

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

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

**(Volume 2 – Appendices)**

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

Faculty of Arts, Creative Industries and Education,

University of the West of England, Bristol

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## A1: Letter sent to head teachers

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

Address:

Email: [alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk)

Tel:

[DATE]

Dear Head teacher,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,

Alison Wren  
PHD student, University of the West of England

## **A2: Information sheet for parents (pilot study)**

### Information sheet for parents (pilot study)

#### *What is a pilot study?*

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

#### *How is the pilot study different to the main study?*

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

#### *Are there any increased risks related to taking part in a pilot study?*

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

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

Alison Wren

Address: **UWE Graduate School**, Room 3E37, University of the West of England, Coldharbour Lane, Frenchay, Bristol, BS16 1QY

Email: [alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk)

Phone:




























Date: 01/02/14

### A3: Assent information (pilot study)

Pupil name:

Date:

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

<p>Alison has told me what the project is about</p> 	<p>I understand that I can choose if I want to take part</p> 	<p>I understand that I will be taking photographs in school and that I can have a copy if I want.</p> 
 	 	 
<p>I understand that I will be drawing some pictures and that I can have a copy if I want.</p> 	<p>I know that my voice will be recorded today so that Alison can remember what I have said. I can listen to my voice on the recorder if I want.</p> 	<p>I know that if I have any more questions I can ask.</p> 
 	 	 
<p>I understand that we can stop at any time if I want.</p> 	<p>I am happy to take part in the project.</p> 	<p>I am happy for my drawings and photographs to be used in reports in the future.</p> 
 	 	 

Signed by pupil: .....

Signed by parent: .....

#### **A4: Information sheet for parents**

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

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

##### *What is the purpose of the project?*

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

##### *Why has your child been chosen?*

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

##### *Does your child have to take part?*

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

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

If you sign the consent form, then I will arrange a date to come in to school to observe your child. The observation will involve me being in the classroom / playground watching your child's

moment-by-moment interactions with their friends for one school week. My observation will be subtle and I will maintain a distance from your child (so as not to single them out). School staff will be briefed to make me aware if they feel the observation is causing any stress or changes in behaviour for your child.

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

*What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?*

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

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

*What if something goes wrong?*

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

Phone: 01173284186

Email: [Jane.AndrewsEDU@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Jane.AndrewsEDU@uwe.ac.uk)

*Will your taking part in this study be kept confidential?*

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

*What will happen to the results of the research project?*

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

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

*Who is organising / funding the project?*

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

*Contact details for further information*

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

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

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

Date: 04/06/14



## A5: Parental consent form

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

Home address:

Email: alison.mcwhirter@live.uwe.ac.uk

Tel:

[DATE]

Dear Parent/Carer,

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

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

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

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

### **STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

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

Allow my child to be observed	
Take part in a confidential, tape recorded interview with my child	
Allow photographs taken by / drawings completed by my child to be included in the study	

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

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

Date .....

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

Yours sincerely,

Alison Wren  
PHD student, University of the West of England

## B1: Observation Schedule

Pupil ID:	School ID:	Date:	Day: 1 2 3 4 5	Lesson: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Subject:			Linked to:	

	Time interval	Who interacting with?						Influence on interactions					Classroom info		Notes
		Adult - Target	Target - Adult	Peer - Target	Target - Peer	No interaction	Bin	ID	Starts	Ends	Positive support	Negative support	Location	Adult present	
<b>Location</b>	1														
1 In class	2														
2 Out of class [ID?]	3														
	4														
	5														
	6														
	7														
	8														
	9														
	10														
	11														
	12														
	13														
	14														
	15														
	16														
<b>Curriculum focus</b>	17														
1 Literacy	18														
2 Numeracy	19														
3 Science	20														
4 Humanities	21														
5 Art/ICT	22														
6 Music/Drama	23														
7 PE	24														
8 PSHE	25														
9 Other	26														
10 Non-curriculum	27														
	28														
	29														
	30														
	31														
	32														
	33														
	34														
	35														
<b>Notes</b>	36														
	37														
	38														
	39														
	40														
	41														
	42														
	43														
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	49														
	50														
	51														
	52														
	53														
	54														
	55														

Pupil ID:	School ID:	Date:	Day: 1 2 3 4 5	Lesson: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Subject:			Linked to:	

	Time interval	Who interacting with?						Influence on interactions					Classroom info		Notes
		Adult - Target	Target - Adult	Peer - Target	Target - Peer	No interaction	Bin	ID	Starts	Ends	Positive support	Negative support	Location	Adult present	
<b>Location</b>	60														
1 In class	61														
2 Out of class (ID?)	62														
	63														
	64														
	65														
	66														
	67														
	68														
	69														
	70														
	71														
	72														
	73														
	74														
	75														
<b>Curriculum focus</b>	76														
1 Literacy	77														
2 Numeracy	78														
3 Science	79														
4 Humanities	80														
5 Art/ICT	81														
6 Music/Drama	82														
7 PE	83														
8 PSHE	84														
9 Other	85														
10 Non-curriculum	86														
	87														
	88														
	89														
	90														
	91														
	93														
	94														
	95														
	96														
	97														
	98														
	99														
<b>Additional Notes</b>															

## **B2: Criteria for coding responses**

### **Criteria for coding responses – systematic observation schedule**

#### **General information**

Pupil ID: Pupil pseudonym

School ID: e.g. S1

Date

Day and lesson noted by circling the appropriate number

Subject: Focus of lesson being taught. 'Play' in unstructured times.

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

#### **Main schedule**

##### Who interacting with?

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

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

##### *Adult – Target*

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

##### *Target – Adult*

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

##### *Peer – Target*

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

##### *Target – Peer*

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

*No interaction*

This box should be ticked if no interaction occurs during the observation interval. This should be coded even if the pupil is sat with an adult or peer when no specific interaction occurs.

*Bin*

This box should be ticked if the focus of the interaction is unclear based on the above criteria. This can also be used if the researcher has no clear line of vision or the pupil leaves the classroom.

**Impact on interactions**

These five columns relate to direct TA influence on the peer interactions of target pupils.

*ID*

This is where the Adult ID of the TA observed as influencing an interaction is recorded.

*Starts*

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

*Ends*

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

*Positive support*

This box should be ticked if the target pupil is involved in an interaction with a peer and the TA offers positive support for the interaction e.g. praising the pupil for sharing or rewarding the pupil for working well with a peer.

*Negative support*

This box should be ticked if the target pupil is involved in an interaction with a peer and the TA offers negative support for the interaction. This is not as final as ending an

interaction (see above) but is rather just a message of disapproval related to the interaction e.g. phrases such as “should we be talking now?”

### **Classroom information**

#### *Location*

This box records whether the pupil is inside or outside of the school building at the time of observation.

1 = inside the school building (including rooms other than the main classroom)

2 = outside of the school building

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

#### **Adult present**

This box is codes whether an adult was within a 1 metre radius of the pupil during the observation interval. The adult ID should be coded in the box.

### B3: Example of observation notes

Pupil ID: <u>Olivia</u>	School ID: <u>S1</u>	Date: <u>03/07/12</u>	Day: <u>12345</u>	Lesson: <u>12345678910</u>
Subject: <u>Literacy</u>	Linked to:			

	Time interval	Who interacting with?						Influence on interactions					Classroom info		Notes
		Adult - Target	Target - Adult	Peer - Target	Target - Peer	No interaction	Bin	ID	Starts	Ends	Positive support	Negative support	Location	Adult present	
Location	60	B												A	
	61	A												A	
1 In class	62	A												A	
2 Out of class (ID?)	63	A												A	
TA taking separate lowest attaining group (hiccups)	64	A												A	
	65					✓								A	TA watching her
	66					✓								A	
	67	A												A	
	68			✓										A	
	69							A			✓			A	
	70	A												A	
	71	A												A	
	72					✓								A	
	73					✓								A	
Curriculum focus	74					✓								A	
	75					✓								A	
	76					✓								A	
	77	A					✓							A	
	78	A						A	✓					A	
	79			✓										A	"Olivia talk to."
	80	A												A	
	81	A						A	on		✓			A	
	82														
	83														
Drawing Symbols.	84														
	85														
	86														
	87														
	88														
	89														
	90														
	91														
	92														
	93														
Partner talk ↓ Working with A	94														
	95														
	96														
	97														
	98														
	99														
	100														
	101														
	102														
	103														
	104														
Additional Notes															
* reminded peer to say thank you when peer found something for her															

#### B4: Extract from research journal

16/06/14

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

Today he was very fidgety and seemed to be struggling to stay on task. His TAs both seemed to be much harder on him than I've seen before - and he seemed to feel that because he was quieter in the afternoon sessions than I've seen him.



## **B5: Interview schedule (TAs)**

### **TA information**

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




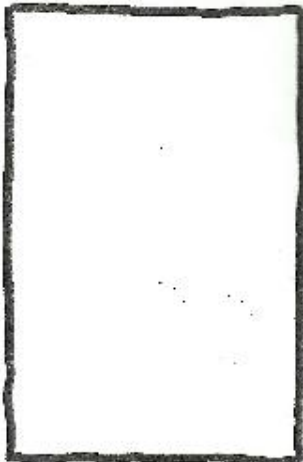



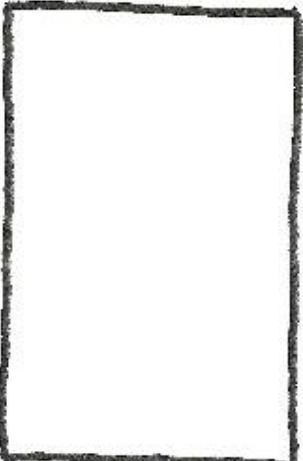
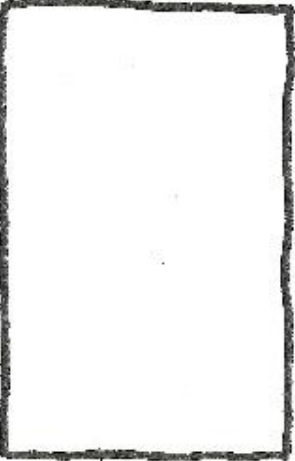


**How long have you worked at the school?**

**How long have you worked with [pupil name]?**

**How would you describe your main role in the support of [pupil name]?**

## B6: Activity Sheet

Photography task

	<div data-bbox="715 338 1114 517"> _____ _____ _____ _____</div> <div data-bbox="715 595 1114 775"> _____ _____ _____ _____</div>	
	<div data-bbox="715 842 1114 1021"> _____ _____ _____ _____</div> <div data-bbox="715 1099 1114 1279"> _____ _____ _____ _____</div>	
	<div data-bbox="715 1335 1114 1514"> _____ _____ _____ _____</div>	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My Friends

My Helper

## **B7: Assent information for pupils**

### **Assent Information for pupils**

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

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

At the end of the interview:

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

## **B8: Interview schedule (pupils)**

### Interview schedule

(after assent discussion)

#### **Introduction to tour**

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

I have a camera so we can take some photos.

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Questions to be asked while child is drawing:**

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

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

Can you tell me about some of the children that you play with in school?

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

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

Did you play with anyone at playtime today?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **B9: Interview schedule for pupils (adapted for Gopal)**

Amendments / additions highlighted in red

### Interview schedule

(after assent discussion)

#### **Introduction to tour**

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

I have a camera so we can take some photos.

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Questions to be asked while child is drawing:**

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

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

Can you tell me about some of the children that you play with in school?

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

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

Did you play with anyone at playtime today?

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

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

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

What do you like to do during choosing time?

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

**B10: TA consent form**  
**Consent form for Teaching Assistants**

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

Home address:

Email: alison.mcwhirter@live.uwe.ac.uk

Tel:

[DATE]

Dear [NAME],

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

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

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

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

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

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

Print name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

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

Yours sincerely,

Alison Wren  
PHD student, University of the West of England

## **C1: Case study frame**

### **Case Study Frame**

#### Pupil information

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

#### School information

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

#### School Experience

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

#### Classroom

*Allocated seat? Carpet space? Any other classroom info*

#### Teaching Assistants

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

#### Pupil perception of TA role

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

#### Peer interactions

##### Interactions

*Levels of interaction from systematic observations*

#### In the classroom

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

### At playtime

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

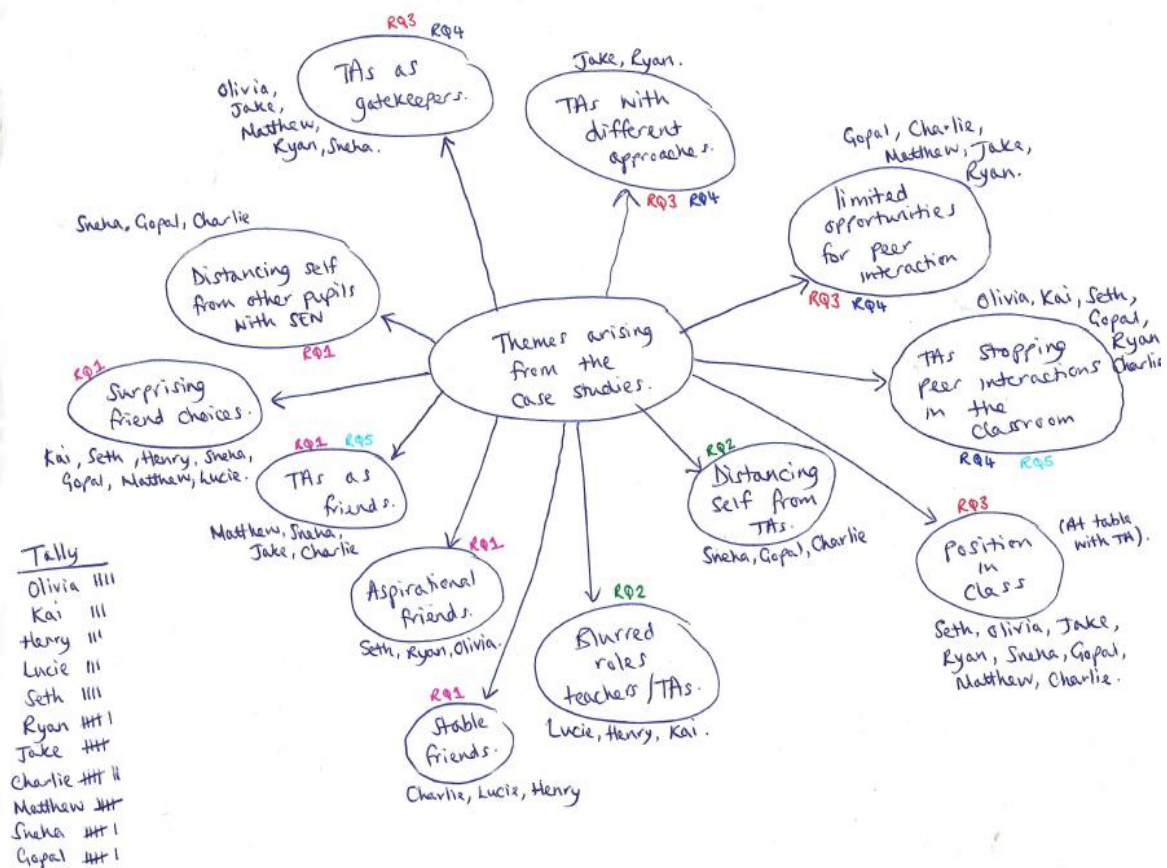
### Favourite people / friends

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

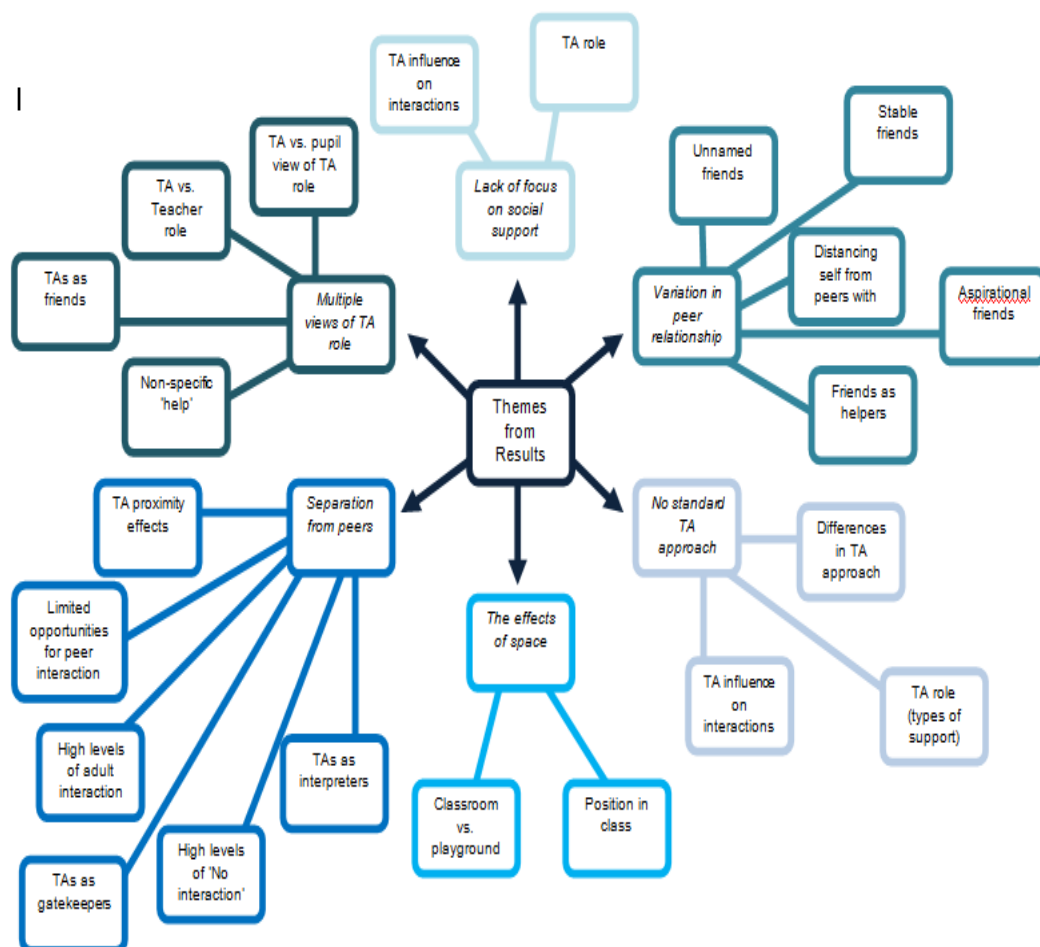
### TA influence on interactions

*Figures linked to TA influence on interaction and details from observation notes. TA proximity levels.*

## C2: Mind map of themes arising from case-by-case analysis



### C3: Mind map of themes arising from results



**D: Case studies**

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

## Case Study - Olivia

### 1 Pupil background

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

12

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

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

25

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



32

33 School Information

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

42

43 School experience

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

49

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

54

55 94.4% of all occasions when an adult was present it was a TA rather than a teacher  
56 and on 89% of all occasions it was Olivia's allocated TA Mrs A. I recorded in my  
57 observation notes feeling that the teachers had passed over responsibility of Olivia's  
58 schooling to Mrs A as it felt as though they made very little contact with Olivia at any  
59 point. In class Olivia looked to Mrs A for tasks she should be doing or for help with  
60 work. The only time I saw Olivia approach a teacher (Mrs AB) was to show her  
61 completed work at the end of a lesson, and this was on Mrs A's instruction.

