid's just, like, not very happy, I don't know. Like what happens like, you know

Participant 8a

<p>A 'fight' for an equitable education</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u></p> <p>Theme 4: A square peg in a round hole – accessing an equitable education</p>	<p>“I felt like she was against me, and she thought, you know, I was just one of those parents, you know, mollycoddling parents. I was just trying to fight for, for, for [child] to have, you know, the same as everybody else, I wanted her to be interested in understanding [child]. This is why, if you say this to him, you know, if you, you know, this is why he reacts in this way.”</p> <p>“he had a lot of difficulty actually because she didn’t seem to get it... she didn’t understand... him”</p> <p>“This particular teacher said that he’s emotionally immature and, I know, if anything he is very emotionally mature”</p> <p>“I got very, very frustrated with her, because she, she made it, she made his life very, very difficult and, like I said, she wasn’t the type of teacher, I didn’t feel that she was in the job, that she was basically in the job because it was a job, it didn’t feel like she got children’s differences, you know, personality.”</p> <p>“I wanted her to to be interested in understanding [child]. This is why, if you say this to him, you know, if you, you know, this is why he reacts in this way.”</p> <p>“I felt there was very little understanding perhaps from [teacher]”</p> <p>“there was no recognition of sensitivity. No terminology around it in school.”</p> <p>“I think it was just nice to have that person in school, you know, you as a parent going into school and feeling that I’m not gonna be judged as like, one of those, you know mollycoddling parents, because I feel like [child] needs extra support in certain things without having an ADHD or autism diagnosis. Just his personality. Because I feel as a parent that he his needs aren’t being met because his personality doesn’t fit the, you know, the the the norm or whatever... I can say that without being judged or [child] feeling that ohh I’m different, because it’s all about fitting in, isn’t it? It’s all about not sticking out like a sore thumb.”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>
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	<p>“so it’s all very welcome, you know, all these, you know, solutions, and that’s as a parent as a teacher, everybody’s constantly, or as an Ed Psych, is like let’s find a solution possible solution to that. But if the person in question is either not able or willing, able is the world that comes, it’s not can’t, well, actually the word is can’t. It’s not won’t they? They genuinely they can’t do it. Then you can have all these strategies in the world, but they’re not gonna. They’re not gonna help... It’s just not working. It will not work. You know.”</p>	Participant 2a
	<p>“I did get that feeling [that I am being judged]. Eventually, this little, you know, like, feeling, like I said to one of his teachers, you know that I think again it was a performance and you know, does he sort of, can he just sit and watch if he wants? You just have to join. And just like, well, you know, you don’t want him to be, but now you’re asking for him to be treated differently.”</p> <p>“he’s tended to keep himself to himself quite a lot. And again, that was quite an issue for the school... he’s really quite sociable at home. But I think they would really feel like there’s something not quite right with him. I mean, I should mention straight away where they thought autism. Autism is the big thing that they’re, we’re gonna, you know, they’re constantly kind of, I mean, my feeling is there isn’t really any big understanding about sensitivity. I can’t even say that I’ve discussed it with them because I think it would just be like, do you know what, she’s just a parent in denial. She just doesn’t want to accept that about her child... [sensitivity is] never mentioned... people have said on plenty of occasions things like, well, you know, the spectrum is huge. So it’s like, yeah... I don’t feel that it is [autism] because I mean, obviously, you now, I’ve had him since being a baby and he’s always been very sociable at home, is always that way with us, you know. He’s always talking to us. He’s not really withdrawn in the same way, but yeah.”</p> <p>“I do feel that if I had just talked about it, but it was towards the end [before he was home schooled]. I did start to think perhaps I should, but I just think they just didn’t want to listen.”</p> <p>“he’s really is a happy kid and he was always happy enough to go to school, to be honest. It was never particularly happy there though, it was more that they that it was a problem for them. I think more so than him.”</p>	Participant 3a

"[school] don't recognise it, I don't know, I actually went in to say I made a special PowerPoint... she was quite defensive... and was very much I know what I'm doing. This is the technique I use... I broke it down enough so she she'd accept that children, some children are sensitive, but she only really acknowledged the ones who are what I call the struggling orchids. So the ones who... don't thrive, she didn't acknowledge, actually, that the ones who are thriving. OK. It's like [child]. They also need extra support."

Participant 4a

"Yeah, they're not recognising it because they're, I think because they're, they're choosing not to. It's almost an arrogance that, how can a parent of our school know more than we do?... The think they know it all."

"There's probably nobody that knows her better than I do.... if anything I support other people dealing with her."

"this is another thing... we made the decision not to tell the school that there were any sensitivities with them... I don't know whether it was a good thing or a bad thing, but we just didn't want them to be labelled as anything. We just see them as being different to maybe main, you know, the vast majority of children, I mean, all children are different and wonderful, but we didn't want them to be labelled with anything. So of course school were unaware that we knew that she chews. We know what their little idiosyncrasies are... the last few months, they've been reaching out to us and saying, well, you know, this behaviour isn't quite right. Blah blah, which is why I think they're going for the autism diagnosis. But I don't know... I don't think, I don't, I don't think so... I think the children have always known that they were different because they are so clever... I don't know how you describe them really, just that they are different and I think Junior school it was easier for them to just get on and the other kids just accepted them for who they are"

Participant 5a

"[sensitivity wasn't discussed at school]. It was only when they started probing down the autistic autistic route. And the way that they did it made me very defensive. And I just said that they are highly sensitive children. Then I said, have you, you know, do you understand what that is? And you

know, one of the teachers sort of said yes, but I don't, I, I'm not convinced that they do actually understand what it means... they made out that it was the children that wanted this diagnosis of autism because then once they've got the diagnosis, they they can, like, get all this support... But yeah I'm quite defensive about it, which I try not to be... obviously, I want my children to thrive. And you know, they are thriving at school. And, but the way school have put it is that, you know, they can have mental health issues further down the line if they don't get a diagnosis and therefore support that that comes with that... I did switch off a little bit when they were talking about it because I just thought no."

"I suppose the teachers are trying to do their best... But I just think because they don't understand what they're dealing with... they're looking at it from an autistic point of view. So the support that the children are getting are like the ear defenders and the chewy thing... so that was supportive in a way. And although, how I saw it was well, you need to be looking at why she's chewing it, because it might be like because she's regulating something. There's, she's overwhelmed. It could be she's just bored. And if she's just bored at school, then you need to do something about it. That was my. But that's not how they viewed it."

"I was really unhappy with how they dealt with it... I said... I don't see how I can continue having him at the school. And so I left. We left the school."

"So we started to really look at doing another pastoral support programme with him, but the language in it was always very negative. And again, I started noticing the strategies were all very samey as it had been before, and I was like, these don't work because these have the opposite effect. You're putting, you're badging him again the same as the old school were as a neurodiverse child. And they don't work with him."

"He went back in a small class size because I basically begged them to let him back into some sort of routine."

Participant 6a

“ending year four and starting year five his behaviour was erratic to say the least... it was more about the school just not getting it right for him.”

“You can’t have him working in the hallway because he’s had an explosion while you’re watching a movie about something that’s upset him or some emotional circuit”

“[High-sensitivity] it’s not on their radar because when you use those words they they they don’t, we had, we went in February to explain about high-sensitivity and they’re not, if it doesn’t have any funding attached to it, they’re not interested”

“the school feel he needs a permanent one to one. Now [child] doesn’t need a permanent one to one. He needs somebody that gets him in that class that can help with manage his emotions... I think that is where schools are missing the trick massively in that they think everyone that needs support in the classroom has got a learning difficulty.”

“I’ve written to you, I’ve come in, I’ve given you presentations on high-sensitivity... I’ve given you all of this help and support because it’s my son’s mental health that is the problem here... I said, so you are literally lumping him in with all the other children that have got behavioural problems? I said I’m not having it.”

“It’s only now I feel able to actually approach her head teacher, which I have and said, are you aware of the highly sensitive person trait? Are you aware of high-sensitivity and what it means and how it can be enhanced in a learning environment?... And how you could actually change the physical environment and the the the sensory experience for somebody to actually enable them... And so I’ve literally just started having that conversation. I found a really good article because I’m not able to necessarily articulate it as well as I would like to because, I, I don’t feel I’m a, I’m kind of a lived experience person and I could speak to people about it to offer that. But because there’s, you know, usually in education, you need to be a you need to have a certificate of some description for people to take seriously or you need to be behind an organisation that promotes it. You can’t. You’re not valued as a parent’s voice to advocate for your child yet from a highly sensitive person trait.”

Participant 7a

	<p>“I think the main thing was the invalidation that she could tell that she wasn’t experiencing the classroom environment in the same way as other people were, and she couldn’t understand why... But when she’d say to her teachers, I need help. Because she always tried her best. Always had a smile on her face, was lovely. She was told she was fine. And she didn’t feel that she was fine. She felt that she needed help, and she did. So they just, invalidated her.”</p> <p>“You know, you look back at it now. You know that first year teacher. That first-year teacher made such a negative impact...”</p> <p>“when we complained after we took [child] out because lots of information has come out since about the behaviours at school and how she was treated. One of the particular ones I mentioned in there was they have a duty of care that when they knew that that environment was not meeting [child’s] needs, they should have said that... we don’t know exactly what’s going on. We haven’t experienced this before. We aren’t able to make any more accommodations. We really think maybe you should look for a different environment.”</p>	
<p>Consideration of, or action upon, change in education provision in relation to the experience of high ES within education contexts</p> <p>Location in RTA Theme 4: A square peg in a round hole – accessing an equitable education</p>	<p>“with COVID as well, you know there is a boom in online courses, so, so some, I’m not sure all of them, but she could probably do a lot of her umm qualifications online and you know it has. It has been so miserable, it’s got to the point where, like, well, well, what’s the point, shall we just, do we do that?”</p> <p>“My son 10, yeah... it’s been a real roller coaster with him... he’s a very up and down experience [and is now home schooled]”</p> <p>“I thought, why not really, you know, why not just take him out for a bit?... [he’s] still really following the curriculum because I don’t know whether he might go back at some point... but it worked out well, so I kind of thought you know, it hadn’t been something that, you know, it was really quite a difficult decision to make... I have to say I was really, you know, I never expected to do that with my kids... I was like, ohh, completely traumatised. Don’t know how much I was doing the right thing, but it is working really well. It’s been really good. He’s really enjoying it... I think it is the right thing, but it is</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p>

a massive step away from everything that you've ever known. You know it's, you know, school, you know, I didn't plan my kids to not go to school and that's it really."

"I mean. My my husband spoke because, to be honest, I got to a point where it's just like I can't do it anymore. You know, I've just, and he's brought it to the head teacher... we hadn't spoken to her before basically, you know, he just said that he felt that, you know, they were always saying that he needed to kind of have one to one support and this sort of thing or he wouldn't get on with his work. When he could have that at home. So I think they were a bit like, well, can't really argue with that really, because he isn't getting that school."

"I said it doesn't really make sense for you at this point [to be home schooled]. If she'd been younger, I would have given her that option if she wanted to. But because she's kind of midway through and she does kind of manage alright, you know... it wouldn't be a very sensible move for her. So she was a bit upset about it first"

"She sees schooling as an inconvenience... She wants to go to school where I live until she's 14. and then she said I'm going to home school myself. She wants to be home schooled. Ever since they did school from home. She's wanted to be home schooled... Because she she can do what she can choose what she's she does and she can do things quicker because they hold her back so she'll so, she said. They were doing some tests and she came home. She she said it was so slow, she said because the teacher was reading the questions, should have it finished by the time she finished reading the questions... They don't have capacity to cope. She's almost like as much as children at the other end of the scale need a one to one. If she had a one to one, she'd be amazing. Or if they could take her out the class and say, actually, you know what, you go and learn about this. You go and do some separate, you know, individual study."

"I was really unhappy with how they dealt with it... I said... I don't see how I can continue having him at the school. And so I left. We left the school."

Participant 4a

Participant 6a

“She did, uh a while ago, she actually, which was an amazing thing to have done, she wrote a letter to her guidance teacher, then passed it onto her class teacher saying that she had these, you know, difficulties and challenges about noise sensitivity, people shouting, people chatting in class.”

“her guidance teacher is amazing and the senior management of the the secondary school are fantastic as well. So they totally get it. You know, they they would have a meeting with you and go this is very interesting, totally understand that. Totally supportive. But they are not in the class, you know they don’t sit with the classes.”

“my feeling is there isn’t really any big understanding about sensitivity... [sensitivity is] never mentioned”

“I do feel that if I had just talked about it, but it was towards the end [before he was home schooled]. I did start to think perhaps I should, but I just think they just didn’t want to listen.”

“just a general understanding of differences I think would be really helpful. So sensitivity being one of those, but just generally like that introvert, extrovert, just knowing that not all kids love to go perform on stage, love to be the centre of attention, answering questions you know, getting picked on to read out loud, things like that.”

“if they had this awareness it would be much easier wouldn’t because I would be able to go in and say, you know what he has had these sensitivities, you know these are his particular triggers this is what would really help him... If I could just be upfront with that, that would make a massive massive difference, I think”

“if you read [Elain Aron’s] books as 15 to 20% of the population [are highly sensitive], which is, which is absolutely huge, isn’t it?”

Participant 3a

“I thought amazing, I thought it was amazing you were doing this because I was like for people to know about this because this is like, this is a thing really, you know.”

“I didn’t mention [sensitivity]. They didn’t mention it... But I do think part of her still things [sensitivity] isn’t a real thing, though, you know, I mean, it’s not, not a diagnosis, it’s, it’s not talked about... but the more like, the more things I send to her, I’ll find articles and links and things and send it, you know, read this. You know, like she did the test and she, she scored really high... I just think, you know, basically she sees so much around autism and how autism presents in girls, and, yeah... If you see all of that, you never see high-sensitivity... So all you see is that.”

“it would be better if everybody knew about it. So not even not even just school, but, umm so for example we went out for, for a meeting with extended family at the weekend and he was very quiet. And out of his cousins he’s the youngest, his one cousin, he’s really, really loud and there’s quite a few really loud in the family, and he’s really quiet and I’m thinking, they must be thinking why is he so quiet, you know? But again, if you could say to them about sensitivity, but then they would be like, what’s she on about or never heard of that she just making it up you know... And I said to my husband, you know, I just, well, honestly, I think I prefer quiet.”

“Awareness more awareness will make a massive, massive difference. I really do think it would have been a massive difference to particularly to him”

“I think people around them being aware that they are highly sensitive is important.”

“acknowledgement of if they were to understand highly sensitive in schools as much as they can, you know, they understand ADHD and ASD. And I think that would help a lot.”

“I think schools, I think teachers should be given, I think all teachers should have at least half a day on what high-sensitivity is so that there can be aware of it. Because if you’ve got no, you’ve got a class full of children, and no understanding, if XYZ over there are highly sensitive. Then you, you you can be more attuned to what might happen and what those children might be going through. Because

Participant 4a

	<p>I would say it's like. It's like everything's amplified for them. So no, if something goes wrong, it'll go wrong bigger for them"</p> <p>"I personally think [it would be a positive thing for language around high-sensitivity to be used in schools] ... but I know that people, some people don't like the term highly sensitive because it seems like it's a bad thing, but to me it's I I think both me and my husband and we're probably both highly sensitive as well, so, I don't see it as a bad thing. I see, I think there's more positives as well. There's nothing negative about it, it's just other people's perceptions of it. That's the negative."</p> <p>"I just think just having an awareness of it is the main the main thing... I don't know what more they could do other than just being more aware of it."</p> <p>"we question all the time whether we should have told school about our children before they went, but we did cause it said when we were filling in the forms. And there are any other things that you you perhaps need to tell us about your child? And we just thought do we say anything? And we thought well, we didn't want to because we just thought it's not a big deal, that was the the issue. It's really difficult. It's not a big deal that they're highly sensitive and but then you want them to be treated and supported... I don't know. It's a really tricky one because it is... it's a personality trait. It's not. It's not a disorder. It's just how they are."</p> <p>"[I think more awareness would be good], yes, I I think if they had it as part of part of their toolbox they call it... where they got strategies to deal with things"</p> <p>"when you're highly sensitive, it's not just about... the fabric and the clothes and the touch and the look and the feel, and that's what [school] miss, they see highly sensitive as those things, which are typical neurodiverse issues, aren't they? They are triggers that make people think they must be autistic. They must have ADHD, they must have sensory processing disorder. That's very different... I've also got a friend that's got a child that's diagnosed with SPD and she keeps saying oh that's what [child] has got and I'm like no it isn't... It's hard to get them to see things differently."</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>
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	<p>“I think the the the educational psychologist... I would say for them to have an open mind about the child before they start talking about diagnosis... I think they need to be holistic in what they’re in, what they’re doing... So for me, the HSP part of it comes in between a teacher knowing there’s a problem or challenge or a difference and then having it in their toolbox to try these different things”</p> <p>“they may be made aware of learning difficulties, but the highly sensitive trait isn’t a learning difficulty. It’s a depth of processing”</p> <p>“when we were having the challenges that we were having and at the time it was only the diagnostic labels that I could think of. So ADHD, autism, SPD, PDA, all of those because it felt like in the education system, those would be the only labels that they would actually be able to engage with me on.”</p> <p>“it has been proven that if you can nurture a highly sensitive child. They will flourish... [there needs to be a pathway] ... The first thing would be educating, ensuring that the teachers, the staff that those children are going to interact with are trauma informed... So that they understand what is happening to a child’s nervous system from a highly sensitive... perspective... And then you would move to the child’s opinion then what they would like to see?... Because you know, just asking the questions, what do you need?... Because these children. If you allow them to have their voice. Without judging, shaming, or blaming them, they actually know what they need. They know.”</p> <p>“Definitely awareness is massive because if not, we run the risk. Well, it’s already happening of parents getting desperate to fit their kids into a system that isn’t meeting their needs, and if they don’t fit the pressure is on the parent to make them fit because there aren’t alternative provisions. And then it feeds into the fear that, well, what if my child can’t go to school? How can I work if my child’s not at school?... And then. There’s extra worries... And and and and all of that is felt by the deeply sensitive child.”</p> <p>“I think it’d be much easier [if the term highly sensitive or environmental sensitivity was used more]. You know, if you say autism, people know what it means. But if I’m putting [child] into like a new</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>
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	<p>something, a new class or a new school year, I it's like this very long-winded explanation like this is my daughter. She struggles to speak to strangers and also loud noises. And sometimes it's too bright for her in the world. Like it's just it would be a lot easier if people understood that term"</p> <p>"it felt too hard to explain [her sensitivity] ... with the noise [at lunch], I did say she was struggling. I don't think I used the word [sensitivity] specifically because I don't think, I don't think people know what it means"</p>	
<p>Clinical, diagnosis-driven language is required for educational contexts to take heed of phenomena such as high ES</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 5: "This is a thing" – it's not a diagnosis, but it's still a real experience</p>	<p>"I was trying to explain it in those terms [sensitivity, autism, ADHD], although that is not his diagnosis. If you could look at it in the, the the way that you support those children, that's the type of support [child] needs sometimes."</p> <p>"I think it's not as well recognised as, say, ADHD or autism. It doesn't have that kind of diagnosis that teachers are prepared and know about. So, it depends on the particular teacher, as to, you know, their approach"</p> <p>"I feel like [child] needs extra support in certain things without having an ADHD or autism diagnosis. Just his personality"</p> <p>"But we're not getting him diagnosed, it's not that process. And I think that's difficult sometimes for particularly modern teachers to understand because everything is document, everything is, you know what I mean?"</p> <p>"there was no recognition of sensitivity. No terminology around it in school."</p> <p>"I'm kind of anti-labels, I have to say, but I do think in that in in the case of that I would have been quite happy if he was labelled [highly sensitive], because I think it fits him and I think maybe the, maybe what the issue we had with labels in the past is that the label was not quite right [e.g., autism] ... I didn't really want him labelled with something I didn't really think applied to him."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>

	<p>“I think the main thing was the invalidation that she could tell that she wasn’t experiencing the classroom environment in the same way as other people were, and she couldn’t understand why... But when she’d say to her teachers, I need help. Because she always tried her best. Always had a smile on her face, was lovely. She was told she was fine. And she didn’t feel that she was fine. She felt that she needed help, and she did. So they just, invalidated her.”</p>	
<p>Without there being a diagnostic lens to the experience of high ES, there is poor understanding (i.e., high ES is “lumped in” with other neurodiversities)</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 5: “This is a thing” – it’s not a diagnosis, but it’s still a real experience</p>	<p>“I think it’s not as well recognised as, say, ADHD or autism. It doesn’t have that kind of diagnosis that teachers are prepared and know about. So, it depends on the particular teacher, as to, you know, their approach”</p> <p>“I thought amazing, I thought it was amazing you were doing this because I was like for people to know about this because this is like, this is a thing really, you know.”</p> <p>“highly sensitive children, according to <i>Elaine Aron</i> and her 20% of the population, you know, it’s not nothing, what’s the, the rates of autism? Yeah, ADHD, I mean, they are much lower than that... And they have a lot more, you know, profile and awareness everywhere.”</p> <p>“I mean, I should mention straight away where they thought autism. Autism is the big thing that they’re, we’re gonna, you know, they’re constantly kind of, I mean, my feeling is there isn’t really any big understanding about sensitivity. I can’t even say that I’ve discussed it with them because I think it would just be like, do you know what, she’s just a parent in denial. She just doesn’t want to accept that about her child... [sensitivity is] never mentioned... people have said on plenty of occasions things like, well, you know, the spectrum is huge. So it’s like, yeah... I don’t feel that it is [autism]”</p> <p>“I did start to think perhaps I should [speak up more about my child being highly sensitive], but I just thought I just think they just didn’t want to listen.”</p> <p>“Now what I will say is we did have him on the waiting list for autism assessment at one point. But then we decided to take him off because I just. I just didn’t feel it was right... I didn’t feel it really fits him and I think if you get, I could see how we could get the diagnosis. I don’t think he would do particularly well in the tests. That’s another thing about highly sensitive kids. You know, I think you</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p>

kind of wouldn't interact maybe with somebody you don't know, and with what the school was saying, he doesn't do his work, you know, I think then that maybe we could have achieved that diagnosis because you know we got a checklist for autism and there's very little that we could tick on that for him from our perspectives at home. But I do feel that he might have got that diagnosis if we had have gone down that path and then would that really have been right for him?"

"I think if they'd have that awareness [around sensitivity], that would have made a massive difference, actually, because I don't think it would have taken that much for him to be able to be himself more then, because it's it was very, very up and down as some teachers were a lot better than others. And I think if you could have, if people have that awareness, they would be like, oh yeah, actually, I think that doe really fit him and what he's like, but they don't. That awareness is the only thing they have is autism. So that's kind of what they go for really, because it's like, well, you know, there is obviously some overlap isn't there, you know, noises and that."

"basically, I think [school] they're always coming from the well, you know, if you were just getting diagnosed with autism, basically it would be fine because you can then have one to one... They would say things like, well, if he gets a diagnosis, you'll get one to one support. And I just know that isn't true necessarily. So because obviously autism is huge... he was never gonna get, never gonna get his needs met because his needs, whether he got diagnosed or not, are his needs, if you see what I mean."

"I do think there's a lot of misdiagnosis. I mean, I'm on a lot of home education Facebook groups and things like this now and again, and nobody ever mentions [sensitivity] on there, but there are so many kids who were like being taken out of school because of anxiety. This type of thing, they're going through ASD assessment and I'm thinking I don't know whether that's the right thing."

"because this anxiety, they've got some counselling in school now. So she's been involved with that. So I had a few chats with them about it, but again I didn't mention [sensitivity]. They didn't mention it, but they did say that she had said that she thought she had autism... because you'll see things on, so she'll see things on social media probably and stuff like that, and again, she'll see the traits that

	<p>probably apply to her. But they said, oh, we've spoken to teachers and stuff and like nobody, nobody said that, you know, no, no, don't think any of that. And you know, I mean, it was totally out of the blue for me. I was like, what?... But I do think part of her still things [sensitivity] isn't a real thing, though, you know, I mean, it's not, not a diagnosis, it's, it's not talked about... but the more like, the more things I send to her, I'll find articles and links and things and send it, you know, read this. You know, like she did the test and she, she scored really high... I just think, you know, basically she sees so much around autism and how autism presents in girls, and, yeah... If you see all of that, you never see high-sensitivity... So all you see is that.”</p> <p>“[school] don't recognise it, I don't know, I actually went in to say I made a special PowerPoint she was quite defensive... and was very much I know what I'm doing. This is the technique I use... I broke it down enough so she she'd accept that children, some children are sensitive, but she only really acknowledged the ones who are what I call the struggling orchids. So the ones who.. don't thrive, she didn't acknowledge, actually, that the ones who are thriving. OK. It's like [child]. They also need extra support.”</p> <p>“Yeah, they're not recognising it because they're, I think because they're, they're choosing not to. It's almost an arrogance that, how can a parent of our school know more than we do?... The think they know it all.”</p> <p>“[High-sensitivity] it's not on their radar because when you use those words they they they don't, we had, we went in February to explain about high-sensitivity and they're not, if it doesn't have any funding attached to it, they're not interested [researcher]”</p>	Participant 4a
	<p>“So we did see an educational psychologist. I think a couple of times. I think reception and then year two I think.... she basically, well she's an autism specialist as well... So again, [sensitivity] was never mentioned... I don't even know if I brought it up with her, sensitivity, you know, she wouldn't know about it. To be honest, I don't know.”</p>	Participant 5a

“I suppose the teachers are trying to do their best... But I just think because they don’t understand what they’re dealing with... they’re looking at it from an autistic point of view.”

“I’m kind of anti-labels, I have to say, but I do think in that in in the case of that I would have been quite happy if he was labelled [highly sensitive], because I think it fits him and I think maybe the, maybe what the issue we had with labels in the past is that the label was not quite right [e.g., autism] ... I didn’t really want him labelled with something I didn’t really think applied to him.”

“they are intelligent children and we made the mistake. It’s not, I say, a mistake, but we we they read an awful lot and [child] has got a psychology book. So she has been reading all up on everything. So which is why, [child], I think decided that he had got autistic traits which you can look at some of his behaviours and see that they could be construed as that. And so yeah, I don’t know some some of it I’m just not sure whether it’s real or not.”

