

**Reduced Timetables in Wales: Exploring Secondary
School Staff and Pupils' Experiences of Reintegration to
Secondary Mainstream Settings**

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Summary

This thesis is divided into three sections: a major literature review; an empirical research paper and a critical appraisal.

Part One: Major Literature Review

The major literature review will be presented in three distinct sections (Part A, B and C). Part A will use a narrative review style to set the scene, considering the context of the research topic. Part B adopts a systematic approach to critically explore the existing literature regarding reintegration of learners identified with socio-emotional differences following formal or informal exclusions. Finally, Part C will discuss the implications for EP practice along with psychological underpinnings and provide a rationale for the empirical study of the thesis.

Part Two: An Empirical Research Paper

The empirical research paper aimed to explore the views and experiences of secondary age pupils who have had a positive or meaningful reintegration into a secondary mainstream setting in Wales following being on a reduced timetable. In addition, the research sought to gain the views and experiences of secondary school staff working in a mainstream secondary setting in Wales who have supported a pupil in the process of a positive or meaningful reintegration to an educational setting, following being on a reduced timetable, focusing on capturing what both groups of participants felt helped the process. A description of the methodology used is outlined, including the Reflexive Thematic Analysis process where findings are outlined. Implications for practice and relevance to Educational Psychologists are discussed. Limitations and future research are also considered.

Part Three: A Critical Appraisal

This final section includes a reflexive and reflective account of the research process and is presented in two parts: a critical account of the development of the research practitioner, and contribution to knowledge including the dissemination of the findings.

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List of Abbreviations

CYP – Children and Young People

EP – Educational Psychologist

ALN – Additional Learning Needs

COVID-19 – Coronavirus

AP – Alternative Provision

UK – United Kingdom

YP – Young Person

BPSEM – Bio-Psycho-Socio-Ecological Model

LA – Local Authority

PRU – Pupil Referral Unit

PCP - Person-Centred Planning

PRISMA - Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

CASP - Critical Appraisal Skills Programme

MMAT - Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool

SDT – Self-determination Theory

ALNCo – Additional Learning Needs Coordinator

PTMF - Power Threat Meaning Framework

TEP – Trainee Educational Psychologist

Definition of terms

In line with Braun and Clarke's (2024) Big Q Qualitative Reporting Guidelines (BQQRG) for authors, reviewers and editors, the following section will aim to define key terms and concepts as they relate to this research.

Psychological literature highlights the ongoing debates relating to the use of terminology to describe Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and the possible negative implications of labelling (Hickinbotham & Soni 2021).

Behaviour, emotional and social development is identified as an area of need within the ALN Code for Wales (Welsh Government, 2021). The Code describes the area of need as follows:

“Some children and young people will demonstrate features of emotional and behavioural difficulties. They may be withdrawn or isolated, disruptive, and disturbing, hyperactive or lacking concentration; they may have underdeveloped social skills; or present challenging behaviours” (Welsh Government, 2021, p35).

According to current literature, labels related to social, emotional, and behavioural needs are commonly aligned with a medical model, which locates difficulties as within-child, highlighting deficits (Hickinbotham & Soni 2021).

Historically, ‘challenging behaviour’ has been defined as “culturally abnormal behaviour(s) of such an intensity, frequency, or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is likely to be placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously limit use of, or result in the person being denied access to, ordinary community facilities.” (National

Collaborating Centre for Mental Health UK, 2015, p21). Mowat (2015) argues that challenging behaviours is a social construct shaped by the relationships and dynamics within the classroom environment. Holt, Bowlby, and Lea (2013) share similar views, describing that children and young people's challenges are shaped by their environments and prefer the term socio-emotional differences.

As a result, the term socio-emotional differences will be used throughout, alongside a reframing of challenging behaviours as children and young people who present with externalised behaviours. This wording seeks to reduce the potential for deficit-based labelling, instead positioning behaviours in context and aligning with the researcher's intention to prioritise the perspectives and voices of children and young people.

For the purpose of this research, the term successful reintegration is understood as the factors that participants felt facilitated and/or supported the reintegration journeys of CYP following being placed on a reduced timetable. As the study draws on both positive psychology (Seligman, 2012) and eco-systemic (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) perspectives, it acknowledges that 'success' may be interpreted differently by individuals and therefore adopts a 'what is working' approach, with a focus on reintegration practices within Welsh secondary schools. In the field of positive psychology, the PERMA model (Seligman, 2012) highlights positive emotion and meaning as important elements that can contribute to resilience and support the well-being of children and young people (Fredrickson, 2009). In this context, considerations of 'successful reintegration' also include the positive and meaningful aspects, such as a sense of belonging and purpose, that participants associated with what seemed to help in their reintegration experiences.



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Part One: Major Literature Review

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Introduction

Introduction to the literature review

To consider some of the complexities surrounding the research topic, the literature review will aim to explore reintegration processes following exclusionary practices of children and young people (CYP) with socio-emotional differences. To do this, the literature review will be presented in three distinct sections (Part A, B and C) and will utilise a hybrid approach, meaning that the literature review will be presented using a combination of a narrative and a systematic approach to the review (Turnbull, Chugh & Luck, 2023; Snyder, 2019).

Part A will use a narrative review style to set the scene, considering the context of the research topic such as inclusive education in Wales, exclusionary practices within schools, and implications for CYP with socio-emotional differences including the process of reintegration following formal or informal school exclusions.

Part B adopts a systematic approach to critically examine the existing literature in response to the question: “What factors influence the reintegration of CYP with social, emotional, and/or behavioural differences into a mainstream setting following formal or informal exclusions?”

Part C will aim to summarise the key themes within the review in relation to the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) in addition to considering some psychological underpinnings of socio-emotional differences and adolescent development.

A rationale for the empirical study presented in part 2 of the thesis will be provided, including psychological theories underpinning the research questions, in particular bio-ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) and Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2011) will also be discussed.

Part A: Setting the scene

Inclusive Education in Wales

Inclusive education, as it is broadly defined, acknowledges that ‘every learner matters and matters equally’ (UNESCO, 2017, p12). Inclusion is a key focus of Wales’ educational reforms with a central goal to develop a high-quality, inclusive education system that meets the needs of every learner in every classroom (Welsh Government, 2023). The introduction of the new curriculum for Wales, alongside reforms to the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system is seen as vital to achieving this ambition (Conn & Hutt, 2020). These reforms aim to ensure equitable access to the curriculum while addressing the diverse needs of learners with ALN, ensuring opportunities to progress (Welsh Government, 2021, 2022).

The ALN reform explicitly supports an inclusive education system, as outlined in the ALN Code, which emphasises providing learners with ‘common opportunities’ that address their specific needs while ensuring they fully belong to the school community (Welsh Government, 2021, p. 40), placing responsibility on schools and all members of staff to adapt their practices to support all learners. This includes supporting CYP that display socio-emotional differences presented as externalised behaviours, which is recognised as one of the four broad areas of need within the ALN Code.

According to the current literature, CYP who are labelled with socio-emotional differences presented as externalised behaviours are frequently removed from mainstream educational settings, as their behaviours typically do not align with educators’ expectations of how students should act in these contexts (Caslin, 2014; Lea, Holt & Bowlby, 2016). Furthermore, Mowat (2015) highlights a disconnect between the practical realities of inclusive education and the perspectives presented in some of the literature, particularly concerning CYP with socio-emotional differences presented as externalised behaviours.

This is mirrored within the Welsh context with research by Knight and Crick (2022) highlighting some of the challenges of translating inclusive principles into practice. The study explored the possible differences in interpretation of inclusive education across the UK, utilising a critical policy analysis. The findings noted that policies relating to the inclusion of learners in Wales appeared to adopt a deficit approach to supporting CYPs needs. According to the researchers, this approach did not align with the aim of fostering systemic change (Knight & Crick, 2022). The researchers report that there is a need for further guidance on what inclusive practice is, describing that the concept of inclusive education within current policy was symbolic in nature. Moreover, the critical role of teachers' attitudes in implementing inclusive education is discussed within the paper. The researchers noted that teachers, although recognising the need to adopt inclusive practices, identified 'challenging behaviours', displayed by pupils, as a possible barrier to achieving an inclusive education system, in addition to insufficient funding or resources (Knight & Crick, 2022). Conn, Hicks and Thomas (2024) suggest that these findings by Knight & Crick (2022) reflect a possible 'implicit othering' (p97) of pupils with ALN by teachers. Despite best intentions of staff, some of these practices appeared to be creating further marginalisation of ALN learners (Conn et al, 2024). These factors may be perceived as a barrier to the inclusion of children who may be labelled as 'disruptive' and impacting the classroom dynamics, pointing to a possible gap between the aspirations of policy and the realities faced by education professionals (Weaver, 2023).

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, many vulnerable families in Wales experienced hardships related to lost employment, loss of income and inability to pay bills (Adegboye et al., 2021). This had a significant impact on CYPs mental health in addition to parental mental health (Adegboye et al., 2021). Following national lockdowns, in 2020 Senedd Cymru released a report noting that Wales would be at a higher risk of children

succumbing to vulnerability and adverse effects due to the high level of child poverty in Wales (Williams, 2020).

Due to the growing needs of CYP and their families, there has been a recent emphasis on prioritising CYPs emotional wellbeing and mental health (Welsh Parliament, 2020) with the new Curriculum for Wales and ALN Code placing CYPs wellbeing at the centre of everything and is considered a golden thread across all areas of learning (Welsh Government, 2019; Welsh Government, 2021). Furthermore, statutory guidance for schools by Welsh Government outline embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being (Welsh Government, 2021). The guidance offers a framework for schools, which is based on the core values of belonging, efficacy and being heard (Welsh Government, 2021).

Over recent years there has been an increase in the evidence base of trauma informed (Long, 2022; Luthar, Crossman & Small, 2015), relational (Dodds, 2023) and restorative (Zakszeski and Rutherford, 2021) approaches and practices. In contrast to behaviourist approaches¹ these practices aim to understand behaviours within the context of CYPs experiences and underlying needs (McKee, 2022). In Wales, the new guidance on improving learner engagement and attendance by Welsh Government (2023) purports that there should be a commitment by educational professionals and schools to adopt a learner-centred, strength-based, and trauma-informed approach to promote attendance and engagement in learning. Although there have been efforts to adopt relational approaches to support behavioural differences, research indicates that exclusionary practices are still commonly used as a

¹ Behaviourist approaches are based on the theory of operant conditioning proposed by B. F Skinner, which suggests that learning is shaped by the consequences of our behaviours. Within the context of education, this cause-and-effect framework utilises reward vs punishment strategies with 'desired behaviours' reinforced through rewards and consequences to actions being introduced following 'undesirable behaviours'.

reactive sanction (Wilson et al., 2024), reflecting continued use of behaviourist approaches such as zero-tolerance (Armstrong, 2017; Mellor, 2023).

The role of schools: CYP perspectives and staff wellbeing

A central theme within guidance by Welsh Government (2021) is the crucial role schools and their staff have in supporting CYPs emotional well-being. Schools are considered accessible and supportive environments within communities, with school staff engaging with CYP and their families on a regular basis (Stokes, 2022; Wiest-Stevenson & Lee, 2016). Vulnerable CYP may benefit from a ‘ring of protection’ provided by schools that promote an inclusive, nurturing, and positive environment (Pritchard, 2024, p29). To develop CYPs resilience, support is needed from the adults around them, as ‘resilience is a characteristic that emerges out of the systemic interdependence of children with their families, communities, and schools’ (Doll, 2013, as cited in Roffey, 2016, p33). As a result of this, evidence shows that the supportive and meaningful relationships and connections schools foster, promote protective factors for CYP with socio-emotional and behavioural differences, which is key in tackling some of the risk factors or challenges some CYP face (Roffey, 2016).

However, a number of studies that aimed to gain insight into the voices of CYP with socio-emotional and behavioural differences reported; feelings of disconnect, both from school staff and from learning activities (Clarke, Boorman, & Nind, 2011), were at risk of being perceived as less interested in learning and less engaged in school compared to their peers (Gibson, 2019), potentially among the least listened to and empowered in educational settings (Michael & Frederickson, 2013) and are suggested to be the most likely to experience punitive and exclusionary practices, which may undermine their inclusion and contribute to further marginalisation (Cefai & Copper, 2010; Jull, 2008).

Nevertheless, schools and their staff are experiencing high levels of stress (Teacher Wellbeing Index, 2024). Mainstream teachers are continuing to find engaging with the behavioural needs of CYP difficult (Tanase, 2021) with classroom behaviour being identified as a stressor linked to the well-being of school staff (Welsh Government, 2021). According to the Teacher Wellbeing Index (2024), 50% of staff report that their school's culture negatively affects their mental health and well-being. Among the key stressors, 82% of teachers and educational staff noted an increase in challenging pupil behaviour, which has reported to further deteriorate their mental health. Although only 4% of the survey respondents represent those working in Wales, the findings remain relevant as they appear to reflect the current challenges present within the Welsh education system. Research suggests that secondary school teachers experience higher levels of compassion fatigue (Yu et al., 2022), which may be reflected in the current statistics showing higher rates of school exclusions within secondary settings in Wales (Welsh Government, 2024). This professional responsibility placed on school staff to be emotionally regulated and compassionate towards CYP (Abraham, 2024) may lead to feelings of being overwhelmed, particularly when there is a need for staff development and further resources (Welsh Government, 2024). This may contribute to a perceived lack of competence in supporting students, causing staff to question their own ethical practice (Lawrence, 2011; Luthar & Mendes, 2020).

While efforts have been made by the Welsh Government to promote a whole-school approach to supporting CYP with socio-emotional and behavioural differences, it could be argued that for such an approach to be truly effective, attention must also be given to the well-being of school staff, not solely that of pupils. Research highlights that among the factors that promote staff wellbeing; appreciation, relationships, and a sense of belonging were reported to contribute positively to their experiences (Wigford & Higgins, 2019). The

factors influencing teacher wellbeing appear to mirror those absent from the interactions reported by CYP (Clarke, Boorman, and Nind, 2011; Boyden & de Berry, 2004; Gibson, 2019; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Cefai & Copper, 2010; Jull, 2008).

These findings highlight the ongoing challenges associated with the inclusion of CYP with socio-emotional differences within mainstream schools, in addition to potentially contributing to the ever-growing pressures within these environments to meet the needs of CYP within complex wider contexts (Graham et al., 2019; Thompson, Tawell & Daniels., 2021), a possible reflection of an ‘education system in crisis’ (Weaver, 2023, p6). Studies emphasising the perspectives of CYP with socio-emotional and behavioural differences underline the significance of listening to their voices, arguably offering powerful insights, and sharing useful and at times challenging messages about what accounts for an inclusive and effective learning environment (Michael & Frederickson, 2013).

School exclusions in Wales

Statutory guidance by Welsh Government (2024) state that school exclusions are a response to:

- serious breaches of the school’s behaviour policy
- and if allowing the learner to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the learner or others in the school.

An overview of data on permanent and fixed-term exclusions within schools in Wales was released in October 2024. The document was based on data from September 2022 to August 2023 and on all pupils in maintained primary, middle, secondary, and special schools in addition to pupil referral units (PRUs) (Welsh Government, 2024). Data for the 2021/22

academic year was the first set of exclusion data since 2018/19 that was not directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Welsh Government, 2024).

The most recent statistics indicate that CYP eligible for free school meals, typically determined by parents or carers receiving means-tested benefits, are 3.5 times more likely to be excluded from school than those who are not eligible (Welsh Government, 2024).

Furthermore, CYP identified as having ALN also face higher exclusion rates. The highest exclusion rates during the 2022–2023 academic year were associated with learners diagnosed with ADHD or experiencing socio-emotional differences, presenting with externalised behaviours (Welsh Government, 2024). Additionally, CYP from Roma and white ethnic backgrounds had the highest rates of fixed-term exclusions, while those with a mixed ethnic background experienced the highest rates of permanent exclusions. Although the data regarding the ethnic background of all excluded learners for the 22/23 academic year was not available, the statistics somewhat reflect the current landscape of school exclusions in Wales. Furthermore, the highest percentage of exclusions were from secondary mainstream schools and associated with ‘persistent disruptive behaviour’ (Welsh Government, 2024, p11). A Senedd Children and Young People and Education Committee (2024) report indicated that CYP who were excluded from school were identified as being at significant risk of exploitation. The evidence given revealed that very few children who have been exploited were regularly attending school (Senedd Children and Young People and Education Committee, 2024). Moreover, Action for Children reported that over 90% of the children referred to their services in Wales had faced exclusion from education. These findings and current statistics suggest the vulnerability of excluded CYP in Wales (Senedd Children and Young People and Education Committee, 2024).

Exclusionary practices in Wales

Historically, in Wales, children's rights have increasingly influenced education policy, particularly with The Learning Country policy, which emphasised prioritising learners' interests and reducing achievement inequalities (National Assembly for Wales, 2001). This document laid the groundwork for reforms in the Welsh education system, including a commitment to reduce school exclusions (Daugherty & Jones, 2002). The adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) by the National Assembly for Wales (now Welsh Government) in 2004 further reinforced the focus on children's rights in policymaking. This commitment was legally formalised through the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, which required ministers to consider the UNCRC in all decisions (as cited in Welsh Government, 2011). As a result, school exclusion guidance was updated in 2012 to align with these legal duties (Tseliou, Taylor, & Power, 2023). However, as Tseliou et al. (2023) outline, although guidelines regarding school exclusions have evolved over the years, taking into consideration the rights of the learner, statistics based on school exclusion rates in Wales have continued to increase. Although there are variances in exclusion rates across LAs in Wales (Tseliou et al., 2023), possibly explained by differing levels of ALN and socio-economic disadvantage in each area, up-to-date figures highlight that overall school exclusion rates for the year 2022- 2023 were the highest since 2011-2012 (Welsh Government, 2024). However, the true extent may be underestimated due to hidden forms of exclusion not captured in the official statistics, as alluded to by Power and Taylor (2020).

According to Done et al. (2021), off-rolling refers to the practice of removing students from a school's register without following the formal procedures required for fixed-term or permanent exclusions under legal regulations. These practices were largely concealed for

many years, but recent research is beginning to shed light on the issue. Parsons (2018) identifies several methods that schools might use as exclusion strategies, including informal practices such as off-rolling. These methods might include:

- Permanent exclusion
- Fixed-term exclusion
- Placement in PRUs or Alternative Provision (AP)
- Managed moves
- Elective Home Education (EHE)
- Reduced or part time timetables
- Extended study leaves
- Use of attendance code B for approved off-site educational activities
- Cases of children missing education (p2)

Evidence suggests that off-rolling has occurred in Wales (Welsh Government, 2018; Estyn, 2019). However, existing policies aim to reduce systemic incentives that may encourage this practice. In particular, the Curriculum for Wales and the School Improvement Guidance: Framework for Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability (Welsh Government, 2022) place a stronger emphasis on supporting the progression of all learners.

Nevertheless, a recent Welsh Government review (2024) on practices used in schools and PRUs to prevent exclusions highlights some of the ongoing concerns from educators, parents, and CYP about the continued use of exclusionary practices. Despite government guidance recommending evidence-based alternatives, secondary school systems appear to be more frequently utilising exclusionary practices (Denham, 2021).

Reduced Timetables

As noted above, one method of informal exclusions used within schools are reduced timetables. Reduced timetables have sometimes been used to support CYP with medical needs and, more recently, for those struggling with school attendance due to emotional or mental health issues, such as pupils experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (Markwell, 2024). However, reduced timetables are reported to be more commonly implemented for CYP exhibiting socio-emotional differences presented as externalised behaviours, or as an alternative to exclusion, effectively resulting in a form of ‘quasi exclusion’ (Parsons, 2018, p7). In previous years, no research has explicitly focused on the use of reduced timetables in relation to exclusionary practices in schools, which may explain their absence from educational policy. Consequently, schools have used reduced timetables without guidance from LAs or national policies (Denham, 2021). However, recent research by Weaver (2023), which explored how and when LAs in Wales implement reduced timetables for CYP experiencing socio-emotional differences displayed as externalising behaviours, as well as practitioners' perceptions and experiences of these reduced timetables, highlighted the need for improved systems and processes. In light of these findings, the Welsh Government proposed new guidance on the use of reduced timetables.

Based on Weaver's findings, it is outlined that reduced timetables should only be used in exceptional circumstances and ‘should never be used as a means of managing behavioural issues’ (Welsh Government, 2023, p.27). Furthermore, the guidance reports that reduced timetables are a short-term arrangement (for a maximum period of six weeks) between the young person, parents and/or carer, school, LA, and any other professionals that support the young person, with an emphasis on the importance of reintegration.

Despite new guidance, a 2024 Welsh Government review revealed that in some cases reduced timetables continue to be used as a preventative measure to avoid permanent exclusions with some CYP perceiving reduced timetables as a way for schools to ‘get them out of the way’ due to staff struggling to manage their behaviour (Welsh Government, 2024, p. 86), contradicting the short-term, supportive use recommended by government guidelines (Welsh Government, 2024).

Similar to Weaver’s (2023) research, Markwell’s (2024) research aimed to explore the rationale behind reduced timetables within schools in England, in addition to CYP’s experiences of being placed on a reduced timetable. Among the CYP interviewed, seven out of eight participants noted that reduced timetables were used either as a tool for behaviour management or as evidence in review meetings considering exclusions or managed moves, effectively becoming a tick-box exercise on the path to exclusion. Although Markwell’s study focuses on England, it provides valuable insights into the use of reduced timetables within the broader UK educational context and enriches our understanding of the possible implications on CYP placed on reduced timetables. Furthermore, research indicates that CYP placed on reduced timetables experience ongoing exclusion, which impacts their well-being, leading to negative behavioural consequences (Weaver, 2023) in addition to having a negative impact on CYPs friendship development, increased feelings of isolation, and were perceived as preparing CYP for failure, metaphorically acting as a ‘plaster over the crack’ rather than addressing underlying issues (Markwell, 2024, p76). Although Weaver (2023) did not directly explore the views and experiences of CYP on reduced timetables, the study’s conclusions align closely with Markwell’s (2024) findings.

Building on these findings, attention shifts to the reintegration process itself, where questions arise about schools' true intentions and the effectiveness of current practices in supporting

CYP returning from being placed on reduced timetables (Weaver, 2023). Instead of offering a coordinated, supportive approach, schools seem to place pressure on CYP to ‘prove’ themselves (Weaver, 2023, p78; Welsh Government, 2024, p. 59), which arguably reinforces a within-child perspective. Additionally, reduced timetables may create challenges for families and risk further disengagement from education, potentially influencing relationships between schools and parents (Welsh Government, 2024).

As a result of concerns raised within the research regarding reintegration, the new guidance by Welsh Government emphasises the importance of reintegration, ensuring that all parties involved share the common goal of the pupil returning to school (Welsh Government, 2023). However, despite this emphasis, findings suggests that schools continue to display a lack of urgency when it comes to reintegrating pupils, with reduced timetables often being extended without clear plans for reintegration (Welsh Government, 2024). Nevertheless, it is worth considering the implications of real-world practice, whereby schools are under considerable pressure to complete statutory processes (Welsh Government, 2024). It is possible that during this time schools have not been able to identify and interpret the guidance that supports the reintegration of learners. As a result, it is unlikely that a noticeable difference would be reported in the short timeframe, as the change process can take significant time to implement positive change (Brown et al., 2025). Current policy acknowledges the challenges of reintegration, with statements such as, ‘the longer a learner is out of school, the more difficult it is for them to be reintegrated’ (Welsh Government, 2024, p. 49), and recognises that rapid reintegration into mainstream schools is a significant challenge for both learners and schools.

Reintegration

Reintegration is defined as educational settings, LAs, and other agencies' efforts to 'return pupils who are absent, excluded or otherwise missing from mainstream education' (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019, p. 340), although a 'successful' reintegration does not necessarily mean the point at which a CYP returns to full-time mainstream education (Kelly, 2022). Reintegration into mainstream education is often reported to be challenging for students displaying socio-emotional and behavioural differences, particularly when these difficulties arise early in their education (Estyn, 2023). This group of CYP are perceived to be at a higher risk of 'unsuccessful' reintegration, potentially leading to what is referred to as the revolving door effect, where a CYP repeatedly transitions between educational settings such as mainstream schools and AP (Pillay et al., 2013). These repeated transitions pose a significant concern given psychological literature highlighting the importance of school connectedness and a sense of belonging in developing positive self-esteem and self-concept (Martin et al., 2017).

Part B: Systematic approach to a literature review

Introduction to the systematic literature review

Having established the broader context of inclusion and exclusionary practices in Wales in addition to reintegration and its importance in the educational landscape regarding reduced timetables in particular, it is important to delve deeper into the specific practices that shape this process. While the previous discussion aimed to set the scene, utilising Braun and Clarke's (2021) 'making an argument' model (p120), the following section will provide a more focused exploration of reintegration in relation to CYP with socio-emotional differences presenting as externalised behaviours using a systematic approach to a literature review.

Method for review

Within the early stages of the literature review process, the aim was to identify studies that specifically explored the reintegration of CYP into mainstream education following a period on a reduced timetable. However, an initial search of the existing literature revealed a lack of research directly addressing this specific reintegration process. The initial search strategy was developed with guidance from a university specialist librarian and included terms related to reduced or part-time timetables. Despite this targeted approach, the search yielded an insufficient number of studies to conduct a comprehensive systematic review. Consequently, the scope was adjusted to ensure a more thorough analysis of relevant literature. As a result, the focus was broadened to include studies exploring the facilitators and barriers to reintegration for CYP with socio-emotional differences, particularly those exhibiting externalised behaviours, returning to a mainstream setting after formal or informal exclusions. Further reflections regarding the search process are outlined in Part 3 of the thesis.

The searches were carried out within the period of September 2024 – January 2025 and conducted through electronic search engines including: SCOPUS, PsychInfo, ERIC, British Education Index (BEI) and Google Scholar. The following search terms were used (see Table 1).

Search Terms	Rationale
"Reintegrat*" "Re integrat*"	The review intended to capture studies that explored reintegration experiences or processes.
"Mainstream school*" "Mainstream secondary school*" "Mainstream education"	The review aimed to gain papers that involved practices / process / experiences from secondary mainstream settings / education.
"Reduced timetable*" "Reintegration timetable" "Part timetable"	The review intended to explore practices and processes related to reduced timetables or part-timetables in particular.
"Informal exclusion" "School exclusion"	The review aimed to explore processes of reintegration following formal or informal school exclusions.

Table 1. Summary of search terms used for systematic literature review

Search terms were combined and/or separated (for example, ‘reintegrate’ and ‘mainstream school’) to further expand the research area. References from some articles were also further explored through a snowball technique and through citation tracking. By looking at the reference lists of key studies it allowed the researcher to find other relevant studies, which complemented the initial systematic searches (Hirt, 2020). In addition, unpublished doctoral theses were searched through ProQuest and ORCA Online Research @ Cardiff and government documentation. Further manual searches were conducted within the journal *Educational Psychology in Practice* to identify relevant research on the topic in relation to Educational Psychology practice.

Following the initial search, inclusion, and exclusion criteria (see Table 2) were applied to assess the eligibility of the literature. However, due to a lack of specific policy or guidance directly shaping the scope of the search, it was necessary to introduce boundaries to focus the review. In line with Siddaway’s (2019) recommendation that inclusion and exclusion criteria may be revisited throughout the review process, these parameters were reconsidered as the literature review progressed. Consequently, the date range for included publications was refined to 2010–2025, based on their relevance and contribution to the evolving research focus. Further reflections on this process are included in Part 3.

A Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) model (Page et al., 2021) is included (see Figure 1) to ensure transparency in searches, screening, and eligibility of papers to be included within the review. The searches initially provided a total of 682 papers. In addition to this, a further six papers were found using a backwards-and-forwards snowballing method. Duplicates were removed, and papers were screened through their titles and abstracts to determine their eligibility and relevance to the research topic.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Rationale
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Papers that include the process of reintegrating a CYP to a mainstream setting following formal or informal forms of exclusion (this accounts for reduced/part timetables, alternative provisions and other methods of informal exclusions).	Papers that do not discuss the process of reintegrating CYPs into mainstream settings following formal or informal forms of exclusions e.g., papers focusing on CYPs experiences within Alternative Provisions or exploring the process of reintegrating CYP to an educational setting because of experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) or due to medical needs.	The researcher is interested in exploring what are the factors that influence the reintegration process of CYP to a mainstream setting following experiences of formal or informal exclusions, specifically learners that have socio-emotional differences presenting as externalised behaviours.
Papers providing empirical data, including quantitative and qualitative studies and published in peer reviewed journals in addition to unpublished doctoral theses (subject to critical appraisal).	Papers that do not include empirical data such as purely theoretical or conceptual papers	A combination of sources will enhance the overall quality and depth of the literature review, offering a balanced view of the research topic.
Papers based within the UK.	Papers that are based outside of the UK.	Research that was directly related to UK educational contexts was sought due to the research focusing on the context of reintegration within the Welsh context.
Published between the years 2010 – 2025	Published earlier than 2010	To introduce boundaries to focus the review.
Papers written in English, Welsh, or any other language were considered for inclusion, provided a translation was available.	Papers where translations were incomplete, unclear, or not reliable sources.	Accessibility and comprehension. However, despite openness to studies in Welsh and other languages, no non-English publications were identified through the search process.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for systematic literature review papers

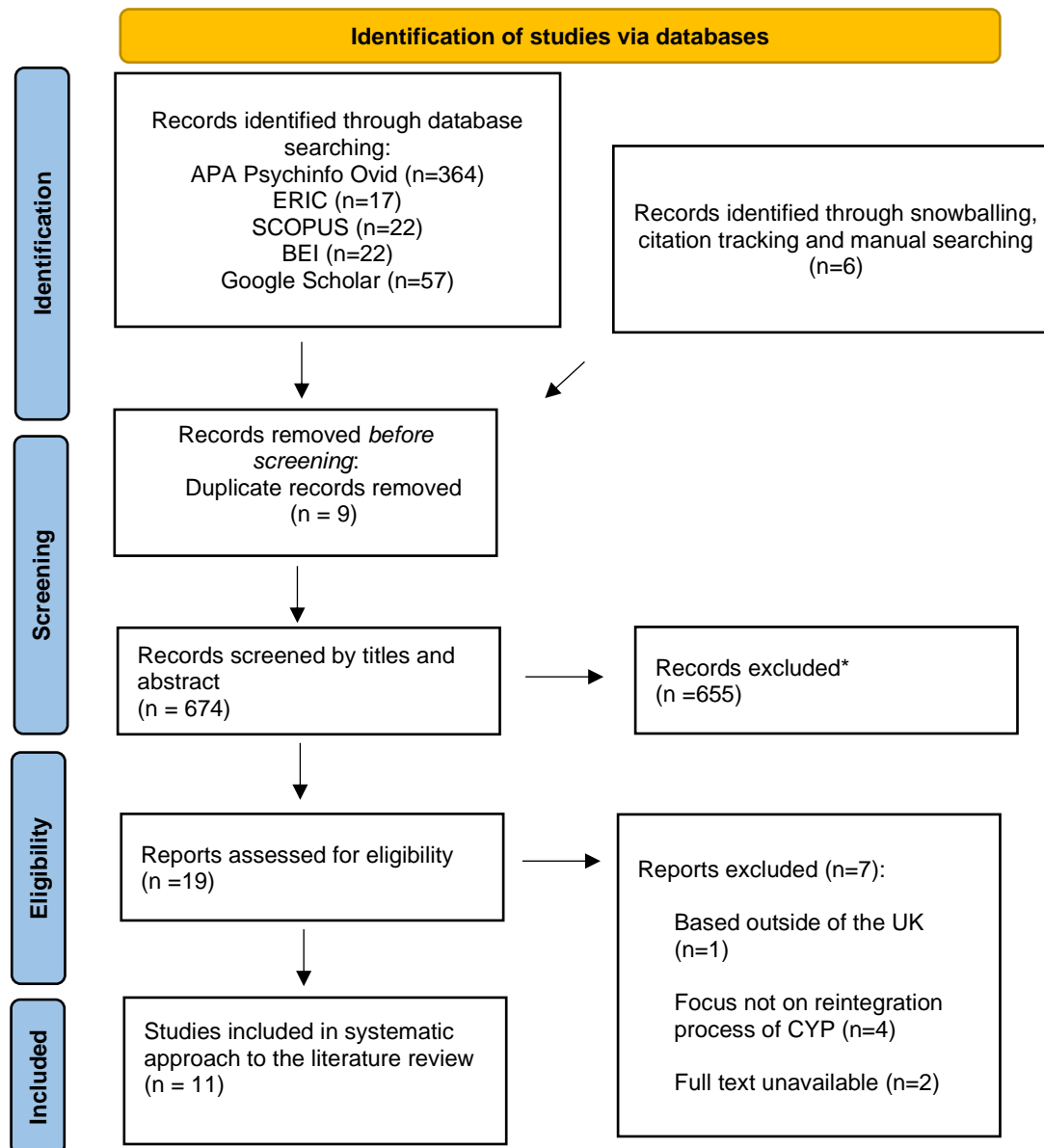


Figure 1. PRISMA for systematic literature review

To establish the quality of the chosen literature, the studies that met the inclusion criteria were critically appraised to aid in the process of drawing reliable conclusions (Popay et al., 2006). The researcher used the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist (CASP, 2018) for qualitative research, and the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT)

(Hong et al., 2018) was used for studies employing a mixed-method approach. Please see Appendix A for a detailed account of the critical appraisal process for each paper.

To ensure a thorough analysis of the data, the researcher followed the below multi-phase process for the development of themes (Appendix B) (Cresswell, Hinch, and Cage, 2019; Lockwood, Munn & Porritt, 2015):

1. Extracting information: reading each study multiple times to gather details about the methodology, participants, and findings.
2. Coding: assigning labels to relevant information found in the studies.
3. Developing themes: grouping the codes into broader categories or themes to organise and summarise the main findings.

In summary, the literature included in the systematic review consisted of a total of 11 studies. Eight of these used qualitative methods and three used a mixed-method approach. Five of the studies have been published in peer reviewed journals and the other seven papers were doctoral theses, all completed as part of the requirements of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology. The papers all focussed on CYP, either directly gathering their views on the reintegration process or through other stakeholders, such as educational professionals including school staff in addition to parents / carers. Table 3 below provides an overview of the papers included in the review, with a full summary of each paper available in Appendix C.

Author(s) and Reference	Location	Design	Participants	Analysis
Pillay, J., Dunbar-Krige, H., & Mostert, J. (2013). Learners with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' experiences of reintegration into mainstream education. <i>Emotional and behavioural difficulties</i> , 18(3), 310-326.	UK (London, England)	Qualitative approach with a generic phenomenological enquiry within an interpretivist-constructivist paradigm.	13 learners identified by the researchers with BEDS aged between 11-14 years.	Giorgi's steps for data analysis.
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Design	Participants	Analysis
Thomas, D. V. (2015). Factors affecting successful reintegration. In <i>Managing and Improving School Attendance and Behaviour</i> (pp. 200-220). Routledge.	Within one LA in Wales.	Mixed methods approach.	Education practitioners (Headteachers, SENCOs and classroom practitioners such as teachers and learning support assistants).	Multiple approaches such as analysis of historical data and qualitative analysis method was used to analyse the semi-structured interviews.
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Design	Participants	Analysis
Atkinson, G., & Rowley, J. (2019). Pupils' views on mainstream reintegration from alternative provision: a Q methodological study. <i>Emotional and behavioural difficulties</i> , 24(4), 339-356.	UK (focusing on the English educational system)	Q methodology.	9 primary and secondary pupils aged between 10-16 years old.	Q-factor analysis.
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Design	Participants	Analysis
Ewan-Corrigan, E. (2013). Person Centred Planning 'in action': exploring with young people their views and	UK (South-West England).	Action research methodology. Mixed methods approach.	6 CYP (5 male and 1 female) primary and secondary aged. Two in mainstream schools and	Rating Analysis and Thematic Analysis.

experiences of education and the use of Person-Centred Planning in supporting transition and re-integration to mainstream settings.			4 in alternative provisions. 43 adults which included parents, school/setting staff, multi-agency professionals and educational psychologists.	
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Design	Participants	Analysis
Lawrence, N. (2011). What makes for a successful re-integration from a pupil referral unit to mainstream education? An applied research project. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 27(3), 213-226.	UK.	Qualitative research design to explore views of participants.	Focus group 1 – 9 PRU staff who had the role of learning mentor in various settings. Focus group 2: 6 mainstream school staff from different secondary schools within the borough, 2 PRU staff and 1 advisory teacher from the Behaviour Support Service.	Thematic analysis.
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Design	Participants	Analysis
Kelly, A. (2022). <i>The lived experiences and sense making of adolescent males with social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing needs who have reintegrated back into</i>	Northern Ireland	Qualitative design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).	Participants were male students between 14-15 years old, in Key Stage 3 and 4 of compulsory	Followed the IPA procedure, which involved a four-phase process.

<i>mainstream education following a placement in alternative education provision: an interpretive phenomenological analysis</i> (Doctoral dissertation, Queen's University Belfast).			school age across Northern Ireland. All participants had identified SEN in relation to social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing needs.	
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Design	Participants	Analysis
Boyd, R. (2019). <i>“Nothing much has changed:” Black boys’ experiences of exclusion and reintegration in mainstream secondary schools</i> (Doctoral dissertation, University of Essex & Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust).	UK (across two London LAs)	Qualitative design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).	6 black or mixed-raced boys from 3 mainstream secondary schools across two LA in London. Between the ages of 12-15 years old (Years 8, 9, 10 and 11).	Followed the IPA procedure.
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Design	Participants	Analysis
Bakhtiar, R. (2017). <i>Listening to the stories of young people who have experienced reintegration from an Inclusion Centre to a new mainstream secondary school</i> (Doctoral dissertation, University of Sheffield).	UK.	Qualitative design using a narrative inquiry approach.	2 YP (2 Males in Year 8 and Year 9 of secondary education) who had experienced reintegration from an Inclusion Centre to mainstream secondary school.	Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke’s approach.
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Design	Participants	Analysis

Moran, K. (2010). Reintegration into mainstream secondary school following permanent exclusion: Experiences and opportunities. The University of Manchester (United Kingdom).	UK (LA in England)	Qualitative case study methodology.	<p>4 parents of reintegrated pupils (case study)</p> <p>3 pupils (interviewed)</p> <p>4 members of school staff supporting reintegrating pupils (interviewed) in addition to 3 Headteachers</p> <p>2 LA reintegration officers (interviewed)</p> <p>7 EPs (focus group)</p>	Theoretical Thematic analysis.
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Design	Participants	Analysis
Armstrong, H. (2017). From Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) to mainstream education: a Q methodological study exploring the perceptions of PRU and mainstream secondary school professionals on reintegration (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nottingham).	UK (within one LA in England)	Q methodological approach.	<p>The study included 47 participants from secondary school settings and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), specifically:</p> <p>Mainstream Secondary School Staff: Participants were recruited from seven mainstream secondary</p>	<p>Mixed method approach.</p> <p>Factor extraction and interpretation from the Q methodology, in addition to thematic analysis on qualitative data from post-sorting questionnaires to identify perceived barriers to reintegration within the LA.</p>

			<p>schools within the Local Authority.</p> <p>PRU Staff: Staff members from two PRUs within the Local Authority.</p> <p>Professional Roles: The participants held various professional roles, including Teachers, Behaviour and Learning Practitioners, Pastoral Managers, and Inclusion Officers.</p>	
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Design	Participants	Analysis
Weaver, C. (2023). <i>"This is your last chance to prove to us you can be here, we've tried everything to help you"- Exploring the use of reduced timetables as exclusionary practice for young people in Wales</i> (Doctoral dissertation, Cardiff University).	UK (Wales)	Mixed method design.	<p>The study involved two groups of participants:</p> <p>Quantitative component: 13 professionals with responsibilities for attendance and/or exclusions across all 22 LAs in Wales.</p>	<p>Quantitative analysis: descriptive statistics.</p> <p>Qualitative analysis: Reflexive Thematic Analysis following Braun and Clarke's six step process.</p>

			Qualitative component: 7 interviews with professionals who supported YP placed on reduced timetables, and had regular direct contact with them such as secondary school pastoral team, charity sector, counselling services, youth support team, TEPs ALNCos and Inclusion room Lead.	
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Design	Participants	Analysis
Markwell, C. (2024). <i>“It feels like you’re just plastering over a crack” The use of reduced timetables in secondary schools</i> (Doctoral dissertation, UCL (University College London)).	UK (within one LA in the Southeast of England)	Two-phase qualitative design. Phase 1: collecting contextual data from professionals through semi-structured interviews. Phase 2: semi-structured interviews with YP who had been placed on reduced timetables. Also included activities such as the Grid Elaboration Method (GEM) and the life grid approach.	Phase 1: 8 professionals from schools and wider LA teams who had roles in supporting YP on reduced timetables were interviewed. Phase 2: 7 YP in years 8-10, with five currently on a reduced timetable while the other 2 was reintegrated back into full-time education. Pupils were from 3 mainstream schools	Reflexive Thematic Analysis following Braun and Clarke’s six step process.

			within the area and one AP. 5 of the pupils needs were associated with EBSA and 2 pupils were attending an alternative provision.	
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Table 3. Overview of the papers included in the systematic literature review

The following section will synthesise key themes identified in the literature, focusing on factors currently recognised as having an impact on the reintegration of CYP into mainstream schools following formal or informal exclusions.