62

63 Classroom

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

72

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

77

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

80

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

86

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

90

#### 91 Teaching Assistants

92 Olivia has allocated TA support from Mrs A for 25 hours a week (9am – 2.30pm each  
93 day), which includes lunchtimes and breaktimes. Mrs A has been Olivia's allocated TA  
94 since she started at the school in reception. She has worked at the school for more  
95 than five years, across all key stages. She has no formal qualifications linked to

96 educational support, but says she has received ongoing training while working at the  
97 school.

98

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

103

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

108

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

112

### 113 Pupil perceptions of TA role

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

118

119 I asked Olivia how Mrs A helps her in school.

120 *Olivia: She does writing*

121 *Me: She helps you with your writing?*

122 *Olivia: Yes*

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

124 *Olivia: Um.... she reads words*

125 *Me: She reads with you*

126           *Olivia: Just me*

127

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

137

138   I asked Olivia what Mrs A does in the playground and she said *"walks around"*.

139           *Me: Does Mrs A help you in the playground?*

140           *Olivia: No. Not me.*

141           *Me: Do you see her in the playground?*

142           *Olivia: No. in class.*

143

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

148

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

150

## 151   Peer interactions

### 152   Interactions

153   Based on the systematic observation results, Olivia spent 76.3% of her time in school  
154   interacting with adults, the highest of any pupil in the sample (average 58.4%). This  
155   despite not having the highest levels of adult proximity in the sample (63.6%). She

156 spent just 14.1% of her time interacting with peers, much lower than the average for  
157 target pupils (21%) and the third lowest result amongst the sample.

158

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

161

#### 162 In the classroom

163 There were relatively few opportunities for Olivia to interact with peers in class, as she  
164 spent the vast majority of her time in interactions with adults (71.1% of all her time in  
165 class). Of these adult interactions, a far higher number were with TAs than with  
166 teachers (61.2% compared to 36.5%) and most of the TA interactions were with Mrs A  
167 (47.3% of all adult interactions).

168

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

177

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

184

#### 185 At playtime

186 Olivia spent 54.2% of her time in the playground interacting with peers and just 22.9%  
187 interacting with adults.

188

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

196

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

201

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

207

208 One lunch break I heard a girl from Olivia's class ask Mrs A, "*Does Olivia want to play*  
209 *with me?*" Mrs A responded that the girl should ask Olivia. When approached, Olivia  
210 happily played with the girl (a chasing game).

211

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

214

#### 215 Favourite people / friends

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

220 *Me: Do you like to play with Alexa?*

221 *Olivia: She plays with Pearl*

222 *Me: Do you play with them?*

223 *Olivia: They play together*

224 *Me: When do you play with Alexa?*

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

226

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

232

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

234 *Olivia: I play with Wayne*

235 *Me: Is Wayne a boy in school?*

236 *Olivia: No, my cousin.*

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

238 *Me: Ok. When do you play with Wayne?*

239 *Olivia: Sometimes when I see him*

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

242 *Olivia: I like Wayne.*

243

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

248

249

250 TA influence on interactions

251 29 occasions were recorded where a TA influenced an interaction between Olivia and a  
252 peer. This is far higher than for any other pupil, in part because I observed for longer at  
253 Olivia's school (five days rather than four) but also because Mrs A was very proactive  
254 about both keeping Olivia on task in class and about praising her when she did  
255 manage a successful interaction with a peer. All 29 occasions observed were Mrs A

256

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

262

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

268

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



## Jake – Case Study

### 1 Pupil information

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

8

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

16

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

25

26 These needs impact on Jake's interactions with peers in multiple ways. Peers may not  
27 understand Jake's complex behaviour (for example, he often throws tantrums) or know  
28 how to play safely with him. Alongside this, he struggles to invite other pupils to play or  
29 work with him and may not understand or be able to respond to their invitations if  
30 offered. His limited independence also means he is rarely alone.

31

32 In the statement, adapted provision is suggested in the form of a speech and language  
33 therapy programme based around improving his understanding of how to use language  
34 appropriately in both learning and social settings. This was in place and active during  
35 observations. Differentiation of curriculum and support to improve his concentration  
36 skills are also suggested and were seen being implemented. Finally, a small group  
37 programme designed to develop his social skills is also suggested. This support was  
38 not in place during observations, although he has had previous social skills support in  
39 nursery.

#### 40 School Information

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

46

#### 47 School Experience

48 All of Jake's lessons take place in a mixed ability Year One class. The classes are  
49 taught by a main class teacher, Mrs A1, aside from her PPA time (which is covered by  
50 a TA Mrs A2) and some PE lessons (which are taken by an external agency). Despite  
51 being in his main class for the majority of the week, Jake rarely takes part in whole  
52 class activities, working instead on differentiated tasks or interventions with his TAs  
53 (66.4% of the time). Jake has full time TA support including break and lunchtimes.

54

55 Looking at his observation results, Jake spent 67.20% of his time with an adult  
56 proximal (within approximately a one metre radius of him). Jake spent a much higher  
57 proportion of time with an adult proximal in class (80%) than he did in the playground  
58 (17.17%). In class, the longest stretch he spent unsupported was three minutes in a  
59 literacy lesson.

60

61 Of the time spent with an adult present, 91.9% was with one of his main TAs. I noted in  
62 my research diaries that they only left his side when he was set up with a task on a  
63 computer (he gets this as a reward for working well). The affect of such a high level of  
64 TA proximity is discussed in later in the case study.

65

66 Classroom

67 Pupils have allocated seats in Jake's classroom, although they move for literacy  
68 lessons as they are grouped by ability. Jake sits at the back of the classroom in the  
69 same seat for all lessons. He sits at a four seat table, next to his TA and opposite two  
70 low attaining peers. In the centre of his table is a box full of resources used to support  
71 Jake, but this also blocks his view of the other pupils at his table as it is piled very high.  
72 There is a space behind Jake in which he is allowed to walk if he needs to.

73

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

77

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

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

86

87 Teaching Assistants

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

93

94 Mrs B supports Jake in the mornings and at break time. She had worked at the school  
95 for five years. She has no formal qualifications linked to educational support, although  
96 she previously worked in a nursery setting and was trained for this.

97

98 Mrs C supports Jake at lunchtimes and in the afternoons. When she is not supporting  
99 him she works on the school reception. She has no formal qualifications linked to  
100 educational support and have no specific training before starting to support Jake. She  
101 has worked as a TA for three years.

102

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

105

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

111

#### 112 Pupil perceptions of TA role

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

120

#### 121 Peer Interactions

#### 122 Interactions

123 Based on the systematic observations, Jake spent 55.4% of his time interacting with  
124 adults in the week observed, slightly lower than the sample average for pupils (58.4%).  
125 Of these 93% were with TAs and just 7% with teachers.

126

127 Jake spent 20.1% of his time interacting with peers, only slightly lower than the sample  
128 average (21%). He did not interact with anyone for 15.9% of the time, also lower than  
129 the average for target pupils (17.9%).

130

131 Jake had a very high number of interactions coded as 'Bin' (8.6%, sample average of  
132 2.6%). This was due to the occasions where he was removed from class by his TAs,  
133 which could not be coded as they were not observed (it was felt that following him out  
134 of class might upset him).

135

### 136 In the classroom

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

144

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

150

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

156

157 Only four occasions were recorded of a peer interacting with Jake outside of playtime  
158 and three of these occurred were in a single PE lesson where a peer was leading him

159 through a dance routine by holding his hand (Mrs C had been doing this prior to the  
160 peer taking over).

161

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

164

#### 165 At playtime

166 93.65% of Jake's interactions with peers occurred during playtime. It is worth noting  
167 that he had much lower levels of adult proximity here too (17.19% of his time outside).

168

169 In contrast to his behaviour in the classroom, in the playground Jake was observed  
170 interacting with peers for the vast majority of his unstructured time (92.19%). He played  
171 with multiple peers and engaged in many different games. Of his peer interactions,  
172 73.44% were led by a peer and 26.56% by Jake himself. Where Jake did lead  
173 interactions, it was primarily non-verbal: hand-holding, hugging and chasing. Jake  
174 seemed much happier and less anxious in the playground.

175

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

180

#### 181 Favourite People / Friends

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

187

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

190

191 TA influence on interactions

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

198

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

204

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

207

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

## Case Study - Charlie

### 1 Pupil Information

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

6

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

19

### 20 School Information

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

26

### 27 School Experience

28 Charlie is in a mixed ability Year Two class for all subjects. He is taught by a main  
29 class teacher, for the majority of his school week, aside from her PPA time (which is  
30 covered by a TA, Mrs E) and PE lessons, which are taught by an external agency.



31 Charlie does not come out of class for any interventions or small group work, but he  
32 does stay inside with TA Mrs E for the first few minutes of breaktimes to have a snack  
33 and a drink. This was put in place because he was forgetting to do these things and  
34 there have been concerns about his weight.

35

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

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

50

## 51 Classroom

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

57

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

60

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

63

64 Teaching Assistants

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

71

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

76

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

81

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

85

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

91

92 Pupil Perception of TA Role

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

97

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

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

101 *Me: So they're just there in case you need help?*

102 *Charlie: Yeh.*

103

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

109

## 110 Peer Interactions

### 111 Interactions

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

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

120

### 121 In the classroom

122 98% of Charlie's 242 interactions with adults occurred while he was in the classroom,  
123 and just 28.6% of his peer interactions. As the figures suggest, there were very few

124 opportunities for Charlie to interact with peers in class as he spent the vast majority of  
125 his time in interactions with his TAs. When group work/partner work was set up as the  
126 class task, Charlie worked in a pair with his TA rather than with a peer. He very rarely  
127 spoke to the other pupils on his table and, on the few occasions he did, was stopped  
128 and told to concentrate (see 'TA influence' section). Due to his position at the back of  
129 the classroom, he had no access to other pupils without leaving his seat.

130

131 At playtime

132 71.4% of Charlie's interactions with peers occurred during playtime. He had much  
133 lower levels of adult proximity here too, only 4.3%.

134

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

141

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

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

145

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

150

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

153

154 Favourite People/Friends

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

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

160 *Charlie: I play with Mrs E in class*

161 *Mum: No, pick a child*

162 *Me: You can draw whoever you would like Charlie*

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

164 *Mum: That's better*

165

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

174

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

177

178 *Mum: What about Niall?*

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

180

181 Rather than draw any other children, Charlie asked to draw his little brother as  
182 someone he liked to play with, although he is not yet at school. This may have been  
183 because his brother was present during the interview. His mother said that they do play  
184 often together and that Charlie seemed to like the games aimed at younger children.

185

186 TA influence on interactions

187 Seven occasions were recorded during the systematic observations when a TA  
188 influenced Charlie's peer interactions. Only once did a TA start any interaction between  
189 Charlie and a peer. This happened in a PE lesson when Mrs D asked another pupil to  
190 help Charlie balance during a dance warm up because she had to leave. When she  
191 returned, she took over from the pupil as Charlie's partner. On three occasions TAs  
192 stopped interactions with peers, all in classroom settings and all focussed around  
193 keeping Charlie on task. Further to this two occasions of negative support were  
194 observed, where peers were asked to stop talking to Charlie as they were affecting his  
195 concentration. Finally, the last incident was of positive support, when Charlie was  
196 praised for sharing resources (glue) with a pupil at his table.

197

198 As previously mentioned, Charlie spent a higher than average percentage of time in  
199 school with an adult proximal (within a 1 metre radius). It is worth noting that only  
200 18.6% (13) of the 70 interactions he had with peers occurred while an adult was  
201 proximal, meaning 81.4% occurred in the 140 minutes he was unsupported. This  
202 suggests some effect of TA proximity either on Charlie's ability to talk to his peers or on  
203 their willingness to talk to him.

204

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

## Ryan - Case study

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

5

### 6 Pupil information

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

12

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

20

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

27

### 28 School information

29 Ryan attends a large community primary school in the East of England. The school has  
30 high numbers of pupils on roll (over 500) but low percentages of both pupils with SEN

31 and those eligible for Free School Meals. The school was rated 'Good' at its last  
32 Ofsted.

33

#### 34 School experience

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

41

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

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

46

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

52

#### 53 Classroom

54 Pupils have allocated seats (grouped by ability) in Ryan's main classroom, although  
55 Mrs T sometimes moves pupils between tables based on the task set. Ryan sits most  
56 often at the back of the classroom, facing the whiteboard. He is at a table with three  
57 low attaining peers and his TA. Ryan rarely sat next to a peer at his table, even when  
58 his TA was not filling this space. In numeracy, Ryan sat at a table to the extreme left of  
59 the classroom with up to 5 low attaining peers (the number changed across the week).

60



61 On the carpet, Ryan sits on the back row at the feet of his TA. He struggled to  
62 concentrate when out of his seat and Mrs F explained that she sat with him there to  
63 keep him focused.

64

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

67

#### 68 Teaching Assistants

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

73

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

77

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

81

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

87

88 Mrs G described her role as helping Ryan to understand what the teachers were saying  
89 and supporting him to learn. She was observed rewording questions for Ryan and  
90 regularly did not completing tasks because she was working on ensuring he

91 understood the underlying knowledge. She also often set Ryan up with tasks and left  
92 him (at least briefly) to complete them independently.

93

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

98

#### 99 Pupil perceptions of TA role

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

103

#### 104 Peer interactions

##### 105 Interactions

106 Across the time observed Ryan spent 64.3% of his time in interactions with adults  
107 (46.5% of these with Mrs F). In contrast, Ryan spent just 8.5% of his time interacting  
108 with peers; the lowest of any pupil in the sample (average 21%). This figure reflects just  
109 58 interactions with peers out of a total 684 data points. Ryan also spent 25.5% of his  
110 time not interacting with anyone, higher than any other target pupil (average 17.9%).  
111 His low level of peer interactions is perhaps unsurprising given both his higher than  
112 average levels of adult interaction and of adult proximity; he had very few chances to  
113 interact with peers. I think it is also linked to Ryan's personality however, as he seemed  
114 reticent to talk to peers without prompting (this is discussed further later in the case  
115 study, where examples of TA prompting and praise are included).

116

117 In the case of adult interactions, very few were led by Ryan. 'Adult to target' accounted  
118 for 90% of all adult interactions. In comparison, his peer interactions were much more  
119 even, 'peer to target' at 48.3% and 'target to peer' at 51.7%. This suggests Ryan feels  
120 more able to lead interactions with peers than he does with adults.

121

122 In the classroom

123 Almost all of Ryan's interactions with both adults and peers occurred in the classroom.  
124 96.8% of the times Ryan interacted with an adult it took place in class. This is in line  
125 with the very high levels of adult proximity recorded (94.6% in class). As I've previously  
126 stated, it felt as though Ryan had very few opportunities to interact with peers because  
127 he spent so much time in interactions with adults, this was especially the case when  
128 being supported by Mrs F. Having said this, Ryan showed little interest in interacting  
129 with peers in class even when unsupported.

130

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

135

136 At playtime

137 Just 3.2% of Ryan's interactions with adults happened in the playground, which is also  
138 in line with the much lower percentage of adult proximity in this setting (5.4%). Just  
139 15.5% of Ryan's peer interactions occurred at playtime and as stated this is an unusual  
140 pattern for the sample.

141

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

149

150 During our tour of the school Ryan was asked to show me where he played. He chose  
151 to take two photographs of the playground, and asked if he could take more but was  
152 told by the adult present (a TA who was not currently working with Ryan) to choose  
153 something different, so the remaining photographs were of other parts of the school.  
154 This suggests Ryan sees the playground as the main area in which he plays.

