

Sharon Clarke

What are the social benefits and drawbacks for ASD students attending a Base in School X?

Submitted to the University of Wales in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the

Degree of Master of Education

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

2018

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Abstract

School X is a comprehensive school which offers a Base for autistic children. This research looks at how well the autistic students who attend School X develop social skills. The views of professionals who work on a regular basis with autistic children and their families; the students, their parents and the staff who work closely with the children on a daily basis were all involved in the research. Each stakeholder provided a different, but a valued, viewpoint. The research included a range of qualitative methods varying from parental surveys to informal questionnaires with students. The outcomes of the research showed that the students attending the Base were affected positively in many ways including the benefit from mixing with mainstream children, consistency and safety provided by the Base and the staff. Recommendations made included the sharing of the good practice that is already evident within the Base and possible changes that could improve the provision for autistic students across the whole of the school where there were gaps in teacher knowledge and experience.

Declarations and Statements

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed *S Clarke*

Date 01/09/2018

STATEMENT 1

This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA(Education).

Signed *S Clarke*

Date 01/09/2018

STATEMENT 2

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed *S Clarke*

Date 01/09/2018

STATEMENT 3

I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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MA(Ed) Dissertation

Word Count

I confirm that the word count for my MA(Ed) dissertation (excluding appendices and reference list) is:

16391

Signed: *S Clarke*

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Glossary

NAS – National Autistic Society

AET – Autism Education Trust

FSM – Free School Meals

HoD – Head of Department

ALN – Additional Learning Needs

ASD – Autistic Spectrum Disorder

WG – Welsh Government

LEA – Local Education Authority

SEN – Special Educational Needs

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the students and parents, who without I would not have been able to carry out this research. Thank you to the staff at the Base for allowing me to work with the students on a regular basis; also for sharing their thoughts and experiences gained from working with the students. Thirdly I would like to thank the professionals who shared with me their vast knowledge and experience. Lastly, I would like to thank my tutor, Sian Brooks, for the invaluable guidance and support given.

Introduction

Opinion on whether children with special educational needs should attend mainstream or specialist schools is very much divided (Wall, 2007) In particular, this study looks at children with Autism attending mainstream school. Autism, as defined by The National Autistic Society, 'is a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them'. (National Autistic Society, 2018) Baron-Cohen (2008) and Frith (1989) also give detailed accounts of what autism is and what it means to be on the autistic spectrum. Autism, as explain by Baron-Cohen (2008, p15) 30 years ago was very rare, '4 in 10,000' as compared to diagnosis more recently '1 in 100'. Both authors explain that the needs of those on the autistic spectrum are now better met due to the recognition that the autistic spectrum is wide and each child or adult has individual and differing needs. The National Autistic Society (NAS), among other support charities, provide guidance on this big decision for parents. There is no clear cut way for parents when making the decision to see which the best option for their child is. The NAS believes that the starting point when making this decision should very much be the 'individual needs' of each child. (Autism.org.uk, 2017,) The purpose of this research is to study a small group of students, all of which are on the autistic spectrum; these students are all attending a specialist Base within a mainstream school. For the purpose of this research, the school throughout will be referred to as School X and the area of the school which is purely for the provision of autistic students, the Base. The focus of this study will be on the progress students have made socially since attending School X. Socialising with other students, for many autistic children, can be a constant issue; The Autism Education Trust (AET) explains that this is often because autistic children 'struggle to understand the social behaviour of others and what is socially acceptable behaviour'. (Autismeducationtrust.org.uk, 2017)

The setting for this research is school X. School X is a Secondary Comprehensive with around 1200 students on role. The school is in a Welsh Valley and has 25% FSM (Free School Meals) students. The Base has been in place since September 2014 and the number of children accessing the Base has grown year on year with new admissions each September. Most children come from a Base within a primary school within catchment but others travel slightly further to access the school as there is no provision in their local secondary schools. Within the Base there are currently 18 children, of

these only 4 are girls. These children are supported by 3 key members of staff. The Head of Department has worked in the school for over 10 years and appointed as Head of Department (HoD) on its formation. The HoD is always situated in the Base and this is a constant for the children. Other key workers will then support children in lessons where needed; all students have a flexible timetable where they attend some or in some cases all, mainstream lessons.

In 2013 the proposal for the ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) Base was made to School X by the local council. At this time not only was I a teacher governor at School X but I was responsible for Student Voice and Community Links. This meant that I was involved on many levels with feedback for the proposal and was privy to hear the opinions of a diverse range of stakeholders. As expected some voiced concerns about autistic children integrating with mainstream children and in particular the development or possible lack of development of social skills (Mesibov, Shea and Schopler, 2014, Chp.3). My current role as an Associate Senior Leader means I have little involvement on a daily Base with the Base apart from the children who I teach personally but have seen many of these children coping with the issues of developing social skills. Since 2014, the initial year of the Base there have been reviews of the provision for children but the purpose of this research is to look predominantly at social skills and how these are developed and possibly hindered for children attending the Base in School X.

Within the borough where School X is located, parents have two choices when it comes to provision for autistic children at secondary level. The first of these evidently being the Base at School X, the second choice is a Base in a different school located 10 miles away from School X and established in 2001. In School X children have access to the Base and attend mainstream lessons, some with support but many without. The class sizes can be anything between about 20 and 30. (Full Fact, 2017, Class Sizes in England and Wales) The second option is a specialist school which caters for children with disabilities. This is a specialist school that has a department specifically for children with autism. Within this department there are small classes (4-6) with a high staff ratio. Children are placed in classes according to their age and learning ability. The aims of this department are summarised 'to develop communication, interaction, self-help, behaviour, leisure and social skills' (Moodle.bridgend.gov.uk, 2018). Currently registered with NAS, in Wales, there are 69 schools with provision for children with

autism. Just under half of these schools are specialist schools for children with additional learning needs (ALN).

The aims of the Base within School X reflect those not only for all ALN children but those for all children within the school: ‘The aims of education for pupils with difficulties and disabilities are the same as those for all pupils.’ (School X, 2018, Additional Learning Needs)

These aims include ensuring that all students have equal access to a broad, balanced curriculum which is differentiated to meet individual needs and abilities and the opportunities to join all activities with access to support.

The primary reason for this study is to identify the social impacts there are for autistic children attending a Base within a school such as School X. A school with limited support for children and staff, in particular teachers, who are not specifically trained in teaching autistic children. Likewise, a school where autistic children will be mixed with mainstream children of all different abilities. The positive impact on autistic children’s social skills will be reviewed in-depth as well as any drawbacks which may have resulted from children attending School X. It is impossible to compare the benefits and drawbacks as compared to a specialist school but by looking at each child’s social skills and the progress made at School X it is hoped through looking at the viewpoints of students, staff and parents that specific benefits and drawbacks can be drawn together.

This project has a narrow focus with research being carried out only in School X. This allows research to be carried out in depth with children, parents and staff.

The research for both the literature review and primary research aims to answer these questions:

- What are ‘social skills’ and what programmes and methods are already in place to develop social skills with autistic teenagers?
- What are the positives and negatives impacts on social skills of ASD students attending school X?
 - o Has integration into a secondary school affected students social skills?
 - o Has the integration into such a provision affected the students’ social skills?
- What are the key reasons for these effects?

Before summarising I will aim to compare the differing opinions of stakeholders considering the individuality of each student and finally highlight the areas of strength that attending the Base within School X provides and where possible make suggestions for changes. In 2002 the Welsh Government adopted the 'Social Model of Disability'. Disability Wales defines:

Impairment' as 'an injury, illness, or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a long-term effect on physical appearance and/or limitation of function within the individual that differs from the commonplace.

This is comparative to the term disability which unlike the above definition recognises that individuals with disabilities have barriers taking part in society. (Disability Wales, 2018) The Welsh Government gives examples to support these definitions such as impairment is someone who 'has had a leg amputated', 'who is visually impaired or deaf'. The category which autism falls under is disability. It is explained as barriers that affect individuals which the rest of society take for granted (<http://gov.wales>) In particular with autism we are looking at the inability for some to live independently or to make choices. Having said this it is evident that autism is such a wide spectrum and many individuals learn skills that help them live independent and successful lives. The NAS in its explanation of what autism is refers to the major barriers of communication and the development of relationships with others. Most on the autistic spectrum will struggle at some level or other to make new contacts or how to act in social situations. The NAS refer to the autistic spectrum as a 'hidden disability'. Many of the problems that those on the autistic spectrum will face are not evident to others, for example, sensory issues or the ability to process language. As a teacher who quite often has autistic children within my class I have learnt that my teaching needs to be adapted to ensure my teaching is inclusive. A simple example is my use of sarcasm or idioms and use of some phrases which other students may understand the meaning of straight away can be confusing for others. Both Wall (2007, p.110) and Baron-Cohen (2008, Chp.5) make reference to the literal way in which individuals with ASD understand many phrases. This is discussed in depth in a Welsh Government (WG) Guide (2014, p.44) as detailed below. This explains how 'people with ASD will often have a very literal understanding of language'. Further to this examples are given of idiom, metaphors and similes which may cause confusion or upset to a child with ASD. Within the Base that I will be researching there are students on very different ends of the spectrum. Some students are diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome and are very high functioning and are

on the More Able and Talented register. Moyes (2002, Chp.1) describes the term ‘high-functioning’ and explains that these children have usually average or above average levels of intelligence. She states ‘a child with ‘high-functioning’ autism could be a child who has many self-stimulatory behaviours, little social interactive ability, little expressive language, and yet has a near normal IQ score. (2002, P.5) Other students within the Base struggle with instructions, communication with others and need 1 to 1 support. As recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO):

The autism spectrum is very broad and can affect people with all levels of ability. Although there is no cure for ASD, appropriate support and intervention can help people to reach their potential (WHO, 2016, p.6)

The focus of this research is on social skills and clearly, if autistic children are supported whilst in school to develop these skills or tools to enable them to interact with other students then this could help them as adults. WHO discuss the problems that many have with education and the problems with building relationships and establishing and maintaining friendships. Through the research I will look at these issues and how placement in the Base can either benefit or have a hindrance on these issues. (WHO, 2016, p.15)

The ‘Draft Additional Learning Needs Code February 2017’ is a very detailed document and yet to come into effect. Kirsty Williams, current Welsh Cabinet Secretary Education recently announced that this Bill is expected to go into law by the autumn of 2019. This Bill, focusing completely on children with Additional Learning Needs, echoes this belief in growth mindset and raising aspirations:

It is important that the child or young person recognises that they are on a journey and that the support and provision they are provided with should support them to increase their independence and to achieve their future ambitions. (6.21 p34)
All professionals working with them should share high aspirations for the child or young person. (17.5 p158)
Schools and FEIs should raise the career aspirations of their ALN students and broaden their employment horizons. (17.6, p158)

In summary, there are many organisations to support children, adults, families and partners with autism. Government legislation aims to support children with all additional learning needs and there is a plethora of information available about strategies and theories to support children on the autistic spectrum. Throughout the literature review these will be examined in detail with a key focus on the social skills of

autistic children. The research that follows will look at the opinion of not only the students who currently attend the Base but also parents, key workers and professionals. Interviews are to be carried out with 2 professionals. Firstly Person C, she is very involved through her work with support for ASD children and was part of a team that wrote a guide for parents on supporting their newly diagnosed ASD child and has addressed schooling and the options. This guide, Autism: A Guide for Parents and Carers Following Diagnosis was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2014 and will be a key document that I will be referring to as it too has been written following research with doctors, mental and child health specialist, parents and children and adults on the autistic spectrum. Throughout this research this guide will be referred to as the WG Guide. Also being interviewed is Person D, the Charity manager of Charity X. Charity X support individuals and families with autism and Person D, has personal experience with an autistic son. Person D, has a great deal of experience working with parents and advising them on strategies to use and discussing issues such as the best options when it comes to schooling. (Halcyon Foundation, 2018)

Literature Review

This literature review looks at the history of autism and the changes there have been from a medical perspective and more importantly a schooling perspective over time.

The word autism can be traced back over 100 years ago to 1911 when Bleuler used the word to describe individuals with social anxieties who were withdrawn from contributing in society. Cumine, Dulop and Stevenson (2010) describe how Kanner and Asperger brought about change and clarity to the terms of both autism and asperger. In 1944 Hans Asperger, a paediatric doctor, wrote a report which recognised the features of autistic children. This paper was not translated from German to English until 1980 and so prior to 1980 had limited readership Kanner, at the same time, was carrying out his own research in the USA. He too recognised in his 1943 paper characteristics of autistic children. Like aspergers these included a withdrawal in most cases and sensitivity to stimuli such as noise and issues with communication. This interpretation differs slightly from that of Frith (1989) who believes that the characteristics described by Kanner and Asperger are quite different. Frith points out that at the time, late 1980's, the diagnosis of aspergers syndrome was 'reserved for the rare intelligent and highly verbal, near-normal autistic child' (Frith, 1989, p8) whereas the term Autism was used to describe those who most resembled Kanner's definition of autism:

We must, then, assume that these children have come into the world with innate ability to form the usual biologically provide affective contact with people, just as other children come into the world with innate physical or individual handicaps.

(Kanner, 1943 cited Frith, 1989, p.9)

Since this early research, there has been an abundance of research into establishing what autism is. Frith (1989) argued that, despite previous beliefs, autism is not a disorder of children it is a disorder of development. Frith opposes the myth believed by many that autistic children become autistic from a lack of love from their parents and claims that autism is a 'rare and tragic event that can hit anyone'. Looking at more recent literature, the WG Guide too describes ASD as a developmental disorder. The WG Guide, aimed at parents of ASD children, explains how children are all affected to different degrees and in a wide variety of ways. The definition of ASD is simplified using the following description - 'ASD affects the way a person communicates with and relates to other people and the world around them' (WG Guide, 2014, p.9). The WG

Guide too introduces the concept of the three impairments, most commonly affecting individuals with ASD. Wall (2007, p.14-15) discusses in further detail the 'three impairments,' also known as the 'triad of impairments'. These impairments include – Social Interaction, Social Communication and Imagination. In her introduction to ASD Wall (2007, p.9) describes ASD as a hidden disability where an individual has no physical disability and may not even present themselves as having a disability. In fact, Wall states that some individuals with ASD, due to their 'unusual behaviours' may seem to the general public 'odd, eccentric or even bizarre'. Bogdashina (2005) supports this theory using the work of Wing. Wing (1993 cited in Bogdashina, 2005, p.26) categorised 'impairments in social interaction' of individuals on the autistic spectrum. Wing claims that each individual will fall into one of these categories, one of these being the 'active but odd' group (Bogdashina, 2005, p.24) Wing believes that children in this group will interact with other children but the interaction will be one way and the children in this group will pay no attention to the response given. Despite this reference to Wing's work, Bogdashina (2005,) states the importance of every child with ASD being seen as an individual and the importance of recognising each child's individual needs. This takes us back to the Key points made by Baron-Cohen (2008, Chp. 2) and the move to autism being recognised as a spectrum where children of all different levels of autism are recognised and their particular needs acknowledged. Similarly, The Journal of Nursing (2009, 59:2, p.22) refers to autism as a 'complex disorder' and recognises three 'distinctive behaviours that characterise autism' - social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication.