Introduction of themes within the literature

A review of the existing literature highlights the complex and interconnected factors influencing the reintegration of CYP with socio-emotional and behavioural differences to a mainstream setting. Many studies included in the review adopt an eco-systemic (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) perspective, recognising that reintegration experiences are shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by the broader systems surrounding CYP. Within this framework, key themes are identified, encompassing learner factors as well as influences from family, school, and peer relationships. Additionally, systemic and environmental factors play a crucial role, reflecting the wider socio-political contexts that impact the reintegration process. The work of Bronfenbrenner (1999) is particularly relevant to these themes, as the ecological systems theory emphasises the multiple, interacting layers in which CYP develop. This perspective highlights how reintegration is not shaped by the individual alone but by the dynamic interactions between those layers i.e. the microsystem (e.g., family, peers, teachers), mesosystem (connections between home and school), exosystem (wider influences such as local authority policies), and macrosystem (societal and cultural values). Framing the findings through this lens was key to the analysis, as it helped to situate the themes within these interconnected layers and emphasised the complexity of factors that influence reintegration experiences. The following section explores these themes in greater depth, drawing on the existing literature to explore the ways in which these interconnected influences shape CYP's experiences of reintegration into a mainstream setting.

Individual factors

The studies considered most relevant to this theme were Lawrence (2011), Thomas (2015), Atkinson and Rowley (2019), Moran (2010), and Kelly (2022).

A study by Lawrence (2011) explored the views of PRU and mainstream staff regarding the process of reintegration of secondary school aged pupils from a PRU to a mainstream setting.

The aims of the study included considering what makes a reintegration successful or not, in particular what factors support or are perceived as barriers to the process. To do this, the study used focus groups. The first focus group included nine PRU staff and the second group consisted of a mixture of six mainstream staff from various secondary schools within the borough, two PRU staff and one advisory teacher from the Behaviour Support Service. The study identified several key factors that facilitated the reintegration of CYP into mainstream education, one of which included CYPs motivation to return to a mainstream setting, their ability to adopt a reflective approach, and an increased sense of self-esteem and self-worth. These findings suggest that the CYPs' internal readiness plays a pivotal role in the reintegration process. However, the focus of the study is based on the perspectives of those working with the CYP, therefore it could be argued that the findings may be shaped by adults' perceptions and assumptions. Although the researchers' use of thematic analysis suggests an epistemological and ontological stance consistent with a reflexive approach, the absence of an explicit statement of these positions leaves some uncertainty about how the research was shaped.

Thomas' (2015) study echoed the findings of Lawrence (2011). The focus of Thomas' research was on factors identified by educational practitioners as influencing the success of reintegration from a PRU to a mainstream setting. Learner-related factors such as the CYPs desire to reintegrate, their acceptance of school rules, and a positive attitude, were all outlined as important individual factors that could influence the reintegration process, suggesting that

a significant responsibility is placed on the learner for a successful reintegration. Based on these findings, Thomas (2015) goes as far as proposing a reintegration readiness model which emphasises the role of the CYP within the reintegration process, and how their input could determine the trajectory of their reintegration. It could be viewed that proposing a reintegration readiness model that places the onus on the CYP, raises important considerations regarding whose perspectives are shaping the knowledge claims and how this influences the concept of 'readiness'. Similarly to Lawrence's (2011) research, without considering the perspectives of the YP, the findings risk reflecting adult assumptions. Engaging with others such as CYP as meaning-makers may be helpful to co-construct their understanding of reintegration. This approach may unintentionally reinforce a within-child perspective while overlooking systemic and contextual factors. The absence of an epistemological and ontological stance further complicates interpretation, as it is unclear how the knowledge was understood. Additionally, while the researcher appears to adopt an insider position, there is no accompanying reflexive engagement with how this positionality and subjectivity may have influenced data interpretation or the shaping of findings which may impact the study's transparency.

However, more recently there has been research that have sought the voice of CYP regarding their views and experiences of reintegrating to a mainstream setting following informal forms of exclusion. Atkinson and Rowley (2019) explored the views of nine primary and secondary age pupils on a successful reintegration into a mainstream setting from an AP. Q methodology was used to explore subjectivity and the communication of individual views based on personal opinions and constructs. CYP who participated reported individual factors, such as personal motivation, as crucial to the reintegration process. They emphasised the importance of a strong desire to succeed, which involved setting personal goals and targets to improve their behaviour. This, in turn, contributed to their academic achievement, reinforcing

the idea that a willingness to succeed is a key factor in successful reintegration. These findings are particularly powerful as they are coming directly from the CYP themselves, offering first hand insight into their lived experiences. Although the researcher mentions that the methodology used could have limited the CYP to fully express themselves, they recognise that the views and opinions of the CYP are dynamic, and therefore it was not assumed that participants would give the same viewpoint if the Q-sort were re-administered at a different point in time. In addition, generalisability was not an aim of the research but rather attempted to identify what views exist on the topic.

Consistent with Atkinson and Rowley's (2019) findings, additional research which incorporate the views of the CYP highlight that individual attributes such as the CYPs intention and ability to change and engage with the school environment along with their psychological wellbeing, ALN, and future-oriented thinking, were all important individual factors that could influence the reintegration process (Moran, 2010; Kelly, 2022). Although the studies highlighting pupil voice (Moran, 2010; Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Kelly, 2022) identified individual factors that could contribute to a successful reintegration process, these were discussed within the broader context of an eco-systemic approach, acknowledging the wider support systems and external factors influencing the reintegration process. In spite of the fact that Thomas (2015) stated that one of the study's aims was to understand the systems and how they operate in order to identify key influences on successful pupil reintegration, the emphasis on the individual learner within the reintegration process may be potentially problematic. Some qualities that influence reintegration may be innate or shaped by broader environmental factors, meaning that solely focusing on the learner's readiness may overlook the role of systemic support in facilitating a successful reintegration. In contrast, other studies (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Moran, 2010; Kelly, 2022) acknowledge that while individual

factors are important, they represent only one part of a broader set of influences affecting CYP with socio-emotional differences reintegrating to a mainstream setting.

The role of relationships in reintegration

The microsystem refers to the immediate social interactions and relationships that directly impact a CYP's reintegration experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Atkinson & Rowley, 2019). This includes family, peer, and staff relationships, which according to the current literature (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019) play a crucial role in shaping how CYP navigate their return to mainstream education following formal and informal exclusions. Research highlights that a strong support network within these systems may facilitate the reintegration process, while challenges within these relationships may create barriers. The studies considered most relevant to this theme were Atkinson & Rowley (2019), Bakhtar (2017), Armstrong (2017), Pillay et al. (2013), Thomas (2015), Lawrence (2011), Gibson (2019) and Boyd (2019).

Staff relationships

While peer relationships might often be assumed to be central to CYP's reintegration experiences, research suggests that relationships with school staff may hold even greater significance. Atkinson and Rowley (2019) found that while friendships were important, CYP identified trusted school staff members as their primary sources of emotional and practical support during their reintegration to a mainstream setting. The presence of at least one key adult within the school who demonstrated care and advocacy was seen as crucial in fostering a sense of belonging and security. These findings are further supported by Bakhtar's (2017) research. Unstructured exploratory interviews were completed with secondary age pupils who had reintegrated from an Inclusion Centre to a mainstream secondary school. The CYP emphasised the importance of a supportive adult advocate within the school environment suggesting how this is considered an essential component in facilitating positive change

during the reintegration process. Moreover, the research by Bakhtar (2017) highlighted that if the CYP felt heard and supported within their school settings by the adults around them, they were more likely to engage with the reintegration process. However, it is important to note that the study consisted of two participants. Nevertheless, as the researcher used a narrative inquiry approach, the findings offer rich, participant-led insights that are highly valuable in understanding complex, individualised experiences, especially regarding topics such as reintegration, where personal stories may shed light on broader systemic challenges and support. By allowing the CYP to express themselves freely it is possible that the results are more meaningful as the CYP play an active role in shaping their narratives around the subject. This focus on the importance of feeling heard and supported aligns with Armstrong's (2017) findings, which highlight the role of mutual respect between CYP and school staff in fostering positive reintegration experiences. While Armstrong's (2017) study did not directly include student participants, it nevertheless considered their perspectives during the development of the research methodology. Findings reinforce the idea that when CYP feel valued and respected, they are more likely to engage meaningfully with the reintegration process.

Furthermore, Pillay et al. (2013) who interviewed learners with social, emotional and behavioural differences that were returning to mainstream education after spending time in a Learning Support Unit or PRU, identified that a strong adult-student relationship provided stability for the CYP within the reintegration process. However, it was suggested that it was important that adults set clear boundaries and a structured set of agreements with learners, to prevent the CYP from becoming over-reliant on key staff members. This emphasis on adult-student relationships aligns with broader concerns about the role of school staff in the reintegration process, as staff attitudes and perceptions may influence how welcomed and supported CYP feel upon their return to mainstream education. Thomas (2015) highlighted

that a possible barrier to reintegration was the hesitation of some school staff to fully accept returning students. Apprehensiveness about past behaviours and potential challenges influenced staff attitudes, which, in turn, shaped how CYP experienced their reintegration journey. Without a welcoming school environment, CYP were more likely to struggle with feelings of exclusion and disengagement.

Family and home factors

Within the current literature, parental involvement and family support have been identified as key facilitators of successful reintegration. Lawrence (2011) found that parents who expressed positive views about education and provided a supportive home environment played a vital role in their child's reintegration journey. Furthermore, clear communication between school staff, CYP, and their families was deemed essential in setting realistic expectations and easing the reintegration process.

Atkinson and Rowley (2019)'s findings reinforced the importance of family support, noting that successful reintegrations were more likely to happen if parents displayed encouragement towards the reintegration process. This also aligns with findings from Pillay et al. (2013), who described caring and encouraging relationships with parents as promotive factors in resilience, helping CYP navigate the challenges of reintegration more effectively.

Additionally, Bakhtar (2017) further emphasised that family support was deemed a key factor within the reintegration of CYP, particularly when parents and caregivers considered external systemic influences, such as socioeconomic pressures or previous school experiences, rather than solely attributing presenting difficulties to the CYP themselves. This perspective helped reduce feelings of blame and fostered a more constructive approach to reintegration (Bakhtar, 2017).

Peer relationships

According to the current literature, peer relationships are recognised as a complex factor to the reintegration process of learners. Overall, the research outlines that positive peer relationships or peer role models could be perceived as a facilitator to the reintegration of CYP returning to mainstream education, such as by offering guidance in lessons, providing motivation to succeed, promoting pro-social behaviours and as an additional sense of connection or belonging to school (Pillay et al., 2013; Gibson, 2019). However, findings also highlight that some CYP find the reintegration process to be an isolating experience, with feelings of anger and frustration creating potential barriers (Pillay et al., 2013). Studies that explored the individual views of learners reported that CYP acknowledged the direct impact of their peer groups on their behaviours, with CYP recognising that reintegrating into the same peer groups that contributed to previous challenges could hinder their ability to change (Bakhtar, 2017). While buddy systems were effective for some CYP, they could also lead to conflict depending on group dynamics (Pillay, et al., 2013). While the findings of these studies provide valuable insights into the role of peer relationships in the process of reintegration, peer influence remains a complex and somewhat unpredictable factor within reintegration. Although there is reference to CYP reporting to acknowledge the impact of positive or negative peer influences on their experiences, this may not translate into an ability to engage or disengage from those social groups. As a result of this, peer relationships as a factor within the reintegration process may need to be considered within the wider systems of the CYP.

Given the complexity of peer influence within reintegration, it is important to consider how external support networks beyond the school environment can contribute to fostering positive relationships for CYP. While in-school peer interactions can serve as both facilitators and barriers to reintegration, research suggests that additional sources of social support, such as

community mentors and extracurricular activities, may help CYP build resilience and develop a sense of belonging outside of their immediate peer groups (Boyd, 2019). This broader perspective on peer influence highlights the need for a more holistic approach to reintegration that extends beyond the school setting.

Mesosystem: the role of home-school connections in reintegration

The mesosystem represents the interactions between different elements of a CYP's microsystem, such as the relationship between school and home. These connections play a crucial role in shaping the reintegration experience of CYP, as they influence the level of support, communication, and shared expectations between parents, carers, and school staff. The present literature has consistently highlighted the importance of strong home-school collaboration in facilitating successful reintegrations (Lawrence, 2011; Pillay et al., 2013; Kelly, 2022). The research that appeared most relevant to this theme included Pillay et al. (2013), Lawrence (2011) and Kelly (2022).

Lawrence (2011) reported the significance of parental engagement and effective communication between parents and school staff in supporting CYP's reintegration. High levels of parental involvement, along with clear and transparent communication from school staff, were associated with more positive reintegration experiences. Importantly, communication that framed reintegration with a future-oriented perspective, highlighting realistic expectations and shared aspirations, helped create a sense of purpose and direction for both CYP and their families. Similarly, Pillay et al. (2013) found that cooperation between home and school was a crucial factor in the reintegration process. When strong communication and collaboration were present, CYP were more likely to experience a meaningful reintegration. In contrast, a lack of home-school cooperation often led to strained relationships, with CYP reporting feelings of disconnection due to challenges. These

challenges included parental work-related pressures, parenting approaches, and developmental changes associated with adolescence, all of which could influence the level of parental involvement in the reintegration process. This suggests that the success of reintegration is not solely dependent on the CYP but is also shaped by the wider contextual factors that affect parental engagement.

Kelly (2022) further reinforced the importance of the mesosystem by highlighting how the attitudes and messages shared by adults within the reintegration process influenced CYP's own perceptions and engagement. When school staff and parents conveyed a positive and purpose-driven perspective, emphasising that reintegration was in the child or young person's best interest and aligned with their potential, CYP were more likely to invest in the process. This reciprocal effect suggests that a strength-based approach, underpinned by an ethos of respect, may foster a more constructive reintegration experience.

However, from a critical perspective, although Pillay et al. (2013) used qualitative questionnaires as one means of data gathering, specifically with parents, they may not have given a fair reflection of the possible complexities surrounding parental-school communication, particularly regarding the potential barriers parents face in engaging with schools. The self-reported data by parents may also be influenced by parents wanting to present the school in a positive light, due to the sensitive nature of the data as their child or young person had only reintegrated to a mainstream school for a period of 12 months following being in an Learning Resource Unit or PRU, therefore may wish to avoid risking any potential tensions during their child's reintegration into mainstream education.

Although some possible limitations, the findings support the importance of a strong home-school collaboration in shaping CYP's reintegration journeys. When parents/carers and school staff communicate effectively, share realistic and future-focused aspirations, and

present reintegration as a positive and meaningful process, CYP are more likely to experience a successful transition back into mainstream education.

Macro-systemic factors

Macro-systemic factors encompass broader social, cultural, and policy influences that shape reintegration experiences for CYP. These factors extend beyond individual schools and families, reflecting wider systemic structures, power dynamics, and educational practices that influence how reintegration is perceived, facilitated, and experienced. The research that appeared most relevant to this theme were Bakhtar (2017), Kelly (2022), Corrigan (2014), Lawrence (2011), Gibson (2019) and Armstrong (2017). Key themes identified from the literature include the importance of pupil voice, agency, inclusion, school connectedness, and the role of power and professional responsibility in shaping reintegration experiences.

Voice, Agency and Power

Bakhtar (2017) outlines the significance of voice, agency, and power in the reintegration process, with YP expressing a strong sense of injustice regarding their exclusion experiences. Within the research, a key factor in successful reintegration was increasing CYP's sense of agency, allowing CYP greater control over their educational journey. The findings concluded that educational professionals play a crucial role in facilitating this by actively listening to CYP's voices and reflecting on their own practices to support meaningful change. Similarly, pupil voice was a central theme within Kelly (2022)'s research. The importance of including CYP in decision-making processes related to their reintegration were highlighted, emphasising the need for staff to increase their awareness regarding how proposed interventions are perceived by CYP and to adopt practices that promote autonomy rather than reinforcing a sense of 'otherness.' However, an increased sense of agency may be a key factor in the reintegration process of CYP, as both studies focused on key stage 3 and 4

students, who might be more aware of their future educational prospects. This theme may be less prominent in younger cohorts. Nevertheless, this finding aligns with research on CYP with socio-emotional differences, who often feel that their voices are not heard.

While research highlights the importance of integrating pupil voice into all aspects of the reintegration process, there are potential challenges in effectively implementing this approach within educational settings. Corrigan (2014) explored the role of Person-Centred Planning (PCP) in supporting reintegration and identified possible systemic challenges in its implementation. PCP was found to be effective in facilitating positive reintegrations to mainstream education, particularly when stakeholders were committed to its philosophy and tools. However, the study concluded that there is a need for skilled facilitators or champions to elicit CYP's views and provide ongoing support, which may be difficult due to limited resources within settings. In the context of the research by Corrigan (2014), the effectiveness of PCP also depended on the wider school culture, with more inclusive schools demonstrating a better 'fit' for its implementation. A key challenge identified within the research regarding PCP was the shift in power compared to traditional models, which may be professional-driven, in contrast to PCP that positions the CYP as equal to others in the process.

A 'clean slate' approach

Studies that aimed to gather the voice of CYP within the reintegration process outlined that school staff adopting a 'clean slate' approach aided the learners experiences when returning to the mainstream setting. Reflections were given regarding the power of labelling and how preconceived biases based on past behaviours can negatively impact pupils' development following reintegration, making it essential for schools to foster a nurturing and inclusive environment that prioritises both physical and emotional safety (Bakhtar, 2017; Kelly, 2022). However, as noted above, findings by Lawrence (2011) reinforce the possible tensions

between the need for a ‘clean slate’ and the lingering apprehensions of school staff regarding pupils reintegrating which may impact the reintegration process of some CYP.

Sense of belonging

School belonging or connectedness was one important factor in the reintegration of CYP to a mainstream setting. Importantly, CYP made sense of their successful reintegration through a developed sense of belonging to their schools, reinforcing the notion that staff hold significant power in shaping inclusive practices (Bakhtar, 2017). Gibson (2019) further reinforced the importance of school connectedness, particularly for CYP who have experienced educational exclusion, gaps in learning, and reduced self-efficacy. The study recognised that reintegrating pupils often associate mainstream education with past academic struggles, making it a priority to address their relationship with learning. A strength-based approach was recommended to rebuild their confidence and ensure that their educational goals are understood and valued by staff. By centering reintegration efforts around a person-centred framework, CYP may be given a greater sense of agency in their own education, which in turn fosters stronger relationships between pupils, staff, and other stakeholders involved in the reintegration process, which may increase feelings of belonging and connectedness to the mainstream environment. The findings by Gibson reiterates Kelly (2022)’s and Bakhtar (2017)’s conclusions regarding the importance of CYP voice, agency and power within the reintegration process.

Similarly, Armstong (2017)’s findings were consistent with other research which identified inclusive attitudes and school ethos as key factors to support successful reintegration. However, these same factors were also identified as barriers in cases where inclusive practices were not consistently embedded within the school culture. This suggests that while individual teachers or staff members may advocate for inclusivity, broader systemic

challenges may be a barrier to the successful implementation of these principles.

Chronosystem: the role of time in reintegration

The chronosystem considers how changes over time influence the reintegration of CYP into mainstream education. This includes the duration of their exclusion, the timing of reintegration efforts, and the ways in which the reintegration process is managed. The studies considered most relevant to this theme were Thomas (2015), Atkinson and Rowley (2019) and Moran (2010). The literature suggests that the success of reintegration is linked to how long a child or young person has been away from a mainstream setting, the expectations surrounding their return, and the level of support provided during this period of change (Moran, 2010; Thomas, 2015; Atkinson & Rowley, 2019).

It is suggested within the literature that prolonged periods away from mainstream settings may contribute to greater challenges in re-adjusting, possibly due to changes in routine, loss of peer connections, or shifts in self-perception regarding their place in the educational system. Thomas (2015) highlighted that reintegration is more likely to be successful when school staff, parents, and CYP expect reintegration to occur as soon as possible.

However, while a swift reintegration may be beneficial, it is also important to acknowledge the emotional impact the transition or reintegration may have on the CYP. Findings suggest that CYP experience significant distress during times of change, with feelings of confusion and frustration being common (Thomas, 2015). This reinforces the need for adults to provide structured support, ensuring that CYP have enough time and space to process the reintegration providing a gradual and timely reintegration into mainstream education (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019). Moran (2010) further explored the complexities of reintegration, highlighting that the impact of school exclusion and the preparatory work undertaken prior to reintegration should be considered.

Conclusion

This systematic review provides new insights into the reintegration of CYP following formal or informal exclusions, functioning as a meta-review of the existing literature in this area.

Thematically analysing the literature using Bronfenbrenner's (1999) eco-systemic perspective highlights the layers and complexities that shape reintegration processes, offering a unique and psychologically underpinned understanding not previously applied within this context. By drawing these elements together, the review offers a novel and deeper understanding of how reintegration may be supported at different levels/layers which has implications in a number of areas, not least for policy at a national level in Wales as well as for Educational Psychology practice generally.

It is important to recognise that the papers included within the literature review primarily focuses on the reintegration of pupils with socio-emotional and behavioural differences to a mainstream setting following a period within an AP such as a PRU or an Inclusion Centre or after permanent exclusion. While the factors influencing reintegration discussed in these studies offer valuable insights, they must be interpreted with caution, as they do not explicitly account for the reintegration of CYP who have been placed on reduced timetables. It is possible that the experiences of those returning from full-time APs compared to those returning to mainstream education from being on a reduced or part-time timetable may differ.

Part C: Rationale of research

Psychological theories in the context of socio-emotional and behavioural differences

There are various psychological underpinnings and theories that may be helpful in further understanding these factors that influence the reintegration process of CYP with socio-

emotional and behavioural differences. The following section will outline some psychological theories to consider in the context of the research topic.

An eco-systemic perspective on socio-emotional and behavioural differences

Research demonstrates that CYP are significantly influenced by their surrounding circumstances and experiences (Kelly, 2022). McNamara (1999) reports key contributory factors for socio-emotional differences presenting as externalised behaviours (see Figure 2). The diagram illustrates how different factors may interact to shape socio-emotional differences that present as externalised behaviours in CYP. Pupil and family/community influences may connect with teacher/classroom and school management factors, arising within the context of a situation of concern, which together contribute to the behaviours observed and the eventual outcomes or actions taken. It is important to acknowledge that underlying socio-emotional and behavioural differences are possible feelings of stress and anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-worth, and fears of failure and rejection (Kelly, 2022). The eco-systemic perspective suggests that these feelings may arise from multiple factors, with CYP experiencing socio-emotional differences, possibly facing various challenges simultaneously across different systems.

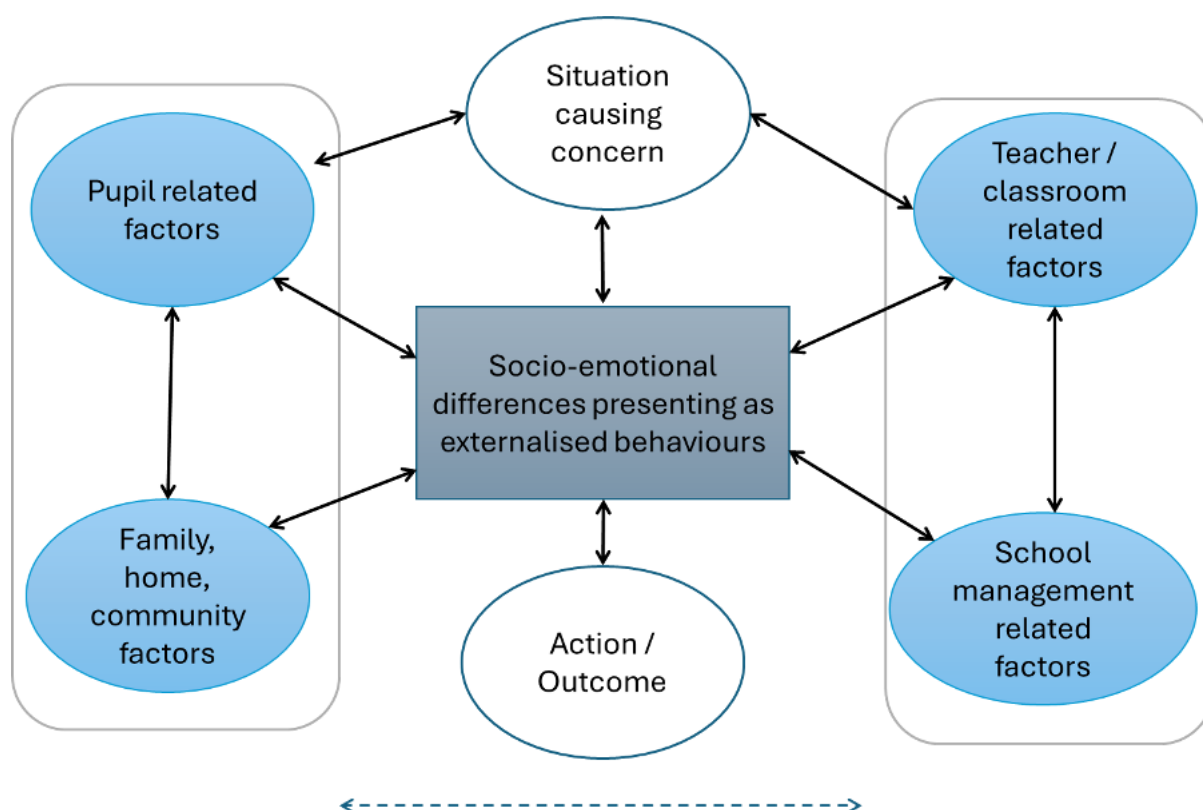


Figure 2. Contributory factors to socio-emotional differences as stated by McNamara (1999)

In this instance, similarly to the research on reintegration, understanding socio-emotional differences through an eco-systemic lens may be helpful as it emphasises the interconnected nature of factors influencing the reintegration process of learners. Rather than viewing challenges in isolation, this perspective highlights how interactions within the school environment are shaped by reciprocal influences, where wellbeing, behaviour, and relationships impact one another.

Bronfenbrenner's (1999) Ecological Theory considers how the environment and the systems surrounding the child or young person impacts their development. Bronfenbrenner's model may be particularly useful to gain a better understanding of socio-emotional differences presented as externalised behaviours (Weaver, 2023; Kelly, 2022). The theory proposes that there are many complex layers within the systems in our environment with each layer influencing another. If changes were to occur within one system, this could cause a ripple

effect in other layers. The model places the child at the centre with rings of systems and environment radiating outwards. Bronfenbrenner (1999) reports four levels that can influence a child or young person's development. The layer closest to the centre is the microsystem, this includes the immediate interactions the child or young person has with their family, school, community, or peers. An example could include a child or young person needing support to regulate their emotions due to behaviours displayed by some of the adults around the child or young person impacting their response. Next is the mesosystem, which is the connections between the micro and mesosystem. These links could include the relationship between the child or young person's school with their parents or carers. The exosystem does not interact directly with the individual, however, it does represent the larger social system surrounding them therefore influencing them in some respects, such as financial stress at home due to parent/carer's job loss or school behavioural policies that could exacerbate CYPs behaviour or social care decisions impacting family dynamics. The outer layer of the model is the macrosystem. These are systemic influences such as culture, sub-cultures, and societal values. An example would include cultural attitudes and constructs regarding discipline or behaviour management influencing how others perceive and respond to 'challenging behaviours.' The last layer is the chronosystem which represents the changes over time. Within the context of socio-emotional differences this may include a CYP who may have had difficult early childhood experiences and currently displaying difficulties in regulating their emotions and developing and maintaining relationships in adolescence, impacting their behaviour and school engagement. The possible long-term effects of school exclusions in addition to COVID-19 lockdowns could also be considered as examples.

Neuroscientific perspective

Adolescent development is most commonly associated with exploration of new activities and desires, social influences, risk-taking and renegotiating relationships with caregivers

(Galavan, 2021). In previous years, research suggested that major changes in the brain's structure and function happened mostly during the prenatal period and in early childhood, with the first 1001 days of a child's life considered to provide the foundation for future development (Page, 2023). However, developments in research have shown that the brain undergoes significant reorganisation during adolescence which might influence adolescent behaviours, including risk-taking, peer influence, and self-awareness (Knoll et al., 2015). During this time, many neural connections are removed, white matter increases, and neurotransmitter systems change which means that there are shifts that improve the brain's overall connectivity and functioning (Perrin et al., 2008). This reorganisation leads to changes in thinking and emotional regulation (Konrad, Firk & Uhlhaas, 2013), however different parts of the brain mature at various rates. The brain's reward and emotion-processing areas develop earlier, while the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for self-control and decision-making, takes longer to mature (Perrin et al., 2008). As a result, in emotionally charged situations, adolescents may be more influenced by their emotions and the prospect of a reward, rather than engaging in logical decision-making, leading to possible risk-taking behaviours (Konrad et al., 2013). This does not mean that adolescents are not equipped to think and act rationally. Studies that have been completed within a controlled setting revealed that adolescents are able to assess these high emotional situations just as well as older adults. However, studies that adopted a naturalistic approach with real-life examples outlined how early adolescents were reported to take more risks when in groups compared to when they were alone (Knoll et al., 2015; Galavan et al., 2006; Glavan et al., 2007; Chein et al., 2011). Although historically adolescent brain development and behaviours may be painted in a negative light, recent developments from researchers in the field of neuroscience calls for a more 'nuanced understanding that celebrates these behaviours and conceptualises their importance in navigating changing social landscapes during adolescence' (Galavan,

2021, p843). Furthermore, these neurological changes during adolescence are best understood ‘as the multiple mutual, and continuous interaction of all levels of the developing system’ (Galavan, 2021, p844) meaning that a holistic understanding of a child or young person’s development is essential.

CYP with socio-emotional differences presenting as externalised behaviours, are recognised to be a vulnerable group within society (Thomas, 2015). It can be assumed from the literature that many of these CYP have experienced adverse childhood experiences (Martin-Denham, 2021). Research indicates that early trauma and/or loss within relationships that are important to the CYP may inform the development of a child’s brain and nervous system as it may disrupt the brain’s original pathway towards safety and connection (Lyons et al., 2020; Bomber, 2020). The developing brain can remember these stressful events and can trigger a survival response, even in the absence of danger (NHS Wales, 2024). CYP that have been exposed to unpredictable and stressful circumstances within their environments may experience some challenges related to their emotion and behavioural regulation, cognition, and relationship development which may impact their learning and connectedness to school (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2024; McMullen & O’Hare, 2022). However, when the school environment is modified to meet the needs of CYP where the conditions are optimum for their nervous systems, pupils are more equipped to settle into learning and make the most of their potential, academically and socially (Bomber, 2020).

Psychoanalytic perspective and a sense of belonging

This neuroscientific evidence coincides with a psychoanalytic approach of adolescent behaviour proposed by Erikson (1968). Erikson’s (1968) stages of psychosocial development discuss the influence of social dynamics and the extension of psychosocial development into adulthood. There are eight stages which are shaped by biological, psychological, and social

factors throughout life. This proposed model is purported to influence/underpin personality (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022). In relation to adolescent development, 'Identity vs Confusion', which is the fifth stage in the theory, is closely associated to an individual's sense of belonging, and is essential for understanding their identity, role and purpose within their wider context (Milmine, 2023).

Belonging is widely recognised as a fundamental human need essential for psychological well-being (Maslow, 1943). Belonging is reported to be a necessity that must be met before an individual can achieve higher functioning and self-actualisation (Lovell, 2021). Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1968) highlights belonging as a crucial foundation for the development of self-esteem, influencing thoughts, behaviours, and motivation. In the context of education, school belonging refers to the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported within their school environment (Lovell, 2021). Research by Roffey (2013) identifies belonging as a protective factor in well-being and resilience, emphasising that individuals need to feel acknowledged, valued, welcomed, and included to foster a strong sense of connection.

Bringing theories together, Allen and Kern (2017) have more recently developed a model informed by Bronfenbrenner's (1999) Ecological Theory, known as the bio-psycho-socio-ecological model (BPSEM) (as seen in Figure 3 below). This framework places greater emphasis on the social and psychological aspects of belonging within schools. The BPSEM (Allen & Kern, 2017) considers individual biological differences, attitudes, emotions, relationships with peers and school staff, and broader community influences such as culture and policies. Similar to Bronfenbrenner's original theory, the interconnected layers within the BPSEM influence one another, shaping an individual's sense of belonging in a dynamic and multifaceted way. Building on this information and previous literature that highlight the voices of CYP with socio-emotional and behavioural needs, who often report feelings of

disconnection (Clarke, Boorman, and Nind, 2011; Boyden & de Berry, 2004; Gibson, 2019; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Cefai & Copper, 2010; Jull, 2008), the exclusionary experiences they describe may further demonstrate how interconnected factors influence their sense of belonging, well-being, and behavioural responses.

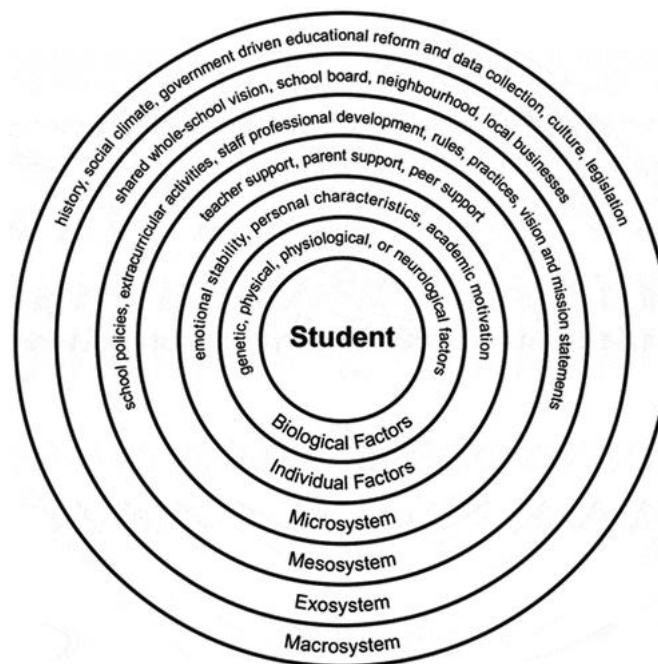


Figure 3. BPSEM, taken from Allen & Kern (2017, p.55)

Self-determination and motivation

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a macro level theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985) which aims to outline the dynamics of human need, motivation, and well-being within a social context (Chiu, 2022). Deci and Ryan (1985) note that we all have three universal and psychological needs that motivate us to act or not. These include autonomy, competence, and relatedness. If these needs are met, it is reported that individuals experience increased psychological wellbeing, however in contrast, if not, it may evoke feelings of isolation and disconnect (Chiu, 2022). Reeve (2013) highlights that classrooms who support these psychological needs are more likely to increase the engagement of learners. In a similar way

to factors that may influence learners' reintegration, CYPs' motivation and engagement may also be influenced by contextual elements, including teacher and peer support (Chiu, 2022).

Within the context of positive youth development, self-determination is defined as 'skills, knowledge and beliefs, which facilitate goal-directed, self-regulated and autonomous behaviour' (Hui & Tsang, 2012, p1). To foster self-determination in CYP, it is important to focus on promoting autonomy, independent thinking, self-advocacy, empowerment and living according to personal values (Hui & Tsang, 2012). This approach aligns with Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2012), which focuses on developing human strengths.

The Self-determination theory may help explain findings within the literature, where enhancing young people's sense of agency, promoting respectful environments, and providing opportunities for self-advocacy were identified as key factors supporting meaningful reintegration into a mainstream setting (Bakhitar, 2017; Armstrong, 2017; Gibson, 2019; Kelly, 2022).

Personal Transition Curve and reintegration

Developed in the context of organisational psychology and change management, Fisher's Personal Transition Curve Model (Fisher, 2012, cited in Kelly, 2022)) (as seen in figure 4) draws on earlier theories of grief and change but adapts them to emphasise how individuals experience and emotionally respond to change in workplace or organisational settings. The Personal Transition Curve (Fisher, 2012, cited in Kelly, 2022)) provides a useful framework for understanding the non-linear nature of reintegration, illustrating that CYP may experience multiple setbacks before reaching a stage of 'gradual acceptance'. This 13-stage model reflects some of the emotions CYP may experience on their return to mainstream settings, including marked by periods of regression (Kelly, 2022; Fisher, 2012). This framework offers a helpful lens for interpreting the emotional challenges and fluctuating experiences identified

in the literature, where prolonged absence, disrupted routines, and changing self-perceptions contribute to the complexities of reintegration (Thomas, 2015; Moran, 2010).

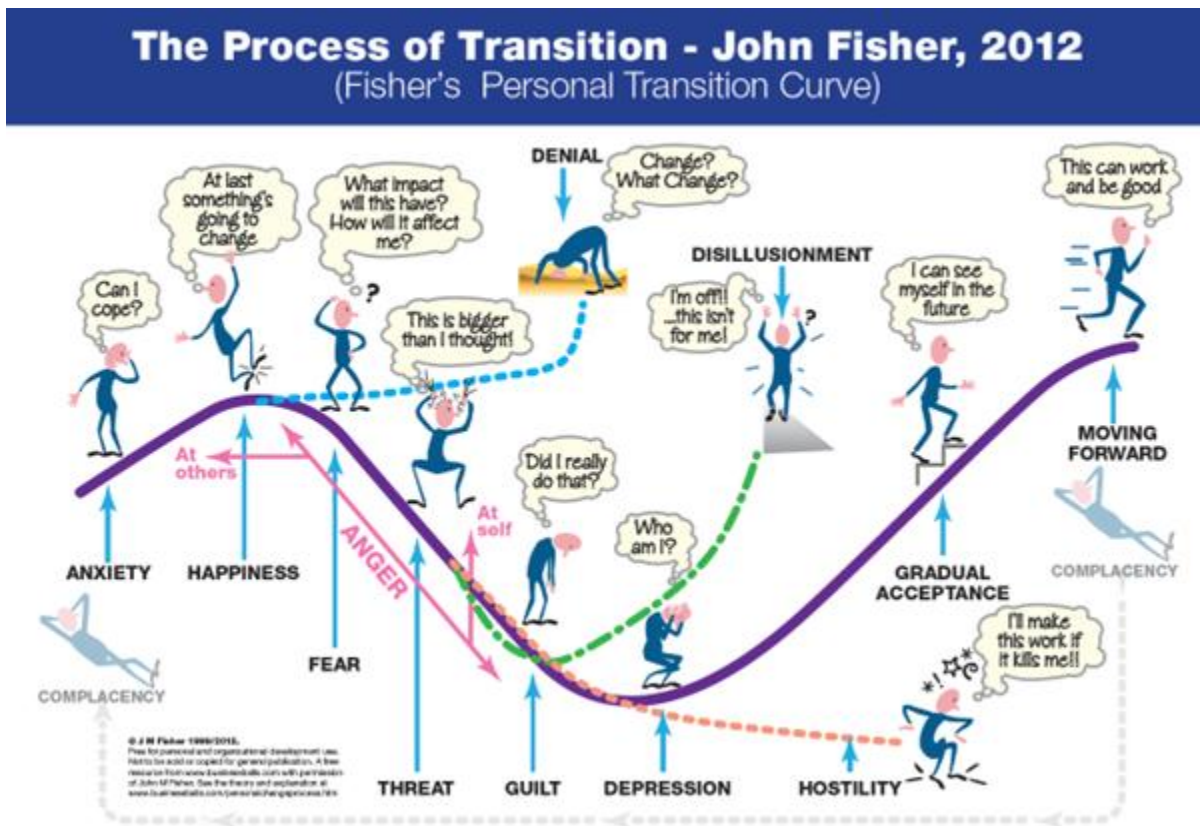


Figure 4. Personal Transition Curve (Fisher, 2012)

The role of the EP

Considering the various theories, models, and frameworks that may aid in the understanding of the reintegration experiences of CYP with socio-emotional and behavioural differences following formal or informal exclusions, it becomes clear that their reintegration journeys are complex, with many factors that practitioners must consider.