155

156 We also talked about the types of games Ryan played in school. He could not name  
157 any games that he liked to play and could not recall what he had played earlier that  
158 day. Ryan seemed to struggle with many of the interview questions, either not  
159 answering or just responding 'yes'.

160 *Me: Who do you play with at playtime?*

161 *Ryan: Yes.*

162

163 *Me: What games do you like to play?*

164 *Ryan: Yes.*

165

166 Favourite people/friends

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

172 *Me: What's this a picture of?*

173 *Ryan: Hall.*

174 *Me: The hall. Yes. Do you play in the hall?*

175 *Ryan: Yes.*

176 *Me: What do you do in the hall?*

177 *Ryan: Sit.*

178 *Me: Sit when?*

179 *Ryan: To Neil.*

180 *Me: You sit with Neil?*

181 *Ryan: In afternoon.*

182

183 I did not observe Ryan interacting with Neil at any point and Mrs F said she had never  
184 seen them together but as this was the only peer Ryan identified throughout my time  
185 talking to him it needs to be recognised as important to him. Neil is a high attaining,

186 popular boy in the class so this could be seen as aspirational from Ryan's perspective.  
187 Neil is potentially someone Ryan would like to play with.

188

189 TA influence on interactions

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

198

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

202

203 *Mrs F: No talking Ryan*

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

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

206

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

211

212 It is clear that Mrs F saw interactions between Ryan and his peers as off task  
213 behaviour in the classroom setting. I noted that on three of these four occasions the  
214 pupils in class were working through activities at tables and that the other pupils were  
215 talking between themselves while completing the tasks. It was only the pupils sat with a  
216 TA who were told not to talk.

217

218 As previously discussed, it is clear that Ryan's two main TAs have very different  
219 approaches to support. The observation results show that Mrs F had much higher  
220 levels of proximity in the lessons she supported, spending 78.8% of her time within 1m  
221 of Ryan. In these lessons, just 6.8% of Ryan's interactions were with peers. In  
222 comparison, Mrs G spent a lot less time proximal (47.8%) and Ryan had higher levels  
223 of peer interaction (10.5%). This difference in interaction levels may be linked to the  
224 differing approaches, but could also have been affected by multiple other factors, for  
225 example the subjects of lessons supported (literacy, numeracy and phonics for Mrs F  
226 and PE, PSHE and literacy for Mrs G). What is clear is that Ryan would have a higher  
227 number of peer interactions in the lesson Mrs F supported if she did not stop or  
228 discourage these when they occurred.

## Case Study - Kai

### 1 Pupil information

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

7

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

17

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

23

### 24 School Information

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

31

32 School Experience

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

39

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

45

46 Classroom

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

51

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

55

56 Teaching Assistants

57 Kai has support in all of his classes, but no specific support at break and lunchtimes.  
58 He is observed by a range of TAs (five in the week observed), although most frequently  
59 by Mrs Z and Mrs I. TAs in the school move between classes as and where they are  
60 needed. There is no timetabled pattern of support although a TA is always available in  
61 his class should he need one.



62

63 In the week observed, Mrs Z supported Kai in many of his main class lessons and  
64 during PE. She has worked with Kai since he started at the school. She is a qualified  
65 teacher who has been working as a TA for five years. She said the only specific  
66 training she had received related to educational support was during her teacher  
67 training. Mrs Z described her role as helping Kai to behave and keeping him on task.

68

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

75

76 Pupil perceptions of TA role

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

80 *Kai: She helps me with my work.*

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

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

83 *Me: So she helps you when you don't know the answers?*

84 *Kai: Yeah, which is a lot!*

85

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

88

89 When I asked if she helped him in any way with his friends he told me she didn't,  
90 *"That's not her job".*

91

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

96

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

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

116

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

121

122 Peer Interactions

123 Interactions

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

129

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

132

### 133 In the classroom

134 96.3% of Kai's interactions with adults happened in the classroom. He only interacted  
135 with an adult on 12 occasions (3.7%) in the playground across the week. In contrast to  
136 much of the sample, the vast majority (82.7%) of Kai's interactions with peers occurred  
137 during class time. Of these he was the person speaking for 58.4% of the time.

138

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

146

### 147 At playtime

148 Kai had relatively few interactions with anyone during playtime. In fact, just 3.7% of his  
149 interactions with adults and 17.3% of his interactions with peers happened in the  
150 playground. He spent 16.36% of his time interacting with no-one. My research notes  
151 show Kai was observed occasionally playing with peers both from his and other  
152 classes. He was also seen talking to the adult present in the playground and school  
153 staff told me he is regularly reprimanded for coming inside school during breaks and  
154 lunchtimes to see adults rather than playing outside.

155

156 Mrs R said that she felt unstructured times were quite stressful for Kai as he has had  
157 issues with these in the past. She explained that when he joined the school he was  
158 regularly fighting with other pupils to the extent that some parents had complained  
159 about his behaviour. She felt that he now, “second guessed” the ways in which he  
160 approached peers and was wary of saying the wrong thing. She thought he was  
161 coming into school at break times to avoid playing with peers.

162

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

168       *Kai: We used to play all the time.*

169       *Me: When you were in nursery?*

170       *Kai: Yeah, I played with Jenny and Ali. Mostly those two.*

171       *Me: Are they still in your class now?*

172       *Kai: No they are in class two.*

173       *Me: Oh OK, but you can play with them at lunchtime I guess?*

174       *Kai: Yes, but I don't.*

175

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

178       *Me: What do you play at playtime?*

179       *Kai: I don't know, I used to play in the sand.*

180

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

183

#### 184 Favourite People / Friends

185 In the interview, I asked Kai to draw his favourite friend to play with in school. Kai drew  
186 four stick people and decided that they were in the hall where the class do PE. When

187 asked, Kai could not tell me who the stick people were or who he plays with regularly.  
188 He could not name the people he had played with earlier that day either, *"I can't*  
189 *remember their names quickly"*. He was able to say that he plays with different people  
190 each day rather than the same people every day.

191

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

197

#### 198 TA influence on interactions

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

207

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

214

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

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

218 *Kai: I play with different people sometimes.*

219           *Me: OK*

220           *Kai: Sometimes I get lonely.*

221           *Me: Really? How come?*

222           *Kai: Sometimes no people come to me.*

223           *Me: OK Do you not go to them?*

224           *Kai: No.*

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

226           *Kai: They make it worse.*

227

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

## Matthew – Case Study

### 1 Pupil information

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

8

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

15

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

18

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

26

### 27 School Information

28 Matthew's school is a larger than average (over 450 pupils) community primary in a  
29 rural village in the Midlands of England. The school has a low percentage of pupils with  
30 English as a second language and of pupils eligible for Free School Meals. It's

31 percentage of pupils with SEN is in line with the national average. The school received  
32 a rating of 'good' at it's last Ofsted.

33

#### 34 School Experience

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

40

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

48

49 Matthew receives full time TA support including break and lunchtimes.

50

51 In the week observed, Matthew spent 71.47% of his time with a TA proximal; the  
52 highest of anyone in the sample (who had an average of 52.21%). In my research  
53 diaries I wrote that his TAs very rarely moved away from his side and, even when they  
54 did, they continued to communicate with him, talking to him from across the room. I  
55 recorded feeling that Matthew seemed very unsure of how to behave when his TAs  
56 were away from him, suggesting this was a very rare occurrence. Across the week  
57 including playtimes, the longest continuous time Matthew spent unsupported was a five  
58 minute stretch in a morning lesson. This happened because Mrs J was on the other  
59 side of the room helping another pupil with her spellings.

60

#### 61 Classroom



62 In Matthew's school, pupils have allocated seats for their lessons. Matthew is in the  
63 same seat for all lessons in his main classroom, on a table at the back of the room. His  
64 seat faces away from the whiteboard. He is always sat with a group of low attaining  
65 peers, although this group changes slightly for numeracy lessons. Matthew sits next to  
66 his TA, who crouches at the edge of the table to work with him.

67

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

72

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

76

## 77 Teaching Assistants

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

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

85

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

89

90 Mrs V is employed as a dinner lady by the school. She sits with Matthew while he eats  
91 and at lunchtime play.

92

93 Mrs J and Mrs K explained their role as keeping Matthew safe and helping him to move  
94 around the school. Both also talked about differentiating work, in terms of breaking  
95 down tasks. Mrs K also talked about helping Matthew to pay attention in class. Neither  
96 TA mentioned speech and language support or helping Matthew to interact with peers.

97

#### 98 Pupil perceptions of TA role

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

104

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

107 *Me: Do they go out in the playground with you?*

108 *Matthew: Yeah, at playtime in the playground with me.*

109 *Me: What do they do out there?*

110 *Matthew: They play chasing.*

111 *Me: They play chasing with you?*

112 *Matthew: Yeah, we play.*

113

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

116

#### 117 Peer Interactions

##### 118 Interactions

119 Matthew spent 65.3% of the time observed interacting with adults although (despite the  
120 high level of TA proximity) this was split fairly equally between teachers (47.5%) and  
121 TAs (52.5%). This is a higher level of adult interaction than the sample average  
122 (58.4%).

123

124 Matthew spent just 13.8% of his time interacting with peers, the second lowest level  
125 recorded across the sample (whose average was 21%). He spent 18.4% of his time not  
126 interacting with anyone, a result slightly higher than the average for target pupils  
127 (17.9%).

128

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

132

### 133 In the classroom

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

143

### 144 At playtime

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

152

153 As with his other TAs, Matthew seemed to see Mrs V as a peer rather than as an adult  
154 support, as this exchange shows:

155           *Me: Who did you play with today?*

156           *Matthew: I played with Mrs V.*

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

158           *Matthew: No we played inside.*

159           *Me: You played inside?*

160           *Matthew: Mrs V and me.*

161           *Me: What did you play?*

162           *Matthew: We played games.*

163

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

165

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

172

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

177

#### 178   Favourite People / Friends

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

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

184   *I play games with her.*

185                           *(referring to his friends):       They play tag,*

186 *I go down on the climbing frame with them.*  
187  
188 It was hard to see any difference between the ways he talked about the two groups.  
189 This confusion could be because his TAs often take the place of his peers in school  
190 settings; in partner tasks for example or when the class were asked to line up in pairs.  
191  
192 When asked specifically about other pupils, a lot of Matthew's answers were very  
193 vague. He often talked about non-specific "friends" and struggled to name them when  
194 asked.  
195 *Matthew: I play with my friends on the adventure.*  
196 *Me: Who do you play with?*  
197 *Matthew: My friends.*  
198 *Me: Can you tell me their names?*  
199 *Matthew: Not now.*  
200  
201 He did name a girl called Nina (identified as a close friend by school staff) and another  
202 peer in the later stages of the interview.  
203 *Matthew: I play with Nina.*  
204 *Me: Do you want to draw her?*  
205 *Matthew: Yes. Can I remember what she looks like?*  
206 *Me: I don't know. Can you?*  
207 *Matthew: Yes.*  
208 *Me: What sort of things do you like to do with Nina?*  
209 *Matthew: Play tag.*  
210 *Me: You play tag with her?*  
211 *Matthew: Sally too.*  
212  
213  
214 TA influence on interactions

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

223           *Mrs J: You are doing very well working as a team. Good sharing.*

224

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

227

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

231

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

237

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

## Case Study – Gopal

### Pupil Information

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

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

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

### School Information

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

37 School Experience

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

46

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

54

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

62

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

70

71 Classroom

72 In his main class pupils have allocated seats and move around for literacy, numeracy  
73 and topic session but Gopal stays in the same seat for all subjects. He sits at a table  
74 near the front of the classroom, facing the whiteboard. His TA has a seat next to him



75 and there is a gap between him and the other pupils at the table so I noted the two o  
76 them feel quite isolated from the rest of the class.

77

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

81

## 82 Teaching Assistants

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

86

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

94

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

98           *Peer: Can I have that? [pointing to pencil]*  
99           *Gopal: [unintelligible]*  
100           *Mrs L: He says he still needs the blue pencil*  
101

102   *And this in a classroom session:*

103           *Me: Where shall we go Gopal? Where do you play in school?*  
104           *Mrs L: Gopal likes to play in the playground*  
105           *Me: Do you want to go to the playground?*  
106           *Gopal: No, the track.*  
107

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

112

113 Pupil perceptions of TA role

114 As with the other pupils, Gopal was asked to draw an adult who helps him in school.  
115 Gopal chose to draw Mrs L; although he named multiple adults who work with him (all  
116 TAs).

117 *Me: Who will you draw?*

118 *Gopal: Mrs L.*

119 *Me: Mrs L, Ok.*

120 *Gopal: Mrs L works with me every day.*

121 *Me: In all of your lessons?*

122 *Gopal: Yes, and Mrs AA and Mrs M and Mrs L again.*

123 *Me: You have lots of different helpers!*

124 *Gopal: Every day. Most of all Mrs L.*

125

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

129 *Me: What does Mrs L do?*

130 *Gopal: Mrs L just helps me.*

131 *Me: What does she do to help you?*

132 *Gopal: She helps.*

133 *Me: Ok. Can you tell me how?*

134 *Gopal: The helpers help everybody but Mrs L just looks after me.*

135

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

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

139

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

141 *Me: Do they play with you?*

142 *Gopal: No they just help.*

143

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

147

148 Peer interactions

149 Interactions

150 The vast majority of Gopal's interactions in the week observed were with adults  
151 (60.7%), a higher percentage than the sample average (58.4%).

152

153 Just 25.6% of all Gopal's interactions were with peers, which is slightly higher than the  
154 sample average (21%) but again lower than for peers.

155

156 Gopal spent 11.5% of the time observed not interacting with anyone which is lower  
157 than the average for target pupils (17.9%) and makes sense given the high proportion  
158 of adult proximity observed (68.8% - the second highest level in the sample).

159

#### 160 In the classroom

161 93.5% of all Gopal's interactions with adults occurred in the classroom. As with much of  
162 the sample a higher proportion of interactions were adult-target (66.9%) rather than  
163 target-adult (33.1%).

164

165 68.3% of all Gopal's interactions with peers occurred in the classroom, an unusual  
166 pattern for the sample. This figure may reflect the types of lessons Gopal has each  
167 week, many of which (especially the interventions) include a high level of peer-peer  
168 conversation (albeit framed and led by adult supports).

169

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

173

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

183

#### 184 In the playground

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

190

191 Just 31.7% of Gopal's peer interactions occurred in the playground. This reflects 54.3%  
192 of the data points recorded in the playground. Despite this relatively low level of peer  
193 interaction, I noted that Gopal played happily with multiple peers. His play was

194 sometimes considered too loud or too busy by TAs and he was asked to calm down.  
195 When this happened he would follow instruction and change the game.

196

197 Favourite people/friends

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

203 *Gopal: I'll draw Jai.*

204 *Me: Jai, is he in your class?*

205 *Gopal: Yeah. Yesterday he is my friend.*

206 *Me: You played with him yesterday?*

207 *Gopal: Yes.*

208

209 This exchange suggests Gopal might just have chosen the first child he could think of.  
210 Mrs L confirmed that Gopal rarely plays with Jai, although there have been similar  
211 incidents to the one I observed above between the two boys. Mrs L called it a  
212 “love/hate relationship”.

213

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

217 *Me: What do you play with Adrian?*

218 (I asked this question about Jai and Gopal responded ‘don’t know’)

219 *Gopal: At playtime we sometimes can play too...Adrian chasing me and he was*  
220 *coming too and then we're hiding in the bench*

221 *Me: That sounds like fun.*

222 *Gopal: It's Adrian coming. That one's Adrian.*

223

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

225

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

230 *Me: who do you play with here?*

231 *Gopal: I play on the side.*

232 *Me: Which children do you play on the slide with?*

233 *Gopal: My friends.*

234 *Me: Can you tell me their names?*

235 *Gopal: No.*

236

237 It is possible that Gopal was trying to distance himself from these pupils with SEN. I  
238 observed him playing happily with them every lunch time so it does seem strange that  
239 he failed to mention them at any point.

240

#### 241 TA influence on interactions

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

249

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

253

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

## Case Study – Sneha

### 1 Pupil information

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

8

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

18

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

23

24 Sneha's statement suggests adapted provision to support her needs in school. Speech  
25 and language support, a phonics based early learning programme and small group  
26 support sessions to build her confidence are all listed and were in place at the time of  
27 observation. A social skills group is also suggested, and this was observed during the  
28 research visit. A small group of pupils met together to practise turn taking, sharing and  
29 social cues.

30

31 Sneha also took part in 'forest school' sessions and small group literacy sessions  
32 designed to help her understand the order of stories and the concepts of 'before and  
33 after'. She attends cooking sessions with other pupils with SEN, these are focused on  
34 sharing, turn taking and following instructions. She also undertakes activities intended  
35 to improve her fine and gross motor skills.

36

#### 37 School information

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

44

#### 45 School experience

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

51

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

55

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

60

61 In total, across the research visit, Sneha had an adult proximal for 65.2% of the time.  
62 This is higher than the average for target pupils (52.2%). Of these, 92% of the time the

63 adult present was a TA, and on 66% of occasions it was Mrs M (her allocated TA). In  
64 class, Mrs M was only away from Sneha for short intervals and, even when she moved  
65 away, she would stand watching to ensure Sneha was ok. A large proportion of the  
66 time Sneha spent without an adult proximal was during registration. During this time  
67 she would sit on the carpet with the rest of the class, but I noted she would still look  
68 round and wave at Mrs M, who was at the back of the classroom.