“I think it’s just autism or ADHD [that school understands]”

“I still see them as high, highly sensitive as the main thing not autism”

“we did a telephone consultation and she said, you’re right he doesn’t have ADHD and I’m comfortable to say it’s no autism. She said your son is highly, highly anxious... And I said now that I’ve ruled all of that out I said what the hell am I gonna do because this can’t continue.”

“when you’re highly sensitive, it’s not just about... the fabric and the clothes and the touch and the look and the feel, and that’s what [school] miss, they see highly sensitive as those things, which are typical neurodiverse issues, aren’t they? They are triggers that make people think they must be autistic. They must have ADHD, they must have sensory processing disorder. That’s very different..., I don’t know it’s hard to explain to a person. Teachers or parents that have gone down the medical diagnosis process. It’s hard to get them to see things differently.”

Participant 6a

“I think teachers can just maybe teach and stay in their lane and get a professional then like yourselves who’s got a breadth of understanding that can say, actually, it could be many of these different things, try these strategies, before we start going down the diagnosis route... Because a lot of these are borderline. You know, if you look up ADHD, and trauma, a lot of the symptoms are the same. In a child. And I hate to think, you know, mix that with HSP as well, how many children have been diagnosed with ADHD and currently drugged up to the eyeballs.”

“I think the the the educational psychologist... I would say for them to have an open mind about the child before they start talking about diagnosis... I think they need to be holistic in what they’re in, what they’re doing... So for me, the HSP part of it comes in between a teacher knowing there’s a problem or challenge or a difference and then having it in their toolbox to try these different things. And I think before you go down that road of it’s ADHD, ODD, autism, whatever, cos parents are, I put my teachers under pressure. I did. Do you think there’s anything wrong with my child? This can’t carry on. What do you think’s wrong with them? In your opinion, do you think this, do you think that. I did put my school under pressure... I think it’s for them to say we have to keep an open mind. It could be a range of things... They went straight to diagnosis, medical diagnosis, clinical stuff without thinking –

“I do make allowances for a lot of his little foibles that he has without thinking it’s some autistic trait... I just accept that, you know, he’ll grow out of something or he won’t, and he is gonna be who he is and I think that’s where schools don’t, they try, they want everyone to be the same, they want you all to be the same, they want you all to sit there, all to do your SATs and you know... It’s not life.”

“the EHCP was playing the game really for him to go to secondary school and be on a radar of somebody... I hate that I’ve had to do that because you know, and I joked to my friend the other day, if I’d have just signed that form, you know, I know exactly how to fill that out and get him diagnosed with ADHD, ODD, autism, the lot... But I would be failing my kid”

“So [child] went to Lego Therapy for a bit in Year Five. He hated it because he was put in with the children with autism.”

Participant 7a

“when we were having the challenges that we were having and at the time it was only the diagnostic labels that I could think of. So ADHD, autism, SPD, PDA, all of those because it felt like in the education system, those would be the only labels that they would actually be able to engage with me on.”

“I was going down the route of what diagnosis is that ADHD, it is autism? And actually I don’t believe it’s any of those... highly sensitive is a personality trait”

“it’s a combination of things, so on the side she’s also diagnosed with social anxiety... which I think it overlaps a lot. I think that possibly the GP, you know that’s it’s a diagnosis that they can give. They don’t give a diagnosis of highly sensitive or environmentally sensitive or anything. So so the things that gave her that diagnosis was being, you know, really stressed out in crowds or with strangers or loud noises, so she knows that she’s certainly old enough now to know that she struggles at times her friends don’t.”

“I think it’d be much easier [if the term highly sensitive or environmental sensitivity was used more]. You know, if you say autism, people know what it means. But if I’m putting [child] into like a new something, a new class or a new school year, I it’s like this very long-winded explanation like this is my daughter. She struggles to speak to strangers and also loud noises. And sometimes it’s too bright for her in the world. Like it’s just it would be a lot easier if people understood that term. I mean I know what I mean by it but also it’s like with with autism, you know it’s a spectrum and different kids have different bits... it would be a nice starting point because I don’t have, you know, I say social anxiety, which isn’t really it, it’s more than that, but yeah, then they can kind of have a starting point if I say that.”

“But [child] I mean you could tell from when she was a baby that, you know, I was actually wondering about autism for a little while and things like that... Because she just wasn’t comfortable. She’s gone through a lot of her life, just being uncomfortable... [but I moved away from wondering around autism] because once she gets used to things, she’s a different kid... Like it’s just new things or kind of

Participant 8a

pushing comfort levels. It's just, you know, she has a hard, hard wall, which is just you can't go past. But she's I I have plenty of friends with kids around the autism spectrum, and it's, I know with girls it's different. Like, you know, it's lots of masking and things but but it doesn't feel like the right word for her. I did wonder when she was younger, like when she was, you know a toddler and she was just not engaging with people very much at all. But then once she got older and I think got used to things a bit better... you know, when you start Googling, like my kid is being odd or different or whatever, you know, it's the first thing that comes up every time. So I had to kind of dig to find out. Like, no, actually, that's not it. It's more like if I touch her with something scratchy she totally freaks out. And, like, I took her to messy play... all the other babies were like rolling around in it and delighted and like having you know it all over their hair and stuff, and [child] was sitting on the edge of it like what is happening, and then she just like, went into a corner and that was that."

"they talked about things like, umm, selective mutism as well, which I think possible could have been a, you know, I didn't know because, you know, they they go off to school and you don't actually know what happens in there. But it was like... they have like a student teacher meeting and said like [child] has started talking now. And I was like, I didn't know she wasn't talking."

"with the uniform I, to be honest, I didn't actually raise [the reasoning behind her not being able to wear trousers] ... I raised her eczema because it felt too hard to explain [her sensitivity] ... with the noise [at lunch], I did say she was struggling. I don't think I used the word [sensitivity] specifically because I don't think, I don't think people know what it means, so I might as well just explain the, the... like the impact"

"I know it's not diagnosable exactly, but it would be nice because I don't think the diagnosis she has is exactly it... it feels like [social anxiety] ... that's not actually what she has, but it does, it's an easy way to shut down certain things, you know, like, like she can't order. Well, she can't yet... Kind of like little kids you expect that of, but she's almost 10... I'm just like, no, she's, you know, she has social anxiety. So please don't try. Because sometimes people think they just need to, like, encourage kids. And actually, the more she gets encouraged, the less likely she is to do it... I have actually lied, and said she's just on the spectrum, like done, and then people just back up, you know, that's the

	<p>word they know. And I would, I feel like in some ways sensitivity is along a very long spectrum of these, kind of environmental things... I don't think it's totally off the spectrum. So it's not a lie exactly but it's not exactly what she is either. But when she shuts down, I mean, she shuts down hard... So I have to jump in with something, and she's highly sensitive will mean absolutely nothing."</p> <p>"I mean, they, uh, they were, she was, they were playing around with the diagnosis, just because of her, I mean selective mutism. You know it's not again, it's on a spectrum. And I think in some ways that would fit her decently just because she really can't do it, it's not her being like, obstinate or, you know, trying. Yeah, she just can't... so she's definitely kind of prone to being anxious anyway, which I think sensitivity and anxiety and selective mutism. And you know, like it's all this like thing... But yeah, if you say those words, people know what it means. If you say my daughter is highly sensitive, they'll just think I'm being one of those, like, I don't know, middle class parents who, you know, worries about organic baby food or whatever."</p>	
<p>The uncomfortableness of advocating for your child when there is no diagnostic lens to fall back on</p> <p><u>Location in RTA</u> Theme 5: "This is a thing" – it's not a diagnosis, but it's still a real experience</p>	<p>"I think it was just nice to have that person in school, you know, you as a parent going into school and feeling that I'm not gonna be judged as like, one of those, you know mollycoddling parents, because I feel like [child] needs extra support in certain things without having an ADHD or autism diagnosis. Just his personality. Because I feel as a parent that he his needs aren't being met because his personality doesn't fit the, you know, the the the norm or whatever... I can say that without being judged or [child] feeling that ohh I'm different, because it's all about fitting in, isn't it? It's all about not sticking out like a sore thumb."</p> <p>"this is another thing... we made the decision not to tell the school that there were any sensitivities with them... I don't know whether it was a good thing or a bad thing, but we just didn't want them to be labelled as anything. We just see them as being different to maybe main, you know, the vast majority of children, I mean, all children are different and wonderful, but we didn't want them to be labelled with anything. So of course school were unaware that we knew that she chews. We know what their little idiosyncrasies are... the last few months, they've been reaching out to us and saying, well, you know, this behaviour isn't quite right. Blah blah, which is why I think they're going for the autism diagnosis. But I don't know... I don't think, I don't, I don't think so... I think the children have always known that they were different because they are so clever... I don't know how you describe</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 5a</p>

	<p>them really, just that they are different and I think Junior school it was easier for them to just get on and the other kids just accepted them for who they are”</p> <p>“I think that would help [if there was more parent-teacher communication]. I mean I do we we question all the time whether we should have told school about our children before they went, but we did cause it said when we were filling in the forms. And there are any other things that you you perhaps need to tell us about your child? And we just thought do we say anything? And we thought well, we didn’t want to because we just thought it’s not a big deal, that was the the issue. It’s really difficult. IT’s not a big deal that they’re highly sensitive and but then you want them to be treated and supported... I don’t know. It’s a really tricky one because it is... it’s a personality trait. It’s not. It’s not a disorder. It’s just how they are.”</p> <p>“It’s only now I feel able to actually approach her head teacher, which I have and said, are you aware of the highly sensitive person trait? Are you aware of high-sensitivity and what it means and how it can be enhanced in a learning environment?... And how you could actually change the physical environment and the the the sensory experience for somebody to actually enable them... And so I’ve literally just started having that conversation. I found a really good article because I’m not able to necessarily articulate it as well as I would like to because, I, I don’t feel I’m a, I’m kind of a lived experience person and I could speak to people about it to offer that. But because there’s, you know, usually in education, you need to be a you need to have a certificate of some description for people to take seriously or you need to behind an organisation that promotes it. You can’t. You’re not valued as a parent’s voice to advocate for your child yet from a highly sensitive person trait.”</p>	Participant 7a
<p>Education setting querying exploration into neurodivergence for child</p> <p>Location in RTA</p>	<p>“I mean, I should mention straight away where they thought autism. Autism is the big thing... people have said on plenty of occasions things like, well, you know, the spectrum is huge. So it’s like, yeah... I don’t feel that it is [autism]”</p> <p>“just recently school have wanted to actually get both children assessed for ASD... we haven’t actually gone down that route as far as I’m concerned I don’t actually think that either of them are. I think they have, that they are highly sensitive and that’s that’s the term that I would choose to use for them.”</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 5a</p>

Theme 5: *“This is a thing”* –
it’s not a diagnosis, but it’s
still a real experience

“I think they’re going down the route more of an attention deficit kind of thing with her.”

“I think they’ve just picked up on various things that he said. I don’t know everything that’s been discussed because it was just between him and the teacher and but yeah, so that’s that’s why they wanted to just see if they could get them both [assessed for ASD], I think it is how they’ve put it to me because I’m quite, I’m not anti them being labelled autistic as such but I just don’t think that they are, and I don’t think this school actually understands what a highly sensitive child is.”

“when they first went to primary school. So they were in Reception. And one of the teachers picked up on [child]. And particularly just with eye contact and how she was around other children. And so she was referred to an educational psychologist. He came in, observed her, talked to her and his outcome at that stage, which was when she was what, five or six, was that there’s no autism here. She’s just a very intelligent, highly mature emotional child. And she could read way before she was three... So they’re just very they are very intelligent. They’re, they’re way more intelligent than me... And so and yeah, so she was looked at but then that was it.”

“We know what their little idiosyncrasies are... the last few months, they’ve been reaching out to us and saying, well, you know, this behaviour isn’t quite right. Blah blah, which is why I think they’re going for the autism diagnosis. But I don’t know... I don’t think, I don’t, I don’t think so”

“It was only when they started probing down the autistic autistic route. And the way that they did it made me very defensive. And I just said that they are highly sensitive children. Then I said, have you, you know, do you understand what that is? And you know, one of the teachers sort of said yes, but I don’t, I, I’m not convinced that they do actually understand what it means... they made out that it was the children that wanted this diagnosis of autism because then once they’ve got the diagnosis, they they can, like, get all this support... But yeah I’m quite defensive about it, which I try not to be... I did switch off a little bit when they were talking about it because I just thought no.”

“There was all sorts of very very typical neurodiverse, in their minds, behaviours.”

	<p>“School had no interest in... my concerns that it was a mental health problem, they just wanted me to get him assessed for autism, ADHD.”</p> <p>“So they they had, unbeknown to me, put him forward for community paediatric assessment. Even though I said no... And so I started to fill it in thinking actually maybe this is the right way to go. Maybe I am wrong. Maybe I’ve got this wrong. I I told them I was furious about it, but you know what? If he, if he, if you’re right and I’m wrong, I’ll hold my hands up. So I filled in”</p> <p>“that’s when the teacher said to me my daughter is diagnosed with ADHD and we’ve got a great community paediatric team. Why don’t I have a word with them and see if they can assess [child]. You know, rather than go through the system, why don’t I see if I can pull some strings?... I said, well, I don’t really think that that’s right. I said let’s wait and see. We’ve only been back at school six weeks. Let’s wait and see... if we’re still seeing these bad behaviours, I’ll, I’ll, I’ll consider it. And that is what I said. But she went ahead and did it anyway... And I said to her if he had autism or ADHD or ODD then these things wouldn’t necessarily help and then not help because what I understand with those neurodiversity is that it’s a pattern that happens constantly... And I said it’s not happening at home because by that point home was really good.”</p>	Participant 6a
Codes <u>Not Allocated</u> in Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), including reasoning (seen in ‘Code’ column in blue font)		
<p>Child unable to suppress strong heightened emotions</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, ‘Child experiencing heightened emotions’ (Theme 1)</p>	<p>“Her compassion was so strong she couldn’t. She couldn’t suppress it. She couldn’t not feel the things that she felt. And so was harshly critical of herself on an academic perspective.”</p>	Participant 7a

<p>Child's heightened emotions brushed off by school-based staff</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child experiencing heightened emotions' (Theme 1)</p>	<p>"this is HSP all over. He's completely over thought it. The pain is extreme. He's very, very he's very, very painful for him... But that's the other thing with school. I don't think, I think they brush it off... It's real. Yeah, give him that, give him that time and that acknowledgement. And that's something that as a parent I've learned. I never say I'm too busy to talk about something. He needs to talk about it. Express it. Talk it to death."</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p>
<p>Child being able to manage strong emotions in school</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child internalises heightened emotions' (Theme 1)</p>	<p>"she's physically violent... but she's also very good at managing it. That she she never shows a sign of it at school."</p> <p>"I mean, [child] does that at school. She'll she'll excuse herself to the toilet when she's... when somebody's upset, as she said, she said, she said, she just, she loses it. Like, literally. She's like, I'm gonna lose it at school. That's how I deal with it... she's very good. She's never ever lost it at school."</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p>
<p>Child able to self-regulate when overwhelmed</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child internalises heightened emotions' (Theme 1)</p>	<p>"she has certain behaviours. Umm, where she will emotionally regulate herself. So, for instance, at the moment what she does is bites her nails literally down to the quick. And this is a new thing. She never started biting her nails until last year. She always had, like, beautiful nails. But before that, it'd be something like she'd pick her nose... And she did have a period where she pulled her hair out... And and she just she she she likes to twizzle with things like when she's calming down, she'll take herself off. She's quite aware of when she needs to go and be by herself and she'll like to find something to twizzle with or something while she's reading a book. And that that sort of thing and so that was how. That's how she's kind of how it manifests with her, how she deals with all of the, I suppose. It's just how she regulates what's going on around her, if she gets overwhelmed with the situation, that's how it manifests."</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p>

<p>Child unable to seek emotional support when needed</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child internalises heightened emotions' (Theme 1)</p>	<p>“She would never naturally come to us and say anything so, so for her to come and say oh I feel I’m feeling anxious about something. You know I would, I would have some champagne at that point for her to be able to verbalise things externally. But I can tell when she is particularly worried about things. So, I would then have to to ask her, I’m noticing, you know, that you’ve been sitting on your bed, that you’re under your duvet. I’m wondering if you’re feeling... But it’s from my side. So, if I was to, I didn’t notice or I didn’t have the time or couldn’t be bothered was exhausted, whatever, it wouldn’t come out without my prompting.”</p> <p>“She’s very, you know, she’s able to, kind of, uh, I don’t know, mask really. And then I’ve got these children, they come home, I’ve got friends whose children come home and just lose it at home as a release after having the whole day at school and these busy environments. But she doesn’t actually do that, she just goes in her room and is quiet.”</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>
<p>Child’s experience of emotional overwhelm leading to poor verbal articulation of feelings</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child internalises heightened emotions' (Theme 1)</p>	<p>“He’s aware of his own emotions and knowing everybody else’s emotions, and that’s where it all gets tangled up in his head to the point where you get angry or frustrated because you’ve got so much going on at the same time”</p> <p>“She would never naturally come to us and say anything so, so for her to come and say oh I feel I’m feeling anxious about something. You know I would, I would have some champagne at that point for her to be able to verbalise things externally.”</p> <p>“A healthy, intelligent, wonderful 14-year-old who is at home. All the time, she doesn’t want to see anybody. Doesn’t want to do anything. Umm. It’s just that’s really quite, as a parent, that’s just a very, very sad place to be. So, she hates school and she was really looking forward to not being at school, but then it’s the overwhelm of having things to do in the holidays, it has been too much, so you know, like I said, we finish school the end of June. So, at some point prior to June, we would have the conversation. Oh you know, holidays coming up. I know you’re looking forward to all this. What would you like to do? It’s all oh I don’t know. OK, well, you know, we can talk about it another day to the point where I kind of feel like we can’t talk about it again because even asking the question is now, so shame, shaming that she doesn’t have an answer... It’s just complete withdrawal... And that’s, I suppose it’s hopelessness, really, isn’t it?”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p>

<p>Child melts down after school when in safety of home</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child internalises heightened emotions' (Theme 1)</p>	<p>"I know this is common with sensitive kids and she's really good all day at school. And then she, like falls apart hard at night... I think she bottles stuff up all day long."</p>	<p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Child displays anxious behaviours at school/home</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child displaying poor mental health' (Theme 1)</p>	<p>"[Loud noises make her] highly anxious... [they are] intolerable."</p> <p>"A healthy, intelligent, wonderful 14-year-old who is at home. All the time, she doesn't want to see anybody. Doesn't want to do anything. Umm. It's just that's really quite, as a parent, that's just a very, very sad place to be. So, she hates school and she was really looking forward to not being at school, but then it's the overwhelm of having things to do in the holidays, it has been too much, so you know, like I said, we finish school the end of June. So, at some point prior to June, we would have the conversation. Oh you know, holidays coming up. I know you're looking forward to all this. What would you like to do? It's all oh I don't know. OK, well, you know, we can talk about it another day to the point where I kind of feel like we can't talk about it again because even asking the question is now, so shame, shaming that she doesn't have an answer... It's just complete withdrawal... And that's, I suppose it's hopelessness, really, isn't it?"</p> <p>"academically, she is you know, you can't ask anymore, but in fact that also then goes into perfectionism where she's very she loves maths. She's very good at it. But she might get 85. She actually got 100% in a maths test this year... And she still wasn't, yeah, she wasn't happy with it though... It was maybe too easy or other people also got hundreds, so maybe it wasn't that difficult."</p> <p>"It's perfectionism, which ultimately is fear really, isn't it?"</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>

“it could be to the point where she can’t. She couldn’t get up in the morning because the thought of going to English and Period four where her teacher was possibly going to shout at everybody.”

“there might be good classes before that and better classes after that, but it was just the thought this just...That was the only thing that she was concentrating on. So she literally could not get out of bed.”

“she’s, she’s already said that she’s not going to manage to do her [exams] because she’s going to be too stressed and worried about them... intellectually she is probably capable”

“she feels that she’s a bad person. And that she doesn’t have a right to really have fun and to have a lot of friends and to be really popular.”

“kind of black and white, inflexible, perfectionist thinking... You know, it has to be this, or it’s that. Asking me is it this, or is it that, no you know maybe we could consider, it’s black and white, you know, the plan. And that’s a joke in our house is so the plan. It’s never the plan, you know, you want things to go, you know, she might already have, you know, 40,000 details of how she thinks the day’s going to go. And then by the time she’s going down the stairs, something like, oh, something happened. Not amazing but you know there’s no milk for breakfast? Something like that. And she finds that very difficult. But that’s also another part of the the it’s difficult to not have things going exactly as you want them.”

“anxiety is something which presented in her”

“when she’s sort of gone back to school [post-lockdowns) ... she is anxious and she says the noise bothers her a lot now. And it didn’t really, she’s never even mentioned that before, but now it just does seem to bother her quite a bit.”

“she’s definitely a perfectionist and she just gives herself a really hard time about stuff, you know, and and she she gets excellent marks.”

Participant 3a

	<p>“because this anxiety, they’ve got some counselling in school now. So she’s been involved with that.”</p> <p>“he was going through some very dark times over the last year even just going about space in class, for weeks we had conversations around reincarnation, death, the sun, blowing up, what if my children, my children’s children’s children die, and what if I get reincarnated and I come back in 200 years and I’m living under ground and I can’t breathe.”</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>
<p>Value in child having access to teachers and support staff with certain qualities</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, ‘Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation’ (Theme 1 & 2)</p>	<p>“[he needs] somebody sensitive themselves. I think that’s it. Possibly quieter, more sensitive”</p> <p>“They’re very similar personalities. Very, quite, quite quiet. But just lovely, kind nurturing. And they’ll listen. I think he needs somebody that is patient and will listen to his worries and you know, whatever they might be.”</p> <p>“she just got it. Yeah, she was just caring I think yeah.”</p> <p>“the deputy head [related well to [child]], even without knowing about sensitivity, but just being understanding, there is a crossover, isn’t there?”</p> <p>“I’ve been there when he’s teaching [child squash] and he’s got such a positive attitude and... I was trying to get [child] to engage, to have and hear somebody say all those positive things feeds in to your consciousness or semi-consciousness and makes you feel good about yourself and it gives you that confidence”</p> <p>“[the degree to which my child is supported is] dependent on the teachers, the particular personality of the teacher.”</p> <p>“without this particular person, who I think actually is also highly sensitive. I don’t think she realises that. And without this person, she wouldn’t be at school.”</p> <p>“She’s just incredible...[she] is very observant and is there for you, that is needed with highly sensitive children I think.”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p>

“So there’s things you could do with the environment, I don’t know, you could have well, but then it’s different. It’s difficult in a secondary school, in a primary school where you’ve got, you know you’re one family, you can make your classroom, you have brighter areas, darker areas, but you can’t really. I’m not sure that’s so practical in a secondary school where everybody moves all the time. So I suppose the other side of that is that the staff, the teacher, is actually perhaps even more critical in being part of the environment. So for someone like [child], she needs a teacher who is not terrifying. They need to be consistent to their core about maintaining a very quiet and calm atmosphere. She needs to know that people are not just going to get away with talking and chatting. Even the sound of whispering, if she’s feeling very stressed, the sound of whispering can be too much... and she does have one or two teachers like that who just don’t take nonsense from anybody. But I think that’s the minority these days. Classrooms are just much more informal places.”

“If you’re that kind of shouty personality, it’s unlikely that you are highly sensitive, I imagine, and you’re probably it’s never even considered to you the effect that you’re having on somebody else. I mean, no, no teachers are doing that deliberately, so there probably does need to be a lot more awareness done as to the consequences of this.”

“the teacher I think is a paramount part of it, as everybody says and everything, but their skills in classroom management I think will have a massive big effect on highly sensitive children, maybe more than others.”