Since the work of Kanner and Asperger, the understanding of autism has come a very long way and its recognition by professionals has meant improvements in the support available for individuals on the ASD spectrum. In 1980 the term "Infantile autism" was listed for the very first time in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The DSM is a handbook used by professionals in health care. Although produced in the USA this was and still is largely used throughout the world to diagnose mental disorders. Before this time children who showed many of the symptoms of ASD were actually diagnosed with 'childhood schizophrenia' (Parents, 2014)

Similarly, at this time there were changes in provision for SEN (Special Educational Needs) children in education. Brown (2016, p.91) reports this time as a move from

‘segregation to integration’. One of the major changes came about following the Warnock report in 1978. This report looked in detail at SEN within schools and addressed the placement of SEN students in mainstream schools. Brown explains that the Education Act 1981 incorporated many of the report’s recommendations. Campbell (2002, p.36) too sees this report and more importantly the Act which followed as a way forward for Local Education Authorities (LEA’s) and provision for SEN children in schools. Further changes to legislation and government policies such as the Code of Practice for SEN (DFE, 1994) and the green Paper (DfEE, 1997a) moved inclusion forward, asserting ‘the right of the student with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools ‘wherever possible’(p37). Farrell (2003, p.28) reports that this Paper, although promoting inclusion, fails to define the term and that the ‘implicit view that emerges, however, is that inclusion is to do with placing students in mainstream schools rather than special schools’ when sometimes, as has already been discussed it comes down to an individual’s needs.

What was crucial to the improvement of inclusive schooling in the view of Campbell (2002, p.15) was the UNESCO report in 1994, The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. This was an international agreement signed by 95 governments and 25 international organisations to show their commitment to SEN children and inclusive schooling. The Salamanca Statement argued that ‘children should learn together, whenever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have’. (UNESCO, 1994: 11-12)

These changes for SEN children, including those with ASD meant that provision and opportunities continued to develop. Wall (2007) provides a detailed list of the legislation, reports and guidance documents released between 1833 and 2006. These include documents relating to both health and education and documents primarily relating to ASD, such as the 2002 report, Autism in Schools: Crisis or Challenge?

This report carried out by the National Autistic Society provided some worrying results. The report recognised that within mainstream schools most teachers felt they were teaching more autistic children than they had ever done before but had not had the training or resources to support them. One of the key facts showed that 44% of schools with children with ASD said that they were not getting the support needed (Barnard, 2002). There were several follow ups to this report and in 2005 Hanbury produced a

guide Based on the findings - Educating Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders: A Practical Guide. Hanbury within this guide aims to help ‘practitioners’ and is clear that educational success can only come from a partnership between parents and schools. In particular, Hanbury explained the importance of teachers having an understanding of ASD, he points out in the later edition of this book:

There is no magic to teaching children with autism. Successful practice for students with autism is the result of sound knowledge, hard work and appropriate resources. It is an extension and refinement of many basic pedagogic principles (2012, p.75)

Hanbury (2012) confidently believes that no method of teaching will ‘cure’ autism in a child but good teaching and an understanding of students’ individual needs will help that individual student to progress and learn. Further to this Brown (2016, p.91-94) explains how government practices and policies have further transformed understanding. For example, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2015) highlighted the need for a child to be considered as an individual and involved in any decision-making - this could evidently refer to the type of schooling that child has the opportunity to choose which he / she thinks will better suit their individual needs. Brown amongst others believes that inclusion and in particular the provision for SEN children, in general, has ‘developed considerably in the last few decades’. Brown conversely also gives examples where students, although being provided for in mainstream schools, are still struggling with provision such as physical access and even cases of lower teacher expectations for SEN students. Wall (2007) echoes these concerns and discusses the issues of curriculum offered. Many mainstream schools do not have the flexibility of specialist schools and this is even reflective of the teaching styles used. Wall (2007, p.104) talks of the ‘delivery of the curriculum’. It is standard practice in secondary schools for teachers to stand at the front of a class and verbally teach the content, although very often supported by books or other materials this method of teaching is not always conducive to the learning of a student with communication problems and not accommodating for many students with ASD. Wall also refers to the NAS 2006 Campaign which, following legislation and policies such as the Removing Barriers to Achievement: The Government’s strategy for Sen (2004) and the Every Child Matters agenda highlighted that there were still many issues with inclusion for ASD students. This Campaign and paper entitled ‘Make School make Sense’ records the interviews of 28 autistic children which give a picture

of their experiences in school. Some of these interviews show very positively that inclusion in a mainstream school can work; whereas special schools work for others and unfortunately for some home-schooling is the only choice. There is much that practitioners could learn from this report probably recognising the type of students and how they feel when in school. (Reid and Batten, 2006, p.32) This research concludes with three very basic ‘demands’ – ‘The right school for every child’ this reflects what we have already discussed that children with ASD, like all children, are individuals and each has its very own set of individual needs. ‘The right training for every teacher’ – the report states that 1 in every 110 child is on the autistic spectrum and so teachers should be trained appropriately. Finally ‘The right approach in every school’ – this refers to making schools ASD friendly where considerations are made to ensure that ASD children have some of the stresses attached to school taken away from them such as providing them with individual timetable and addressing basic needs. These reflect the main principles of the SEN Code of Practice which was introduced in 2001. Many of the authors already discussed refer to this in their work. An example of this being Hope-West and Jones (2011,) who refer in detail to the SEN Code of Practice. The Code as described by Hope-West and Jones clearly states that a child with SEN should have his or her needs met and that the views of the ASD child should be sought and taken into account. Other ideals in schooling suggested:

It will be important that your child has an appropriate peer group and access to a curriculum that meets his needs.

Every school will have a number of potential advantages and disadvantages and it is a case of weighing up which features are the most important for your child and your family. (2011, p.62)

This brings us to the big decision that must be made by every parent of a child with ASD – which type of school will best meet their child’s individual needs. The Autistic Spectrum Disorder strategic action plan for Wales (2011) was put in place so that all of Wales were working towards the same objectives and ultimately a delivery of services that will ensure individuals with ASD ‘are supported to reach their full potential in all aspects of their lives’ (p1). The plan states that children with ASD should have access to education as close to their home as possible (p.29) and is very much focussed on individuals having access to services, including education which meets their individual needs. Most recent data for Wales shows that in 2016/17 of the secondary school

provision there are currently 39 special schools compared to 200 secondary schools. (Stats Wales, 2018, Figure 1)

Figure 1

Sector (All schools)

Year (2016/17)

SectorSector 1Area CodeYear

Measure1TypeType 1

All maintained schools

LARegion

Middle School: ages 3-16

Middle School: ages 3-19

Secondary school with post-16 provision

Secondary school without post-16 provision

Special school with post-16 provision (from 2007/08)

Special school without post-16 provision (All special schools to 2006/07)

All maintained schools

Wales

4

6

143

57

30

9

1,547

Of the 200 schools, it is unclear how many of these have provision for children on the ASD spectrum. The NAS provides a list of schools that have provision but this is not up to date as School X does not appear in place and this school has had a specialist Base for some years. The WG Guide (2014) too advises parents on education and schooling. The WG Guide advises parents to spend time researching what provision is available in local schools and tells parents that all autistic children have the right to attend a mainstream school should they choose to and this is an entitlement by law (p.101). There are many sources of advice for parents when making this choice, snapcymru.org provide parents with a list of questions to ask when deciding on the best education for their child.

Cole (2006) supports the teaching of ASD children in mainstream schools and comments on the success of SEN students in mainstream schools. He supports his claims that ASD children do better in mainstream schools stating that data from the national database confirms that SEN children attending mainstream schools achieve more. Cole refers to evidence showing that LEAs with a high percentage of inclusion for SEN children in mainstream schools do no worse than those with specialist school provision for SEN children. Also referencing the work of Gary Thomas (1996) who

carried out research showing that ‘70% of special schools do not enter any student for GCSE’. This reflects on all SEN but the work of Jordan and Jones (2002, p.5) refers specifically to the inclusion of ASD children. They too support the argument that teaching does not need to be segregated to be successful but provide a detailed list of the pros and cons of mainstream schools for ASD children. Integration with mainstream students features highly and reference is made to social skills, learnt behaviours and even the opportunity to spread ‘awareness and tolerance of ASD in society’.

Some of these have recently been attributed to the number of ASD children being taken out of schools and being home schooled. A BBC report (2017) ‘showed families with autistic children lodged more appeals about the lack of support their child is receiving in school than those with other learning needs’. In the same report the Welsh Government said ‘it was committed to creating an inclusive education system for all learners.’ (BBC News, November 2017)

Baron-Cohen (2008) and Campbell (2002) are both advocates for inclusive schooling and recognise the importance of education for autistic children. Baron-Cohen believing that education being the ‘most important intervention’ for individuals with ASD (p.109) whether this is through a specialist school with a great deal of support or even a mainstream school where support has been reduced but is appropriate to the child’s individual needs. How effective a school is, in Campbell’s (2002,) opinion depends on a large range of factors where value added is very important, measuring where students were and how they have progressed.

As is clear from the research social interaction and communication skills can be a problem for anyone on the ASD spectrum. In recent years there has been an increasing amount of literature which really identifies what these specific issues are. Baron-Cohen (2008, Chp.1), Wall (2007, Chp.4) and Cumine, Dunlop and Stevenson (2010, Chp.2&5) have all listed difficulties under the umbrellas of social interaction difficulties and communication difficulties. Under the umbrella of difficulties with social interaction there are many common themes, these include: Difficulty with eye contact; A preference to being alone and an avoidance of interacting with others; an inability to know how others are feeling or how they might think or respond and difficulty responding to others, to name a few. Baron-Cohen (2008, p.17) also points out that some individuals may have ‘difficulty accepting that there may be other perspectives,

not just a single correct perspective' and in a classroom setting, within a mainstream school this can be one of the most difficult barriers to teaching children with ASD in a mixed environment where other students may not be as understanding.

Although these authors in the main agree on the main communication difficulties for individuals with ASD there are some discrepancies. Cumine, Dunlop and Stevenson (2010, p.5) have a focus on 'Asperger Syndrome' which is commonly recognised as high-functioning on the autistic spectrum. They state that individuals may have perfect spoken language but this tends to be formal, pedantic and lacks expression. Wall (2007, p.62-64) supports this theory and that of the inability to read non-verbal communication correctly, such as facial expressions and gestures. Both Wall and Baron-Cohen in their literature comment on the other end of the autistic spectrum where individuals are more severely affected and have no desire to communicate or in some cases no ability.

The aim of this research is to look at the social skills of ASD students within School X and, as social skills are so diverse, I will be focussing in my research on some of the social struggles identified by the WG Guide (2014). These being: inability to join in with others, one-sided interaction, inappropriate language or giggling, no eye contact or problems with social cues, inability to start or take equal part in a conversation and inability to make friends. This list could be exhaustive, as Mesibov, Shea and Schopler (2004, p.91) confirm, social problems with ASD are 'among the most complex and pervasive characteristics of this condition'. Like others Mesibov, Shea and Schopler have looked at programs used to help ASD individuals with social difficulties and in this case the TEACCH programme. This programme created by Eric Schopler in 1966 has many different elements but as Kalyva (2011, Chp.1) believes this programme focuses on maximising children's abilities and skills by integrating behavioural principles.

Methodology

Research aims

As discussed by Thomas (2010, p.13) when setting out a research project there are an ‘infinite number’ of questions or objections that can be set. The focus of this project could be very broad looking at many different aspects for autistic children attending school X.

Thomas discusses the aims and objectives versus a range of research question. In this case there are a series of questions that need addressing, these are listed below, but the ultimate aim of this research is to find out:

What are the social benefits and drawbacks for ASD students attending school X.

The questions which I will be addressing in order to answer the research aim are:

What are the positive impacts on social skills of ASD students attending school X?

What are the negative impacts on social skills of ASD students attending school X?

What are the key reasons for these effects?

How do the opinions of different stakeholders compare?

How much do these depend on the individuality of each student?

These questions are to be approached from the point of view of a range of stakeholders including the students, parents and staff from the Base and professionals who are well researched on ASD students in mainstream schools. Within these questions I will be looking at how integration has affected the social skills of ASD students and any stresses or issues caused through attending a mainstream Base. As discussed by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017). There are no ‘hard and fast’ rules to how many questions should be set and there are lots of differing opinions on this matter. Based on the recommendation made by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017) the questions I have set are, for the most part, quite specific and hopefully will lead my research.

The conclusions of this research can hopefully be used to make recommendations for possible improvements to provision within the Base. There is currently no evidence to show what provision is best for ASD students and I predict that this will depend very

much on the individual needs of each student. This opinion reflects that of The National Autistic Society who state the ASD children are all individuals with a differing range of needs. Ideally, this research will help highlight areas of strengths of this Base system and identify any problem areas with possible solutions or measures to overcome these.

Research Methods

Denscombe (2014) argues that by using mixed methods of research to investigate the same thing, that confidence in the findings and its accuracy is increased. He believes this to be the main principle of triangulation. This method of mixed research or triangulation assumes that neither quantitative nor qualitative data provide a full picture. This view is supported too by Gorard, Taylor and Taylor (2006) who state that both methods are valuable and can both provide a partial picture. The majority of this research will be based on qualitative data due to the complexity of what is being studied. However, a small amount of quantitative data will be reviewed. This is to include data which provided ongoing progress data on each student in the sample, later discussed. This quantitative data shows students' end of Key Stage 2 Levels and expected levels of progress as compared to actual levels of progress and will also include scores from National Testing. These scores measure student ability in Numeracy and Literacy and when results are given to parents from the Welsh Government they are shown on a scale which compares the scores with national averages. This will provide a base to review progress made on an individual academic level. As stated by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017, p.48) 'Quantitative data analysis has no greater or lesser importance than qualitative analysis and *vice versa*. Its use is entirely dependent on *fitness for purpose*'. For the purpose of this research this method, even though I am not reviewing academic progress, will give me a good indication of how the students have settled into the school. Likewise, there is pastoral data available on each student which is presented as quantitative data which will give an indication of each student's happiness and confidence levels in school and any changes over time.

The majority of the research will look at qualitative data including a range of interviews, surveys and questionnaires. I will be looking at the opinions of not only the students but also the staff who work with these students on a regular basis, parents and professionals.