69

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

74

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

85

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

89

## 90 Classroom

91 In Sneha's classroom, pupils have allocated seats, grouped on tables by attainment.  
92 Sneha sits at the back of the room near the classroom door. Her table also seats three  
93 other low attaining peers and her TA, Mrs M. There is a gap between Sneha, Mrs M,  
94 and the other pupils and I noted it felt as though they were on a table of their own, very  
95 much separate to the other pupils.



96

97 On the carpet, the pupils do not have allocated spaces. Sneha tends to sit fairly close  
98 to the front near the teacher when she joins in with activities on the carpet (she  
99 sometimes stays at her table with Mrs M).

100

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

105

#### 106 Teaching assistants

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

111

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

118

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

124

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

128

129 Pupil perceptions of TA role

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

133

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

138

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

141 *Me: What do you and Mrs M do?*

142 *Sneha: Play*

143 *Me: You play together*

144 *Sneha: Play all day*

145

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

150

151 Peer interactions

152 Interactions

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

159

160 In the classroom

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

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

172

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

176

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

179       *Mrs U (teacher):       What shall we do next Sneha?*

180       *Sneha:                 House*

181       *Mrs U:                 What do you mean?*

182       *Mrs M:                 She wants to go in the greenhouse*

183       *Sneha:                 Strawberries*

184       *Mrs U:                 You want to water the strawberries in the greenhouse?*

185       *Sneha:                 Strawberries!*

186

187 In an intervention session I recorded the following exchange

188       *Mrs AA (TA):         Sneha, can you tell us what you like?*

189           *Mrs M:*                   *Sneha likes sausages!*  
 190           *Mrs AA:*               *Do you like sausages Sneha?*  
 191           *Mrs M:*                   *Sneha would eat sausages every day*  
 192           *Mrs AA:*               *I will put down sausages then*

193

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

196

197   At playtime

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

202

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

207

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

211

212

213   Favourite people / friends

214   Sneha was asked to draw her favourite friend to play with in school. She chose to draw  
 215   two girls, Priya and Asha, and a boy, Imran, who are in her main class. Sneha was not  
 216   observed interacting with any of these pupils at any point and Mrs M said she could not  
 217   recall Sneha playing with them. Priya and Asha are both popular, high attaining girls so

218 it is possible Sneha chose them as people she would like to play with, rather than  
219 people she regularly played with.

220

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

224

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

229

#### 230 TA influence on interactions

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

237

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

241

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

## Case Study – Lucie

### 1 Pupil Information

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

13

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

24

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

27

### 28 School information

29 The school Lucie attends is an all-through academy in the South West of England.  
30 Compared to the national average, it is a high proportion of pupils with SEN. It has a

31 low proportion of pupils eligible for FSM. The school received a 'Satisfactory' rating at  
32 its last Ofsted. The school has an attached HIRB on the primary school site.

33

#### 34 School Experience

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

43

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

47

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

51

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

55

56 In terms of adult proximity, Lucie spent 40.2% of her time with an adult present. This is  
57 lower than the sample average (52.2%) and is an interesting result given that multiple  
58 adults were on hand at all times (three adults for up to eight children in the HIRB). Of  
59 the times an adult were present, 53.8% of these it was a teacher and 48.5% it was a  
60 TA. I observed in my research diary that Lucie, despite her low confidence, felt like a  
61 very independent girl and that, when adults did interact with her, it was generally just to

62 check on her progress or to set up another task for her. Adults rarely sat with her for  
63 long periods of time, the longest stretch recorded was seven consecutive minutes.

64

#### 65 Classroom

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

70

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

73

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

78

#### 79 Teaching Assistants

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

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

87

88 Mrs N said that she feels her main role is to help Lucie improve her confidence when  
89 speaking and to ensure she is practising her communication skills regularly. She said  
90 Lucie sometimes needs support talking to other pupils so she checks on her regularly  
91 when she is working in group and partner tasks.

92



93 Mrs O is allocated to support a specific pupil in the HIRB but works with other pupils if  
94 they need it. Mrs O also supports Lucie (and some other pupils) in mainstream class.  
95 She has worked with Lucie for approximately 9 months and at the school as a TA for  
96 less than two years. She has no qualifications related to educational support and has  
97 had no training since starting at the school. She cannot sign British Sign Language or  
98 use Makaton.

99

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

104

#### 105 Pupil perceptions of TA role

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

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

109 *Lucie: I will draw a girl*

110 *Me: Ok, who are you going to draw?*

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

113 *Me: Is she?*

114 *Lucie: Yes, but Natalie not always.*

115 *Me: No...*

116 *Lucie: Its' Natalie!*

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

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

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

122 *Lucie: I help her and she helps me.*

123

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

128

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

132

133 *Lucie: Mrs O is not there for me.*

134 *Me: Ok, what does she do?*

135 *Lucie: Mrs O comes to look after Heidi.*

136 *Me: But does she work with you?*

137 *Lucie: Not mostly.*

138

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

143

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

150

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

152

153 Peer interactions

## 154 Interactions

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

161

## 162 In the Classroom

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

170

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

175

## 176 At Playtime

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

180

181 During our tour of the school, Lucie made reference to several different games she  
182 plays with her friends. She talked clearly about "playing" both in the HIRB and in the  
183 playground saying that in the HIRB they had more opportunities to play than in her  
184 mainstream class.

185

186 *Lucie: We play all the time. Lots and lots of times.*

187 *Me: Who does?*

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

189 *Me: Ok, that sounds fun.*

190 *Lucie: We play in the HIRB and outside.*

191

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

198

199 Favourite people/friends

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

202

203 *Me: Why is Spike your best friend?*

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

206 *Me: You visit him at home?*

207 *Lucie: Yeah. I keep visiting him 'oh hello Spike'.*

208

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

211

212 (As well as Spike) Lucie also talked about a number of other pupils who were her  
213 friends, all of whom spend some of their time in school in the HIRB. She was clear that  
214 she only likes to play with “HIRB children” because they were her friends. She was not  
215 observed interacting with any mainstream pupils at any point, even when in her

216 mainstream class. This is worthy of note as her statement suggests contact with  
217 mainstream pupils could help Lucie improve her language.

218

219 TA influence on interactions

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

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

224 *You are working together so nicely!*

225

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

227

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

## Case Study – Henry

### 1 Pupil information

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

7

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

16

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

24

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

- 27 • I can understand and use the language of friendship
- 28 • I can organize myself in the classroom

29

30 Mrs Q, a teacher in the HIRB, explained that the first target had been put in place  
31 because Henry was 'telling tales' about other pupils and saying unkind things. The  
32 second target was chosen as Henry has poor concentration when working  
33 independently and asks questions of adults even in relation to very simple problems.  
34 She said that the friendship target had been in place for several months as this was an  
35 ongoing issue for Henry.

36

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

41

#### 42 School information

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

48

#### 49 School experience

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

59

60 During my research visit, Henry had the vast majority of his lessons in the HIRB. He  
61 was taught in one of two classrooms by a team of teachers and TAs as part of a small  
62 group of pupils. The HIRB has two conjoined classrooms and its own patio space and

63 the pupils moved between these freely. Henry was taught by a main teacher, Mrs Q,  
64 supported by two TAs (Mrs O and Mrs N). The SENCO, Mrs Y, also came into lessons  
65 sometimes and teaches occasional lessons.

66

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

69

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

74

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

80

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

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

90

91 When Henry did have an adult proximal, there was a fairly even split between teachers  
92 (40.1%) and TAs (38.8%). This result is unusual for the sample, the majority of whom  
93 had much higher levels of TA support. In Henry's case, Mrs Q (the resource base  
94 teacher) has taken a specific interest in Henry's behavioural needs and told me she



95 often finds just sitting near him is enough to calm him down or to get him to focus on  
96 his work. She was observed doing this regularly throughout the research visit, and this  
97 would definitely account for much of the teacher proximity.

98

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

102

### 103 Classroom

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

110

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

113

### 114 Teaching assistants

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

117

118 In the HIRB, aside from teacher Mrs Q, Henry is supported primarily by Mrs N who  
119 works full time in the resource base but is allocated to support multiple pupils. Mrs N  
120 has worked at the school for more than five years, three years with Henry, and  
121 previously worked at a school for children with hearing impairments. She has  
122 qualifications in BSL, can use Makaton and has had specific training in strategies to  
123 support learners with hearing impairments. Mrs N described her role supporting Henry  
124 as keeping him working and stopping him distracting others. She also said that she  
125 does specific work with him about politeness and being a good friend.

126

127 Henry also receives support from Mrs O, who is allocated full time to another pupil but  
128 helps answer questions and check work if needed. Mrs O has worked at the school for  
129 less than two years and has known Henry since the start of Year Two (approximately  
130 nine months at the time of observation). She has no specific qualifications related to  
131 educational support or to working with learners with a hearing impairment. Mrs O said  
132 she supports Henry by reminding him of what he should be doing and stopping him if  
133 his behaviour becomes challenging. She did not mention support with social  
134 interactions but did say she sometimes had to talk to him in the playground (she is  
135 outside to support her allocated pupils) as his play can become very boisterous which  
136 has been known to upset other pupils.

137

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

140

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

144

#### 145 Pupil perceptions of TA role

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

151 *Me: Can you draw me a picture of one of your helpers in school?*

152 *Henry: Mrs N, Mrs Q, Mrs O, Mrs Y. There are lots.*

153 *Me: Which one will you draw?*

154 *Henry: All of them*

155 *Me: Ok, can you tell me what do they do? Do they do different jobs?*

156 *Henry: If I need their help, I just put my hand up and one of them comes to help*  
157 *me*

158           *Me: Ok. What might you need help with?*

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

160

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

163

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

167

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

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

171           *Henry: Sometimes*

172           *Me: How do they help?*

173           *Henry: Um.. they sort out problems*

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

175           *Henry: Yeah*

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

178           *Henry: All of the time!*

179

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

185

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

188

189 Peer interactions

190 Interactions

191 In line with the lower levels of adult proximity observed for Henry, relatively low levels  
192 of adult interaction were also recorded (53%); lower than the sample average (58.4%).  
193 Interestingly, despite roughly equal proportions of proximity, teachers had a much  
194 higher percentage of interactions than TAs, at 56,3% (TAs, 30.5%). This can be linked  
195 directly to teacher Mrs Q, who took part in 32.8% of all Henry's interactions with adults.

196

197 Henry spent 33.1% of the time observed interacting with peers. This is the second  
198 highest percentage recorded across the entire sample (second only to a girl, Lucie,  
199 who attends the same school and HIRB), and is higher than the sample average of  
200 21%.

201

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

204

205 In the classroom

206 Henry had a higher level of peer interaction in the classroom (64,3%) than he did in the  
207 playground (35.7%). This is unusual for the pupils observed, most of whom had higher  
208 levels of interaction during playtimes. This figure reflects the style of working observed  
209 in the HIRB, much of which was based around partner and group work. During peer  
210 interactions in the classroom, Henry was slightly more likely to lead (55.6%) than be  
211 the subject of the interaction (44.4%).

212

213 98.4% of all Henry's interactions with adults occurred in the classroom, with only two  
214 data points recorded in the playground across the week (the lowest of any target pupil),  
215 he had an adult present for 58.6% of his time in class.

216

217 At playtime

218 Despite having the majority of his peer interactions in class, Henry spent 87.5% of his  
219 time in the playground interacting with peers, and the majority of these interactions  
220 (65.7%) were led by the peer. He only spent 0.2% of the time interacting with adults  
221 (the occasion recorded with Mrs O, discussed previously) which is also reflected in the  
222 low level of adult proximity recorded (1.3%).

223

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

229

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

232 *Me: Can you tell me what you do at playtimes with your friends?*

233 *Henry: Play with them*

234 *Me: Are there any games you play often?*

235 *Henry: I always play werewolves*

236 *Me: Werewolves? I don't know that game*

237 *Henry: It's good but it's not good because people roar*

238 *Me: Oh! And then it gets loud in the playground?*

239 *Henry: yeah*

240 *me: Is it a bit like a chasing game?*

241 *Henry: Yeah. Spike just likes playing with it but I don't*

242 *Me: You don't like it?*

243 *Henry: But but sometimes I find it fun so sometimes I join in*

244

245 This was the game that I had observed the group being warned by Mrs O for playing. I  
246 think this exchange shows that Henry is aware that he can have issues at playtime and  
247 is trying to distance himself from this particular incident.

248

249 I recorded in my research diaries that Henry played well with other pupils but that he  
250 could be quite dominant and was seen more than once refusing to play a game that he  
251 had not chosen.

252

### 253 Favourite people/friends

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

257

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

260

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

264

### 265 TA influence on interactions

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

272

273 Four occasions were observed where a TA offered positive support for an interaction  
274 between Henry and a peer. These all occurred in the same lesson where Henry was  
275 building a model with Timothy and Mrs N was praising him for working well as part of a  
276 pair. Only one occasion was recorded of negative support, this was in a humanities  
277 lesson where Mrs O asked Henry *"Should you be talking to Spike now?"* thereby  
278 discouraging their conversation.

279

280 Although Henry has low levels of adult proximity, a difference can still be seen between  
281 his levels of peer interaction when an adult was present and not. In total, 79.6% of all  
282 Henry's interactions occurred when there was no adult present. This suggests that  
283 adult proximity is having some effect on his peer interactions.

## Case Study – Seth

### 1 Pupil Information

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

7  
8 Seth's statement outlines needs which could impact negatively upon his interactions  
9 with peers. Seth can be reticent to speak and sometimes does not respond when  
10 spoken to. He also has issues with expressive and receptive language so may not  
11 understand everything that is said to him. These speech and language difficulties could  
12 lead to peers finding it hard to interact with Seth. The statement of SEN suggests a  
13 speech and language programme, set up as a small group to enable Seth to build his  
14 confidence speaking and to have opportunities to practise speaking with peers.

15

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

21

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

30

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



37

38 School Information

39 Seth's school was the smallest visited as part of this research project. With less than  
40 250 pupils on roll it is smaller than the national average and has just one class (of  
41 around 30 pupils) per year group. The school is a voluntary aided faith primary school  
42 in the South West of England. Compared to the national average, it has a lower  
43 percentage of pupils eligible for Free School Meals and of pupils with SEN. It has a  
44 high proportion of pupils with English as a second language compared to the other  
45 schools in the sample, with a large number of Polish pupils on roll. The school received  
46 a rating of 'Outstanding' at its last Ofsted.

47

48 School Experience

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

55

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

63

64 Classroom

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

70

71 The pupils spend a lot of time on the carpet being taught as a whole class. They do not  
72 have allocated seats but Seth chooses to sit at the back of the carpet. He is sometimes  
73 moved to the front by either Mrs P or Mrs U if they are unhappy with his behaviour (e.g.  
74 he is pinching himself or they feel he is struggling to concentrate).

75

76 Seth has lessons in the ICT suite once a week. In these lessons pupils choose where  
77 they would like to sit. While I was observing, Seth opted to sit at a computer away from  
78 the other pupils. Mr A2, who often covers these lessons, said this was typical behaviour  
79 for Seth.

80

### 81 Teaching Assistants

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

91

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

97

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

109

110 In the week I observed, Seth also came into contact with Mr A2 who was a student  
111 undertaking a placement at the school and fulfilling a basic TA role. He had worked at  
112 the school approximately three months with multiple pupils. He said his role supporting

113 Seth was the same as with the other pupils in the class; helping them to complete tasks  
114 and checking their understanding.

115

#### 116 Pupil perceptions of TA role

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

118 Seth was unsure who to draw:

119 *Seth: Do you mean draw Mrs P?*

120 *Me: Does she help you in school?*

121 *Seth: Sometimes.*

122 *Me: You can draw her if you would like to.*

123 *Seth: I will draw her.*

124

125 It is clear from this exchange that Seth was not certain about who helps him in school.

126 This could be because of his issues with expressive and receptive language or may be  
127 due to the ways in which he is supported as he does not seem to spend very much  
128 time with any adult support (14.8%).

129

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

133 *Me: What does Mrs P do?*

134 *Seth: Works with me.*

135 *Me: Ok does she...*

136 *Seth: [interrupts] works with everyone.*

137 *Me: She helps other children?*

138 *Seth: Yes, not just me sometimes.*

139 *Me: How does she help you?*

140 *Seth: She helps everyone.*

141

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

146 *Seth: Everyone works with Mrs P.*

147 *Me: She doesn't just work with you?*

148 *Seth: No, all the children in my class.*

149

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

152

#### 153 Peer interactions

#### 154 Interactions

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

158

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

161

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

164

#### 165 In the classroom

166 97.7% of all Seth's interactions with adults occurred in the classroom, although as  
167 previously stated, he has a low level of adult interaction as compared to the rest of the  
168 sample. Just over half of all his interactions with peers happened in the classroom  
169 (54%). I noted in my research diaries that it felt as though Seth was more often spoken  
170 to than the person starting an interaction, and this is borne out by the observation  
171 results. (Seth was the speaker in just 3.3% of interactions with adults in the classroom  
172 and 43.7% of his interactions with peers). When Seth did talk to peers I noted that it  
173 was more often to check he was doing a task correctly or to show them his work. This  
174 type of reassurance is something a TA might offer if present.