“it has been very affected up and down the years depending on the teachers he’s had, he’s had some much better years than others... for example, Year One was a very positive year for him, but you have quite like a caring, nurturing type of teacher in that class. And there were two teaching assistants as well, and they were really, really supportive”

“I think he kind of picks up on what people think about him, if you know what I mean. So I think he picks up, you know, that, you know, they’re like him and they really, you know, were being kind to him

Participant 3a

	<p>and things, and I think probably some of the teachers have been a bit kind of impatient and he'll pick up on that... I could see that he would be less comfortable because of the people"</p> <p>"at first he's very much kind of in his shell quite a lot. You know, he's kind of very, you know, cautious, observes things, doesn't get stuck in like the other kids do really holds back from activities, things like that. And again some teachers are kind of not very understanding around that."</p> <p>"I said, what, you know, what could the school do to kind of make things better? So she said, you know, noise or teachers kind of telling people to be quiet... because they just seem to tolerate that noise level... well to whatever level really, particularly supply teachers, which is quite prevalent with the pandemic and sickness and things like that... and also you know, actually teaching classes, not just letting things go and not saying anything... she finds it quite difficult to not have that lesson go through, not have things followed you know."</p> <p>"because of the highly sensitive trait, the perception of body language of tone, of voice, of gestures. Umm, you know, teachers being stressed with 30 plus children with differing needs. I am highly sensitive, a person will interpret those behaviours considerably differently from another, and then it then can then take a lot longer for that highly sensitive person to recover from that interaction, to then be able to relax again and feel safe and connected to them, be able to learn."</p> <p>"she had this amazing teacher in P3 and P4... She really helped [child] find things she was good at and gave her lots and lots of encouragement and actually kind of gave her permission to be proud of herself... she really gave [child] opportunities to do the things she was good at. And even encouraged her, so we're Jewish and they're the only Jewish kids at school. And [child] actually stood up in front of the class, like told them all about some of the Jewish holidays."</p> <p>"They give her permission to, you know, like they kind of don't make a big deal about the things she doesn't join in on, they give her lots of opportunities to shine."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>
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<p>Value in child having a trusted adult to share with, who engages in active listening</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation' (Theme 1 & 2)</p>	<p>"He's able to go back [to small group support] if he was upset. He could go to her office and chat to her. So, if the teacher wasn't around or, you know, say [the group] was missed, if the group couldn't run, he would just make a beeline for [teacher] because he knew she just got it."</p> <p>"he's the only one out of the three of them that will come home and tell me exactly what he's done... I have a rundown literally as soon as he comes in from school. I have the this happened that happened or we did this.... I think he needs to talk to me and give me a rundown of what he's done, you know... anything that was interesting, anything that he achieved, anything that he struggled with."</p> <p>"And they'll listen. I think he needs somebody that is patient and will listen to his worries and you know, whatever they might be."</p> <p>"they need to just have somebody... that gives him some time and space to listen and be patient. I think it's patience and, and, sort of, yes, rather than being too in your face and too, you know, just somebody that will listen and understand and somebody that he can go to if he's feeling overwhelmed for whatever reason."</p>	Participant 1a
	<p>"without this particular person, who I think actually is also highly sensitive. I don't think she realises that. And without this person, she wouldn't be at school."</p> <p>"She's just incredible...[she] is very observant and is there for you, that is needed with highly sensitive children I think."</p>	Participant 2a
	<p>"[she takes] on board people's opinions I think, some of the things are really about other people, which is causing [her anxiety] ... I mean they've probably offloaded their problem onto her, they're feeling better."</p>	Participant 3a
	<p>"I think what I realised with HSP is, is we're all very different in you what know gets the best out of us is very different and you know with [child] it's relationships. It's not being treated like he's thick and it's being treated with the emotional intelligence that he is, I think, with highly sensitive children, we've</p>	Participant 6a

	<p>gotta stay on a level. You can't show your emotions with them because they pick up on it and it can really sway their own internal feelings.”</p> <p>“this is HSP all over. He's completely over thought it. The pain is extreme. He's very, very he's very, very painful for him... But that's the other thing with school. I don't think, I think they brush it off... It's real. Yeah, give him that, give him that time and that acknowledgement. And that's something that as a parent I've learned. I never say I'm too busy to talk about something. He needs to talk about it. Express it. Talk it to death.”</p> <p>“It's about him having again that relationship with someone that he feels that he can tell him anything and they won't judge him... And they won't hold it against him. And if he wants to blow off some steam, or if he wants to take off his trainers and walk around in bare feet just to ground himself that they'll let him do that and not say they can't do that.”</p>	
<p>Child able to seek emotional support when needed (and feeling safe)</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation' (Theme 1 & 2)</p>	<p>“he was taken out of lesson for half a couple of hours. I think it was in meetings and to speak to [teacher] and that was to do with a lot with working through emotions and expressing. And so that was the support, a properly supported environment. It was recommended for him and he did get a lot out of it. Then he took a bit of a break and then he went back again... because my grandmother died, and I think he was finding it very difficult. It's the first death he's experienced... And so, he felt like he needed some extra help. So, he went. He asked to go back and see [teacher].”</p> <p>“if the [emotional support] group couldn't run, he would just make a beeline for [teacher] because he knew she just got it.”</p>	Participant 1a
<p>Child has poor emotional regulation at school</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>“the school feel he needs a permanent one to one. Now [child] doesn't need a permanent one to one. He needs somebody that gets him in that class that can help with manage his emotions... I think that is where schools are missing the trick massively in that they think everyone that needs support in the classroom has got a learning difficulty.”</p>	Participant 6a

<p>Merged into code, 'Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation' (Theme 1 & 2)</p>		
<p>Child benefits from emotional literacy sessions at school</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation' (Theme 1 & 2)</p>	<p>"They also do a thing at school... it's about emotions... they talk about, like, coloured emotions... And then as they work their way up... it becomes more purposeful. So she, you can hear her, something about like oh well, we learned in school that if we get upset we should make ourselves a corner of a room to sit in, you know, and calm down."</p>	<p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Child lacks the resilience and coping strategies to manage their sensitivities in the school environment</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation' (Theme 1 & 2)</p>	<p>"oh, there was a bit of a dispute and... she's, with the help of her amazing guidance teacher at school, she tried to, to sort that out at the end of term, but I think she's feeling so ashamed that she told her friend that she didn't want to speak to her again. She, she just can't, can't really kind of contemplate it."</p> <p>"without this particular person, who I think actually is also highly sensitive. I don't think she realises that. And without this person, she wouldn't be at school."</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>

<p>Child experiencing a need to discuss and reflect on experiences with others</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation' (Theme 1 & 2)</p>	<p>"he's the only one out of the three of them that will come home and tell me exactly what he's done... I have a rundown literally as soon as he comes in from school. I have the this happened that happened or we did this.... I think he needs to talk to me and give me a rundown of what he's done, you know... anything that was interesting, anything that he achieved, anything that he struggled with."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>
<p>Value in child having the opportunity to engage in small group support (e.g., ELSA) or individual support (e.g., school counselling)</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation' (Theme 1 & 2)</p>	<p>"he was taken out of lesson for half a couple of hours. I think it was in meetings and to speak to [teacher] and that was to do with a lot with working through emotions and expressing. And so that was the support, a properly supported environment. It was recommended for him and he did get a lot out of it. Then he took a bit of a break and then he went back again... because my grandmother died, and I think he was finding it very difficult. It's the first death he's experienced... And so, he felt like he needed some extra help. So, he went... I think it was a group, not just the one-on-one, I think in a group and just dealing with, you know, talking about emotions and journalling and, you know, things like that."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>
<p>Child requires support with co-regulation and emotion regulation</p>	<p>"the school feel he needs a permanent one to one. Now [child] doesn't need a permanent one to one. He needs somebody that gets him in that class that can help with manage his emotions... I think that is where schools are missing the trick massively in that they think everyone that needs support in the classroom has got a learning difficulty."</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p>

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation' (Theme 1 & 2)</p>		
<p>Value in child having access to a safe space when needed</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation' (Theme 1 & 2)</p>	<p>"It's about him having again that relationship with someone that he feels that he can tell him anything and they won't judge him... And they won't hold it against him. And if he wants to blow off some steam, or if he wants to take off his trainers and walk around in bare feet just to ground himself that they'll let him do that and not say they can't do that."</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p>
<p>Inter-personal relationships are highly important</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Child values meaningful connection with peers' (Theme 2)</p>	<p>"[child] is also completely non-competitive, so she never wants to be the best. She's not bothered... So she she oh her and her friend have got an agreement. Now, if we're gonna get a times table badge at school, we'll get it on the same day... They will wait."</p> <p>"So she's got a best friend, who, she's very occasionally fallen out with like kids do, and she did have a best friend, [child], who she was very close to... She's only got two or three friends."</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p>

<p>leading to difficulties in peer relationships</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Friendships can be difficult' (Theme 2)</p>	<p>"a lot of the girls were crying and he got it. He understood it, whereas the boys were being very noisy, teasing, trying to make the girls cry even more and then he got upset at that as well. He said they were spoiling the last day."</p> <p>"I think you know a lot of the problems that he's had have been to do with relationships and friendships and the difficulties he doesn't like arguments and disagreements and drama. Basically, it's just it's just the drama, you know, he internalises that."</p> <p>"she's very mature for her age as well... she just has that maturity and she's very sensible and so I think that's a strength... she also is quite affected by people being quite mean, you know, saying mean things either to her or to other people."</p> <p>"I think one of the big advantages that she has because of her high-sensitivity is that depth of connection. And that depth of care and consideration. You know she can ask the most profound questions... very mature conversations and that depth of processing and actually for her to be able to lead that level of conversation is such a huge strength... maturity, which again sets her apart from her peers..."</p> <p>"You know, being with her peer group, connecting with people, being able to engage and interact with those people that she feels safe with. But, equally, because of the deep level of processing and then like that maturity level, um, her ability to, I guess understand that other people aren't that deep and aren't that mature is very difficult because if you are, you only ever see that as being a negative... Because in the school environment it isn't a skill that's embraced."</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child experiencing difficulties with peer relationships</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>"ending year four and starting year five his behaviour was erratic to say the least. He would get really angry about something and and flip out, his friendships got quite strained. He was really oversensitive to everything. Very, very negative when he was coming home about everything. I was getting cross... It was just really difficult time... it was more about the school just not getting it right for him."</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p>

<p>Merged into code, 'Friendships can be difficult' (Theme 2)</p>		
<p>Child experiencing an intense dislike of disagreements and arguments</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Friendships can be difficult' (Theme 2)</p>	<p>"oh, there was a bit of a dispute and... she's, with the help of her amazing guidance teacher at school, she tried to, to sort that out at the end of term, but I think she's feeling so ashamed that she told her friend that she didn't want to speak to her again. She, she just can't, can't really kind of contemplate it."</p> <p>"she's really like kind of sailed through school. She's really high performing and she just did really well... I think for her its more issues with her peers, since lockdown actually I think they're both really happy, being locked down at home she was honestly really happy."</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p>
<p>Sensitivity leading to difficulties in peer relationships</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Friendships can be difficult' (Theme 2)</p>	<p>"I guess the disadvantage is the, um, the need for home to be a safe place... The need for it to be, um, orderly, timely, calm, quiet... you know the, the, the kind of spontaneity. That's difficult in the home... She needs time... you know when you wake up in the morning, oh it's a beautiful day. Let's go out... No... [she needs to know the plan] and to be able to build that into time. So it's kind of a disadvantage... it can mean, therefore, that she isn't able to take part in things with her friends. For example, at last minute."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child finding it easier to make friends when younger and children more accepting of difference</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>"I think the children have always known that they were different because they are so clever... I don't know how you describe them really, just that they are different and I think Junior school it was easier for them to just get on and the other kids just accepted them for who they are"</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p>

<p>Merged into code, 'Friendships can be difficult' (Theme 2)</p>		
<p>Value in child having consistent peer relationships</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Maintaining meaningful connections can be difficult in changeable educational environments' (Theme 2)</p>	<p>"because of the deep processing, connections are important, it isn't easily achievable. There isn't the opportunity to have deep connections with the people, for example, if the classroom is regularly moved around to work with different people... Or if there are staff changes, uh, from a job share perspective... so she's got potential for very deep, strong relationships, but sometimes the layout, the set out, the way school is doesn't always, you know, enable her to do that... similar thing. You know, being with her peer group, connecting with people, being able to engage and interact with those people that she feels safe with."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Value in child having consistent relationships across school years due to the time it takes them to 'warm up'</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Maintaining meaningful connections can be difficult in changeable educational environments' (Theme 2)</p>	<p>"the other thing I've tended to see is, well, it is, it's taken teacher a while to kind of get to see what he's like. So at first he's very much kind of in his shell quite a lot. You know, he's kind of very, you know, cautious, observes things, doesn't get stuck in like the other kids do really holds back from activities, things like that. And again some teachers are kind of not very understanding around that. So they're like kind of like, you know this sort of thing and. And so we tend to see again at the beginning of school. It's all a bit like that. then as they get more used to, he'll come up the shell a bit more and then it's a bit more positive as time goes on. So you'll finish [the year] on a very positive note. And his Year Four teacher was , you know kind of got what he was like and then back in Year Five we were back to quite negative again and sort of oh, we get quite fed up really going through this all the time."</p> <p>"maybe taking a bit more time, particularly at the beginning of the school year, so maybe a bit more work on transition as well and would be really helpful and also transition kind of between teachers as well. So, I was, I felt I was starting again every year, you know, that the school had never had this child before... They wouldn't really know anything about the history. So every year after repeating, this is where this is what happened and this is where we've been before and this is sort of like quite</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p>

	<p>what's like every year... They should know that already... With a new teacher that is gonna take some time to warm up. So just give him that time. Just don't be so straight away."</p> <p>"Towards the end, the last three months of year five was really bad. But that happened when he found out he was moving teachers when we mapped it back. We can map it back to literally the same week that he found out he wasn't going to have the same teacher... And it was like you hate me. You're leaving me. I'm gonna be the child that I think I am. Because you're leaving me and this is it. It was a massive. Now we know."</p>	Participant 6a
<p>Child experiencing overwhelm due to deeply processing other people's moods and body language</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child experiences overwhelm due to overthinking interpersonal interactions' (Theme 2)</p>	<p>"but I'm trying to make him understand that he didn't, it didn't have anything to do with him and I think that's what the problem is, you know, with people, you know, like myself and [child], that you feel like everything is because you're, you're picking up on everybody's emotion and bad mood. And you, you would think I've done something wrong. It's my fault. You try and put it right and then, you know, you, you are expending a lot of energy doing that, you know, as well as everything else."</p> <p>"You know, people are, you know, not in a bad mood or not stressed. But you're doing things faster than a very relaxed pace. And she does find that overwhelming."</p> <p>"I think he kind of picks up on what people think about him, if you know what I mean"</p> <p>"She is a good friend to people... But I think that's sometimes quite draining for her because she takes other people's kind of worries and things on board."</p> <p>"she's very mature for her age as well... she just has that maturity and she's very sensible and so I think that's a strength... she also is quite affected by people being quite mean, you know, saying mean things either to her or to other people."</p> <p>"I think what I realised with HSP is, is we're all very different in you what know gets the best out of us is very different and you know with [child] it's relationships. It's not being treated like he's thick and it's being treated with the emotional intelligence that he is, I think, with highly sensitive children, we've</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>

	<p>gotta stay on a level. You can't show your emotions with them because they pick up on it and it can really sway their own internal feelings."</p> <p>"because of the highly sensitive trait, the perception of body language of tone, of voice, of gestures. Umm, you know, teachers being stressed with 30 plus children with differing needs. I am highly sensitive, a person will interpret those behaviours considerably differently from another, and then it then can then take a lot longer for that highly sensitive person to recover from that interaction, to then be able to relax again and feel safe and connected to them, be able to learn."</p> <p>"they look at the perception of the body language, the eye contact, the tone of voice towards them. Then they then have a deep level of shame. About the fact. Well, how come I don't seem to be able to do this like the others do? And then when they asked the teacher for help. Because it isn't a learning difficulty, the teacher just tells them they're fine and they just need to try harder."</p>	Participant 7a
<p>Child requires additional time to recover from negative interpersonal interactions</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child experiences overwhelm due to overthinking interpersonal interactions' (Theme 2)</p>	<p>"because of the highly sensitive trait, the perception of body language of tone, of voice, of gestures. Umm, you know, teachers being stressed with 30 plus children with differing needs. I am highly sensitive, a person will interpret those behaviours considerably differently from another, and then it then can then take a lot longer for that highly sensitive person to recover from that interaction, to then be able to relax again and feel safe and connected to them, be able to learn."</p>	Participant 7a
<p>Child has a high potential for experiencing guilt, shame, and blame relating to inter-personal</p>	<p>"[child] was very, very challenging at the beginning of this year for a few months at school, and he made some teachers, you know, get upset... things are said to him and and done in front of him to make him feel horrendously bad about himself. That then can't be repaired by just, you know, coming in tomorrow fresh slate. They've gotta rebuild with him. The thing is with highly sensitive children, you can't just treat them like Tonka toys. I often compare [child] and other children to</p>	Participant 6a

<p>interactions and relationships</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child experiences overwhelm due to overthinking interpersonal interactions' (Theme 2)</p>	<p>Tonka toys and China plates. You know, if you told them off. Yeah. Next minute I'll come up to you and give you a cuddle. I love you. If you tell [child] off, he'd cry and think you hated him. So for him the big thing around HSP is is relationships and and that knowing that even though he's different or he sees things differently or he wants to ask you one thousand questions about the sun that you've gotta give him what he needs"</p>	
<p>Child experiencing a high level of distractibility in overstimulating environments</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child experiences overwhelm in busy, loud educational environments' (Theme 3)</p>	<p>"he is quite capable. He's quite an able child and some of them would say that we can tell he's quite a clever child, but he just won't do the work, you know, he just seems to need prompts all the time... but he actually worked really well at home."</p> <p>"I've noticed even when we're at home... when his sister's around, she's making a lot of noise. He's a bit like, he's quite distracted by that... normally it's just me and him. It's really quiet. We're working."</p> <p>"if he had sat down and got on with his work I don't think there would have been any issues with him because he's a very quiet kid. There's never been any behavioural issues, anything like that. You know, his behaviours are really good. I think it was more the fact that, you know, he's distracted. He won't do his work."</p>	Participant 3a
<p>Value in strong classroom management styles</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Experience of overwhelm</p>	<p>"So for someone like [child], she needs a teacher who is not terrifying. They need to be consistent to their core about maintaining a very quiet and calm atmosphere. She needs to know that people are not just going to get away with talking and chatting. Even the sound of whispering, if she's feeling very stressed, the sound of whispering can be too much."</p>	Participant 2a

<p>meaning child requires access to quieter, more relaxed educational environments to promote achievement and wellbeing’ (Theme 3)</p>		
<p>Value in homely environments</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, ‘Experience of overwhelm meaning child requires access to quieter, more relaxed educational environments to promote achievement and wellbeing’ (Theme 3)</p>	<p>“No uniform. They have slippers that they can wear during the day.”</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Value in being able to revisit skills</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, ‘Experience of overwhelm meaning child requires access to quieter, more relaxed educational</p>	<p>“they are able to revisit missing elements of skills that they maybe have been present in class but weren’t absorbing the information at the time”</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>

<p>environments to promote achievement and wellbeing’ (Theme 3)</p>		
<p>Child finding it difficult to think under pressure</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, ‘Experience of overwhelm meaning child requires access to quieter, more relaxed educational environments to promote achievement and wellbeing’ (Theme 3)</p>	<p>“the time was a big issue, that time wasn’t pressed [working from home], he didn’t have to think quick. I think he’s a bit, you know, if he’s in the headlights, gotta come up with an answer, come up with an idea quickly, he struggles. But it was quieter. He was able to just sit on his own and just think, yeah, this is what I’m gonna do.”</p> <p>“I remember [child] when she was little. I once tried to do that. You know, the counting down thing to get her to do something. And she literally freaked out. I never did it again.”</p> <p>“we were quite big on if you do that, you get this... If you can score more goals, you can get there. And we started to notice that the more pressure you put on him the worse he behaved or the worse that he, is it more pressure on the rewards, keep it on himself, and the worse it got, football was a prime example of that. If you said if you score three goals, you get a fiver or if you score one goal, you get a quid. He he would not score goals, but if you didn’t say anything and he went on there have a great game.”</p> <p>“how does taking her from a larger setting into a smaller setting change how she feels? About being in either environment, because ultimately it’s about how that highly sensitive child then feels in the smaller environment. If the child feels less safe in the smaller environment than in the bigger environment because she then feels excluded, spotlights on them. Is there gonna be more pressure because there’s an expectation don’t forget here, from teachers and the system, that because they’ve made some special allowance that therefore it will work. So there’s a lot of expectation and pressure on that child then too.”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child doing better with gentle discipline</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>“he definitely doesn’t cope well with strict teachers and strict people. He doesn’t do well with that and I think that he’s he’s got this lack of respect for people that just expect respect. He’s like, no, they haven’t earned that. That is where with him the relationship is the biggest thing with him. The second they get that relationship... he’ll open up.”</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p>

<p>Merged into code, 'Experience of overwhelm meaning child requires access to quieter, more relaxed educational environments to promote achievement and wellbeing' (Theme 3)</p>		
<p>Child has a very busy mind</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Experience of overwhelm meaning child requires access to quieter, more relaxed educational environments to promote achievement and wellbeing' (Theme 3)</p>	<p>"her mind, is very busy and all the time... it must be exhausting for her brain to just be on the go so much"</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p>
<p>Child being highly affected by a lack of energy and needing time to recover</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>"as kids get older, people expect you to have certain ways of reacting to things you know, and she just doesn't always do that. And it can be quite difficult, especially if she's like tired or hungry."</p> <p>"I mean, she was happy at nursery... It wasn't like she was desperately unhappy or anything. It was just more like you could tell when she'd been like very busy and had had enough, and she wasn't the kind of kid, you know, some of my friends would be like, oh, after nursery we're going out to dinner and then we're going on a walk or whatever. She she can't do that she needs, she still does, we can't, like, go for the whole day."</p>	<p>Participant 8a</p>

<p>Merged into code, 'Experience of overwhelm meaning child needs additional time to recharge and recover throughout the school day' (Theme 3)</p>		
<p>Valuing access to breaks when feeling overwhelmed</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Experience of overwhelm meaning child needs additional time to recharge and recover throughout the school day' (Theme 3)</p>	<p>"that was when I talked about a growing and thriving orchid, how to how to make them thrive. And that was aimed at the school as well, because it's like, you know, giving them breaks when it becomes too much and that's what they do, they do that with [friends 10-year-old child, who is highly sensitive] to an extent."</p> <p>"[child] actually wangled it herself, that she sits with a little girl who's got ADHD? No, she's, she's autistic. Her friend [name]'s autistic and she's wrangling it to she's [child]'s partner in class, so when [child] gets a break, [child] gets a break."</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p>
<p>Value in child being able to engage in more specific classroom activities to reduce overthinking</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Experience of overwhelm</p>	<p>"And we did a topic last week. He had to talk to the class and choose anything you wanted. So, it was quite broad and, he, I know he struggles with that because he's thinking not only of what he's choosing, what everybody else will think about it. Is it the right thing? Am I doing something wrong, and, you know, what the reaction of the teacher will be, what the reaction of the children will be. So, he's, he's, he's not just thinking, oh yeah, I like that, I'll do that, whatever."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>

<p>meaning child needs additional processing time during class-based activities' (Theme 3)</p>		
<p>Value in child being able to focus on one task at a time</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Experience of overwhelm meaning child needs additional processing time during class-based activities' (Theme 3)</p>	<p>"he's never really busy. I think he can only really concentrate on one thing at a time. It's one thing at a time"</p> <p>"There's one thing going on in the brain."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>
<p>Child experiencing difficulty contributing in whole-class activities</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Experience of overwhelm leading to preference for smaller, quieter learning-based activities (i.e., individual or pair work as opposed to large group work)' (Theme 3)</p>	<p>"I remember myself. You know, you want to answer, because you want that recognition that you, that you got the right answer, you know and there's no other way of doing that. You know you're right answering in your head, but you're too nervous to say, you know, to to say it."</p> <p>"Well, a report, her recent report from teachers was, you know, [child] is a delight in class. You know the only kind of could do better was kind of maybe that she could contribute a little more in class, but you know she's hard working and polite, follows instructions in lessons, you know she does everything."</p> <p>"[the perfect environment], the classroom probably a single, you know, she would just be on her own. Or maybe with one or two people that she liked and that she knew that they were quiet people and they would get on with their work... she would work in the library."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p>

	<p>“we even tried where she’s been in the kind of the teachers cupboard in between two classrooms and that kind of worked. But then another teacher came in and said, what are you doing in there? Who didn’t know anything about [child] and, you know, that was, you know, that’s not going to work”</p>	
<p>Value in child having consistent boundaries, rules, and routines imposed by all staff to feel safe and secure</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, ‘Experience of overwhelm meaning child prefers structured rules and routines throughout the school day’ (Theme 3)</p>	<p>“she finds it quite difficult to not have that lesson go through, not have things followed you know.”</p>	Participant 3a
<p>Value in child feeling safe in secure attachments</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, ‘Nurturing relationships with key adults support wellbeing and emotion regulation’ (Theme 1 & 2)</p>	<p>“A small teaching environment [would be ideal], where the teachers’ main goal is the children feeling safe.”</p> <p>“how does taking her from a larger setting into a smaller setting change how she feels? About being in either environment, because ultimately it’s about how that highly sensitive child then feels in the smaller environment. If the child feels less safe in the smaller environment than in the bigger environment because she then feels excluded, spotlights on them. Is there gonna be more pressure because there’s an expectation don’t forget here, from teachers and the system, that because they’ve made some special allowance that therefore it will work. So there’s a lot of expectation and pressure on that child then too.”</p>	Participant 7a
<p>Child feels different to peers</p>	<p>“I think [school suggesting to explore the ND pathway for ASD] it’s made him question certain things about why he’s different to other children, a little bit more.”</p>	Participant 5a

Reason not allocated in

RTA

Merged into code, 'Child doesn't fit into the boxes set out by school' (Theme 4)

"this is another thing... we made the decision not to tell the school that there were any sensitivities with them... I don't know whether it was a good thing or a bad thing, but we just didn't want them to be labelled as anything. We just see them as being different to maybe main, you know, the vast majority of children, I mean, all children are different and wonderful, but we didn't want them to be labelled with anything. So of course school were unaware that we knew that she chews. We know what their little idiosyncrasies are... the last few months, they've been reaching out to us and saying, well, you know, this behaviour isn't quite right. Blah blah, which is why I think they're going for the autism diagnosis. But I don't know... I don't think, I don't, I don't think so... I think the children have always known that they were different because they are so clever... I don't know how you describe them really, just that they are different and I think Junior school it was easier for them to just get on and the other kids just accepted them for who they are"

"I didn't hear about the term highly sensitive children until the children were what at school 5 or 6. And it changed my perception of how I dealt with my children... I discovered and by another parent at school who had a child who she'd obviously researched and she'd found highly sensitive. And the Facebook page actually. And as soon as I went on there and I and I read what other people were saying about their children and I, then obviously the highly sensitive child book and all the rest of it, not that I've read it, but I was just, I just everything like just slotted into place and I understand I thought that's my children. That's why my children are different from other children. It's there's nothing wrong with them. They they, it's their personality and and unfortunately with school they always want to just put children into boxes and if they don't fit in that box the there must be something wrong with them and that's wrong."

"once I realised that it wasn't that there was anything wrong with them. They were just. It was a personality trait and it's just how they are. That's their different. And we've always said different is good. You know, it's a really amazing thing. We've always, you know, we've always, you know, talked about the positives of why they are, how they are different and and that it's a really brilliant thing that they are how they are."