An EP is considered to be in a unique position to work with the systems surrounding our CYP by being able to offer a systemic perspective, allowing EPs to engage more broadly with families and schools (Beaver, 2011) while also being person-centred in our practice. By working systemically, EPs support individuals and groups from a variety of cultural backgrounds within diverse communities (Sakata, 2021). Practice guidelines by The British

Psychological Society (2017) note that ‘EPs have a professional duty to work towards the social inclusion of clients by challenging social conditions that contribute to exclusion and stigmatisation’ (Kuria & Kelly, 2023, p412). The role of the EP in Wales (Welsh Government, 2016) supports and promotes the development, well-being, resilience, and achievement of CYP and therefore assumed to have a significant role to play in supporting schools regarding the reintegration of pupils to mainstream settings.

It is evident from the literature, that an ecological systems perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) is helpful when framing the reintegration process of CYP with socio-emotional and behavioural differences to a mainstream setting. As the role of the EP is uniquely placed to work with systems such as the CYP and the school, EPs could work collaboratively to assist the reintegration process and reinforce a collaborative working model. Various studies outline EPs unique position in working with schools and families to help in the reintegration of pupils returning to school following permanent exclusions or placements in APs. This includes offering a holistic lens to a collaborative consultation process (Owen, 2022) and utilising systemic approaches to acknowledge existing knowledge within systems and build capacity and confidence during the reintegration process of learners (Armstrong, 2017).

The role of the EP as Agents of Hope

EPs are well placed to facilitate and create space for positive conversations where there is a focus on listening and responding to CYPs needs, strengths and wishes which may help in the process of achieving a productive reintegration plan (Bakhitar, 2017). A dominant narrative within the reintegration literature outlines the barriers and challenges faced by CYP rather than highlighting examples of successful or meaningful reintegration (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019). This deficit-focused approach mirrors historical trends in psychology, which have traditionally concentrated on difficulties and disorders (Murphy & Duncan, 2007, as cited in Adams, 2016). In contrast, Positive Psychology developed by Martian Seligman, is an

umbrella term used to refer to the study of ‘conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions’ (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 103). The development of Positive Psychology is recognised as having created a positive shift in the focus of topics within psychology, some of these being well-being, hope and resilience (Kun, Balogh & Krasz, 2016). Research surrounding Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2012) emphasises the importance of experiencing positive emotions and how they are essential for developing resilience and improving the well-being of children and young people (Frederickson, 2009). EPs are sometimes referred to as hope catchers or agents of hope (Cox & Lumsdon, 2020) terms that aligns with the principles of Positive Psychology. This highlights the commitment that EPs have in fostering hope, optimism, and well-being with those they engage with, emphasising the strengths-based and growth-oriented approach that is central to Positive Psychology.

Rationale for the empirical study

In summary, the literature suggests that CYP with socio-emotional and behavioural differences, their families, and schools may experience interconnected challenges, as systemic factors appear to contribute to the difficulties encountered. CYP often report that their voices are not fully heard, while school staff may experience reduced well-being due to the pressures of navigating externalised behaviours. Although a range of facilitators have been identified to support reintegration, risk factors appear to be more frequently reported than promotive factors in the reintegration of learners with socio-emotional and behavioural differences (Pillay et al., 2013; Boyd, 2019). Exclusionary practices remain a concern in Welsh schools, with reduced timetables appearing to be a relatively common intervention to manage challenging behaviour within the system (Welsh Government, 2024; Weaver, 2023). Despite this, the literature offers little focused research on reintegration following reduced

timetables, meaning there is limited evidence to guide schools in supporting CYP back into full-time education. Furthermore, while recent policy documents acknowledge the importance of reintegration, they provide only limited elaboration of what constitutes ‘successful’ reintegration, which leaves ambiguity for schools and practitioners. Existing studies also appear to focus on adult perspectives, often attributing responsibility for reintegration to the child, while comparatively few studies have centred the voices of CYP or explored the positive and meaningful aspects of their experiences.

In line with Braun and Clarke’s (2013) advocacy for a making the argument model, the rationale for this study is therefore situated within these identified gaps in existing knowledge and theory. Weaver’s (2023) study has already highlighted the value of future research that captures the perspectives of CYP who have experienced reduced timetables. However, the literature review indicated that the reintegration of CYP into mainstream education following a period on a reduced timetable has not been directly explored. This absence presents an opportunity to contribute possible new insights into how reintegration is understood and experienced, and to consider the implications such insights may hold for educational practice.

Research Questions

The core research question underpinning the current research project is:

RQ: What are school staff and pupils’ views and experiences of a positive or meaningful reintegration into a mainstream secondary educational setting in Wales?

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**Reduced Timetables in Wales: Exploring Secondary School Staff and Pupils’
Experiences of Reintegration to Secondary Mainstream Settings**

Part Two: Empirical Paper

Word count: 11,473

Abstract

This empirical study explored secondary school staff and pupils' experiences of a positive or meaningful reintegration to a secondary mainstream setting following children and young people (CYP) being placed on a reduced timetable in Wales. The study employed an eco-systemic (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) and Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2012) lenses, with the aim of capturing good practices regarding a positive or meaningful reintegration of CYP following being placed on a reduced timetable. The research gained the views and experiences of four secondary aged learners and four members of staff from two Local Authorities based in the North-West of Wales. The findings were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) and the following three overarching themes were generated: *Anchored in Connection, rooted in Relationships, Bridging the Gap: Pathways to Belonging and Reintegration*, and *Navigating Roadblocks*. The findings emphasise the pivotal role of authentic relationships, student voice, and tailored support in fostering belonging and engagement. Based on the views and experiences of participants, positive reintegration was linked to strength-based approaches, mentoring, community collaboration, and school cultures that value inclusion and flexibility. However, the data also highlighted tensions between inclusive intentions and systemic practices, particularly the ambiguous role of reduced timetables as both support mechanisms and perceived exclusionary tools. Implications for EP practice are outlined and recommendations for future research are made.

Introduction

In Wales, recent evidence highlights the ongoing pressures associated with the inclusion of CYP with socio-emotional differences (Welsh Government, 2024). Most CYP identified with socio-emotional differences report feelings associated with disempowerment and disconnection to educational settings, experiencing increased exclusionary practices which is suggested to further influence their feelings of inclusion (Clarke, Boorman, and Nind, 2011; Gibson, 2019; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Cefai & Copper, 2010; Jull, 2008). School staff are also experiencing high levels of stress associated with an increase in challenging pupil behaviour (Teacher Wellbeing Index, 2024). This contributes to the growing picture of the increased tensions within mainstream settings to meet the needs of CYP within increasingly complex wider contexts, including socio-economic challenges, cultural and linguistic diversity, and a growing awareness of wellbeing and mental health needs (Graham et al., 2019; Thompson, et al., 2021).

Statistics based on school exclusion rates in Wales reveal that in recent years there have been an increasing number of pupils being formally excluded from schools (Tseliou, 2021; Welsh Government, 2024) with secondary school systems more frequently utilising exclusionary practices (Denham, 2021). Power and Taylor (2020) state that ‘schools in Wales are put under pressure to not exclude’ (p.870), therefore, it is suggested that schools have developed methods of avoiding permanent exclusions such as introducing informal exclusionary practices such as reduced timetables for CYP with socio-emotional differences presenting with externalising behaviours (definition of term given in Part 1) and/or as an alternative to formal exclusion (Weaver, 2023; Parsons, 2018).

The new guidance on improving learner engagement and attendance by Welsh Government report that reduced timetables should only be used in exceptional circumstances and ‘should never be used as a means of managing behavioural issues’ (Welsh Government, 2023, p.27). Furthermore, the guidance reports that reduced timetables are a short-term arrangement between the young person (YP), parents and/or carer, school, Local Authority (LA), and any other professionals that support the YP, with an emphasis on the importance of reintegration. Whilst the current guidance reports that reintegration is the shared goal following a reduced timetable, in practice, there are still possible barriers and ambiguity around the processes to support reintegration (Markwell, 2024; Weaver, 2023). Despite new guidance, a 2024 Welsh Government review revealed that in some cases reduced timetables continue to be used as a preventative measure to avoid permanent exclusions with some CYP perceiving reduced timetables as a way for schools to ‘get them out of the way’ due to staff struggling to manage their behaviour (Welsh Government, 2024, p. 86), contradicting the short-term, supportive use recommended by government guidelines.

Current literature regarding factors that influence the reintegration process of CYP returning to a mainstream setting following informal or formal forms of exclusion highlight the complex and interconnected factors influencing the reintegration of CYP with socio-emotional differences to a mainstream setting. Many studies included in the review adopt an eco-systemic perspective, recognising that reintegration experiences are shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by the broader systems surrounding CYP (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Moran, 2010; Kelly, 2022). Key themes were identified, encompassing learner factors (Lawrence, 2011; Thomas, 2015; Atkinson & Rowley, 2019) as well as influences from family, school, and peer relationships (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Bakhtar, 2017; Pillay et al., 2013; Gibson, 2019; Boyd, 2019). Additionally, systemic, and

environmental factors play a crucial role, reflecting the wider socio-political contexts that impact the reintegration process (Bakhtar, 2019; Kelly, 2022; Corrigan, 2014; Armstrong, 2017; Atkinson & Rowley, 2019).

Despite potential facilitators, much of the literature focuses on the barriers and challenges of reintegration rather than highlighting ‘successful’ reintegration experiences (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019, p340). This deficit-based perspective reflects historical psychological trends (Murphy & Duncan, 2007).

In Wales, exclusionary practices such as reduced timetables remain a concern, with CYP placed in a form of limbo (Weaver, 2023). While recent policy developments acknowledge reintegration challenges, there is little guidance on what constitutes a ‘successful’ reintegration. Given that successful reintegration can mitigate exclusion risks (Lawrence, 2011), further exploration of influencing factors might shape the reintegration journeys of others.

Research based on CYP’s views regarding inclusion highlight the importance of gaining pupil voice, as research including CYP appears to actively challenge and redefine what inclusive education means to them, based on their own experiences (Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Taines (2013) argues that for learners to meaningfully influence decision-making within schools, the structure of the school system must be reorganised and approached with new ways of thinking.

As noted above, much of the literature on CYP with socio-emotional differences and reintegration following formal or informal exclusions highlights that their journeys are

shaped by multiple, interrelated factors (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Bakhtar, 2017; Pillay et al., 2013; Gibson, 2019; Boyd, 2019; Kelly, 2022; Corrigan, 2014; Armstrong, 2017; Lawrence, 2011; Thomas, 2015). These influences vary for each YP making it essential that reintegration is approached collaboratively and/or in a person-centred way.

In contrast to more traditional models of Educational Psychology service delivery (Murphy & Duncan, 2007), Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2012) shifts the focus towards a strength-based approach. EPs, described as agents of hope (Cox & Lumsdon, 2020), align with this approach by fostering positive emotions that may support in the process of reintegrating pupils.

Research aims

Grounded in Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2012) and an eco-systemic (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) perspective, this study aims to explore school staff and pupil views on what is considered to be a positive or meaningful reintegration into mainstream secondary education following being placed on a reduced timetable. By gaining both the views and experiences of CYP and school staff, it is hoped that the research will reinforce a collaborative approach focused on changes within the school system. Recognising that ‘success’ may be defined differently by individuals; the research aims to adopt a ‘what is working’ approach highlighting good reintegration practices in Welsh secondary schools and consider how EPs can empower stakeholders and facilitate positive change.

Methodology

Ethics

This research project has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University. Additionally, through the

duration of the research project the researcher followed the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct (2021) and The Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (Health and Care Professions Council, 2016). Ethical considerations in relation to the current study are outlined in the Table 4 below and further elaborated on in Part 3.

<p>Informed consent</p>	<p>Informed consent was obtained from participants and parents/carers of CYP prior to completing the interview. CYP also received an assent form to complete.</p> <p>All participants received a full information sheet that included an outline of the purpose/aims of the research project, their participation in the research/withdrawal rights, managing their personal data and discussed potential benefits and possible risks of participating in addition to relevant contact details such as the researcher's, supervisor, and Cardiff Ethics Committee. All the above information was reiterated verbally before completing the interview process.</p> <p>The researcher did not contact potential participants directly to ensure that participants did not feel pressured to partake. School staff and CYPs parents/carers were able to contact the researcher directly to express their interest. Discussions with the researcher were also welcomed before consent was taken.</p> <p>Participants were required to give verbal and written consent to take part in the research and note that they understood the aims and purpose of the study. This included consenting to have their voice recorded for analysis purposes.</p> <p>School staff, CYP and parents/carers of CYP received a copy of the information sheet and signed consent form to keep for their records.</p>
<p>Right to withdraw</p>	<p>Participants and parents/carers of CYP were made aware of the right to withdraw from the research project within the information and consent form provided by the researcher. This information was also reiterated at the beginning and end of the interview. In addition, participants and CYPs parents/carers were informed that</p>

	<p>their data could be withdrawn from the research up until the data is transcribed (within two weeks of conducting the interview).</p>
Confidentiality and anonymity	<p>Participants and parents/carers of CYP were made aware of the following through the information and consent form:</p> <p>Participants personal data were required for consent and to plan for the interview. This information is kept confidential and stored securely on an encrypted, password protected laptop device, that only the researcher has access to. The personal data gathered consisted of the participants' name, school, and an email address for communication for recruitment purposes only.</p> <p>The information gathered from participants during the interview was recorded on a voice recorder if in person and on Microsoft Teams (audio only) if online. Following the interview, the recorded information was transcribed and then anonymised, meaning that all names and identifying information was removed so that participants or others cannot be identified from the information. Once the data was anonymised, participants were unable to withdraw their data from the research project. The audio recording was deleted once the data had been transcribed.</p> <p>The data gathered during the interview was anonymised during transcription, however it could not be kept confidential as excerpts (including verbatim quotes) were used in the research report.</p> <p>The data was anonymised during the transcribing process where pseudonyms were assigned to each participant.</p> <p>The researcher ensured that the participants' anonymity was protected as much as possible e.g., remove school name.</p>

Psychological harm	<p>The information sheets were shared with participants prior to consenting ensuring that all participants and parents/carers of CYPs were fully informed and comfortable with the research requirements.</p> <p>In terms of CYP, before starting the interview there was an opportunity for the CYP to build a rapport with the researcher, ensuring that they were at ease and that they understood that they could pause or stop the interview at any time, could choose not to answer any questions they don't want to, and could withdraw their data up until it was transcribed. All of this was true for school staff members also. To ensure an increased sense of psychological safety, the CYP had the option of having a trusted member of school staff present during the interview. This also allowed for any questions to be explained further if needed. Reflections regarding an additional adult present in the CYPs interviews can be seen in Part 3.</p> <p>The research focused on positive experiences such as what helped or supported participants in the process of returning to school. However, the researcher monitored each participant's emotional presentation throughout the interview.</p> <p>A debrief was conducted with all participants when finishing the interview, and a debrief sheet was provided to participants and CYPs parent/carers in case they required support at a later date.</p>
Safeguarding	<p>In relation to the CYP participating, the researcher conducted the interviews within the school setting. As noted above, the CYP had the option of a trusted member of school staff being present during the interview.</p> <p>Parents/carers were made aware in the information sheet that in exceptional cases, the researcher may be legally and/or professionally required to over-ride confidentiality and to disclose information obtained from (or about) the CYP to statutory bodies or relevant agencies. For example, this might arise where the researcher has reason to believe that there is a risk to their safety, or</p>

	the safety of others. However, on this occasion safeguarding processes were not necessary as no concerns were highlighted within discussions.
Respect of participants	The researcher made efforts to address the potential power dynamics or imbalance of the interview through building rapport with the participants beforehand. The researcher continued to build rapport with the participants following the interview process through the debrief process to ensure all participants felt comfortable and were fully informed of the next steps of the research. Also, by using semi-structured and unstructured interviews as data gathering methods, the researcher felt that this might increase participants ownership of the interview process and therefore empowering them in their storytelling of their views and experiences.

Table 4. An outline of ethical considerations of the empirical study

Ontology & Epistemology

A qualitative research paradigm holds the fundamental assumption that there is not a single version of reality and therefore no ‘right’ answer exists (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

The research project will adopt a critical realist ontology. The critical realist stance proposes that ‘A pre-social reality exists but we can only ever partially know it’ (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p26) and is informed by our individual perspective (Burr, 2015). A critical realist standpoint recognises that reality is shaped by culture, social agency, and historical and political context therefore acknowledging the multi-layered complexities of reality (Braun and Clarke, 2013). By adopting this viewpoint, the participants ‘real’ experiences of a positive reintegration process following being on a reduced timetable is considered.

The epistemological standpoint for this research will be contextualism. Contextualism ‘sees knowledge emerging from context’ (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p30) therefore by adopting this

epistemology to the research project the researcher can recognise the context in which the participants are creating their ‘truths’ and ‘realities’. The research aimed to recruit participants from secondary schools across Wales, therefore experiences of reintegration to an educational setting following being on a reduced timetable may differ depending on educational setting context which sits within the wider LA and systems.

Participants

Participant criteria

The tables below outline the inclusion and exclusion criteria for both CYP (Table 5) and school staff (Table 6) for participation in the empirical study. It is important to note that the study’s gatekeepers were the ones who identified CYP as having experienced what was described as “a positive / meaningful / successful reintegration.” Gatekeepers were provided with recruitment materials that outlined this concept as referring to pupils who had returned from a reduced timetable and were considered by staff to have experienced an element of success, understood in terms of achieving a particular goal for the pupil or for those supporting them in their reintegration. In addition, for the CYP interviewed, the notion of “successful reintegration” was not directly explored; they were not asked whether they identified with this concept themselves. Instead, the focus was placed on their experiences and the multi-layered factors they perceived as helpful or meaningful in their reintegration journey.

CYP	
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged 11-16 years old.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reintegrated to the same secondary mainstream school that established the reduced timetable, for a minimum period of 3 months. • Placed on a reduced timetable due to experiencing socio-emotional differences presenting as externalised behaviours in school and/or as an alternative to exclusion. • Has had a positive experience / successful reintegration. • Feel able and comfortable to discuss their views and experiences in an unstructured interview through the medium of Welsh or English.
Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children or young people that have returned to school following being on a reduced timetable for any reason that doesn't include experiencing behavioural differences in school and /or as an alternative to exclusion (e.g., medical needs or emotional school-based avoidance). • Children and young people that have reintegrated to a different educational setting following being on a reduced timetable (reintegration to original school/placement broke down). • Children younger than 11 years old, and young people older than 16 years old.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people that have returned to school for less than 3 months. • No more than two pupils per school to ensure that views can be gathered from different educational settings/regions within Wales.
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Table 5. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for CYP

School staff	
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary staff such as Senior Leadership Team (SLT), ALNCos, teachers and support staff. • Involved in supporting a CYP in the positive / successful process of returning to school following being on a reduced timetable due to the CYP experiencing socio-emotional differences presenting as externalised behaviours in school and/or as an alternative to exclusion. • Feels comfortable to share their views and experiences in a semi-structured interview through the medium of Welsh or English.
Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working within a primary or further education setting. • No more than two members of staff per educational setting to ensure that views can be gathered from different schools/regions within Wales.

Table 6. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for school staff

The research study used a purposive sample (Braun & Clarke, 2021) to allow for the identification and selection of CYP who have had a positive or meaningful reintegration to a mainstream setting following being placed on a reduced timetable or who were a member of staff that supported in the process of a positive or meaningful reintegration following a CYP being placed on a reduced timetable. This allowed the researcher to select participants to gather rich and in-depth data about their experiences regarding the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In addition to using purposive sampling, the researcher also utilised a snowball sampling technique. Braun and Clarke (2013) define snowball sampling as ‘an approach to sampling where new participants are invited from the networks of people who have already taken part (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p336). The researcher was made aware of other potential participants through discussions within the data generating process of the research, for example an interview with a member of staff highlighted a potential CYP that would fit the inclusion criteria, therefore the school shared the information regarding the study with the parent and/or carer of the CYP and consent from both parent/carer and the CYP were obtained. By combining both sampling methods this allowed the researcher to reach a higher number of the intended targeted group. Further reflections regarding the identification of participants are elaborated in Part 3.

Participants recruited

The findings of the research are informed by data gathered from a total of eight participants (n = 8). Four (n = 4) of which were secondary age learners and four (n = 4) were school staff working within mainstream settings. Participants were located across two LAs in the North-West of Wales. A summary of each participant is included below which includes their assigned pseudonym.

Children and Young People		
Participant (Pseudonym)	School Year	Key Stage
Martha	Year 11	Key Stage 4
Ifan	Year 11	Key Stage 4
Huw	Year 11	Key Stage 4

Wil	Year 10	Key Stage 4
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Table 7. Summary of CYP who participated with assigned pseudonyms

School Staff	
Participant (Pseudonym)	Role
Wmffra	Deputy Headteacher
Sioni	Lead of Inclusion and Wellbeing
Mari	Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo)
Puw	Inclusion Officer

Table 8. Summary of school staff who participated with assigned pseudonyms

Procedure

Braun and Clarke (2013) advise researchers to recruit and inform potential participants of the research through a form of advertisement. As a result, the participants were notified of the research project through a recruitment poster that was put up in the school and sent to gatekeepers. The recruitment posters were modified to ensure that both groups of participants were fully informed of the research aims. As a result, two versions of the recruitment poster were produced, with each tailored to the specific participant group.

The gatekeeper(s) of the research project were the Headteachers and/or ALNCoS of the mainstream secondary schools. For clarity the following section will be divided into two separate parts to outline the process for both groups of participants.

School staff

The researcher sent an email to gatekeepers that included information regarding the research (recruitment poster and participant information sheet). Schools identified participants that fit the research's inclusion criteria. The researcher's contact details were outlined within the information available therefore, potential participants were able to contact the researcher directly via email to express their interest and provide consent for participation.

CYP

The researcher sent an email to gatekeepers that included information regarding the research (recruitment poster and participant information sheet). In order to recruit CYP, the educational settings contacted the parents/carers of CYP that fit the research's inclusion criteria and shared the research information. Although the researcher's contact details were outlined within the information available to parents/carers for them to contact the researcher directly, parents/carers contacted the school to express their willingness for their CYP to participate. Following this, the researcher contacted the parents/carers to ensure that they had any further questions regarding the research, before consenting for their child or YP to take part. All documents are provided in the Appendix.

Data generation

As the research aimed to gather two separate sets of data from educational staff and pupils, the data gathering method was adapted slightly for both groups. This allowed participants to express their views and experiences fully, giving them the freedom to elaborate but also ensuring that the method chosen strengthened the researcher's ability to explore the research question while being interested and curious within discussions.

School staff

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from educational staff. Semi-structured interviews are considered the most popular type of data gathering technique within qualitative studies (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017). This allowed the researcher to explore participants views and experiences in-depth through open-ended questions and take on an active role in the interview which aided in co-constructing meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

CYP

Unstructured interviews were used to gather data from CYP. According to O'Reilly and Dogra (2017) unstructured interviews follow a similar pattern to semi-structured interviews however unstructured interviews give the CYP an increased sense of control and ownership of the direction and content of the interview. The interview was mostly participant-led with the researcher following a list of themes/topics with a possible list of prompts to encourage discussions around areas such as their experiences and feelings related to their reintegration and reduced timetables (as seen in Appendix G). The aim of using unstructured interviews with CYP was to empower participants during the process of sharing their lived experiences while the researcher was also able to play an active role in somewhat guiding the interview. Both groups of participants had the option of completing the interviews in person within the school context or online via Microsoft Teams. This was decided during the consent process and dependant on participants availability and/or preference. As a result, two of the interviews that were conducted with school staff and one interview completed with a CYP were completed online via Microsoft Teams.

To ensure that CYP felt comfortable during the interview process, a trusted adult attended the interview also. This was either a member of staff that the CYP had chosen or for the CYP that completed their interview online, a parent/carer. Each interview was recorded using a voice recorder and completed through the medium of Welsh.

Following completing the interview, the researcher provided the participant with a debrief form (Appendix H) that outlined the projects aims and contact information of the researcher and the School of Psychology, Cardiff University Ethics Committee if the participant wished to contact with any comments or questions. The participant was reminded that they could withdraw their data up to the point of transcription. A copy of the information sheets signed

consent forms and debrief forms were shared with participants and parents/carers of CYP for their own records.

Data analysis

The data was analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2021). RTA was deemed suitable for the current research as it aligned with the researcher's ontological and epistemological stance. Braun and Clarke (2021) report that one of the key advantages of using RTA is that it offers flexibility to researchers. In addition to this, by using RTA it allowed the researcher to explore the data in depth, which aided the process of identifying and analysing patterns and themes within the data in addition to recognising the researcher's active role within the process (Byrne, 2021).

Overview of the analysis process

The six phases of RTA by Braun and Clarke (2021) were used flexibly throughout the data analysis process, navigating phases non-linearly. The fluidity of RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2021) is represented in the Figure 5 below, which links the different phases in a continuous circular motion. Interviews with both CYP and school staff were transcribed separately. Following this, the researcher spent time fully immersing oneself in the data, which was facilitated by the creation of familiarisation doodles (Appendix I). These doodles were deemed valuable to aid the process of an in-depth exploration of the data such as identifying initial codes within the data. Both latent and salient codes were identified. As the researcher was handling two sets of data, creating a document which included an overall familiarisation of the data was helpful as it allowed the researcher to see the experiences as it enabled the researcher to consider the experiences of both groups in relation to one another (Appendix J). Initial themes were generated which were then defined and redefined (Appendix K) and

finally named within one thematic map. Further in-depth reflections regarding the bringing together of CYP and school staff views and experiences are discussed in Part 3.

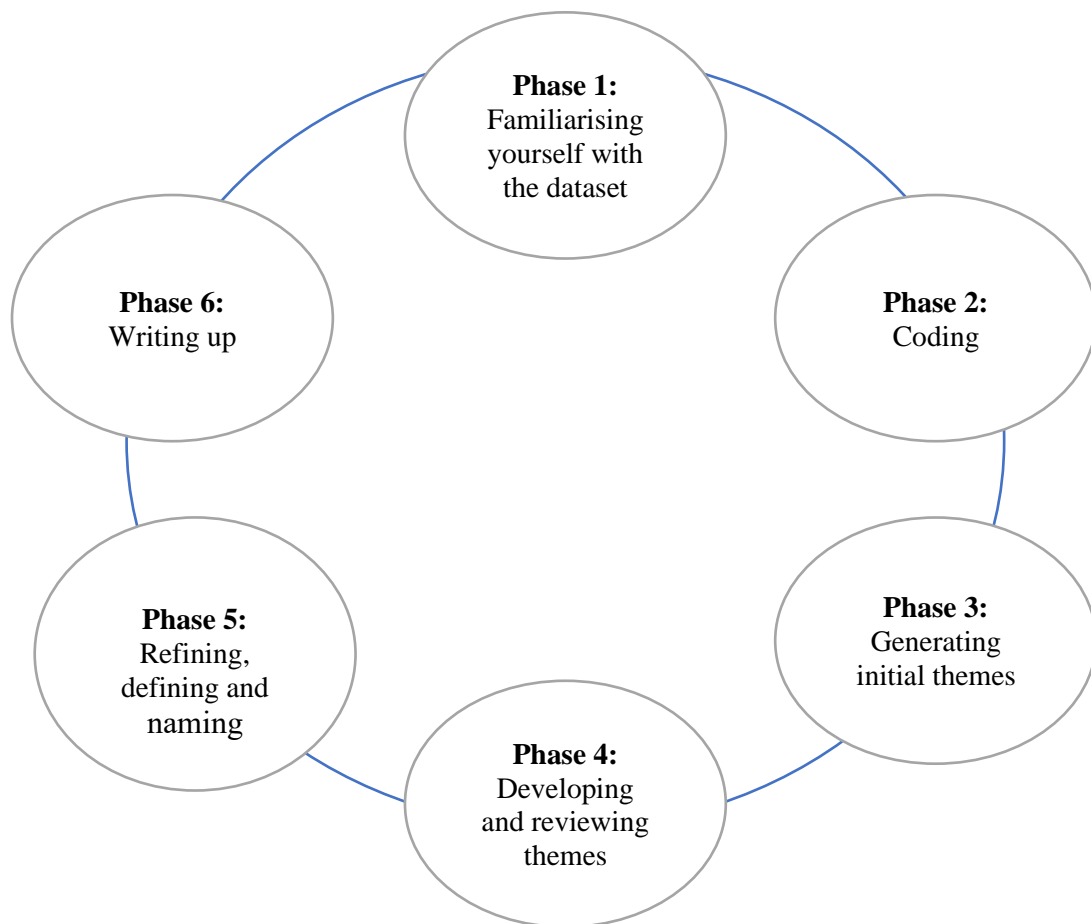


Figure 5. Summary of the RTA process (Braun & Clarke, 2021)

Trustworthiness of qualitative research

Yardley (2017; 2024) outlines four overarching criteria for assessing validity within qualitative research: sensitivity to context, commitment, and rigour; transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. The following table outlines the attempts made to address each criterion: Yardley’s framework was utilised to ensure the trustworthiness of the current research and analysis.

Yardley’s Criteria	Application in Research
Sensitivity to Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed consent obtained from school staff, CYP, and parents. Ethical considerations carefully observed (e.g., handling sensitive

	<p>topics).</p> <p>Contextual epistemology used to reflect knowledge as situated and partial.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of both staff and CYP voices to reflect power dynamics and diverse perspectives. <p>Consideration of the socio-cultural and educational context in Wales. Respect for emotional sensitivity when discussing reintegration experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical approval process acknowledged.
Commitment and Rigor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants. • Sampling strategy (e.g., purposive) to access a range of views. • Maintained a reflective diary to document positionality and decision-making. • RTA used to support depth and complexity of meaning. • Iterative data analysis to refine themes. • Supervision engaged with regularly to support methodological integrity. • Literature used to inform design and analysis.
Transparency and Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflexivity maintained through regular positionality reflections and diary entries. • Research decisions (e.g., theme development, coding) documented to ensure transparency. • Combination of narrative and systematic literature reviews to provide both breadth and depth. • Clear articulation of critical realist ontology and contextualist epistemology, coherently linked to method (further explored in Part 3)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of theme generation and refinement process. • Use of participant quotes to retain voice and transparency in interpretation.
Impact and Importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses possible issue in Welsh education - reintegration following reduced timetables. • Provides practical implications for Educational Psychologists and school professionals. • Challenges deficit narratives by highlighting positive and strengths-based reintegration experiences. • Potential contribution to policy, school reintegration practice, and EP consultation/supervision models. • Highlights an under-researched area and amplifies the voices of CYP and staff within that context.

Table 9. The application of Yardley's Criteria in relation to the empirical study

Findings and discussion

The findings and discussion are presented in separate sections to enhance clarity and accessibility for the reader. However, a strong analytical thread runs across both sections.

The findings section offers a descriptive account of the data, while the discussion provides an interpretive analysis of the themes, incorporating theoretical insights, contextual considerations, and implications for practice (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Findings

The following section outlines the key themes and subthemes that developed from the RTA, aimed at addressing the research question: What are school staff and pupils' views and experiences of a positive or meaningful reintegration into a mainstream secondary

educational setting in Wales following being on a reduced timetable? The thematic map (Figure 7) visually represents the groups experiences, highlighting three overarching themes: ‘*Bridging the gap: pathways to belonging and reintegration*’; ‘*Anchored in connections, rooted in relationships*’ and ‘*Navigating roadblocks*’. The lines within the figure illustrate the dynamic relationships and interplay between these themes. The following section will explore each theme and its corresponding subthemes, supported by direct participant quotes in addition to an exploration of each theme from the perspective of the researcher.

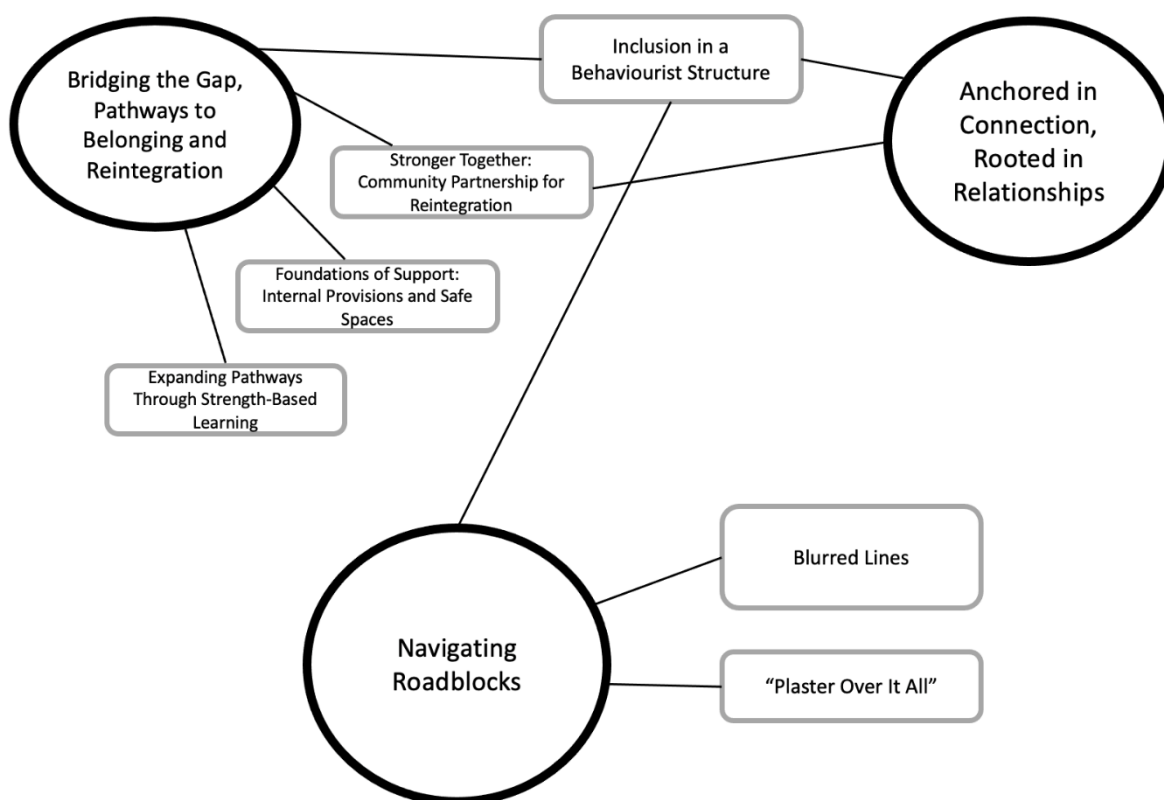


Figure 6. Thematic map of findings

Subordinate theme: Anchored in Connection, Rooted in Relationships

This theme captures the central role of meaningful, trusting relationships in the reintegration of CYP following a period on a reduced timetable. A recurring narrative from staff was that

without trust and emotional connection, strategies and support structures held limited value.

As one member of staff shared:

“You know what, I think it's relationships... before anything, before any strategy ... if you don't have a relationship with a young person, with a family, you don't have any hope... relationship a hundred percent.” – Sioni

Staff emphasised the need for emotionally available adults who could respond flexibly and relationally to CYP's needs. These individuals served as anchors, who provided consistent presence and advocacy. For many CYP, these adults were described not only as supportive figures, but as champions who genuinely understood them and were willing to hold space through setbacks and successes alike. As one pupil explained:

“Lead Inclusion has sorted everything really... if you need someone to talk to, they're always there for you, they never push you away... he can have a laugh but also be serious, just that he shows that he cares.” – Ifan

Another YP reflected on their own shift in behaviour due to a supportive relationship:

“Since coming back to school I've noticed right... Sir has done this fair for me so I need to be fair back.” – Wil

This kind of mutual respect was identified by staff and CYP alike as central to creating a positive climate in school. A member of staff shared:

“We as staff respect the pupils and then we expect the respect back. That's the core of this place for me.” – Wmffra

Students echoed this sense of reciprocity in their own terms:

“If they show [respect] to me, I’ll show it back... if they’re just going to shout at me, I’m not just going to stay there and be nice back – nah.” – Martha

Staff also highlighted how reintegration was strengthened when schools fostered collaborative relationships between pupils, families, and school staff. The active involvement of CYP in planning and decision-making was seen as not only empowering, but necessary:

“Any plan that’s put in place has to be that the pupil is a leading part of the discussions.” – Wmffra

This emphasis on agency and voice created a relational ripple effect, where CYP who felt heard, seen, and supported became more willing to re-engage with school life. Staff noticed that when these relationships were in place, other aspects of reintegration, such as attendance, motivation, and engagement, began to shift positively:

“Without the positive relationships within the school, it does not motivate CYP to come in.” – Mari

“Pupils form positive relationships... if they don’t have that foundation then it’s very difficult or almost impossible to move forward to the next step.” – Puw

Subordinate theme: Bridging the gap pathways to belonging and reintegration

This overarching theme captures the multifaceted ways in which schools support CYP in bridging the gap between disengagement and meaningful reintegration following a period on a reduced timetable. Across all three subthemes, a shared emphasis emerges on relational scaffolding, flexible pathways, and a community ethos of collective responsibility.

Staff and CYP alike highlighted the importance of redefining success through strength-based, personalised learning experiences that value wellbeing, motivation, and engagement

alongside academic outcomes. Internal school provisions, such as nurture hubs, offered safe, responsive spaces for emotional regulation and reflection, while partnerships across home, school, and external agencies ensured wraparound, holistic planning. Central to this process was the consistent presence of trusted adults and peers, who fostered agency, belonging, and emotional growth.

Subtheme: Expanding Pathways through Strength-Based Learning

School staff repeatedly highlighted the importance of reframing what ‘success’ looks like for CYP reintegrating following a period on a reduced timetable. School staff described the value of strength-based approaches, those that meet learners where they are in their individual journeys and focus on personal development, wellbeing, and engagement as valid indicators of progress.

“Success for me is that they are safe, they are happy, their mental health is in a place that we want it to be and that they finish their journeys here to be able to go on to their next step in life...” – Sioni

“...to be able to put the scaffold in place for them to hopefully build that solid wall together, to ideally reintegrate full-time and to be succeeding, but whatever succeeding is for them.” – Sioni

This reframing was often supported through flexible educational experiences such as extended opportunities for work experiences, enrichment activities, and emotional wellbeing support. Staff and CYP alike expressed the value of alternative curriculum options in offering purpose, motivation, and a pathway back into education.

For some learners, accessing work experience appeared to be a key turning point in their reintegration. When opportunities aligned with CYP's interests or aspirations, they fostered a sense of competence and optimism for the future.

"The work experience changed a lot for me." – Ifan

"The work experience is a big boost for me ... motivation for me because there was a time at the start of Year 10 where things were pretty different to now, I just needed a little scaffold."

– Wil

Staff also described clear outcomes associated with this approach, noting improvements in attendance, attitude, and emotional regulation.

"There was one pupil where his motivation and attendance were very low ... exclusions too. But after arranging work experience, there was a complete change in his mindset. His attendance has gone up." – Wmffra

"We haven't had anything close to an exclusion since we've introduced this intervention ... a five-day week with five lessons a day is certainly not for everyone. I think it is our role in the school to respect that and look at ways around it to provide contemporary education." –

Wmffra

For some learners, extracurricular activities such as sport or mentoring relationships provided relational and emotional anchors that contributed to resilience and engagement.