175

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

185

#### 186 In the playground

187 Seth only interacted with an adult on five occasions in the playground (of 103 minutes  
188 recorded), which is in line with the very low level of adult proximity recorded (1.9%). He  
189 was observed playing with multiple peers of different ages across the week.

190 Sometimes he was invited to play by peers, other times he just joined in with games.

191 He played most often with a boy from his class, Isaac, who he talked about multiple  
192 times in the interview.

193

194 On multiple occasions Seth was seen either arguing with other pupils or throwing  
195 tantrums in response to their behaviour. He seemed to have a very strong sense of  
196 what was fair and, if he felt things were unfair, would lose his temper or get upset. As  
197 was observed in the classroom, some of the other boys were seen actively annoying  
198 Seth and seemingly finding it funny when he lost his temper. When this occurred in the  
199 playground, school staff (both teachers and dinner ladies) warned Seth about his  
200 behaviour and advised the other pupils not to play with him. It felt, to me, as though  
201 Seth was the only one being punished for these exchanges.

202

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

207

#### 208 Favourite people/friends

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

211 *Me: Isaac is in the playground?*

212 *Seth: Yes he is here (pointing).*

213 *Me: Ok.*

214 *Seth: And my other friends.*

215 *(Drawing)*

216 *Me: Ok, who else are you drawing?*

217 *Seth: Um...Daniel.*

218 *Me: Daniel from your class?*

219 *Seth: Yes. Um...Shane.*

220 *Me: Ok.*

221 *Seth: Me.*

222 *Me: That one is you?*

223 *Seth: Yes and you have to do David 'cos he's really funny in that one.*

224 *Me: Do you play with all these children?*

225 *Seth: I can sometimes.*

226 *Me: Did you play with them today?*

227 *Seth: No. On my own.*

228 *Me: Ok.*

229 *Seth: I could play with David*

230

231 Seth was observed playing with all the pupils he named at some point during the  
232 research visit. It should be noted, however, that both Shane and David were involved in  
233 the bullying-type incidents described previously. Listening to the interview there are  
234 large pauses before each pupil is names (except Isaac) as if Seth is having to think  
235 about who he has drawn. I felt as though Seth felt he should draw multiple children,

236 maybe because his mother had asked whether he played with anyone else. To  
237 appease her he thought of some other children he could draw.

238

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

246

#### 247 TA influence on interactions

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

254

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

260

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

264

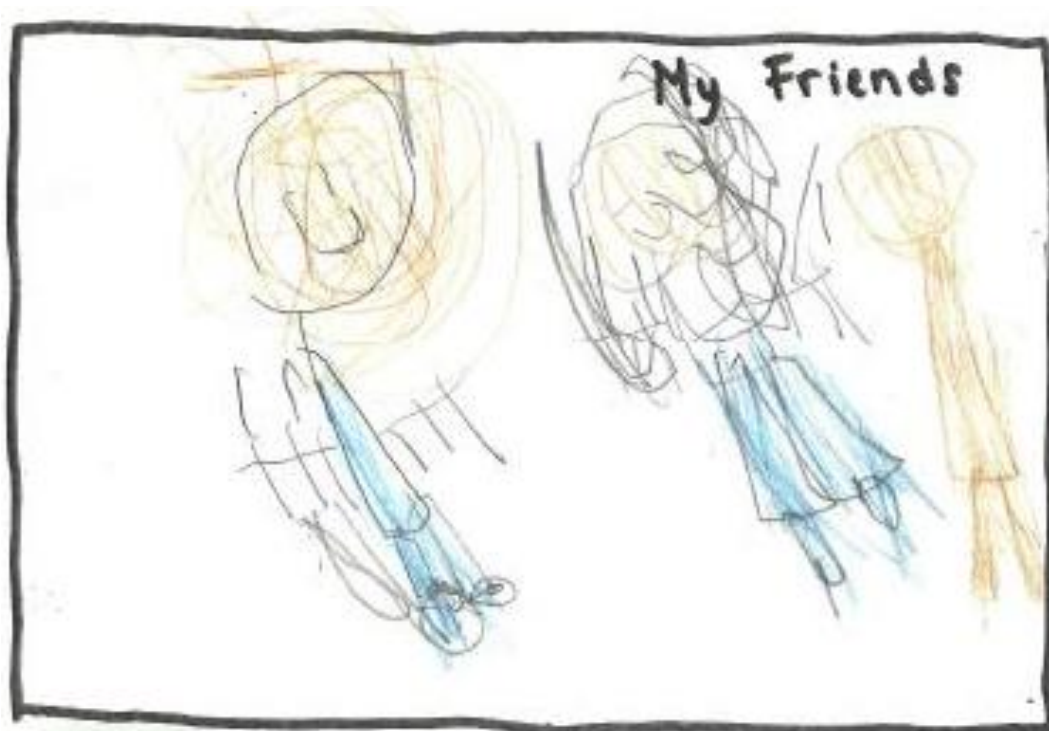
265 Only one occasion was recorded of Mrs P positively influencing peer interactions. This  
266 was in a PE lesson where she praised Seth for working well with his team in a game.  
267 At no point was Mrs P observed starting an interaction between Seth and a peer.

268

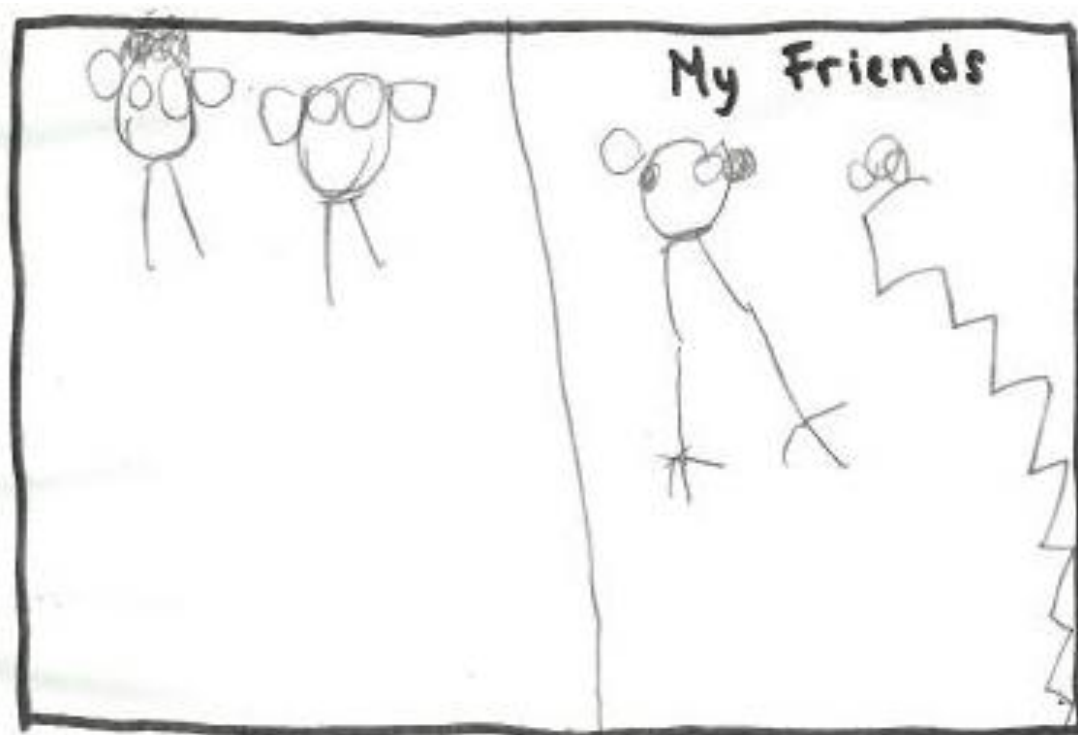
269 It is hard to quantify Mrs P's impact outside of the interactions described above, as she  
270 spent so little time with Seth while I was observing. I felt as though my presence might  
271 have affected this as Mrs P was very nervous every time she spoke to me, which made  
272 me feel like she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

**E: Images from the drawing activity**

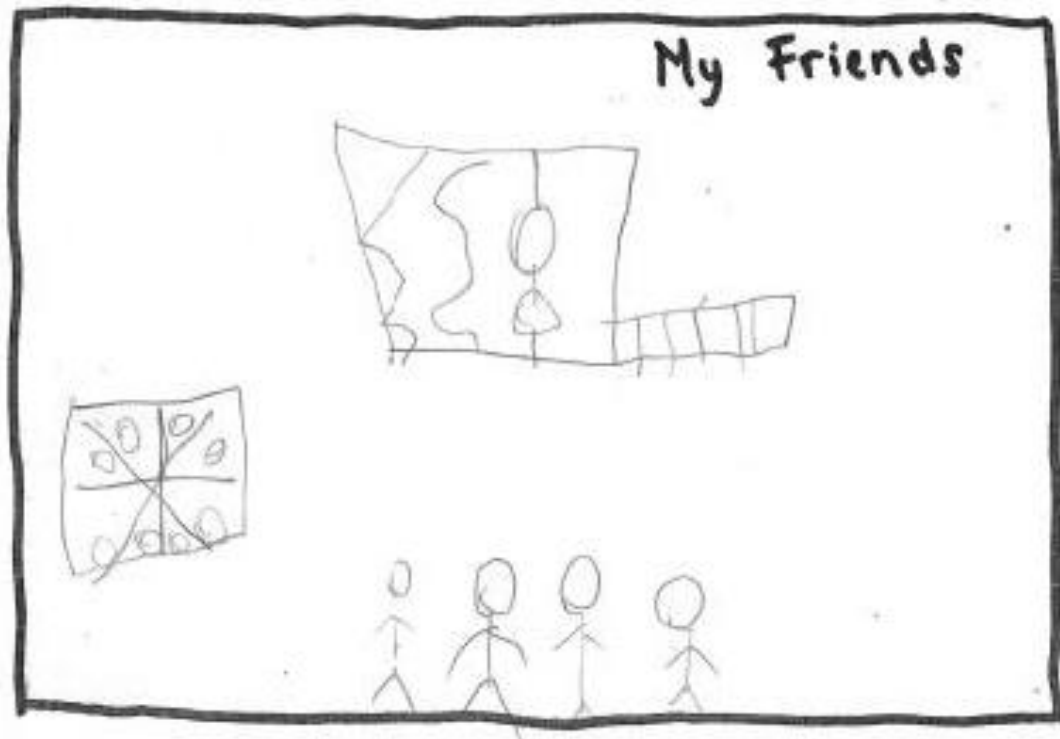
Olivia's drawings

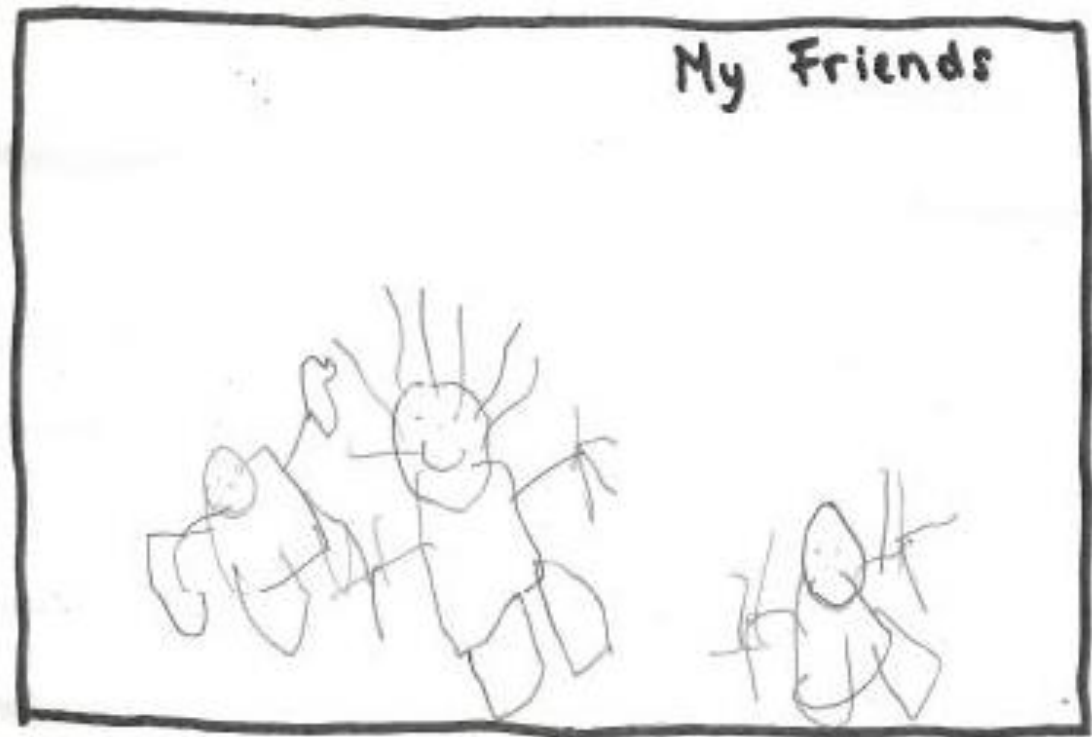


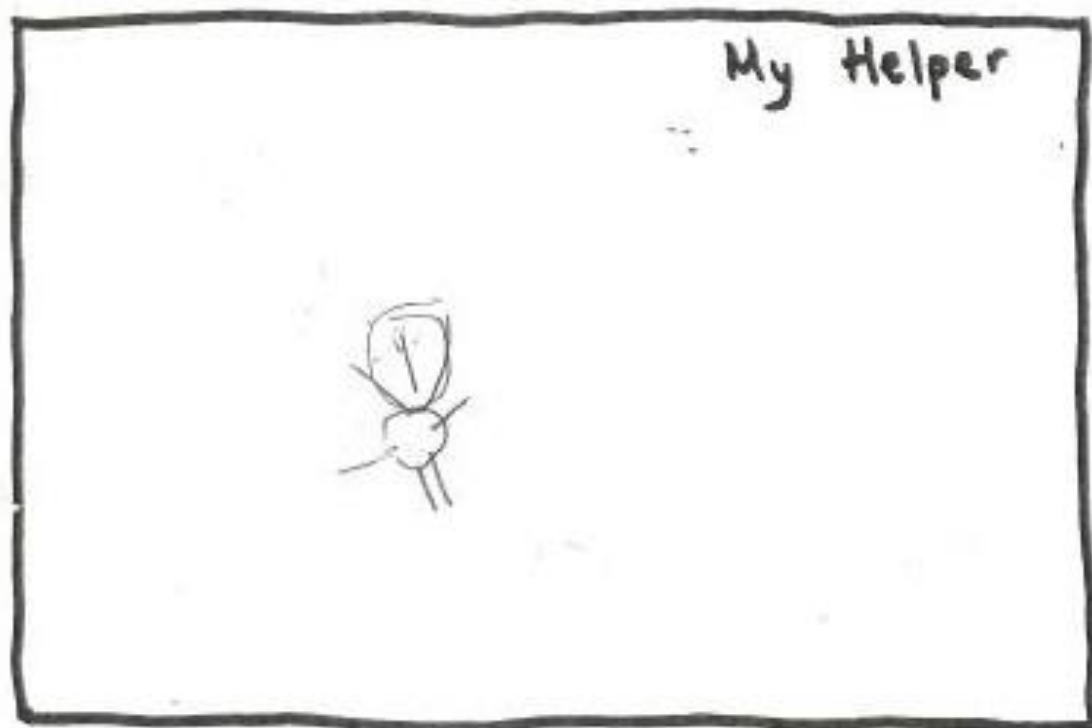
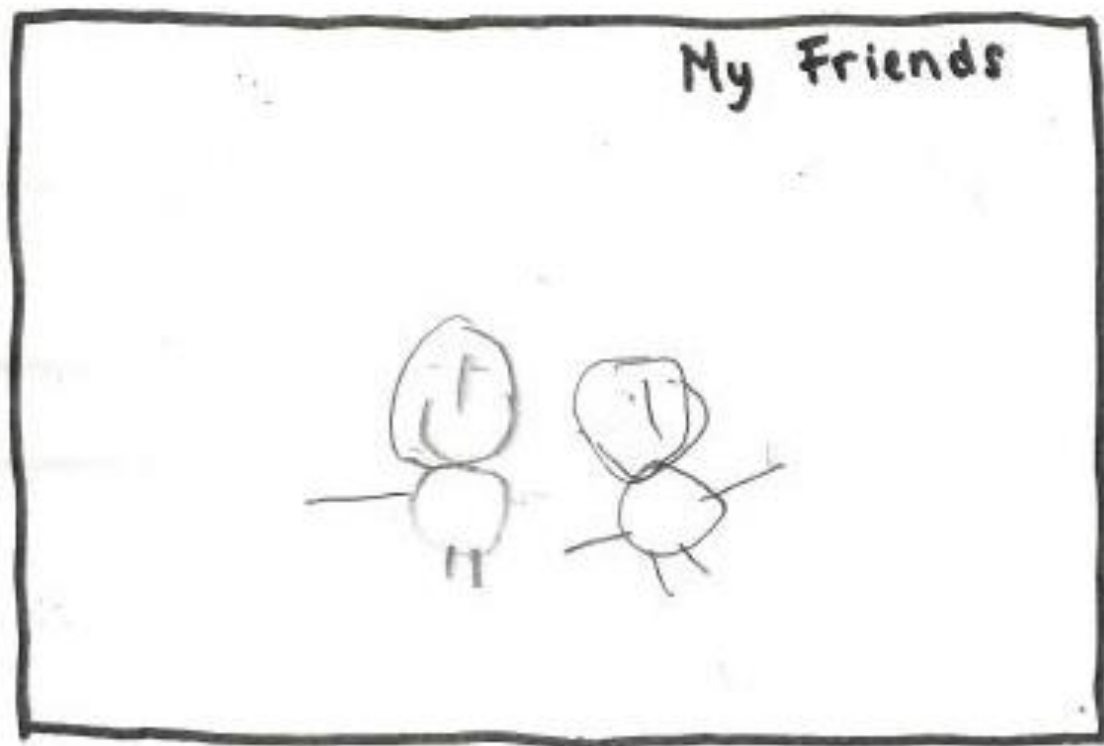
Charlie's drawings