The interviews carried out with students will be semi-structured interviews. Following the advice of McGrath and Coles (2015, p.94) I will be meeting with the students beforehand to discuss the purpose of the interviews and I will be meeting the students on familiar ground to ensure students are comfortable. I will go through the instructions with students very slowly and this is done in the Base, a room in which they are very comfortable and with staff around whom they trust. Students well-being is paramount and this will provide the most honest findings if students are happy and feel in control. The students will be informed that if they choose not to take part, even if this is during the interview then they can leave the area and move to the relaxation area known to the students as the 'chill out' zone of the Base. Students have different zones in the Base and are very comfortable with these surroundings and understand that different areas are for different things. Being told that they can go to the 'chill-out zone' is something students understand and would do this if they are feeling anxious or stressed in school or need some time out. The use of unstructured interviews was considered but given the clear aims of the research and knowing already the students semi-structured interviews will be most appropriate. The main advantage of carrying out semi-structured interviews, as highlighted by Denscombe (2014) is that there is some flexibility for the interviewer which can allow the interviewer to ask further questions which may arise or delve deeper into certain answers.

The interviews will be carried out one-to-one, Denscombe (2014, p.216) too discusses the advantages of these types of interviews and relevant to this research is that the one-to-one interview is easier to control: 'The researcher only has one person's ideas to grasp and interrogate, and one person to guide through the interview agenda.'

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017, p.435) refer to the difficulty encountered when interviewing 'marginalized groups' which of course some children with ASD who have severe communication difficulties are. They refer to the work of Kelly (2007, p.25–6) who promotes the use of communication cards and pictorial cards that for example indicate feelings. Based on this and having seen the way students work at the Base, I will use this technique if necessary.

I will also carry out interviews with OASIS staff and ASD professionals. One of the professional interviews is to be with an ASD Charity Manager; the charity in question supports families and individuals with autism through training and mentoring. The

Charity Manager is also a parent to a son who has high functioning autism and is very experienced and works with families on an individual basis and so should provide a 'rounded' view on this topic. The other professional interview will be with Person C who works in Child Health and works alongside the National Autistic Lead for Wales NHS. Person C also works with families and has to look at individual needs so will be able to offer a different view from more of a health and medical needs perspective.

Similar to interviewing students, all of the adults concerned will also be informed that they can withdraw at any point. These interviews too will be semi-structured. The reason for this choice, in this case, is quite different. Both of these groups are very specialised and experienced in the area I am researching and although I have clear objectives for this research I would not like to hinder the answers to these. Another option could have been a questionnaire and as Bell and Waters (2014, p.145) point out there is the possibility of bias with interviews however there is usually the opportunity to gain more information through interviews than there is questionnaires.

Finally, I will carry out a survey with parents (Appendix 1) to assess their opinion on the progress of their child at school X with a focus on social skills. The majority of students in the Base get to school through the means of a taxi or school bus which means parents are very rarely in school and so it would be of an inconvenience to ask parents to school for interviews. Denscombe (2014) discuss the range of ways in which surveys can be carried out and for the purpose of this research I will use postal surveys or in this case 'pupil post'. Denscombe points out the possible disadvantages of using postal surveys such as time delay and response rate but despite this, I feel this is the most convenient option in this school context. Whilst preparing the survey I will be careful not to use leading questions and ensure that where questions are closed that the Likert scale will be used. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009, p.81) recommend 'five-point scales for attitude questions, because it provides enough response alternatives to reflect the various opinions'.

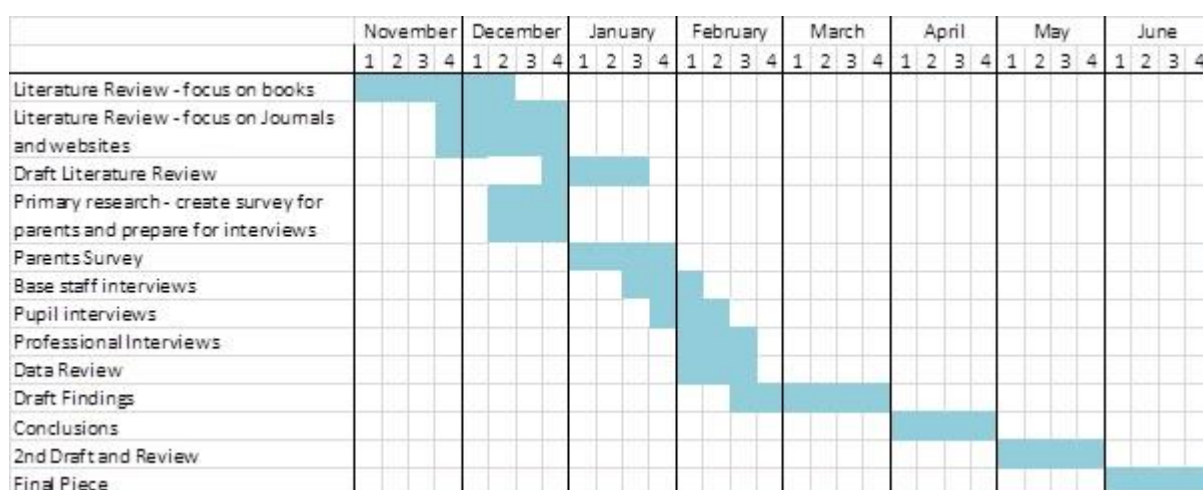
Triangulation

Gorard, Taylor and Taylor (2006, Chp.3) discuss in detail the different understandings of the term triangulation. Stating that some believe that triangulation means that there should be three types of research, others believe, which is the viewpoint I will be adhering to in this research, that there should be elements of quantitative research and

elements of qualitative research which are in line with the questions of research. Using this method of triangulation the research findings should complement one another so that all findings can be compared and any contrasts made. For example, in the case that this research data shows that a student is not progressing well but interviews with students or parents show otherwise, this information will not be disregarded as useless but patterns will be looked for and reviewed further with comparisons against other findings.

Schedule of Research

The Gantt chart below was written up prior to starting the research project. Biggam (2015, p.103) suggests that creating a Gantt chart will help to visually see the different elements of a dissertation and can be a useful tool for managing time and sticking to deadlines.



Sample

When deciding on how many students to include in the sample it was important that enough were chosen to get a fair representation of all ASD students in school X. In total 10 students will be part of this study; this also means 10 sets of parents as I feel it is important that the parents questioned are those of the students so that research can be correlated. Of the 10 students, there are 2 students per year group of entry; in each group there are 3 – 5 students who attend the Base. When deciding on the sample many sampling methods were considered but many discounted. When deciding on the sample there were 2 important considerations –

1 – I feel the students who would open up best to me would be those I teach or already have a relationship with as this will be important for students to feel comfortable whilst carrying out interviews.

2 – The opinion of Base staff on the parents' likeliness of completing the questionnaire. The Base staff aim to maintain regular contact with home and so will have a good idea of which parents are likely to not respond.

The sampling methods considered, as described by Greig (2007) were random sampling – this method was immediately disregarded because of the reasons above. Likewise systematic sampling, which organises data systematically for example age, attendance would not be appropriate as does not consider point 1 or 2.

Using the sampling methods described by Greig (2007, p.102) my method is most similar to an 'opportunity sample' where the children have been chosen because in the main I know these students the most. This is a non-random method of sampling but the intention being that these students will be most forthcoming when being interviewed. Likewise the sample of parents, staff and professionals are 'opportunity' samples – the Base staff are those that work within the Base and so is the only option. The professionals happen to be individuals who I have come across in my research.

Ethical Issues

Whilst completing this research the University Code of Conduct (University of South Wales, 2018) will be followed. In line with this code of conduct, I will ensure that all participants are fully informed of the purpose of this research and that they will be kept anonymous in the findings. Anderson and Corneli (2017, p.24) refers to what is called anonymous research findings stating that to be truly anonymous then even the researcher should not know the identity of the participants. For this research there will need to be some correlation between the student and parents' data and so parents are lettered as are students to identify the pairings.

Reflective of the University Code of Conduct, the safety of all participants is very important and in particular, the safety of the students involved as these are classified as children. Children can be vulnerable to questioning and as recognised by Cohen, Taylor and Taylor (2017) and I would not want to put any unnecessary stress on the students. Steps in place to ensure that these students feel safe at all times include having support

staff present and carrying out the interviews in the Base which students are familiar with. It may be emotional for some students to discuss their feelings more so because all of the students involved are on the autistic Spectrum and so these questions will be asked if the student is at ease and happy to talk. Students will be informed that they can say stop at any point or walk away should they feel uncomfortable. Should this happen, then all discussions will stop immediately. As mentioned above the students involved are all those I know quite well and can already read their behaviours quite well so should be aware if I need to stop the interviews. As an additional measure of protection for these vulnerable learners, the staff present will always be watching the students' reaction and will stop the questioning should they be concerned for the students. As advised by BERA guidelines all participants will be told how the findings will be used and as stated in point 18 of the BERA guidelines parents will be informed and their permission gained before interviewing the students. BERA (2011, p.7) states that parental permission must be granted before interviewing children and those who are vulnerable.

All participants will be aware that participation is completely voluntary and they have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time and no coercion will be used to make these participants join or remain in the study. Parents may find the surveys emotional as they will be reflecting on the progress that their son / daughter has made in a way they may not have done so before. Parents will be able to complete these surveys at home but I will provide contact details should they want to discuss anything and make initial contact before to ensure they know that they can withdraw from the survey and to confirm for them that all findings will be anonymised. Following BERA guidelines, point 37 states that the methods used must be those that are deemed most fit for purpose with least the risk to all participants, researcher and the university.

All research collected will comply with the Data Protection Act (1998) including participants remaining anonymous and storage of data that is password protected and locked away in a locked room which only I have access to. The main risk to myself as the investigator could arise should one of the interviewees become emotionally distressed or even aggressive. The location and format of the interviews should minimise this as should the presence of support staff. The support staff who are present know the students very well so will be looking for any signs of discomfort and if this should arise will stop the interviews and I will leave the Base room. The presence of

support staff will ensure that all data collected will be both unbiased and prevent any false acquisitions, or in this case of this happening will be witness supporting myself as the investigator.

Research Analysis

There are many software programmes for analysing data but for the small amount of quantitative data that will be collected this will be analysed using Excel Spreadsheet. When looking at the data I will be looking for progress made and from this too will be able to establish using the PASS survey information such as the confidence of students, attitudes and self-regard. GL Assessment summarises the PASS survey as a short survey that gains an ‘insight into attitudes that could be hindering achievement.’ (GL Assessment, 2018)

Denscombe (2014) suggests that before analysing data that data is organised into groups. Fortunately, the source of data will already mean that the data will be organised. Whilst looking at the data, for example progress made academically I will be looking at both the mode in terms of progress made over the number of years the student has been in school.

When analysing the qualitative data I will be using a coding system. Using the methods outlined by Gibbs (2008) I will be categorising the data using codes. This will allow me to compare outcomes and to ‘quickly collect together all the text coded I the same way and read it through to see what is at the core of the code’. (Gibbs, 2008, p.48) This will also be combined with the use of tables as described by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2013, p.178). This method will allow me to make comparisons and gain ‘a thumbnail profile of each participant’.

Conduct of the Research

The methods of research shown were in the main successful in gaining the data required. Interviews would not have worked if they had been formally structured and using a semi-structured interview meant that questions could be added or adapted as required. The use of questionnaires with students were also semi-structured but these were a lot more flexible than planned. It was evident straight away that students felt uncomfortable when just sat with me for an interview and so after just one interview the structure was changed. During the interviews we sat in small groups and played games

or plasticine and questions were changed so that they would be part of an ongoing chat. We talked about lots of things before I asked any of the interview questions so that students were already talking openly to me. These conversations and games were audio recorded so that the main findings could be later scribed. As compared to the first semi-structured interview this method was far more successful. As described by Wengraf (2001, p.5) carrying out semi-structured interviews can be challenging and what was key for me was having a list of my research objectives to hand, some key questions and then re-wording these as was appropriate to the conversation or game. The survey carried out with parents had an 80% return, 8 out of 10 parents. This is a fair response but ideally I would have had a 100% return. In addition, although all parents completed the closed Likert style questions, only 5 completed the open-ended questions commenting on their child. 1 parent is the mother of 2 children in the sample so this can be considered as 6 comments providing qualitative research.

Findings and Analysis

Pilot Study

Prior to interviewing students and sending surveys home, a pilot study was carried out. As explained by Blessing and Chakrabarti (2009) a pilot study's main purpose is to foresee any issues and changes that need to be made to the research design. In the case of this pilot study student D was interviewed prior to any other sampled students and a survey sent home to student D's parents. Blessing and Chakrabarti state that to successfully carry out a pilot study then this must 'be as close as possible to the setup of the intended study'. (2009, p.114). The pilot study, although limited in size was extremely useful. The survey was completed promptly and both quantitative and qualitative data were successfully collected and there appeared no bias in the answers of the parents. The interview with student D proved that there were "'kinks" in the system' (Melnik and Morrison-Beedy, 2012, p.52). This interview felt very staged and sitting at a table, with just me evidently made the student feel uncomfortable. Her answers were very short and a lot of persuasion was needed to get further answers from her, this had to be done carefully to ensure no bias or as little bias as possible. Wallace and Van Fleet (2012) note that it can be difficult to minimise bias and although using multiple respondents can minimise bias this can be difficult if all respondents have the same preferences. Towards the end of the interview, other students approached and I asked them to join us. As it was a lunchtime, students are encouraged to play board games and so I was asked to join in. This made a big difference to the atmosphere and student D immediately relaxed. I then re-worded a question I had asked earlier about taking turns and applied this to the board game and found that the student opened up a great deal more. For this reason, the interviews were then carried out with students whilst they were in groups and playing board games; this enabled open chat. All sessions were recorded, and the main findings are summarised in Appendix 1.

This pilot study also highlighted the concern with my role as both a teacher and an interviewer. The students very obviously see me as someone of authority and not someone who they would usually talk to about their feelings, in particular, those that may give a negative response about teachers or the school. For this reason it was even more important that I was seen to be on their level by playing games as an equal.

Student Data

Academic Progress

This first part of the research looks at the students in the sample. The sample is small but as Daniel (2011) states depending on the level of research carried out, in particular with qualitative research, a small sample size is very often sufficient. Ten students were chosen from the Base, this was done based on the relationship I already have with the students and the likeliness of them participating in the research. Following parental permission there were eight students in the sample from Years 7 to 11 to give a fair representation; very fortunately there were two in each year group. Efron and Ravid (2013) claim that carrying out action research in education can be just as valid using a small but fair sample for the total population of interest than ensuring that everyone is involved and sampled.

The data in Figure 1 was collected to review students' academic progression. It is expected that students make progress of 2 levels at each Key Stage. Levels are split and measured and the expectation is, for example, for a student to move from Level 4 to Level 6 in a Key Stage. (Tutor my Kids, 2018)

Autism can affect students in many different ways and the challenges they face can affect both their development and learning. (Dodd, 2005) It is suggested by MacKenzie (2008, p.28) that every autistic child should be 'approached as an individual who has many strengths and abilities'. Mackenzie believes that doing this will enable teaching and learning to be more effective for autistic children. To measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning for students at School X the progress made by the sample is illustrated below in Figure 2. The table shows the level or grades that the students are currently working at and most importantly if the expected progress has been made. Of these predictions, those at Key Stage 4 are most accurate due to ongoing exams and coursework which aid teachers' predictions.