"I've got kickboxing which I've just started ... I've got my mates there which is sound ... yeah maybe I'm more motivated cause I'm a bit more interested maybe." – Martha

“Doing things with (hub teaching assistant), that’s made a difference ... done a lot of wellbeing work and preparing for an interview, and stuff for college ... things have been a lot better and a lot less suspensions.” – Huw

These experiences appeared to be underpinned by a coaching and mentoring ethos, where trusted adults offered support with challenges and promoted self-awareness, emotional regulation, and future planning.

“Coaching the individual’s awareness of themselves ... maybe that’s why we see most successes in Year 10 and 11.” – Sioni

“We’ve tried our best to be flexible and do what works for our children and young people, even within the limits of the system ... I like to think we’ve acknowledged that our learners have changed.” – Sioni

The voices of young people were not only seen as important in shaping their own reintegration pathways, but also in supporting others. One member of staff spoke specifically of upskilling pupils as mentors, creating peer-based opportunities for growth and shared responsibility.

“We upskill our pupils and then give them responsibilities as mentors for the younger pupils and collaborate with the primary schools for various ideas.” – Wmffra

Ultimately, both staff and CYP narratives reinforced that relational scaffolding, intentional, consistent relationships with adults and peers, was central to fostering emotional growth, agency, and self-belief throughout the reintegration process.

“We had to appreciate that flexibility was needed to raise motivation and attendance. It’s been a positive experience – not just for the pupils, but for us as a school and the parents too.” – Puw

Subtheme: Stronger Together: Community Partnership for Reintegration

This subtheme highlights the collective effort required to meaningfully support CYP as they reintegrate into mainstream education following a period on a reduced timetable. School staff spoke with conviction about their deep sense of moral responsibility, not only to the individual learner, but to the wider school and community. For some, this commitment was described as unwavering:

“[Pupil] is the perfect example of that... I would bet my mortgage that this pupil would have been permanently excluded from any other school... but we have continued even when things haven’t been working... where the background knowledge isn’t there, the relationship isn’t there, it’s just not going to work.” - Sioni

“We don’t turn our backs on our CYP here... we give them every possible opportunity to succeed.” – Puw

This commitment was underpinned by a belief that reintegration cannot rest on the shoulders of schools alone. Staff highlighted the importance of multi-agency collaboration, noting that meaningful reintegration is most successful when schools work alongside families and external professionals to develop wraparound plans:

“I can’t think of a single child in this school where we’re concerned about them and there’s no external agency working with them... youth officers, school nurses, counsellors... we have a team around them to ensure that they succeed.” – Wmffra

“It’s important to bring other agencies in with more specialist support.” – Sioni

Staff reflected on the importance of placing CYP and their families at the heart of reintegration planning. Transparent communication, shared expectations, and trusting relationships were all emphasised as essential:

“We set expectations for the child, but also consider what the pupil wants, what the parents want... being open and honest for the benefit of the child at the centre.” - Wmffra

“Clear communication and regular meetings... a phone call is made every week to the home.” – Puw

“If we have the support of the pupil, the support of the home, we as a school can put the support in place.” – Wmffra

A positive and meaningful reintegration was also described as dependent on alignment between the school and home environment, where consistency and stability allowed positive changes to take root:

“It just highlights that having both stability in the home and the school, if that’s a match, the good work we do takes effect.” – Sioni

This collaborative ethos extended beyond individual cases, with staff describing efforts to build relationships with other schools, share practice, and invest in their own professional development to meet the evolving needs of CYP:

“Receiving different training... we create good relationships with other nearby schools... bring everyone together and do something different.” – Wmffra

Together, these perspectives reflect a deeply relational model of reintegration, where community-wide partnerships, professional learning, and transparent collaboration form the foundation for inclusive practice. Reintegration was not viewed as a linear or isolated process, but rather a shared journey, one rooted in belonging, trust, and collective responsibility.

Subtheme: Foundations of Support: Internal Provisions and Safe Spaces

This subtheme captures the role of internal school provisions, such as nurture rooms or hubs in laying the groundwork for CYP returning to mainstream education following time on a reduced timetable. For some CYP, these spaces became relational environments, where young people could regulate, reflect, and reconnect. One pupil shared openly how the hub had offered a stabilising influence:

“I spend a lot of my time in the hub and it’s saved and changed me a lot ... I haven’t been suspended for a whole month now ...” - Huw

Huw further reflected on how simply being away from previous peer influences, facilitated by time in the hub, allowed for behavioural shifts:

“Cause before I would be dared to do stuff and I’d just do it, but since being in the hub more after my reduced timetable, I’m not with the same group, so I think that’s helped too.” - Huw

Staff echoed this emphasis on the relational and emotional utility of internal provisions. They spoke of the importance of designing flexible, responsive environments that matched the

emotional and learning needs of their pupils. One member of staff captured the essence of this approach:

“You know you have so many young people from so many backgrounds and this is their safe base...” – Sioni

Another described the evolution of internal supports in response to rising post-COVID needs:

“Suddenly a few months [after COVID] I realised that our children that had behavioural needs weren’t really sure where they were going, and the interventions we had in place weren’t meeting the demands we needed for these children ... we trialled the idea of a hub... and I think it has been one of the biggest successes within the school to tell you the truth.” - Wmffra

One school described how they took a three-tiered approach that supported both curriculum access and emotional development:

“We have the nurture provision... a place for small groups to come and get support, and then we have the ALN hub, so they work with teaching assistants to get the extra boost on the curriculum side and on the emotional side to some extent, and mainstream lessons too... so we create an alternative timetable with a mix of the three.” – Puw

This approach led to clear results:

“Within half a term, fair play, (pupil) was coming to school full time.” – Puw

Flexibility and responsiveness were key. Another staff member described how pupils could dip in and out of the hub depending on the situation:

“We saw a gap where there was a clash with teachers or subjects, they are not really enjoying, so the children go down to the learning hub to complete those lessons.” - Sioni

Staff shared how the availability of a secure base helped maintain engagement for some CYP:

“They come running in halfway through a lesson saying I’m not doing it, but at least then you know that we have a safe base for them here and that they’re not running home.” – Puw

From the CYP perspective, just knowing there was a place to go was often enough to reduce stress and increase their sense of agency:

“I then just go to the (learning hub/wellbeing room), yeah...” - Martha

These internal spaces supported the school’s inclusive ethos, a culture that prioritised emotional well-being, relational repair, and individualised pathways. One staff member highlighted this balance:

“We are supportive of the children and we are quite flexible to their needs as well so we are not saying that you are not allowed to be in the (nurture provision), you are not allowed to be in the hub ... we try and give focus to the child first.” – Puw

From the experience shared by both school staff and CYP, provisions appeared to foster a sense of belonging, both socially and emotionally. Provisions and safe spaces were not simply educational add-ons, they were foundational to reintegration as the CYP were able to develop routines and establish peer community. As one teacher affectionately put it:

“In the (nurture provision) we have the locals, I like to call them ... they create their own little community ... they’re in their comfort zone every time they come into school.” – Puw

Subordinate theme: Navigating roadblocks

This theme explores how reduced timetables, while intended as supportive stepping stones toward reintegration, often blur the lines between inclusion and exclusion. Ultimately, navigating these roadblocks requires a shift from behaviourist responses to relationship-centred, context-informed approaches that include CYP.

Subtheme: Blurred Lines

This subtheme explores the contradictory experiences and perceptions surrounding reduced timetables and how they relate to reintegration into mainstream schools. It sheds light on the tension between the well-intended rationale behind reduced timetables, as viewed by school staff, and the perceptions of CYP. The resulting ambiguity underscores the complexity of balancing support with inclusion.

From the perspectives of staff, the intended goal of reintegration is clear: students should eventually be able to attend full-time, engage in six lessons a day, and meet academic expectations. However, many staff members acknowledge that for some students, this one-size-fits-all model is not feasible. A member of staff shared:

“I think reintegration is ideal but what are we looking at for this ‘perfect’ is that they are attending full time, 6 lessons a day and that they complete every task but the truth is that we have young people, in our catchment area anyway, that are living in a deprived area, we have young people who have had extremely tough and challenging lives that continue to live in these situations so completing six lessons a day five days a week is a challenge in itself...”

– Sioni

For school staff, reduced timetables are often seen as a strategic tool, designed to scaffold support, prioritise emotional wellbeing, and prevent overwhelming students who are described to ‘struggle’ with full-time attendance at school due to socio-emotional differences

presented as externalised behaviours, almost as an embedded tier within the school's continuum of support. As one staff member explained:

“The reduced timetable is a big part of our provision map... education doesn't fit into everyone's box, so we have had to look outside the box to ensure that we find things that work for our children, and that's where the reduced timetable comes into that and our provision.” – Wmffra

School staff routinely view reduced timetables as a temporary phase, intended to ease students back into full-time education by gradually increasing their engagement. Staff believe that such an approach is more realistic for some students, especially those with socio-emotional and behavioural differences. Wmffra further emphasised:

“I think it's also hard to think about this (reduced timetables and reintegration) where we have children at school, or for this pupil where his timetable is at 80% at the moment, I don't want to change that from four to five days as I think that day of work experience in this case is doing academic and emotional good for the pupil...” – Wmffra

The intention behind the reduced timetable is often framed as supportive and protective, particularly when staff express concern that pushing a student to attend full-time might lead to further ruptures in relationships or to a permanent exclusion. Wmffra described how certain students on reduced timetables were succeeding:

“We have children who are on an 80% timetable at the moment and they are succeeding and doing extremely well... the highest the percentage the better as we want children to be at school but there are experiences such as work experience as valuable.” – Wmffra

However, while most staff may view reduced timetables as protective and restorative in nature, CYP appear to be interpreting the experience of reduced timetables differently to school staff. This is outlined by the experience of Ifan, who articulated that reduced timetables were:

“Like a bit of slack really, reduced timetable yeah... I get to be home more, that’s what it is really innit.” – Ifan

To Ifan, the reduced timetable felt like a privilege, but also suggested a disconnect from the wider school community. The experience was framed not as a positive opportunity for gradual reintegration, but more like an extended holiday or suspension.

“It’s like a holiday really, it’s like a suspension really isn’t it but it isn’t either, you get to go home and do whatever you want to do, I’ve got work experience all day Monday so I’m barely in school really (pause) I’m in school every morning but home every afternoon.” – Ifan

Similarly, Martha shared how she viewed the reason for her reduced timetable as somewhat of a punishment:

“Umm ... they couldn’t handle me when I was in my moods I think.” – Martha

“Because I was a bad kid ...” – Martha

These insights stand in contrast to the way staff describe the intentional, caring scaffolding that underpins their use of reduced timetables.

From the school staff perspectives, reduced timetables are carefully monitored and retained “in-house,” as part of a tiered support system intended to help students re-engage safely and at their own pace. A staff member explained:

“Our first step as a school every time is not that the child is not on the school site but we reduce the timetable within the school and within what we can offer in the school...” – Sioni

This internal approach is described to keep CYP connected to the school environment, even if their timetable is adjusted. However, the experiences described by CYP suggests a much more fractured presence in school.

Subtheme 2: “Plaster Over it All”

This subtheme captures the underlying tension between short-term fixes and long-term solutions in the use of reduced timetables, and the need to explore what lies beneath the surface of a child or YP’s school disengagement. The metaphor of the “plaster over it all”, taken directly from one staff participant, conveys the concern that reduced timetables, though often well-intended, risk covering rather than addressing the root causes of a CYP’s difficulties.

“These reduced timetables can be a plaster over it all, it’s the same in society as well ... for reintegration to work we need to understand the root of the problem.” – Puw

Staff reflections highlighted that without meaningful exploration into why a YP needs a reduced timetable, the intervention can quickly become a routine coping mechanism rather than a pathway to reintegration. While reduced timetables may offer temporary relief or containment, they may also fall short to building the resilience needed for re-engagement, potentially feeding a pattern of withdrawal.

“So my opinion is that once they’ve been placed on a reduced timetable it usually becomes a normal thing... it’s a get out of jail card like I’m going home at dinner time, I’m not staying, like used to having their own way and if I don’t like school I’m going home... to some extent

it doesn't build enough resilience for me... although we have to remember that these children are young and are still developing." – Puw

Other staff reflected on how systemic pressures may lead to decisions that prioritise outcomes over individual need:

"In reality at times, we don't put what the child needs first because there are pressure on schools to maintain the statistics that are set by the government." – Sioni

In contrast, positive reintegration experiences tended to emerge when schools took time to "drill down" into the individual circumstances of each CYP, exploring hidden or emerging needs. This approach outlines a mindset shift from managing behaviour to understanding context:

"It drills down to the little things... this is a strategy... drill down why this doesn't work for a child, what doesn't work... they can't write well, can't read well... is there anything within the classroom environment, is there anything within the school system that doesn't work for them, once you've understood that, you can work around it." – Sioni

Another member of staff similarly emphasised the importance of exploring the 'why' before deciding on a reduced timetable:

"You know every case is different but my advice is, why do they need the reduced timetable to begin with... usually most of the children from our school have had trauma or ACEs already... they have been identified with ALN, they are on the spectrum, they are waiting for NDP for CAMHS advice... we also have to consider are they safe at home too... we need to make sure that this is definitely the best thing to do if the goal is to reintegrate them full time." – Puw

From the perspective of CYP, positive change and re-engagement often came when schools looked beneath the surface. This deeper understanding enabled access to targeted support, which improved both their experience of school and their capacity and motivation to re-engage.

“...this is just about me really but before... I have ADHD yeah and before school didn’t know that so they’ve figured that out end of last year and now I’m getting a little bit of help and slack towards school and it just helps a little yeah (pause) a bit of breathing space really.” – Ifan

“Oh maybe cause the help cause I’ve got dyslexia yeah and I didn’t get a lot of help before so now that I’ve asked for it I get help from teachers to read and stuff.” – Martha

For some CYP, being seen, understood, and supported had a meaningful impact, not only in terms of academic help but in reducing mental and emotional burdens:

“I think I don’t have so much on my mind now so I can do more things so maybe that’s why it’s better.” – Martha

However, according to one member of staff the difficulty of returning to full-time school after prolonged periods of reduced attendance remained a challenge, especially when home offered autonomy that school might not:

“You know the rare successes... it doesn’t happen often where we’ve been able to get them back full-time... they’re used to being at home and then it depends on what they are doing at home.” – Mari

“Why would they want to come back to school full-time when they have to do what other people tell them... getting the balance is very difficult.” – Mari

Subtheme 3: Inclusion in a Behaviourist Structure

This subtheme focuses on the voices of CYP. During analysis, it became clear that a distinct thread of frustration and injustice ran through many CYP narratives regarding previous experiences of exclusions, suspensions, or reduced timetables and how these have shaped their feelings about school.

For Ifan, repeated suspensions and then being placed on a reduced timetable felt more like the school giving up on him than offering help:

“Nobody wanted me here so ... (pause) cause school was saying that I’d have to move schools and everything and I thought oh nice, like what?! Then I was being suspended all the time and I was never here basically, so I got put on a reduced timetable.” – Ifan

Ifan and Huw both described how being placed in isolation spaces after returning to school made them feel rejected and disconnected, eroding their sense of a fresh start:

“Well to not put me in the behaviour unit for a week straight after I come back as a start ... just isolation on my own in a room ... like I came back to school thinking ok yeah, fresh start now and then no you’re in the unit for a week ... can’t be arsed with that, it just made me want to go home again and not come back.” – Ifan

“The head didn’t even listen to me when there was something, just told me to go home, which made me angry because it made things hard when I needed to come back to school then ... I was fed up of seeing my front door all the time ...” – Huw

When asked what advice they would give others in a similar position to them, CYP shared messages that sounded less like resilience and more like survival – somewhat of a coping mechanism. They knew they were on their *"last chance,"* and felt they had to comply to stay in school:

"Keep your head down and just do what they ask you to do." – Huw

"Don't be bad and keep your head down and carry on basically ..." – Ifan

"Umm just listen to teachers, like don't be annoying and maybe you can stay in school longer..." – Martha

Labels and assumptions were also a perceived problem. Huw explained how being seen as the *"naughty boy"* affected how staff treated him:

"Teachers always targeted me cause it was easy cause I was labelled the naughty boy." – Huw

Despite this, CYP also expressed moments of hope and progress, particularly when alternative strategies, such as work experience or reduced timetables, offered them a pathway back into meaningful engagement. Yet even here, success is framed through a behaviourist lens: good behaviour is rewarded with opportunity; poor behaviour threatens loss.

"The work experience ... because if I was bad, I wasn't allowed to go on work experience and then if I wasn't able to do that I would've turned out worse ... and the work experience is just in my head all the time so say now that I've been bad and I've been sent to the office, I think oh god what's going to happen to me on Friday's now, will I have to go back to school so I have that mindset and mentality." – Wil

While some CYP, like Huw, acknowledged that a reduced timetable helped restore a sense of purpose and calm:

“I just thought this was my last chance to carry on in education yeah ... I wish they put me on a reduced timetable sooner really so I feel like I can do something with my life.” – Huw

But for others, time away from mainstream classes or being in a separate unit felt boring and pointless:

“Ok, well a year ago I wasn’t actually in the school itself I was in like a (behaviour isolation unit) and it was so boring ...” – Martha

Discussion

Anchored in connection, rooted in relationships

The present study outlines the critical role of developing meaningful relationships across multiple levels of the school system, including between staff and students, schools, and families, and within the wider community. These relationships serve as the foundation upon which positive and meaningful reintegration and inclusive practices are built. The findings suggest that fostering trust and connection is not simply a desirable feature of school life, but rather a catalyst that enables other interventions to take root and be effective.

Both staff and pupil experiences in this study suggest that reintegration is fundamentally relational before it is procedural. That is, the success of any structured reintegration plan is dependent on the quality of the relationships underpinning it. Participants repeatedly emphasised that positive relationships were not only a starting point for re-engagement but also a sustaining factor that supported progress over time. In this way, relationships acted as a

bridge, linking pupils to school, and school to wider support systems, enabling meaningful change to take place.

This relational emphasis is further reinforced by participants' reflections on the value of emotionally available and advocating adults within the school. Many CYP described how having adults who believed in them and championed their needs facilitated the process of navigating their reintegration journeys, following time spent on a reduced timetable. These findings echo those of Atkinson and Rowley (2019), who found that CYP identified trusted members of school staff as their primary sources of emotional and practical support during reintegration. Similarly, Bakhtar (2017) reported that CYP valued the presence of a supportive adult advocate, viewing this connection as essential to positive reintegration experiences. Implications for practice might include utilising trauma-informed or trauma-responsive strategies to facilitate this relational approach. This might include approaching interactions with empathy, understanding, and applying models such as the PACE model (Hughes, 2006) to guide responses to challenging situations involving students who might have experienced trauma. Furthermore, allowing staff to develop an increased understanding of CYPs needs recognising that behaviour is a form of communication, and that change isn't always linear – all rooted in a whole-school ethos that prioritises connectedness and compassion (Avery, et al., 2021).

Additionally, the findings from the current study highlight the importance of agency and voice. When CYP felt heard and involved in the decisions affecting their education, it created a relational ripple effect, enhancing their sense of self-efficacy and deepening their engagement. This aligns with research that positions pupil voice as central to inclusive practice and effective reintegration. Importantly, these connections were characterised by mutual respect, another recurring theme in the data. CYP expressed that being respected by

staff, and having that respect reciprocated, made them feel valued and motivated to re-engage with school life. This mirrors Armstrong's (2017) conclusion that mutual respect between CYP and school staff plays a pivotal role in fostering positive and meaningful reintegration outcomes.

Together, these findings reinforce the notion that meaningful reintegration is not about a checklist of steps, but rather about creating the emotional and relational conditions that allow young people to return to and thrive within mainstream education. Investing in relationships, particularly those that validate the experiences, identities, and aspirations of CYP, must be recognised as not only beneficial but essential in efforts to promote inclusion and reduce exclusionary practices.

Bridging the gap, pathways to belonging and reintegration

The findings suggest that schools that promoted positive reintegration experiences encouraged strength-based approaches, focusing on the intentional development of each CYP's skills, interests, and aspirations. Initiatives such as work experience, mentoring, and coaching were viewed by participants as important tools to support CYPs self-awareness, resilience, and long-term engagement with education. These approaches align closely with a holistic view of learner needs, one that reflects key principles of the ALN Code and the New Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2022; Welsh Government, 2021). In particular, the intentional focus on nurturing the whole child, emotionally, socially, and academically, supports a more inclusive and person-centred education system. Strength-based practices aim to promote agency and optimism, which may be a strong contributing factor for a meaningful and positive reintegration. This finding coincides with Gibson (2019)'s study that also highlighted the importance of school connectedness and how adopting strength-based

approaches may aid in rebuilding CYPs confidence and repair their relationships with learning following exclusions.

A strong sense of community emerged as a central theme within the present study, encapsulating the importance of connectedness and belonging for CYP undergoing reintegration following a reduced timetable. The findings emphasised the value of community partnerships and collaborative, multi-disciplinary working. Schools that centred the voices of CYP and their families, maintained transparent communication, and shared expectations across professional networks appeared to foster a more supportive environment for reintegration. Trusting relationships between school staff, families, and external professionals were highlighted as essential in building a wraparound system of support. These findings resonate with research from Kelly (2022), who noted that the views and attitudes of the adults around the CYP significantly shape how CYP interpret and engage with reintegration processes. It is suggested that when CYP perceive that reintegration is rooted in belief, purpose, and hope for their success, they are more likely to invest in their own progress.

Moreover, findings from the present study suggest that staff in schools where reintegration was experienced positively often adopted a social justice perspective (Browne et al., 2024; Milligan, 2022). There was a clear sense of moral responsibility and ethical commitment to meeting the needs of their learners, not only academically, but emotionally and socially. This relational ethic extended beyond the school setting. Staff described the importance of connecting with other professionals, engaging in continued professional development, and building communities of practice across schools. These efforts were driven by a shared aim to support all learners in their reintegration journeys and foster a wider culture of inclusion.

At the heart of these findings is the notion that meaningful reintegration is more than the implementation of a practical plan. Rather, it is experiences of emotional safety, belonging, and relational connection through internal provisions within mainstream settings. The differing experiences of reintegration appeared to depend on whether CYP felt understood, accepted, and seen within their school environments. In this context, provisions were not static, nor strictly procedural, they were dynamic and creative, designed to be responsive to each CYPs unique needs, identity, and readiness to return to mainstream learning.

Together, these perspectives reflect a relational model of reintegration, one that is rooted in collective responsibility, shared understanding, and community-wide collaboration.

Reintegration was not perceived as a linear or individualised event, but rather as a shared journey that involved families, educators, external professionals, and most importantly, the CYP themselves. This is echoed in existing literature, such as Boyd (2019), who identified the significance of additional sources of social support, including mentors and extracurricular activities, in helping CYP build resilience and develop a sense of belonging beyond their immediate peer groups.

In summary, the findings of this study affirm that the reintegration of CYP following reduced timetables is most successful when situated within a broader ethos of connection, trust, and community. A sense of belonging is not a by-product of successful, positive, or meaningful reintegration; it is the condition that enables it to occur.

Navigating roadblocks

This theme outlines the systemic challenges that arise during the reintegration journeys of CYP following time on reduced timetables.

Although the findings highlight the passion and sense of duty school staff feel in supporting CYP with socio-emotional differences, particularly those presenting with externalised behaviours, many staff described reduced timetables as a protective measure. Staff viewed these timetables as a way to safeguard CYP from further harm, such as potential further ruptures in relationships or the risk of permanent exclusion. While staff expressed a strong commitment to inclusive practices, there was a clear distinction between how reduced timetables are viewed by school staff and how they are experienced by CYP. This reflects Armstrong's (2017) findings, which emphasised that although individual educators may champion inclusion, broader systemic barriers may influence the implementation of practices.

The experiences of participants in this study further highlighted ongoing ambiguity and inconsistencies in how reduced timetables are used and understood. Perspectives varied however most school staff saw them as helpful support strategies integrated into the school's provision. Staff commonly described these timetables as internal and reframed them as "alternative timetables," maintaining a link between the CYP and the school. In contrast, CYP often described experiencing sporadic attendance and spending much of their time at home.

This theme raises important ethical questions: whose needs are truly being met by reduced timetables, the system's or the CYP's? What message do these timetables send to CYP about their place and worth in school? These findings invite reflection on how interventions intended to support CYP might instead contribute to further exclusion or become mechanisms that restrict rather than enable reintegration.

Despite the existence of Welsh Government guidelines on reduced timetables, this study found a continued mismatch between policy and practice (Welsh Government, 2024; 2023). While these timetables may support some CYP in re-engaging with education, they may be

perceived as a “last chance”. These experiences echo Weaver’s (2023) findings, which pointed to a lack of clear reintegration systems and ambiguous goals, with many questioning whether full reintegration was truly the school’s aim. Weaver (2023) also identified how the norms and practices of individual school contexts allowed for reduced timetables to be applied in ways that, although seemingly supportive, often reinforced exclusion. Similarly, the findings of the present study highlight the complexities of reduced timetables. The ambiguity and inconsistency in how reduced timetables are applied across schools suggest a need for more uniform guidance and implementation. Staff should be supported through professional development to align their practices with national guidelines, fostering shared understanding.

The findings of the current study, when considered alongside previous research (Weaver, 2023; Markwell, 2024), suggest that reduced timetables may contribute to further disengagement and weaken resilience among CYP, rather than promote re-engagement. This appears to contradict what existing literature outlines as essential for positive reintegration and conflicts with what staff in this study described as a possible factor that is key to meaningful reintegration journeys. One staff member’s reference to reduced timetables being like a “plaster over it all” captures this concern clearly. While intentions may be good, these arrangements risk masking, rather than addressing, the root causes of disengagement.

As one staff member reflected, “we need to make sure that this is definitely the best thing to do if the goal is to reintegrate them full time.” This insight reflects a wider understanding that without addressing external factors, such as trauma, neurodivergence, or challenges within the home environment, schools risk implementing surface-level solutions. These may manage behaviour in the short term but do not address the deeper barriers to attendance and inclusion.

This supports Markwell's (2024) findings, which emphasised the need to explore underlying causes in order to achieve successful reintegration.

Insights from CYP suggest that although reintegration may appear successful on paper, it does not necessarily translate into a sense of belonging or increased self-efficacy for CYP. When asked what advice they would give to others, CYP offered statements such as "keep your head down," "do what you're told," and "just crack on." At first, this might appear to reflect resilience. However, a closer look suggests these responses stem more from a need to comply and survive rather than from a place of genuine empowerment or growth, which may be explained by a theory of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975) based on previous experiences of exclusion.

Although the CYP who were interviewed were now engaging more in school life, their motivation often seemed rooted in fear of further exclusion or the desire to jump through hoops to finish school, rather than in a belief in their own abilities. From the perspectives shared, it became clear that many CYP felt pushed out rather than supported to stay. What emerged was not a sense of empowerment, but a coping mechanism, an attempt to adapt to a school environment where inclusion felt conditional on "good" behaviour. This intense pressure to conform was often underpinned by feelings of injustice and frustration, especially highlighted in the subtheme *'Inclusion in a behaviourist structure'* which focused on pupil voice. The findings emphasise the importance of recognising and respecting pupil voice, agency, and power if reintegration is to be truly positive and meaningful. It may be helpful to use self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) as a lens to facilitate the reintegration plans of CYP, supporting autonomy (e.g., pupil voice), build competence (e.g., strength-based approaches), and foster relatedness (e.g., positive relationships with staff and peers).

Prioritising these factors may help in promoting intrinsic motivation of CYP which may help in the re-engagement to mainstream settings following reduced timetables.

Finally, these findings align with existing research. Weaver (2023) found that reduced timetables often led to continued exclusion and negative impacts on wellbeing, including behavioural issues, social isolation, and disrupted friendship development. Similarly, Markwell (2024) noted that such practices could prepare CYP for failure, acting only as a temporary fix rather than addressing deeper problems. These findings reinforce the present study's conclusion: meaningful reintegration requires more than short-term interventions. It requires systemic change, thoughtful practice, and a focus on the voices and needs of CYP themselves.

Limitations and possible future research

In accordance with Braun and Clarke's Big Q methodology, rather than claiming a final 'truth' as such, findings are open to further exploration, as other researchers may explore similar contexts and over time the knowledge about the topic will evolve (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

While this study was conducted with a commitment to rigour and reflexivity, some considerations remain important when interpreting the findings. The researcher's positionality—shaped by personal values, beliefs, and professional experience—was acknowledged and actively explored throughout the research process, as detailed in the reflective account (Part 3). Rather than attempting to eliminate subjectivity, this study embraced the co-constructed nature of knowledge within a contextualist and critically realist framework. The reflexive log and regular supervision helped to critically engage with this positioning.

The accounts gathered reflect the situated perspectives of participants from two LAs in the North-West of Wales. These accounts are embedded within local systems and socio-cultural contexts that inevitably shaped both what was shared and how it was interpreted. While these findings are not intended to be generalisable in a traditional sense, they offer rich, contextualised insights into the complex realities of reintegration. Further exploration across different contexts would extend and diversify understanding.

Although efforts were made to address power imbalances in interviews with CYP such as using accessible language, building rapport, and positioning the researcher outside of the school system, it is possible that CYP still perceived the researcher as being aligned with school staff, which may have influenced their responses. It is also important to note that the group of CYP interviewed cannot be considered a homogenous group. Their diverse experiences and identities mean that the findings may not reflect the full spectrum of views, highlighting the need for future research that continues to explore these nuances. However, in the context of the current research regarding reintegration, staff and learner-led views and experiences were highly valuable in understanding the complex, broader systemic challenges, and support.

Furthermore, the absence of parent and carer voices represents a notable gap in the data. As key stakeholders in the reintegration process, gaining insight into their perspectives would be essential to develop a more holistic understanding of how reduced timetables are experienced and navigated, in addition to exploring factors that influence the reintegration process of CYP. Despite these limitations, this study offers valuable insights into the factors that can facilitate more positive and meaningful reintegration experiences for CYP following a period on a reduced timetable.

Implications for EP Practice

The findings from this study have some implications for EP practice, particularly in relation to reintegration processes for CYP returning to mainstream education following time on reduced timetables. Core themes such as the importance of connectedness, inclusion, relationships, CYP agency, empowerment, strength-based approaches, and social justice frameworks all emerged as central to supporting successful reintegration journeys. EPs, with their unique position within education systems, are well placed to influence these processes by promoting a systemic, preventative, and community-oriented approach (MacKay, 2006).

One such approach is community psychology, which recognises the importance of understanding the broader socio-political and historical contexts in which CYP live. Kelly's (2006) ecological theory of community psychology offers a holistic and systemic model for addressing community issues. In practice, this includes empowering communities, fostering collaborative working, and promoting the active involvement of parents and carers. EPs adopting a community psychology lens could work not only at the level of the individual CYP but also within the wider family, school, and community systems to support reintegration journeys in a way that fosters sustained change beyond the microsystem (Kelly, 2006; Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

Alongside this approach, EPs may find the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF) a valuable tool in promoting social justice (Browne et al., 2024; Milligan, 2022). The PTMF challenges individualised and deficit-based models of behaviour by shifting focus to context, power dynamics, and meaning-making processes (Milligan, 2022). Reflections from EPs using the PTMF suggest it facilitates collaborative planning, joint working, and multi-agency support, while encouraging professionals to consider broader systemic and political influences on distress (Milligan, 2022). This aligns with the study's findings that

reintegration support should be context-sensitive and relational. The PTMF helps bring attention to how power and adversity interact, offering a meaningful framework to guide EP practice that is rooted in empowerment and systemic awareness (Browne et al., 2024).

Promoting ethical reflection and supervision is also essential. EPs are in a strong position to support schools in embedding reflective practice and supervision into their culture. By offering supervision to school staff, EPs can help sustain professional development, facilitate critical discussions, and maintain a school-wide ethos committed to inclusion, equity, and belonging. Building this reflective capacity can aid in reshaping reintegration as a supportive rather than exclusionary practice, where all staff are engaged in ongoing learning about inclusive practice.

Given their skills in consultation and supervision, EPs are well placed to support both individual staff and school-wide systems through interprofessional supervision (Calliot & Leadbetter, 2013). As external supervisors, EPs can foster reflective dialogue that supports psychological understanding and effective change. Working systemically, EPs can enhance communication between the school, family, and other services, and work preventatively to benefit not only individual pupils but also the wider school community (Simmonds, 2022; Beaver, 2011; Wassink et al., 2022). Youth work has been recognised as playing a valuable role in supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of CYP (Welsh Government, 2021). A key finding of the current study highlights the importance of collaborative multi-disciplinary working, alongside promoting strength-based approaches and resilience building within the reintegration journeys of CYP. One example of how EPs can support wider community-based collaboration within the reintegration of learners is through extending our practice to the community, providing supervision to both school and Youth Justice staff, helping them reflect on their practice (Gumbs, 2023).

EPs can also play a key role in raising awareness of both the barriers and enablers to reintegration. By supporting schools to critically reflect on current practices and facilitating the implementation of evidence-based strategies, EPs can drive organisational change. Chidley and Stringer's (2020) implementation framework offers a practical guide for bridging the gap between policy, practice, and pupil experience. This supports schools to ensure that reduced timetables function as meaningful support strategies rather than covert forms of exclusion, with the ultimate goal of reintegration guided by ethical, inclusive, and systemic principles.

In line with this, EPs can support schools to reframe reduced timetables as "alternative timetables" delivered in-house, using available resources to maintain school connectedness. EPs could also contribute to the development and evaluation of on-site reintegration provisions, ensuring that pupils have a safe, structured environment to return to. Utilising systemic problem-solving tools such as PATH (Pearpoint, O'Brien & Foster, 1993) Circle of Adults (Newton & Wilson, 2015) and Solution Circles (Forest & Pearpoint, 1996; Elliot, 2019) can draw on existing knowledge within the school and wider reintegration team, building confidence and capacity throughout the process.

Supporting reintegration also involves addressing staff wellbeing, as positive staff relationships, appreciation, and belonging contribute to a healthy school climate (Wigford & Higgins, 2019). These same factors were identified in this study as supporting CYP reintegration, suggesting that interventions targeting staff wellbeing may simultaneously enhance pupil outcomes. Group mentoring, coaching for school staff, and peer-support models for CYP could all be effective strategies to promote resilience and shared responsibility in the reintegration process.

Family engagement is another vital element. EPs can support schools to develop approaches that foster meaningful parental involvement, such as being a part of parenting events or facilitating the process of identifying a key worker to act as a consistent point of contact. This relational approach promotes trust and shared understanding between home and school, supporting a smoother reintegration journey for CYP.

Moreover, models such as Seligman's (2011) PERMA framework offer a structured approach to promoting wellbeing on a whole-school level. By focusing on Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment, schools can foster a culture of belonging that supports all learners, including those reintegrating from reduced timetables. Combined with Bronfenbrenner's (1999) Ecological Theory and the bio-psycho-socio-ecological model (BPSEM), the PERMA model can also be used to support groups of CYP, helping to transform schools into functional communities that serve as hubs of inclusive support (Hamilton & Moore, 2004).

Finally, adopting an intersectional lens is critical (Zhang & Gao, 2024). CYP on reduced timetables often experience multiple, overlapping forms of disadvantage. EPs must consider these intersecting identities, be they related to race, disability, socio-economic status, or trauma history, when developing reintegration plans. This requires moving beyond generic strategies toward culturally and contextually responsive practices that meet the unique needs of each child.

Contribution to knowledge

This study adds to the developing body of research on reduced timetables in Wales and the reintegration of CYP into mainstream secondary settings. It sought to extend previous work by focussing on the voices of CYP alongside those of school staff, thereby offering a more balanced account of reintegration following exclusionary practices such as reduced

timetables. The research was informed by both a positive psychology lens, which directed attention towards the factors that supported resilience, well-being, and a sense of belonging, and an eco-systemic perspective, which helped situate these factors within the wider layers of influence that surround CYP, from peer and teacher relationships to school practices and broader cultural expectations. Through this framing, the study generated three themes: Anchored in Connection, Rooted in Relationships; Bridging the Gap, Pathways to Belonging and Reintegration; and Navigating Roadblocks. These themes illustrate not only the importance of meaningful relationships, strength-based approaches, and collaborative working in creating pathways to positive reintegration, but also the systemic barriers that continue to shape CYP's experiences of exclusion and return.

Furthermore, the study highlights how CYP construct and articulate their own understandings of reintegration and reduced timetables. During analysis, a thread of frustration and injustice was evident in many narratives, as YP reflected on how exclusions, suspensions, and reduced timetables had shaped their relationship with school. One YP explained, *"The head didn't even listen to me when there was something, just told me to go home, which made me angry because it made things hard when I needed to come back to school then ... I was fed up of seeing my front door all the time."* Staff members questioned the longer-term impact of reduced timetables, with one commenting, *"These reduced timetables can be a plaster over it all ... for reintegration to work we need to understand the root of the problem."* Such accounts bring to the forefront the contrasting ways in which reintegration is experienced by CYP and school staff, raising questions about how these different constructions can be navigated in practice.

In conclusion, the aim of the study was not only to explore good practices within schools in Wales but also to empower the voices of CYP whose perspectives have too often been

marginalised. By bringing together their narratives with those of staff, the study seeks to deepen understanding of reintegration and reduced timetables as a layered process shaped by multiple influences and perspectives. In this way, the contribution lies not only in identifying facilitators and barriers, but also in challenging deficit framings and affirming that meaningful reintegration, particularly following exclusionary practices such as reduced timetables, needs to be co-constructed with YP themselves.

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**Reduced Timetables in Wales: Exploring Secondary School Staff and Pupils’
Experiences of Reintegration to Secondary Mainstream Settings**

Part Three: Critical appraisal

Word count: 7,470

Introduction

The following critical appraisal will present a reflexive and reflective account of my research journey as an applied psychologist. The critical appraisal will be written in the first person as it is a personal reflective account and is recognised as good practice for Big Q as it positions the researcher within the research (Gaddefors and Cunningham, 2024). There are many areas that could have been explored in this review, but I have chosen to focus on the most relevant aspects of the research for my own reflections.

Critical account of the development of the research practitioner

Development of the research topic

As part of my Doctorate in Educational Psychology, I embarked on the challenging yet exciting journey of developing my thesis. The sheer prospect of selecting a topic for such an in-depth and thorough piece of research felt daunting. This thesis would represent the pinnacle of my academic journey and, in many ways, would become something I would be 'known' for, and felt as if it would be defining my academic and professional identity. With this in mind, I was determined to choose a topic that not only spurred my interest but also had the potential to contribute meaningfully to the field of Educational Psychology (EP), and above all I aimed to conduct research that would, contribute to facilitating positive change for the participants themselves and the educational systems surrounding them. This aligns closely with my core values and my practice as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP).

Inspired by discussions with final-year TEPs about how they developed their thesis ideas, I adopted a free association approach. I adapted this technique to brainstorm and record any thoughts that surfaced regarding potential research topics. Additionally, I reflected on my

previous academic assignments to identify any recurring themes or a golden thread that might guide my research focus. Key terms and ideas that emerged included: preparing for adulthood, school belonging, pupil voice, school exclusions, PRUs, managed moves, reduced timetables, externalised behaviours, behaviours that challenge, staff wellbeing, and supervision. Initially, some of these themes felt somewhat disconnected, and I was overwhelmed by the challenge of weaving them together into a coherent thesis topic.

A pivotal moment in this process was a supervision meeting with my research supervisor. During our discussion, I explored previous research conducted by TEPs that overlapped with my areas of interest. This led me to Dr. Chloe Weaver's research on the use of reduced timetables in Wales (Weaver, 2023). Her findings highlighted a potential gap in the literature: the voices of CYP placed on reduced timetables were largely absent. This area of research resonated with me, aligning with both my research interests and my underlying professional values.

At the same time, I recognised that school belonging was a recurring theme in my academic assignments. I wanted to incorporate this aspect into my research in a meaningful way. While drafting my initial thesis proposal, I reviewed the latest Welsh Government guidance on learner engagement, which included a section on reduced timetable (Welsh Government, 2023). A key emphasis in this guidance was on the reintegration process for learners returning to mainstream settings after being placed on reduced timetables. This insight led to a lightbulb moment - I could explore the experiences of reintegration into mainstream education following a reduced timetable. This approach would allow me to capture what this transition looked like and what it meant for the learners and staff involved.