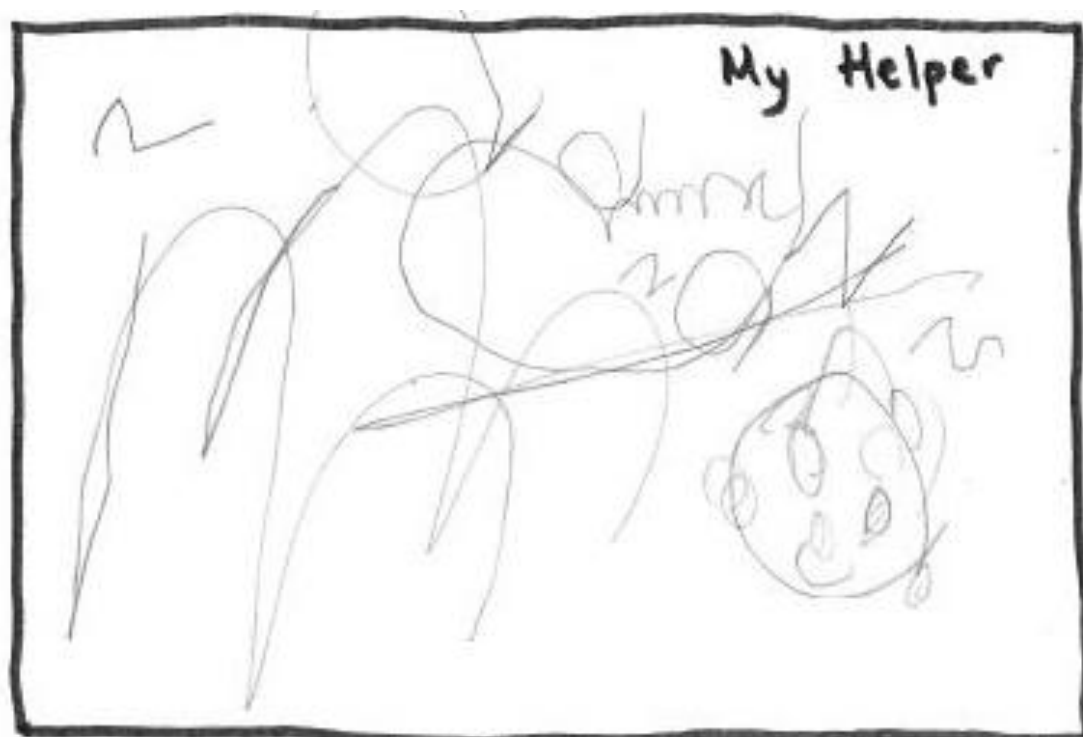
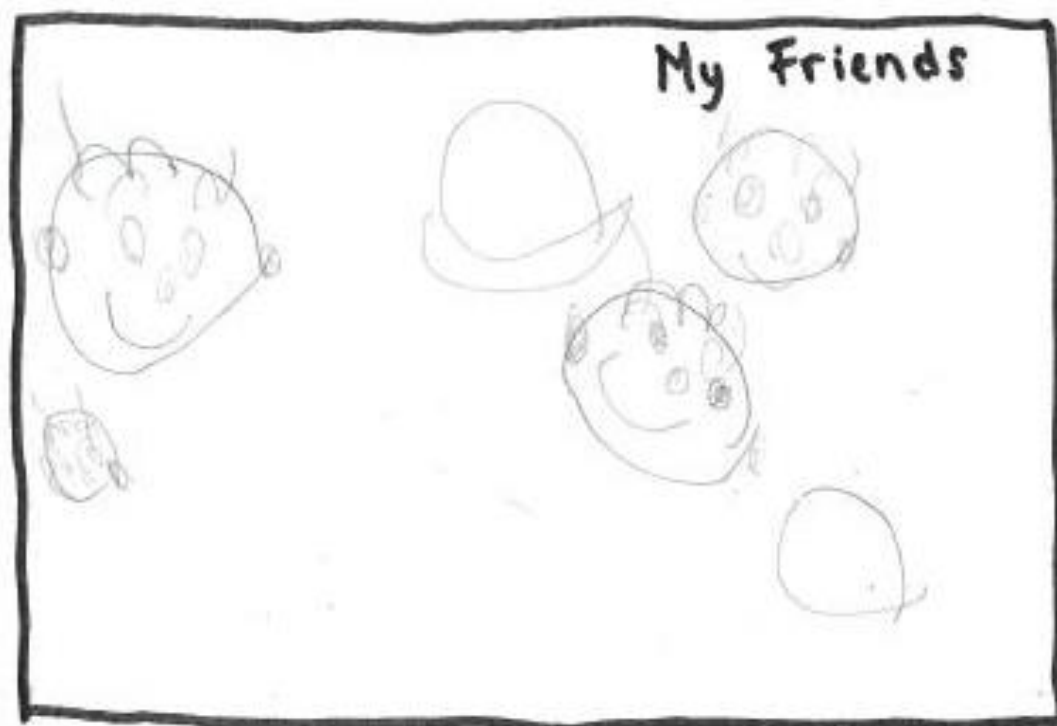




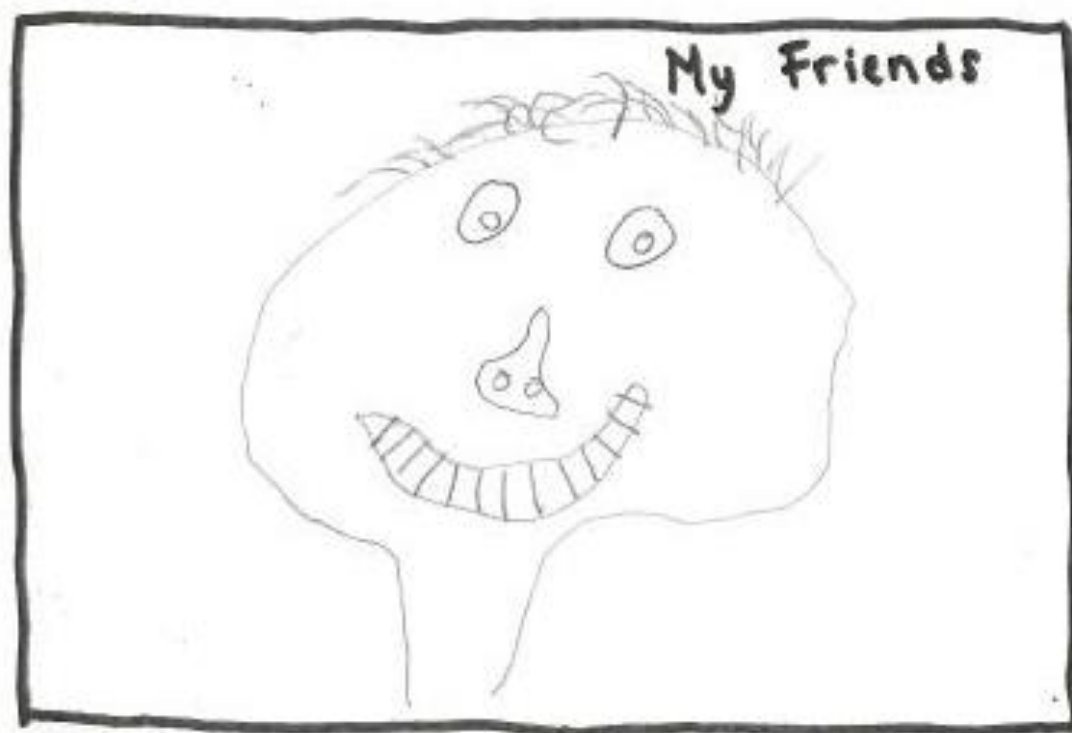


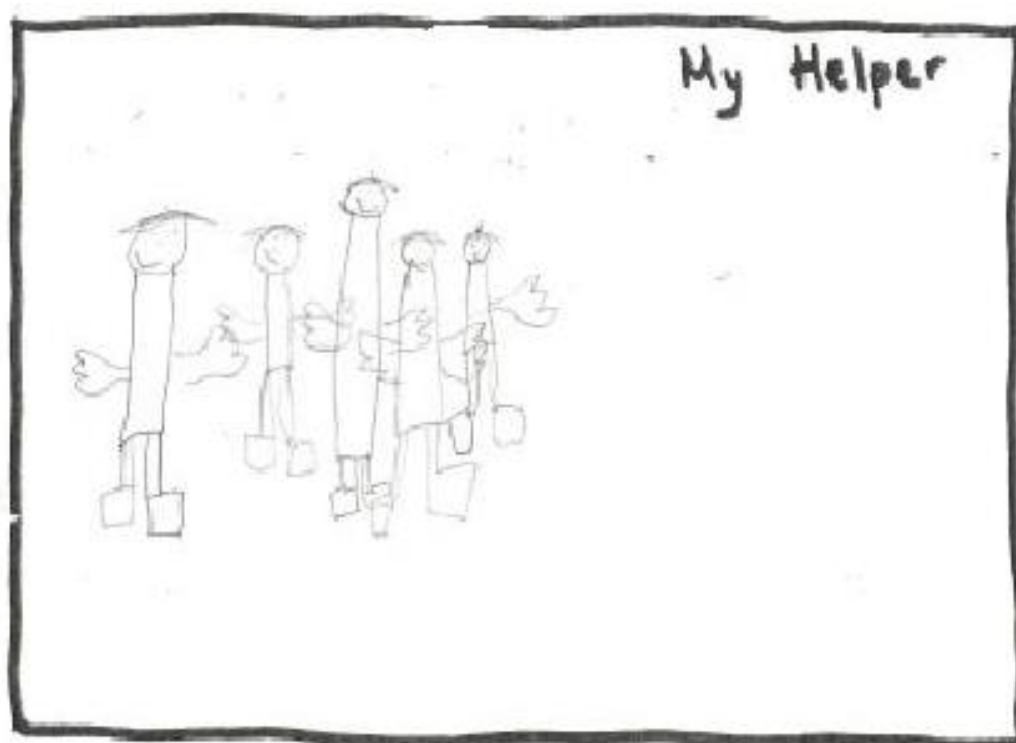
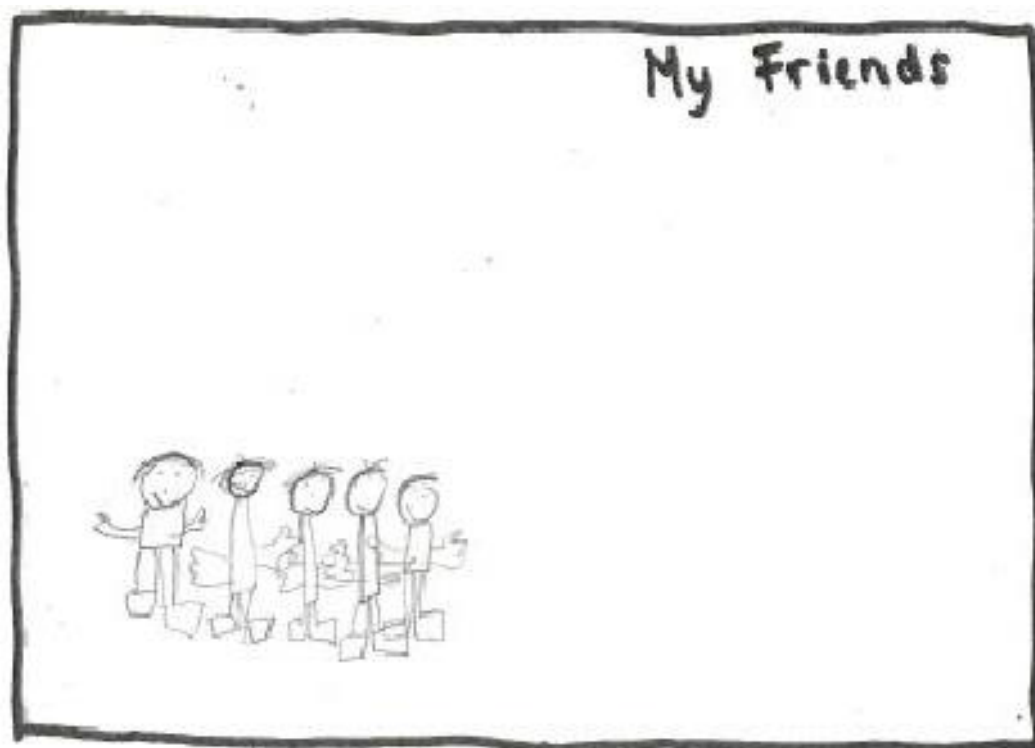