Figure 2: End Key Stage Predictions and Attendance

Student Code	Gender	Current Year Group	End KS2 Average	End KS3 teacher prediction	End KS3 Actual	Average GCSE Grade Prediction	Making Expected progress	Attendance
A	F	7	3	4	x	x	N -1	100%
B	M	7	4	6	x	x	Y	86%
C	G	8	2	5	x	x	Y +1	80%
D	G	8	3	5	x	x	Y	84%
E	M	9	2	4	x	x	Y	100%
F	M	9	3	x	6	x	Y+1	91%
G	F	10	3	x	5	C	Y	82%
H	M	11	4	x	6	A	Y	94%

Pastoral Progress

The well-being of all students in any setting is very important. It is even more imperative to monitor the well-being of autistic students due to the feeling of anxiousness that most individuals with autism experience. For some students, anxiousness is very much a concern as Purkis *et al* (2016, p.41) recognise there is a 'cycle of being worried about anxious' this can then lead on to further problems with anxiety and panic attacks. For reasons such as this the PASS survey is used. The PASS survey is an online survey that students take each year with the intention of highlighting any 'barriers to learning, including issues around confidence, resilience, motivation, concentration, disaffection and alienation' (GL Assessment, 2018)

Figure 3 shows both the latest data from the PASS survey and the data collected when each student was in Year 7. The data collected in Year 7 has been shown to give an indication of change over the years and to look for areas of progress or decline. We are unable to compare Year 7 students, A and B, against other data but visibly the data collected for both these students show that there are areas of concern that needed monitoring. In School X it would ordinarily be the Head of House who is responsible for acting upon this data but in this case, it would be the Base Lead teacher.

It can be noted that all other students have made a marked improvement in their pastoral well-being (from Year 8 to 11) having no 'causes for concern' (highlighted red) and

students such as H having a ‘positive’ outcome’ with all prior concerns now ‘deemed positive’. The findings also show that the areas of greater concern for this sample of children are based around confidence and self-belief; these being ‘Learner Self Regard’ and ‘Confidence in Learning’. Painter (2006) discusses working with autistic children and states that many children with autism have low self-esteem and confidence in themselves which reflects these outcomes.

Figure 3: PASS Survey

Pupil Code	Gender	Current Year Group	Feelings about school	Perceived Learning Capability	Learner Self Regard	Preparedness for Learning	Attitudes to Teachers	General Work Ethic	Confidence in Learning	Attitudes to Attendance
A	F	7								
B	M	7								
C	G	8								
		7								
D	G	8								
		7								
E	M	9								
		7								
F	M	9								
		7								
G	F	10								
		7								
H	M	11								
		7								
			Anything with a score over 50 is deemed positive							
			Score between 50 and 20 is worth noting and monitoring							
			Score below 20 is a cause for concern							

Student Interviews and Observations

(Appendix 2 and 3)

Following the pilot study, it was clear that the interviews needed to be as informal as possible. Achari (2014, p.119) describes the benefits of carrying out informal interviews and the key to my research is the fact that the students may have just seen this as ‘conversation’. It was important to also find out how students felt about school

and these were very open questions which allowed students to speak honestly about what they liked and disliked about School X. As according to Riding (2002, p.95) 'A happy pupil is a successful pupil!'. Riding believes that learning will be attractive to students if they have prior success which will have impacted on their self-confidence. Purkis et al (2016, p.41) recognise that many autistic individuals may be suffering from anxiety or very similar symptoms but the individuals are not even aware of this due to this being their 'normal state of being'. The findings vary greatly between each student and Figure 4 shows the main findings from both the interviews and my own observations.

Figure 4: Student Interviews	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Do students like to work with other students both within the Base and in classrooms?	Base only	Yes – Base Limited in class	Yes – very well in the Base taking a lead Not at all in a class		Very well in the Base and good in classes, teachers understand who he works well with.	No longer reliant on the Base, enjoys being in class with friends.	Will work with others in class but prefers working with pupils who work well and listen. Angered by pupils who don't listen.	Mature attitude, can work with anyone but understands some people don't understand his ways which can be controlling.
Are students able to make friends?	No but starting to talk with brothers friends	Has learnt how to and is trying although nervous	Yes within the Base and developing confidence in classes	Yes, confident to ask others their name and knows the importance of being 'nice' to others		Yes, has a group of select friends but very comfortable with these.	Can talk to new people but has a group of select friends.	
Can students take turns with others?	Yes, brother also in sample – developed skills at home.		Yes and helping teach others		Very well and showing others how to do so.			Yes, has been taught this at the Base.
Can students show emotions or understand the emotions of others?	Can show her own emotions but struggles understanding others and knowing how to react	Has the ability to respond but not comfortable talking about emotions.			Yes but the understanding is very literal.		Good understanding of emotions, knows what to do when he feels angry or upset.	Good awareness of others' feelings and emotions. Knows how to control his own anger and frustrations.
How do students feel in social situations around the school?	Nervous of corridors / crowding A was even nervous sitting with me even though she had met me many times she had never sat with		<i>C did not comment on this but observations show that she is now walking around the school and playground by herself, she was also part of the</i>	Confident now but knows that this took time to develop	Proud of achievements – able to walk to lessons alone, good coping strategies.	Confident and excited to choose GCSE's.		Confident in social situations and pushing himself by volunteering outside of school in a shop.

Summary of Student Data

Mixing with other students and making friends

Most students are happy to mix with other students in the Base and the majority are very confident mixing here; with some taking the lead and saying that they feel most comfortable and confident when in the Base.

Chilvers (2007, p.65) explains how most autistic children want to make friends and believes it to be a misconception that autistic children do not want friends. She also argues that developing friendships helps develop 'prosocial behaviours' such as sharing and regulating emotions.

Puberty, emotions and self-awareness

Gillberg and Coleman (2000, report on the work of Kanner (1971) and Szatmari et al (1989)) state that often high-functioning autistic children can improve through puberty and into their teenage years. This is reflected in the outcomes of the student interviews. The older students, in particular, show that very rarely do they feel the need for support from the Base or Base staff as they did in younger years. All students who are in Year 9 or above have very good self-awareness and plainly show that they understand their own emotions. Some students show that they can better manage their emotions and others clearly know how to react should they feel upset or angry. The youngest students in the sample showed that they have an understanding of their own emotions but are yet to show empathy or understanding of others' emotions.

Subjects and teachers

Some students discuss specific subjects when asked what they like about school. It is interesting to note that these students also discuss extra-curricular clubs which are optional. There is little comment about teachers as a whole although it is noted that if there is a change of teacher such as a supply or new teacher this can cause students to become unsettled. This is a very typical problem for autistic children. Dodd (2005) discusses in depth the importance of routine for autistic individuals but looks at how children can be prepared for changes in routine to help them cope with these changes more effectively. One point made by Student H was interesting – when asked about his likes and dislikes of School X he answered: “Actually I think I like the teachers because

I am coming to do A Levels because I know my teachers are good and they know my ways, like they know me”. This leads us to believe that this student has developed relationship skills which mirror Whitman (2004) who discusses the ability of autistic students to build relationships.

The Base

The student interviews showed that the Base was an area that all students felt safe. Moreover, some of the older students no longer visit the Base as much as they feel that they have outgrown it and now have found their own group area to go to. Noticeably the work that goes on in the Base is reflected in students’ answers. They know what expectations are in terms of manners, taking turns and how they treat others. Myers (2010) focuses on the importance of teaching life skills to autistic children. The interviews show that students are told to behave well towards others and how to introduce themselves which Myers recognises as some of the important life-skills that autistic individuals need for everyday life both as a child and young adult. Myers (2010, p.171) states that we ‘need manners to make the day functional’. She discusses learnt phrases which will prepare autistic children for a range of situations, evidently this is taught in the Base and this is having a positive impact on the students sampled.

Movement around the school

Bogdashina (2003, p.50) explains that for many with autism, large crowds can be overwhelming; “In crowded places, their brains seem to try to process all the stimuli around them”. This is evident in the student interviews with a few mentioning how they feel about moving around the school. Measures are made to try to prevent the students from leaving the Base whilst the corridors are at their most busy but some students are still very aware and nervous about going to lessons by themselves. Again, it is worth noting that this seems to be no longer an issue for the older students and that other students have found ways around this using the quieter, but longer, routes to lessons.

Interviews with Base Staff

(Appendix 4 and 5)

Semi-structured Interviews were carried out with two members of Base staff. As discussed previously a semi-structured interview allowed for the opportunity to ask

further questions based on the answers to previous questions. As recommended by Denscombe (2014) one-to-one interviews were used as these allowed specific questioning techniques based on each interviewee's answers. One of the interviews was with Person A, who manages the Base and another with Person B who has worked in the Base for 4 years. During these interviews, I focussed on finding out how social skills were developed and encouraged in the Base and the opinions of the staff on the benefits and drawbacks of working with ASD children in a mainstream school. There are some very practical recommendations made by many different authors as to how social skills can be taught; some examples of these include Moyes (2012) who promotes the use of visual techniques to develop social skills in autistic children. The main purpose of these interviews were to specifically find out which strategies are used in School X. The main findings are summarised below:

Routines and teaching within the Base

The Base staff have very clear routines for students which must be followed; an example of this is taking turn to tidy up the dinner table. The importance of routines for autistic students has long been discussed by Wall (2007, p.65) explains the needs that autistic individuals have for routine and 'sameness'. Wall believes that structures and clear routines help support autistic individuals overcome many of their difficulties in day-to-day life. Students are taught in the Base explicitly basic social skills such as how to greet people and how to introduce themselves. Base staff, role model good behaviour and students know that they must sit quietly in classrooms and this is done through in-class support when students are in year 7 and 8. The Base staff both talk about using these methods consistently and ensuring students know that there are high expectations and that they are expected to treat others how they wish to be treated themselves.

Understanding emotions

Both members of staff agree that some students have a very good understanding of emotions and it is primarily with year 7 students that they use things such as the emotions wall display to help students understand others' emotions. Understanding others' emotions can be a very difficult challenge for many on the autistic spectrum and so this is unusual and reflects positively on the students sampled. Hanbury (2012) discusses the difficulty that students have not only reading others' emotions but dealing

with their own and recognising the cause and effect of emotions. They also talk about students' learning about their own emotions and giving the students the skills they need to understand the emotions. There are specific references made to Student E and H in the Person A interview and she explains how these students have grown in emotional intelligence and are now very aware of their own emotions and know how to cope for example if they are angry or upset.

Barriers for ASD students in the mainstream school

It is clear that there are some barriers but more precisely being in a mainstream school provides less flexibility than there would be in a special school; flexibility to teach students life skills and take them out of lessons and DS comments how she would like to teach the children "how to catch a bus, shopping, things like that but because of the number of children we have and the different age groups it makes it hard" (Appendix 4) McDonald (2014, p.121) in her research looks at the issues concerning schooling and in particular highlights the need for there to be flexibility in meeting autistic children's individual needs.

Both members of the staff are concerned about bullying from mainstream students. It is commented "very rarely do we have any issues" (Appendix A) but this is evidently a worry and something that they monitor and look closely for. A survey carried out in 2006 by the National Autistic Society uncovered that over '40 per cent of children with autism have been bullied at school' (2006, p.3) Reid and Batten (2006) believe that the indifference shown by many autistic children results in them struggling to make friends which can then result in bullying.

Both staff also discuss the issue of moving around the school and crowds in the corridor but have strategies in place to assist students. The final barrier they both discuss is that some teachers are still not fully aware of each individual child's needs and in particular this would be with new or cover teachers. These are both reflective of the findings from the student interviews.

Benefits for ASD students in the mainstream school

The main benefit both members of staff recognise is "mixing with other children" (Appendix 5). Although they have talked about the issues with corridors they have also said that by mixing with other students, other than Base students, they have quickly had

to adapt and learn to cope with the size of the school. Person A believes that for the children being around mainstream children develops resilience. Resilience is something that School X strives to develop in all children through tools to develop a positive growth mindset but developing resilience in children on the autism spectrum is not as easy. Brooks and Goldstein (2012, p.13) discuss the need for autistic children to develop a 'social resilient mindset'. In their book aimed at supporting parents with strategies to develop resilience in autistic children. Brooks and Goldstein promote the development of resilience in autistic children stating it to be a powerful development tool which will help autistic children to manage their social anxieties.

Both members of staff also point out that the specialism of teachers is a benefit of a mainstream school using certain students specifically who have interests in subject areas and are able to work with specialist teachers unlike if they were in a special school. In research carried out by Brown (2016) mainstream teachers from primary schools stated how it is not always easy to include SEN children due to class sizes and the need to reach standards due to the current government setting a standards agenda, with all the measures that schools now have to go through every year.

Interviews with Professionals

Two interviews with professionals in the areas of autism and education were carried out. These will be referred to throughout as Person C and Person D. The objective of interviewing these was to find out their opinion on the provision of an ASD Base in a mainstream school.

The important factors when choosing a school for an autistic child

Person D was able to come at this question from a number of angles, having an autistic child he explained that for some autistic children schooling in a mainstream was not even an option due to the support needed and his son's inability to cope in crowded areas. On the other hand, he is also a governor at a primary school which has a Base and has visited a number of schools with ASD provision and believes these to be suitable for children who have some level of independence and who are not in need of one to one support. Person D states "when I advise parents about schooling there are no straightforward ways of working out which school is best and I would advise parents to

visit all schools they are considering and take their child with them” (Appendix 7). Person C echoes this point with regards to visiting schools prior to choosing and like Person D, agrees that choosing a school is a very personal choice and will depend on the individual needs of the child. This is echoed by the National Autistic Society who guides parents to look at all the schooling options and find the school that meets the needs of their children. (National Autistic Society, 2018)

Opinion of the provision of a ‘Base’ for ASD children in a mainstream school

Both Person C and Person D have a range of views on the provision of a Base in a mainstream school. It seems that both think that this is the preferred option for ASD children given that there is enough support in place for a child and that their individual needs can be met. Person D believes that autistic children who “are high functioning would thrive given the opportunity to attend a secondary school”. (Appendix 6) He also states though that those children who need specialist care and are “unable to develop any independence will need the smaller classes and more specialist care given in a specialist school”. Person C also focuses on the support available and like Person D would advise parents to visit schools to find out for themselves the support available and whether or not this meets the needs of their children. This level of support that needs to be assessed is discussed by Seach, Lloyd and Preston (2002) in addition the difficulty for teachers of differentiating mainstream lessons for just one or two autistic students is emphasised.

Furthermore, they both believe that this type of school prepares students for life after school echoing the views of Cole (2006) and in addition, Person C believes that this provision is good for all students, helping them “develop an understanding of children with additional needs and helps them to accept difference.”(Appendix 6) Their concerns with this provision are based on the school itself and the ratio of teachers to students meaning that not every member of staff may be completely aware of each student’s individual needs.

What effects can attending a ‘Base school’ have on the development of social skills?