As I delved deeper into the literature, I noticed that much of the existing research on exclusionary practices and children and young people (CYP) with socio-emotional, and behavioural differences had a predominantly negative focus. Studies often highlighted what was going wrong for these young people (YP) and the challenges faced by those supporting them. While acknowledging these difficulties is important, I was keen to contribute a more constructive perspective, one that focused on what was working well. I wanted to take a strength-based approach, shifting the narrative towards resilience, meaningful reintegration, and positive experiences.

To ensure transparency in my research process and to acknowledge any personal biases, I engaged in an Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) values clarification activity (Hopkins, 2020). This exercise solidified my motivations for selecting this topic and reaffirmed my commitment to gaining the voice of CYP. Through this reflection, I identified key personal values that were particularly significant to me: compassion, connection with others, fairness and justice, curiosity, safety, and commitment. My interest in social justice and empowering CYP, as well as those who support them, became central drivers for my research direction.

A significant challenge I faced was formulating my research question. Based on my experiences in practice, I was aware that engaging with CYP displaying externalised behaviours or those placed on reduced timetables could be challenging for schools. I was conscious of not contributing to a narrative of shame and blame, either for the YP or for the school systems and staff. Instead, I aimed to frame my research in a way that acknowledged challenges while also highlighting positive, constructive and practical pathways forward.

Throughout this process, I frequently grappled with an essential question: who was I doing this research for? Was it for the CYP themselves, the educators and professionals supporting them, or the broader educational system? This question was central to shaping my research, guiding me to ensure that my study would have meaningful implications for both practice and policy. Ultimately, I wanted my work to amplify the voices of CYP, provide insights that could inform practice, and contribute to creating more inclusive and supportive educational environments. Therefore, I decided it would be useful to include both CYP and school staff within the research. My hope of doing so was to ensure a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the reintegration process. Further reflections regarding rationale of chosen participant groups are seen in the methodology section under the subheading ‘participants’.

Being enrolled on the Doctorate program in Cardiff, I felt it was important to focus on the Welsh context. Additionally, Weaver's research was already situated in Wales, making it valuable to reflect on the findings from both studies. Additionally, as someone who strongly identifies with my Welsh heritage, I also felt a personal commitment to contribute positively to the Welsh context and support those I work with daily within the school systems in Wales.

At the beginning of this research journey, I became increasingly aware of the linguistic nuances surrounding the term reduced timetable within the Welsh language. There appeared to be several phrases used interchangeably, such as *‘amserlen wedi ei leihau’*, *‘amserlen wedi ei addasu’*, *‘amserlen amgen’*, and *‘amserlen cyfyngedig’*, each of which could convey a similar or overlapping meaning depending on context. This highlighted the importance of recognising how language shapes understanding and interpretation, particularly in bilingual or multilingual settings. As a result, I remained mindful of these variations throughout the

data analysis process, taking care to consider how terminology used by participants might reflect differing perspectives or experiences related to reintegration practices in schools.

Review of the literature

Braun and Clarke advocate for a ‘making the argument model’ in research, which places the rationale for the study within the context of pre-existing knowledge and theory. I was aware from Weaver’s (2023) study that a valuable direction for future research on reduced timetables would be to gather the voices of CYP who had been placed on reduced timetables. However, during the literature review, I identified potential gaps in the existing research, particularly regarding the reintegration of CYP into mainstream settings following a period on a reduced timetable. This specific area had not been previously explored, presenting an opportunity to contribute to possible new insights or implications for practice.

The prospect of starting the literature review felt overwhelming, as I wanted to ensure that I was selecting the most appropriate type of review for my research. I explored different types of literature reviews, considering their suitability for my methodology, which was informed by Big Q and Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). According to Braun and Clarke (2021), adopting both RTA and Big Q is more of an adventure than a fixed sequence of steps and allows the researcher to contribute to ‘the rich tapestry of understanding that we and others are collectively working on’ (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p120). In line with this view, I aimed to give the reader a contextualised understanding of what is currently understood and set the scene for the research within my narrative review. However, I found myself somewhat conflicted, as the requirements of the doctorate also required a level of critical analysis and evaluation. Ultimately, I found that a hybrid combination of narrative and a systematic approach to review was the best fit.

I was initially concerned about unintentionally replicating previous studies, but I found reassurance in the ‘making an argument model,’ which emphasised the importance of positioning my research within the broader academic landscape (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Initially, no cut-off date was applied to the literature search. However, as the review progressed and papers were assessed for relevance, it became clear that the most contextually meaningful literature was published from 2010 onwards. In line with Siddaway (2019), who acknowledges that inclusion and exclusion criteria can be reviewed and refined throughout the process, the decision was made to set the date range for included studies from 2010 to 2025. This reflexive approach ensured that the review remained focused on literature most aligned with the evolving aims of the research.

Although Weaver’s (2023) study had already highlighted the limited research on reduced timetables, I recognised that the growing interest in this topic could have led to new research emerging since then. To ensure that my literature review was comprehensive and up to date, I conducted initial searches of the research area to refine my key search terms for the systematic review. This process confirmed that while there had been some additional studies, such as Markwell’s (2024) research on reduced timetables in England, which incorporated pupil voice, there was still not enough literature to conduct a detailed systematic review solely on reduced timetables. I reflected if this was reinforcing a creep or ghost of positivism into my research journey, which I acknowledged but wanted to avoid. Following further reading of the available literature I noticed there was an increasing emphasis in Welsh Government guidance on reintegrating pupils after reduced timetables. My narrative literature review suggested that while policy outlined reintegration as a key focus, its practical implementation remained inconsistent. This apparent gap in practice led me to broaden my

research focus to include the reintegration of CYP with socio-emotional and behavioural differences following both formal and informal forms of exclusion. I hoped that this expanded scope would provide a richer understanding of the factors contributing to the reintegration process of learners within mainstream settings.

Adapting to the expectations of qualitative research, particularly within the Big Q paradigm, presented certain challenges, especially in relation to my academic writing style. My previous undergraduate training was largely grounded in a more traditional, positivist approach to research. As a result, aspects of my writing style had become fairly ingrained, favouring structured critique and a linear appraisal of literature. Transitioning into a qualitative stance required a significant shift in how I approached both the literature and the writing process. Engaging with Big Q meant not only synthesising and critically appraising existing research, but also doing so in a way that honoured subjectivity, contextual nuance, and the co-construction of meaning. This involved adopting a more reflective, tentative, and exploratory tone, one that embraced complexity and ambiguity rather than seeking to ‘prove’ or definitively resolve tensions in the literature.

Balancing this shift while maintaining academic rigour required continual reflexivity. I had to remain aware of when I was slipping into old habits of critique and instead refocus my analysis on how knowledge is socially constructed and contextual. Although traditional appraisal tools such as Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) were helpful in guiding the evaluation of qualitative studies, it was again the work of Braun and Clarke (2024) that proved to be particularly valuable in setting a more appropriate lens to engage with qualitative literature. The Big Q Qualitative Reporting Guidelines for authors, reviewers, and editors (Braun & Clarke, 2024) was instrumental in helping me reframe my approach to

critiquing literature through a Big Q lens and in developing the limitations section of my own research.

Lens of the research

I believe that, within the role of an EP, we are uniquely positioned to work with the systems that surround CYP, as discussed in Part 1 of my thesis. In addition to this systemic role, I see EPs as hope catchers, professionals who facilitate conversations through a strength-based lens, helping to identify and build on existing strengths and resilience (Cox & Lumsdon, 2020).

As explored in Parts 1 and 2 of my thesis, the literature on reintegration into mainstream education consistently emphasises the importance of a systemic approach to support. Given the current literature, with school staff and systems under pressure, the development of my thesis title naturally led me to incorporate both an eco-systemic and a Positive Psychology lens shaping the analytic framework for my research as ‘the analysts reading glasses’ (Braun & Clarke, 2024, p426). This dual approach aligns with my values as a practitioner and ensures that my research contributes meaningfully to fostering supportive and inclusive educational environments.

Throughout the research process, I reflected on the ethical considerations of adopting a positive, strength-based approach to the study. I was mindful of not wanting to overlook or dismiss potential barriers that participants might have faced or continue to experience. However, by using semi-structured and unstructured interviews, I believe I have allowed participants to discuss their experiences freely. While I had predetermined themes and questions to guide conversations, I was open to exploring any tensions or challenges that arose, ensuring that responses were authentic and relevant to the topic.

Discussions during research supervision were particularly valuable in helping me reframe some of the initial apprehensions I had about adopting a positive and strength-based approach within my study. At times, I was concerned that by focusing primarily on what worked well, I might inadvertently promote a form of ‘toxic positivity’ that overlooked or minimised the real challenges faced by CYP and school staff. These conversations helped me reflect more deeply on the role of EPs and how, within our professional practice, we naturally adopt a ‘what works’ lens, aiming to identify strengths rather than focusing solely on problems or deficits.

Through this reflective process, I came to appreciate that a strength-based perspective does not need to ignore or downplay challenges, rather, it can coexist with a realistic acknowledgment of the barriers and complexities involved in reintegration. While the study aimed to explore positive and meaningful reintegration experiences, it became clear, both through the data and through ongoing supervision, that these experiences do not happen in isolation from difficulty. Challenges, systemic tensions, and contradictions are an integral part of the reintegration journey and recognising these within a strength’s framework aimed to allow for a more balanced, authentic, and ethically grounded approach to the research.

Epistemology and Ontology

Throughout my training, I have found the concepts of epistemology and ontology quite challenging to grasp. Their inherently philosophical nature often left me feeling as though I had more questions than answers. As a result, I dedicated a significant amount of time during the initial stages of my research to explore the different epistemological and ontological positions I could take and reflecting on how these choices would influence the decisions made throughout the research process.

I did consider adopting a social constructionist epistemological position, which emphasises the active role of the researcher in the research process. A social constructionist paradigm acknowledges that the researcher cannot entirely detach their subjective values, interests, experiences, and beliefs from their work (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Burr, 2015). This acknowledges that how I would respond to participants answers, frame questions, or interpret data would all be influenced by my own perspectives. My construction and interpretation of events would all be shaped by my underlying interests, values, and beliefs, which, as Maxwell (2022) highlights, is an unavoidable reality of qualitative research.

Nevertheless, following reading Braun and Clarke's book on successful qualitative research, I came across contextualism which 'sees knowledge emerging from context' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p30). During my training on the Doctorate, there has been a significant emphasis on understanding the interactions within and between various systems. This systemic perspective has greatly influenced my work, and the work that EPs undertake (Beaver, 2011) as it aligns with systems theory, which emphasises the interconnectedness of various factors within an educational environment.

As a result of this, I felt that I naturally gravitated towards contextualism as an epistemological stance, recognising it as a 'good fit' for my research. Contextualism acknowledges that individual experiences are influenced by their specific contexts, which are further defined by the wider systemic contexts such as the school system, local authority (LA), and broader socio-economic factors. As my research focuses on the reintegration process of CYP returning to school after being placed on a reduced timetable in Wales, I felt that contextualism proved to be particularly appropriate, as it allowed me to consider the various influences of policies that may be reflected in the practices reported within schools

and how they shape the reintegration process. In addition to this, contextualism recognises how the researcher's values and practices will inevitably shape the knowledge they produce and therefore embraces subjectivity as a meaningful part of the research process, which is compatible with a Big Q qualitative research.

Furthermore, findings from existing research suggest that EPs view social justice as being shaped by systems and context, focusing on human rights, fairness, practices that promote equity for all (Daniel & Gulliford, 2025). This perspective resonated with me and reinforced my decision to adopt a contextualist stance, which complimented the eco-systemic lens for part 2 of my thesis.

Methodology and design

Participants

The literature regarding the reintegration of CYP following informal or formal school exclusions highlights the collaborative nature of the process and how involving CYP, parents/carers, school staff, and wider professionals is key to facilitating a meaningful, or, as described in current literature, a 'successful', reintegration journey to a mainstream setting. This led to my consideration of adopting an eco-systemic lens for the research to capture the interconnecting factors from various systems around the CYP that may influence their reintegration journeys.

I was aware, from Weaver's (2023) research, that the perspectives of professionals on the topic of reduced timetables had already been explored, with implications for practice considered. Future research had highlighted the importance of gaining the voices of CYP, school staff, and parents/carers.

The feasibility of gathering all the voices missing from the research was something I reflected on extensively. I considered the value of triangulation and the strength it can add to research, however, as a practitioner working closely with schools, I wanted the focus of the study to remain within the school context, and specifically how we as EPs can empower school systems by identifying good practices and sharing them across settings. I was also passionate about gaining the voices of CYP due to my experiences in previous roles and as a TEP. Additionally, existing literature highlights that CYP with socio-emotional differences often go unheard (Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Prunty, Dupont, and McDaid (2012) stated that, to understand a particular phenomenon within a vulnerable population, the perspectives of those with direct experience need to be listened to and understood. This further reinforced my passion for gathering the voices of CYP in the context of reintegration and reduced timetables.

I felt assured in my decision to focus on the school system and CYP by drawing on the ‘making an argument’ model, and in the belief that this research contributes to the tapestry of knowledge on the topic (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Recruitment process

Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend that researchers recruit and inform potential participants through advertisements. In line with this, recruitment posters were shared via email with Headteachers and ALNCOs of mainstream secondary schools in Wales. Schools then identified both staff and CYP who met the research inclusion criteria.

I anticipated that recruitment would be challenging, and this proved to be the case. The recruitment process was a journey marked by moments of frustration and demotivation, as initial interest in participation was low. This lack of engagement seemed to reflect the pressures currently faced by schools, a theme discussed in Part 1 of my thesis. Schools are operating at full capacity, and I wondered whether the topic of reduced timetables was under recent scrutiny, making schools reluctant to participate for fear of being perceived as implementing exclusionary practices. I had hoped that framing the research through a Positive Psychology and strength-based lens would encourage participation, but unfortunately, this did not have the impact I anticipated. This experience led me to reflect on current secondary school practices in Wales and the possibility that successful reintegration from reduced timetables is still a relatively rare occurrence. Additionally, I questioned whether the recruitment difficulties were indicative of the challenges faced by TEP researchers more generally. Perhaps when a research topic holds significant weight, there is a higher level of pressure and perceived judgment among potential participants, leading to hesitancy in engagement.

Unexpected challenges in the recruitment process led to a condensed data collection period, which felt rushed within the constraints of a single month. My initial aim was to identify CYP who met the inclusion criteria and build rapport with them over multiple sessions before conducting interviews. Due to time pressures, this process had to be expedited. To mitigate potential anxieties among CYP, they were given the option of having a trusted school staff member present during interviews. I acknowledge that this could have influenced their responses, as the presence of a staff member might have affected what they felt comfortable sharing however the psychological safety of CYP within the interview process was a priority

of mine. Nevertheless, this is an important consideration when reflecting on the research process and its potential limitations.

Consideration of methods

I contemplated adopting an Appreciative Inquiry approach, which focuses on identifying and building upon existing strengths and successes to inspire positive change (Shuayb, Sharp, Judkins, & Hetherington, 2009). In hindsight, I believe that Appreciative Inquiry would have been an appropriate fit for my research, as it aligns with my positionality and complements both the eco-systemic and Positive Psychology lenses underpinning the empirical paper. Appreciative Inquiry is considered an empowering model that fosters positive change by highlighting what works well rather than focusing on deficits (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This approach could have provided another perspective on reintegration, identifying good practices and effective strategies for supporting CYP. However, at the time of developing my thesis, various factors influenced my methodological choices. Balancing research deadlines with placement responsibilities required me to make practical decisions about my methodology. While I acknowledge that my research could have taken a different direction, I accepted and let go of those alternatives to work within the constraints of the information and resources available at the time. However, while the principles of Appreciative Inquiry supports the strength-based focus of my research, I also remained mindful of some of its limitations. One key critique of Appreciative Inquiry is that it can sometimes place too strong an emphasis on what's going well, which may risk overlooking or underexploring systemic challenges, inequalities, or tensions that are equally important to understand, particularly in complex educational contexts (Dematteo and Reeves, 2011; Grant & Humphries, 2006).

Previous research exploring CYP views on reintegration has utilised various methodologies, including Q methodology. Q methodology is particularly valuable as it addresses some of the power imbalances that can arise in research by fostering a more equally weighted relationship between the researcher and participants (Hughes, 2016). While I recognise that Q methodology effectively centralises YP, I was eager to enable conversations with CYP giving them the autonomy and freedom to verbally share their views and experiences.

Research indicates that the methods of eliciting CYPs views most commonly include discussion methods (Smillie & Newton, 2020). I considered using a more narrative approach, such as using the life history grid to facilitate discussions with CYP. Additionally, I explored the possibility of creating and incorporating functional behavioural cards, similar to the school wellbeing sorting card task developed by Dr.Jessica Holder (School Wellbeing Card Series, n.d.), to encourage engagement. However, I was unsure whether I would have the time to create the resources needed to facilitate discussions, given the time pressures during the data-gathering process following a later than anticipated recruitment process.

Additionally, although sorting cards might have helped in facilitating discussions, I was hesitant to introduce predefined topics, I wanted the CYP to feel free to share what they felt was most relevant.

After careful consideration, I decided that unstructured interviews would provide the most flexible and adaptive approach to interactions with CYP. Unstructured interviews offer an informal and participant-led format, allowing for a more comfortable environment where CYP can openly share their experiences. This method facilitates the collection of rich qualitative data, capturing the depth and complexity of CYPs experiences. Moreover, unstructured interviews empower CYP by allowing them to guide the conversation, ensuring

that their voices are genuinely heard. This aligns closely with my core aim of centering CYPs perspectives within the research process. Additionally, the adaptability of unstructured interviews was particularly beneficial for the CYP I engaged with, as it enabled me to respond to their cues and adjust my approach accordingly.

For school staff participants, I decided that semi-structured interviews would be the most appropriate method. One of the primary advantages of semi-structured interviews is that they provide a focused framework while allowing for flexibility. This format enables the researcher to explore possible ideas that arise during the conversation, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of the research topic (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

My ontological and epistemological choices heavily influenced my research design and methodological decisions. Similar to interviews with CYP, I aimed to create a space where participants felt comfortable openly sharing their experiences and perspectives. I wanted to make the interviews as conversational as possible. Although I had a set of guiding questions, I was flexible in my approach, making sure that I was actively listening to responses to ensure that the prompts given were extending their experiences and perspectives.

Ethical considerations

A key ethical consideration when interviewing CYP was addressing the potential power imbalance between myself, as the researcher, and the CYP. To try and reduce this, I introduced myself as a trainee/student rather than positioning myself as someone that they might perceive to be an authoritative figure. I hoped that this approach would create a more balanced interaction, helping the CYP feel at ease and more willing to share their experiences.

My previous experiences in roles such as being a Learning Support Assistant, Assistant EP, and now as a TEP were helpful in ensuring that participants felt comfortable discussing sensitive topics. I drew upon my therapeutic skills to build trust and rapport, demonstrating flexibility and sensitivity in my questioning. By actively listening and showing a genuine interest in their perspectives, I aimed to meet CYP where they were, reinforcing the importance of their experiences within the research process.

Informed consent was given careful and ethical consideration throughout the research process. Comprehensive information sheets, consent/assent forms, and debrief sheets were designed specifically for CYP, school staff, and the parents/carers of participating CYP. These documents were reviewed in detail with the research supervisor and revised in accordance with feedback from the university's Ethics Panel to ensure clarity, accessibility, and ethical robustness. The ethical framework outlined by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2021) guided the researcher's approach, particularly in relation to conducting research with CYP. The BPS highlights that 'the consent of participants in research, whatever their age or competence, should always be sought, by means appropriate to their personal characteristics' and that 'special safeguards need to be in place for research with vulnerable populations' (BPS, 2021, p.15). Furthermore, while the BPS suggests that 16 is generally an acceptable age for sole consent in low-risk research, I also sought parental consent in all cases to ensure an ethically sound process (BPS, 2021, p.16). Respecting children's autonomy and ensuring they received appropriate information to make informed choices was a central consideration throughout (BPS, 2021).

The recruitment of CYP presented further ethical reflections. Following interviews with school staff, some CYP were identified by schools using a snowball sampling approach. This was accounted for within my approved ethics application however, this raised questions around the extent to which these CYP personally perceived their reintegration experiences as positive or meaningful, or whether such perceptions were constructed by school staff. To address this, the interview process with CYP was designed to be flexible and participant-led, with questions phrased in a way that encouraged open discussion about their experiences, rather than presuming positivity. CYP and their parents/carers were fully informed of the study's aims, and consent was obtained from both parties. Nonetheless, the process highlighted the complexities of navigating multiple gatekeepers in educational research, particularly when working with children and vulnerable populations.

Data generation

Following reading Braun and Clarke's work, I reflected on their guidance regarding the distinction between opinions and feelings when designing interview questions. During supervision I discussed my interview questions with my research supervisor, considering whether piloting them would be beneficial. While piloting could have ensured that questions were accessible, particularly for CYP, I was concerned that this might shift my research towards a more positivist approach, which was not my intention. Instead, I relied on my prior experience working therapeutically with CYP in previous roles and now as a TEP. Through these experiences, I had developed strong skills in framing questions appropriately, and I felt confident that my approach would facilitate meaningful discussions. In addition to this, having an eco-systemic lens and Positive Psychology as a framework to guide questions were helpful when exploring styles of questions for the interviews.

Data analysis

During my initial brainstorming of the research methodology, I considered both RTA and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as methods of data analysis for the research. However, although IPA offers a valuable approach to exploring lived experiences, RTA was chosen as the most appropriate method for this study for the following reasons:

- The focus of this research was not solely on individual lived experiences, but rather on identifying patterns of meaning across two participant groups, school staff and CYP. RTA, particularly as conceptualised by Braun and Clarke (2019; 2021), offers the flexibility to work across individual experiences while drawing out broader shared meanings and systemic influences, making it well-aligned with the study's eco-systemic framing.
- RTA enabled the researcher to engage reflexively with the data while acknowledging the broader relational, cultural, and systemic contexts influencing reintegration experiences.
- As this study sought to explore and integrate a range of perspectives to understand the complexity of reintegration following reduced timetables, RTA allowed for greater thematic fluidity and integration across participants.
- The values of RTA align well with the study's strengths-based and Positive Psychology lens, as it offers a method for exploring not only challenges but also resilience, relationships, and meaningful practice.

A few ethical considerations sprung to mind regarding utilising RTA as a means to analyse the data from CYP. I reflected upon the possible risk of my views influencing the interpretation of the data. While I knew that RTA celebrates subjectivity, and this is seen as a superpower within the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2021), I did not want the

interpretation and meaning of what CYP shared to be missed. Through supervision, I reflected on these thoughts and felt assured that, through my practice and prior experiences, I was able to meaningfully interpret the data and represent the CYPs' voices. These reflections led me to further amplify their voices within the final subtheme, '*Inclusion in a Behaviourist Structure*,' which I further reflect upon in the below section.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the RTA process for me was the initial phase of familiarisation. I found myself deeply engaged with the data during this stage, dedicating significant time to listening, reading, and re-reading the transcripts. To support this process, I developed 'familiarisation doodles', visual reflections and mind maps that helped me to capture early impressions and emotional responses to the data. These became invaluable touchpoints, especially when I found myself moving back and forth between different phases of the analysis, or when redefining and refining my themes (as illustrated in Appendix I, J and K). I particularly appreciated the non-linear nature of RTA. The fluidity between phases felt empowering, allowing for creativity and responsiveness to the data. However, I also found this freedom challenging at times, particularly in determining when my analysis was sufficiently comprehensive. As Braun and Clarke (2021) note, reflexivity is an ongoing process, and the potential for new interpretations is endless. This presented a personal tension: the desire to delve deeper and uncover further meaning, versus the practical need to draw the analysis to a close within the constraints of the research timeframe. Navigating this tension was a central part of my analytical journey and ultimately enhanced my appreciation for the richness and depth that RTA offers.

While the research process yielded valuable insights from both school staff and CYP, I recognised some variation in the depth and detail of data collected across the participant

groups. In particular, interviews with CYP were often shorter and less elaborate than those with staff, which may have influenced the depth of interpretation and level of analytical rigour in certain areas. During the initial stages of coding the CYP data, I found myself generating more latent codes, as the surface-level content was less developed. At first, I was concerned that this might reflect a limitation in the data, however, I came to accept that the data was meaningful in its own right, regardless of volume or complexity. After taking a step back from the analysis and revisiting it with fresh eyes, I was able to identify subtleties and nuance that I had initially overlooked. This helped me to appreciate the richness that could still be found within more concise responses and reassured me that the CYP data could contribute powerfully to the overall thematic narrative.

Throughout the data analysis process, I found myself engaging in a great deal of reflection, particularly when faced with contradictions within the data. Initially, I questioned whether RTA allowed for the recognition and inclusion of such contrasting experiences within themes. However, after revisiting Braun and Clarke's guidance, I came to understand that RTA not only accommodates but values the complexity of divergent perspectives. This helped justify the development of an overarching theme that could hold space for differences, not only between CYP and staff, but also within each group, such as between individual staff members or across different schools. Another challenge I encountered was the difficulty in 'letting go' of some of the rich and nuanced data. I felt a sense of responsibility, especially towards the CYP participants, to honour every contribution, and worried about missing insights that could inform future practice. However, I came to accept that part of the analytic process involved making choices and being present with the data I had at that moment in time.

A significant point of internal conflict was deciding how to analyse and represent the two distinct datasets. My original plan was to create separate thematic maps for CYP and staff before synthesising them. However, as I moved deeper into analysis, this approach began to feel disjointed. I was concerned that separating the data might undermine the relational and interconnected nature of reintegration. After considerable back and forth between the phases of RTA and supervision and a very helpful presentation by Clarke (2025) regarding the RTA process, I chose to construct a single, combined thematic map. This decision was grounded in the understanding that the experiences of YP and staff are linked and that reintegration is a relational, co-constructed process. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's Eco-Systemic Model, both CYP and school staff coexist within the same educational ecosystem, continuously influencing each other. A unified thematic map therefore offered a holistic, macro-to-micro lens to understand how school culture, relationships, and systemic structures shape reintegration journeys. Additionally, this approach aligned with the values of Positive Psychology by shifting the narrative toward shared strengths and collaborative strategies, rather than reinforcing an 'us vs. them' dynamic. Ultimately, this integrated approach allowed for a more cohesive and meaningful interpretation of the data, one that not only respected the individual voices of participants, but also honoured the complexity of the reintegration process itself.

This reflective process also influenced how I chose to present the findings within the write-up. I found myself torn between wanting to highlight the voices of CYP, which I viewed as both a responsibility and a privilege, and maintaining a coherent and accessible structure for the reader. I was again mindful of the potential to unintentionally create an 'us vs. them' dynamic by presenting separate blocks of data from school staff and CYP under each theme. My aim was to amplify CYP voices in a way that felt meaningful and balanced, without isolating their perspectives from the wider context. As a result, I opted for a narrative

approach to presenting the findings. This allowed me to weave together the voices of CYP and staff, positioning them on an equal footing and reflecting the relational nature of reintegration. In doing so, the narrative approach reinforced the idea that successful reintegration is not the responsibility of one individual, but rather something shaped by a dynamic interplay of relationships, environments, and systemic influences. It felt important that the structure of the findings aligned with the core message of the research itself, that reintegration is a collaborative, contextual, and holistic process.

All interviews for this research were conducted in Welsh. I chose to manually code the data rather than relying on software. While this might seem less efficient, I found that this approach aligned well with the overall methodology of the research. The manual coding process allowed me to become immersed in the data, as I was continuously engaging with the language and nuances of participants' responses. This closer connection to the data not only enhanced my understanding of the content but also gave me greater insight into the subtle cultural and contextual elements within the conversations. Ultimately, this method of coding deepened my reflexivity and provided a richer, more meaningful analytical experience. Conducting the interviews in my mother tongue, allowed me to feel a deeper connection to the data. This added a layer of responsibility for me as a researcher to represent their voices. I felt a heightened duty to ensure that their views and experiences were captured accurately and meaningfully. This responsibility to amplify the voices of the participants, particularly as it relates to a sensitive topic like reintegration, added an ethical dimension to my work. It was not just about gathering data but about ensuring that these individuals were heard and understood in the most authentic way possible. I believe that my connection to the language further enhanced my commitment to conveying their stories with integrity and respect.

Researcher-practitioner considerations

At times, I experienced a conflict between my values and the practical constraints of the research. I was committed to ensuring that all materials were available in Welsh for participants, as I strongly believe in linguistic inclusivity. However, given time constraints, I faced a dilemma, I did not want to outsource translations, as this did not align with my methodology, and I wanted to be involved in every step of the research to maintain reflexivity. Although translating materials and transcriptions myself was time-consuming, I ultimately felt it was a worthwhile decision, as it allowed me to remain deeply engaged with my research at all stages.

Navigating the dual role of practitioner and researcher was particularly challenging at times. In practice, I frequently work with schools where complex cases of CYP with socio-emotional and behavioural differences arise, often resulting in reduced timetables or exclusion. While research and policy advocate for evidence-based practices, these are not always implemented in schools due to systemic limitations. This discrepancy was frustrating, yet I could empathise with school staff, recognising that most are doing their best with the resources that are available to them.

Throughout the research process, I found that my sense of momentum fluctuated, often influenced by shifting perceptions of the study's value. At times, I questioned the significance and impact of the research, particularly as the focus on positive reintegration experiences evolved in relation to the wider systemic challenges that emerged from the data. This evolving sense of purpose led to moments of uncertainty, where my initial motivations were re-evaluated in light of new insights and critical reflections. As a result, my momentum at various stages of the research journey was staggered, not due to a lack of engagement, but

because I was continuously re-negotiating what I believed the true value and contribution of the research to be. This process, while at times uncomfortable, ultimately deepened my reflexivity and helped me remain open to the complexities and contradictions within the data and within myself as a practitioner-researcher.

It's important to note that the researcher I was at the beginning of this process is different from the researcher I am now. As a TEP, I believe that I am continuously developing my own identity as a researcher alongside my professional practice. This dual development is crucial for my growth and effectiveness in both roles. Throughout this year, my experiences in practice have significantly influenced my development as a researcher. Engaging with diverse CYP, understanding their unique needs, and adapting my approaches have all contributed to shaping my research perspective. These practical experiences have provided me with deeper insights into the complexities of socio-emotional and behavioural differences. As I continue to grow as a practitioner, my understanding of the needs and perspectives of CYP evolves. This ongoing development influences my approach to research, making it more empathetic, flexible, and responsive. By continuously adapting and refining my methods, I strive to ensure that my research genuinely reflects the voices and experiences of those I aim to empower.

Contribution to knowledge and dissemination

Contribution of the research

It could be suggested that this research contributes to knowledge in certain areas. Although the research utilised Braun and Clarke's (2021) 'making an argument' model, to the best of my knowledge, there is no existing research that specifically explores the reintegration process of CYP returning to mainstream educational settings after being placed on a reduced

timetable. By adopting an eco-systemic and Positive Psychology framework, this study offers a unique lens through which to understand the complex interplay of factors involved in reintegration, positioning both CYP and school staff as central agents in the process. Another important contribution is the focus on pupil voice. Additionally, the study brings forward valuable contributions in Welsh, a language with rich cultural and educational significance, further broadening the scope of research within Welsh-language contexts. Overall, this research provides a foundation for future studies in this area, particularly in Welsh educational settings.

Implications for Educational Psychology practice

One main finding of the research highlighted the importance of collaboration and a multi-disciplinary approach in supporting CYP reintegrating into a secondary mainstream setting following time on a reduced timetable. Although school staff listed various professionals as part of the team around the child or young person, there was no mention of an EP within this support. This led me to reflect on why this might be the case. While considerations must be given to the local context of the EP role, I also questioned whether this reflected a broader issue within the profession, namely, the visibility of EPs in schools, potentially impacted by a ‘workforce in crisis’ (BPS, 2024), and the implications of this in terms of how others perceive the EP role, with some describing it as a mysterious profession (Birch, Frederickson, Miller, 2023). Within the context of reintegration and exclusionary practices such as reduced timetables, the EP may be underutilised in supporting behavioural needs (Hampton & Ramoutar, 2021).

As a result, I felt it was important that the research be appropriately disseminated. A dissemination framework proposed by Harmsworth (2000) outlines three levels of research dissemination. The first is dissemination for awareness, intended for those with a developing

interest in the topic who would benefit from being informed of the outcomes. The second is dissemination for understanding, which targets individuals or groups who would benefit from a deeper engagement with the topic. The final level is dissemination for action, involving groups that can influence change at an organisational level. Schools would most benefit from dissemination for understanding but are more commonly only exposed to information suited to awareness. With this in mind, a dissemination plan is outlined in the table below:

Dissemination Target Audience	Dissemination Level	Action / Method
Educational Psychology Service (EPS) that I will be working with in September 2025	Understanding → Action	Share findings and discuss implications for practice. Collaboratively explore development of a reintegration framework (e.g., resilience-based approach) for pupils returning from informal exclusions with the possibility of presenting to mainstream educational settings as a preventable approach. Furthermore, discuss the development of a practical guide to share with educational setting within the LA to bridge the gap between theory and practice.
Neighbouring Educational Psychology Service	Awareness → Understanding	Present findings as part of CPD following Viva. Facilitate discussion on transferability of the research to their local context and systems.
Schools (via summary document for staff and leadership teams)	Awareness → Understanding	Provide a summary document of Part Two's findings with key themes and practical implications. Offer suggestions for how schools can reflect on and apply the findings.

Inclusion Leads at Local Authority Inclusion Forum	Understanding → Action	Present findings in scheduled forum (Sep/Oct 2025 following final examinations). Facilitate dialogue around system-wide responses and collaborative action based on key themes of connectedness and collaboration.
Head of Inclusion (across Local Authorities research was based)	Action	Meet to discuss strategic implications of findings. Explore policy and systemic factors. Discuss scaling or piloting a reintegration framework and conducting further action research (e.g., parental experiences).

Table 10. Dissemination plan

A detailed account of possible implications for EP practice is outlined in part 2.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Critical appraisal of literature that fit the inclusion criteria for the systematic literature review

Atkinson & Rowley (2019) Pupils' views on Mainstream Reintegration from Alternative provisions: A Q methodological study. (CASP – qualitative checklist)

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – clear statement of aims of the research which included exploring the views of primary and secondary-aged pupils who have experienced exclusion and successful reintegration regarding the factors that they perceive to have supported their success.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – seeking the views of pupils who have had an experience of exclusion and successful reintegration to a mainstream setting.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes – Q methodology used to gather views as it is deemed ethical, respectful and person-centered.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes – information was given about why CYP were included in the study.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – the research team clearly state how the data was collected, providing a break-down of the procedure used within the study and justified the method chosen.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	The research team states the use of Q methodology, although they don't state it explicitly within the research, using this methodology implies that the researchers have considered the relationship between researchers and participants (as participants are CYP in this case). Also considered implications of changes to research design such as the method chosen fully allowing participants to express their view on reintegration.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – anonymity of the participants. The research in its entirety has the CYP's best interest at heart by adopting a eco-systemic, positive psychology and solution-focused approach in addition to using Q-methodology as a means to gather information in a sensitive but informative way.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – an in-depth description of the analysis process is available to the reader and full transparency in the process of developing themes from the data. Strengths of the methodology were also discussed.

9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – an in-depth exploration of the findings is given, including quotes from participants.
10	How valuable is the research?	A clear list of recommendations for adults working with CYP who have experienced permanent exclusion and reintegration into mainstream education was presented.

Pillay, Dunbar-Krige & Mostert (2013) Learners with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' experiences of reintegration into mainstream education (CASP – qualitative checklist)

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – clear statement of aims of the research is noted within the abstract and main body of the paper.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – a qualitative method was used to explore the reintegration experiences of learners with BES differences.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	The research design appears to have been appropriate to address the aims of the study – the authors used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological inquiry to analyse and describe reintegration experiences of learners with BES differences. This aligns well with the stated aim of understanding these students' experiences. Specifically, the study employed multiple data collection methods to gain a rich understanding of the reintegration process.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes – researchers employed a purposive sampling method to recruit participants who fit the criteria. A multi-stakeholder approach allowed for triangulation of data from different perspectives.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – the research team states that the unstructured interviews with CYP were conducted to the point of data saturation. Researchers did not provide explicit information about how the interviews were conducted or if they used a topic guide. While the data collection method appear comprehensive and appropriate for addressing the research issue, some aspects could have been more explicitly described, such as the interview process and the form of data for all methods. Overall, the multi-method approach allowed for triangulation of data from different sources.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Researchers states that they introduced themselves as research students to pupils, which was done to establish a trust relationship. However, while the paper provides detailed information about the research methodology, there is little explicit

		consideration of the relationship between the researchers and participants, as well as limited reflection on the researchers' potential biases and influences on the study. This aspect of the research could have been more thoroughly addressed to enhance the transparency and reflexivity of the study.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Unclear – anonymity of participants however there is no explicit mention of informed consent procedures or how the study's purpose and methods were communicated to the learners, parents, or Teachers involved.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	The authors used peer examination through an independent coder to support the credibility of the research. In addition, researchers presented some data to support the themes identified, including direct quotes from participants and acknowledged some contradictions in the data. However, there are areas where more detail and critical reflection would have been helpful for assessing the rigor of analysis e.g., description of how themes were derived from the data and researcher reflexivity.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – the paper presents a clear statement of findings that are explicitly linked to the research questions, although there are some areas where more depth would have been helpful such as an exploration into how the themes were derived from the data.
10	How valuable is the research?	Identification of new research areas and discussed practical implications of findings such as proposing a resilience-based reintegration programme.

Thomas (2015) Factors affecting successful reintegration (MMAT Checklist – mixed methods)

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Are there clear research questions?	Yes – a clear statement of research aims is noted which was to identify and explain patterns of pupil reintegration from a PRU to a mainstream education for students in Key Stages 1-3.
2	Do the collected data address the research questions?	Yes – the paper outlines several key aspects of the research methodology and findings that align with investigating factors affecting successful reintegration.
3	Is there an adequate rationale for using a	Yes – the rationale for the study's mixed method design is evident in several aspects.

	mixed methods design to address the research question?	
4	Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	Yes – the researchers used a multi-stage approach that combined quantitative and qualitative methods, with each stage building upon and complementing the others. By effectively integrating these components, the study was able to provide a nuanced and multi-faceted answer to the research question, addressing both the patterns of reintegration and the complex factors influencing its success within the specific context of the study.
5	Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	Yes – the researchers provide a nuanced analysis that combines insights from both data types to draw meaningful conclusions about the reintegration process, while also acknowledging areas where further research may be needed.
6	Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	Yes – the researchers acknowledge the divergences and inconsistencies between both quantitative and qualitative results and suggest areas for further research.
7	Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	Yes – overall the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved.

Corrigan (2014) Person-centred planning in action – exploring the use of PCP in supporting young people’s transition and reintegration to mainstream education (MMAT Checklist – mixed methods)

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Are there clear research questions?	Yes – clear research question presented within the introduction to address a gap within the literature. The research has two main research aims: to explore all stakeholder views and experiences of PCP during its context of use and to explore reported outcomes over time for CYP post reintegration / transition.
2	Do the collected data address the research questions?	Yes – to answer the first RQ the researcher gathered stakeholder views and experiences through questionnaires and analysed open questions through thematic analysis. For the second research aim of exploring reported outcomes over time, the study collected data

		through a follow-up questionnaire and target monitoring and evaluation framework.
3	Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?	Can't tell – rationale for using a mixed method design isn't explicitly mentioned. However, the chosen methodology and data collection demonstrates a clear intent to capture both breadth and depth of information.
4	Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	Yes – the researchers have designed a comprehensive approach that combines multiple data collection methods and analysis Techniques to provide a holistic understanding of PCP in the context of supporting young people's educational transitions/reintegration.
5	Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	Yes – however there are some areas where the integration could be more explicit such as the researchers could have provided more direct comparison between the quantitative ratings and the qualitative themes to strengthen their interpretations.
6	Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	Yes – the researchers acknowledge the divergences and inconsistencies between both quantitative and qualitative results.
7	Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	Yes – the study demonstrates adherence to many quality criteria for both quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as action research principles, there are some areas where more explicit information or discussion would be needed to fully assess adherence to all traditional quality criteria – the researchers acknowledge some limitations, particularly regarding generalisability and suggest areas for future research.