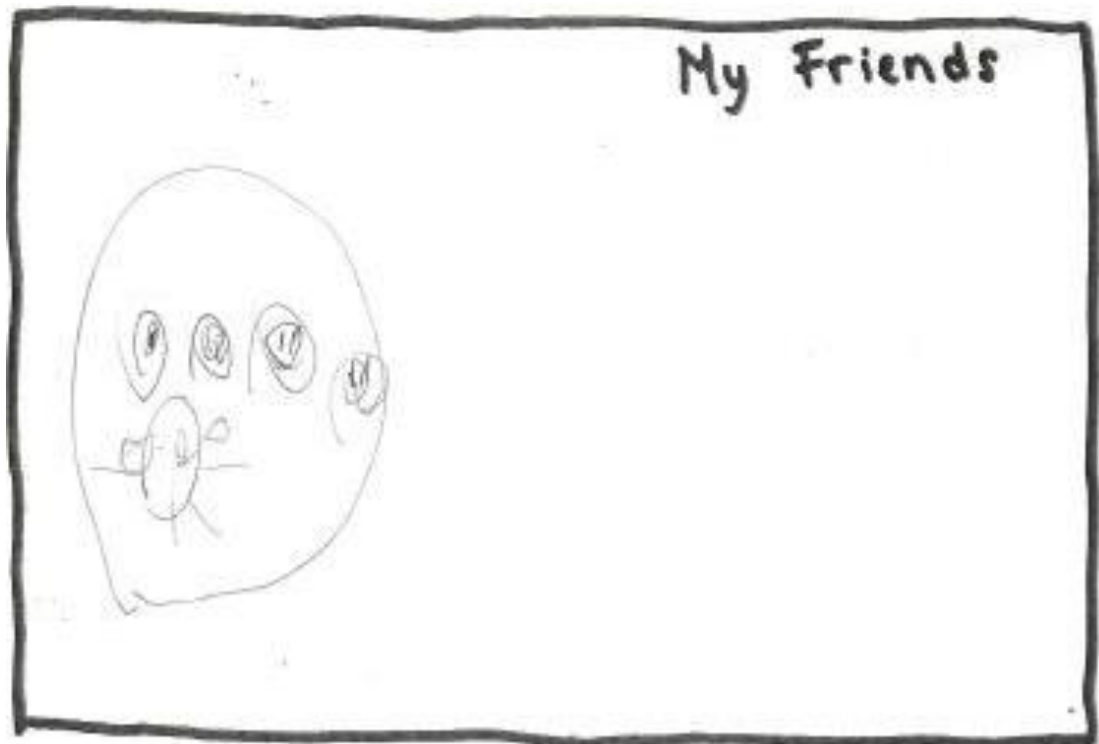




Lucie's drawings



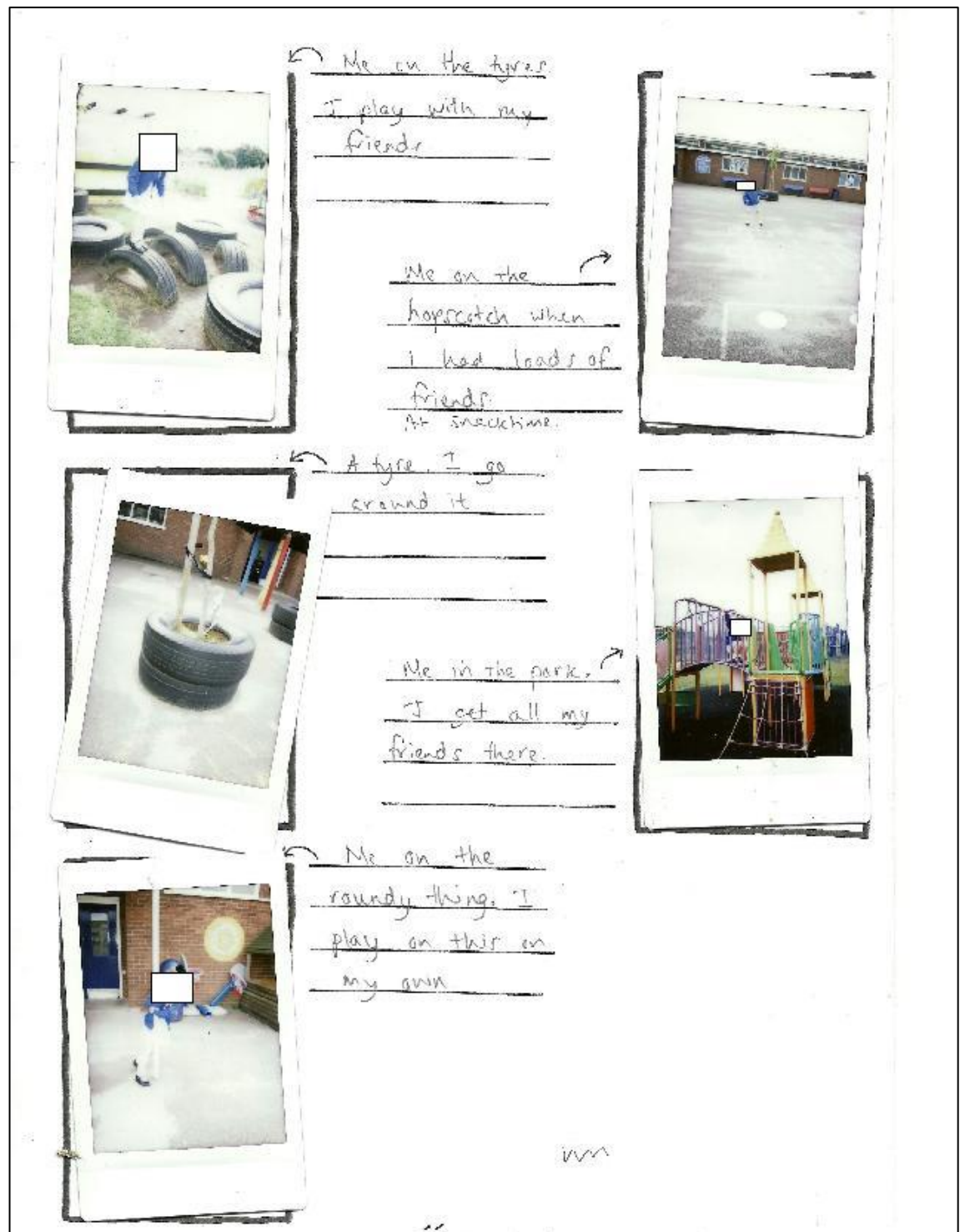






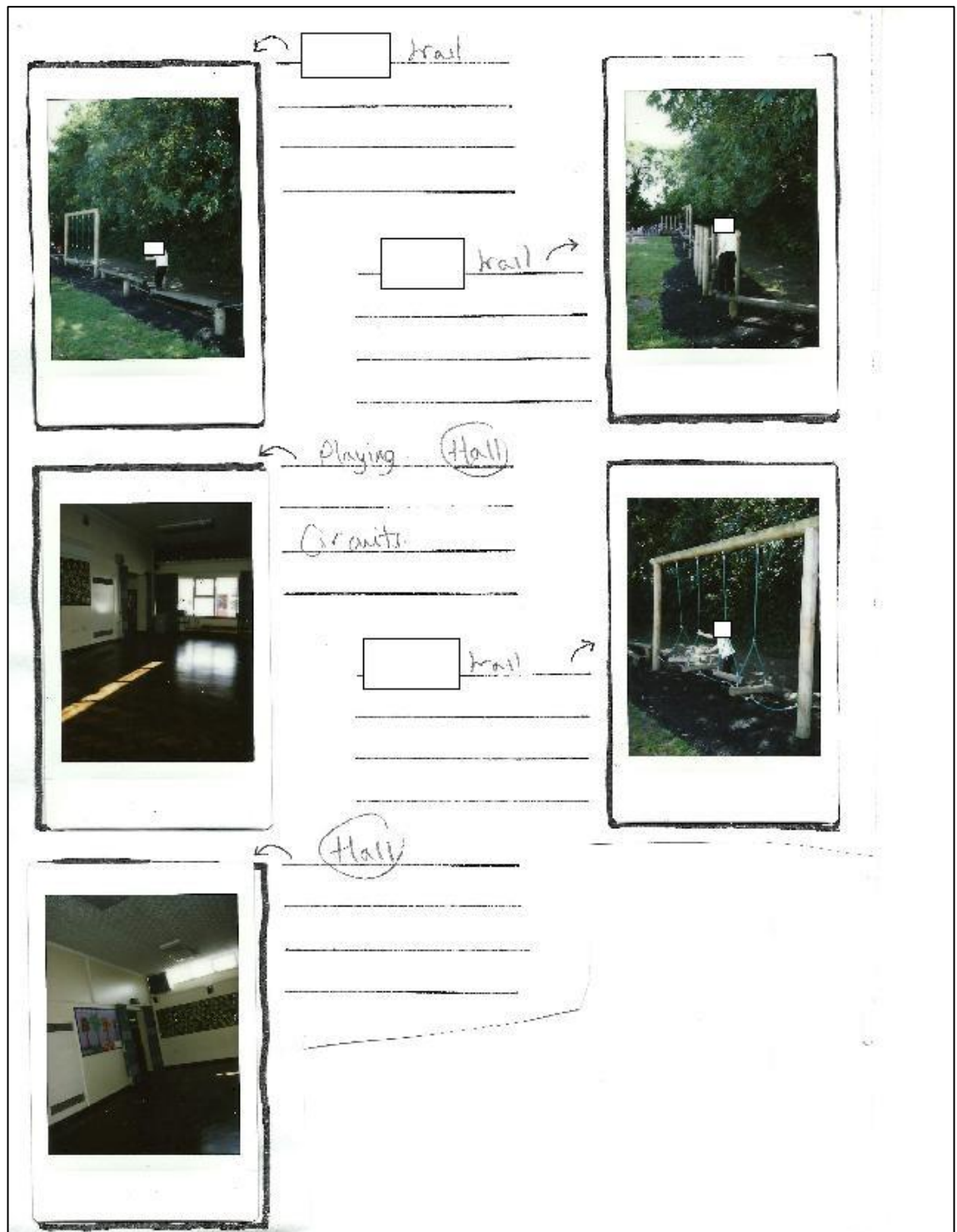
## F: Photographs taken by the pupils

Olivia's photographs

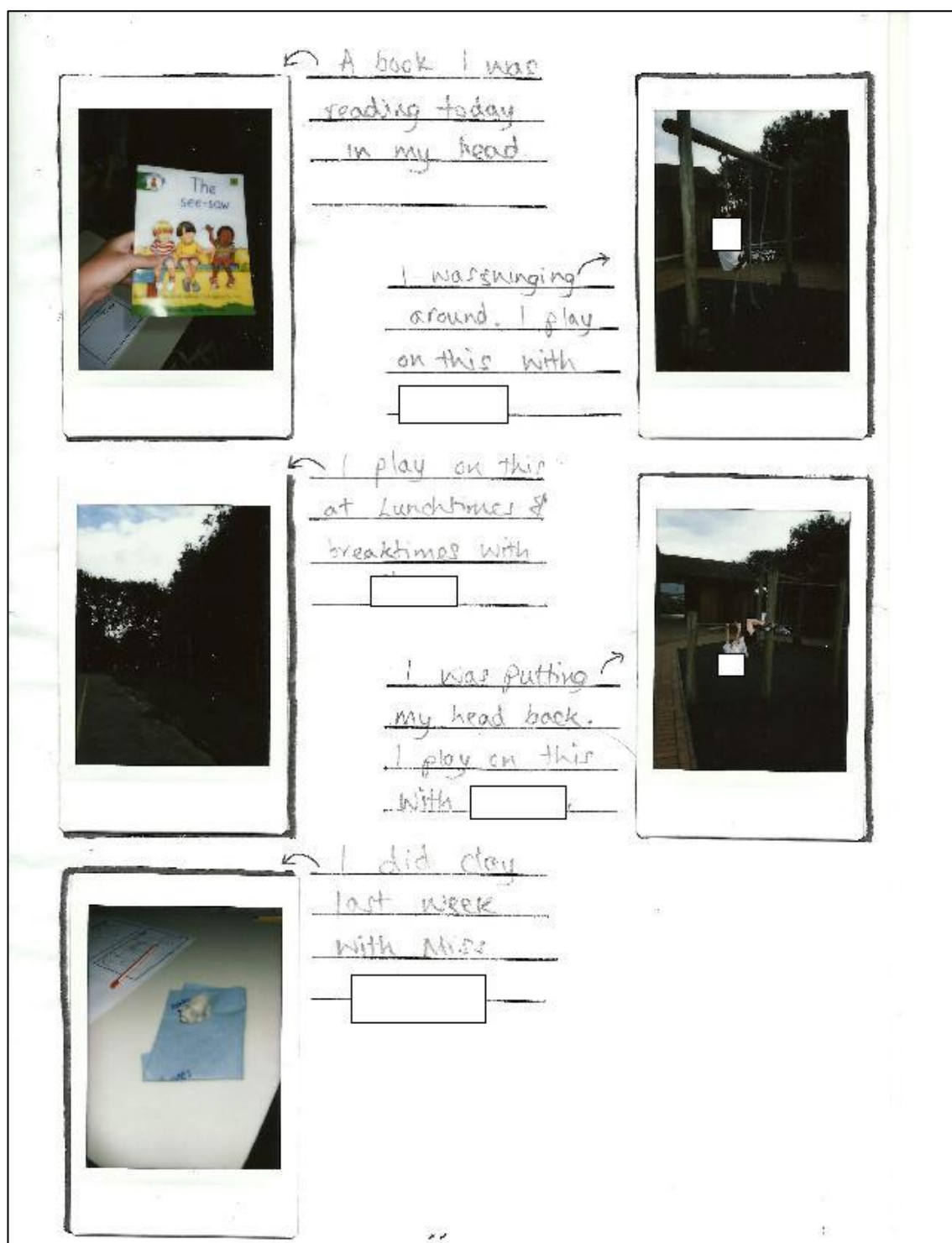




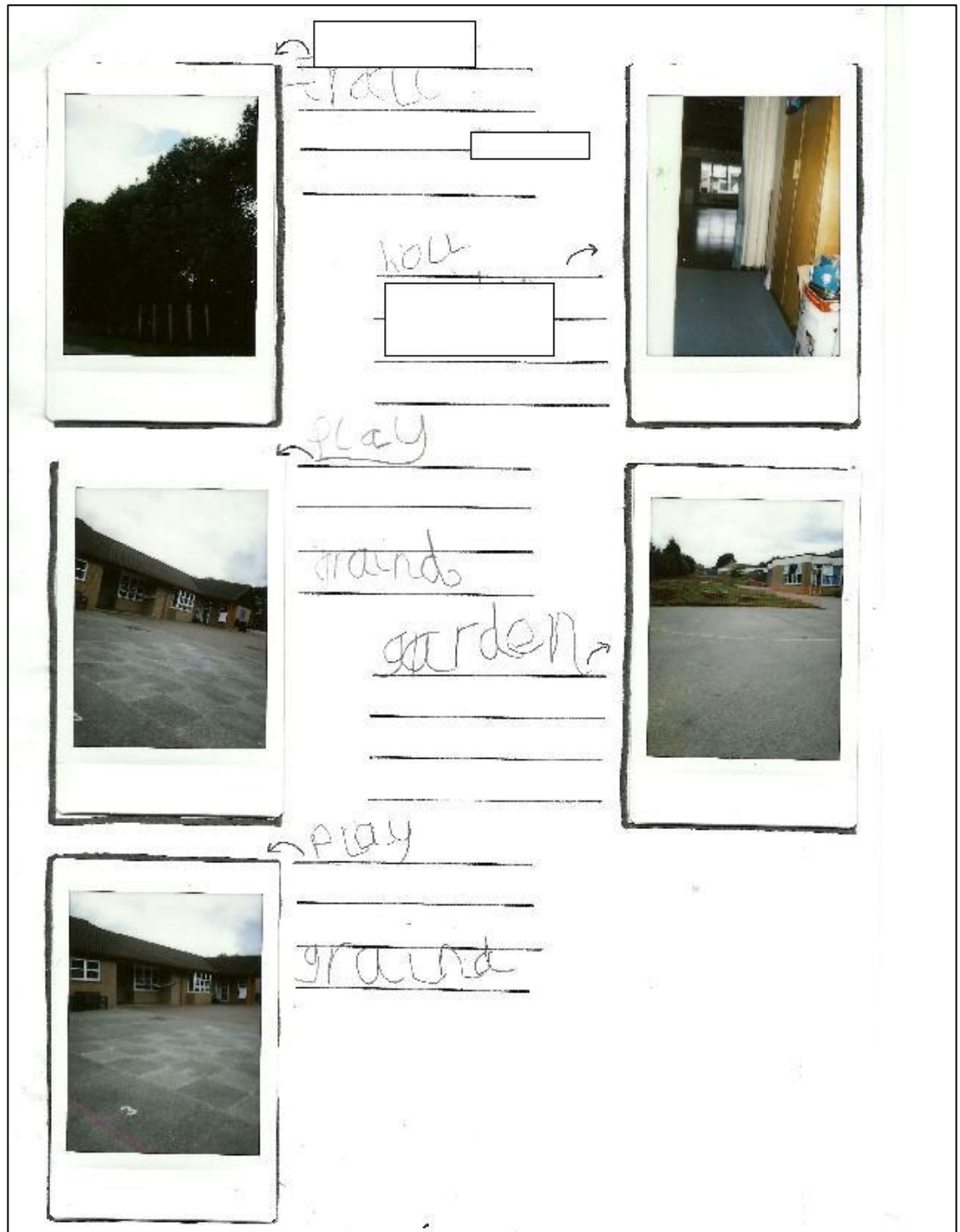
# Jake's photographs



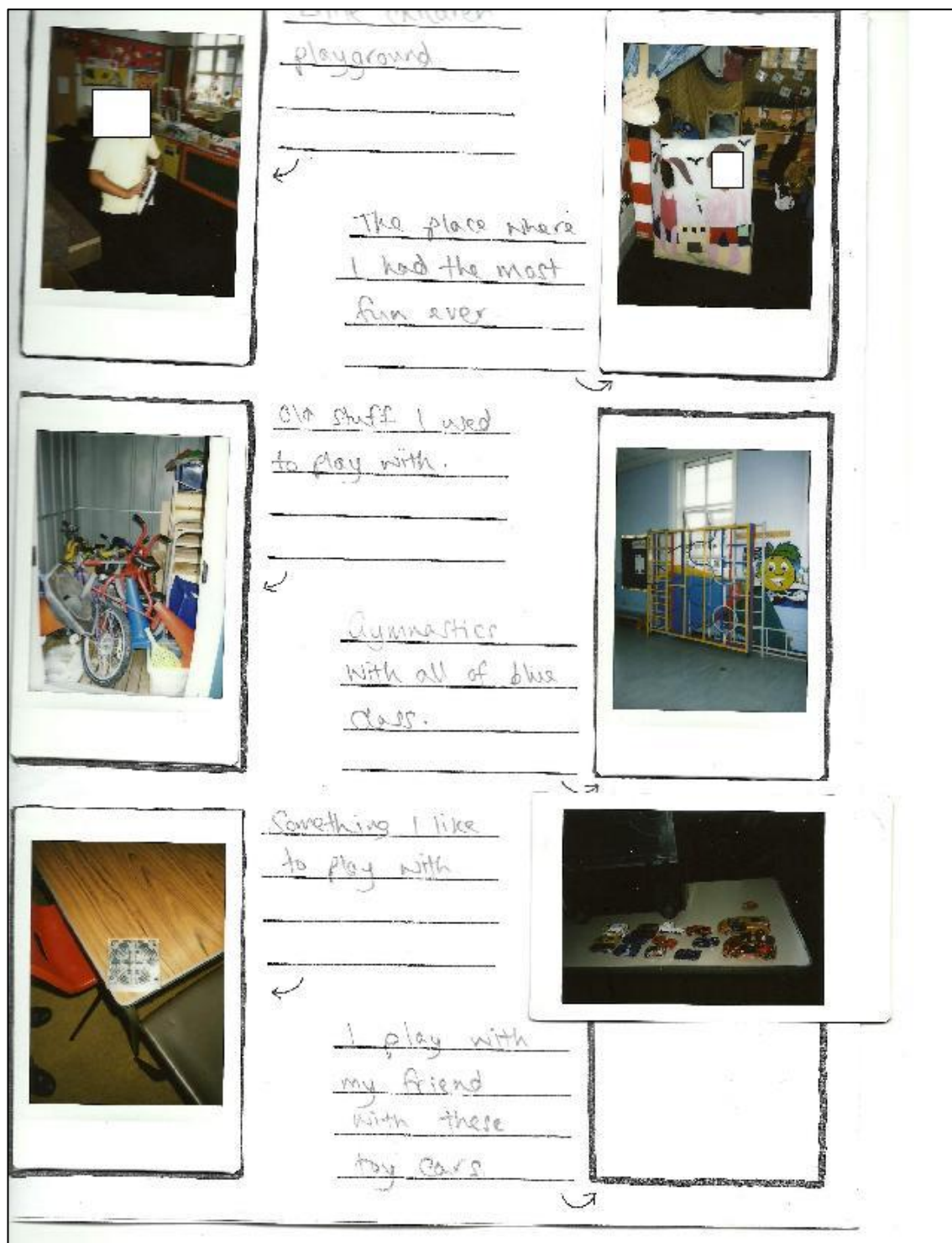
# Charlie's photographs



# Ryan's photographs

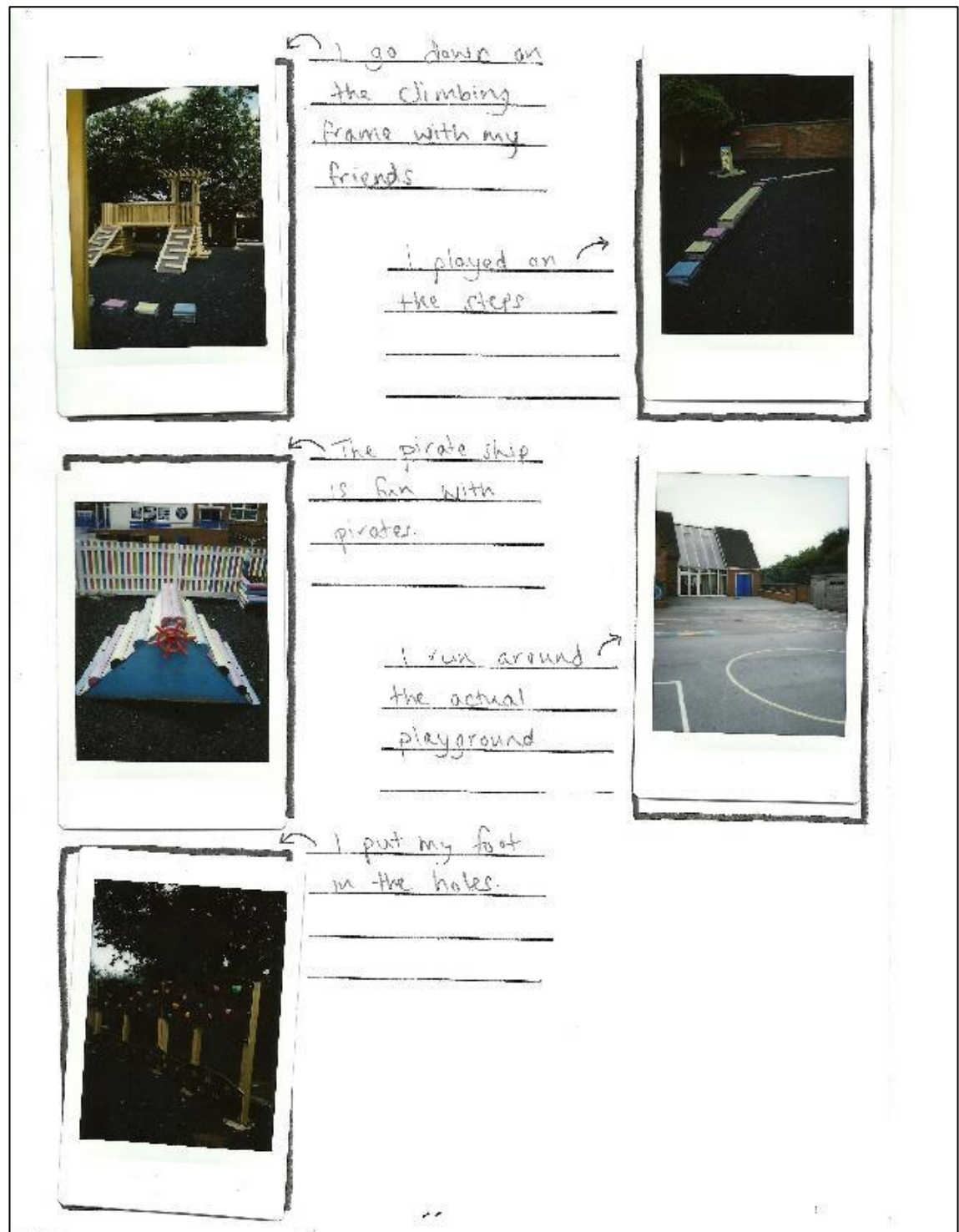


# Kai's photographs





Matthew's photographs

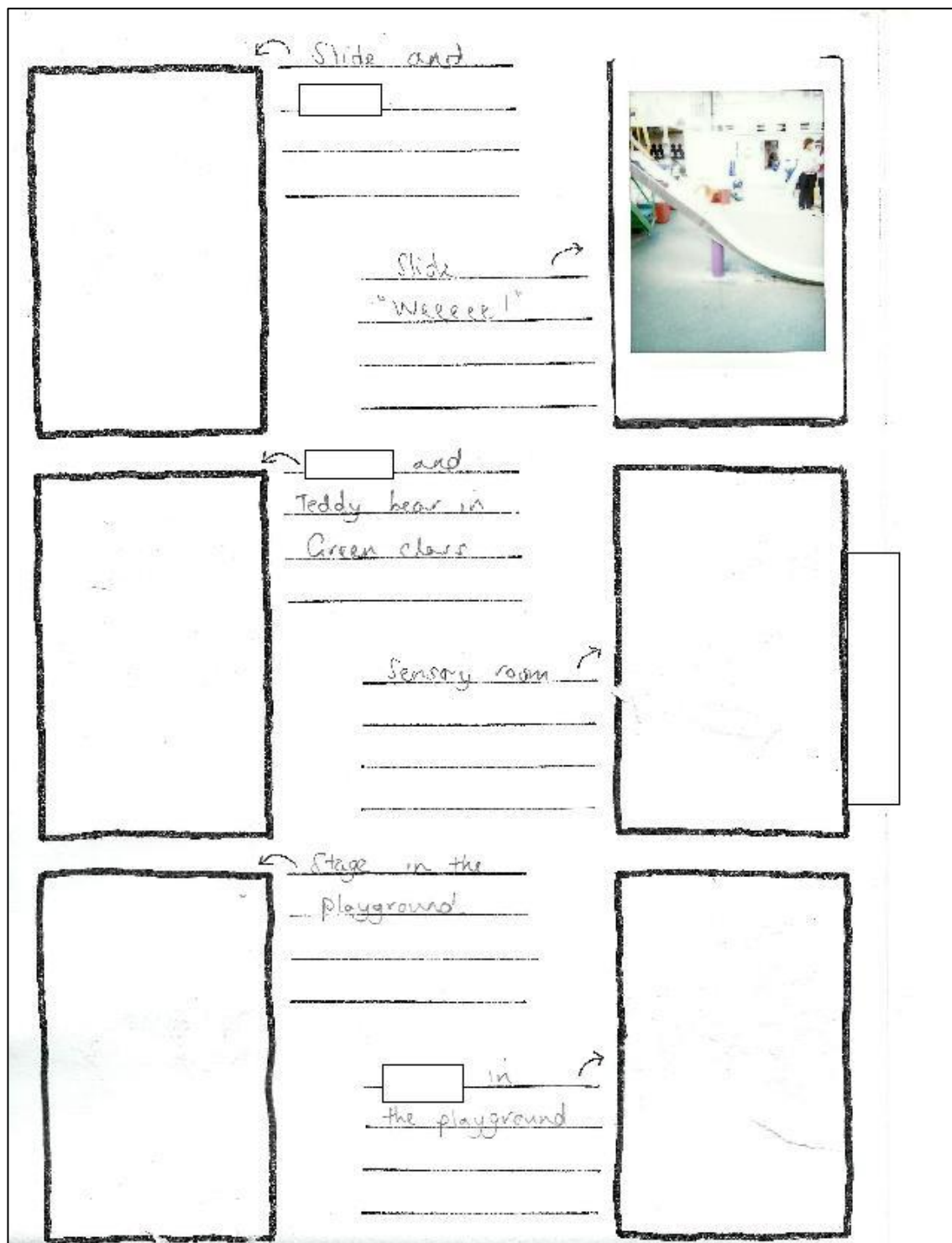


Gopal's photographs



## Sneha's photographs

(Sneha's mother only consented to the use of photographs in which Sneha was not present)



Lucie's photographs

↖ We play tag  
there

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---



---

We get games  
out and play  
them

---



---



---

↖ The hump  
play in here at  
lunchtime

---



---



---

What we make  
stuff with

---



---



---

↖ When we play  
outside we've got  
a little area

---



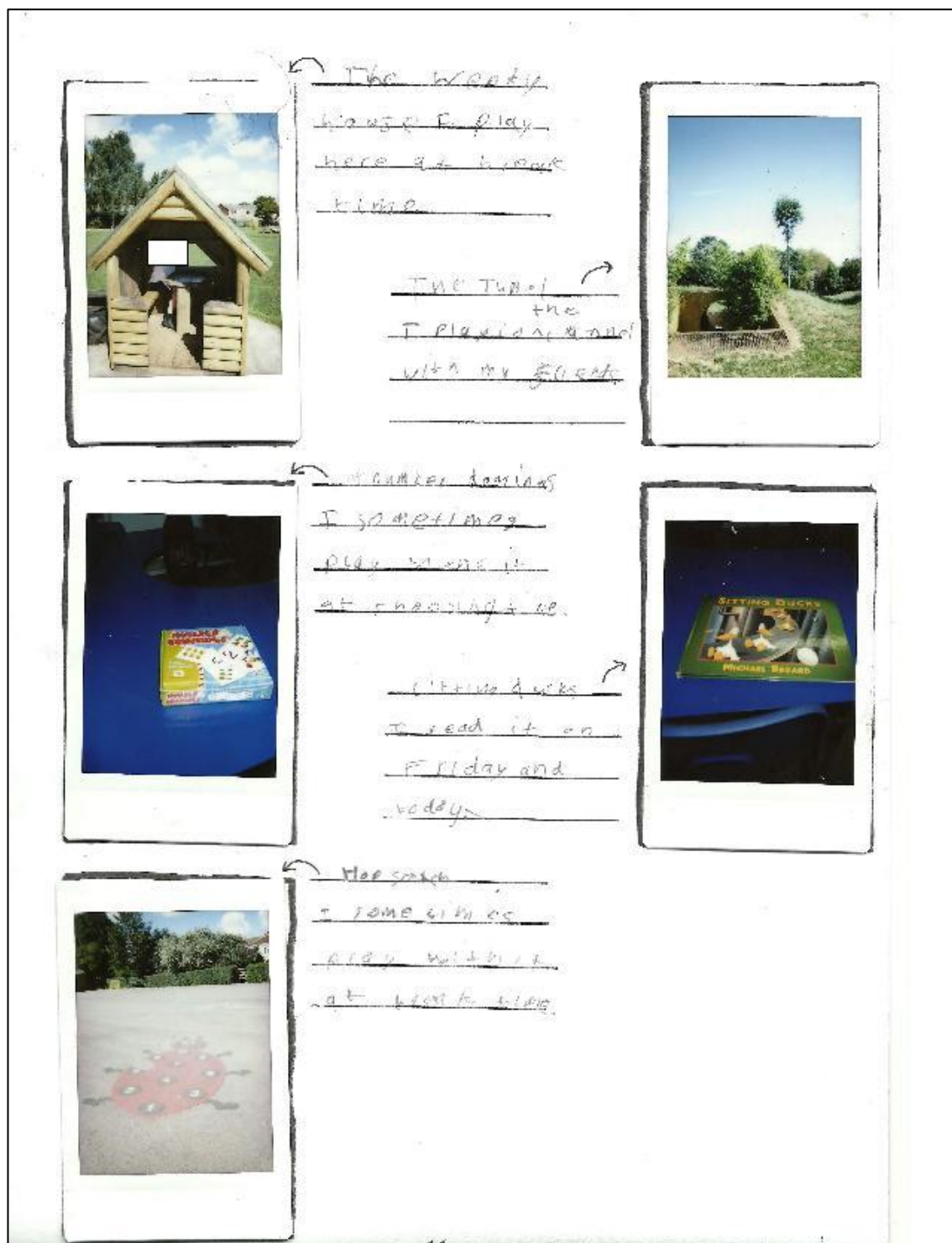
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# Henry's photographs



Seth's photographs

← train

sometimes I  
can remember  
play with   
sometimes sit with   
Lego when Mrs  
 says its playtime

← A fish - rocking  
there's a horse  
that's the same. I  
play on it alone.

clinking frame  
I play with

← climbing frame

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **G1: Feedback letter for head teachers**

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

Address:

Email: [alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk)

Tel:

Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2014

Dear Head teacher,

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

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

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

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

Kind regards,

Alison Wren  
PHD student, University of the West of England

## G2: Feedback for pupils

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

Email: [alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk)  
Tel:

Dear [child's name],

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



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

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



We took some photographs together using my camera. Lots of children told me how much they liked using the camera and seeing their photos afterwards. The photos you have taken are really good and helped me to remember where you liked to play in school.

Lots of the children I visited drew pictures for me of people who help them in school and of their friends. Some children drew only one friend but others drew lots of different friends. The drawings you did are brilliant, I hope you were proud of them and showed the copy I gave you to people.



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

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

From Alis



### **G3: Feedback for school staff and parents**

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

Email: [alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:alison.mcwhirter@uwe.ac.uk)

Tel:

#### **Feedback for school staff and parents**

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

#### **Results from observations**

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