	<p>“You know, being with her peer group, connecting with people, being able to engage and interact with those people that she feels safe with. But, equally, because of the deep level of processing and then like that maturity level, um, her ability to, I guess understand that other people aren’t that deep and aren’t that mature is very difficult because if you are, you only ever see that as being a negative... Because in the school environment it isn’t a skill that’s embraced.”</p> <p>“they look at the perception of the body language, the eye contact, the tone of voice towards them. Then they then have a deep level of shame. About the fact. Well, how come I don’t seem to be able to do this like the others do? And then when they asked the teacher for help. Because it isn’t a learning difficulty, the teacher just tells them they’re fine and they just need to try harder.”</p> <p>“[her poor mental health presented as] self-loathing... That she needed to change who she was in order to be accepted.”</p> <p>“I think the main thing was the invalidation that she could tell that she wasn’t experiencing the classroom environment in the same way as other people were, and she couldn’t understand why... And so the only thing that’s measured is academia, and so that she would see that maybe she hadn’t read as many books as others. Or maybe her spelling test results wasn’t necessarily as good as others. But when she’d say to her teachers, I need help. Because she always tried her best. Always had a smile on her face, was lovely. She was told she was fine. And she didn’t feel that she was fine. She felt that she needed help, and she did. So they just, invalidated her.”</p>	Participant 7a
	<p>“it’s a combination of things, so on the side she’s also diagnosed with social anxiety... which I think it overlaps a lot. I think that possibly the GP, you know that’s it’s a diagnosis that they can give. They don’t give a diagnosis of highly sensitive or environmentally sensitive or anything. So so the things that gave her that diagnosis was being, you know, really stressed out in crowds or with strangers or loud noises, so she knows that she’s certainly old enough now to know that she struggles at times her friends don’t.”</p>	Participant 8a

	<p>“It was just like umm, like everyone else is doing this, and not that everyone has to be the same. But it was like everybody and then [child] over here.”</p>	
<p>Child being a minority group, expected to fit in with the majority</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, ‘Child doesn’t fit into the boxes set out by school’ (Theme 4)</p>	<p>“The teachers are all very, you know I speak to them on parents evening and they are all genuine. They, they want the best for everybody, as you know, which is great. I wouldn’t be expecting a teacher, the teacher’s not just there for one, my daughter. You know, they’ve got hundreds of pupils. And you just have to fit in. And that’s the that’s the problem.”</p> <p>“You know, you look back at it now. You know that first year teacher. That first-year teacher made such a negative impact... And as a parent, you put your child into an environment expecting that that child is going to be cared and nurtured. And I think straight away that’s where the mismatch happens. Because the teacher’s role is to teach the child to read and write and achieve a certain level by a certain target to date... that is their number one... If you were to give a EYFS teacher thirty children. And out of those thirty children, you’ve got six highly sensitive children. The time and patience and dedication and environment that you’re going to have to give those six far outweigh the energy resources you have available, and so you will give it to the other twenty-four. Because the numbers are, the actually the system works for the twenty-four.”</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Education setting not set up for personality of child</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, ‘Child doesn’t fit into the boxes set out by school’ (Theme 4)</p>	<p>“I think some activities that are in schools are quite difficult for kind of introverted, you know, if you’re an introvert as well as being highly sensitive, which lot, lots of highly sensitive people are introverts. So lots of hands up if you know performances, assemblies, parties, these sorts of things, which obviously most kinds really enjoy can be quite stressful for sensitive kids, noise, it’s really uncomfortable and very high noise levels. And one thing about the noise as well... he spent three [years] in like a hut type thing... not like a proper classroom... a lot of the noise levels are worse in there I think than a classroom because the ceiling is quite low, and obviously it’s quite small as well. So when you’ve got like 30 kids or whatever in that sort of space quite, quite noisy.”</p> <p>“having kind of the empathy and the sort of friendly and being quite kind and things like that, these are all good traits. And I think the problem is, though, that people seem to want, obviously people seem to prefer extroverts to people like, you know, really kind of, introverted, you know... chatty all the time... I think in our society, because you read, sometimes... like Japanese or something like</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p>

	<p>that... they value those sorts of traits. But I think in our society here, there aren't as many... so being an introvert, highly sensitivity, it's it's tricky.”</p> <p>“that’s what we, that’s what we kind of view as being how kids should be, isn’t it? They should be really loud.”</p> <p>“Not a lot [could be done to improve school for my daughter]. I think the whole school system’s not geared up for children like her... It needs a complete overhaul of the school system... It’s almost like we wanna get every child to the same point. Which means those who are at the top of end the scale, get held back, and those who are at the bottom end of the scale get dragged to a point that is potentially uncomfortable, it’s almost like we want everybody to be the same, where in reality we’re all very different and the top end of the scale, we really should be pushing those people. Because they they’re the ones who. They’re the ones who are really going to set the country going forward.”</p> <p>“I didn’t hear about the term highly sensitive children until the children were what at school 5 or 6. And it changed my perception of how I dealt with my children... I discovered and by another parent at school who had a child who she’d obviously researched and she’d found highly sensitive. And the Facebook page actually. And as soon as I went on there and I and I read what other people were saying about their children and I, then obviously the highly sensitive child book and all the rest of it, not that I’ve read it, but I was just, I just everything like just slotted into place and I understand I thought that’s my children. That’s why my children are different from other children. It’s there’s nothing wrong with them. They they, it’s their personality and and unfortunately with school they always want to just put children into boxes and if they don’t fit in that box the there must be something wrong with them and that’s wrong.”</p> <p>“it’s also about what your goal is, right? Like if my goal is for her to conform to everything everyone else is doing, then I’m not achieving that because she isn’t. But if my goal is for her to be like happy, and, you know, I think she’s very likely to, like, move out to a farm in the countryside or, you know, just do something really odd, go work with llamas or something. She likes animals a lot. But you know, not like go to uni, get a job, go work in an office.”</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>
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<p>Sensitive personality types are not valued in schools</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child doesn't fit into the boxes set out by school' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"in a class of thirty children, you have more immediate obvious needs. You already have a system that intervenes with those. So if you have boys, for example, who are misbehaving. Shouting. Throwing physically... it already has an approach... so, you are a highly sensitive child or deeply sensitive child.... experiencing the class differently. There isn't a pathway. That is immediately obvious, and actually the interventions that they need are not considered to be appropriate in the school system because they are by nature, care, compassion, time, patience. And those are in very short supply in mainstream school."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child led to feel that there is something wrong with them</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child doesn't fit into the boxes set out by school' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"unfortunately the experience we had from a school environment was that I think you know from [child's] particular experience was that she was classed and referred to as being oversensitive... And then, well, her interpretation of that was that there was something wrong with her... she said, I wish I wasn't highly sensitive because, you know, I wish I didn't have to have all these habits"</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child disliking the school environment</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Child displaying EBSA type behaviours resulting from difficulties associated with experiencing high ES within</p>	<p>"she would not go if, if she had the choice."</p> <p>"if I was being diplomatic, I would probably say that she dislikes it intensely. I could probably more informally say that she hates it."</p> <p>"she hates school"</p> <p>"from our side, it's such a sad, it's such a sad place to be as well, because we have a totally miserable child who hates school. You know, how can you get a report now that is a glowing report?"</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>

<p>the education context' (Theme 4)</p>		
<p>Value in child voice in creating supportive environments</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Systemic change is required to support CYP who experience high ES' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"it has been proven that if you can nurture a highly sensitive child. They will flourish... [there needs to be a pathway] ... The first thing would be educating, ensuring that the teachers, the staff that those children are going to interact with are trauma informed... So that they understand what is happening to a child's nervous system from a highly sensitive... perspective... And then you would move to the child's opinion then what they would like to see?... Because you know, just asking the questions, what do you need?... Because these children. If you allow them to have their voice. Without judging, shaming, or blaming them, they actually know what they need. They know."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>There should be a pathway around how to support CYP who experience high ES at school</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Systemic change is required to support CYP who experience high ES' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"it has been proven that if you can nurture a highly sensitive child. They will flourish... [there needs to be a pathway] ... The first thing would be educating, ensuring that the teachers, the staff that those children are going to interact with are trauma informed... So that they understand what is happening to a child's nervous system from a highly sensitive... perspective... And then you would move to the child's opinion then what they would like to see?... Because you know, just asking the questions, what do you need?... Because these children. If you allow them to have their voice. Without judging, shaming, or blaming them, they actually know what they need. They know."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>School-based staff lack time to give CYP high in ES the additional nurture they require</p>	<p>"You know, you look back at it now. You know that first year teacher. That first-year teacher made such a negative impact... And as a parent, you put your child into an environment expecting that that child is going to be cared and nurtured. And I think straight away that's where the mismatch happens. Because the teacher's role is to teach the child to read and write and achieve a certain level by a</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'Systemic change is required to support CYP who experience high ES' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>certain target to date... that is their number one... If you were to give a EYFS teacher thirty children. And out of those thirty children, you've got six highly sensitive children. The time and patience and dedication and environment that you're going to have to give those six far outweigh the energy resources you have available, and so you will give it to the other twenty-four. Because the numbers are, the actually the system works for the twenty-four."</p>	
<p>Confliction around what to do for child's best interests</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'A 'fight' for an equitable education' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"[sensitivity wasn't discussed at school]. It was only when they started probing down the autistic autistic route. And the way that they did it made me very defensive. And I just said that they are highly sensitive children. Then I said, have you, you know, do you understand what that is? And you know, one of the teachers sort of said yes, but I don't, I, I'm not convinced that they do actually understand what it means... they made out that it was the children that wanted this diagnosis of autism because then once they've got the diagnosis, they they can, like, get all this support... But yeah I'm quite defensive about it, which I try not to be, because we've been very open with the children and they've both said that they want to do the the tests for it. So I'm I'm and my husband is kind of like on board for that. So I have to go along with all of that. But yeah, to me... obviously, I want my children to thrive. And you know, they are thriving at school. And, but the way school have put it is that, you know, they can have mental health issues further down the line if they don't get a diagnosis and therefore support that that comes with that... I did switch off a little bit when they were talking about it because I just thought no."</p> <p>"they are intelligent children and we made the mistake. It's not, I say, a mistake, but we we they read an awful lot and [child] has got a psychology book. So she has been reading all up on everything. So which is why, [child], I think decided that he had got autistic traits which you can look at some of his behaviours and see that they could be construed as that. And so yeah, I don't know some some of it I'm just not sure whether it's real or not."</p> <p>"I think that would help [if there was more parent-teacher communication]. I mean I do we we question all the time whether we should have told school about our children before they went, but we did cause</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p>

it said when we were filling in the forms. And there are any other things that you you perhaps need to tell us about your child? And we just thought do we say anything? And we thought well, we didn't want to because we just thought it's not a big deal, that was the the issue. It's really difficult. IT's not a big deal that they're highly sensitive and but then you want them to be treated and supported... I don't know. It's a really tricky one because it is... it's a personality trait. It's not. It's not a disorder. It's just how they are."

"So they they had, unbeknown to me, put him forward for community paediatric assessment. Even though I said no... And so I started to fill it in thinking actually maybe this is the right way to go. Maybe I am wrong. Maybe I've got this wrong. I I told them I was furious about it, but you know what? If he, if he, if you're right and I'm wrong, I'll hold my hands up. So I filled in"

"So we started to really look at doing another pastoral support programme with him, but the language in it was always very negative. And again, I started noticing the strategies were all very samey as it had been before, and I was like, these don't work because these have the opposite effect. You're putting, you're badging him again the same as the old school were as a neurodiverse child. And they don't work with him. They they some of these messages just explode him further, you know. And I started to realise the reward schemes didn't work. He was very, very smart and very, very intuitive. And he knew how to just do the minimum to get what he needed and then he'd stop... And he knew, if he didn't get one star on Wednesday, what was the point in trying on Thursday or Friday because it was gone."

"He went back in a small class size because I basically begged them to let him back into some sort of routine."

"after we had the the demolished class incident, I literally was beside myself because it's just I didn't know what to do. So I rang the community Paediatrics and said I know it's school holidays but this is an emergency I need to come and see you. I think there's something seriously wrong with my child... I don't know what's going on."

Participant 6a

“we did a telephone consultation and she said, you’re right he doesn’t have ADHD and I’m comfortable to say it’s no autism. She said your son is highly, highly anxious... And I said now that I’ve ruled all of that out I said what the hell am I gonna do because this can’t continue. I’m a bag of nerves. I’m feeding it into my child... I’m constantly looking at things that I should be doing, haven’t done, either criticising, under valuing something, self-doubt, self-belief, overemotional, over conscientious. Just like nothing’s in the middle. For me it’s one way or the other and I started to realise that’s how my son was. And yeah, the eating’s got worse. He’s very picky about textures. He’s very picky about things, can’t have stuff touching. Now if I put that down in this autism assessment two years before they’d probably have put him down as autistic. But it’s not.”

“This is what I don’t agree with muddying the waters in some respects. Yes, clinical diagnosis often carries mental health challenges as well... But you’ve gotta respect mental health issues as an equal in my mind, and that isn’t what the school do... I’ve diagnosed my son without any help from any of you. I’ve written to you, I’ve come in, I’ve given you presentations on high-sensitivity... I’ve given you all of this help and support because it’s my son’s mental health that is the problem here... I said, so you are literally lumping him in with all the other children that have got behavioural problems? I said I’m not having it.”

“I think more from my perspective, the EHCP was playing the game really for him to go to secondary school and be on a radar of somebody... I hate that I’ve had to do that because you know, and I joked to my friend the other day, if I’d have just signed that form, you know, I know exactly how to fill that out and get him diagnosed with ADHD, ODD, autism, the lot. I could probably pack in work with a carer’s allowance, I could probably sit there and he would get full on support through through school for the next five or six years. I can fill that form in to the letter of how it needs to be done. But I would be failing my kid. And why would I do that? And that’s where I said to school. You are failing my child by not understanding him... But the worst thing is you panic as a parent, when things get bad, and you have no understanding, no one there understands it, when things get bad, you doubt yourself and go, actually, what if I’ve missed? What if it is ADHD? What if he has got it? What if he does need drugs? What if he does? What? What if?... And you go through this massive pang of guilt and

	<p>stress, and bear in mind I'm obviously highly sensitive myself I literally went through so much guilt and overthinking and I still do to this day"</p> <p>"I didn't [ask for any support] at the time because I was in a trauma response myself because of the depth of [child's] mental health deterioration... the extent to which she was dismissed as being fine by everybody. And that she would just somehow, miraculously, I don't know, grow out of this or grow into this or, you know, there was nothing. There was no compassion. There was no understanding. It was really a very isolating time for all of us."</p> <p>"Definitely awareness is massive because if not, we run the risk. Well, it's already happening of parents getting desperate to fit their kids into a system that isn't meeting their needs, and if they don't fit the pressure is on the parent to make them fit because there aren't alternative provisions. And then it feeds into the fear that, well, what if my child can't go to school? How can I work if my child's not at school?... And then. There's extra worries... And and and and all of that is felt by the deeply sensitive child."</p>	Participant 7a
<p>Parent experiencing uncertainty and negative emotions around child's education provision</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'A 'fight' for an equitable education' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"the amount of time this teacher has spent on our lovely daughter. It's not embarrassing, but she has devoted so much time, which we are completely grateful for and it's still, still not working. I'm not sure if it ever will work. I don't know"</p> <p>"please just try these skills. Please have faith in yourself."</p> <p>"with their guidance teacher and and the management, I think they couldn't do anymore. And if there was a problem with a particular class teacher, then I would have complete confidence in my guidance teacher, who would then go and speak to them. And I'm confident that something would happen from that. So I have got confidence in the school but with the current system, I don't think there's a huge amount more... without changing the whole point. So you don't have six lessons in a day. You know, without fundamentally changing the whole system of of doing different subjects at different times of the days. I don't, I'm not sure what else because we've tried to work on on skills and you know things to solve, things to help in the current building, the current setup... even as a parent having to come to terms with, I have to accept that she won't drink anything during the day because she doesn't want</p>	Participant 2a

to go to the bathrooms because there's girls. Older girls are people, girls swearing or something in the bathroom."

"My son 10, yeah... it's been a real roller coaster with him... he's a very up and down experience [and is now home schooled]"

"he is quite capable. He's quite an able child and some of them would say that we can tell he's quite a clever child, but he just won't do the work, you know, he just seems to need prompts all the time... but he actually worked really well at home. So I thought, why not really, you know, why not just take him out for a bit?... [he's] still really following the curriculum because I don't know whether he might go back at some point... but it worked out well, so I kind of thought you know, it hadn't been something that, you know, it was really quite a difficult decision to make... I have to say I was really, you know, I never expected to do that with my kids... I was like, ohh, completely traumatised. Don't know how much I was doing the right thing, but it is working really well. It's been really good. He's really enjoying it... I think it is the right thing, but it is a massive step away from everything that you've ever known. You know it's, you know, school, you know, I didn't plan my kids to not go to school and that's it really."

"I do feel that if I had just talked about it, but it was towards the end [before he was home schooled]. I did start to think perhaps I should, but I just think they just didn't want to listen."

"I did get that feeling [that I am being judged]. Eventually, this little, you know, like, feeling, like I said to one of his teachers, you know that I think again it was a performance and you know, does he sort of, can he just sit and watch if he wants? You just have to join. And just like, well, you know, you don't want him to be, but now you're asking for him to be treated differently."

"I mean. My my husband spoke because, to be honest, I got to a point where it's just like I can't do it anymore. You know, I've just, and he's brought it to the head teacher.. we hadn't spoken to her before basically, you know, he just said that he felt that, you know, they were always saying that he needed to kind of have one to one support and this sort of thing or he wouldn't get on with his work. When

Participant 3a

	<p>he could have that at home. So I think they were a bit like, well, can't really argue with that really, because he isn't getting that school."</p> <p>"I think that would help [if there was more parent-teacher communication]. I mean I do we we question all the time whether we should have told school about our children before they went, but we did cause it said when we were filling in the forms. And there are any other things that you you perhaps need to tell us about your child? And we just thought do we say anything? And we thought well, we didn't want to because we just thought it's not a big deal, that was the the issue. It's really difficult. IT's not a big deal that they're highly sensitive and but then you want them to be treated and supported... I don't know. It's a really tricky one because it is... it's a personality trait. It's not. It's not a disorder. It's just how they are."</p>	Participant 5a
<p>Parent having a poor relationship with school staff in relation to ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'A 'fight' for an equitable education' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"[Child] plays the trumpet so that kind of loud noise. He hasn't got a problem with, he doesn't like, we got some ear defenders again at, this is a school thing because they said that [child] said he doesn't like the noise in the corridors when they change class.. he just kept leaving them at home."</p> <p>"[sensitivity wasn't discussed at school]. It was only when they started probing down the autistic autistic route. And the way that they did it made me very defensive. And I just said that they are highly sensitive children. Then I said, have you, you know, do you understand what that is? And you know, one of the teachers sort of said yes, but I don't, I, I'm not convinced that they do actually understand what it means... they made out that it was the children that wanted this diagnosis of autism because then once they've got the diagnosis, they they can, like, get all this support... But yeah I'm quite defensive about it, which I try not to be, because we've been very open with the children and they've both said that they want to do the the tests for it. So I'm I'm and my husband is kind of like on board for that. So I have to go along with all of that. But yeah, to me... obviously, I want my children to thrive. And you know, they are thriving at school. And, but the way school have put it is that, you know, they can have mental health issues further down the line if they don't get a diagnosis and therefore support that that comes with that... I did switch off a little bit when they were talking about it because I just thought no."</p>	Participant 5a

“we had an AM and PM email of what went well and what hasn’t... And I started to keep a track of a green, amber red day. So if he was, if he had no issues, he had a green AM or green PM. If he has some issues, but then he corrected himself or he responded well, he was amber and red was absolutely flat refusal didn’t get any work done. And I started to track it and out 30 days there was seven days, seven half days of red, 14 half days of neutral, and the rest were green so my point was actually out of a 30 day period, now I’ve tracked it, he actually had 15 sessions that went well and he had 30 sessions that were amber and red. So actually, amber, you could say every kid has a blip and as long as they respond well to the right tuition or the correction that’s fine. So for me, I did that to evidence back to the school, that, you’re focusing on the seven half days of red... Not on the rest, and your negativity towards him, he’s absorbing it. He’s feeling it. He hates himself. He sees the red. He doesn’t see all the other stuff. And he was very, very, I started to realise he was very, very aware of everyone’s emotions. Very, very absorbent of what was going on. Very, very, he then starts to internalise all that about himself. So he hated himself. He was a bad child. He was no good. No one likes him. No one wanted him. There was no relationship there. The one person he had a relationship with, as long as they didn’t put any rules in place, he was he liked them.”

“So they they had, unbeknown to me, put him forward for community paediatric assessment. Even though I said no... And so I started to fill it in thinking actually maybe this is the right way to go. Maybe I am wrong. Maybe I’ve got this wrong. I told them I was furious about it, but you know what? If he, if he, if you’re right and I’m wrong, I’ll hold my hands up. So I filled in”

“I was really unhappy with how they dealt with it... I said... I don’t see how I can continue having him at the school. And so I left. We left the school.”

“so then they got the educational psychologist out who came out and was doing a study on hyperactive children... So she came out and she wrote, wrote some strategies and some tools and an assessment of them. And basically when I received that and spoke to the teacher at the parents evening that year, she said, well, there is no point in following through on anything that she’s put in that report because I’ve tried. It doesn’t work.... that’s when the teacher said to me my daughter is diagnosed with ADHD and we’ve got a great community paediatric team. Why don’t I have a word

Participant 6a

	<p>with them and see if they can assess [child]. You know, rather than go through the system, why don't I see if I can pull some strings?... I said, well, I don't really think that that's right. I said let's wait and see. We've only been back at school six weeks. Let's wait and see... if we're still seeing these bad behaviours, I'll, I'll, I'll consider it. And that is what I said. But she went ahead and did it anyway... And I said to her if he had autism or ADHD or ODD then these things wouldn't necessarily help and then not help because what I understand with those neurodiversity is that it's a pattern that happens constantly... And I said it's not happening at home because by that point home was really good."</p> <p>"This is what I don't agree with muddying the waters in some respects. Yes, clinical diagnosis often carries mental health challenges as well... But you've gotta respect mental health issues as an equal in my mind, and that isn't what the school do... I've diagnosed my son without any help from any of you. I've written to you, I've come in, I've given you presentations on high-sensitivity... I've given you all of this help and support because it's my son's mental health that is the problem here... I said, so you are literally lumping him in with all the other children that have got behavioural problems? I said I'm not having it."</p>	
<p>Parent feeling pushed to breaking point and feeling there's something wrong with my child</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'A 'fight' for an equitable education' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"after we had the the demolished class incident, I literally was beside myself because it's just I didn't know what to do. So I rang the community Paediatrics and said I know it's school holidays but this is an emergency I need to come and see you. I think there's something seriously wrong with my child... I don't know what's going on."</p> <p>"we did a telephone consultation and she said, you're right he doesn't have ADHD and I'm comfortable to say it's no autism. She said your son is highly, highly anxious... And I said now that I've ruled all of that out I said what the hell am I gonna do because this can't continue. I'm a bag of nerves. I'm feeding it into my child... I'm constantly looking at things that I should be doing, haven't done, either criticising, under valuing something, self-doubt, self-belief, overemotional, over conscientious. Just like nothing's in the middle. For me it's one way or the other and I started to realise that's how my son was. And yeah, the eating's got worse. He's very picky about textures. He's very picky about things, can't have stuff touching. Now if I put that down in this autism assessment two years before they'd probably have put him down as autistic. But it's not."</p>	Participant 6a

“This is what I don't agree with muddying the waters in some respects. Yes, clinical diagnosis often carries mental health challenges as well... But you've gotta respect mental health issues as an equal in my mind, and that isn't what the school do... I've diagnosed my son without any help from any of you. I've written to you, I've come in, I've given you presentations on high-sensitivity... I've given you all of this help and support because it's my son's mental health that is the problem here... I said, so you are literally lumping him in with all the other children that have got behavioural problems? I said I'm not having it.”