Person C highlights the fact that “Social skills are the hardest skill to develop in children with autism”. This opinion is reflected by Sargent (2011) who has developed a

range of techniques and lessons to develop social skills. Sargent believes that although social skills are some of the most difficult skills to learn and to teach they are the ‘most positive aspect of life itself’ (2011, p.5); from developing social competencies he believes lots of other issues such as self-esteem, developing relationships and independence will all improve through the teaching of social skills.

Person C also adds to her argument that “Personally I feel that for autistic children, being in a mainstream school will help children’s social skills simply..... simply by just being around other children.” (Appendix 6) Person D agrees with this sentiment also stating that for ASD children mixing with other children in a mainstream school is a significant learning experience. Sargent (2011, p. 29) tells of the benefits from mixing children in particular in classroom situations, listing these benefits and refers to the fact that everyone contributes something to a group activity or as suggested by the parents, other students become ‘role models’. Sargent believes that this mixed ability interaction will improve not only the social skills but behaviour and academic skills of all the students. Nonetheless, for Hannah (2001, p.4-7) whilst it can be effective for young children to mix with autistic children it cannot be expected that by putting the children together in a playground that they will learn to interact without any other intervention. Hannah argues that there needs to be both support and guidance in place for this to be effective.

Parent Survey

Figure 5: Outcome of Parent Survey

Pupil Code	Gender	Current Year Group	1. Does Your child play with other children?	2. Does your child understand the body language and facial expressions of others?	3. Can your child take turns and share?	4. Can your child listen to others and patiently wait for their turn to speak?	5. Can your child listen to and respect the opinions of others, even if they disagree?	6. Can your child communicate their own feelings and opinions to others?
A	F	7	2	3	3	3	3	3
B	M	7	2	3	2	3	3	3
C	G	8	1	1	1	1	1	1
D	G	8	1	2	1	2	2	2
E	M	9	1	2	1	1	2	2
F	M	9	1	1	1	1	1	2
G	F	10	1	1	1	1	1	2
H	M	11	1	1	1	1	1	2
1	Big improvement							
2	Some improvement							
3	No change							
4	Not as much as before							
5	Shows no understanding							

This parent survey enabled both the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was collected through the means of a Likert scale type survey and qualitative through open questions at the end of the survey. As described by Taylor (2005, p.221) in the past both sets of data would not have been compared or combined and only quantitative research findings were thought to be 'objective'. In the case of this study, both are deemed equally important and support the findings of one another. Based purely on the results above it is clear that the majority of parents believe there to have been an improvement in the social skills of their child since joining School X. 81% of the answers said that there was some improvement or a big improvement when referring to the social skills; 48% of these answers point to the big improvement category.

The students who showed no change according to parents' feedback are notably both year 7 students. This could be linked to the work of Jean Piaget. As described by Yap

(2012) Piaget believed that children go through four stages of development as a child. The two which are most relevant to this study being the 'Concrete Operational Stage' from about the age of 7 to 11 and the 'Formal Operational Stage' from the age of 12 which affects the thinking of a child. This would be the case for our Year 7 students who we can see have not made much progress since joining School X.

In addition to Figure 5 are the opinions given by parents. Parents were asked in the questionnaire to *Please comment on any factors that you think have helped your child develop their social skills at school* x. (Appendix 8) The parent of student A is also the parent of student E and the written feedback is very interesting given that some improvement has only been noted in one area out of the six. This parent reflects on the progress made by her son, student E and notes that her son made little progress socially in year 7 but she is now pleased with the amount of progress made socially, which was her main reason for choosing a mainstream school with ASD provision. This parent believes that attending a mainstream school has enabled student E to mix with other students but also to develop coping strategies for different social situations.

The feedback from the Parent of student B details the area of improvement which is the ability to play with others. This parent believes this to be down to the games and routines at the Base during lunch times.

Parent C gives a positive report of the care and support that the Base provides. Parent C believes that the daughter's 'big improvements' are due to this provision and the opportunity and encouragement to take part in activities which have 'sparked her interest.'

Parent F tells how it is only in the last year, which would have been Year 8 has a big improvement been seen in F's social skills. This again could be linked to what we know about cognitive development from Piaget (Yap, 2012). Parent F too talks of the support provided and is evidently very pleased that her son is now confident to spend less time in the Base and mix with other children.

All parents have seen a "big improvement" in their child's ability to play and to take turns and most parents have seen a 'big improvement' in their child's ability to listen to others and patiently wait for their turn to speak.

The open question allowed parents to give their own opinions this being negative or positive and the outcome of all were positive recognising the provision for students and support provided. This method of mixing closed and open questions is often used in government surveys as it provides both 'frequencies and narratives'. (Gorard and Taylor, 2006, p.126)

Interestingly parents also saw the mixing that their children have to do with other students as a benefit to their social development. This has been previously discussed and both the negatives and positives but from a parents' perspective there are some parents, as described by Moor (2008) who fear loneliness for their autistic child. These parents desperately want to see their child interacting with others and hope sincerely that their children can make friends.

Key Findings Summarised

Reflecting on the aims of the research, to follow is an interpretation of what the findings have shown in relation to each of these aims:

What are 'social skills' and what programmes and methods are already in place to develop social skills with autistic teenagers?

The exact definition of social skills, and what skills are considered 'social', changes from one person to another. Cumpta and Fell (2010) created a system to develop social skills within autistic children. This included some of the areas discussed such as making friends and working with peers, communication and understanding emotions. However, their programme looks at areas that have not come up within this research such as managing distractions, how to ask for help and even personal safety. Another programme 'Super Skills' with the same intention created by Coucouvanis (2005) looks at breaking down social skills and in this programme they are broken down into 4 categories - Fundamental Skills, Social Initiation Skills, Social Response Skills and Getting Along with Others. These are just 2 examples but this plainly shows us that the term social skills can encompass a great many skills. The qualitative research from the parents' survey shows that parents consider social skills to be those involving making friends, working with others and being aware of emotions and how to deal with different situations. It is evident that within the Base there are systems and routines in

place to help the students develop social skills. There is no programme as such but the research shows that staff are very aware of the individual needs of each child and so provide support as needed. The findings show that all stakeholders feel these to be effective; in particular, the parents who all have seen some progress in their child's social skills development.

What are the positives and negatives impacts on social skills of ASD students attending School X and what are the key reasons for these effects?

The negative impacts are really not clear through the research, however, the negative concerns are. The main concerns revolve around the worry about bullying and mixing when students first join the school. Concern is shown by some students with regards to the number of students in corridors between lessons. This concern with large crowds and noise is very common in individuals with autism. Bogdashina (2005, p.83) explains this with reference to 'hypersensitivity'; this is broken down into 'hyperhearing' and 'hypervision'. This is the case when an individual's vision, for example, is almost too 'acute' and their hearing is amplified causing sensory overloads and this most commonly happens in crowded and unfamiliar areas.

Although there is no evidence of students' progress being affected by a change in teachers it is evidently important that all teachers are aware of the individual needs of students but this, in particular, can affect students if there is a new or supply teacher.

The findings of this research illustrate that the mixing with mainstream students is possibly one of the areas that have the most positive impact on the development of social skills with students. Specifically, as students learn themselves how to deal with social situations and develop their own coping skills. Contrary to this Sargent (2011, p.55) believes that although most children learn most social skills through 'imitating other children'. Children with autism do not have the same ability and very often do not learn through 'incidental learning'.

The stability of having the Base to set routines, expectations and a safe area for students too have been vital to the success of the students researched. The students in year 8 and onwards show that having the Base and being in a mainstream school has worked for them in their social skills development.

Where there any gaps or issues with the research?

In hindsight, there are a few elements of the research which I would have changed given the chance. It would have been beneficial to have sent the surveys home to more students and parents to collect further data and feedback on the progress of students. Ideally, all students who attend the Base would have participated and this may have changed the outcomes of the research findings or supported the findings made. I would have liked to have gained more information from the parents. The use of the Likert scale limited the information on progress and was not specific; one person's opinion of a 'big improvement' may be another's interpretation of 'some improvement'.

The largest gap in the research was from not interviewing or carrying out a survey with the mainstream teachers. The findings are mixed showing us that some authors believe that mainstream teachers do not have the skills to support autistic children within a mainstream class and primary evidence showing that teachers have developed good relationships with students and understand and accommodate their individual needs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Throughout the literature review and study, the main aims of the research were always a consideration. The first of these aims ‘What are ‘social skills’ and what programmes and methods are already in place to develop social skills with autistic teenagers?’ is both a complex question and a very simple question. The question what are ‘social skills’ has no definitive answer. The work of Cumpata and Fell (2010), Coucouvanis (2005) and Mesibov, Shea and Schopler (2014) alone show us that there are very different opinions on what are considered social skills and these are categorised and labelled differently by each of the authors. The second part of this question looks at the methods in place and there are evidently a number of programmes and methods in place and recommended for children with autism to develop social skills. These range from the Super Skills program created by Coucouvanis (2005) to the TEACCH approach recommended by Mesibov, Shea and Schopler (2014). In addition to the programs offered there is a plethora of recommendations and suggested lessons available through support groups like Autism Trust and authors such as Cumpata and Fell (2010) who offer lesson plans, games and role-play activities all with the intention of developing social skills in autistic students. The research showed that the Base does not use any of these programs but use their own systems at School X.

The remaining aims were very much the tool used to decide upon the research methods and questions types for interviews and surveys. These aims looked at the impact, the benefits and drawbacks to social skills of autistic students attending School X. The findings of these are concluded below:

The research showed that nearly all students were developing social skills at School X and that progress for students once reaching Year 8 is at a quickened pace. This could be linked to Piaget’s theories of development which tell us that as students enter Year 8 they are beginning to mature and think differently, in particular, starting to use their reasoning skills. (Verywellmind.com, 2018)

Evidently, the systems put in place in the Base are beneficial to the students. The research shows that students are taught how to take turns, how to be kind to others, make friends and even manners are taught. (Appendix 2, 3 and 4) The feedback from parents, students and staff show that these are effective. There is an expectation level in the Base and Student E portrayed this perfectly; “Everyone in here is my friend, I’m

always nice to people in here – Miss wouldn't be happy if we weren't nice" Although not an aim of the research it is evident from answers such as this that the relationship between the staff in the Base and the students is key. The interviews with Person A and B demonstrated that they knew the students very well and throughout the student interviews and the feedback from parents there is reference made to these relationships. (Appendix 4 and 5)

The literature showed us conflicting views of autistic students' development in mainstream. Some, such as Sargent (2011), believing that it is not enough to mix mainstream and autistic students and see results whereas others such as Trevarthen (1998, p.238) believing that schools such as School X bring 'benefits of company and stimulation' whilst still supporting students.

In the case of this research, the findings showed us that staff and parents were unanimous in their responses believing that this mix is beneficial to the students. The professionals hold very much the same view for autistic children, who they believed had the independence skills to manage in a mainstream school. The autistic spectrum is very wide and in this research we have looked at students who are verbal and have already some level of independence. Person C has experience of both specialist and mainstream schools and has quite specific views - 'this type of placement is very good for children who are not reliant on one to one support and have already some level of independence' (Appendix 6). She argues that for these children the specialist staff in a Base can offer continuity and consistency that autistic students need whilst mainstream staff provide subject specialism'. She does recognise that not all mainstream teachers are specifically trained in teaching autistic children. This view is supported by Rodriguez, Saldana and Moreno who state that mainstream teachers report that they are 'not equipped with the knowledge or skills to address the needs of these students' (Cited Yefim, 2016, p.117) This was a limitation of the research, not getting feedback from all teachers but research collected from students show that most students have developed good relationships with their teachers and that their teachers know them well. For example, Student E comments "My teachers know who I like and they let me work with them" (Appendix B).

One of the main concerns for students is the movement in the corridors. As discussed earlier this is mainly due to the hypersensitivity that some autistic children experience.

(Bogdashina, 2005) The findings from students show that most have developed skills to deal with this. Student E is an excellent example of where a student has developed their own ‘coping’ skills to move in crowded areas and arguably this would not have been required or learnt if he had not attended a mainstream school (Appendix B)

There are no clear answers to any of the aims of this research and the final question, *What are the key reasons for these effects?* is no different. As above there are elements which the research shows have had a positive impact on the student’s social skills such as the routines implemented by the staff in the Base and the inclusion in lessons. Nevertheless, as predicted, the development of social skills is very different for each of the students and each has very individual and different needs. Train (2007, p.146) discusses development in children and states that all children will mature naturally at their own level but learning ‘is a change resulting from experience’. It is these experiences that being in a mainstream school offers autistic children which the research shows are beneficial to the learning of social skills.

There are areas of very good practice which are recognised by not only the outcomes from students but also from parents and staff. Recommendations that can be carried forward are a result of the research findings and literature review:

Continue to use routines and systems in the Base

The use of routines and systems within the Base are embedded and effective in helping students to develop social skills this supports Wall who stated that autistic children need routine. (2007, p.65) These include simple systems to teach students how to take turns. Students are encouraged to play board games and learn how to work with others. Students from Year 7 are prompted and reminded of their behaviour and manners on a regular basis. There is evidence from the older students that show they are able to make friends with other students all be it that they prefer a smaller friendship group they seem to value the friends they have.

Continue to develop relationships to support students

Students clearly respect the staff in the Base but they also feel safe there. Student C refers to the Base as a “happy place” and shows that this is somewhere where she is comfortable and supported stating “When I come here I feel like the same like when I’m home”. One of the most endearing comments made by a student about the staff in the

Base was Student D when referring to Person A, she states “I really like Person A, she looks out for me”. (Appendix B)

Encourage students to find subjects of interest

Most students, even those in year 7 have shown interests in certain subjects and this has helped each in developing relationships with members of teaching staff and mixing with others in that subject area. The biggest achievements linked to this is the voluntary attendance of students to clubs and extra-curricular activities. Student C is an excellent example having taken part in the school production. (Appendix D)

Develop mainstream teachers knowledge and skills of the autistic spectrum

One of the concerns that both professionals raised was the knowledge and skills that mainstream teachers had to enable and accommodate an autistic student in the mainstream class. The student surveys show that the majority of students have good relationships with some teachers and most teachers are aware of students' needs. (Appendix B) Seach, Lloyd and Preston (2002, p.5) suggest for teachers to be most effective in teaching autistic children within a mainstream class then they should prepare by looking at the child's ‘individual strengths and weaknesses’ and acknowledge that each child may have different development profile alongside understanding the ‘specific features of the autistic disorder’. Understandably with large class sizes, sometimes up to 32, this can be difficult and so teachers may need reminding from Base staff as to specifics on each child so to take away the emphasis on the teacher finding out the information and this being provided for them.

Develop awareness of autism among mainstream students

Mixing with other students comes up often in the research as being a major strength of having the Base in School X. One of the main concerns, on the other hand, was bullying and this was also seen in the literature review. A recommendation by Beaney (2017) is creating Autism Champions. This is recommended for use in primary schools but could be developed in secondary schools. In particular, Beaney's programme to create autism awareness provides teachers with lesson plans and assemblies to develop an understanding amongst other students of what autism is and how they can help. This could also help eliminate the concerns that parents have when students are transitioning from Year 6.