Lawrence (2011) What makes for a successful re-integration from a pupil referral unit to mainstream education? An applied research project

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – the research has a clear statement of aims and goals. The primary aim was to explore the views of PRU and mainstream staff regarding the process of reintegration of secondary school age pupils from PRU to mainstream.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – the researcher aimed to gather the views and experiences of school staff and therefore utilised focus groups as a means of collating data.

3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes – the researcher provides justification for the use of focus groups as the primary data collection method and justified the use of thematic analysis for data analysis.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes – the researcher has explained how the participants were selected however the exact process of recruitment is not clearly stated.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – the researcher justifies the setting for data collection, in addition to the method of data collection is also clearly stated.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes to some extent – the researcher demonstrates awareness of their role and potential bias.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – although not explicitly mentioned within the research, the researcher has considered participant wellbeing and anonymity. There is a mention to a reflexive journal where the researcher might have included further considerations of ethical issues.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – the research demonstrates elements of rigorous data analysis, such as the use of a recognised method and a reflexive approach. However it would have been helpful to elaborate on the analysis process (theme derivation).
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – the researcher provides a clear statement of findings addressing the original research questions and offers practical suggestions for a successful reintegration.
10	How valuable is the research?	The research contributes to existing knowledge and practice in the field of pupil reintegration from PRUs to mainstream education in addition to discussing implications for EPs and suggesting new areas for research such as seeking CYP and parents views of reintegration.

Kelly (2022) The lived experiences and sense making of adolescent males with social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing needs who have reintegrated back into mainstream education following a placement in alternative education provision – an IPA.

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – the researcher provided a clear statement of aims which included exploring the lived experiences of YP who have reintegrated back into mainstream education following a placement in an alternative provision.

2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – to explore YPs lived experiences in addition to how they made sense of their reintegration experiences.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes – the study used a qualitative design using IPA. This aligned with the researchers aims as it is fitting to explore the lived experiences of participants in addition to the researchers epistemological stance
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes – the researcher provides information regarding why CYP were included in the study.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – the study used several methods to ensure that the data collection was appropriate and effective e.g., considered interview setting, duration, ethical considerations, rapport building and consideration of additional needs of CYP.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes – the researcher demonstrates awareness of their role as the researcher by outlining that time was spent on building rapport with the CYP and made efforts to address potential power imbalances.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – ethical issues have been considered throughout the study. The researchers implemented several measures to ensure ethical standards were met such as, gaining ethical approval and informed consent.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – the data analysis demonstrates a systematic, transparent and theoretically grounded approach.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – an in-depth exploration of the findings is given, including visual representation of emerging personal experiential themes and group experiential themes in addition to quotes from participants.
10	How valuable is the research?	The research addresses a gap in the literature in addition to providing practical implications for professional practice such as for EPs, and school staff supporting CYP reintegrating to a mainstream setting.

Armstrong (2017) Thesis: From PRU to mainstream education: a Q methodological study exploring the perceptions of PRU and mainstream secondary school professionals on reintegration (MMAT Checklist – mixed methods)

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Are there clear research questions?	Yes – research aimed to explore two research questions which included ‘what are the viewpoints of both mainstream secondary school and PRU professionals on the promotive factors to reintegration’ and ‘what are the

		attitudes of both mainstream secondary school and PRU professionals on the current barriers to reintegration within the LA'.
2	Do the collected data address the research questions?	Yes – the combination of q methodology and thematic analysis of qualitative data allowed the researcher to explore both promotive factors and barriers to reintegration, directly addressing both research questions.
3	Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?	Yes – q methodology was chosen as the primary approach. The researcher reports that a combination of methods provides an unique contribution to existing literature on reintegration.
4	Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	Yes – q methodology forms the core of the research. The researcher integrated multiple methods to develop a comprehensive Q-set such as focus groups with PRU and school staff, online questionnaires and unstructured interviews. Triangulation of data sources further strengthened the integration.
5	Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	Yes – the researcher interpreted their findings in relation to existing literature, highlighting the unique contributions of the study in addition to including viewpoints that may not have been captured by the main factor analysis which displayed a thorough interpretation of the data.
6	Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	Yes – the researcher acknowledged that some participants had hybrid views or perspectives that were not captured by the main factor analysis and addressed this. However, the researcher reported that some participants felt that certain statements were difficult to understand or too similar – it is unclear how this potential inconsistency between the Q-set design and participants' interpretations was fully addressed in the analysis.
7	Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	Yes – reliability, validity and objectivity are discussed in relation to the quantitative data while credibility, and transferability were acknowledged for the qualitative data. Limitations for both were also considered. The researcher justifies their use of a mixed-method design.

Bakhitar (2017) Thesis: Listening to the stories of young people who have experienced reintegration from an Inclusion Centre to a new mainstream secondary school (CASP – qualitative checklist)

Checklist Questions	Details
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1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – a clear set of aims were reported within the research which included gathering YPs views on how they make sense of the success of reintegration and implications for practice.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – clear reasons for choosing a qualitative methodology were outlined in the research. Some of these included the aim to focus on gathering rich detailed accounts of individual's experiences and empowering participants in their story telling and further supported by the researchers social constructivist epistemological position.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes – the researcher used a narrative inquiry approach / framework to the research which allowed them to address the study's aims of gaining a better understanding / insight of YPs lived experiences of reintegration.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes but did face challenges due to this and as a result had a small sample size of 2.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – the researcher chose to focus solely on the perspectives of the YP, without seeking corroboration from professionals or adults, in order to value the importance of listening to the YPs experiences / stories.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes – e.g. the researcher makes references to addressing the possible power imbalance within interviews with the YP.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes –thoroughly considered throughout the research process such as gaining ethical approval, obtaining informed consent and pseudonyms given to participants.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – the researcher used structured methods and demonstrated reflexivity. However, the small sample size could impact the overall rigor of the analysis but the approach aligns with the qualitative, narrative focus of the research.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – the researcher clearly outlines the themes for each participant, providing direct quotes and visuals such as thematic maps to clarify analysis.
10	How valuable is the research?	Despite some limitations regarding sample size, the research provides valuable insights into the stories of YP reintegrating into mainstream settings and gives practical implications for practice in addition to modelling a sensitive, ethical approach to working with vulnerable YP.

Moran (2010) Thesis: Reintegration into mainstream secondary school following permanent exclusion: experiences and opportunities (CASP – qualitative checklist)

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – the researcher states aims multiple times throughout the research. The aims of the study include: gaining a better understanding of the facilitators and barriers to a successful reintegration to a school following permanent exclusion, considering the perspectives of CYP, parents and school staff and the implications for EPs.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – the qualitative methodology aligns with the researcher’s social constructionist epistemology. Therefore by using a qualitative method the researcher is seeking to capture multiple perspectives.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes – by using this flexible design, the study was able to address the research aims well.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes – the research strategy of a purposive sample appears appropriate to the aims of the research as it targeted a range of relevant stakeholders involved in the reintegration process (YP, parents, school staff, HT, reintegration officer and EPs).
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – the researcher used multiple methods of data collection such as; semi-structured interviews with YP, parents, school staff supporting reintegration, reintegration officers and headteachers; focus groups with EPs; and a postal survey was administered to all secondary schools in the LA.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes – the researcher as considered the relationship between researcher and participants in several aspects of the study such as providing a debrief following the interviews with participants, reflecting on their dual role as TEP and researcher and takes steps to address possible power imbalances and biases.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – for example, the researcher clearly communicated the research’s aims to participants when seeking their consent to participate.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – multiple measures taken to ensure thoroughness and transparency within the process.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – the researcher presents their findings in a structured way, addressing each research question with supporting evidence from the data.

10	How valuable is the research?	Overall the research provides valuable insights into the complex process of reintegrating permanently excluded pupils, with potential to inform policy, practices and future research.
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Boyd (2019) Thesis: “Nothing much has changed” Black boys’ experiences of exclusion and reintegration in mainstream secondary schools (CASP – qualitative checklist).

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – clear statement of aims. The overall aim was to gain an insight into the experiences of Black boys who had been excluded from school and then reintegrated into mainstream secondary school.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – due to the exploratory nature of the research a qualitative methodology was deemed appropriate to gain an in-depth understanding of the research topic.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes – the researcher used IPA which aligned with the researchers aims.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes – the research used purposive sampling.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – the research used semi-structured interviews which allowed the researcher to gather rich data.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes – the researcher demonstrates reflexivity and reflected upon her cultural background in addition to her role as a researcher.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – the study received ethical approval from the ethics committee, obtained informed consent from multiple parties and steps were taken to protect participants’ identity.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – the researcher describes a detailed, multi-stage process.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – the findings are presented in a clear and structured way, reporting the overarching themes and individual participant findings which is also supported by the use of quotes.
10	How valuable is the research?	The research addresses a significant gap within the literature and practical implications are discussed which could be helpful to educators and policymakers. Future research is also suggested.

Appendix B. Examples of developing themes for the systematic literature review (Cresswell, Hinch, and Cage, 2019)

Author(s)	Themes within research
Lawerence (2011)	<p>Individual factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation of the YP to return to mainstream • Being able to adopt a reflective approach • Improved by YP increased self-esteem or self-worth. • Clear communication by the school staff about the reintegration process <p>Parental factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared responsibility for child's actions • Sharing realistic views and hopes for the future • Positive views and supportive of YPs education • High engagement with staff and the reintegration process • Staff clear with their communication with parents <p>Systemic factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Timely' recognition of individual need for each reintegration period to be flexible and individually tailored for each YP. • Clear and honest communication between all parties such as roles being explained, boundaries in place and expectations outlined. • Inclusive ethos or approach to the reintegration process • Positive and proactive approach – adopting a holistic understanding of CYP needs. • Child-centred – not focusing on outcomes based on the needs of the school. • Key adult / advocate within the school context – allocated mentor, focusing on

	<p>strengths/interests of CYP and access to extracurricular activities and alternative curriculum activities.</p>
<p>Atkinson and Rowley (2019)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed an eco-systemic reintegration model which included: <p>Relationship factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particular member of staff that I could go to in school ‘people showing they care’ Friends identified as important for some but staff were regarded as more important. <p>Parental factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and encouragement from family of CYP – family relationships as a central factor in supporting reintegration. <p>Individual factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘You have to want to succeed’ CYP motivation to reintegrate. Recognising the importance of education in enabling CYP to secure further education, employment or training. <p>Environmental/Systemic factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting to know staff before reintegrating – connections and relationships important. CYP reported it being a chance of a fresh start ‘there were no labels / judgement’ Inclusive and nurturing ethos Focusing on the future not dwelling on the past difficulties CYP displayed. <p>However individual differences in CYP views on what helped the reintegration process.</p>

<p>Pillay et al (2013)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research considered how resilience can be influenced by the interactions, opportunities and relationships we have in the systems around us. • Identified risk factors such as: behaviour, social and emotional needs, chronic exposure to adversity increases negative risk trajectories and increased possibility of damaging outcomes, in the same way as resilience develops over time. • Sustained access to promotive factors has a significant influence on the learner's resilience. • Posed a question as to if the lack of resilience is what may be instrumental in the reintegration regression experienced by learners with socio-emotional and behavioural differences. • Promotive factors of resilience that influence reintegration of learners included: recognition from peers of social progress. However, YP reported that the reintegration process was an isolating experience with CYP reporting to feel high / constant feelings of anger (therefore considered as a risk / barrier to the reintegration process). • Relationships: good relationships with parents facilitated reintegration with parents being caring and encouraging, Cooperation between home and school were important factors. If this wasn't in place, CYP reported strained relationships due to various systemic factors such as parenting, child development related to adolescence, parental work strains etc. Peer relationships were another factor that helped reintegration through guidance during lessons and motivating the learners to achieve and increased their sense of connection to school. A buddy system worked in some cases however could cause conflict dependent on which peer group CYP steered towards. Promotive relationships by the adults within the school system helped or contributed to a stabilising effect within the reintegration process, providing a safe environment when feeling angry or anxious. It was reported that at least one promotive relationship with an adult within the mainstream setting was helpful – however it was very important that adults set clear boundaries and a structured set of agreements with learners, or they could become over-reliant and take advantage of the 'free access' to the key adult.
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Thomas (2015)	<p>Systemic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School factors that affect reintegration included: school ethos. An nurturing whole- school ethos with a critical mass of staff committed to an inclusive ideology and appropriately trained. Inclusion embedded within school practice, accepted by learners, parents, staff, governors and local community. <p>Communication / Timely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reported that reintegration is increasingly successful if all parties expect the reintegration to occur as soon as possible, the length of time in which the pupil has been away from the mainstream setting may have an impact upon the success of reintegration with a shorted time period of attendance at a PRU likely to foster success. <p>Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of staff willing to advocate for the CYP is vital. • However some barriers involved some staff reluctance to see some pupils reintegrating as ‘it can be very difficult for some staff to accept a child coming back without some concern in the back of their mind’. • Parental/home factors that influence reintegration: the attitudes and views of parents/carers and not just those of the reintegrated learner. The paper discussed systemic barriers such as parenting and life experiences of parents (e.g. low socio- economic background) impacting pupil views of school etc. limiting aspirations for the future. • Pupil factors included the desire to reintegrate, the acceptance of school rules and a positive attitude (this suggests that there is a large responsibility placed on the learner for successful outcomes following reintegration). • The proposed reintegration readiness model based on findings placed the onus on the CYP to demonstrate that they are ready to reintegrate rather than schools working to prove they can accommodate to pupils needs (controversial opinion compared to eco- systemic models).
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<i>Bakhtar (2017)</i>	<p>Friendships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YP positioned themselves as being directly influenced by the friends around them. • Friendships were considered significant to them in their stories. • Guiding friend they associated with that could model helpful coping strategies. • However this made them vulnerable to peer influence – learners were able to make the association between their old peer group and their own unacceptable behaviours. <p>Sense of belonging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 of the YP interviewed appeared to make sense of their successful reintegration by framing their experiences within a sense of belonging to their schools. • Staff held the power to implement practices of inclusion. • A ‘clean slate’ with staff and peers but beneath this a more complex approach by the adults around them which includes a sensitive relational approach / support. • Sense of belonging through a supportive school community, which valued them and staff treating CYP with respect (the way the CYP are spoken to and the support provided).
Kelly (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YP expressed a desire to establish a renewed sense of self via a fresh start at mainstream. • Individual factors: ability and intention to change / motivation of YP to change was significant to their reintegration journeys. • Discreet means of support from adults in school as YP articulated a dislike for ‘special treatment’. Checkins and prompts from staff was enough rather than concrete resources such as visual aids that made them stand out to peers. Important to consider pupil voice and including YP as part of

	<p>decision making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The power of labelling – responsibility of adults around the YP to adopt ‘clean slate’ approach, as biases based on previous experiences and negative judgement can have an impact on pupils’ development following reintegration. • Findings reported that YP felt that change and transitions caused a lot of triggering feelings such as confusion and frustrated therefore it’s important that adults allow enough time and space for CYP during the process of reintegration – providing some structure to ensure some predictability and clear communication and information sharing considered as important. • Continued careful monitoring and supporting of CYP that is reintegrating from a trusted adult. • If others instill a positive purpose / value or outlook in the reintegration experience this was most likely to be reciprocated by the CYP – CYP more invested in the school and responded more favorably when told by staff that reintegration was being done in their best interest to help them meet their true potential. Ethos of respect facilitated by a strength-based approach. • Eco-systemic lens of factors affecting reintegration included: Individual: learners psychological wellbeing, ALN and future-oriented thinking Relationships with those surrounding them most prominent such as within the study explicit support and encouragement by family members was important (crucial that they played an active role in the reintegration journey). Peer/staff: providing additional emotional support and contributing to feelings of school connectedness. • CYP within Kelly (2022)’s study linked the meaning behind reintegration to desire to be back included into social aspects of school. • The relationship with school staff was considered most vital and influential relationship in terms of school connectedness and reintegration success. • The school adopting a nurturing and inclusive school environment that promotes physical and emotional safety and using a person-centered approach
Gibson (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive connections with peers was considered a factors that may help in reintegration. • Promoting a sense of agency in CYP is a goal.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School connectedness.
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Appendix C: Summary / overview of research included within the systematic approach to the literature review

Author(s) and Reference	Location	Aim(s)	Design	Participants	Analysis	Findings
Pillay, J., Dunbar-Krige, H., & Mostert, J. (2013). Learners with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' experiences of reintegration into mainstream education. <i>Emotional and behavioural difficulties</i> , 18(3), 310-326.	England (London)	Explore the reintegration experiences of learners with behavioural, emotional, and social differences who were returning to mainstream education after spending time in a Learning Support Unit or PRU. Additionally aimed to develop a resilience-based reintegration programme.	<p>Qualitative approach with a generic phenomenological enquiry within an interpretivist-constructivist paradigm.</p> <p>Data collection methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completion of sentences and a life essay by all 13 learners - Unstructured interviews with four selected learner participants - Interviews with three professionals involved in reintegration of learners - Qualitative questionnaires for parents of learners 	13 learners with BEDS from the London Borough of Waltham Forest aged between 11-14 years.	Giorgi's steps for data analysis, which included establishing a sense of whole, identifying general themes, recognising relevant explicit themes, and integrating the construct into new knowledge and understanding.	<p>Summarised into three main themes:</p> <p>Emotional experiences – learner experienced both promotive (pride, optimism, pride in developing social competence and academic achievement) and risk (anxiety, anger, and loneliness) emotional factors during reintegration.</p> <p>Relationship experiences – learners encountered both promotive and risk factors in their relationships. For example, learners experienced their families as caring but</p>

			- Email responses to questions from seven mainstream teachers			<p>also strained relationships, lack of academic support and variable family structure were barriers. Learners experienced peer support through academic guidance and motivation however also negative peer pressure and unconstructive social relationships. Learners reported that relationships with adults in educational settings provided emotional support and increased sense of attachment although learners reported a lack of reciprocal respect, rejection by some adults and absence of adult recognition.</p> <p>Reintegration practices – gradual reintegration, good communication</p>
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						between home and school and parental support were identified as promotive factors while disrupted academic progress. Disengagement from LSU/PRU and disparity between LSU/PU and mainstream environment settings were considered risk factors.
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Aim(s)	Design	Participants	Analysis	Findings
Thomas, D. V. (2015). Factors affecting successful reintegration. In <i>Managing and Improving School Attendance and Behaviour</i> (pp. 200-220). Routledge.	Within one LA in Wales.	The study aimed to focus specifically on factors identified by educational practitioners as influencing the success of reintegration from a PRU to a mainstream education. It sought to understand the systems and how they operate in order to identify key influences on the success of specific pupil reintegration.	Mixed methods approach. Quantitative analysis of historical data – reviewing historical pupil tracking data to identify potential variables and relationships impacting reintegration. Postal questionnaires –	Education practitioners (Headteachers, SENCos and classroom practitioners such as teachers and learning support assistants).	Multiple approaches such as analysis of historical data (pupil tracking data which tracked pupils throughout the academic year from their arrival at the PRU) and qualitative analysis	Influential factors affecting successful reintegration of pupils from PRUs to mainstream education: Parental support School ethos Length of time pupil spent away from mainstream

			<p>gathered both qualitative and quantitative data on the perspectives of education practitioners towards potential reintegration barriers and facilitators.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews – conducted with school staff from primary, secondary and PRU settings</p>		<p>method was used to analyse the semi-structured interviews (however, the researcher does not explicitly state which approach was used to identify themes).</p>	<p>Staff training</p> <p>Support from the PRU</p> <p>Geographical and Cultural context</p> <p>Geography (rurality and poor transport) was a barrier.</p> <p>Language differences (Welsh and Non-Welsh).</p> <p>Socio-economic differences</p> <p>Collective generational low self-esteem and resilience (parental attitudes linked to this)</p> <p>School and staff factors</p> <p>Nurturing whole school ethos and committed staff were more successful in reintegration cases.</p>
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						Ongoing CPD for staff. Positive relationships between pupils and staff.
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Aim(s)	Design	Participants	Analysis	Findings
Atkinson, G., & Rowley, J. (2019). Pupils' views on mainstream reintegration from alternative provision: a Q methodological study. <i>Emotional and behavioural difficulties</i> , 24(4), 339-356.	UK (focusing on the English educational system)	<p>Main aims included:</p> <p>Explore pupil's views on successful reintegration into a mainstream setting</p> <p>Focus on what works in reintegration, based on a eco-systemic perspective and a model of positive psychology</p> <p>By exploring these aims, the researcher intended to understand reintegration success in context and acknowledge the role of each 'system' surrounding the CYP in supporting a successful reintegration.</p>	Q methodology to explore subjectivity and the communication of individual views based on personal opinions and constructs.	Purposive sample - 9 primary and secondary pupils aged between 10-16 years old.	<p>Q-factor analysis to compare each participant's Q-sort with that of others, identifying similarities and differences that led to the generation of 'factors' or shared viewpoints.</p> <p>This allowed the researchers to explore pupils' subjective views on reintegration in a structured way while also providing opportunities</p>	<p>Factor 1: Fresh start and belonging – key factors included parental support, having a specific member of staff for support and environmental considerations.</p> <p>Factor 2: importance of peer relationships and value of social and emotional support from school staff (reported mostly by primary aged pupils).</p> <p>Eco-systemic reintegration model: suggested that reintegration success is determined by factors within the individual, family,</p>

					for qualitative insights.	relationships, school, and wider environment. Individual differences – ‘one size fits all’ approach is inappropriate, and a person-centred approach is suggested.
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Aim(s)	Design	Participants	Analysis	Findings
Ewan-Corrigan, E. (2013). Person Centred Planning 'in action': exploring with young people their views and experiences of education and the use of Person-Centred Planning in supporting transition and re-integration to mainstream settings.	South-West England (inner city and suburban areas)	To explore stakeholder views and experiences of Person-Centred Practice/planning during its context of use To explore reported outcomes over time for young people post-transition/reintegration.	Action research methodology. Longitudinal – data collection at two time points. Mixed methods approach Quantitative data – questionnaire and target monitoring and evaluation. Qualitative data – open-ended questions.	6 CYP (5 male and 1 female) primary and secondary aged. Two in mainstream schools and 4 in alternative provisions. 43 adults which included parents, school/setting staff, multi-agency professionals and educational psychologists.	Rating analysis – explored participants’ experiences of OCP and perceived progress at an individual child level across key outcome areas using a 5-point Likert scale. Thematic analysis – explored multiple stakeholders’ perceptions of the use of PCP	PCP was perceived as useful in facilitating positive reintegration to mainstream settings. This was related to stakeholder experiences of the process and perceptions of progress over time. The research found that the PCP acted as a catalyst to improved presence of CYP within the school community and strengthened positive relationships, in addition to an

					in supporting post-transition / reintegration.	increased engagement and ownership of their reintegration plan. The role of the EP was discussed. EPs were noted to be well-placed to fulfil the role of the PCP facilitator and to support capacity building at an organisational / system level.
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Aim(s)	Design	Participants	Analysis	Findings
Lawrence, N. (2011). What makes for a successful re-integration from a pupil referral unit to mainstream education? An applied research project. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 27(3), 213-226.	UK (while the exact LA or region is not specified, the study focused on exploring views and practices at a local level).	Explore the views of PRU and mainstream staff regarding the process of reintegration of secondary school aged pupils from a PRU to a mainstream setting, To explore what makes reintegration successful or not, specifically what factors support or create barriers. Identify possible areas to support the reintegration process, to increase the number of pupils that	Qualitative research design to explore views of participants. Focus groups – two separate focus groups were conducted at a teacher centre (neutral location). The EP, who was also the researcher, acted as a moderator for both focus groups. The	Focus group 1 – 9 PRU staff all who had the role of learning mentor in various settings. Focus group 2: 6 mainstream school staff from different secondary schools within the borough, 2	Thematic analysis – the data from the two separate groups were analysed together.	<i>Possible factors supporting successful reintegration</i> <i>Child factors:</i> the CYP's desire to return to mainstream, belief in their ability to succeed and adoption of a reflective approach in addition to improved self-esteem and self-worth were

		<p>experience a successful / effective reintegration to a mainstream school.</p>	<p>groups were guided by three questions:</p> <p>What facilitates and supports effective reintegration of pupils from PRU to mainstream school?</p> <p>What created barriers or hinders effective reintegration of pupils from the PRU to mainstream school?</p> <p>What needs to be changed or developed to improve the process of reintegration?</p>	<p>PRU staff and 1 advisory teacher from the Behaviour Support Service.</p>		<p>considered important factors.</p> <p><i>Parental factors:</i> parents who shared responsibility for their child's actions, had realistic views and hopes for the future and were supportive of and positive towards their child's education.</p> <p><i>Systemic factors:</i> timely and individually tailored reintegration, clear communication between all parties, and an inclusive ethos in the mainstream setting were considered crucial. Ongoing support from the PRU and external agencies.</p> <p><i>Possible barriers to successful reintegration</i></p>
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						<p><i>Child-related barriers: ongoing significant social, emotional, behavioural and/or mental health difficulties, as well as lack of peer relationships in the mainstream school.</i></p> <p><i>School-related barriers: schools that are not truly inclusive in terms of ethos, attitudes, and expectations. Schools with negative or unrealistic expectations of the CYP,</i></p> <p><i>Systemic barriers: poor relationships and communication between the PRU and mainstream schools, possible lack of skills and resources in mainstream schools for supporting CYP with SEBMH needs and decisions made without a holistic</i></p>
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						<p><i>understanding of the child.</i></p> <p>Implications for practice</p> <p>Closer links and working relationships.</p> <p>Moving beyond labels to consider the whole child, sharing holistic assessments and tailoring reintegration packages to individual needs.</p> <p>Improved training for mainstream staff in supporting vulnerable CYP.</p>
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Aim(s)	Design	Participants	Analysis	Findings
Kelly, A. (2022). <i>The lived experiences and sense making of adolescent males with social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing needs who have reintegrated back into mainstream education following a</i>	Northern Ireland	<p>To explore how YP make sense of their experience of reintegrating back into mainstream education from a placement in alternative education provision (AP)</p> <p>To highlight any factors and/or attributes that were</p>	<p>Qualitative design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).</p> <p>1:1 face-to-face semi-structured interviews within</p>	<p>Purposive sampling approach was used to recruit participants.</p> <p>Participants were male</p>	<p>Followed the IPA procedure, which involved a four-phase process: working towards</p>	<p>YP expressed a desire for a fresh start and to be seen and ‘normal’ students again – they often rejected explicit support that made them feel</p>

<p><i>placement in alternative education provision: an interpretive phenomenological analysis</i> (Doctoral dissertation, Queen's University Belfast).</p>		<p>perceived as facilitating and inhibiting this reintegration.</p> <p>The research sought to add to existing literature and increase understanding regarding what it means to YP who have experienced this. Additionally, the study aimed to focus on pupil voice in order to explore their experiences and how professionals may better support them through the reintegration process.</p>	<p>their school settings.</p>	<p>students between 14-15 years old, in Key Stage 3 and 4 of compulsory school age across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>All participants had identified SEN in relation to social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing needs.</p>	<p>experiential statements, case-level summaries, cross-case themes to develop group experiential themes, and a linear account of the thematic structure.</p> <p>Focused on individual experiences while also generating group experiential themes across participant accounts.</p>	<p>different from their peers.</p> <p>Reintegration was described as a process that took time to get used to.</p> <p>When reintegration was presented positively and as being in their best interest, YP were more likely to value the experience and reciprocated this.</p> <p>Future-oriented thinking, particularly related to obtaining GCSEs was a key motivator.</p> <p>Positive relationships with family, peers and school staff were facilitators – staff connectedness was</p>
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						<p>particularly important with CYP valuing traits such as calm communication, understanding and use of positive reinforcement.</p> <p>Access to nurturing spaces and flexible support strategies in mainstream.</p> <p>Anger, general Mental health and ALN were reported as possible barriers to the reintegration success, daily functioning and school engagement of CYP.</p>
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Aim(s)	Design	Participants	Analysis	Findings
Boyd, R. (2019). <i>"Nothing much has changed:" Black boys' experiences of exclusion and</i>	UK (across two London LAs)	To explore how black boys make sense of their experiences of exclusion and reintegration in	Qualitative design using Interpretative	6 black or mixed-raced boys from 3 mainstream secondary	Followed the IPA procedure.	<p>6 overarching themes:</p> <p>Pupils' positive and negative</p>

<p><i>reintegration in mainstream secondary schools</i> (Doctoral dissertation, University of Essex & Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust).</p>		<p>mainstream secondary school.</p> <p>To understand what black boys perceive to help them reintegrate into school and what they perceive to be difficult about the process.</p> <p>The research aimed to address a gap in the literature by focusing specifically on the lived experiences of black boys who have been excluded and reintegrated in secondary mainstream schools.</p>	<p>Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).</p> <p>1:1 semi-structured interview</p> <p>It's worth noting that the original research design aimed to focus on successful reintegration, but this was adapted due to recruitment challenges. The final criteria included all secondary year groups, any type of external exclusion, and removed the focus on successful reintegration.</p>	<p>schools across two LA in London.</p> <p>Between the ages of 12-15 years old (Years 8, 9, 10 and 11).</p>	<p>Each interview was analysed in depth individually before looking across all interviews for commonalities and differences</p>	<p>relationship with school teachers which had implications for pupils' self-identity.</p> <p>Inclusive environments – CYP valued environments where they felt a sense of belonging, often related to the presence of peers and family members. School intervention programs that focused on identity and self-image were seen as particularly valuable. Peer relationships specifically were important for CYPs sense of belonging and motivation in school.</p>
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Aim(s)	Design	Participants	Analysis	Findings

<p>Bakhtiar, R. (2017). <i>Listening to the stories of young people who have experienced reintegration from an Inclusion Centre to a new mainstream secondary school</i> (Doctoral dissertation, University of Sheffield).</p>	<p>UK (within a LA that the researcher / TEP was on placement)</p>	<p>To explore the experience of YP who have successfully reintegrated into mainstream secondary school after spending time at an Inclusion Centre following permanent exclusion.</p>	<p>Qualitative design using a narrative inquiry approach.</p> <p>Unstructured exploratory interviews with YP – to facilitate storytelling the researcher used a ‘story mountain’ visual aid.</p> <p>Incorporated elements of feminist research.</p>	<p>2 YP who had experienced reintegration from an Inclusion Centre to mainstream secondary school.</p> <p>Male in year 8.</p> <p>Male in year 9</p> <p>Both reintegrating to a new mainstream school and have been for over a year at the time of the study.</p>	<p>Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke’s approach.</p>	<p><i>Importance of relationships</i> – supportive friendships were crucial for both.</p> <p><i>Sense of belonging</i> – facilitated by staff implementing practices of inclusion and supporting their learning needs.</p> <p><i>Voice and agency</i> – valued being given a voice and spoken to respectfully and given choices.</p> <p><i>Post-reintegration regression</i> – schools need to provide space, time and support.</p> <p>Support and understanding by school staff.</p>
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						<i>Identity and change</i> – YPs identities evolved through the reintegration process. <i>Environmental factors</i> – such as the learning environment.
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Aim(s)	Design	Participants	Analysis	Findings
Moran, K. (2010). Reintegration into mainstream secondary school following permanent exclusion: Experiences and opportunities. The University of Manchester (United Kingdom).	UK (LA in England)	<p>To increase understanding of the facilitators and barriers leading to successful reintegration into school following permanent exclusion</p> <p>To increase understanding of the perspectives of pupils, parents, and school staff on reintegration into school</p> <p>To consider the role of the Educational Psychologist within the process</p>	<p>Qualitative case study methodology.</p> <p>Data collection methods included:</p> <p>Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with pupils, parents, school staff supporting reintegrating pupils, LA reintegration officers, and</p>	<p>4 parents of reintegrated pupils (case study)</p> <p>3 pupils (interviewed)</p> <p>4 members of school staff supporting reintegrating pupils (interviewed) in addition to 3 Headteachers</p>	<p>Thematic analysis –</p> <p>“A 'theoretical' thematic analysis approach is thought of as a 'top-down' or theory driven approach and it tends to be driven by the researcher's theoretical approach, or</p>	<p>The findings indicate that successful reintegration requires a combination of school, pupil, family, and professional factors working together to support the pupil's transition back into mainstream education.</p> <p>School staff support was crucial for successful</p>

			<p>headteachers</p> <p>Focus Group: A focus group was held with the team of educational psychologists</p> <p>Survey: A postal survey was administered to all secondary schools in the LA</p> <p>Documentary Evidence: Analysis of pupil files and LA documents</p> <p>Casework Evaluation: Evaluation of EP involvement in reintegration cases</p>	<p>2 LA reintegration officers (interviewed)</p> <p>7 EPs (focus group)</p>	<p>interest in a specific area derived from a review of literature or from their experience (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A theoretical approach requires engagement with the literature prior to analysis, as engagement with the literature can enhance analysis by sensitizing the researcher to the more subtle features of the data." (p117)</p>	<p>reintegration. This included:</p> <p>Allocating a key staff member to champion and support the pupil</p> <p>Providing additional staff support and one-to-one sessions</p> <p>Building positive relationships between staff and pupils</p> <p>Having a welcoming and supportive school ethos</p> <p>Effective communication was important, particularly:</p> <p><i>Close liaison between the pupil's</i></p>
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						<p><i>previous and new school</i></p> <p><i>Regular contact between school and home</i></p> <p><i>Individual Pupil Attributes</i></p> <p><i>Certain pupil characteristics facilitated reintegration:</i></p> <p><i>Willingness of the pupil to change and engage</i></p> <p><i>Pupil motivation and commitment to making the new placement work</i></p> <p><i>Helping pupils feel they belonged in the new school was crucial:</i></p>
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						<p><i>Supporting pupils to develop friendships and peer relationships</i></p> <p><i>Making efforts to welcome the pupil and make them feel part of the school</i></p> <p>Input from other agencies was helpful:</p> <p>Ongoing support from reintegration officers after admission</p> <p>Multi-professional working practices</p> <p>Parental Support</p> <p>Parental engagement and support for the reintegration was an important facilitator</p>
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Author(s) and Reference	Location	Aim(s)	Design	Participants	Analysis	Findings
Armstrong, H. (2017). From Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) to mainstream education: a Q methodological study exploring the perceptions of PRU and mainstream secondary school professionals on reintegration (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nottingham).	UK (within one LA)	<p>To explore the views of both mainstream secondary school and PRU professionals on the promotive factors to reintegration</p> <p>To investigate the attitudes of both mainstream secondary school and PRU professionals on the current barriers to reintegration within the Local Authority</p>	<p>Q methodological approach which combines both qualitative and quantitative research.</p> <p>Participants completed a 60-item Q-sort, ranking statements on a continuum from 'agree' to 'disagree'. The Q-set was generated through focus groups, policies, guidance, and previous research and literature.</p> <p>47 participants from secondary school settings and PRUs completed the Q-sort.</p>	<p>The study included 47 participants from secondary school settings and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), specifically:</p> <p>Mainstream Secondary School Staff: Participants were recruited from seven mainstream secondary schools within the Local Authority.</p> <p>PRU Staff: Staff members</p>	<p>Mixed method approach.</p> <p>Factor extraction and interpretation from the Q methodology, in addition to thematic analysis on qualitative data from post-sorting questionnaires to identify perceived barriers to reintegration within the LA.</p>	<p><i>Viewpoint 1: Collaborative Working and the Role of the PRU.</i> This viewpoint emphasized the importance of collaborative working practices, positive relationships, and the central role of the PRU in supporting reintegration. It highlighted the value of PRU involvement both during and after reintegration, as well as the importance of family engagement.</p> <p><i>Viewpoint 2: Inclusive Practice, Availability of Resources and</i></p>

				<p>from two PRUs within the Local Authority participated in the study.</p> <p>Professional Roles: The participants held various professional roles, including Teachers, Behaviour and Learning Practitioners, Pastoral Managers, and Inclusion Officers.</p> <p>Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, whereby a</p>		<p><i>Support.</i> This perspective focused on inclusive practices within schools, the availability of resources, and support for both students and staff. It emphasised the importance of an inclusive school ethos, flexibility in curriculum, and positive perceptions of the student.</p> <p><i>Viewpoint 3: Individualised Approaches and the Role of the School.</i> This viewpoint stressed the importance of tailored, individualised approaches to support reintegration, with a focus on the</p>
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				<p>key contact in each setting suggested other suitable participants who had knowledge and experience in relation to student reintegration.</p> <p>The research aimed to include the views of adults working closely with students during the reintegration process, both within schools and PRUs.</p>		<p>school's role. It highlighted the need for specific reintegration packages, mainstream key workers, and the replication of effective PRU strategies in schools..</p>
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				The study did not include students as participants, although student perspectives were considered during the development of the Q-set.		
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Aim(s)	Design	Participants	Analysis	Findings
Weaver, C. (2023). " <i>This is your last chance to prove to us you can be here, we've tried everything to help you</i> "-Exploring the use of reduced timetables as exclusionary practice for young people in Wales (Doctoral dissertation, Cardiff University).	UK (Wales)	<p>To explore how and when local authorities in Wales are using reduced timetables for young people experiencing socio-emotional differences presenting with externalising behaviours. This aim is explicitly stated in the research question.</p> <p>To explore practitioner perceptions and experiences of reduced timetables. This is directly stated as the second research question.</p>	<p>Mixed method design. Specifically, it used a convergent parallel design where qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently and analysed independently.</p> <p>Quantitative: online questionnaire distributed to 22 LA in Wales. Aimed to gather information about if and how LAs are using reduced</p>	<p>The study involved two groups of participants:</p> <p>Quantitative component: professionals with responsibilities for attendance and/or exclusions across all 22 LAs in Wales – 13 completed</p>	<p>Quantitative analysis – descriptive statistics.</p> <p>Qualitative analysis: Reflexive Thematic Analysis following Braun and Clarke's six step process.</p>	<p><i>Findings Specifically Associated with Reintegration</i></p> <p>The study highlighted several issues related to reintegration:</p> <p>Lack of urgency for reintegration: Data suggested that once a child is placed on a reduced timetable, there appears to be a lack of urgency from schools to reintegrate the young person</p>

			<p>timetables and what data is being collected on them.</p> <p>Qualitative: 7 semi-structured interviews with professionals who support YP on reduced timetables – from one consortia in Wales.</p>	<p>the questionnaire.</p> <p>Qualitative component: 7 interviews with professionals who supported YP placed on reduced timetables, and have regular direct contact with them such as secondary school pastoral team, charity sector, counselling services, youth support team, TEPs ALNCoS and Inclusion room Lead.</p>		<p>Reintegration dependent on child's behaviour: Where reintegration is the aim, it is often up to the young person to make changes to 'prove' to school they can behave, rather than a coordinated approach involving those around the young person and school</p> <p>Lack of systems for reintegration: The absence of systems to enable reintegration plays into the 'inclusion enabling exclusion agenda'</p> <p>Difficulty in multi-agency work for reintegration: Participants spoke of challenges in working in a multi-agency way to support the young person and school to avoid a reduced timetable or to</p>
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						<p>support with reintegration</p> <p>Prolonged reduced timetables: Some young people are left on reduced timetables for extended periods, making reintegration more difficult</p> <p>Unclear reintegration goals: There was a general sense that participants wondered if school's genuine aim was reintegration</p> <p>These findings suggest that while reintegration is often stated as the goal of reduced timetables, in practice, there are significant barriers and a lack of clear processes to support effective reintegration.</p>
Author(s) and Reference	Location	Aim(s)	Design	Participants	Analysis	Findings

<p>Markwell, C. (2024). <i>"It feels like you're just plastering over a crack" The use of reduced timetables in secondary schools</i> (Doctoral dissertation, UCL (University College London)).</p>	<p>UK (within one LA in the South East of England)</p>	<p>To explore how and why reduced timetables (RTTs) are being operationalised in schools</p> <p>To investigate professionals' experiences of supporting young people on RTTs</p> <p>To understand the experiences of young people who have been placed on RTTs</p>	<p>Two-phase qualitative design.</p> <p>Phase 1: collecting contextual data from professionals through semi-structured interviews.</p> <p>Phase 2: semi-structured interviews YP who had been placed on reduced timetables. Also included activities such as the Grid Elaboration Method (GEM) and the life grid approach.</p>	<p>Phase 1: 8 professionals from schools and wider LA teams who had roles in supporting young people on reduced timetables were interviewed.</p> <p>Phase 2: 7 YP in years 8-10, with five currently on a reduced timetable while the other 2 was reintegrated back into full-time education.</p> <p>Pupils across 3 mainstream school and one AP. 5 of the pupils needs were associated</p>	<p>Reflexive Thematic Analysis following Braun and Clarke's six step process.</p>	<p>RTTs were used to manage various needs including SEND, medical needs, and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). They were also used to support teachers in managing challenging behaviour.</p> <p>Professionals expressed concerns about RTTs being overused for vulnerable young people, potentially putting them at further risk. There was a disconnect between local authority staff and school staff in conceptualizing behaviour and support for young people.</p> <p><i>Findings Related to Reintegration Challenges with Reintegration</i></p>
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				with EBSA and 2 pupils were attending an alternative provision.		<p>Reintegration back to full-time education was identified as a significant challenge, particularly for RTTs put in place due to behavioural or mental health issues. The majority of RTTs had been in place for more than the recommended 12 weeks.</p> <p><i>Factors Affecting Reintegration</i> Professionals attributed challenges in reintegration to parental and young people's motivation to keep the RTT in place. RTTs were seen as favourable by some parents and young people as they had positive</p>
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						<p>impacts on family life and allowed young people to avoid difficult school situations.</p> <p><i>Young People's Perspectives on Reintegration</i> Young people expressed anxiety about returning to full-time education, as the underlying causes of their school-related anxieties had not been addressed. The thought of returning to school full-time increased anxiety for many young people.</p> <p><i>Successful Reintegration</i> In one case where successful reintegration occurred, the young</p>
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						<p>person had received support for their mental health from an outside organization (CAMHS). This suggests that addressing underlying causes of anxiety is crucial for successful reintegration.</p>
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Appendix D. Gatekeeper Letter – English and Welsh Versions

Ffion Williams ydw i, Seicolegydd Addysgol O dan Hyfforddiant yn fy nhrydedd flwyddyn o'r cwrs doethuriaeth mewn Seicoleg Addysg o Brifysgol Caerdydd. Rwy'n ysgrifennu atoch fel rhan o'm hymchwil ar gyfer fy nhraethawd hir, o dan y teitl '*Reduced timetables in Wales: exploring secondary school staff and pupils' experiences of a positive reintegration to a secondary mainstream setting*'.