“I think the the the educational psychologist.. I would say for them to have an open mind about the child before they start talking about diagnosis... I think they need to be holistic in what they're in, what they're doing. It comes from you guys. And it comes from their local authorities, because schools are teachers and they will teach them children the best they can. And when the odd one or two start rearing their head in that classroom, they have got to be, have, keep an open mind and not self-diagnosed, not diagnosed those children themselves, and pigeonhole them before they're sure, because the minute you mention those words to a parent they're either gonna stick their head in the sand and ignore it. And then that child will get no help until it's too late or they're gonna go oh yeah, that sounds good. I'm gonna go after everything, or they're gonna be, you know, like me in that, you know, if I get a headache, my first thing isn't going get paracetamol, it's I'll get a glass of water... I'd rather find another way of dealing with it before I get to that point. So for me, the HSP part of it comes in between a teacher knowing there's a problem or challenge or a difference and then having it in their toolbox to try these different things. And I think before you go down that road of it's ADHD, ODD, autism, whatever, cos parents are, I put my teachers under pressure. I did. Do you think there's anything wrong with my child? This can't carry on. What do you think's wrong with them? In your opinion, do you think this, do you think that. I did put my school under pressure... I think it's for them to say we have to keep an open mind. It could be a range of things... They went straight to diagnosis, medical diagnosis, clinical stuff without thinking – “

“I think more from my perspective, the EHCP was playing the game really for him to go to secondary school and be on a radar of somebody... I hate that I've had to do that because you know, and I joked to my friend the other day, if I'd have just signed that form, you know, I know exactly how to fill that

	<p>out and get him diagnosed with ADHD, ODD, autism, the lot. I could probably pack in work with a carer's allowance, I could probably sit there and he would get full on support through through school for the next five or six years. I can fill that form in to the letter of how it needs to be done. But I would be failing my kid. And why would I do that? And that's where I said to school. You are failing my child by not understanding him... But the worst thing is you panic as a parent, when things get bad, and you have no understanding, no one there understands it, when things get bad, you doubt yourself and go, actually, what if I've missed? What if it is ADHD? What if he has got it? What if he does need drugs? What if he does? What? What if?... And you go through this massive pang of guilt and stress, and bear in mind I'm obviously highly sensitive myself I literally went through so much guilt and overthinking and I still do to this day"</p> <p>"I didn't [ask for any support] at the time because I was in a trauma response myself because of the depth of [child's] mental health deterioration... the extent to which she was dismissed as being fine by everybody. And that she would just somehow, miraculously, I don't know, grow out of this or grow into this or, you know, there was nothing. There was no compassion. There was no understanding. It was really a very isolating time for all of us."</p>	Participant 7a
<p>Parent feeling responsible for 'teaching' school-based staff about how to relate to their child</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Merged into code, 'A 'fight' for an equitable education' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"I felt like she was against me, and she thought, you know, I was just one of those parents, you know, mollycoddling parents. I was just trying to fight for, for, for [child] to have, you know, the same as everybody else, I wanted her to be interested in understanding [child]. This is why, if you say this to him, you know, if you, you know, this is why he reacts in this way."</p> <p>"So we did see an educational psychologist. I think a couple of times. I think reception and then year two I think.... she basically, well she's an autism specialist as well... So again, [sensitivity] was never mentioned... I don't even know if I brought it up with her, sensitivity, you know, she wouldn't know about it. To be honest, I don't know."</p> <p>"if they had this awareness it would be much easier wouldn't because I would be able to go in and say, you know what he has had these sensitivities, you know these are his particular triggers this is what would really help him... If I could just be upfront with that, that would make a massive massive difference, I think"</p>	Participant 1a Participant 3a

	<p>“I think one thing that was helpful which is worth mentioning is that in one of the school years... they had kind of like an online system that they used sometimes for like comprehension and things like that. And he really enjoyed that... I read some research which is about, I think, interventions with kids who were doing some computer bits and stuff and saying that highly sensitive children really, you know, when they were getting the constant feedback, if you got this right, you’ve got this right. That was really beneficial for them in comparison to kids that weren’t. And then there’s the orchid and dandelion, which is kind of another kind of way of talking about it... But anyway, he found that really beneficial and I think also it gave him a bit more time where he was just sort of like, you know, the headphones on working on that... I think he really liked it cos he always got the feedback, but he probably enjoyed the quiet and time from it as well... [and] a bit more choice [of learning strategies].”</p> <p>“There’s probably nobody that knows her better than I do.... if anything I support other people dealing with her.”</p> <p>“I’ve diagnosed my son without any help from any of you. I’ve written to you, I’ve come in, I’ve given you presentations on high-sensitivity... I’ve given you all of this help and support because it’s my son’s mental health that is the problem here... I said, so you are literally lumping him in with all the other children that have got behavioural problems? I said I’m not having it.”</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>
<p>Child not fully seen, heard, accepted, or understood</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, ‘A ‘fight’ for an equitable education’ (Theme 4)</p>	<p>“So we did see an educational psychologist. I think a couple of times. I think reception and then year two I think.... she basically, well she’s an autism specialist as well... So again, [sensitivity] was never mentioned... I don’t even know if I brought it up with her, sensitivity, you know, she wouldn’t know about it. To be honest, I don’t know.”</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p>
<p>Value in school being open and honest if they</p>	<p>“when we complained after we took [child] out because lots of information has come out since about the behaviours at school and how she was treated. One of the particular ones I mentioned in there</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>

<p>feel they cannot meet child's needs</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'A 'fight' for an equitable education' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>was they have a duty of care that when they knew that that environment was not meeting [child's] needs, they should have said that... we don't know exactly what's going on. We haven't experienced this before. We aren't able to make any more accommodations. We really think maybe you should look for a different environment."</p>	
<p>Parent receiving a desirable response when sharing information around their child's high ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'A 'fight' for an equitable education' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"I think it was just nice to have that person in school, you know, you as a parent going into school and feeling that I'm not gonna be judged as like, one of those, you know mollycoddling parents, because I feel like [child] needs extra support in certain things without having an ADHD or autism diagnosis. Just his personality. Because I feel as a parent that he his needs aren't being met because his personality doesn't fit the, you know, the the the norm or whatever... I can say that without being judged or [child] feeling that ohh I'm different, because it's all about fitting in, isn't it? It's all about not sticking out like a sore thumb."</p>	Participant 1a
<p>Child and/or parent/carer experiencing a teacher not being understanding of ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'A 'Consideration of, or action upon, change in education provision in relation to the</p>	<p>"he had a lot of difficulty actually because she didn't seem to get it... she didn't understand... him"</p> <p>"This particular teacher said that he's emotionally immature and, I know, if anything he is very emotionally mature. He's aware of his own emotions and knowing everybody else's emotions, and that's where it all gets tangled up in his head to the point where you get angry or frustrated because you've got so much going on at the same time"</p> <p>"I got very, very frustrated with her, because she, she made it, she made his life very, very difficult and, like I said, she wasn't the type of teacher, I didn't feel that she was in the job, that she was basically in the job because it was a job, it didn't feel like she got children's differences, you know, personality."</p>	Participant 1a

experience of high ES
within education contexts'
(Theme 4)

"I wanted her to to be interested in understanding [child]. This is why, if you say this to him, you know, if you, you know, this is why he reacts in this way."

"I felt there was very little understanding perhaps from [teacher]"

"there was no recognition of sensitivity. No terminology around it in school."

"so it's all very welcome, you know, all these, you know, solutions, and that's as a parent as a teacher, everybody's constantly, or as an Ed Psych, is like let's find a solution possible solution to that. But if the person in question is either not able or willing, able is the world that comes, it's not can't, well, actually the word is can't. It's not won't they? They genuinely they can't do it. Then you can have all these strategies in the world, but they're not gonna. They're not gonna help... She was getting distressed by the teacher, was just shouting. There was no way she would physically be able to stand up and walk to the teacher's desk or catch their eye and then leave the room? She just, you know, cause we've talked about this, so, so, that is a strategy to then go outside and do some, you know, some deep breathing, some grounding... It's just not working. It will not work. You know."

"[the perfect environment], the classroom probably a single, you know, she would just be on her own. Or maybe with one or two people that she liked and that she knew that they were quiet people and they would get on with their work... she would work in the library, but even you go to the school library now and a library is not, not not a very quiet place, you know, in times gone by you were pretty scared to talk in the library and you wouldn't dare make a noise. But they are different places now. I think it is the society we are in... With the curriculum, and people having, you know students having much more of a say with how their learning takes place. That just makes more noise, and if you are not an extrovert or if you're noise sensitive, it's just it's just too much."

"we even tried where she's been in the kind of the teachers cupboard in between two classrooms and that kind of worked. But then another teacher came in and said, what are you doing in there? Who didn't know anything about [child] and, you know, that was, you know, that's not going to work"

Participant 2a

"I think the secondary schools... are still very traditional in their viewpoint. I've told you to do something, sit down and if you don't do it, I'm shouting at you."

"he's tended to keep himself to himself quite a lot. And again, that was quite an issue for the school. So he did have, you know, he did have, like, a sort of a couple of friends over the years. It's quite a big school as well. So the classes change, like, every year, basically... he's really quite sociable at home. But I think they would really feel like there's something not quite right with him. I mean, I should mention straight away where they thought autism. Autism is the big thing that they're, we're gonna, you know, they're constantly kind of, I mean, my feeling is there isn't really any big understanding about sensitivity. I can't even say that I've discussed it with them because I think it would just be like, do you know what, she's just a parent in denial. She just doesn't want to accept that about her child... [sensitivity is] never mentioned... people have said on plenty of occasions things like, well, you know, the spectrum is huge. So it's like, yeah... I don't feel that it is [autism] because I mean, obviously, you now, I've had him since being a baby and he's always been very sociable at home, is always that way with us, you know. He's always talking to us. He's not really withdrawn in the same way, but yeah."

"I do feel that if I had just talked about it, but it was towards the end [before he was home schooled]. I did start to think perhaps I should, but I just think they just didn't want to listen."

"he's really is a happy kid and he was always happy enough to go to school, to be honest. It was never particularly happy there though, it was more that they that it was a problem for them. I think more so than him."

"[school] don't recognise it, I don't know, I actually went in to say I made a special PowerPoint, I went an they've got a lady who's like their, I don't know, she's almost... she doesn't, she's not, she's not, doesn't teach a class, she's I don't know what the title is but she's kind of overall on the scenes and stuff and she's got various psychology courses that she's been on, I don't know to what extent she's qualified, and I went and spent an hour with her, fairly early on in the project I was doing on highly

Participant 3a

Participant 4a

sensitive children so I could do a bit of research, find out what she knew, and she was quite defensive... and was very much I know what I'm doing. This is the technique I use... I broke it down enough so she she'd accept that children, some children are sensitive, but she only really acknowledged the ones who are what I call the struggling orchids. So the ones who.. don't thrive, she didn't acknowledge, actually, that the ones who are thriving. OK. It's like [child]. They also need extra support."

"Yeah, they're not recognising it because they're, I think because they're, they're choosing not to. It's almost an arrogance that, how can a parent of our school know more than we do?... The think they know it all."

"No [there is nobody at school my daughter can talk to about high-sensitivity]. She's got, there's one particular one teacher that she had in Year Two, Year Three. And now she's now got one in Year Five. Who she is a little bit closer to, but she tends to just keep her head down in school"

"I think they've just picked up on various things that he said. I don't know everything that's been discussed because it was just between him and the teacher and but yeah, so that's that's why they wanted to just see if they could get them both [assessed for ASD], I think it is how they've put it to me because I'm quite, I'm not anti them being labelled autistic as such but I just don't think that they are, and I don't think this school actually understands what a highly sensitive child is."

"this is another thing... we made the decision not to tell the school that there were any sensitivities with them... I don't know whether it was a good thing or a bad thing, but we just didn't want them to be labelled as anything. We just see them as being different to maybe main, you know, the vast majority of children, I mean, all children are different and wonderful, but we didn't want them to be labelled with anything. So of course school were unaware that we knew that she chews. We know what their little idiosyncrasies are... the last few months, they've been reaching out to us and saying, well, you know, this behaviour isn't quite right. Blah blah, which is why I think they're going for the autism diagnosis. But I don't know... I don't think, I don't, I don't think so... I think the children have always known that they were different because they are so clever... I don't know how you describe

Participant 5a

them really, just that they are different and I think Junior school it was easier for them to just get on and the other kids just accepted them for who they are”

“[sensitivity wasn’t discussed at school]. It was only when they started probing down the autistic route. And the way that they did it made me very defensive. And I just said that they are highly sensitive children. Then I said, have you, you know, do you understand what that is? And you know, one of the teachers sort of said yes, but I don’t, I, I’m not convinced that they do actually understand what it means... they made out that it was the children that wanted this diagnosis of autism because then once they’ve got the diagnosis, they they can, like, get all this support... But yeah I’m quite defensive about it, which I try not to be, because we’ve been very open with the children and they’ve both said that they want to do the the tests for it. So I’m I’m and my husband is kind of like on board for that. So I have to go along with all of that. But yeah, to me... obviously, I want my children to thrive. And you know, they are thriving at school. And, but the way school have put it is that, you know, they can have mental health issues further down the line if they don’t get a diagnosis and therefore support that that comes with that... I did switch off a little bit when they were talking about it because I just thought no.”

“I think it’s just autism or ADHD [that school understands]”

“I suppose the teachers are trying to do their best... But I just think because they don’t understand what they’re dealing with... they’re looking at it from an autistic point of view. So the support that the children are getting are like the ear defenders and the chewy thing... so that was supportive in a way. And although, how I saw it was well, you need to be looking at why she’s chewing it, because it might be like because she’s regulating something. There’s, she’s overwhelmed. It could be she’s just bored. And if she’s just bored at school, then you need to do something about it. That was my. But that’s not how they viewed it. They just viewed it or she’s chewing it. So yeah, we’ll just take it away.”

“I didn’t hear about the term highly sensitive children until the children were what at school 5 or 6. And it changed my perception of how I dealt with my children... I discovered and by another parent at school who had a child who she’d obviously researched and she’d found highly sensitive. And the

Facebook page actually. And as soon as I went on there and I and I read what other people were saying about their children and I, then obviously the highly sensitive child book and all the rest of it, not that I've read it, but I was just, I just everything like just slotted into place and I understand I thought that's my children. That's why my children are different from other children. It's there's nothing wrong with them. They they, it's their personality and and unfortunately with school they always want to just put children into boxes and if they don't fit in that box the there must be something wrong with them and that's wrong."

"ending year four and starting year five his behaviour was erratic to say the least. He would get really angry about something and and flip out, his friendships got quite strained. He was really oversensitive to everything. Very, very negative when he was coming home about everything. I was getting cross... It was just really difficult time... it was more about the school just not getting it right for him."

"during COVID Paediatrics rang me to say sorry, we've got your application. Sorry it's taking us so long... I said don't worry about it. We've moved schools. Can we just leave it for six months and you know, delay the referral and just see if it's just the school? So they allowed me to delay it for six months."

"[High-sensitivity] it's not on their radar because when you use those words they they they don't, we had, we went in February to explain about high-sensitivity and they're not, if it doesn't have any funding attached to it, they're not interested"

"You can't have him working in the hallway because he's had an explosion while you're watching a movie about something that's upset him or some emotional circuit... And this this is something a lot of the schools touched on curriculum wise, and I know it comes from above, so it's not their fault, but they're touching on so many little things that they think they're doing the right thing, but it doesn't account for that percentage of children that isn't the norm."

"the school feel he needs a permanent one to one. Now [child] doesn't need a permanent one to one. He needs somebody that gets him in that class that can help with manage his emotions. He is not

Participant 6a

thick. He has a reading age of 12, 13 years old... what they miss is that the highly sensitive children are very intelligent. They just can't, sometimes they just can't, they're not in the right environment... So whether it's because it's too noisy... it was the environment... in the classroom environment where he's getting more frustrated because he's doubting himself or he's overthinking something, it's building up not having that person there that can see that escalation in his demeanour, the sweat, you know, the agitation... And that's where they need someone. Not a teacher... They put a teacher in as his teaching assistant, and I'm supposed to be grateful for that. I'm like, that's the worst most you could've ever done...he doesn't want it because he sees it as, you know, he's thick, he's stupid... he's very unhappy with his current TA, this woman in the morning. She's a very, very old-fashioned teacher... So she can help him academically. And he says that she speaks to him thick. He speaks, she she treats him like he's stupid... she doesn't get me. She didn't get me. I'm like, I know she doesn't get you, but she's not there to get you. She isn't there as a SMH support. She isn't there as a mental health support person. Umm. And I think that is where schools are missing the trick massively in that they think everyone that needs support in the classroom has got a learning difficulty."

"This is what I don't agree with muddying the waters in some respects. Yes, clinical diagnosis often carries mental health challenges as well... But you've gotta respect mental health issues as an equal in my mind, and that isn't what the school do... I've diagnosed my son without any help from any of you. I've written to you, I've come in, I've given you presentations on high-sensitivity... I've given you all of this help and support because it's my son's mental health that is the problem here... I said, so you are literally lumping him in with all the other children that have got behavioural problems? I said I'm not having it."

"unfortunately the experience we had from a school environment was that I think you know from [child's] particular experience was that she was classed and referred to as being oversensitive... And then, well, her interpretation of that was that there was something wrong with her... she said, I wish I wasn't highly sensitive because, you know, I wish I didn't have to have all these habits"

"I didn't [ask for any support] at the time because I was in a trauma response myself because of the depth of [child's] mental health deterioration... the extent to which she was dismissed as being fine

Participant 7a

by everybody. And that she would just somehow, miraculously, I don't know, grow out of this or grow into this or, you know, there was nothing. There was no compassion. There was no understanding. It was really a very isolating time for all of us."

"I think the main thing was the invalidation that she could tell that she wasn't experiencing the classroom environment in the same way as other people were, and she couldn't understand why... And so the only thing that's measured is academia, and so that she would see that maybe she hadn't read as many books as others. Or maybe her spelling test results wasn't necessarily as good as others. But when she'd say to her teachers, I need help. Because she always tried her best. Always had a smile on her face, was lovely. She was told she was fine. And she didn't feel that she was fine. She felt that she needed help, and she did. So they just, invalidated her."

"You know, you look back at it now. You know that first year teacher. That first-year teacher made such a negative impact... And as a parent, you put your child into an environment expecting that that child is going to be cared and nurtured. And I think straight away that's where the mismatch happens. Because the teacher's role is to teach the child to read and write and achieve a certain level by a certain target to date... that is their number one... If you were to give a EYFS teacher thirty children. And out of those thirty children, you've got six highly sensitive children. The time and patience and dedication and environment that you're going to have to give those six far outweigh the energy resources you have available, and so you will give it to the other twenty-four. Because the numbers are, the actually the system works for the twenty-four."

"I actually was relieved to find a term... it was nice to see that there was like kind of a group of people who find tags in clothing absolutely impossible. And, you know, just the the overwhelming feeling sometimes of just the world being very bright or loud or exhausting. So it was a relief. I came across the Facebook group actually first when I was just Googling around so it's not a term that any doctor has used with me or or a teacher. The teachers have mostly said things like specific challenges and social environments or things like that. So no it's not a term that's regularly used [at school]. It's more I know of it and have read the book and things."

Participant 8a

	<p>“they talked about things like, umm, selective mutism as well, which I think possible could have been a, you know, I didn’t know because, you know, they they go off to school and you don’t actually know what happens in there. But it was like... they have like a student teacher meeting and said like [child] has started talking now. And I was like, I didn’t know she wasn’t talking... Also I think because my kids go to a city school... it’s 30 kids in a class and it’s a lot. And it’s statistically speaking, a lot of challenged kids, challenging situations. There’s a lot of refugee families. There’s a lot of children on free school meals, that sort of thing. So I think they have a lot of, like, very loud problems. So an obedient child who sits silently in a corner, like, they’re gonna kind of enjoy that.”</p>	
<p>Child unsupported at school as their differences are not understood</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, ‘Clinical, diagnosis-driven language is required for educational contexts to take heed of phenomena such as high ES’ (Theme 4)</p>	<p>“they look at the perception of the body language, the eye contact, the tone of voice towards them. Then they then have a deep level of shame. About the fact. Well, how come I don’t seem to be able to do this like the others do? And then when they asked the teacher for help. Because it isn’t a learning difficulty, the teacher just tells them they’re fine and they just need to try harder.”</p> <p>“I think the main thing was the invalidation that she could tell that she wasn’t experiencing the classroom environment in the same way as other people were, and she couldn’t understand why... But when she’d say to her teachers, I need help. Because she always tried her best. Always had a smile on her face, was lovely. She was told she was fine. And she didn’t feel that she was fine. She felt that she needed help, and she did. So they just, invalidated her.”</p>	Participant 7a
<p>Schools and professionals need to remain open minded around ES being a potential explanation for child’s experience</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>“I think teachers can just maybe teach and stay in their lane and get a professional then like yourselves who’s got a breadth of understanding that can say, actually, it could be many of these different things, try these strategies, before we start going down the diagnosis route... Because a lot of these are borderline. You know, if you look up ADHD, and trauma, a lot of the symptoms are the same. In a child. And I hate to think, you know, mix that with HSP as well, how many children have been diagnosed with ADHD and currently drugged up to the eyeballs.”</p> <p>“I think the the the educational psychologist.. I would say for them to have an open mind about the child before they start talking about diagnosis... I think they need to be holistic in what they’re in, what</p>	Participant 6a

<p>Merged into code, 'Without there being a diagnostic lens to the experience of high ES, there is poor understanding (i.e., high ES is "lumped in" with other neurodiversities)' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>they're doing. It comes from you guys. And it comes from their local authorities, because schools are teachers and they will teach them children the best they can. And when the odd one or two start rearing their head in that classroom, they have got to be, have, keep an open mind and not self-diagnosed, not diagnosed those children themselves, and pigeonhole them before they're sure, because the minute you mention those words to a parent they're either gonna stick their head in the sand and ignore it. And then that child will get no help until it's too late or they're gonna go oh yeah, that sounds good. I'm gonna go after everything, or they're gonna be, you know, like me in that, you know, if I get a headache, my first thing isn't going to get paracetamol, it's I'll get a glass of water... I'd rather find another way of dealing with it before I get to that point. So for me, the HSP part of it comes in between a teacher knowing there's a problem or challenge or a difference and then having it in their toolbox to try these different things. And I think before you go down that road of it's ADHD, ODD, autism, whatever, cos parents are, I put my teachers under pressure. I did. Do you think there's anything wrong with my child? This can't carry on. What do you think's wrong with them? In your opinion, do you think this, do you think that. I did put my school under pressure... I think it's for them to say we have to keep an open mind. It could be a range of things... They went straight to diagnosis, medical diagnosis, clinical stuff without thinking – “</p>	
<p>Child 'lumped' into one neurodiverse group</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'Without there being a diagnostic lens to the experience of high ES, there is poor understanding (i.e., high ES is "lumped in" with other neurodiversities)' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>“So [child] went to Lego Therapy for a bit in Year Five. He hated it because he was put in with the children with autism.”</p> <p>“This is what I don't agree with muddying the waters in some respects. Yes, clinical diagnosis often carries mental health challenges as well... But you've gotta respect mental health issues as an equal in my mind, and that isn't what the school do... I've diagnosed my son without any help from any of you. I've written to you, I've come in, I've given you presentations on high-sensitivity... I've given you all of this help and support because it's my son's mental health that is the problem here... I said, so you are literally lumping him in with all the other children that have got behavioural problems? I said I'm not having it.”</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p>
<p>Dismissal around experience of high ES</p>	<p>“I did start to think perhaps I should [speak up more about my child being highly sensitive], but I just thought I just think they just didn't want to listen.”</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p>

<p>Merged into code, 'Without there being a diagnostic lens to the experience of high ES, there is poor understanding (i.e., high ES is "lumped in" with other neurodiversities)' (Theme 4)</p>		
<p>The importance of parent-teacher communication around ES (and feeling comfortable to share around this)</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Merged into code, 'The uncomfortableness of advocating for your child when there is no diagnostic lens to fall back on' (Theme 4)</p>	<p>"I think that would help [if there was more parent-teacher communication]. I mean I do we we question all the time whether we should have told school about our children before they went, but we did cause it said when we were filling in the forms. And there are any other things that you you perhaps need to tell us about your child? And we just thought do we say anything? And we thought well, we didn't want to because we just thought it's not a big deal, that was the the issue. It's really difficult. IT's not a big deal that they're highly sensitive and but then you want them to be treated and supported... I don't know. It's a really tricky one because it is... it's a personality trait. It's not. It's not a disorder. It's just how they are."</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p>
<p>Secondary schools are more understanding and accepting of ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for</p>	<p>"if I did raise it... I think with them, they seem they seem generally more understanding of issues that people have, they have different funding levels or something, they seem to be able to put more measures in place. They seem to, you know, lots of our friends have got various different diagnoses and these things in place which is really good... They do seem quite, you know, in comparison to primary school... they have a SENCo that's a full-time job. They have another person who does that as well and they've got two people working full time, whereas in the school also you the primary school, it's a teacher who's doing full time teaching job... So they do seem more geared up for it."</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p>

<p>compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Child requiring additional encouragement to attend extra-curricular activities</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"We're trying to get [him] to, you know, to, to, to do things after school... go to squash and like yesterday, he didn't want to go, you know, he gets quite stubborn if he doesn't want to do something. But I've said that, you know, just one thing, that's all it is. One thing out of school to, to have an interest. And he does enjoy playing squash. It's just the the getting there, you know, having to get up off the sofa and go and get ready and go."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>
<p>Child experiencing difficulties with the school food</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"[child] is a nightmare with food. So again, she's told school that she doesn't like their their pasta. The texture isn't the same as at home, so she doesn't like it. That kind of thing.</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p>
<p>Child can be an introvert or an extrovert</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>"she's quite quiet at school, but she'll speak up in class, for example. She knows the answer and she always does. She'll speak up and she's quite loud when we're out and about and she'll talk to anybody, but she's still quite, I wouldn't say she's massively extroverted."</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p>

<p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"his latest teacher said to me, you know, he's just kind of by himself sort of thing and I think well, I think he needs that down time though... I think he needs to not be around them. So I tried to put it in terms of introversion, we, you know, introvert, needs to not be around people all the time."</p> <p>"both children are very extrovert... They don't shy away. [child] in particular is extroverted, yeah."</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p>
<p>Child processes auditory information deeply</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"You might find with [child], just to mention quickly and another one of her little traits is that if you ask her a question, she might take a long time to answer it. But it's not because she's ignoring you. It's just because she's processing what you've said and you'll probably get a really good answer. But sometimes you might have to wait for it."</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p>
<p>Education setting focuses on child's negative behaviours</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"we had an AM and PM email of what went well and what hasn't... And I started to keep a track of a green, amber red day. So if he was, if he had no issues, he had a green AM or green PM. If he has some issues, but then he corrected himself or he responded well, he was amber and red was absolutely flat refusal didn't get any work done. And I started to track it and out 30 days there was seven days, seven half days of red, 14 half days of neutral, and the rest were green so my point was actually out of a 30 day period, now I've tracked it, he actually had 15 sessions that went well and he had 30 sessions that were amber and red. So actually, amber, you could say every kid has a blip and as long as they respond well to the right tuition or the correction that's fine. So for me, I did that to evidence back to the school, that, you're focusing on the seven half days of red... Not on the rest, and your negativity towards him, he's absorbing it. He's feeling it. He hates himself. He sees the red. He doesn't see all the other stuff. And he was very, very, I started to realise he was very, very aware of everyone's emotions. Very, very absorbent of what was going on. Very, very, he then starts to internalise all that about himself. So he hated himself. He was a bad child. He was no good. No one likes him. No one wanted him. There was no relationship there. The one</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p>

	<p>person he had a relationship with, as long as they didn't put any rules in place, he was he liked them."</p>	
<p>Negative emotions (e.g., overwhelm, shame) leading to child becoming defiant to rules and/or displaying negative behaviours at school</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"we had an AM and PM email of what went well and what hasn't... And I started to keep a track of a green, amber red day. So if he was, if he had no issues, he had a green AM or green PM. If he has some issues, but then he corrected himself or he responded well, he was amber and red was absolutely flat refusal didn't get any work done. And I started to track it and out 30 days there was seven days, seven half days of red, 14 half days of neutral, and the rest were green so my point was actually out of a 30-day period, now I've tracked it, he actually had 15 sessions that went well and he had 30 sessions that were amber and red. So actually, amber, you could say every kid has a blip and as long as they respond well to the right tuition or the correction that's fine. So for me, I did that to evidence back to the school, that, you're focusing on the seven half days of red... Not on the rest, and your negativity towards him, he's absorbing it. He's feeling it. He hates himself. He sees the red. He doesn't see all the other stuff. And he was very, very, I started to realise he was very, very aware of everyone's emotions. Very, very absorbent of what was going on. Very, very, he then starts to internalise all that about himself. So he hated himself. He was a bad child. He was no good. No one likes him. No one wanted him. There was no relationship there. The one person he had a relationship with, as long as they didn't put any rules in place, he was he liked them."</p> <p>"ending year four and starting year five his behaviour was erratic to say the least. He would get really angry about something and and flip out, his friendships got quite strained. He was really oversensitive to everything. Very, very negative when he was coming home about everything. I was getting cross... It was just really difficult time... it was more about the school just not getting it right for him."</p> <p>"So we started to really look at doing another pastoral support programme with him, but the language in it was always very negative. And again, I started noticing the strategies were all very samey as it had been before, and I was like, these don't work because these have the opposite effect. You're putting, you're badging him again the same as the old school were as a neurodiverse child. And they don't work with him. They they some of these messages just explode him further,</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p>