Develop flexibility within the timetable for individual students to learn social skills

The interviews with staff from the Base highlighted the need for there to be some flexibility in the timetabling of the students. In a mainstream school students must stick to a very rigid timetable. Scheuermann, Webber and Lang (2018, p.100) discuss the skills learnt in subjects and the importance of these being 'integrated across subjects'. They also give the example of catching a bus and the number of skills this will teach an autistic student discussing social skills and communication. They also support this argument that the focus of the curriculum and school for autistic students should be to teach social and life skills and to teach students how 'to function independently as an adult in his or her community'.

Professional and Personal Development

Having carried out this research it has enabled me to reflect on my own teaching and interaction of autistic students. The interviews with students made me appreciate how very different each one of our autistic students is. Prior to this research, I would bear certain things in mind when teaching mixed classes such as ensuring I explain at the start of the lesson what activities were being carried out in the lessons. This research has encouraged me as a teacher to find out more about individual students. In my opinion, interviewing Person A and B has helped them too, to reflect on the work carried out in the Base and look at areas which they feel they could work upon to better support the students.

Sharing the Recommendations

The conclusions of the research and recommendations will be shared with Base staff and the professionals. This will be done in person so that I can thank them also for their contribution to the research. These will also be shared with Governors and School X Senior Leadership Team in the new term and will support the review of the Base.

Finally, if I were to follow up research I would look specifically at the skills, knowledge and confidence of teachers in School X whilst teaching autistic children with the viewpoint of providing support to enable them to become more effective teachers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Parent Survey



Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey. All information collected is kept anonymous and so your honest opinions would very much be appreciated. When answering these questions please reflect on the progress of your child since joining Maesteg School and your expectations.

Thank you again for your time. Please return this envelope to school, your child may hand this to Mrs ~~Seena~~ ~~Wolles~~ on Reception or to myself directly - Mrs Clarke in the sealed envelope attached.

Section A

For each of the following questions please answer reflecting on any changes since joining Maesteg School. Please cross the box most appropriate and any further comments should you feel necessary.

1. Does your child play with other children

☐ Big
Improvement

☐ Some
Improvement

☐ No
change

☐ Not as
much as
before

☐ Hardly
ever /
Never

2. Does your child understand the body language and facial expressions of others

☐ Big
Improvement

☐ Some
Improvement

☐ No
change

☐ Not as
much as
before

☐ Shows no
understanding

3. Can your child take turns and share

☐ Big
Improvement

☐ Some
Improvement

☐ No
change

☐ Not as
much as
before

☐ Hardly
ever /
Never

4. Can your child listen to others and patiently wait for their turn to speak

☐ Big
Improvement

☐ Some
Improvement

☐ No
change

☐ Not as
much as
before

☐ Hardly
ever /
Never

5. Can your child listen to and respect the opinions of others, even if they disagree

☐ Big
Improvement

☐ Some
Improvement

☐ No
change

☐ Not as
much as
before

☐ Hardly
ever /
Never

6. Can your child communicate their own feelings and opinions to others

☐ Big
Improvement

☐ Some
Improvement

☐ No
change

☐ Not as
much as
before

☐ Hardly
ever /
Never

Section B

Please comments on any factors that you think have helped your child develop their social skills at Maesteg School.

Appendix 2

Pupil Interviews

These interviews took place over a range of lunchtimes and due to the type of students I worked with some interviews were stopped and started and very often discussion was not relevant to the research but necessary to encourage the students to talk openly. During some interviews we played a play-dough game at the same time and this helped encourage students to talk more. The interview was semi-structured with the aim being that pupils answer some of these questions about themselves. The questions were brought into conversation with students and may have been broken down or re-worded as was needed. Not all questions were asked as some were unnecessary as the question was answered otherwise.

Do students like to work with other students both within the base and in classrooms?

Are students able to make friends?

Can students take turns with others?

Can students show emotions or understand the emotions of others?

How do students feel in social situations around the school?

What do students most like about school?

What do students most dislike about school?

The main quotes that are relevant from each student are listed below, some pupils did not answer all questions and sometimes provided other information which is still of interest and noted too.

Student A - LM	Gender: F	Year: 7
N.B. This student speaks very little and was accompanied by a member of the base when sat by the table. She is extremely quiet and very rarely speaks directly to teachers. The member of staff asked some of these questions and LM whispered a reply but the member of staff also gave their own opinion for each answer, answers given by the member of staff are in italic and those that the student gave are in quotations.		
Do students like to work with other students both within the base and in classrooms?	<i>LM doesn't like working with others, she has started sitting with others in the base cannot communicate with others to be able to work with them yet. She is more comfortable sitting with peers in the base than she is in classrooms.</i>	
Are students able to make friends?	<i>LM does smile a lot and this makes her approachable to others however when someone new speaks to her she struggles massively to start a conversation and so has not really made any of her own friends since joining. Fortunately her elder brother, EM, has a friendship group and she is beginning to mix with them more.</i>	

Can students take turns with others?	<i>Yes she can, LM has grown up with a brother who is also autistic and this is something they both do well.</i>
Can students show emotions or understand the emotions of others?	<i>She can show her emotions well and always appears happy in school. She has very little understanding of others emotions. She knows if someone is upset but does not know how to react.</i>
How do students feel in social situations around the school?	<i>LM is very wary of walking down the corridor and older students and so she is always accompanied to lessons when the corridors are cleared.</i>
What do students most like about school?	<i>"I like it here". ('Here' referring to the base.)</i>
What do students most dislike about school?	<i>Student makes a face at this. She tells me she dislikes some teachers that are too strict and shout and she does not like the noise in lots of classrooms.</i>

Student B - DW	Gender: M Year: 7
Do students like to work with other students both within the base and in classrooms?	<i>"I like nearly all people who come here*" "I like some people in my class and there are 2 boys who let me sit by them but some of them are a bit silly, but it is funny"</i>
Are students able to make friends?	<i>"I have lots of friends now, my teacher played a game so we know names and my other teacher in here told me how to tell people about me. I don't always do it because I am like scared but I am happy when I do do it and come back to tell Miss* because she'll tell me well done"</i>
Can students take turns with others?	
Can students show emotions or understand the emotions of others?	<i>My observation - We played an emotions game as a group and B was very good at recognising the faces that people make to show emotions and could make these but really didn't like talking about emotions.</i>
How do students feel in social situations around the school?	
What do students most like about school?	<i>"I like doing new things like I like art and we did it in my old school but now I can make things and I like going outside and running around."</i>
What do students most dislike	<i>"I didn't like dinner time but now I come here it's</i>

about school?	my favourite.” “I don’t like some of the big boys they squash me on the way to lessons”
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Student C - AR	Gender: F Year: 8
Do students like to work with other students both within the base and in classrooms?	“No, if we have to go in a group I can’t do it and come here”. <i>I commented to C that she worked well taking charge of a group in the base at lunch time.</i> “I like everyone here, they are my friends and they listen to me, I’m in charge of the new ones (Pupil names) because I am the friendliest Miss said.”
Are students able to make friends?	“ I make friends with everyone here but I am getting better but don’t like talking to people I don’t know in my classes.”
Can students take turns with others?	“I am good at that and I have helped Miss to show the new ones how to take turns like when we take turns by the table.”
Can students show emotions or understand the emotions of others?	
How do students feel in social situations around the school?	
What do students most like about school?	“I like my friends, I really like drawing and going on the computer.” “When I come here I feel like the same like when I’m home – it’s a happy place”
What do students most dislike about school?	“I try to work in groups but get really scared”
Additional Notes	<i>This student took part in the school production. She had a small-speaking role and attended rehearsals with a mix of students from across all year groups.</i>

Student D - KD	Gender: F Year: 8
Do students like to work with other students both within the base and in classrooms?	
Are students able to make friends?	“ Miss I know everyone now” “I’ve asked everyone their name and told them mine” “ I don’t like everyone but I am nice”

Can students take turns with others?	
Can students show emotions or understand the emotions of others?	
How do students feel in social situations around the school?	“I was really nervous when I came from my junior school, I loved my junior school Miss, and I didn’t like going to lessons here. Well I liked the lessons but I used to think the school was huge and I’d get lost. I think it’s because I’m bigger now and I learnt where all my classes is because now I think I was silly because that is silly isn’t it Miss”
What do students most like about school?	“I really like DS, she looks out for me, don’t you Miss (calling to DS). The best thing I like is games and Sir has given me a pass to go at lunch too so I can do dancing or trampolining, I’m only learning though but the other girls are really nice some of them go to big competitions and they show me what they have to do. I can’t do that they do like turnies when they are I the air and everything. I tried roller skating but I need to practice, mammy said we can have a go and then I’ll be good for school... well I’ll be better (whispers) I’m not very good yet. Sir said in the summer we can play tennis’ (little squeal of excitement)
What do students most dislike about school?	“I don’t like it when we have a supply teacher or I don’t like assemblies but Miss lets me come here and I help her with jobs, I know though she gives me jobs to stop me chatting because I like chatting”

Student E - EM	Gender: M Year: 9
Do students like to work with other students both within the base and in classrooms?	“I like some people in my classes... no I like all people but I like working with some people. My teachers know who I like and they let me work with them” “Everyone in here is my friend, I’m always nice to people in here – Miss wouldn’t be happy if we weren’t nice”
Are students able to make friends?	
Can students take turns with others?	<i>We played a game whilst talking, I taught this student in year 7 and he was unable to take turns so it was interesting to see that he was very good at taking turns and prompting me to take my turn.</i>
Can students show emotions or	<i>We played a game with play-dough and the student</i>

understand the emotions of others?	<i>drew faces to show me different emotions, it was a very literal understanding of the emotions with big lines down the face for sadness, big lines across the forehead for anger, big open mouth for shocked. He did not want to talk about the emotions though and kept changing the subject telling me about different species of lizards.</i>
How do students feel in social situations around the school?	"I go to lessons by myself now" <i>**Please see notes in Observations</i>
What do students most like about school?	"I love dinner time and home time!" <i>(laughs hysterically at this and tells everyone in the base what he has said.)</i>
What do students most dislike about school?	"Nothing – I LOVE IT!!" <i>This student spoke to me just after the snow day informally in the corridor and I asked if he had enjoyed the Snow Days, he told me "No, I miss school too much, it's boring at home".</i>

Student F - CW	Gender: M	Year: 9
Do students like to work with other students both within the base and in classrooms?	"I don't come to the base much now, I come to see Miss or if I feel ill but I like being in my classes with my friends"	
Are students able to make friends?	"Yes Miss, I can make friends if I want to but I have a group of my friends, they make me laugh and we have fun. They know I am autistic and they are kind to me and they are my best friends"	
Can students take turns with others?		
Can students show emotions or understand the emotions of others?		
How do students feel in social situations around the school?	"I feel confident being in school. I am choosing my GCSE's, I'm excited to take the subjects I really like" "I used to not like school, I don't really know why.... I don't think I had nice friends then, I like school now"	
What do students most like about school?	"I love science and IT with you Miss, they are my favourite of all subjects. I like doing clubs too like Minecraft and Blender" "I didn't used to like having lots of different teachers but I don't mind now. I don't love all of them, don't tell them Miss, but I think they know now that sometimes I say things not because I'm naughty but because I say the first thing I think. Miss said I need	

	to think before I talk, especially if I'm feeling moody and I try to remember that.... But sometimes I still say it"
What do students most dislike about school?	

Student G - DW	Gender: F Year: 10
Do students like to work with other students both within the base and in classrooms?	"I have got used to working with other people in class, I'm not always happy about it but most of my teachers put me with someone who is not naughty. I don't like people who don't listen to the teacher and I get mad inside but I wouldn't tell them"
Are students able to make friends?	" I can talk to new people but I have friends who I meet lunch time and break time so I like to stay with them"
Can students take turns with others?	
Can students show emotions or understand the emotions of others?	"Yes, I think I am very good at knowing other people's feelings. I know that I can sometimes get angry but when that happens I usually end up being upset but I know to come to the base and to talk is good for me to control my emotions and to say how I feel"
How do students feel in social situations around the school?	
What do students most like about school?	"I like doing GCSE's because now I'm learning more about the subjects that I am interested in. I want to do something with computers and now I am learning to code and have stopped coming to the base so much and go the ICT room to practice"
What do students most dislike about school?	"It's too early, coming to school. I like my bed"

Student H - LN	Gender: M Year: 11
Do students like to work with other students both within the base and in classrooms?	"I don't mind who I work with although I know some people don't like working with me because I can be controlling can't I, but it's only because I want to have the best grades" "I think some people in the base are childish that's why I go to your room at dinner time"

	“I’d rather do my work in quiet with people the same age as me”
Are students able to make friends?	
Can students take turns with others?	“Yes, you have to take turns. I didn’t used to take turns but we had to take turns in the base, I don’t like it but does anyone like waiting for a turn”
Can students show emotions or understand the emotions of others?	“Of course but I can wind up other people sometimes and I have to remember to stop because If I find it funny I’ll carry on and it might not be funny for the other person” “I used to go to the base a lot because I was angry, a lot, miss you remember, but I don’t feel angry lots. I think miss I know what winds me up now and I know how to ignore it. Lots of the things that would get on my nerves I know now that it’s stupid.”
How do students feel in social situations around the school?	“Good and now I volunteer in the charity shop and you said that was good for me too didn’t you because now I have to talk to strangers in the shop and I like it and it will help me when I go for a job”
What do students most like about school?	“I don’t know what I like but there’s nothing I don’t like. “ “Actually I think I like the teachers because I am coming to do A Levels because I know my teachers are good and they know my ways, like they know me”
What do students most dislike about school?	

Appendix 3

Pupil Observations

During this research I have spent a great deal of time in the base and simply observing pupils whilst in school. Below are my notes these are categorised into general notes and some specific to each student.

Generic	The Base is extremely well organised. There are clear systems in place and pupils are very aware of these systems and what is expected of them once in the base. The staff know the pupils extremely well and in most cases have excellent relationships with home and this is evident through observing conversations between staff members and students. Students are taught through these systems many things. Manners being the most notable – students are reminded how to respond to one another and are praised for positive behaviour. As a ‘visitor’ when I visit pupils are told they have a visitor and they know to offer a chair and offer a drink. At lunch time eating is only allowed at the dining table which has less seats than there are pupils but pupils know to wait for their turn and do this with no fuss. They then have a rota to take turns cleaning up the dining table after them. Within the base there is a display showing emotions faces and when playing with the students some pointed it out. There is different provision for each student with some spending some of the lessons in the base and others only calling in as needed.
A - LM	This student has to step out of class a lot because of the noise of other students, this has improved slightly from the beginning of the year.
B - DW	
C - AR	This student took part in the school production. She had a non-speaking part but was up on the stage and attended rehearsals with a mix of students from across all year groups.
D - KD	
E - EM	When in year 7 my lesson, ICT, was the only lesson that this student would attend. I was told not to worry about his academic progress as the focus was for this student to start to integrate and any social skills learnt would be a bonus. This student is now on a full timetable and is achieving in all of his lessons. **This student was previously escorted to lessons and walked through the corridors 5 mins after lessons had started and 5 left 5 minutes before because of fear in the corridors. He now walks by himself, he

	does walk a particular route which is probably not the easiest or quickest route but has learnt the quietest route to take.
F - CW	This student joined the school in Year 7 with a diagnosis of ASD and Turrets. It is worth noting that this student no longer displays any 'ticks' or 'eye rolling' which were his main displays of Turrets. This student rarely attends the Base and is very confident among his year group.
G - DW	
H - LN	This is a student who I am mentoring as a More Able and Talented student. He is very aware of his autistic traits and makes efforts to overcome barriers that he knows he faces.