Nod y prosiect yw archwilio barn a phrofiadau disgyblion oedran uwchradd sydd wedi cael profiad cadarnhaol o ddychwelyd yn ôl i leoliad uwchradd prif ffrwd yn dilyn bod ar amserlen wedi ei gyfyngu / addasu / leihau ('*reduced timetable*'). Yn ogystal, nod yr ymchwil yw cael barn a phrofiadau staff ysgolion uwchradd sydd yn gweithio mewn ysgol uwchradd brif ffrwd sydd wedi cefnogi disgybl yn y broses gadarnhaol o ddychwelyd i'r ysgol yn dilyn bod ar amserlen wedi ei gyfyngu / addasu / leihau.

Nod yr ymchwil yw archwilio canfyddiadau staff ysgolion a phobl ifanc o'r ffactorau sydd wedi bod o gymorth yn y broses, gan ganolbwyntio ar gasglu arferion dda. Rwy'n ysgrifennu i holi a fyddech chi'n fodlon helpu i recriwtio plant a phobl ifanc neu staff ysgol sy'n ffitio'r meini prawf isod (gweler y tabl) er mwyn cwblhau cyfweiliad â mi.

Unigolion sydd yn addas i gymryd rhan:	
Plant a phobl ifanc	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rhwng 11-16 oed.Wedi dychwelyd ('<i>reintegrated</i>') i'r un ysgol uwchradd brif ffrwd a sefydlwyd yr amserlen sydd wedi addasu/leihau ('<i>reduced timetable</i>'), am isafswm o 3 mis.Fod yr amserlen sydd wedi ei addasu / leihau wedi cael ei sefydlu oherwydd fod y plentyn / person ifanc yn profi heriau ymddygiadol yn yr ysgol a/neu fel dewis arall yn lle eu gwahardd (<i>nid EBSA ag oherwydd rhesymau meddygol</i>)Wedi cael profiad cadarnhaol / llwyddiannus o ddychwelyd i'r Ysgol.Teimlo yn gyfforddus i drafod eu barn a'u profiadau mewn cyfweiliad anstrwythuredig trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

Staff Ysgol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff ysgol uwchradd e.e. aelod o'r Uwch Dîm, CADYs, athrawon a staff cynorthwyol. • Wedi ymwneud yn y broses o gefnogi plentyn neu berson ifanc yn y broses gadarnhaol / llwyddiannus o ddychwelyd i'r ysgol yn dilyn bod ar amserlen wedi ei addasu / leihau oherwydd iddynt brofi heriau ymddygiadol yn yr ysgol a/neu fel dewis arall yn lle eu gwahardd (<i>nid EBSA ag oherwydd rhesymau meddygol</i>). • Yn teimlo'n gyfforddus i rannu eu barn a'u profiadau mewn cyfweiliad lled-strwythuredig trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.
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A fydddech chi'n fodlon anfon y wybodaeth atodedig (taflenni gwybodaeth) i staff ysgol a rhieni a/neu ofalwyr plentyn neu berson ifanc sy'n cyd-fynd â'r meini prawf uchod os gwelwch yn dda? Bydd cyfranogwyr posibl yn gallu cysylltu â mi yn uniongyrchol i fynegi eu diddordeb ag i ofyn cwestiynau cyn cydsynio i gymryd rhan. Yn dilyn trafodaethau gyda rhieni a/neu ofalwyr, bydd taflen wybodaeth ar wahân yn cael ei rhannu gyda'r plentyn neu'r person ifanc i sicrhau eu bod yn gallu gwneud penderfyniad gwybodus.

Rhaid cael caniatâd cyn i'r prosiect ddechrau. Bydd y data ymchwil yn ddienw ac felly ni fydd y cyfranogwyr yn gallu cael eu hadnabod yn yr adroddiad ymchwil. Bydd data personol y cyfranogwyr yn aros yn gyfrinachol. Mae'r ymchwil hon wedi'i chymeradwyo gan Bwyllgor Moeseg yr Ysgol Seicoleg, Prifysgol Caerdydd.

I nodi eich caniatâd i weithredu fel y person dynodedig sydd yn didoli'r wybodaeth hwn ('*gatekeeper*') ar gyfer fy mhrosiect ymchwil, neu am ragor o wybodaeth, cysylltwch a mi drwy ymateb i'r e-bost hwn neu trwy fy nghyfrif Prifysgol (WilliamsFE6@cardiff.ac.uk) neu i siarad â fy ngoruchwyliwr ymchwil, cysylltwch â Dr Gemma Ellis ar EllisG6@cardiff.ac.uk.

Diolch am gymryd yr amser i ystyried fy nghais, byddwn yn ddiolchgar iawn am eich cefnogaeth.

Llawer o ddiolch,

Ffion Williams
Seicolegydd Addysg O dan Hyfforddiant
Prifysgol Caerdydd

I'm Ffion, a Trainee Educational Psychologist from Cardiff University. I'm writing to you as part of my doctoral thesis research, for which I'm hoping to conduct a research project under

the title of 'Reduced timetables in Wales: exploring secondary school staff and pupils' experiences of a positive reintegration to a secondary mainstream setting'.

The project's aim is to explore the views and experiences of secondary age pupils who have had a positive reintegration into a secondary mainstream setting following being on a reduced timetable. In addition, the research aims to gain the views and experiences of secondary school staff working in a mainstream secondary school who have supported a pupil in the process of a positive reintegration following being on a reduced timetable. The research aims to explore school staff and young people's perceptions of the possible facilitators for a positive reintegration, focusing on capturing what both groups felt helped the process.

I'm writing to enquire as to whether you would be willing to help in the recruitment of children and young people or school staff who identify with the criteria below (see table) to complete an interview with me.

<i>Those who can participate:</i>	
<i>Children and Young People</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Aged 11-16 years old.</i> <i>• Reintegrated to the same secondary mainstream school that established the reduced timetable, for a minimum period of 3 months.</i> <i>• Placed on a reduced timetable due to experiencing socio-emotional differences presenting as externalised behaviours in school and/or as an alternative to exclusion. (not EBSA or medical)</i> <i>• Has had a positive experience / successful or meaningful reintegration.</i> <i>• Feel able and comfortable to discuss their views and experiences in an unstructured interview through the medium of Welsh or English.</i>

School Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary staff such as Senior Leadership Team (SLT), ALNCoS, teachers and support staff. • Involved in supporting a CYP in the positive / successful process of returning to school following being on a reduced timetable due to the CYP experiencing behavioural challenges in school and/or as an alternative to exclusion (not EBSA or medical). • Feels comfortable to share their views and experiences in a semi-structured interview through the medium of Welsh or English.
--------------	---

Would you be willing to forward the attached information (information sheets) to school staff and the parents and/or carers of a child or young person that fits the above criteria please? Potential participants will be able to contact me directly to express their interest in participating or ask any questions prior to consenting to involvement. Following discussions with parents and/or carers, a separate information sheet will be shared with the child or young person to ensure that they are able to make an informed decision.

Consent must be gained prior to commencement of the project. The research data will be anonymised and therefore the participants will not be identified within the research report. The participants personal data will remain confidential. This research has been approved by the School of Psychology Ethics Committee.

To indicate your consent for acting as a gatekeeper for my research project, or for further information, please reply to this email contacting myself, Ffion Williams on WilliamsFE6@cardiff.ac.uk or to speak with my research supervisor, contact Dr Gemma Ellis on EllisG6@cardiff.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request, I would be very grateful for your support.

Many thanks,

*Ffion Williams
Trainee Educational Psychologist
Cardiff University*

Appendix E. Participant Information Sheet
CYP Information Sheet

**I WOULD LOVE TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS ON THE SUPPORT YOU
HAVE HAD TO HELP YOU RETURN TO SCHOOL**



Hi! I'm Ffion Williams.
I'm a Trainee Educational
Psychologist. I am currently
training to be an Educational
Psychologist at Cardiff
University.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH FOR?

I'm interested to hear what helped you return to school
after being on a reduced timetable.

WHAT WOULD I NEED TO DO?

- You will meet with the researcher and spend some time with them to get to know them.
- Answer some questions about what you think helped you when returning to school after being on a reduced timetable.
- You'll be able to ask the researcher questions if you're not sure about anything.

You don't have to meet me if you don't feel
comfortable doing so.

If you have any questions, write them down and I'll try
my best to answer them if we meet.

School Staff Information Sheet



School Staff Information Sheet School of Psychology School Information Sheet Version: 1 Date: 08.01.2024



'Reduced timetables in Wales: exploring secondary school staff and pupils' experiences of a positive reintegration to an educational setting'

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others, if you wish.

Thank you for reading this.

1. What is the purpose of this research project?

This research project is being undertaken by Ffion Williams, Trainee Educational Psychologist, who is currently completing her third year on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University. The researcher is interested in gathering a deeper understanding of secondary age pupils (11-16 years old) who have had a positive reintegration into an educational setting in Wales following being on a reduced timetable. In addition, the research aims to gain the views and experiences of secondary school staff working in an educational setting in Wales who have supported a pupil in the process of a positive reintegration to an educational setting following being on a reduced timetable.

The research aims to explore school staff and young people's perceptions of the possible facilitators for a positive reintegration, focusing on capturing what both groups of participants felt helped the process.

2. Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited because you have been identified as a member of staff that has supported a pupil in the process of a positive reintegration into an educational setting following being on a reduced timetable.

3. Do I have to take part?

No, your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, we will discuss the research project with you and ask you to sign a consent form. If you decide not to take part, you do not have to explain your reasons and it will not affect your legal rights.

4. What will taking part involve?

Taking part will involve a semi-structured interview. The interviews will either be conducted in person or online via Microsoft Teams, this will be dependent on your availability/preference and will be decided during the consent process.

The interview will be voice recorded on a secure device for the researcher to transcribe the conversations shared, and the recording will be deleted after the transcription has been completed (within 4 weeks of conducting the interview). A debrief will be provided by the researcher after the interview has finished, to allow you to have a conversation about anything that you feel that you would like to discuss more or have further information.

5. Will I be paid for taking part?

No. You should understand that any information that you share will be as a gift and you will not benefit financially.

6. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There will be no direct advantages or benefits to you from taking part, but your contribution will help us understand and gather pupil and staff voice to inform next steps.

7. What are the possible risks of taking part?

The research will focus on the positive experiences/views such as what helped or supported in the process of supporting a pupil to return to school, however there may be some discomfort when you're discussing your experiences. The researcher will monitor your emotional presentation throughout the interview.

A debrief will be conducted with all participants when finishing the interview, and a debrief sheet will be provided to you and school.

If there are any safeguarding concerns the researcher will follow the school policy.

8. Will my taking part in this research project be kept confidential?

The researcher is managing the processing and security of two separate data sets: personal data and data gathered during the interview.

Your personal data is required for consent and to make arrangements for the interview. This information will be kept confidential and stored securely on an encrypted, password protected laptop device, that only the researcher will have access to. The personal data gathered will consist of your name, school in which you work, and an email address for communication will only be used for recruitment purposes.

The information gathered from you during the interview will be recorded, on a voice recorder if in person and on Microsoft Teams (audio only) if online. Following the interview, the recorded information will be transcribed (typed up) and then anonymised, meaning that all names and identifying information is removed so that you cannot be identified from the information. Once the data is anonymised, participants are unable to withdraw their data from the research project. The audio recording will be deleted once it has been transcribed.

The data gathered during the interview will be anonymised during transcription. This cannot be kept confidential as excerpts (including verbatim quotes) may be used in the research report. Please see 'What will happen to my Personal Data?' (below) for further information.

9. What will happen to my Personal Data?

Cardiff University is the Data Controller and is committed to respecting and protecting your personal data in accordance with your expectations and Data Protection legislation. Further information about Data Protection, including:

- your rights
- the legal basis under which Cardiff University processes your personal data for research
- Cardiff University's Data Protection Policy
- how to contact the Cardiff University Data Protection Officer
- how to contact the Information Commissioner's Office

may be found at <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection>

Participant's personal data will be processed for up to three months.

Two weeks following your participation in the semi-structured interview, the researcher will anonymise all the personal data it has collected from, or about, you in connection with this research project, except for your consent form.

Your consent form will be retained for 5 years and may be accessed by members of the research team and, where necessary, by members of the University's governance and audit teams or by regulatory authorities.

Anonymised information will be kept for a minimum of 5 years but may be published in support of the research project and/or retained indefinitely, where it is likely to have continuing value for research purposes. It will not be possible to withdraw any anonymised data that has already been published, from the point at which it has been anonymised.

10. What happens to the data at the end of the research project?

Once the data has been collected via the interview, it will be transcribed (typed up), anonymised (coded so that you cannot be identified) and then analysed by the researcher. At this point, data may be shared with academic/research supervisor Dr Gemma Ellis for academic supervision. Any personal data will be removed before any form of sharing takes place.

11. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of the research project will be shared with the researcher's Supervisor, Dr Gemma Ellis, Cardiff University. The final report will also be available to access via Cardiff University's Online Research @ Cardiff (ORCA) website which is an open-source database. ORCA is Cardiff University's institutional repository. It enables researchers to deposit the full text of their work or details about their work and make it freely available over the internet. In this way it helps to raise the visibility of Cardiff University's research and helps to maximise its impact. It is not intended to be a substitute for peer-reviewed journals but has been developed to host work by Cardiff University researchers that has already been, or will be, published elsewhere. Depending on the outcome of the research, it may be our intention to publish the results of this research project in academic journals and present findings at conferences. Participants will not be identified in any report, publication, or presentation.

As the research project will be using semi-structured interviews, there is an intention to use quotes from participants to support findings. All quotes will be anonymised, and no identifiable information will be included in the final report, therefore you will not be able to be identified in the research report.

12. What if there is a problem?

If you wish to complain or have grounds for concerns about any aspect of the manner in which you have been approached or treated during the course of this research, please contact Dr Gemma Ellis (Supervisor Ellisg6@cardiff.ac.uk) or the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University at the address below. If your complaint is not managed to your satisfaction, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office should you wish to complain, can be found at the following: <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection>.

If you are harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, you may have grounds for legal action, but you may have to pay for it.

13. Who is organising and funding this research project?

The research is organised by Trainee Educational Psychologist Ffion Williams as part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University and supervised by Dr Gemma Ellis. There is no funding being received for this research project.

14. Who has reviewed this research project?

This research project has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University. Secretary of the Ethics Committee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT. Tel: 029 2087 0707 Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk.

15. Further information and contact details

Should you have any questions relating to this research project, you may contact us during normal working hours:

Ffion Williams (WilliamsFE6@cardiff.ac.uk) or Dr Gemma Ellis (Ellisg6@cardiff.ac.uk)

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project. If you decide to participate, you will be given a copy of this information sheet and a signed consent form to keep for your records.

Parent/Carer Information Sheet



Parent/Carer Information Sheet School of Psychology Parent/School Information Sheet Version: 1 Date: 08.01.2024



'Reduced timetables in Wales: exploring secondary school staff and pupils' experiences of a positive reintegration to an educational setting'

Your child is being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not you give your consent for them to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others, if you wish.

Thank you for reading this.

1. What is the purpose of this research project?

This research project is being undertaken by Ffion Williams, Trainee Educational Psychologist, who is currently completing her third year on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University. The researcher is interested in gathering a deeper understanding of the views and experiences of young people (11-16 years old) who have had a positive reintegration into an educational setting following being on a reduced timetable. The research aims to explore young people's perceptions of the possible facilitators for a positive reintegration, focusing on capturing what pupils felt helped in the process of returning to school.

2. Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited because your child has been identified as a pupil that has had a positive experience of reintegrating into an educational setting following being on a reduced timetable.

3. Does my child have to take part?

No, your child's participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and it is up to you and your child to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide that you'd like your child to take part, the researcher will discuss the research project with you and ask you and your child to sign a consent form. If you decide that you do not want your child to take part, you do not have to explain your reasons and it will not affect your legal rights.

If you are happy for your child to participate in this research, it will not affect the level of support that they currently receive from your Local Authority, or from your child's school provision. You are free to withdraw your consent for your child to participate in the research project at any time, without giving a reason, even after signing the consent form.

4. What will taking part involve?

Your child will be asked to attend an unstructured interview lasting approx. 30 minutes with the researcher, who will ask some questions about your child's

thoughts around their experiences of the support they have received whilst returning to an educational setting following being on a reduced timetable. Before starting the interview there will be an opportunity for your child to build a rapport with the researcher, ensuring that they're at ease and understand that they can pause or stop the interview at any time, can choose not to answer any questions they don't want to, and can withdraw their data up until it is transcribed (typed up). The interview will be voice recorded on a secure device for the researcher to transcribe the conversations shared, and the recording will be deleted after the transcription has been completed (within 4 weeks of conducting the interview). A debrief will be provided by the researcher after the interview has finished, to allow your child to have a conversation about anything that they feel that they would like to discuss more or have further information. As a parent/carers you will also be provided with a copy of the debrief form for your records.

5. Will your child be paid for taking part?

No. You should understand that any information that your child shares will be as a gift and they will not benefit financially.

6. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There will be no direct advantages or benefits to your child from taking part, but their contribution will help us understand and gather pupil voice to inform next steps.

7. What are the possible risks of taking part?

The research will focus on your child's positive experiences such as what helped or supported them to return to school, however there may be some discomfort when your child is discussing their experiences. The researcher will monitor your child's emotional presentation throughout the interview and the interview will subsequently be stopped if the child/young person shows any signs of distress or concern. If this occurs, the researcher will begin a debrief with the child/young person.

A debrief will be conducted with all children and young people when finishing the semi-structured interview, and a debrief sheet will be provided to you (parent/carers) and school.

If there are any safeguarding concerns the researcher will follow the school policy.

8. Will my taking part in this research project be kept confidential?

The researcher is managing the processing and security of two separate data sets: personal data and data gathered during the interview.

Your child's personal data is required for consent and to make arrangements for the interview. This information will be kept confidential and stored securely on an encrypted, password protected laptop device, that only the researcher will have access to. The personal data gathered will consist of the name of parent and child, school in which they are on roll, and an email address for communication will only be used for recruitment purposes.

The information gathered from your child during the interview will be recorded, on a voice recorder if in person and on Microsoft Teams (audio only) if online. Following the interview, the recorded information will be transcribed (typed up) and then anonymised, meaning that all names and identifying information is removed so that your child cannot be identified from the information.

The data gathered during the interview will be anonymised during transcription. This cannot be kept confidential as excerpts (including verbatim quotes) may be used in the research report. Please see 'What will happen to my Personal Data?' (below) for further information.

In exceptional cases, the researcher may be legally and/or professionally required to over-ride confidentiality and to disclose information obtained from (or about) your child to statutory bodies or relevant agencies. For example, this might arise where the researcher has reason to believe that there is a risk to your child's safety, or the safety of others. Where appropriate, the researcher will aim to notify the child and yourself as a parent/carer of the need to break confidentiality (but this may not be appropriate in all cases).

9. What will happen to my Personal Data?

Cardiff University is the Data Controller and is committed to respecting and protecting your personal data in accordance with your expectations and Data Protection legislation. Further information about Data Protection, including:

- your rights
- the legal basis under which Cardiff University processes your personal data for research
- Cardiff University's Data Protection Policy
- how to contact the Cardiff University Data Protection Officer
- how to contact the Information Commissioner's Office

may be found at <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection>

Participant's personal data will be processed for up to three months.

2 weeks following your child's participation in the semi-structured interview, the researcher will anonymise all the personal data it has collected from, or about, your child in connection with this research project, except for the consent form and your child's age.

Your consent form will be retained for 5 years and may be accessed by members of the research team and, where necessary, by members of the University's governance and audit teams or by regulatory authorities.

Anonymised information will be kept for a minimum of 5 years but may be published in support of the research project and/or retained indefinitely, where it is likely to have continuing value for research purposes. It will not be possible to withdraw any anonymised data that has already been published, from the point at which it has been anonymised.

10. What happens to the data at the end of the research project?

Once the data has been collected via the interview, it will be transcribed (typed up), anonymised (coded so that your child cannot be identified) and then analysed by the researcher. At this point, data may be shared with academic/research supervisor Dr Gemma Ellis for academic supervision. Any personal data will be removed before any form of sharing takes place.

11. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of the research project will be shared with the researcher's Supervisor, Dr Gemma Ellis, Cardiff University. The final report will also be available to access via Cardiff University's Online Research @ Cardiff (ORCA) website which is an open-source database. ORCA is Cardiff University's institutional repository. It enables researchers to deposit the full text of their work or details about their work and make it freely available over the internet. In this way it helps to raise the visibility of Cardiff University's research and helps to maximise its impact. It is not intended to be a substitute for peer-reviewed journals but has been developed to host work by Cardiff University researchers that has already been, or will be, published elsewhere. Depending on the outcome of the research, it may be our intention to publish the results of this research project in academic journals and present findings at conferences. Participants will not be identified in any report, publication, or presentation.

As the research project will be using interviews, there is an intention to use quotes from participants to support findings. All quotes will be anonymised, and no identifiable information will be included in the final report, therefore your child will not be able to be identified in the research report.

12. What if there is a problem?

If you wish to complain or have grounds for concerns about any aspect of the manner in which you have been approached or treated during the course of this research, please contact Dr Gemma Ellis (Supervisor Ellisg6@cardiff.ac.uk) or the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University at the address below. If your complaint is not managed to your satisfaction, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office should you wish to complain, can be found at the following: <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection>.

If you are harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, you may have grounds for legal action, but you may have to pay for it.

13. Who is organising and funding this research project?

The research is organised by Trainee Educational Psychologist Ffion Williams as part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University and supervised by Dr Gemma Ellis. There is no funding being received for this research project.

14. Who has reviewed this research project?

This research project has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University. Secretary of the Ethics Committee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT. Tel: 029 2087 0707 Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk.

15. Further information and contact details

Should you have any questions relating to this research project, you may contact us during normal working hours:

Ffion Williams (WilliamsFE6@cardiff.ac.uk) or Dr Gemma Ellis (Ellisg6@cardiff.ac.uk)


Thank you for considering your child/young person to take part in this research project. If you are happy for your child/young person to participate, you will be given a copy of this information sheet and a signed consent form to keep for your records.

Appendix F. Participant Consent Forms

CYP Assent Forms


ASSENT FORM

ASSENT MEANS AGREEING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN.




Have you understood the information?

☐




Have you had the opportunity to ask questions?

☐




Did the answers make sense to you?

☐



Do you understand that you can change your mind about taking part in the research at any time? I won't ask you why.

☐




Are you happy for your voice to be recorded? The recording will be deleted after I type up our chat.

☐



Do you understand that some of the things you say may be quoted in the research report? No one will be able to identify you from this information because your real name will not be used.

☐



Do you understand that the discussions we have will be kept between us (*confidential*) unless you share information that would make the researcher concerned about yours or another's safety?

☐



Are you happy to take part in the research and for Ffion to visit you in school or online?

☐

If you have ticked each circle on all of the above and happy to take part, please sign your name and the date below.

Signature:

Date:

School Staff Consent Form



School of Psychology
School Staff Consent Form
Version: 1 Date: 08.01.2024



**Reduced timetables in Wales:
exploring secondary school staff and
pupils' experiences of a positive
reintegration to a secondary
mainstream setting**

Name of Chief/Principal Investigator: Ffion Williams

Type of Consent: Formal Consent

**Please
initial
box**

I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated 08.01.2024 version 1 for the above research project.	
I confirm that I have understood the information sheet dated 08.01.2024 version 1 for the above research project and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and that these have been answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without any adverse consequences. I understand that if I withdraw, information about me that has already been obtained may be kept by Cardiff University.	
I understand that data collected during the research project will be looked at by the researcher and may be looked at by individuals from Cardiff University or from regulatory authorities, where it is relevant to my taking part in the research project. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my anonymised data.	
I consent to the processing of my personal information including my name for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be held in accordance with all applicable data protection	

legislation and in strict confidence unless disclosure is required by law or professional obligation.	
I understand who will have access to my personal information, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the research project.	
I understand that after the research project, anonymised data may be made publicly available and may be used for purposes not related to this research project. I understand that it will not be possible to identify me from this data that is seen and used by other researchers, for ethically approved research projects, on the understanding that confidentiality will be maintained.	
I consent to my voice being audio recorded for the purposes of the research project and I understand how it will be used in the research.	
I understand that anonymised excerpts and/or verbatim quotes from my interview may be used as part of the research publication.	
I understand how the findings and results of the research project will be written up and published.	
I agree to take part in this research project.	

Name of participant (print)

Date_____

Signature_____

Name of person taking consent
(print)_____

Role of person taking consent
(print)_____

Date_____

Signature_____

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE RESEARCH

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM TO KEEP

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University. Secretary of the Ethics Committee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT. Tel: 029 2087 0707. Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk.

Parent / Carer Consent Form (on behalf of the CYP)

Parent/Carer Consent Form



School of Psychology

Parent/Carer Consent Form

Version: 1 Date: 08.01.2024



**Reduced timetables in Wales:
exploring secondary school staff and
pupils' experiences of a positive
reintegration to a secondary
mainstream setting**

Name of Chief/Principal Investigator: Ffion Williams

Type of Consent: Formal Consent

**Please
initial
box**

I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated 08.01.2024 version 1 for the above research project.	
I confirm that I have understood the information sheet dated 08.01.2024 version 1 for the above research project and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and that these have been answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my child's participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw their engagement at any time without giving a reason and without any adverse consequences. I understand that if I withdraw, information about my child that has already been obtained may be kept by Cardiff University.	
I understand that data collected during the research project will be looked at by the researcher and may be looked at by individuals from	

Cardiff University or from regulatory authorities, where it is relevant to my child taking part in the research project. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my child's data.	
I consent to the processing of my child's personal information including my name and my child's name for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be held in accordance with all applicable data protection legislation and in strict confidence unless disclosure is required by law or professional obligation.	
I understand who will have access to my and my child's personal information, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the research project.	
I understand that after the research project, anonymised data may be made publicly available and may be used for purposes not related to this research project. I understand that it will <u>not</u> be possible to identify my child from this data that is seen and used by other researchers, for ethically approved research projects, on the understanding that confidentiality will be maintained.	
I consent to my child's voice being audio recorded for the purposes of the research project and I understand how it will be used in the research.	
I understand that anonymised excerpts and/or verbatim quotes from my child's interview may be used as part of the research publication.	
I understand how the findings and results of the research project will be written up and published.	
I agree for my child to take part in this research project.	

Name of participant (child) (print)

Name of parent consenting (print)

Relationship to child
(print)_____

Date_____

Signature_____

Name of person taking consent
(print)_____

Role of person taking consent
(print)_____

Date_____

Signature_____

THANK YOU FOR GIVING YOUR CONSENT FOR YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM TO KEEP

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University. Secretary of the Ethics Committee, School of
Psychology, Cardiff University, Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT. Tel: 029 2087 0707. Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix G. Interview schedule

School Staff Semi-Structured Interview

To begin I will set out by outlining the expectations of the semi-structured interview using Braun and Clarke's (2013) "Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners" as a guide:

"Today I am seeking your thoughts and opinions, there are no right or wrong answers. You are welcome, but are not required, to share your personal experiences. You will be taking part in a semi-structured interview, and this will be carried out much like a conversation. I have themes and questions I would like to cover; however, you are able to answer these questions in any which way you would prefer."

"Please be reminded you have the right to withdraw at any time and the right to withdraw your data up to two weeks after the semi-structured interview, beyond this there will be no identifiable link between yourself and your responses. Are you happy to continue?"

If yes:

"To begin, could you introduce yourself including your name and then tell me one highlight of your week so far?"

Sample items:

- What is your role on a day-to-day basis within the school? (Neutral question)
- Can you describe your role and experience in supporting students who are reintegrating from a reduced timetable?
- How many pupils have you supported through this process?
- What does the term 'reintegration' mean to you in the context of your work?
- What are the key steps you follow when helping a student reintegrate into a full timetable?
- Can you share a specific example of a positive reintegration you were involved in?
- What practices or strategies do you find most effective in supporting a positive reintegration?
- How do you collaborate with parents, carers, other staff, and other professionals in the reintegration process?

(How have (insert professionals) been involved in the positive reintegration process? What additional support or resources do you think ... could provide to facilitate a positive reintegration for students?)

- How does the school create an environment that supports a positive reintegration for students? (Are there any other additional support systems in place to assist

students?)

- What advice would you give to other schools on facilitating a positive reintegration of a CYP following being on a reduced timetable?
- Are there any changes you think should be made to the current reintegration process?
- I think that's all I had to ask you today, is there anything else you'd like to share / think is important for me to know?

CYP Unstructured Interview

Sample prompts:

- How would you describe your experience of returning to school after being on a reduced timetable?
- How / when did you come off your reduced timetable?
- Do you remember why you were put on a reduced timetable?
- What was that like?
- How did that feel?
- What kind of things helped you to settle back at school?
- Who helped you? (school staff, parents/carers/friends) How? Anything in particular they did?
- What would you give as advice to other pupils going through a similar process to what you've gone through?
- Looking back, is there anything you wish that had been different during your time returning to school on a full-time basis?

Appendix H. Participant Debrief Forms

CYP Debrief Form

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY

YOUR VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES WILL HELP US GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS HELPFUL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER BEING ON A REDUCED TIMETABLE.



WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

The researcher will listen to all of your thoughts again and they will be written up in a research paper.

FURTHER SUPPORT

If our conversation has brought up any worries you may wish to visit some of these websites for some support:



School Staff Debrief Form



School Staff Debrief Sheet School of Psychology

School Staff Debrief Sheet

Version: 1 Date: 08.01.2024



Reduced timetables in Wales: exploring secondary school staff and pupils' experiences of a positive reintegration to a secondary mainstream setting

Thank you for taking part in this study, your participation is appreciated.

The aim of the study is to explore the views and experiences of secondary age pupils (11-16 years old) who have had a positive reintegration into an educational setting in Wales following being on a reduced timetable (*or managed move*). In addition, the research aims to gain the views and experiences of secondary school staff working in an educational setting in Wales who have supported a pupil in the process of a positive reintegration to an educational setting following being on a reduced timetable.

The research aims to explore school staff and young people's perceptions of the possible facilitators for a positive reintegration focusing on capturing what pupils and staff felt helped the process.

The information gained will be used to inform the researcher's research project as part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology.

The anonymised results may be published and used in presentations. It is hoped that findings may provide an insight into how to support pupils and schools. This is a reminder that the interview recording, and subsequent transcripts, will be kept confidentially in a secure location only accessible to the researcher. The interview recording will be kept confidentially up to the point of transcription, at which point it will be deleted, and all transcribed information will be anonymised so that you will not be identified.

You have the right to withdraw your data up to four weeks after the interview, as beyond this point there will be no identifiable link between you and your responses.

This research project has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University. Secretary of the Ethics Committee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT. Tel: 029 2087 0707 Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk.

Should you have any questions relating to this research project please contact us via email:

Ffion Williams Trainee Educational Psychologist School of Psychology Cardiff University Tower Building	Dr Gemma Ellis Research Supervisor School of Psychology Cardiff University Tower Building Park Place
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Park Place Cardiff CF10 3AT Email: WilliamsFE6@cardiff.ac.uk	Cardiff CF10 3AT Email: EllisG6@cardiff.ac.uk
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If the conversation within the semi-structured interview has brought up any worries or if you are concerned about your well-being, you may wish to contact:

- www.mind.org.uk
- <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/helping-you>

Parent/Carer Debrief Form



Parent/Carer Debrief Sheet School of Psychology

Parent/Carer Debrief Sheet

Version: 1 Date: 08.01.2024



Reduced timetables in Wales: exploring secondary school staff and pupils' experiences of a positive reintegration to a secondary mainstream setting

Your child's participation in this study is appreciated, thank you.

The aim of the study is to explore the views and experiences of secondary age pupils (11-16 years old) who have had a positive reintegration into an educational setting in Wales following being on a reduced timetable.

The research aims to explore young people's perceptions of the possible facilitators for a positive reintegration, focusing on capturing what pupils felt helped the process. The information gained will be used to inform the researcher's research project as part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology.

The anonymised results may be published and used in presentations. It is hoped that findings may provide an insight into how to support pupils and schools. This is a reminder that the interview recording, and subsequent transcripts, will be kept confidentially in a secure location only accessible to the researcher. The interview recording will be kept confidentially up to the point of transcription, at which point it will be deleted, and all transcribed information will be anonymised so that your child will not be able to be identified.

You have the right to withdraw your child's data up to four weeks after the interview, as beyond this point there will be no identifiable link between your child and their responses.