	<p>you know. And I started to realise the reward schemes didn't work. He was very, very smart and very, very intuitive. And he knew how to just do the minimum to get what he needed and then he'd stop... And he knew, if he didn't get one star on Wednesday, what was the point in trying on Thursday or Friday because it was gone."</p> <p>"So in the end of year give, his his behaviour exploded badly the last couple of weeks he demolished the classroom. He was carried out by three teachers. He kicked the teacher and it was like he had just gone pop. It was, there was just no rhyme or reason for it."</p> <p>"[child] was very, very challenging at the beginning of this year for a few months at school, and he made some teachers, you know, get upset with, you know, one teacher cried and never wanted to work with him again. You know, things are said to him and and done in front of him to make him feel horrendously bad about himself. That then can't be repaired by just, you know, coming in tomorrow fresh slate. They've gotta rebuild with him. The thing is with highly sensitive children, you can't just treat them like Tonka toys. I often compare [child] and other children to Tonka toys and China plates. You know, if you told them off. Yeah. Next minute I'll come up to you and give you a cuddle. I love you. If you tell [child] off, he'd cry and think you hated him. So for him the big thing around HSP is is relationships and and that knowing that even though he's different or he sees things differently or he wants to ask you one thousand questions about the sun that you've gotta give him what he needs"</p>	
<p>Behaviour based reward systems don't work</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"we were quite big on if you do that, you get this... If you can score more goals, you can get there. And we started to notice that the more pressure you put on him the worse he behaved or the worse that he, is it more pressure on the rewards, keep it on himself, and the worse it got, football was a prime example of that. If you said if you score three goals, you get a fiver or if you score one goal, you get a quid. He he would not score goals, but if you didn't say anything and he went on there have a great game."</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p>

<p>Child not being enabled to use HSC label as an excuse for poor behaviour</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"we talk in terms of you know more sort of narrow terms in sort of his emotion or what he's dealing with at that time rather than sort of linking it needlessly back to his high-sensitivity because I don't want him to feel that I'm like this because, because I'm highly sensitive. This is a big emotion that I'm dealing with and it could just be, you know, a preteen emotion, you know. So I don't want to label every single thing that he experiences as coming down to his high-sensitivity... I'd just say that, you know, he's, that he's in touch with his emotion, he's emotionally mature."</p> <p>"she gets it, totally gets that she's highly sensitive. The only issue I have with her is that she potentially plays on it... She will use it. She will say things like she will blame it for her bad behaviour. And and no, I I I was hangry or, you know, it was it was too noisy or she'll she'll come up with something that she knows is a highly sensitive trigger as an excuse for why she's just exploded... Even though my attitude to her is it's all very well you exploding but you can't, it's just not acceptable behaviour. You've got to learn to manage your sensitivity... You've got to learn. Yeah, you can have a little bit of leeway because you're younger, but not that much."</p> <p>"I think with [child], you give her the label, she she'll abuse it."</p> <p>"I think there is a big risk of going oh let him get away with it... That said, in the beginning [child] had meltdowns. I accept that she has meltdowns and I will acknowledge that the meltdowns are often caused by a combination of triggers going into a pot and then eventually it gets too full. It doesn't excuse the behaviour. And she still gets punished for the behaviour."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 4a</p>
<p>Parent wanting school staff to avoid drawing attention to self-regulating behaviours</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective,</p>	<p>"I think... [stop] drawing attention to some of the behaviours that maybe, like the the chewing thing, I I to me, I know they're looking at it from a oh, well, if she's into plastic and she swallows it, then you know, obviously that's a dangerous thing and, so I can understand why they're concerned about it, but to me, drawing attention to these things is not beneficial. That's how I see it."</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p>

<p>substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Child finds it difficult to engage with things they aren't interested in</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"she'll know [what suits her] earlier than a lot of people, you know, she knows that she likes like what she likes and what she doesn't. And she has a lot of very strong, clear goals for her life... she knows that she does not want to do certain things, and there are certain things that are very hard for her because she's just not interested in engaging with them."</p>	<p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Child performing exceptionally well when motivated and supported</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"then the flip side. Um, she manages to she, she did an elective for a subject where there was a lawyer. They got to choose different subjects to choose. There was a mock trial. It was called and they did three trials. And at first of all, she wouldn't take part in anything. She would, she'd write some notes. And that's it. And by the third one, she was actually the lawyer. And they even went down to the local courthouse. She was a lawyer who stood up and changed the jury's mind and won the case. She had to speak loudly enough so that they could all hear her at what she had to say... [the difference was] she wanted to do it... she was capable of doing it."</p> <p>"if she she gets on to doing something, she'll just do it. Yeah. I mean, she does say she does all her own art and things, and she she will choose to sit in bed at night doing maths and doing SATS questions, rather than doing anything else... That's her. That's what she knows. She she choose to do."</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 4a</p>
<p>Child able to look at the bigger picture in their learning</p>	<p>"When a new topic is introduced, to look at the topic from an overall rounded view rather than breaking it into sections where she's drip fed."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Child enjoys to discuss complex ideas</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I think one of the big advantages that she has because of her high-sensitivity is that depth of connection. And that depth of care and consideration. You know she can ask the most profound questions... that level of conversation is such a huge strength... maturity, which again sets her apart from her peers... that's the level of connection depth and understanding that she she wants... Not 24/7... But when she wants it, she wants it and she wants the connection and she wants to be heard and to be understood and to have information given to her. And so that's that's a huge strength."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child has a strong sense of self</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"She's confident in public as she knows herself so well, I think. She gets herself, yeah."</p> <p>"Just so self-contained, she just it's like she doesn't care"</p> <p>"she she stretches the school uniform as far as she can get away with. But I think that's more about her and being herself. And when I've questioned the fact that I go, that's not school uniform. Should her response to me, which I thought was absolutely amazing at her age, was they want my grades."</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p>
<p>Child aware of what is needed to support their</p>	<p>"[child] actually wangled it herself, that she sits with a little girl who's got ADHD? No, she's, she's autistic. Her friend [name]'s autistic and she's wrangling it to she's [child]'s partner in class, so when [child] gets a break, [child] gets a break."</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p>

<p>own achievement and wellbeing</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Child unable to show true emotions for fear of being bullied</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"He didn't cry in school, but he did when he got home, he didn't cry in school because he felt that he would get picked on and bullied... so he held it in until he came home."</p> <p>"You know, he sometimes is afraid to express [his feelings and emotions] because of the stigma of boys, you know, crying and showing emotion unfortunately"</p>	Participant 1a
<p>Child feeling stupid or negative emotions around their ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for</p>	<p>"he definitely doesn't cope well with strict teachers and strict people. He doesn't do well with that and I think that he's he's got this lack of respect for people that just expect respect. He's like, no, they haven't earned that. That is where with him the relationship is the biggest thing with him. The second they get that relationship... he'll open up. I think the other thing with HSP kids, they feel stupid. They think, they'll go, why why why can't I just put gravy on that?... Now I don't even ask because I think I'm just making him feel really stupid... Actually, if he doesn't want it like that, he doesn't have to have it like that."</p>	Participant 6a

<p>compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Child receiving a desirable response when sharing information around their high ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"Yes, I think that's it, it is talking, because I think there's, there's children who do have a high emotional sensitivity and are probably a lot more mature but are unable to express that in a, in a way that they'll feel like they'll be supported because they, you know, perhaps in the past they felt it and tried to express it and not had a desirable, you know, reaction from their peers or, you know, other people."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>
<p>Parent feeling that child needs more opportunities for meaningful interaction around who they are as a person</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I think give her more opportunity to actually talk about who she is and what she is."</p> <p>"I think one of the big advantages that she has because of her high-sensitivity is that depth of connection. And that depth of care and consideration. You know she can ask the most profound questions... that level of conversation is such a huge strength... maturity, which again sets her apart from her peers... that's the level of connection depth and understanding that she she wants... Not 24/7... But when she wants it, she wants it and she wants the connection and she wants to be heard and to be understood and to have information given to her. And so that's that's a huge strength."</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child has a strong sense of justice</p>	<p>"he also has got a really strong sense of justice... which is also actually a weakness of [child] as well that just because her brother's been horrible, she made, you know, she will not calm down till he said sorry, even if he doesn't believe he should."</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p>

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"she's really concerned with doing the right thing. You know, she finds it really upsetting when kids don't listen to the teacher or, you know, she comes home and tells me all these stories, like oh whatever whoever did this, and the teacher told him to go out and he didn't go out and whatever, you know, like there's a couple of kids with different behaviour problems. You know, and she finds it so hard to watch, it's like, but the teacher said and, and it didn't happen. And then, you know, she comes home and like, we'll be like, oh well... and she'll just lie on the floor like, crying because it's just, you know, you say one wrong thing and it's, yeah."</p> <p>"we had to learn how to work with her... and learn that on the weekends we try not to be too busy and you know she needs to rest and stuff."</p>	<p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Child being used as a model child inappropriately</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"there is one thing so in P4... there's a kid in her class... I'm assuming he's on some sort of spectrum... but he has outbursts and he gets really angry and for I have no idea what reason the system is when he has an outburst, he can't be there. One of the other students escorts him to the main office... Now, like three months into this, [child] is like I really don't like doing it because this boy... he's older... he gets really angry. And I sometimes don't know what he's gonna do. And she finds kids like that hard going, as do all kids, but she really, like you know, the noise of that... So I had to email the class teacher and I was like, I don't want [child] doing that anymore."</p>	<p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Child showing high maturity and ability to mentor younger pupils</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher's subjective,</p>	<p>"perhaps to be able to mentor perhaps"</p> <p>"he's much more engaged with the younger children than my daughters were"</p> <p>"she does really well with younger kids. So she's actually going into my son's class to like read them a book about Hanukkah and stuff."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>

<p>substantive, ‘threshold’ for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Child is under pressure to make things work if changes have been made in their interests</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher’s subjective, substantive, ‘threshold’ for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>“how does taking her from a larger setting into a smaller setting change how she feels? About being in either environment, because ultimately it’s about how that highly sensitive child then feels in the smaller environment. If the child feels less safe in the smaller environment than in the bigger environment because she then feels excluded, spotlights on them. Is there gonna be more pressure because there’s an expectation don’t forget here, from teachers and the system, that because they’ve made some special allowance that therefore it will work. So there’s a lot of expectation and pressure on that child then too.”</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child has high aspirations</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher’s subjective, substantive, ‘threshold’ for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>“she wants to be a lawyer in Canada”</p> <p>“if she feels she never gets to be the lawyer that she wants to be, that just shows that she is a bad person because she didn’t manage to do it. She has then got a lifetime of, you know, self-invalidation, self-criticism. And that, you know, you can go to pretty dark places with all of that when you think.”</p> <p>“she at one point wants to be a doctor, and she’s, no, she’s been through various things, and the latest is a lawyer... I can see a barrister... her sensitivity is a big part of [her intelligence], that that, that acute awareness. And that ability to notice the slightest thing. So she’ll notice, she noticed it, something even something slight change. She’ll notice it... I think that’s why, you know, she’d be very good at sitting in the courtroom and spotting the the bits and pieces that people do, yeah, the little, the little nuances in people’s body language and things she will pick up on them.”</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 4a</p>
<p>Child displaying good academic ability</p>	<p>“it’s been difficult, his self-confidence, he’s very academically capable but he doesn’t think, he doesn’t think he’s good enough.”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"Academically... that's the least of his worries really."</p> <p>"I remember myself. You know, you want to answer, because you want that recognition that you, that you got the right answer, you know and there's no other way of doing that. You know you're right answering in your head, but you're too nervous to say, you know, to to say it."</p> <p>"she's very observant. Very analytical. Very organised."</p> <p>"Well, a report, her recent report from teachers was, you know, [child] is a delight in class. You know the only kind of could do better was kind of maybe that she could contribute a little more in class, but you know she's hard working and polite, follows instructions in lessons, you know she does everything... And you're like, oh gosh, it's an amazing report. And then... it's amazing, but, from our side, it's such a sad, it's such a sad place to be as well, because we have a totally miserable child who hates school. You know, how can you get a report now that is a glowing report?"</p> <p>"academically, she is you know, you can't ask anymore, but in fact that also then goes into perfectionism where she's very she loves maths. She's very good at it. But she might get 85. She actually got 100% in a maths test this year... And she still wasn't, yeah, she wasn't happy with it thought... It was maybe too easy or other people also got hundreds, so maybe it wasn't that difficult."</p> <p>"she's, she's already said that she's not going to manage to do her [exams] because she's going to be too stressed and worried about them... intellectually she is probably capable"</p> <p>"She had begun to do some of the skills that they teach [at coaching], you know, like progressive muscle relaxation or or various breathings or things. And she did try these ones for a day or two at school... But it didn't really work, so she wouldn't try again. She's not willing to try them anymore because they didn't work... It's the kind of underachieving mentality and I think I think that's at the core of being highly sensitive as also she doesn't feel that she's capable."</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>
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“then the flip side. Um, she manages to she, she did an elective for a subject where there was a lawyer. They got to choose different subjects to choose. There was a mock trial. It was called and they did three trials. And at first of all, she wouldn’t take part in anything. She would, she’d write some notes. And that’s it. And by the third one, she was actually the lawyer. And they even went down to the local courthouse. She was a lawyer who stood up and changed the jury’s mind and won the case. She had to speak loudly enough so that they could all hear her at what she had to say... [the difference was] she wanted to do it... she was capable of doing it.”

“he is quite capable. He’s quite an able child and some of them would say that we can tell he’s quite a clever child, but he just won’t do the work, you know, he just seems to need prompts all the time... but he actually worked really well at home.”

“basically, I think [school] they’re always coming from the well, you know, if you were just getting diagnosed with autism, basically it would be fine because you can then have one to one, so we had a conversation around it cause it’s a bit like well that’s your choice, isn’t it?... They would say things like, well, if he gets a diagnosis, you’ll get one to one support. And I just know that isn’t true necessarily. So because obviously autism is huge. So he was quite academically fairly capable child. So, you know, at his phonics screening, he got the expected level and at the Year Two SATs, things like that. So with the best will in the world, there is only a certain amount of funding available and if he did get some additional high-level funding, he was never gonna get, never gonna get his needs met because his needs, whether he got diagnosed or not, are his needs, if you see what I mean.”

“she’s really like kind of sailed through school. She’s really high performing and she just did really well”

“academically, she’s doing very well.”

“she’s definitely a perfectionist and she just gives herself a really hard time about stuff, you know, and and she she gets excellent marks.”

Participant 3a

“She’s intelligent to the point of it being hard work, she’s so clever and so quick and so in many ways, so grown up.”

“she’s very self-aware, very wide awake to everything... she can read people like a book... school sort of had to invent extra work for her because she gets through it so fast, particularly in maths. So she’s very she’s very switched on. Very bright.”

“[child] actually wangled it herself, that she sits with a little girl who’s got ADHD? No, she’s, she’s autistic. Her friend [name]’s autistic and she’s wrangling it to she’s [child]’s partner in class, so when [child] gets a break, [child] gets a break... and it’s also the school sort of realised that it’s a way of cementing [child]’s learning without having to give her more because she teachers best what she needs to learn most... So she’ll teach. She teachers all the children she used to work.”

“She’s confident in public as she knows herself so well, I think. She gets herself, yeah.”

“she’s, the the intelligence level. And she you know you show her something once she knows it and she can adapt it. So no, you you teach her how to do, and if, for example, they were teaching how to do division at school of decimals. They taught how to do divide by half... And she can now do any. Yeah. So she’s intelligent.”

“I mean, it’s her birthday at the end of August. So she went to school at just age four. So her best friend turns 1 two weeks after she turns 10. And yet they’re similar level. I think her friend is just slightly behind her.”

“if she she gets on to doing something, she’ll just do it. Yeah. I mean, she does say she does all her own art and things, and she she will choose to sit in bed at night doing maths and doing SATS questions, rather than doing anything else... That’s her. That’s what she knows. She she choose to do. Yeah, I mean, the SATs are two years ahead of her. When they did home-school, she was in the Year Two. She was bored with the work. So her brother was in Year Six at the time. So we

	<p>gave her his some of his work to do. And she was doing that... That's the sort of level she needs to be."</p> <p>"when they first went to primary school. So they were in Reception. And one of the teachers picked up on [child]. And particularly just with eye contact and how she was around other children. And so she was referred to an educational psychologist. He came in, observed her, talked to her and his outcome at that stage, which was when she was what, five or six, was that there's no autism here. She's just a very intelligent, highly mature emotional child. And she could read way before she was three... So they're just very they are very intelligent. They're, they're way more intelligent than me... And so and yeah, so she was looked at but then that was it."</p> <p>"I think the children have always known that they were different because they are so clever... I don't know how you describe them really, just that they are different and I think Junior school it was easier for them to just get on and the other kids just accepted them for who they are"</p>	Participant 5a
	<p>"So we started to really look at doing another pastoral support programme with him, but the language in it was always very negative. And again, I started noticing the strategies were all very samey as it had been before, and I was like, these don't work because these have the opposite effect. You're putting, you're badging him again the same as the old school were as a neurodiverse child. And they don't work with him. They they some of these messages just explode him further, you know. And I started to realise the reward schemes didn't work. He was very, very smart and very, very intuitive. And he knew how to just do the minimum to get what he needed and then he'd stop... And he knew, if he didn't get one star on Wednesday, what was the point in trying on Thursday or Friday because it was gone."</p> <p>"the school feel he needs a permanent one to one. Now [child] doesn't need a permanent one to one. He needs somebody that gets him in that class that can help with manage his emotions. He is not thick. He has a reading age of 12, 13 years old... what they miss is that the highly sensitive children are very intelligent. They just can't, sometimes they just can't, they're not in the right environment... So whether it's because it's too noisy... it was the environment... in the classroom</p>	Participant 6a

	<p>environment where he's getting more frustrated because he's doubting himself or he's overthinking something, it's building up not having that person there that can see that escalation in his demeanour, the sweat, you know, the agitation... And that's where they need someone. Not a teacher... They put a teacher in as his teaching assistant, and I'm supposed to be grateful for that. I'm like, that's the worst most you could've ever done...he doesn't want it because he sees it as, you know, he's thick, he's stupid... he's very unhappy with his current TA, this woman in the morning. She's a very, very old-fashioned teacher... So she can help him academically. And he says that she speaks to him thick. He speaks, she she treats him like he's stupid... she doesn't get me. She didn't get me. I'm like, I know she doesn't get you, but she's not there to get you. She isn't there as a SMH support. She isn't there as a mental health support person. Umm. And I think that is where schools are missing the trick massively in that they think everyone that needs support in the classroom has got a learning difficulty."</p>	
<p>Parent feeling that external support is necessary</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I found a company called [coaching]. It's for highly sensitive children... there's mindset work for parents. And then there's coaching for children as well... it comes down to your child. If your child doesn't want to take part, then there's only so much you can do."</p> <p>"I got to the point where, I got the local authority involved. I rang them up and said you need to come and see my child in this setting because pastoral support is not working. He threatened to self-harm at home because he didn't wanna go to school anymore. He was threatening to stab himself, didn't want to live anymore and at seven years old, that's just not acceptable."</p> <p>"this is the worst thing about the whole thing is I have had to fund private therapy"</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>
<p>School not properly executing coping strategies and resilience building tools</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>"I mean, they do mindfulness. And it's like right we will do mindfulness today. It's like no, it's just, no it doesn't just happen like that."</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>

<p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Child being self-critical, especially of academic ability</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"Her compassion was so strong she couldn't. She couldn't suppress it. She couldn't not feel the things that she felt. And so was harshly critical of herself on an academic perspective."</p> <p>"I think the main thing was the invalidation that she could tell that she wasn't experiencing the classroom environment in the same way as other people were, and she couldn't understand why... And so the only thing that's measured is academia, and so that she would see that maybe she hadn't read as many books as others. Or maybe her spelling test results wasn't necessarily as good as others. But when she'd say to her teachers, I need help. Because she always tried her best. Always had a smile on her face, was lovely. She was told she was fine. And she didn't feel that she was fine. She felt that she needed help, and she did. So they just, invalidated her."</p> <p>"they look at the perception of the body language, the eye contact, the tone of voice towards them. Then they then have a deep level of shame. About the fact. Well, how come I don't seem to be able to do this like the others do? And then when they asked the teacher for help. Because it isn't a learning difficulty, the teacher just tells them they're fine and they just need to try harder."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Child experiencing overwhelm due to demands placed on them</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for</p>	<p>"He stresses a lot about, say, if they were choosing a topic to talk about or to write something in his book, write a story or come up with an idea. He will be overthinking it."</p> <p>"[he gets nervous], but it sort of manifests as anger, really."</p> <p>"You know, people are, you know, not in a bad mood or not stressed. But you're doing things faster than a very relaxed pace. And she does find that overwhelming."</p> <p>"A healthy, intelligent, wonderful 14-year-old who is at home. All the time, she doesn't want to see anybody. Doesn't want to do anything. Umm. It's just that's really quite, as a parent, that's just a</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p>

<p>compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>very, very sad place to be. So, she hates school and she was really looking forward to not being at school, but then it's the overwhelm of having things to do in the holidays, it has been too much, so you know, like I said, we finish school the end of June. So, at some point prior to June, we would have the conversation. Oh you know, holidays coming up. I know you're looking forward to all this. What would you like to do? It's all oh I don't know. OK, well, you know, we can talk about it another day to the point where I kind of feel like we can't talk about it again because even asking the question is now, so shame, shaming that she doesn't have an answer... It's just complete withdrawal... And that's, I suppose it's hopelessness, really, isn't it?"</p>	
<p>Child fearing other people's negative opinions (and/or displaying related performance related anxieties)</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"He stresses a lot about, say, if they were choosing a topic to talk about or to write something in his book, write a story or come up with an idea. He will be overthinking it. And we did a topic last week. He had to talk to the class and choose anything you wanted. So, it was quite broad and, he, I know he struggles with that because he's thinking not only of what he's choosing, what everybody else will think about it. Is it the right thing? Am I doing something wrong, and, you know, what the reaction of the teacher will be, what the reaction of the children will be. So, he's, he's, he's not just thinking, oh yeah, I like that, I'll do that, whatever."</p> <p>"she plays cello at school...if another teacher comes into the room just to watch, see how she's getting on. She would find that very, very off putting."</p> <p>"we spoke to her teacher and well, it's the noise. It's one thing. So we got really good noise cancelling headphones. And we looked at various, various strategies that you know of leaving the room is another one. You could have a card or you just put it on your desk to say, hey, let's leave the room. But both of these, when you've got very, very shy person, totally lacking social confidence, you know, you're kind of like putting flashing lights around them, saying, like, I've got a problem. Hey, class. Hey, everybody else in the class? I've got a problem."</p> <p>"while they're very good noise cancelling headphones and they would work, she she felt too shy to put them in."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 2a</p>

	<p>“so it’s all very welcome, you know, all these, you know, solutions, and that’s as a parent as a teacher, everybody’s constantly, or as an Ed Psych, is like let’s find a solution possible solution to that. But if the person in question is either not able or willing, able is the world that comes, it’s not can’t, well, actually the word is can’t. It’s not won’t they? They genuinely they can’t do it. Then you can have all these strategies in the world, but they’re not gonna. They’re not gonna help... She was getting distressed by the teacher, was just shouting. There was no way she would physically be able to stand up and walk to the teacher’s desk or catch their eye and then leave the room? She just, you know, cause we’ve talked about this, so, so, that is a strategy to then go outside and do some, you know, some deep breathing, some grounding... It’s just not working. It will not work. You know.”</p>	
<p>Child needs to be treated with respect you would give an adult because of their maturity</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher’s subjective, substantive, ‘threshold’ for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>“she responds best if you talk to her like an adult. If you speak to her like she was a small child she will look down her nose at you and think you’re stupid.”</p> <p>“if they talk down to her, she sees it and she totally rejects it then.”</p> <p>“I think what I realised with HSP is, is we’re all very different in you what know gets the best out of us is very different and you know with [child] it’s relationships. It’s not being treated like he’s thick and it’s being treated with the emotional intelligence that he is, I think, with highly sensitive children, we’ve gotta stay on a level. You can’t show your emotions with them because they pick up on it and it can really sway their own internal feelings.”</p> <p>“he definitely doesn’t cope well with strict teachers and strict people. He doesn’t do well with that and I think that he’s he’s got this lack of respect for people that just expect respect. He’s like, no, they haven’t earned that. That is where with him the relationship is the biggest thing with him. The second they get that relationship... he’ll open up.”</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>
<p>Child is typically quiet in the education environment</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>“it’s not something that he finds easy to articulate in words and that he, you know, he might feel uncomfortable, whereas, with me. With me he knows that he can talk and I will understand, whereas the teacher, and this particular teacher, he had a lot of difficulty with actually because she didn’t seem to get it”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>

<p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"they need to just have somebody... that gives him some time and space to listen and be patient. I think it's patience and, and, sort of, yes, rather than being too in your face and too, you know, just somebody that will listen and understand and somebody that he can go to if he's feeling overwhelmed for whatever reason."</p> <p>"I remember myself. You know, you want to answer, because you want that recognition that you, that you got the right answer, you know and there's no other way of doing that. You know you're right answering in your head, but you're too nervous to say, you know, to to say it."</p> <p>"Yes, I think that's it, it is talking, because I think there's, there's children who do have a high emotional sensitivity and are probably a lot more mature but are unable to express that in a, in a way that they'll feel like they'll be supported."</p> <p>"without this particular person, who I think actually is also highly sensitive. I don't think she realises that. And without this person, she wouldn't be at school."</p> <p>"That's another thing about highly sensitive kids. You know, I think you kind of wouldn't interact maybe with somebody you don't know, and with what the school was saying, he doesn't do his work, you know, I think then that maybe we could have achieved that diagnosis because you know we got a checklist for autism and there's very little that we could tick on that for him from our perspectives at home. But I do feel that he might have got that diagnosis if we had have gone down that path and then would that really have been right for him?"</p> <p>"she's quite quiet at school"</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 4a</p>
<p>Child wants to seek information out and hungry for knowledge</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>"I think one of the big advantages that she has because of her high-sensitivity is that depth of connection. And that depth of care and consideration. You know she can ask the most profound questions... that level of conversation is such a huge strength... maturity, which again sets her apart from her peers... that's the level of connection depth and understanding that she she wants... Not 24/7... But when she wants it, she wants it and she wants the connection and she wants to be heard and to be understood and to have information given to her. And so that's that's a huge strength."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>