Appendix 4

Interview with Person A – Senior Member of staff from the Base

SC – Introduction to the research

SC - How are the developments of social skills encouraged in the Base?

A - There are lots of different strategies we try to embed to make sure all pupils understand what social skills are and why they are important. Don't get me wrong some pupils come to us with excellent social skills but many students are overwhelmed at first by the size of the school and the number of pupils so there are some skills we need to teach the children because this is a new experience for them. There are a couple of things we drum into the pupils from the very start. They know that we won't stand for bullying in the base and that they need to treat others nicely like they would like to be treated themselves. My constant nagging makes sure that they understand this. We go over the top with praise at first so that the children know when we have recognised them doing this but over time it's expected and they know how disappointed we will be if they are not nice to others. I suppose along the same line is teaching the pupils basic manners like holding doors open, please and thank you. We try to make sure they all know how to take turns by playing games and putting rotas in place which also gives them some responsibilities like in the kitchen area tidying up, those type of things.

SC - What about encouraging them or showing them how to make friends, because of a couple of the students said to me that you had certain expectations of them and showed them how to talk to others?

A - It is difficult because there are some children who, even though they are autistic and they know it can be so hard for them they are desperate to make friends. One of the girls in year 8 is a perfect example she has mixed really well in classes and although I can see how uncomfortable she is sometimes she tries really hard to speak to new children and she knows how proud of her we are. She hasn't made any really good friends and that is hard but socially she can cope very well. There are some other children who have no interest in making friends and are quite happy in their own company, we work with these children or support them in class to teach them how to interact. Some of them, well you know like X can come across quite rude to others so we've been working with him and sometimes it's just a quiet word to remind him how to talk to others or like in your class the other day when he walked between you and X talking I just told him what the polite thing to do was and then he wasn't happy until he had apologised to you. You know he struggles to make friends and for him it's more learning to talk to others in the class. When the kids first come to us from primary it is so daunting for them and so we try to slowly move them out of the base and into class and when we do this one of us will go the class with them and sit with other pupils and introduce ourselves and most times the pupil with us too to a small group of friendly looking children. It doesn't always work but in fairness to our students what will usually happen is that when we leave the classroom, whether it be a couple of day later

or a couple of weeks later then students in the class will 'look out' for our kids. Some will make real friendships and they will know from us modelling the behaviour how to develop them, some are more than happy just to have some familiar faces in the class. Ultimately the children know that we expect them to be nice to others like they would like to be treated themselves. If we ever hear anyone not being nice to each other they know it's not tolerated and we'll try to make them think about the feelings of the other person and generally that works for us.

SC - What about working with other pupils in classroom situation? For example when pupils are made to work in groups.

A - Hmm ... yes that can cause issues. We tell the pupils that they may end up working with someone they don't like at first and some will go with it and well, you know, the majority of teachers are aware of who are ASD children are and they will think about the grouping or let the child choose their group, some even give them the heads up the lesson before and ask them who they think they will work well with. There are some students, **H**, you know better than anyone if he doesn't want to work in a group that he doesn't. I'll be honest because he is so bright and hard-working I've heard him say to teachers 'I think I'd do better if I did this task alone'. But having said that he took our advice and he is now volunteering in a charity shop so he can learn how to work with others. The main issue is that he can't handle childishness and so he is better in adult company. The things he wants to talk about sometimes go way over my head, I know he tells you about the latest on the stock market. **STUDENT F** is very much like **STUDENT H** but whereas with **STUDENT F** I would fret because he never worked well with others he has found his own way and is now teaching himself social skills and is doing fantastically well in his GCSE's. So sorry, coming back to the question we try to encourage them to work with each other and we do things like playing board games and we mix the teams up so they have to learn to work with other people and they sometimes have a pout about who's on their team but then enjoying the game and then next time when we mix up the teams they want to be with who they were last time!

SC - I can see you have a display showing different emotions.

A - Yes some of our children, not all of them, need to be reminded how to react to other people when they show different emotions so with some of are younger children we play emotions games. There are some like **STUDENT E** who will always struggle with reading pupils emotions. Someone was crying laughing one day and he genuinely had no idea how to react and it upset him a little but the majority of the children ow understand most emotions and how to react but also we try to get them to understand their own emotions. We have the chill out room and at first they need prompting to use it and understanding it's a safe room and if they have a meltdown that's the place to do it. **STUDENT E** will sometimes have a good cry in there and batter the beanbags but he has 10 minutes of that then 10 minutes nap and then comes out happy as larry, so he is starting to understand his own emotions a lot more.

SC - Can you monitor in any way pupil's development of social skills?

A - I suppose it's just observing the pupils really, we meet with MOST parents on a regular basis and we'll give them an update. We obviously talk about how they are getting on academically but lots of our parents want to know how they are getting on socially and their development of skills to prepare them for the big wide world. Sending an autistic child to our school as opposed to a special school like X is a big decision and the parents reasoning, in my opinion anyway, is because they think that their child will be better prepared for life after school from coming to a school like ours where they have to mix with other children.

When we meet with parents one of the things we discuss, and which they are most interested in, is how they have developed socially and this is purely from our observations and sometimes we do a round robin to find out what teachers say too but we will tell them areas of progress but we will be honest with them too and tell them what we are concerned about but again this is only from observing there is no measure or test we can do which is a shame as we can see how much our students progress in social skills but there is nothing to prove it.

SC - What do you feel are the biggest barriers for ASD pupils at our mainstream school?

A - There are things I'd like to do to develop life skills and social skills like showing the kids how to catch a bus, shopping, and things like that but because of the number of children we have and the different age groups it makes it hard. I'd love to take the year 11 pupils out now, do some work experience because we don't do that anymore as a school but because our year 11's are doing so well in their GCSE subjects I can't really take them out of class, plus there's not enough of us in the base to allow one of us to go out for the day with just 2 children. Sorry what was the question..... Oh, okay for our pupils or even the parents the main concerns are – bullying from mainstream pupils, very rarely do we have any issues, crowds in the corridor; we have strategies to help the pupils, the canteen and lunch time hence why most of our children have lunch here and leave lessons 10 minutes early to get their lunch and I'd also say teachers. Not all teachers understand the needs of ASD students and that's why we do a recap every September and have put together the pupil portfolio so a teacher can look at particular students and find out how they work best and what their concerns are.

SC - What do you feel are the benefits for ASD pupils attending our mainstream school?

A - In some ways some of our kids have to very quickly learn social skills to cope with the size of the school. Simply walking to the base through the main gates can be a challenge because of the mix of children. I just said about our Year 11 pupils who are doing so well, one of them is staying on for A Levels and the other is looking for a job. I don't think in a specialist school that they would have been able to take subjects the same as they are here. STUDENT H is passionate about business and ICT and I don't think he would have had the same specialist teaching in X as he would have here but I

honestly believe that being around other students has prepared him for life after school. There are bullies in all schools but there are in life and I think being in the base is like a little protective bubble but the children have to learn to step out of that bubble at times, they know they can come back in when they need too but and this is only my personal opinion and I'm obviously biased but I think our pupils are resilient and for want of a better word street-wise.

Appendix 5

Interview with Person B – Junior Member of staff from the Base

SC - How are the development of social skills encouraged in the Base?

B - I do lots of support in class and we use the same strategies whenever we are with base children. Modelling behaviour is one of our key roles so the children know how they should talk to teachers and to others. In class, mainly with year 7 and 8 children I have to remind them or you know show them how to sit quietly and listen to the teacher, how to wait if they have a question with their hand up – those type of things. I try to make sure that they know the names of some others in the class and try to help them make friendships or at the least pupils who they know will work with them and help them. In the base there are high expectations and we do drill it in a bit but it's simple things like how to greet someone and how to be polite, how to sit at a table with others to eat, taking turns and how to talk to others.

SC - What about working with other pupils in classroom situations, I know you touched on this? For example when pupils are made to work in groups.

B- There are some pupils who will never work in a group and we just need to make sure that all the teachers are aware of this and support however we can. We will always try but for only a small number this is impossible for them. When we know there is group work we'll join the pupil. Sometimes we are just on the side-lines and sometimes we need to be a member of the group to encourage them to be part of the group. Most of the key stage 4 pupils are good at working in groups because they've had lots of practice in the base and I suppose they are just used to it now. Having said that there is one boy in year 11 who will not work in a group. I actually don't know how he manages it but having spoken to his teachers he usually tells them he'd do a better job completing the task alone and as far as I know he usually does.

SC - I can see in the base there is a display for different emotions, how is that used?

B - We use that mainly with year 7. Some of them have come from very little primary schools where they have worked with small groups of teachers and pupils and have been quite protected. We find that sometimes the mix of children in a year 7 class can be scary for these children and so we support them in class but we have a large mix of children here and our base children may not have seen very naughty children before or

children shouting or angry and we try to explain to them how to react when they see different behaviours.

SC - Can you monitor in any way pupil's development of social skills?

B - We have meetings in the base where we discuss pupils' progress. We have a file for each of the children and we'll discuss concerns and monitor them or put actions into place and that can very often include social skills and what we see in the class or in the base or more often than not when the children don't know we are watching them.

SC - What do you feel are the biggest barriers for ASD pupils at our mainstream school?

B - In between lessons and after lunch, times when the corridor is really busy is an issue for lots of the children and I suppose that is because being in a mainstream school there are so many children. I would say that the majority of teachers are very good, no excellent with the ASD children but sometimes there can be an issue if there is a supply teacher or a new teacher and we obviously keep an eye out for that.

SC - What do you feel are the benefits for ASD pupils attending our mainstream school?

B - Mixing with other children and the specialism of different lessons. Before working here I worked in a school just for children with disabilities and special needs. I worked in the ASD base there and one of the issues with the base is that autistic children can have such different needs and some are able to cope very well in social situations and are very intelligent but there's not always the same type of specialised subject teaching in special schools. What I mean is if there was a pupil who was particularly interested in history we'd have teachers who had some knowledge but not studied History themselves and no passion for themselves like secondary subject teachers have. Don't get me wrong the specialist unit was the only choice and ideal for lots of children but there were some children who I felt would be better equipped for life if they'd come to a school like X.

SC - Are there any comments on any of the pupils you feel are relevant to the research?

B - It's hard to explain the progress in their social skills but it seems to me, and I don't have as many years experience as DS but during Year 8 pupils seem to settle and gain confidence being around mainstream pupils and mixing in classes. Look at F who would have ever thought in Year 7 that he would be going into lessons unsupported and able to even consider GCSE choices. Some things that he does are clearly learnt in the base like mixing with others and dealing with his emotions but I honestly think that he has developed lots of his own coping strategies and that he is just "used to" being around a large mix of children and dealing with the uncertainty of mainstream school.

Appendix 6

Interview with Person C Transcript

SC – Introduction to the research.

SC – When choosing a school for an autistic child, in your experience, what are important factors?

C – Obviously the needs of ASD children can range quite significantly but where possible I think a school that can provide normalisation is key. Some ASD children will need one to one support and others may simply need a routine and the knowledge that support is available to them should they need it. Choosing a school is a very personal choice and although many parents choose to send their son / daughter to the school in which they are catchment, this can be a very difficult choice for a parent of an ASD child. If I had to advise parents of ASD children, which I have, I would tell them to visit the schools and find out what support is there for their child and is it enough or appropriate for their son or daughters individual needs.

SC – So with reference in particular to school X what is your opinion of the provision of a 'base' for ASD children in a mainstream school?

C – My preference for any ASD child would always be to attend this type of school, but only if the support is enough. In my own experience this type of placement is very good for children who are not reliant on one to one support and have already some level of independence. My own experience tells me that these bases mean that the ASD child has the continuity and consistency they require and the specialist staff whilst being in the mainstream part of the school is not always quite adapted to their needs but in reality prepares them for life outside school where not everything is adapted to meet their individual needs. From my own experience I think primary schools are generally more flexible to meet the needs of ASD children. That's not to say that school x isn't, but the size of the school alone and the number of staff it would be difficult for every member of staff to understand the individual needs of every child.

I do think that having ASD children in mainstream school is good for other children and helps them develop an understanding of children with additional needs and helps them to accept difference.

C asks me to repeat the question which I do.

C - Going back to what I said about the issues about base units in mainstream schools is again the number of teachers students have. ASD children struggle with relationships and I think that these type of schools need to ensure that all teachers are trained and have the understanding needed to work with ASD children. Far too often a lack of understanding shows that many don't recognise the different behaviours and misunderstand it as poor behaviour.

A very large percentage of autistic children already attend mainstream schools in Wales, I think it's currently about 60%, the success depends on the provision in schools and like I said the understanding.

SC – The focus of this research is to look at, in particular, the effect that attending a 'base school' has on the development of social skills. What are your thoughts on this?

C - Social skills are the hardest skill to develop in children with autism. This is due to many factors, for example the literal understanding that autistic children can have. Social skills affects play massively. Children can be accepted through play, play helps to understand feelings and emotions through play. Obviously I can only speak about 'base schools' I have visited but I have always been impressed by the way in which social skills are encouraged and developed and are taught in the base areas. Personally I feel that for autistic children, being in a mainstream school will help children's social skills simply..... simply by just being around other children. Learning to deal with things like moving from one class to another or taking turns in a class. This can be too much for some autistic children and I obviously go back to what I said earlier, I think that it depends on the individual needs of the child but where children have the independence and intelligence to deal with mainstream it is definitely the sensible choice and the one that will provide children with actual life skills. Like with all schools though parents need to be part of children's development and partnership is key.

Appendix 7

Interview with Person D Transcript

SC – Introduction to the research.

SC – When choosing a school for an autistic child, in your experience, what are important factors?

D - Well obviously I can come at this question in a variety of ways. Having an autistic child I've been in the position where my wife and I had to choose what school to send our son too. For us it wasn't a difficult decision. Sons name (SN) needs a lot of care and has always been cared for in very small groups, maximum of 3 children to teacher or carer. We knew that the mainstream schools around us didn't have the provision for SN. We also knew that he wouldn't cope in the setting of a mainstream school, he struggles massively with large groups of people and it takes him a very long time to build any kind of relationship. We were lucky in his primary school that he had the same key worker for 5 years. I know though through my role as a governor of the local primary school, which has an autistic base and through my charity work that the base setting in a mainstream is ideal for lots of children. When I advise parents about schooling there are no straight forward ways of working out which school is best and I would advise parents to visit all schools they are considering and take their child with them. Watching their child's reaction in each school will be key. A special school provides the level of care and support needed for children who are severely autistic but there are many different levels of autism. Although Asperger syndrome is no longer a 'thing' I would say that many of those children who are high functioning would thrive given the opportunity to attend a secondary school where as those with more severe communication problems and those children unable to develop any independence will need the smaller classes and more specialist care given in a specialist school.