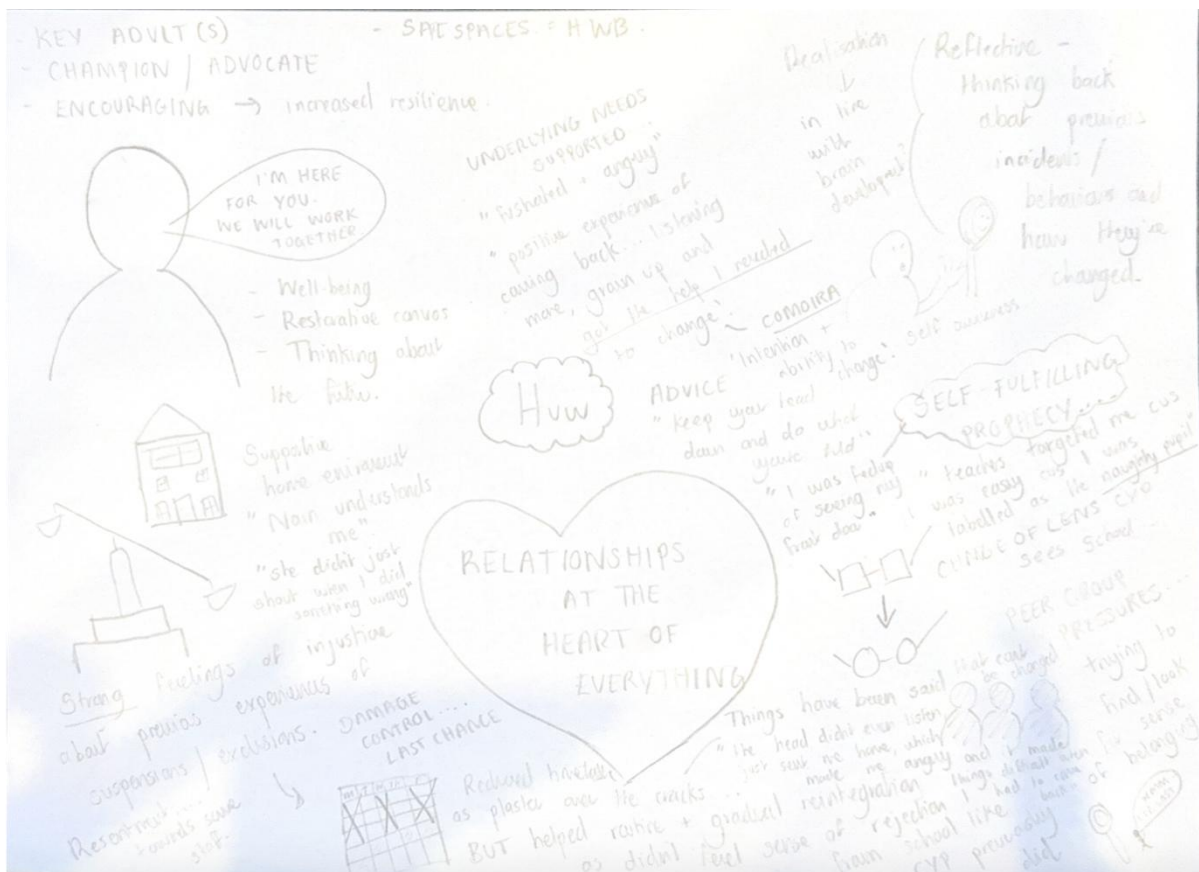
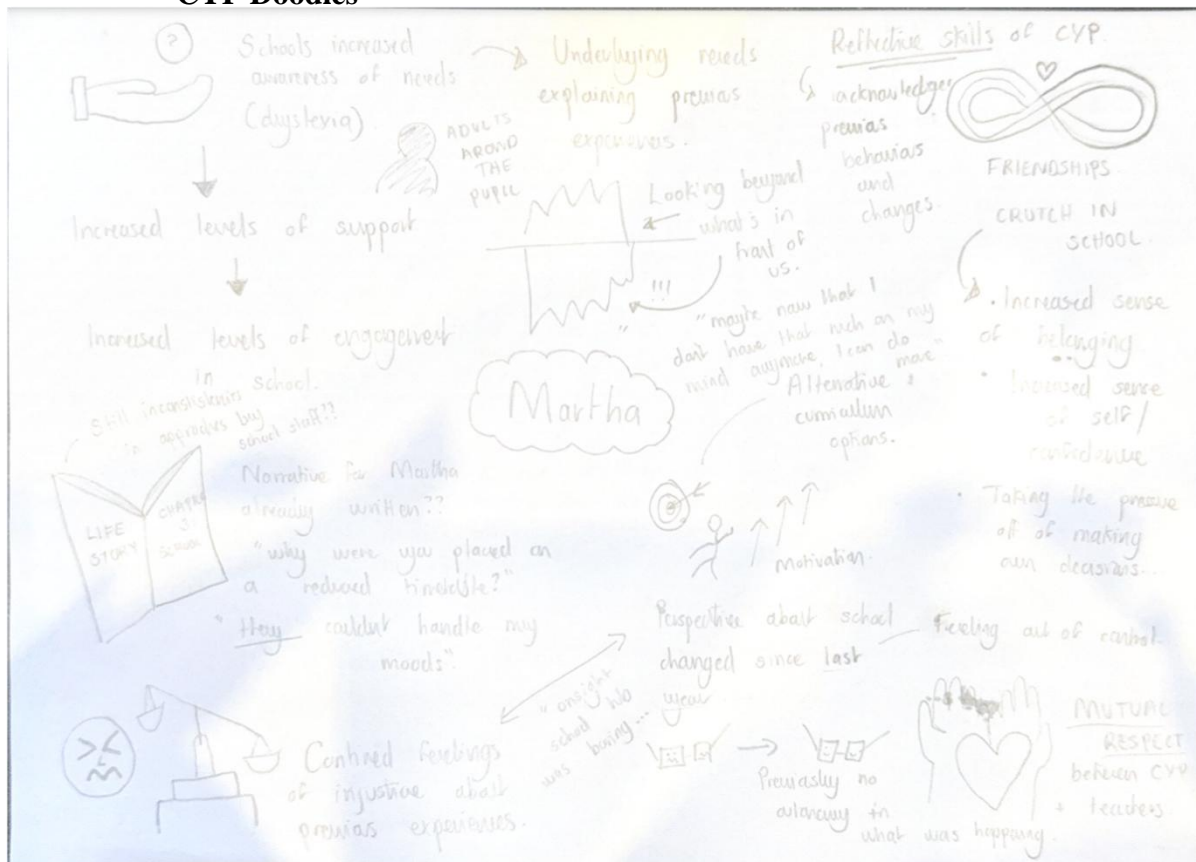
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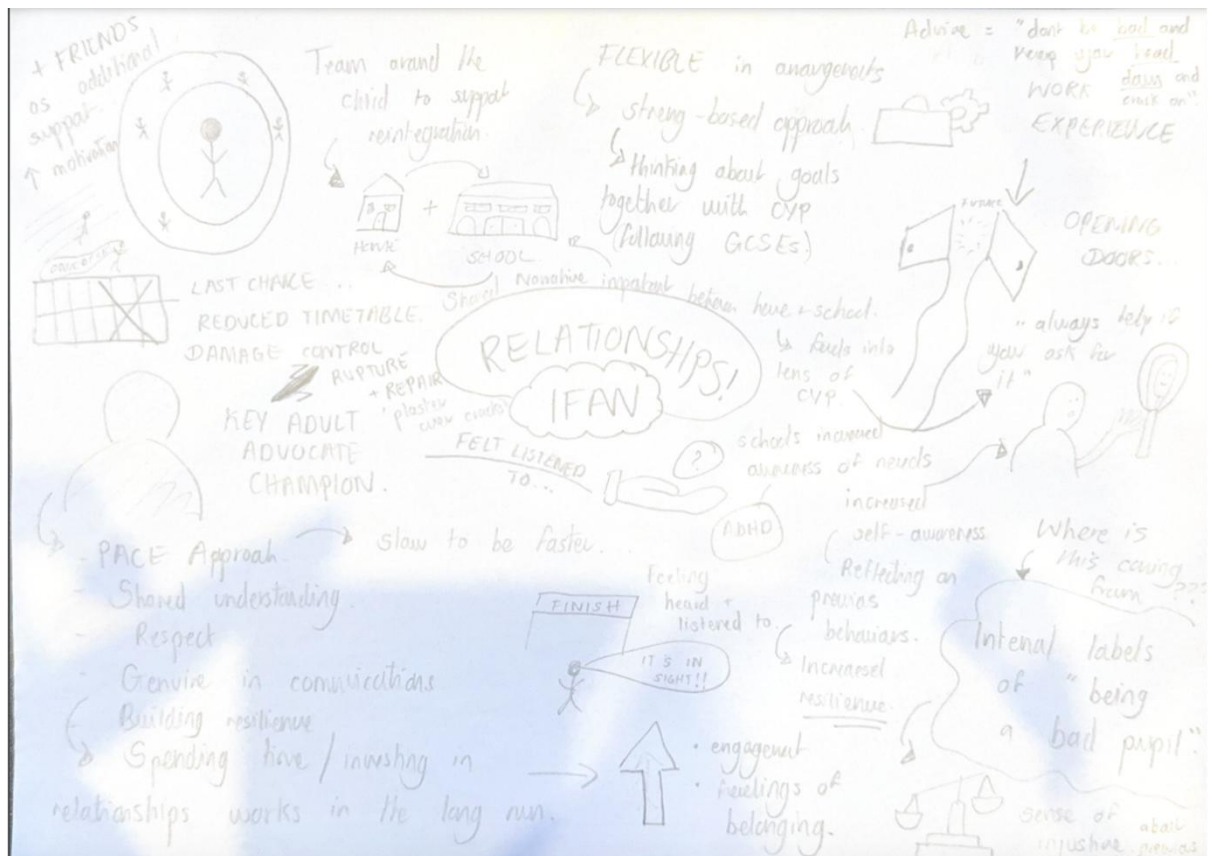
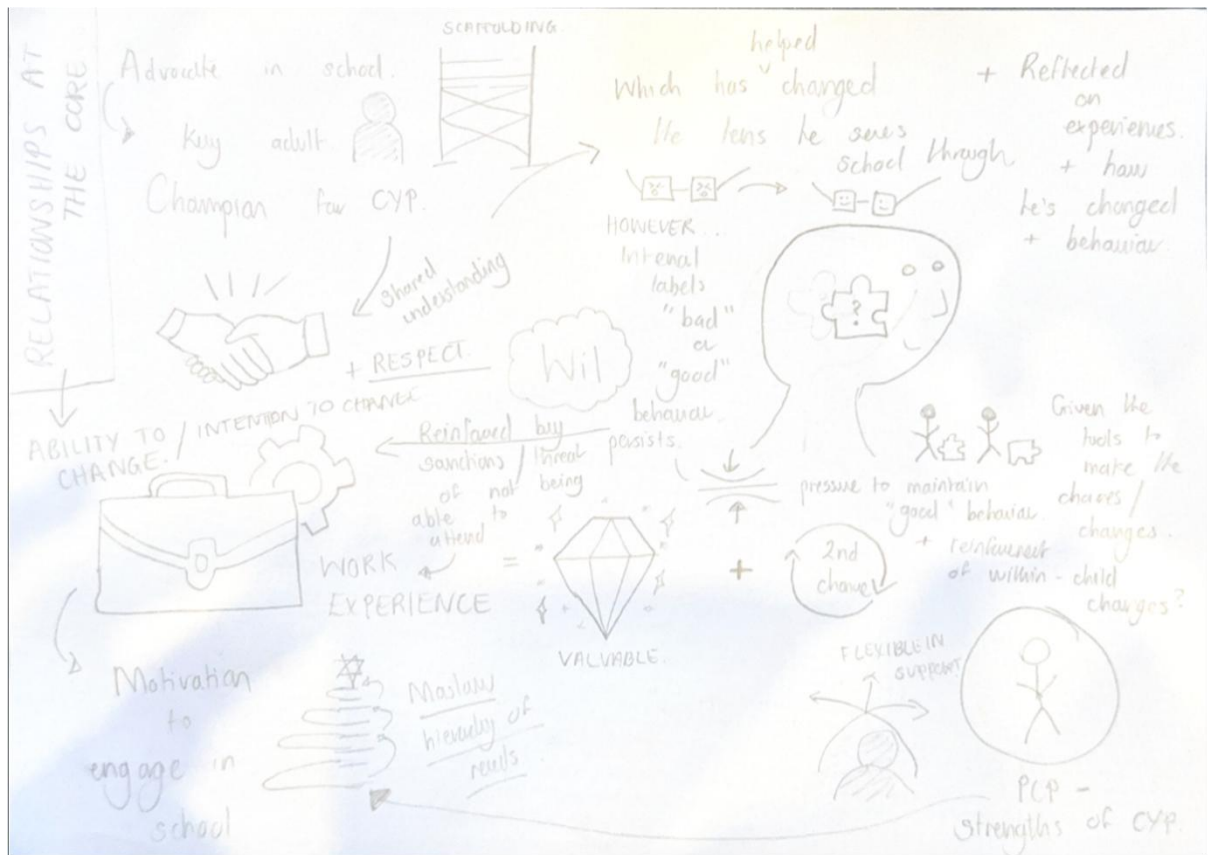
Should you have any questions relating to this research project please contact us via email:

<p>Ffion Williams Trainee Educational Psychologist</p> <p>School of Psychology Cardiff University Tower Building Park Place Cardiff CF10 3AT Email: WilliamsFE6@cardiff.ac.uk</p>	<p>Dr Gemma Ellis Research Supervisor School of Psychology Cardiff University Tower Building Park Place Cardiff CF10 3AT Email: EllisG6@cardiff.ac.uk</p>
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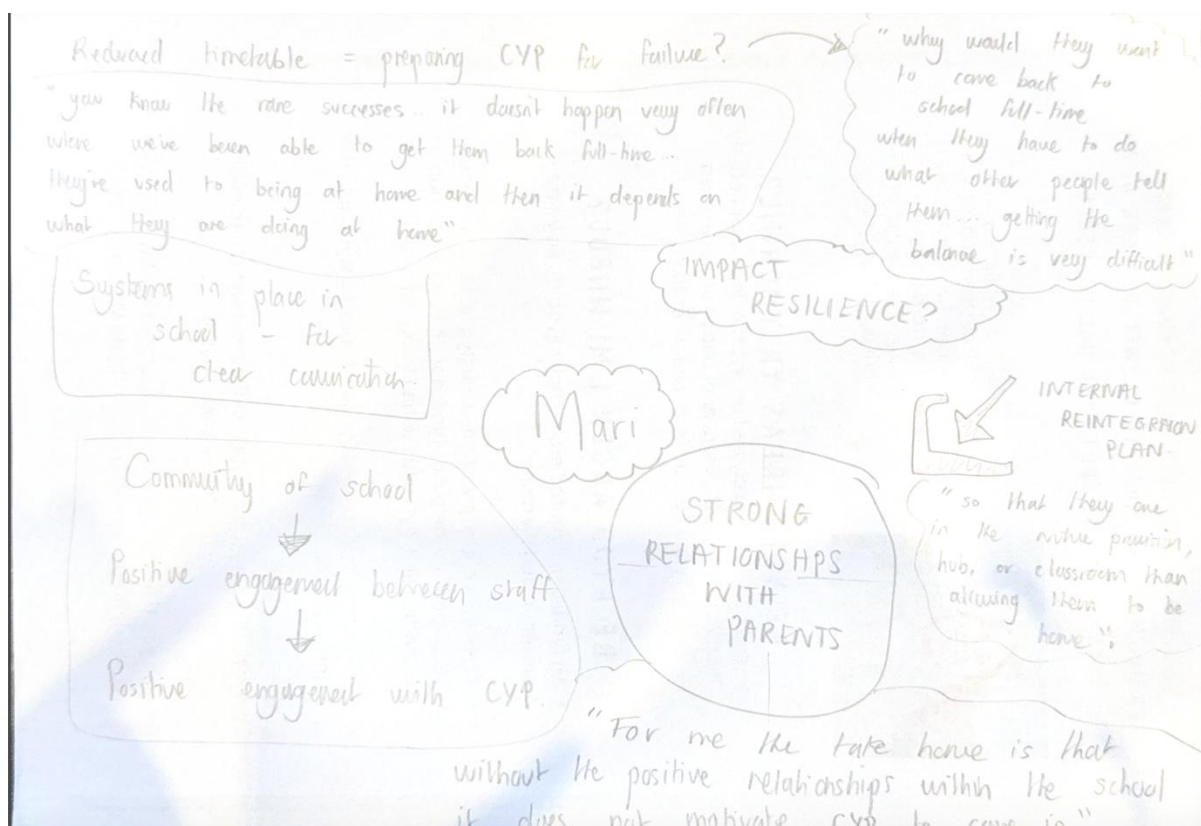
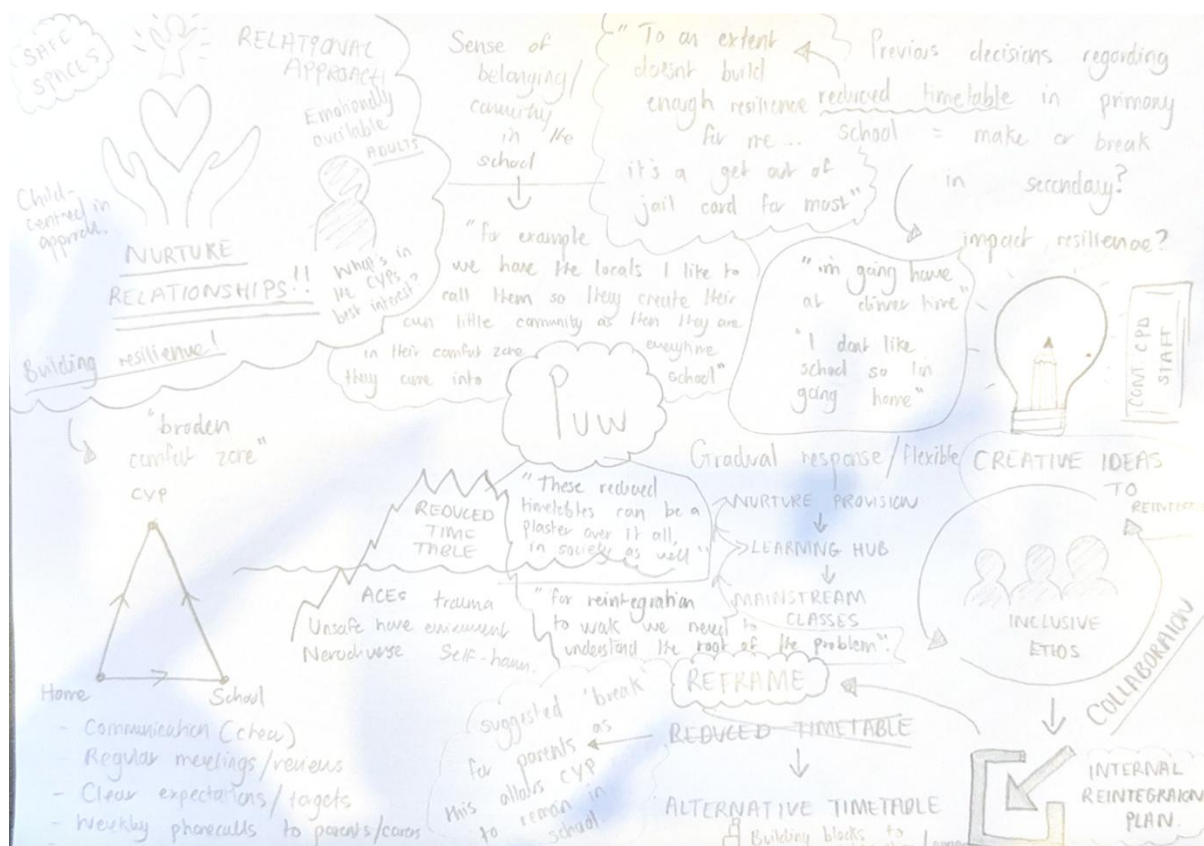
- <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/>
- <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/>

Appendix I. Familiarisation doodles CYP Doodles





School Staff Doodles



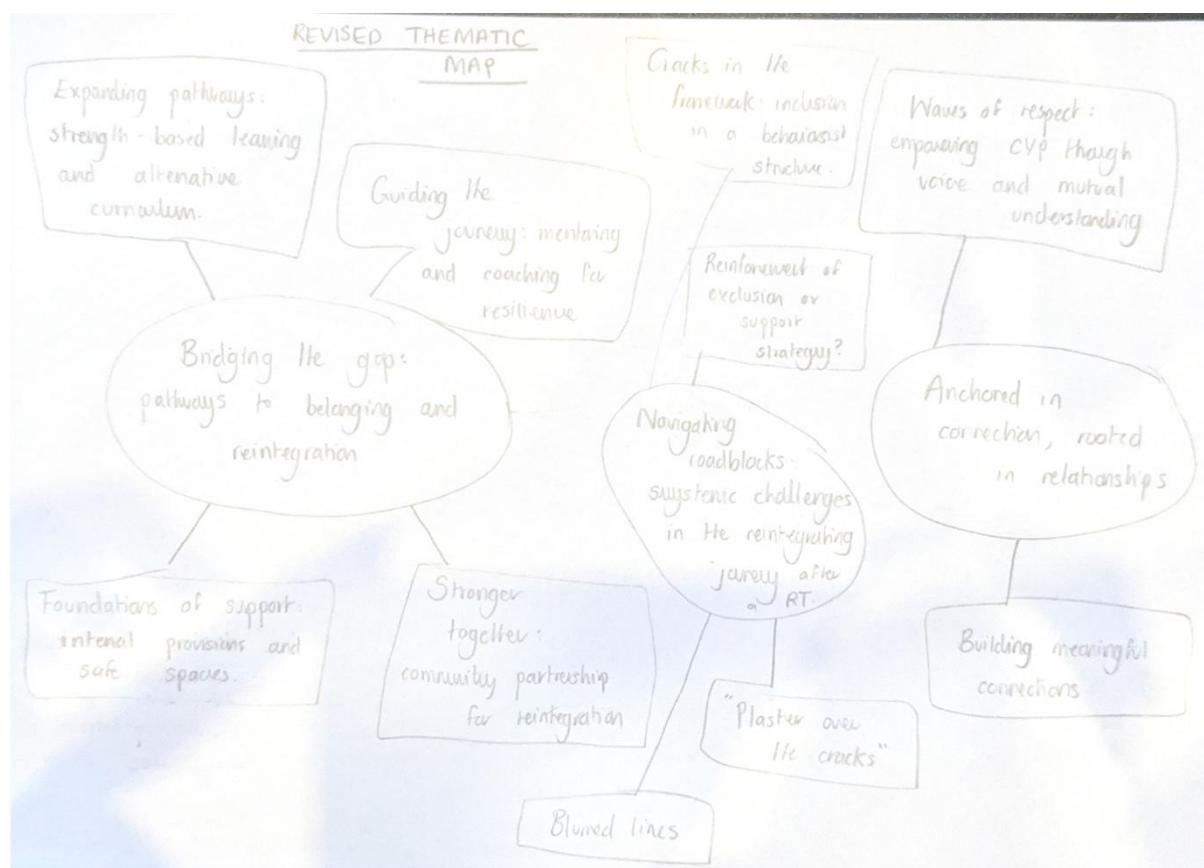
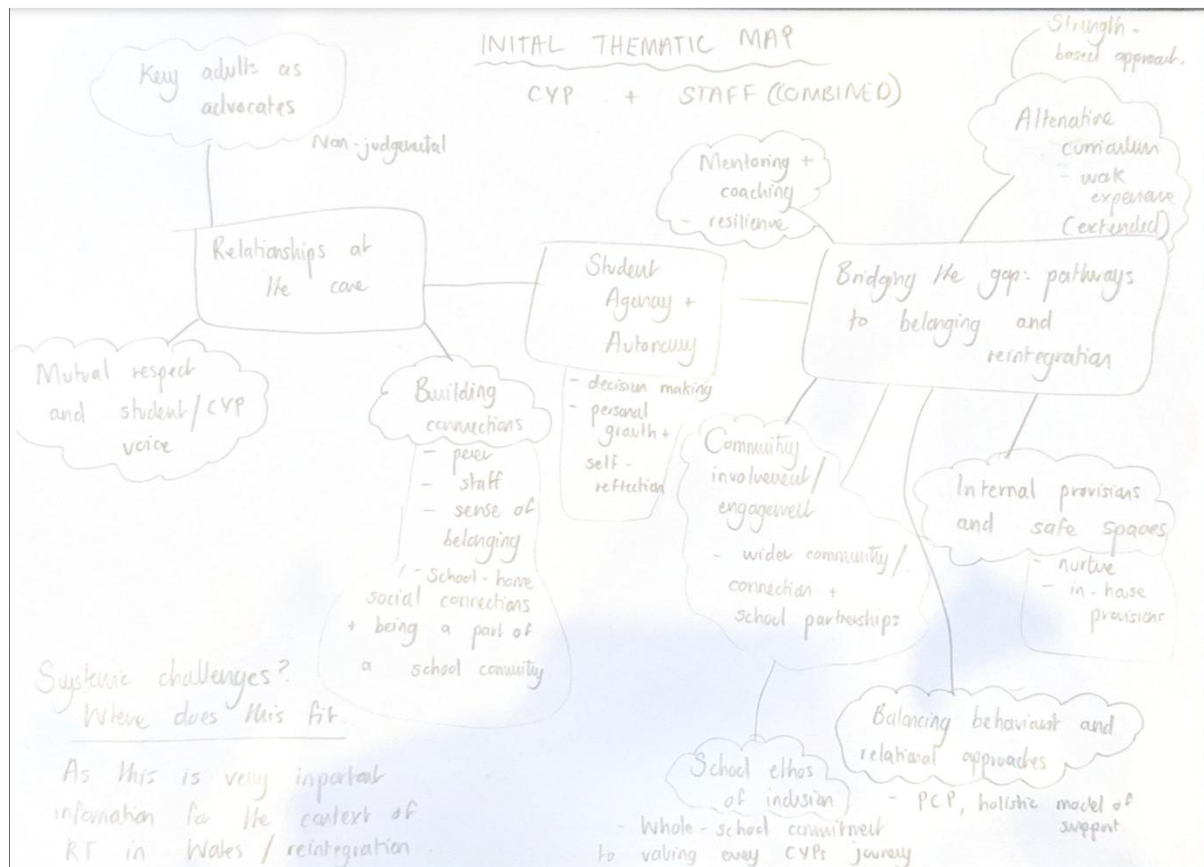
Appendix J. Overall familiarisation of the dataset

<p>RQ: What are school staff and pupils' views and experiences of a positive or meaningful reintegration into a mainstream secondary educational setting in Wales following being on a reduced timetable?</p>	
CYP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognised that the school's increased awareness of possible underlying needs led to increased levels of support by the adults around the CYP which in turn increased their engagement in school which had a positive effect on their reintegration process. Looking beyond what's in front of us (under the iceberg). • Increased levels of autonomy in the reintegration process facilitated the positive experiences. This led to mutual respect between staff and CYP. Feeling like the adults were there to work with them and felt listened to and heard. • Alternative curriculum increased motivation and engagement such as work experience. • Relationships and a sense of belonging at the core of everything – ripple effect to an increased sense of self and reflective skills (increased ability and intention to change) in addition to increased resilience. CYP reflected on how their behaviour has changed for the better based on layers of factors. • Advocate or champion in school such as a key adult was important – non-judgemental and acceptance. • Although CYP were appreciative and reflective of their experiences they continued to express feelings of injustice about their previous experiences of exclusions or placement on a reduced timetable. Reduced timetable seen as damage control and reinforcing rejection which increased feelings of resentment towards some school staff. Sometimes made it difficult to repair the ruptures in relationships and reinforced a revolving door effect and the power imbalances / frustrations the CYP felt regarding some decisions relating to previous suspensions or exclusions. • Having a safe space such as the school hub (nurture provisions) where there is access to key adults. • Supportive home environment facilitates the process of a positive reintegration
School Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal provisions support the reintegration process – however, on the path to inclusion are we excluding CYP with socio-emotional and behavioural differences? Placed into boxes of provisions? • Relationships at the core – increased sense of belonging. • Mentoring / coaching = increase resilience. • Alternative curriculum increased motivation and engagement. • Combination of behaviourist systems but relational approach by the adults 'on the ground'.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of constructs and perceptions regarding that CYP has changed and that education doesn't fit everyone's box. Contemporary education – flexible approach to support the reintegration process. Connecting school learning to the lives CYP currently lead. In addition to this construct the question of do we need to reintegrate CYP full-time after being on a reduced timetable. Considering the ethical implications of this – what is in the best interest of the CYP? In addition to how this is going to fit those that support them? • Still ambiguity around reduced timetables and how they look in schools – discrepancy between what the school staff said in terms of reduced timetables do not mean CYP are home, they are on a alternative timetable within the school. However, when asked what a reduced timetable meant to them they all noted 'being home'. Data suggests that positive reintegration experiences after being on a reduced timetable is more meaningful when the reduced timetable is 'in house' and within provision that the school already have where CYP are able to develop positive relationships with school staff and peers, developing a sense of community / belonging. • Enabling dialogue and collaborative working (transparency is key) – MDT approach with the CYP at the centre of every decision. • Value to collaborating with other schools and having a space to reflect and discuss idea of how best to support CYP. • Inclusive ethos to the school – projects that incorporate the CYPs voices in addition to their peers – upskilling pupils and sharing responsibility and respect. • School staff continued CPD to support in the reintegration process. • Reduced timetable sometimes seen as strategy to manage behaviours – used within provision maps in some schools. • Social justice framework to support pupils reintegration – ensure that CYP are safe, happy, their mental health is supported and that they are prepared for their next step when leaving the secondary school. • Strong connection to the community – duty of care for the CYP. • Reduced timetables seen "as plaster over it all, it's the same in society as well". For reintegration to be meaningful and positive it was expressed that schools need to understand the root of the problem. Reduced timetable seen as a barrier to building resilience for CYP and described as a "get out of jail card for most" to avoid situations and reinforce negative constructs of school and therefore placing reduced timetable from e.g., primary age, staff felt that this was preparing CYP for failure. • All 4 members of staff reframed reduced timetables as an alternative timetable which is seen to be provision within the school offered to CYP and as building blocks to reintegration and engagement following exclusions. • Positive relationships with CYP, parents and the wider community impacts the positive experiences of reintegration.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive ethos of school / school community = positive engagement between school staff = positive engagement with CYP. • Recognised that the school's increased awareness of possible underlying needs led to increased levels of support by the adults around the CYP which in turn increased their engagement in school which had a positive effect on their reintegration process. Looking beyond what's in front of us (under the iceberg).
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Appendix K. Development of initial themes and redefining themes



Appendix L. Example of coding

Wil

Wel ia ifi mae o wedi newid lot de, ag ers fi ddod nol i'r Ysgol dwi wedi sylwi, reit dwi ... ma sir di gneud hyn yn deg ifi felly dwi angan gneud hyn yn deg yn ol bydd so dwi di cychwyn bod yn dda, ia mae o'n helpu chdi lot	Shared respect Internal labels of 'good' and 'bad' behaviours – within-child changes only? Relationships at the core Champion within school
Do, ond dwi wedi sylweddoli mai y fwyaf hyn 'da chi'n mynd da 'chi'n maturio ag da chi'n meddwl gosh na no way onin gallu ag yn gwneud huna o oblaen de ag umm, ag ia ma jest yn iawn	Reflective skills
Wel swnin deud mod i di helpu fy hun de ... O chos dwi di sylwi, reit dwi'n blwyddyn 10 wan dwyn mynd l blwyddyn 11 dwi angan actio fy oed a roid fy mhen l lawr a gneud y gwaith	Reflecting on previous experiences and how behaviour has changed
Swnin deud, rhoid un cyfle iddyn nhw weld y byd gwaith er enghraifft adeiladu a mewn siop neu rhywbeth fel 'na de rhoi cyfle iddyn nhw de, ag dod nol i'r Ysgol yn well ... y profiad gwaith sydd wedi newid fi lot de ag bod y profiad gwaith na yn hwb ifi	Alternative curriculum valuable for positive reintegration Working with CYP strengths for engagement Opportunities increased ability and intention to change
ag bod y profiad gwaith na yn hwb ifi motivation wedyn chos oedd na adag dechrau blwyddyn 10 oedd eithaf gwahanol i rwan so jest angan bach o sgaffold i rwan de	Increased motivation from alternative curriculum influencing engagement across other areas of school Mentoring and coaching
Ia, ag jest gallu roid pen lawr ar y gwaith a canolbwyntio a jest mae'r profiad gwaith jest yn fy mhen i bob munud so deud wan mod i di bod yn ddrwg ag dwi'n cael fy hel i swyddfa dwi'n meddwl gosh be sy'n mynd l ddigwydd ifi ar ddydd Gwener rwan dwi am orfod mynd nol mewn i'r Ysgol neu be so ma jest y mindset a'r mentality genai	Sanctions / threat of not being able to attend Pressure to maintain 'good' behaviours?

Ifan

Dwi'n cael bod adra fwy, jest huna ydi o rili de ... fatha bach o slac rili, reduced timetable ia	Reduced timetable is being home
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ma fatha holiday rili ma fatha suspension rili dydi ond ddim chwaith, ti'n cael mynd adra ag gneud be bynnag ti rili isho neud	Reduced timetable = Reduced demands and reduced resilience?
Wel jest gwybod bofi yn, oni mega digwilydd a bob dim obalen doeddwn ag doedd 'na neb isho fi yma so ... (pause) chos odd ysgol yn deud sa raid ifi symud Ysgol a bob dim ag onin meddwl o nice ag wedyn onin cal fy susbendio ohyd ag doeddwn i byth yma beisicli ag neshi gal fy rhoi ar reduced timetable	Reduced timetable as damage control for exclusions Rupture and repair of relationships with school Plaster over the cracks Reduced timetable seen as last chance Feelings of rejection and resentment for previous decisions
Dwin meddwl mod i di tyfu fyny ag sylwi ma y pethau onin gneud oblaen yn stupid rili ... Tbo, sgenani ddim rili lot ar ol yn ysgol so jest yn trio get the most ti gallu neud rili chos dani efo ond tan rha ag fyddwn ni wedi gorffan wedyn byddan ... dwi'n meddwl bod ni wedi maturio mwy wan ti'n sylwi fod pethau oedd a chdi'n neud oblaen yn stiwpud rili ag ti'n dy flwyddyn ola so might as well make the most of it i be ti isho neud	Reflective skills Reflecting on previous experiences and how behaviour has changed End in sight of school journey Increased self-awareness
Ma hyn jest amdanafi rili, fatha oblaen ... dwi efo ADHD iawn ag oblaen doedd Ysgol ddim yn gwybod huna so mae nhw wedi ffigro allan bo fi efo jest diwadd blwyddyn diwethaf ag wan dwi'n cael bach o help a slac towards ysgol ag ma jest yn helpu bach yndi (pause) bach o breathing space rili	School's increased awareness of needs Looking beyond the tip of the iceberg
Sydd wedi helpu? Lead Inclusion a Head of Year ... Jest di helpu ni drwy bob dim ... Ma (lead inclusion) sortio bob dim rili yndi Os ti ohyd eisiau rhywun I siarad efo mae nhw ohyd yna i chdi, neith nhw byth pwsio chdi o na ag ma huna di helpu fo gneud petha'n hapusach yn ysgol ... neith nhw bob tro helpu a gwrando ... wel trio eniwe ag ma hunan mynd yn bell ifi de	Key adults in school Relationships at the core Champion within school Shared respect Feeling heard and listened to
Pen lawr a cario ymlaen ddim roid fyny de ag os ti angen help jest gofyn ... mae na bob tro help os ti'n gofyn jest fatha (lead inclusion) de ... Mae (lead inclusion) di mega pwsio ni yn ein blaen ... ma bob ysgol angen at least un person fatha (lead inclusion) ... mae o'n gneud o way gwell ...	Key adults in school Relationships at the core Champion within school Shared respect PACE approach to support Spending time investing in relationships works in the long run

Neith o pwsio chdi i'r limit ag mae o'n energised bob tro ag ti'n cael laff efo fo ag mae o'n dallt chdi ... Peth ydi efo (lead inclusion) mae o'n anodd disgrifio be ydi o ... mae o jest yn fo ... mae o'n gallu cal laff ond gallu bod yn siriys so jest bodon cal y balance na ... jest bod o'n dangos bod o'n careio amdanani	Increased levels of engagement Increased levels of belonging Far reaching impact of one key adult
C met arall ni ... To be fair, fo sy'n sortio ni allan pan da ni di neud wbath yn rong de ... mae o fatha Dad i ni yn ysgol, mae jest yn deuthani i gallio beisicli ... Mae C isho i ni fod yma yn yr ysgol	Peer group as additional support and motivation Keeping them 'in line'
Wel dim roid fi yn yr uned i ddechrau efoi am wythnos yn syth ar ol fi ddod nol ... jest isolation ar ben fy hun mewn room ... tha dwi'n dod nol ir Ysgol fatha iawn, dechrau newydd wan ag ti'n uned am wythnos ... mynadd efo huna, oedd o'n gneud fi jest isho mynd adra eto ag ddim dod nol ... ond dwi heb gal fy susbendio ers ages wan ddo sy'n dda	Sense of injustice about previous experiences Self-awareness of changes in behaviour
ddim roid fyny de ag os ti angen help jest gofyn ...	Increased resilience Growth mindsets
dyna be ma mam fi di bod yn deuthafi jest dos i Ysgol ag trio gora chdi ag trio cal graddau chdi ag geidi fynd o na wedyn	Shared narrative between home and school – feeds into lens of CYP. Team around the child to support reintegration

Huw

Mae o wedi bod yn well ... Lot llai o suspensions	Positive experience
Chos doeddwn ni ddim yn byhafio, ag oni jest yn gneud pethau stiwpud ... ag wedyn ddoth (cymhorthydd hwb) ddod yma ag helpu fi byhafio umm ... jest oblaen onin cael fy dareio i neud petha ag oni jest yn neudo ond ers fi fod fwy yn yr hwb wan ers dod nol o redcued timetable fi dwim efo run criw so meddwl bod huna di helpu hefyd	Reflective skills Reflecting on previous experiences and how behaviour has changed Increased self-awareness Importance of safe spaces in school Safe spaces in school as protective factor Peer group pressures Previously trying to find / look for a sense of belonging
Dwi wedi sylwi dy fod di actyli angen ysgol i neud pethau yn bywyd chdi chos os ti ddim yn mynd i'r Ysgol sgentim education ag ti angen huna i gal jobs	Narrative feeds into lens of CYP.

<p>Nain ... Jest acceptio pwy oeddwn i, ag dim jest gweiddi arnafi pan onin gneud pethau yn rong, oddi jest yn dallt fi</p>	<p>Supportive home environment Support by adults at home as protective factor Emotionally available adult Relationships at the core of everything</p>
<p>Fyswn i di cael llwyth llai o suspensions probably ag os sa'r pennaeth yn gwrando a jest cael reduced timetable yn lle suspendio fi bob munud ag oedd cael fy suspendio ohyd jest yn teimlo'n rong, os fysa (pennaeth) di gwrando a gneud be oedd o fod I wneud ... swni jest di gneud lot mwy yn ysgol fyd</p> <p>Oni jest yn gwybod na hwn odd last chance fi i gario ymlaen efo education – dwi'n cael treulio lot o amser fi yn yr hwb ag ma di safio a newid fi yn gyfan gwbl. Dwi heb gael fy suspendio ers mis cyfan wan. Sa well genafi os sa fo di roid fi ar reduced timetable yn gynt ifi deimlo tha bofin gneud wbath efo bywyd fi. Oedd teachers yn targetio fi chos oddon hawdd gan bofin cael fy labelio fel hogyn drwg. Doedd y headteacher ddim even gwrando arnafi pan oedd na wbath jest deuthafi fynd adra, oedd yn gneud fi'n flin ag oedd o'n gneud petha'n anodd wedyn pan onin dod nol i Ysgol ... oni jest di cael llond bol o weld front door fi bob tro ar ol cael susbendio ...</p>	<p>Reduced timetable seen as last chance Importance of safe spaces in school Sense of injustice about previous experiences of exclusion Feelings of rejection and resentment for previous decisions Self-fulfilling prophecy based on school staff perceptions and behaviours Negative feedback loops Reduced timetable as damage control of exclusions Revolving door Power imbalance / frustrations</p>
<p>Petha efo (cymhorthydd yr hwb) ... Gneud lot o gwaith lles ag gwaith preparing for an interview, ag stwff i coleg chos meddwl am ar ol gadal ysgol. Neu os ma 'na digwyddiadau di bod, gneud gwaith ar heinia wedyn</p>	<p>Time in with a key adult Champion / advocate at school Mentoring or coaching Supporting wellbeing and prospects Relationships at the core of everything</p>
<p><i>Oes yna unrhyw beth yn dod i dy feddwl di pan ti'n meddwl am redcued timetables rwan?</i></p> <p>Wel positif ... doeddwn I ddim yn gallu copeio yn yr ysgol ag wan ma petha di gwella o ran behaviour fi ag teimlo tha bofi wedi tyfu fyny lot ... dwim yn gwybod be di'r gair ... umm ... (pause) ... be ti'n galw fo ... realisation</p>	<p>Increased self-awareness</p>

Martha

Wel swni jest yn deud y respect ia, os dinwn roid o ifi dwi'n roid o nol ... fatha os dinw jest yn mynd I weiddi arnafi a petha dwi ddim am jest aros yna ag bod yn neis nol na	Mutual respect
O ella hefyd efo'r help chos mae genai dyslecsia ia ag doeddwn I ddim yn cael lot o help obalen felly gan bofi wan di gofyn amdanafo dwi'n cael 1:1 efo teachers I helpu fi ddarllen aballu	Schools increased awareness of needs Ripple effect of increased awareness of needs for support and engagement
O yndi defo, os di mets fi ddim yna dwi fatha lost cat ... Aye dwi'n dibynnu dipyn ar mets fi de ... Wel swni deud jest roid fwy o confidence ifi ia chos pan dinw ddim yna dwi tha ah be dwi fod I neud rwan ... wedyn os mae nhw efo fi fatha deud wan mae nhw'n deud bod nhw'n mynd I lessons dwi fatha o iawn nai jest dod efo chi cause dwim yn gorfod gneud y decision na I gyd fy hun wedyn na ... fatha os dinw misho mynd I lesson ag dwi yn nai jest gadal nhw ond otherwise nai jest bod efo nhw	Friendship as crutch in school Increased sense of belonging Increased sense of self / confidence
Oce, wel blwyddyn yn ol doeddwn i ddim yn yr ysgol i hun, oni fatha (inclusion hub) ag oddon rili boring so ag ella rwan chos dwim hyna bored ella ag dim gymaint ar mind fi dwi'n gallu gneud fwy o betha so ella dyna pam chos dwi ddim ... dydi Martha ddim yn dda pan main bored ... ella dyna pam	Underlying needs Feelings of injustice about previous experiences Lack of connection / belonging to school Previously no autonomy
dwi jest wedyn yn mynd i (ystafell lles) a gneud y gwaith yn fana ... mae cael oedolyn yn helpu fi jest yn gneud gymaint o wahaniaeth chos deud wan oni ddim efo aelod o staff ag swnin mynd yn flin swni jest yn cerddad ona ne wbath ... rwan mae nhw'n gallu helpu a explainio gwaith ifi	Key adults supporting
<i>Ti'n cofio pam gesdi dy roi ar redcued timetable?</i> Um ... chos oddanw methu handlo fi pan oedd moods oni yn dwi'n meddwl	Reduced timetable perceived as strategy to manage behaviour

Appendix M. Examples of papers excluded from the systematic review (at the point of screening)

Database search	Reference	Reason(s) for exclusion from literature review
Scopus	Kaip D, Blackwood N, Kew-Simpson S, Wickersham A, Harvey J, Dickson H (2024) Educator perceptions of the complex needs of young people in Pupil Referral Units: An exploratory qualitative analysis. PLoS ONE 19(9): e0310633. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0310633	The research explored perceptions of professionals working within Pupil Referral Units regarding the complex needs of some CYP attending PRUs. The research did not refer to reintegration nor reduced timetables.
APA PsychInfo Ovid	Maher, A.J., Quarmby, T., Hooper, O., Wells, V. & Slavin, L. (2024). Physical education in alternative provision schools: A case of spatial (in)justice? <i>British Educational Research Journal</i> , 00, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.4064	The research does mention how physical education could be a facilitator during the process of a CYP reintegrating to a mainstream setting. However, the main aim of the research involved gathering views regarding the use of physical education within alternative provisions only.
APA PsychInfo Ovid	Brinkley, A. J., Sherar, L. B., & Kinnafield, F. E. (2022). A sports-based intervention for pupils excluded from mainstream education: A	The research aim included evaluating a sports intervention within Pupil Referral Units. No mention

	<p>systems approach to intervention acceptability and feasibility. <i>Psychology of Sport and Exercise</i>, 61, 102217.</p> <p>Chicago</p>	<p>of reintegration to a mainstream setting nor reduced timetables.</p>
APA PsychInfo Ovid	<p>Kljakovic, M., & Kelly, A. (2019). Working with school-refusing young people in Tower Hamlets, London. <i>Clinical child psychology and psychiatry</i>, 24(4), 921-933.</p>	<p>Research discusses reintegration in relation to Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance.</p>