<p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Importance of pushing the CYP out of their comfort zone to promote independence</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"it would be nice to show her that how she's thinking about things is perhaps a bit too slanted in a particular way... you also have to learn that, you know, cause when you go to the work place, you're going to have weird people, you are gonna have horrible bosses"</p> <p>"then the flip side. Um, she manages to she, she did an elective for a subject where there was a lawyer. They got to choose different subjects to choose. There was a mock trial. It was called and they did three trials. And at first of all, she wouldn't take part in anything. She would, she'd write some notes. And that's it. And by the third one, she was actually the lawyer. And they even went down to the local courthouse. She was a lawyer who stood up and changed the jury's mind and won the case. She had to speak loudly enough so that they could all hear her at what she had to say... [the difference was] she wanted to do it... she was capable of doing it. She's interested in the subject. She wanted to do it. She knew she could do it, and maybe that actually gave her some relief from constantly wondering and catastrophising over normal life?"</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>
<p>Child needs to be pushed more (i.e., gifted)</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"She sees schooling as an inconvenience... She wants to go to school where I live until she's 14. and then she said I'm going to home school myself. She wants to be home schooled. Ever since they did school from home. She's wanted to be home schooled... Because she she can do what she can choose what she's she does and she can do things quicker because they hold her back so she'll so, she said. They were doing some tests and she came home. She she said it was so slow, she said because the teacher was reading the questions, should have it finished by the time she finished reading the questions... They don't have capacity to cope. She's almost like as much as children at the other end of the scale need a one to one. If she had a one to one, she'd be amazing. Or if they could take her out the class and say, actually, you know what, you go and learn about this. You go and do some separate, you know, individual study."</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p>

	<p>“I think very small groups with children who are like her, who are as clever as her [would support her more in school] ... so she’s great when she works with [child’s friend], she needs that. She likes having people to bounce off... And somebody to work with and. And actually her teacher, her teacher in Year Four, took, used to take them out. Her and [child’s friend] and I think a little boy as well. Take them out of the class and say they would miss an assembly, for example, and do greater depth maths. Or so they would take her out for a little things and I think, if she could work in that sort of group all the time...I think the problem in most schools is you’ve got such a broad range of abilities and you’ve only got one teacher trying to teach thirty children.”</p> <p>“Not a lot [could be done to improve school for my daughter]. I think the whole school system’s not geared up for children like her... It needs a complete overhaul of the school system... It’s almost like we wanna get every child to the same point. Which means those who are at the top of end the scale, get held back, and those who are at the bottom end of the scale get dragged to a point that is potentially uncomfortable, it’s almost like we want everybody to be the same, where in reality we’re all very different and the top end of the scale, we really should be pushing those people. Because they they’re the ones who. They’re the ones who are really going to set the country going forward.”</p> <p>“Yeah, maybe there should be funding... it would be good if they could say, right, we’re gonna take the sensitive children who do tend to be more intelligent. As a rule, we’re gonna take them out and teach them separately some of the time.”</p> <p>“I think the big thing with school is it’s a so homogenised and it’s so you know, everybody’s treated the same when in reality nobody’s the same and it’s not. Yeah, you’ve got your highly sensitive. There’s different things for everybody. And I get the resources stretched, but I think you’ve got to if you if schools were perfect, every child needs will be catered for. And every child strength would be pushed.”</p>	
<p>Value in child receiving specific praise/feedback</p>	<p>“I was commenting on it and said oh that’s brilliant, that’s really good. But I would pick out a specific thing and say oh the you’ve got that slide there, the picture you’ve chosen is really good. It was really cute. They’re all gonna really love that. I think that gave him a boost.”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I think one thing that was helpful which is worth mentioning is that in one of the school years... they had kind of like an online system that they used sometimes for like comprehension and things like that. And he really enjoyed that... I read some research which is about, I think, interventions with kids who were doing some computer bits and stuff and saying that highly sensitive children really, you know, when they were getting the constant feedback, if you got this right, you've got this right. That was really beneficial for them in comparison to kids that weren't."</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p>
<p>Importance of supporting CYP to follow their interests</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"then the flip side. Um, she manages to she, she did an elective for a subject where there was a lawyer. They got to choose different subjects to choose. There was a mock trial. It was called and they did three trials. And at first of all, she wouldn't take part in anything. She would, she'd write some notes. And that's it. And by the third one, she was actually the lawyer. And they even went down to the local courthouse. She was a lawyer who stood up and changed the jury's mind and won the case. She had to speak loudly enough so that they could all hear her at what she had to say... [the difference was] she wanted to do it... she was capable of doing it."</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>
<p>Child desiring peers who are aware of, and sensitive to, high ES (similar personalities) – value/resilience in these relationships</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for</p>	<p>"[the perfect environment], the classroom probably a single, you know, she would just be on her own. Or maybe with one or two people that she liked and that she knew that they were quiet people and they would get on with their work."</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>

<p>compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Value in child being able to engage in activities in which there is a reduced ability to compare to their peers</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"And we did a topic last week. He had to talk to the class and choose anything you wanted. So, it was quite broad and, he, I know he struggles with that because he's thinking not only of what he's choosing, what everybody else will think about it. Is it the right thing? Am I doing something wrong, and, you know, what the reaction of the teacher will be, what the reaction of the children will be. So, he's, he's, he's not just thinking, oh yeah, I like that, I'll do that, whatever."</p> <p>"we worked on it together at home, but then I just left him to it. So he just chose anything, and if he wanted help I was there. He was able to do that at home, whereas in school I think he would be sat listening to whatever people are thinking and doing and then he would get a little bit tied up in like, oh, right, is mine as good as theirs? Or, you know, what, what, you know, he would just overthink it."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>
<p>Ensuring there is less comparison between peers</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"No requirement to, to share what you've done in outside of school, no requirement to be measured on your level of reading, and very much a topic-based approach"</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>Value in child having access to different methods of teaching/assessment</p>	<p>"I remember myself. You know, you want to answer, because you want that recognition that you, that you got the right answer, you know and there's no other way of doing that. You know you're right answering in your head, but you're too nervous to say, you know, to to say it."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p>

<p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"[I would like to see] just that understanding I suppose that that it could be a high-sensitivity, you know, situation, and this is how, you know, this is how you, this is what might help that individual student"</p> <p>"it's sort of yeah, being able to try and support those particular students that you might recognise that have a high-sensitivity and dislike noise for whatever reason. You know to help them sit an exam, in certain schools they have quieter spaces."</p> <p>"Yeah, because [schools] talk about difference, they do it more recently, don't they?... I think it would be a good idea to see what type of personalities we are. We are introverted and this is the best way that we learn, you know, some people learn better in smaller groups and might find it difficult talking in big groups. So, so, normalise it in the sense of tying it in with how we learn with how we are as people. You know, what sort of setting, category, we fit into as a person, and what help we might need, or how we could achieve things better."</p> <p>"I feel like [child] needs extra support in certain things without having an ADHD or autism diagnosis. Just his personality. Because I feel as a parent that he his needs aren't being met because his personality doesn't fit the, you know, the the the norm or whatever"</p> <p>"She's just incredible...[she] is very observant and is there for you, that is needed with highly sensitive children I think."</p> <p>"She would never naturally come to us and say anything so, so for her to come and say oh I feel I'm feeling anxious about something. You know I would, I would have some champagne at that point for her to be able to verbalise things externally. But I can tell when she is particularly worried about things. So, I would then have to to ask her, I'm noticing, you know, that you've been sitting on your bed, that you're under your duvet. I'm wondering if you're feeling..."</p>	<p>Participant 2a</p>
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	<p>“[the perfect environment], the classroom probably a single, you know, she would just be on her own. Or maybe with one or two people that she liked and that she knew that they were quiet people and they would get on with their work... she would work in the library”</p> <p>“we even tried where she’s been in the kind of the teachers cupboard in between two classrooms and that kind of worked. But then another teacher came in and said, what are you doing in there? Who didn’t know anything about [child] and, you know, that was, you know, that’s not going to work”</p> <p>“then the flip side. Um, she manages to she, she did an elective for a subject where there was a lawyer. They got to choose different subjects to choose. There was a mock trial. It was called and they did three trials. And at first of all, she wouldn’t take part in anything. She would, she’d write some notes. And that’s it. And by the third one, she was actually the lawyer. And they even went down to the local courthouse. She was a lawyer who stood up and changed the jury’s mind and won the case. She had to speak loudly enough so that they could all hear her at what she had to say... [the difference was] she wanted to do it... she was capable of doing it.”</p> <p>“[child] actually wangled it herself, that she sits with a little girl who’s got ADHD? No, she’s, she’s autistic. Her friend [name]’s autistic and she’s wrangling it to she’s [child]’s partner in class, so when [child] gets a break, [child] gets a break... and it’s also the school sort of realised that it’s a way of cementing [child]’s learning without having to give her more because she teachers best what she needs to learn most... So she’ll teach. She teachers all the children she used to work.”</p> <p>“I’ve said to them about testing... stop testing my son... you’re going to cause more problems by testing him because err that environment, you want the best for the 80% of kids that are in there that are perfect or got a TA or whoever, for the 20% like my son, who just don’t fit that box, you’ve gotta find another way of testing, you know, finding out whether he’s academically, where he used to be and leave it at that.”</p> <p>“if they aren’t aware, you know teachers, I mean, I don’t know about teacher training. I haven’t trained as a teacher. But, you know, they may be made aware of learning difficulties, but the highly sensitive</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>
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	<p>trait isn't a learning difficulty. It's a depth of processing, so you can imagine a child that is highly sensitive, that has depth of processing which is far more advanced than her peers. And then she's asked to put her hand up to answer her question on the spot. Or she's given a timer in time to do her spellings, and then the teacher's getting frustrated because she's not actually listening to what's being said to her and actually being able to do what's required of her within the time scale that the teacher wants. Well, none of those are because she's not behaving well, she's not listening or she doesn't have the capability. That is all an element of the deep processing that she needs in order to be able to achieve what's asked of her."</p>	
<p>Assessments are too stressful</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I've said to them about testing... stop testing my son... you're going to cause more problems by testing him because err that environment, you want the best for the 80% of kids that are in there that are perfect or got a TA or whoever, for the 20% like my son, who just don't fit that box, you've gotta find another way of testing, you know, finding out whether he's academically, where he used to be and leave it at that."</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p>
<p>Restorative practice and relationships are highly important</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"[child] was very, very challenging at the beginning of this year for a few months at school, and he made some teachers, you know, get upset... things are said to him and and done in front of him to make him feel horrendously bad about himself. That then can't be repaired by just, you know, coming in tomorrow fresh slate. They've gotta rebuild with him. The thing is with highly sensitive children, you can't just treat them like Tonka toys. I often compare [child] and other children to Tonka toys and China plates. You know, if you told them off. Yeah. Next minute I'll come up to you and give you a cuddle. I love you. If you tell [child] off, he'd cry and think you hated him. So for him the big thing around HSP is is relationships and and that knowing that even though he's different or he sees things differently or he wants to ask you one thousand questions about the sun that you've gotta give him what he needs"</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p> <p>Participant 7a</p>

	<p>“because of the highly sensitive trait, the perception of body language of tone, of voice, of gestures. Umm, you know, teachers being stressed with 30 plus children with differing needs. I am highly sensitive, a person will interpret those behaviours considerably differently from another, and then it then can then take a lot longer for that highly sensitive person to recover from that interaction, to then be able to relax again and feel safe and connected to them, be able to learn.”</p> <p>“in a class of thirty children, you have more immediate obvious needs. You already have a system that intervenes with those. So if you have boys, for example, who are misbehaving. Shouting. Throwing physically... it already has an approach... so, you are a highly sensitive child or deeply sensitive child... experiencing the class differently. There isn’t a pathway. That is immediately obvious, and actually the interventions that they need are not considered to be appropriate in the school system because they are by nature, care, compassion, time, patience. And those are in very short supply in mainstream school.”</p> <p>“A small teaching environment [would be ideal], where the teachers’ main goal is the children feeling safe.”</p>	
<p>Child having additional transition support</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher’s subjective, substantive, ‘threshold’ for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>“change is very difficult for him”</p> <p>“the other thing I’ve tended to see is, well, it is, it’s taken teacher a while to kind of get to see what he’s like. So at first he’s very much kind of in his shell quite a lot. You know, he’s kind of very, you know, cautious, observes things, doesn’t get stuck in like the other kids do really holds back from activities, things like that. And again some teachers are kind of not very understanding around that. So they’re like kind of like, you know this sort of thing and. And so we tend to see again at the beginning of school. It’s all a bit like that. then as they get more used to, he’ll come up the shell a bit more and then it’s a bit more positive as time goes on. So you’ll finish [the year] on a very positive note. And his Year Four teacher was, you know kind of got what he was like and then back in Year Five we were back to quite negative again and sort of oh, we get quite fed up really going through this all the time.”</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 3a</p>

	<p>“maybe taking a bit more time, particularly at the beginning of the school year, so maybe a bit more work on transition as well and would be really helpful and also transition kind of between teachers as well. So, I was, I felt I was starting again every year, you know, that the school had never had this child before... They wouldn't really know anything about the history. So every year after repeating, this is where this is what happened and this is where we've been before and this is sort of like quite what's like every year... They should know that already... With a new teacher that is gonna take some time to warm up. So just give him that time. Just don't be so straight away.”</p> <p>“I think people around them being aware that they are highly sensitive is important. But and I think when there's, there's a handover between teachers, it's oh by the way, this list of children are highly sensitive it could be 20% of the children in the class... be aware that these, these these, no, these six are highly sensitive in your class.”</p>	Participant 4a
<p>Child experiencing change as being difficult</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>“change is very difficult for him”</p> <p>“A healthy, intelligent, wonderful 14-year-old who is at home. All the time, she doesn't want to see anybody. Doesn't want to do anything. Umm. It's just that's really quite, as a parent, that's just a very, very sad place to be. So, she hates school and she was really looking forward to not being at school, but then it's the overwhelm of having things to do in the holidays, it has been too much, so you know, like I said, we finish school the end of June. So, at some point prior to June, we would have the conversation. Oh you know, holidays coming up. I know you're looking forward to all this. What would you like to do? It's all oh I don't know. OK, well, you know, we can talk about it another day to the point where I kind of feel like we can't talk about it again because even asking the question is now, so shame, shaming that she doesn't have an answer... It's just complete withdrawal... And that's, I suppose it's hopelessness, really, isn't it?”</p> <p>“kind of black and white, inflexible, perfectionist thinking... You know, it has to be this, or it's that. Asking me is it this, or is it that, no you know maybe we could consider, it's black and white, you know, the plan. And that's a joke in our house is so the plan. It's never the plan, you know, you want things to go, you know, she might already have, you know, 40,000 details of how she thinks the day's going to go. And then by the time she's going down the stairs, something like, oh, something happened.</p>	Participant 1a Participant 2a

	<p>Not amazing but you know there's no milk for breakfast? Something like that. And she finds that very difficult. But that's also another part of the the it's difficult to not have things going exactly as you want them."</p> <p>"the other thing I've tended to see is, well, it is, it's taken teacher a while to kind of get to see what he's like. So at first he's very much kind of in his shell quite a lot. You know, he's kind of very, you know, cautious, observes things, doesn't get stuck in like the other kids do really holds back from activities, things like that. And again some teachers are kind of not very understanding around that. So they're like kind of like, you know this sort of thing and. And so we tend to see again at the beginning of school. It's all a bit like that. then as they get more used to, he'll come up the shell a bit more and then it's a bit more positive as time goes on. So you'll finish [the year] on a very positive note. And his Year Four teacher was , you know kind of got what he was like and then back in Year Five we were back to quite negative again and sort of oh, we get quite fed up really going through this all the time."</p> <p>"he's tended to keep himself to himself quite a lot. And again, that was quite an issue for the school. So he did have, you know, he did have, like, a sort of a couple of friends over the years. It's quite a big school as well. So the classes change, like, every year, basically..."</p> <p>"I said, what, you know, what could the school do to kind of make things better? So she said, you know, noise or teachers kind of telling people to be quiet... because they just seem to tolerate that noise level... well to whatever level really, particularly supply teachers, which is quite prevalent with the pandemic and sickness and things like that... and also you know, actually teaching classes, not just letting things go and not saying anything... she finds it quite difficult to not have that lesson go through, not have things followed you know."</p> <p>"They get overwhelmed and when things change. Yeah, neither of them are good with it."</p> <p>"Towards the end, the last three months of year five was really bad. But that happened when he found out he was moving teachers when we mapped it back. We can map it back to literally the same</p>	<p>Participant 3a</p> <p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>
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	<p>week that he found out he wasn't going to have the same teacher... And it was like you hate me. You're leaving me. I'm gonna be the child that I think I am. Because you're leaving me and this is it. It was a massive. Now we know."</p> <p>"he likes to know what he's got on, and if it changes, yeah, we found that probably best. Don't tell him until later. Till nearer the time. So he can't overthink. He's a massive overthinker... I'm a massive overthinker. But I know where to draw the line, but when he was going through some very dark times over the last year even just going about space in class, for weeks we had conversations around reincarnation, death, the sun, blowing up, what if my children, my children's children's children die, and what if I get reincarnated and I come back in 200 years and I'm living under ground and I can't breathe."</p> <p>"I guess the disadvantage is the, um, the need for home to be a safe place... The need for it to be, um, orderly, timely, calm, quiet... you know the, the, the kind of spontaneity. That's difficult in the home... She needs time... you know when you wake up in the morning, oh it's a beautiful day. Let's go out... No... [she needs to know the plan] and to be able to build that into time. So it's kind of a disadvantage, but also an advantage because what it's meant is it's enabled us to factor in more time for calm in all of our lives... It's important for all of us, so it's actually led our pace of life to be considerably slow, which is a good thing, but it can mean, therefore, that she isn't able to take part in things with her friends. For example, at last minute."</p> <p>"starting new things is always hard for her. She had a new teacher in P5. So that was a bit of a wobble for a few weeks. But now it's definitely every year is better."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p> <p>Participant 8a</p>
<p>Ensuring there is no shame in learning progression</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>"[they can] revisit previous age perspectives to really just allow that opportunity for children to see that a six-year-old may be able to do 11-year-old maths... And an 11-year-old may not be able to do six-year-old maths and and that's OK because there is that opportunity to explore and then to revisit those basics and to build on those without the shame of it, where you're, you shouldn't be doing that now because you're you're a Year Six now, for example, that Year Four level you should be you know this the shame element."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>

<p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Importance of an academic child being able to learn social/emotional skills</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I also think from my daughter's point of view I could send her to grammar school. I could send her to private school. But actually in terms of her overall wellbeing and her ability to fit into society. She's better off not doing that... I think being streetwise is important for kids... for their safety and for their overall wellbeing, being able to mix with people at every level and every type is important... So I think for her going to an average comp, she may, I think she'll still achieve what she needs to achieve academically, to be able to do whatever she wants to do. But I think she'll. She'll learn so much more about life... And be exposed to things she wouldn't be exposed to entertain a grammar school in a polite little market town... it's almost like part time school for her would be best. No, she went to school half the day and she self-educated the other half of the day, always in small groups... especially as she gets older."</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p>
<p>Value in school promoting the use of ES resources</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"<i>Poppy McNeil</i>... It's a picture book... they are brilliant. [It] would be a great resource for working on in school... [to] understand... [that] high-sensitivity is a personality trait, and that more children probably have it than you realise."</p> <p>"<i>Annie's World</i> is amazing... anything that <i>Elaine Aron's</i> written is brilliant. And the <i>Orchid and Dandelion</i> is good... and then this [<i>James Williams</i>] book I like because it's only little."</p>	<p>Participant 1a</p> <p>Participant 4a</p>

<p>Child desires to feel understood in terms of their sensitivity</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I think one of the big advantages that she has because of her high-sensitivity is that depth of connection. And that depth of care and consideration. You know she can ask the most profound questions... that level of conversation is such a huge strength... maturity, which again sets her apart from her peers... that's the level of connection depth and understanding that she she wants... Not 24/7... But when she wants it, she wants it and she wants the connection and she wants to be heard and to be understood and to have information given to her. And so that's that's a huge strength."</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>
<p>School needs to be more person centred and value the aspirations and needs of all</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I think the big thing with school is it's a so homogenised and it's so you know, everybody's treated the same when in reality nobody's the same and it's not. Yeah, you've got your highly sensitive. There's different things for everybody. And I get the resources stretched, but I think you've got to if you if schools were perfect, every child needs will be catered for. And every child strength would be pushed."</p> <p>"Not a lot [could be done to improve school for my daughter]. I think the whole school system's not geared up for children like her... It needs a complete overhaul of the school system... It's almost like we wanna get every child to the same point. Which means those who are at the top of end the scale, get held back, and those who are at the bottom end of the scale get dragged to a point that is potentially uncomfortable, it's almost like we want everybody to be the same, where in reality we're all very different and the top end of the scale, we really should be pushing those people. Because they they're the ones who. They're the ones who are really going to set the country going forward."</p> <p>"It's about him having again that relationship with someone that he feels that he can tell him anything and they won't judge him... And they won't hold it against him. And if he wants to blow off some steam, or if he wants to take off his trainers and walk around in bare feet just to ground himself that they'll let him do that and not say they can't do that."</p>	<p>Participant 4a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>

	<p>“I do make allowances for a lot of his little foibles that he has without thinking it’s some autistic trait... I just accept that, you know, he’ll grow out of something or he won’t, and he is gonna be who he is and I think that’s where schools don’t, they try, they want everyone to be the same, they want you all to be the same, they want you all to sit there, all to do your SATs and you know... It’s not life.”</p> <p>“how does taking her from a larger setting into a smaller setting change how she feels? About being in either environment, because ultimately it’s about how that highly sensitive child then feels in the smaller environment. If the child feels less safe in the smaller environment than in the bigger environment because she then feels excluded, spotlights on them. Is there gonna be more pressure because there’s an expectation don’t forget here, from teachers and the system, that because they’ve made some special allowance that therefore it will work. So there’s a lot of expectation and pressure on that child then too.”</p>	Participant 7a
<p>Turbulent experience of schooling</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u> Code did not meet the researcher’s subjective, substantive, ‘threshold’ for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>“My son 10, yeah... it’s been a real roller coaster with him... he’s a very up and down experience [and is now home schooled]”</p>	Participant 3a
<p>Value in school staff better understanding the child’s history and experiences</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>“maybe taking a bit more time, particularly at the beginning of the school year, so maybe a bit more work on transition as well and would be really helpful and also transition kind of between teachers as well. So, I was, I felt I was starting again every year, you know, that the school had never had this child before... They wouldn’t really know anything about the history. So every year after repeating, this is where this is what happened and this is where we’ve been before and this is sort of like quite what’s like every year... They should know that already... With a new teacher that is gonna take some time to warm up. So just give him that time. Just don’t be so straight away.”</p>	Participant 3a

<p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>		
<p>Value in parent having someone to talk to</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I think more from my perspective, the EHCP was playing the game really for him to go to secondary school and be on a radar of somebody... I hate that I've had to do that because you know, and I joked to my friend the other day, if I'd have just signed that form, you know, I know exactly how to fill that out and get him diagnosed with ADHD, ODD, autism, the lot. I could probably pack in work with a carer's allowance, I could probably sit there and he would get full on support through through school for the next five or six years. I can fill that form in to the letter of how it needs to be done. But I would be failing my kid. And why would I do that? And that's where I said to school. You are failing my child by not understanding him... But the worst thing is you panic as a parent, when things get bad, and you have no understanding, no one there understands it, when things get bad, you doubt yourself and go, actually, what if I've missed? What if it is ADHD? What if he has got it? What if he does need drugs? What if he does? What? What if?... And you go through this massive pang of guilt and stress, and bear in mind I'm obviously highly sensitive myself I literally went through so much guilt and overthinking and I still do to this day"</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p>
<p>Parents to be more supported in the process of supporting CYP who experience high ES</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"Definitely awareness is massive because if not, we run the risk. Well, it's already happening of parents getting desperate to fit their kids into a system that isn't meeting their needs, and if they don't fit the pressure is on the parent to make them fit because there aren't alternative provisions. And then it feeds into the fear that, well, what if my child can't go to school? How can I work if my child's not at school?... And then. There's extra worries... And and and and all of that is felt by the deeply sensitive child."</p> <p>"I think [we need to promote] a deeper understanding for when children are in nursery of high senses of high-sensitivity... I think from a parenting perspective... [to] understand if they are demonstrating deeply sensitive traits early on and to not see them as something that needs to be changed... From a teacher training perspective. It needs to be allocated within neurodiversity. From a school's</p>	<p>Participant 7a</p>

	<p>wellbeing policy. And I think from a government perspective, from an educational policy point of view. You know... understand that a child's access to education is based on how safe they feel."</p> <p>"I was going down the route of what diagnosis is that ADHD, it is autism? And actually I don't believe it's any of those... highly sensitive is a personality trait. And then embracing that. Gosh, yeah. It is so empowering as well, this is a thing about if you can, you know, raise the awareness, it it empowers you... from a parents' perspective that is something we massively lack."</p> <p>"I think that's really interesting though [that there is a book aimed at supporting children's understanding of the HSC] ... It's aimed at children so that they can understand, but if they parent around them doesn't understand they can't help them."</p>	
<p>Importance of someone knowing child well enough to advocate for them when they can't</p> <p>Reason not allocated in RTA</p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"there's an assumption that kids really like... I think there's an assumption that kids need to learn to accommodate the group. So she hates team sports. I think it would be brilliant, you know, they make her really uncomfortable, I think it would be brilliant if in PE there could be like an option to just, you know, like skip rope in a corner or whatever. You know, like she loves, she's very athletic, she loves individual stuff... If I could just opt her out of football for the rest of her life, I would. You know, she, she hates it. And things like all the school events, you know, it's like a school disco, a school cinema night. You know, like there isn't always. We're trying, because I'm on the PTA now, we're trying to always have like a quiet corner, a quiet room or whatever. But the school doesn't always, like, have that. And without her having one-on-one support, which she doesn't need, she can't have that. You know, it's not like because they did invite all the autistic kids to, like, go to the nurture room. If there's something like that happening, but they wouldn't invite her and I don't think she would, like, put her hand up to go. Even if they did, so"</p>	Participant 8a
<p>Parent/carer feeling that they cannot advocate for their child as they are not certified in education</p> <p>Reason not allocated in RTA</p>	<p>"It's only now I feel able to actually approach her head teacher, which I have and said, are you aware of the highly sensitive person trait? Are you aware of high-sensitivity and what it means and how it can be enhanced in a learning environment?... And how you could actually change the physical environment and the the the sensory experience for somebody to actually enable them... And so I've literally just started having that conversation. I found a really good article because I'm not able to necessarily articulate it as well as I would like to because, I, I don't feel I'm a, I'm kind of a lived experience person and I could speak to people about it to offer that. But because there's, you know,</p>	Participant 7a