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

#### **Results from interviews**

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

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

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

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

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

**Children's responses to the methods used**

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

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

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

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

**Thank you**

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

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

## H1: Worksheet for school staff – pupil talk

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

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



Can you think of any ways they could help you more?

Draw some ideas in the second box:





Prompt questions for school staff (while child is drawing)

Offer to / suggest that they label parts of the picture as this may elicit more detail

Refer to the picture for these questions if possible.

Ask for details about the image - Who is that? What are they doing? Which lesson are you in?

What do you like about having someone to help you in school?

Can you tell me about anything you don't like?

Do you have any ideas about how people could help you more?

What types of things do you think you need the most help with?

What types of things can you do without help?

Can you think of anything that you find hard at school?

How could [TA name] help you with that?

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

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

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

## **H2: Worksheet for school staff – monitoring opportunities for peer interaction**

### **Worksheet: Monitoring the peer interactions of pupils with SEN**

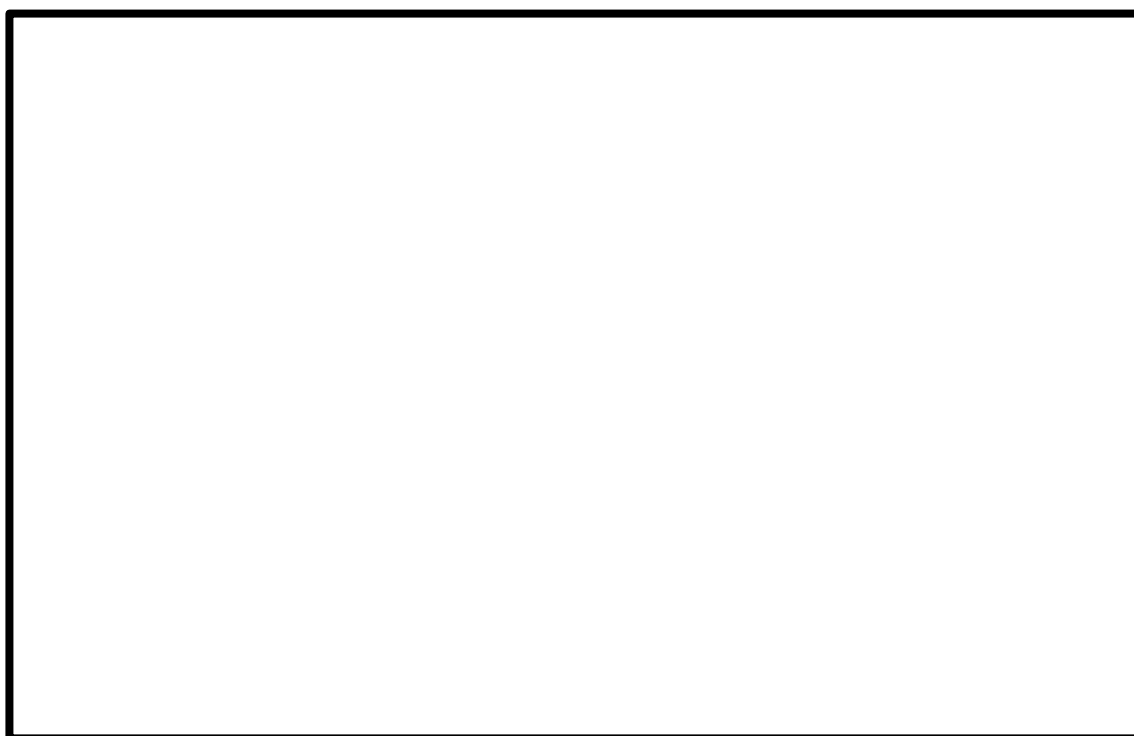
Research has shown that talk with peers is important for children's learning.

This worksheet is designed to monitor the amount of peer interactions occurring in class for an individual pupil with SEN. It is split into two sections, the first for school staff and the second for the pupils themselves.

#### **Activity for school staff**

Map the main classroom in the box below.

Include carpet and breakout spaces.



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

#### Reflecting on the map

Which spaces in the classroom is the most pupil talk happening?

What is different about these spaces?

What could be changed to support peer talk in the spaces where little peer talk occurs?

**Activity for pupils with SEN**

Talking with your friends helps you to learn.

We want you to keep track of the times when you talk to your friends.

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

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning					
Break time & Lunchtime					
Afternoon					

**Questions for the end of the week**

Do you talk to your friends more often at break and lunchtimes or in lessons?

Why do you think that is?

Do you talk to your friends more in the morning or the afternoon?

Why do you think that is?

Could you talk to your friends more in class about the things you are learning?

Can you think of anything that would help you to do this?