<p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>usually in education, you need to be a you need to have a certificate of some description for people to take seriously or you need to behind an organisation that promotes it. You can't. You're not valued as a parent's voice to advocate for your child yet from a highly sensitive person trait."</p>	
<p>Anxious parent putting school under pressure</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>"I think the the the educational psychologist.. I would say for them to have an open mind about the child before they start talking about diagnosis... I think they need to be holistic in what they're in, what they're doing. It comes from you guys. And it comes from their local authorities, because schools are teachers and they will teach them children the best they can. And when the odd one or two start rearing their head in that classroom, they have got to be, have, keep an open mind and not self-diagnosed, not diagnosed those children themselves, and pigeonhole them before they're sure, because the minute you mention those words to a parent they're either gonna stick their head in the sane and ignore it. And then that child will get no help until it's too late or they're gonna go oh yeah, that sounds good. I'm gonna go after everything, or they're gonna be, you know, like me in that, you know, if I get a headache, my first thing isn't going get paracetamol, it's I'll get a glass of water... I'd rather find another way of dealing with it before I get to that point. So for me, the HSP part of it comes in between a teacher knowing there's a problem or challenge or a difference and then having it in their toolbox to try these different things. And I think before you go down that road of it's ADHD, ODD, autism, whatever, cos parents are, I put my teachers under pressure. I did. Do you think there's anything wrong with my child? This can't carry on. What do you think's wrong with them? In your opinion, do you think this, do you think that. I did put my school under pressure... I think it's for them to say we have to keep an open mind. It could be a range of things... They went straight to diagnosis, medical diagnosis, clinical stuff without thinking – "</p>	<p>Participant 6a</p>
<p>Poor communication between parent and school around child's needs</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p>	<p>"they talked about things like, umm, selective mutism as well, which I think possible could have been a, you know, I didn't know because, you know, they they go off to school and you don't actually know what happens in there. But it was like... they have like a student teacher meeting and said like [child] has started talking now. And I was like, I didn't know she wasn't talking... Also I think because my kids go to a city school... it's 30 kids in a class and it's a lot. And it's statistically speaking, a lot of challenged kids, challenging situations. There's a lot of refugee families. There's a lot of children on</p>	<p>Participant 8a</p>

<p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>free school meals, that sort of thing. So I think they have a lot of, like, very loud problems. So an obedient child who sits silently in a corner, like, they're gonna kind of enjoy that.”</p> <p>“it wasn't like anyone raised any issues with me. It was more like me, like knowing that she was coming home upset and knowing that she was just uncomfortable in her own skin.”</p>	
<p>Value in schools not making a big deal out of individual differences</p> <p><u>Reason not allocated in RTA</u></p> <p>Code did not meet the researcher's subjective, substantive, 'threshold' for compelling patterning across the dataset.</p>	<p>“I think that would help [if there was more parent-teacher communication]. I mean I do we we question all the time whether we should have told school about our children before they went, but we did cause it said when we were filling in the forms. And there are any other things that you you perhaps need to tell us about your child? And we just thought do we say anything? And we thought well, we didn't want to because we just thought it's not a big deal, that was the the issue. It's really difficult. IT's not a big deal that they're highly sensitive and but then you want them to be treated and supported... I don't know. It's a really tricky one because it is... it's a personality trait. It's not. It's not a disorder. It's just how they are.”</p> <p>“I do make allowances for a lot of his little foibles that he has without thinking it's some autistic trait... I just accept that, you know, he'll grow out of something or he won't, and he is gonna be who he is and I think that's where schools don't, they try, they want everyone to be the same, they want you all to be the same, they want you all to sit there, all to do your SATs and you know... It's not life.”</p>	<p>Participant 5a</p> <p>Participant 6a</p>

Appendix. 26: Initial, Candidate Thematic Maps

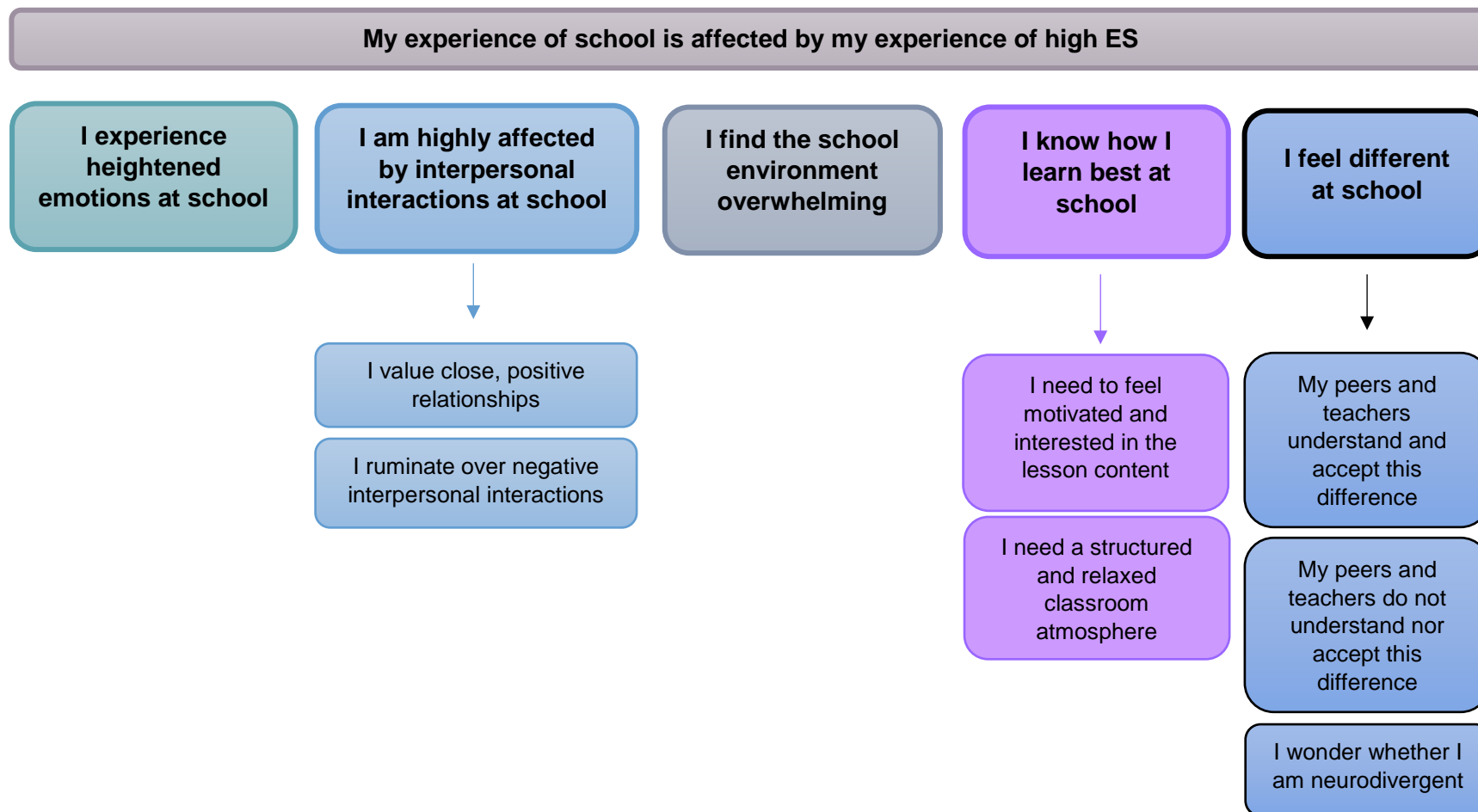


Figure 6: Initial Thematic Map exploring how children, who self-identify as experiencing high ES, experience their time within education (RQ1), including constructions of a supportive educational environment (RQ3)

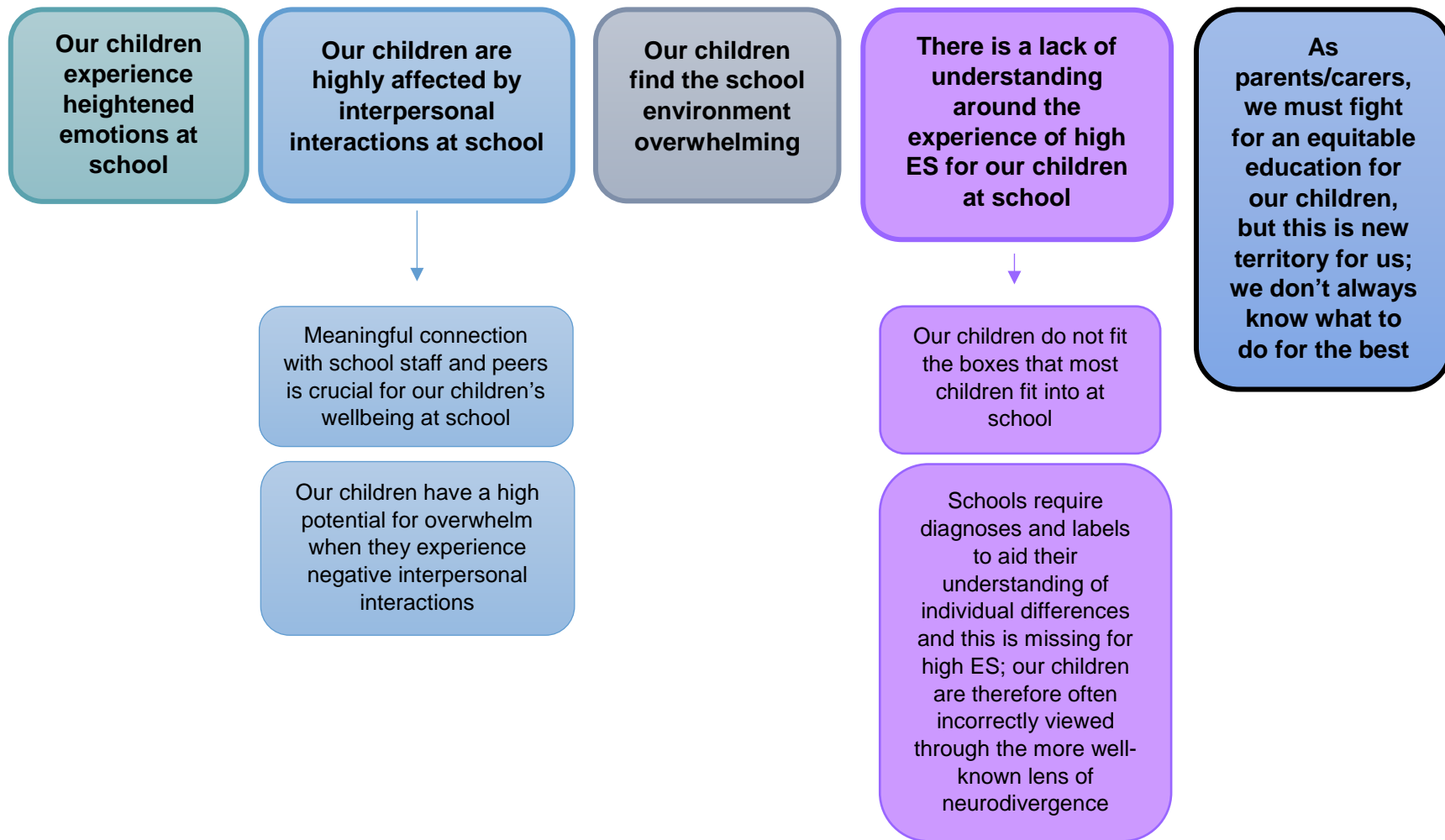


Figure 7: Initial Thematic Map exploring how parents/carers of children, who self-identify as experiencing high ES, perceive their child's time within education (RQ2), including constructions of a supportive educational environment (RQ4)

Appendix. 27: Key Findings and Related Implications for Educational Psychology Practice

Key Findings	Implications for Educational Psychology Practice
<p>Children, and their parents/carers, shared the perception that the child’s time within education was highly impacted by their experience of high ES, and was thus different to the majority of their less sensitive peers. Specifically, children who experienced high ES were found to experience intense emotions, deep analysis of positive and negative interpersonal interactions, and sensory overwhelm within the educational context.</p>	<p>Relating to the key findings of the current study, the EP is arguably well placed to promote awareness and understanding around the experience of high ES at both individual- and systemic-levels.</p> <p>Working at the individual-level</p> <p>How an individual responds to their environment, for example their typical depth of cognitive processing, emotional reactivity, awareness of environmental subtleties, and propensity to feel overwhelmed when overstimulated, is perhaps one of the most basic, yet significant, understandings we can have of a person (Aron et al., 2012).</p>
<p>Children reported varying accounts regarding whether they felt that their experience of high ES was understood and/or accepted within their educational context. Parents/carers similarly reported a sense that their children were perhaps different to the majority of their peers, and did not fit into the ‘boxes’ that they felt were set out by their child’s educational context. Parents/carers perceived that there was a lack of understanding around the experience of high ES for their children within their educational contexts.</p>	<p>Where a CYP lies on the continuum of ES may subsequently be viewed as a form of diversity, or individual difference, which can lead to enhanced, or adverse, outcomes dependent on the CYP’s interaction with the environment. By understanding, holistically, how a CYP is likely to experience and respond to their environment, the EP may be better able to formulate around any strengths or difficulties experienced, and co-construct successful pathways to preferred futures with CYP, their families, and other educational professionals during consultations. The EP’s psychological knowledge and skills, paired with the holistic view the EP brings to individual-level</p>
<p>Parents/carers felt that the lesser well-known experience of high ES was frequently viewed through, what they felt to be, the more well-known lens of neurodivergence by school-</p>	<p>‘casework’, is perhaps of increasing importance when considering (1) the findings from the current study highlighting the potential similarities, and confusion, around the experience of high ES and neurodivergence such as ASC, ADHD, and SPD, and</p>

based staff. Whilst there are similarities across presentations, current thinking suggests that the experience of high ES is distinct from ASC and ADHD, for example (Acevedo, 2020a). Parents/carers reported feeling that it was difficult to get school-based staff, and other educational professionals, to ‘see things differently’, and shared a sense of frustration that the individual difference of high ES was not acknowledged and/or understood in the same way that neurodivergence were, despite feeling that their children required access to additional support as a result of their experience of high ES.

A majority of parents/carers felt overwhelmed with the ‘fight’ they felt that they must engage in to ensure that their children had access to equitable educations. Parents/carers discussed how this was becoming harmful to their own mental health and wellbeing. Some parents/carers ultimately felt it appropriate to remove their child from LA-maintained mainstream education, with several children also reporting a desire to be educated elsewhere (e.g., EHE or independent sector education). The experience of removing a child from LA-maintained mainstream education was reported to be particularly distressing from a parent/carer perspective,

(2) the current ongoing discussions within society and amongst scholars debating the existence of intricacies and differences between the experience of high ES, ASC, and ADHD (e.g., Acevedo et al., 2018; Acevedo et al., 2014).

Working at the systemic-level

Providing systemic-level training for school-based staff and peers was advocated for by all participants in the current study. Such training may be cascaded to both CYP and parents/carers as appropriate.

Aims of systemic-level training

- To promote knowledge, awareness, and understanding around the experience of high ES within educational contexts for CYP, school-based staff, and parents/carers.
- To validate the experiences of CYP who experience high ES, and provide more positive language around the notion of high ES which may be embedded within education cultures.
- To provide school-based staff with an additional lens (i.e., distinct from the ‘neurodivergence lens’) through which to view CYP who display behaviours associated with the experience of high ES to promote a more holistic understanding of individual differences. *NB: It will be important that neurodivergence, however, is not overlooked given the similarities between*

<p>despite reportedly having positive outcomes for their children's achievement and wellbeing.</p>	<p><i>the experience of high ES and ASC and ADHD, for example (Acevedo et al., 2018; Acevedo et al., 2014).</i></p>
<p>Children and their parents/carers shared an extensive range of views regarding what they believed constituted a supportive educational environment for children experiencing high ES. Supportive educational environments were suggested to be those that offered opportunity to: reflect on, and develop positive coping strategies around, the experience of intense emotions; develop meaningful connection with peers and school-based staff; minimise the potential for sensory overwhelm through environmental adaptations; and enhance personal and systemic knowledge around the experience of high ES.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support CYP in their desire to feel more understood as unique individuals by their peers and wider society to: (1) reduce instances of teasing and/or bullying in relation to the experience of high ES, and (2) enable CYP to receive the person-centred planning that they desire within their educational contexts to promote their achievement and wellbeing. • To support CYP in their understanding of the self, which is well-documented within literature to be associated with increased self-esteem, reduced anxiety, and a more favourable opinion of one's own sensitivity (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2020b; Cater, 2016, 2022; Strader-Garcia, 2012). • To support parents/carers in feeling that their children are understood and accepted within their educational contexts, to ultimately reduce their sense of having to independently 'fight' for their child's equitable education, thus simultaneously enhancing parent/carer wellbeing. <p><u><i>Considerations in designing training</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training may wish to include theoretical and background knowledge to the notion of high ES (i.e., information included in Part One – Major Research Literature Review). For example, the core notion that 10 – 35% of the general population experience high ES (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2005; Aron et al., 2012; Pluess et al., 2018), which is characterised by deep cognitive processing and emotional reactivity, heightened awareness of environmental

	<p>subtleties, and propensity to feel overwhelmed when overstimulated (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2012). Similarly, advantages and disadvantages associated with the experience of high ES. For example, the tendency to experience intense enjoyment from deep meaningful connections, alongside the tendency to experience intense feelings of overwhelm and/or stress following negative interpersonal interactions in which individuals often require a significant amount of time to ‘recover’ (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2012).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training may also incorporate the voice of participants in the current study, relating both to how children and parents/carers perceive the child’s time within education, and suggestions around what constitutes a supportive educational environment for CYP who experience high ES (i.e., Part Two – Major Research Journal Article and ‘<i>Key Findings</i>’ in this table). It must be acknowledged, however, that the critical realist-contextualism orientation (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 179) on which this research was built means that any information included from the current study in the generation of such training will reflect a “provisional, contextual, and liminal truth” owing to the personal experiences and beliefs of those who took part in the current study.
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Appendix. 28: Selection of Extracts from Reflection Journal

September 2021, Year 2 of Doctoral Training Programme: Initial Thoughts Around Thesis Topics.

- I liaised with a PhD student conducting the ‘Sensitivity to School’ study. Thinking a lot about how there is a “gap” in the research base (i.e., qualitative experiences of CYP and their parents/carers, what they construct as a supportive educational environment).
- Methodological wonderings: how am I going to recruit participants? Online groups (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) may be a good avenue. Purposive sampling. I need to explore other research (e.g., Cater, 2016, 2022) and how they recruited. There are issues around social media recruitment (e.g., bias). I need to explore this in more depth.
- Should I use HSCS? Should I use HSCRS? Does this fit with my ontological and epistemological positioning, or is this more positivist? Remember the HSCS is only validated amongst 8 – 19-year-olds.
- **Current feelings:** I am feeling confused around the many potential avenues that I could go down. So many thoughts on recruitment at the moment. So many thoughts on potential actionable outcomes I’d like to achieve. I need to remember my research can’t be everything and do everything! Looking forward to having research supervision to try and streamline my thinking.

November 2021, Year 2 of Doctoral Training Programme: Thinking relating to Supervision Session (1) with IS, 05.11.21.

What do I want to be the outcome of this research?

- To gain an understanding of the awareness school-based staff have of high ES; to gain an understanding of the awareness EPs have of high ES; to gain an understanding of how CYP who experience high ES may best be supported at school from the perspective of CYP or school-based staff; to gain an understanding around the impact of ‘labelling’ (e.g., HSC).
- **Current feelings:** I still have too many ideas. It feels quite overwhelming. Where do I start? I need to narrow my focus. I don’t feel like I understand the theoretical underpinnings of high ES well enough at the moment. Supervision raised several questions around the “existence” and “realness” of the notion of high ES that I could not answer. How does this link with my ontological and epistemological positioning and stance as a researcher and TEP? Is this notion more constructionist? We had conversations around whether the experience of high ES may be considered by some to be a construction of anxiety (e.g., rumination) – does it depend how one views it, or is it a “real” notion that can be measured? Before I think any more about my research, I need to go back to basics and understand more about the notion of high ES and the HSC. What language am I going to use? HSC is very within-child. It does not fit well with EPP. I have lots of reading to do!

February 2022, Year 2 of Doctoral Training Programme: Thinking relating to Supervision Session (6) with RS, 08.02.22.

- I have been considering safeguarding (e.g., social media recruitment). I will need to ask for additional information in consent forms (e.g., YP age, name, full name of parent/carer, LA, country, or county of residence). This will enable me to access safeguarding services etc. if any disclosures are made.
- Reflections around the potential political/value side of social media groups – what is the aim and purpose of these groups? How will this bias my analysis? I can't really get away from this; those in a shared group will have shared constructs and this influences research. But is this a negative factor? I want to know these people's truths. I am aware of bias. I am biased myself.
- Inclusion criteria; it will be important YP self-identify as experiencing high ES to avoid the ethical dilemma of 'labelling' them as experiencing things they may not associate with.
- I feel that I need to spend some time thinking about how I am going to report results and analyse before collecting data. I must not collect data without knowing how I am going to analyse it. This is not ethically responsible.
- **Current feelings:** When I joined social media groups, this reinforced my passion for the subject as I realised the importance of the area for so many concerned parents. I was glad that I had stuck with this topic, despite some initial hurdles. I feel that my methodological design is coming together. I have spent a lot of time reflecting on various ethical considerations (e.g., using social media groups to recruit participants, 'labelling' YP etc.). I think this has been a valuable use of time. I am excited to begin the interviews!

May – June 2022, Year 2 of Doctoral Training Programme: Thinking relating to Supervision Session (7) with RS, 07.06.22.

- I am thinking about sending out my participant recruitment posters now to collect data and transcribe over the summer.
- I have been reflecting on a piece of research I engaged in as a participant. I have wondered whether it may be helpful to give YP participants, particularly, interview questions beforehand so that any anxieties about meeting me have less of an impact on them being able to provide coherent answers. I reflected on this with RS. We thought about the advantages and disadvantages of this approach. The disadvantages perhaps outweighed the advantages. I also reflected that the nature of semi-structured interviews allows for additional rapport building time. I can hopefully ease participants in. It will be important that I engage in icebreakers, give them additional information processing time, allow them to turn their camera off or write notes etc. if this helps them with their thinking. I need to think more about my script (e.g., prompts, probes, letting them know that asking for more information is an indication of interest and not an indication of them providing the "wrong" answer).
- **Current feelings:** I spent time with a fellow TEP taking part in a semi-structured interview for part of her own thesis research process. I was surprised how anxious I felt in being able to provide a coherent, thoughtful answer. This gave me higher empathy for my own future participants. I reflected around how I may adapt my methods to increase their feelings of comfortableness and ease. I am reading into being a 'relational interviewer' currently. I think this will be helpful in thinking about the approach I take to interviews.

July – August 2022, Year 2 of Doctoral Training Programme: Writing the Literature Review and Collecting Data

- I have begun participant recruitment. It has been challenging organising everything (i.e., administrator permission to post, wanting me to post on certain days etc.). Keeping Excel file so keep on top of participants.
- I have been reflecting on my interviewing style in relation to readings around being a ‘relational interviewer’. I have been focusing on letting participants take the lead, asking clarifying questions, whilst loosely keeping RQs in mind. I have given myself permission to be empathic, vulnerable, and share information from my own life as appropriate with the aim of building rapport with the participant but not overtaking the dialogue.
- I have had conversations with participants around alternative groups I may wish to post on. I will need to return to ethics to query this. Hopefully this will enable me to collect more data and reach more participants. Collecting data in the summer holidays is tricky!
- I am starting to notice several participants discussing neurodivergence. I am wondering how this will influence the data analysis; are participants neurodivergent? I need to read more into this – should this have been exclusion criteria perhaps? Currently still completing literature review – I need to look into this area in more depth. I am thinking a lot around the ethics of this also.
- I have thought a lot about the way I’ve set the interviews up (e.g., parent interview first). Is this influencing what their child then shares? Are they listening in?
- There have been some YP who have not wanted to take part due to not wanting to meet with a stranger. One parent asked if they could complete the interview questions via written expression. I considered this because this promotes inclusion. I want to gain their voice. However, this does not align with my ontological and epistemological positioning. I need to read more into QCA. “Can I use TA” paper Braun and Clarke (2020) useful ideas.
- It was lovely that some participants commented that just talking about ES was enlightening/helpful/they got a lot out of it.
- I enjoyed a Teams Meeting with some researchers in the area (e.g., Cater).
- **Current feelings:** I was anxious to begin collecting data – will I have any participants? Interviews went well; I really feel that I am living and breathing this thesis at the moment. The first few interviews gave me confidence again that this topic was worth exploring. I am wondering why I keep doubting this; this is a recurring pattern for me. Is this a reflection of how participants are feeling also? “Is this something that is valued about my personality? Do people want to hear this and will any changes be made?”

October 2022 – March 2023, Year 3 of Doctoral Training Programme: Data Analysis and Write Up

- **Current feelings:** This was a daunting part of the process; am I going to do a good enough job with everything the participants have shared with me? Am I going to represent their voices well enough? I really enjoyed getting stuck into data familiarisation. I am noticing so many patterns in the data. The more I noticed, the bigger this felt. Soon, it became huge and I fell into the trap of generating topic

summaries as opposed to themes so that I ensured I didn't 'miss' anything that had been shared with me. This meant that there was a lot of rewriting to do following the feedback from my first draft. I recognise the recursive nature of RTA and "getting lost" being part of the process, but this didn't make it any less frustrating and anxiety-provoking! Taking a step back was helpful and enabled me to view my analysis with 'fresh eyes'. I feel that the analysis I have produced has been enhanced following the first draft submission, although I do feel that I could keep going with this analysis, refining further and further and revisiting and delving deeper into the dataset. It has been difficult to draw a line and stop, but final submission deadlines are looming.