SC – The focus of this research is to look at, in particular, the effect that attending a 'base school' has on the development of social skills. What are your thoughts on this?

D - I suppose this is what I was trying to get at. ASD children having the chance to mix with other children in a mainstream school in itself is a massive learning experience for ASD children and more in my personal opinion beneficial to mainstream pupils. Much of the training we do with businesses is aimed at those who will be working with autistic individuals and families. You would be surprised and disappointed probably by the lack of understanding that there still is about autism. If children are in a school with other autistic children it is very likely that they will have developed knowledge and experience of being around autistic children. Hopefully they will have been involved in class groups or assemblies too that helps them understand what autism is. In the schools I have visited, mainstream schools and the primary school where I am a governor I am always amazed at how well other children work with autistic children.

There are issues no doubt for some autistic children going to a mainstream school. For my own son we knew that he would never cope in a mainstream school. There are some parents who ask me in my charity role what school I think is best and it is clear that they want it to be a mainstream school but if the child needs individual care and a specialist curriculum then a mainstream school is not for them. Every child is an individual and although we have the umbrella of autism the needs of children and autistic adults can vary massively. With this in mind there is no right and wrong school more of a best fit depending on the severity of their autism.

Appendix 8

Parent Survey Data

Pupil Code	Gender	Current Year Group	1. Does Your child play with other children?	2. Does your child understand the body language and facial expressions of others?	3. Can your child take turns and share?	4. Can your child listen to others and patiently wait for their turn to speak?	5. Can your child listen to and respect the opinions of others, even if they disagree?	6. Can your child communicate their own feelings and opinions to others?
A	F	7	2	3	3	3	3	3
B	M	7	2	3	2	3	3	3
C	G	8	1	1	1	1	1	1
D	G	8	1	2	1	2	2	2
E	M	9	1	2	1	1	2	2
F	M	9	1	1	1	1	1	2
G	F	10	1	1	1	1	1	2
H	M	11	1	1	1	1	1	2
1	Big improvement							
2	Some improvement							
3	No change							
4	Not as much as before							
5	Shows no understanding							

<u>A</u>	There has been little change in A's social development since joining the school. I don't think of this as a negative though as my husband and I have been in this position before with E. E did not make much progress socially in year 7 and our main aim when sending him to school X was so that he could learn social skills. He has now developed social skills beyond anything that we ever expected or hoped for. We are aware of the skills taught in the base but we both think that lots of E's social skills have been developed outside of the base where he has mixed with other pupils and learnt coping strategies. Before coming to X school we were limited in where we could take E, for example shopping with E would be avoided. He is now much better prepared for these social situations and we hope the same can be said for A before long. We cannot thank the staff in the base enough for the support they provide but also because they know how to be firm with our children and challenge them
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	in ways we didn't think possible.
<u>B</u>	There hasn't been many changes in B's social skills since joining Maesteg. The biggest change is that he does play a little now whereas play was something he didn't really do before. He has a better relationship with his siblings now and he tells us about who he plays with at lunch time and what he plays and these games and routines have been the factor that have helped him most.
	The amazing staff in the base are responsible for the improvements to C's social skills. She is a different girl now, she is aware of her own feelings and how to control these. She is a far more confident girl who now enjoys playing with others because the staff have shown her how to make friends and have encouraged her to take part in clubs and activities that have sparked her interest.
<u>F</u>	From Year 7 to year 8 F rarely left the base without support in the classroom. Something happened this year and he was not nervous going back to school in September as he always was before. He tells us that having a group of friends who are not like him but understand him has given him confidence. I know that DS has worked with him a great deal on his social skills and we have seen a huge difference over the last year. We were concerned to find out that F was not spending as much time in the base but now can honestly say that going to the base and having the chance to mix as well outside of the base with other children has been the perfect outcome for him.
<u>H</u>	H has overcome so much since being at X school. The work done within the base helped him enormously when he was in year 7 and taught him how to work with other children and listen to others. H is very interested in computer science and business and he is now allowed to spend lots of his time working on these and this too has helped his social skills as he is able to mix with other children who have the same interests as him. We never thought this possible.

Appendix 9

Ethics Form

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: “creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications”. As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the “principal researcher”.

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

Full Name :	SHARON CLARKE				
Tick all boxes which apply:					
Member of staff:	☐	Student:	☒	Honorary research fellow:	☐

Faculty/School/Centre:	CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT, MASTERS IN EDUCATION, EDUCATION		
Campus:	TOWNHILL CAMPUS, SWANSEA		
E-mail address:	sclarke@maestegcs.bridgend.sch.uk		
Contact Telephone Number:	07786836313		
For students:			
Student Number:	P004993	Undergraduate	☐
Programme of Study:	MA in EDUCATION	Taught Postgraduate	☒
Director of Studies/Supervisor:	SIAN BROOKS	Research	☐

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)		YES	☒	NO	☐
					Date
If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known):	Research Degrees Committee		☐		
	Faculty Research Committee		☐		
	Other (write in) Junnine Thomas Walters MA(Ed) Programme Director		☒	27/10/17	

Approval in principle **must** be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval.

SECTION C: External Ethical Guidance Materials

Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines.	
UWTSD Code of Ethics	☒
BERA Ethical Guidelines	☒
	☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

Does the research activity involve collaborators outside of the University?	YES	☐	NO	☒
If Yes, please provide the name of the external organisation and name and contact details for the main contact person:				

Institution	
Contact person name	
Contact person e-mail address	

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☐
If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

Indicative title:	What are the social benefits and drawbacks for ASD students attending a Base in school X ?		
Proposed start date:	Feb 2018	Proposed end date:	June 2018
Purpose of research activity (including aims and objectives) Outline the purpose, aims and objectives of the research activity, including key research questions. Show briefly how existing research has informed the proposed activity and explain what the research activity will add and how it addresses an area of importance. (Maximum 300 words) School X is a secondary school which has a specialist ASD unit. This has been in place for 5 years and although much discussion was made on its proposal the impact the base has on the students attending has never been reviewed. There was much discussion about how well these students would integrate into the school as it is widely known that children on the autistic spectrum have difficulties socialising. The National Autistic Society as an example explains how individuals with autism may want to make friends but find this difficult and in particular find ‘ difficulty reading social cues’ (http://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication.aspx) There is much literature that discusses these concerns and the measures put in place to help schools, parents and pupils. A ‘Guide for Parents’ which has been created All Wales ASD Leads discusses the decisions parents must make when deciding on whether mainstream or special schools are best for autistic children. Some of the questions to be reviewed include: What social benefits are there for ASD students attending school X? - Has integration into a secondary school affected social skills? - Has integration into a secondary school affected emotional intelligence? (These benefits to be looked at through the point of view of ASD students, teachers, professionals and parents / families) What are the drawbacks to ASD students attending school X? - Has the stress of integration into such a provision affected the students social skills? - Has the stress of integration into such a provision affected the students emotional intelligence? Key research questions which will be addressed through the viewpoint of various			

stakeholders (including key workers, parents, teaching staff and pupils) will include –

- What are the positives and negatives impacts on social skills of ASD students attending school X?
- What are the key reasons for these effects?
- Compare the differing opinions of stakeholders considering the individuality of each student.

It is hoped that the conclusions of the research can be used to make recommendations for possible improvements to provision. In addition the outcomes can be presented to Governors as although there was much discussion at this level on the introduction of the base this has not been evaluated at any point.

There is currently no evidence to show what provision is best for ASD students and this will depend very much on the individual needs of that child. Ideally this research will help highlight areas of strengths of this ‘base’ system and identify problem areas.

(this box should expand as you type)

Proposed methods

Provide a brief summary of all the methods that **may** be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. (Maximum 600 words)

The number of students in the base has grown year on year with new students joining each year as expected, but also with further students being identified late on, as on the Autistic Spectrum. For this research I will focus on 2 students from each year group who entered the school primarily as an ASD base student.

This will involve contacting parents as I would like to investigate too their feelings and opinions. In terms of ethic requirements I will need to seek permission to survey the parents and their children and use any data available on each student.

Quantitative data is to include ongoing progress data on each child. This shows expected levels of progress, entry levels, scores from National Testing. This will provide a basis to review progress made on an individual academic level. Although I am not reviewing academic progress this will give me a good indication of how the students have settled into the school. Likewise there is pastoral data available on each student which will give an indication of each student’s happiness and confidence levels in school and any changes over time.

The qualitative data will include a range of interviews. I will carry out unstructured interviews with the students. Knowing the students I am already aware that there are some students who are able to articulate their opinions very clearly. For those that will find this difficult I intend playing games using ‘How I feel’ emotion cards. I will go through the instructions with students very slowly and this is done in the base, a room in which they are very comfortable and with staff around who they trust. Pupils well-being is paramount and this will obviously provide the most honest findings if students are happy and feel in control. The students will be informed that if they choose not to take part, even if this is during the interview /game then they can simply leave the area and move to the ‘chill out’ zone. Pupils have different zones in the base being used and are very comfortable with these surroundings and understand that different areas are for different things. Being told that they can and the chill out zone, the opposite side of the room, is something students if they are stressed with work or need some time out and so is

to new to the pupils.

In addition I will carry out a survey with parents to assess their opinion on the progress of their child at school x with a particular focus on social skills. I will carry out individual in-depth interviews with the key workers and staff within the base. This will look at progress in terms of social skills and emotional intelligence.

I aim to carry out 2 interviews with professionals to review their opinion on schools with an ASD base as compared to 'special schools'. One of these interviews to be with an ASD Charity Manager; The charity I question supports families and individuals with autism through training and mentoring. The Charity Manager is also a parent to a son who has high functioning autism is very experienced and works with families on an individual basis and so should provide a 'rounded' view on this topic.

The other interview with Heather Smith who works in Child Health and works very closely with the 'National Autistic Lead' for Wales NHS. Heather also works with families and has to look at individual needs so will be able to offer a different view from more of a medical perspective. Similar to interviewing pupils all of the adults concerned will also be informed that they can withdraw completely at any point.

Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
All research with pupils, staff and parents will be carried out at School X within the base. Interviews with the Charity Manager and Heather Smith will be carried out at my home address or at the offices of each, whichever is most convenient for each interviewee. (this box should expand as you type)
Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants.
N/A (this box should expand as you type)

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐
Use of interviews?	☒	☐
Use of diaries?	☐	☒
Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
Use of video or audio recording?	☐	☒
Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
Other primary data collection methods, please explain in this box	☐	☒

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If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
Students or staff at the University?	☐	☒
Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
Children under 18?	☒	☐
Prisoners?	☐	☒
Young offenders?	☐	☒
Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
Others (please identify):	☐	☒

Participant numbers and source

Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?

In total 10 students will be part of this study. This is 2 students per year group of entry. Some year groups only have 2 students with ASD and therefore these will be included. Of the other year groups I will look at the student lists and work with the students who I personally teach or already have a relationship with as this will be important for students to feel comfortable whilst carrying out interviews or playing 'How I Feel' games.

I will interview all 3 of the members of staff working in the OASIS and will take their advice on which of the parents from each year group to carry out the survey with. There are some parents who are very involved with their child's education and attend all parental meetings and events so I am more likely to get a response from these parents. I hope that I will have at least 5 sets of parents willing to complete the survey.

Both professionals I have connections with and both have a great deal of experience advising parents and professionals about working with children and adults with Autism. They will be approached informally at first and then asked to complete consent forms and a formal interview.

Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☒	☐	☐
Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐

Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
If YES to any question, please provide full details			
(this box should expand as you type)			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.

If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.

Full risk assessment completed and appended?

Yes

☐

No

☒

Risks to participants

For example: emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information

It may be emotional or difficult for students to discuss their feelings more so because all of the students involved are on the Autistic Spectrum. The interviews will be carried out in the base which students see as their safe space; support staff will also be in the room and it will be ensured the pupils are fully aware of what is happening and that they are comfortable. Pupils will be informed that they can say stop at any point when they feel uncomfortable and the staff who work with these students on a daily basis will be present to look out for any signs that pupils are uncomfortable or upset. Should this happen then all discussions will stop immediately. Within the base there are different areas. We will sit at the 'tabled' area and pupils will be told that should they want to stop and don't feel like they can say stop then they are to go to the 'chill out' area or into the 'sensory room'. At all times there will be several members of staff present. I know all of these pupils quite well and can read their behaviours quite well so should be aware if I need to stop asking questions. Having said this the staff present will always be watching the pupils reaction and will stop the questioning should they be concerned for the pupils. As advised by BERA guidelines all participants will be told how the findings will be used and who will see the final report. Full permission will be approved from parents or guardians before carrying out the interviews.

Likewise parents may find the surveys emotional as they will be reflecting on the progress their son / daughter has made in a way they may not have done so before. Parents will be able to complete these at home but I will provide contact details should they want to discuss anything. Each parent works closely with the staff in the base and these are always contactable to support these parents. Like the students' parents will be told to stop with the surveys if it makes them feel uncomfortable or upset in any way.

All research collected will comply with the Data Protection Act (1998) including participants remaining anonymous and storage of data that is password protected and locked away in a locked room which only I have access to. Following BERA guidelines the methods proposed are those deemed most fit for purpose with least risk to participant, investigator and university.

If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual

activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities
N/A
Risks to investigator For example: personal safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest
The main risk to the investigator could arise should one of the interviewees become emotionally distressed or even aggressive. The location and format of the interviews should minimise this as should the presence of support staff. The support staff who are present know the pupils very well so will be looking for any signs of discomfort and if this should arise will stop the interviews and I will immediately leave the base room. The presence of support staff will ensure that all data collected will be both unbiased and prevent any false acquisitions, or in this case of this happening will be witness supporting myself as the investigator. Following BERA guidelines the methods proposed are those deemed most fit for purpose with least risk to participant, investigator and university.
University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection
The University is at risk of bad publicity if the methodology is not followed and data storage not protected. However these will be considered in full and followed exactly as laid out in this document to ensure the University is represented in only a positive way. Following BERA guidelines the methods proposed are those deemed most fit for purpose with least risk to participant, investigator and university. UWTSD guidelines for research ethics and integrity have been considered when designing this research.
Adverse outcomes List measures put in place to limit any adverse effects or outcomes of research activity where appropriate. Include any emergency protocols.
As mentioned interviews will take place in a setting which pupils are very comfortable in. The OASIS is their space and I will be the visitor so this should ensure that pupils feel in control. There will also be support staff present who know the students very well and will be able to advise if they think the interviews are causing the pupils any distress or upset. All involved will be informed that this is voluntary, any information collected will be unanimous and the participants can pull out at any time.

(this box should expand as you type)

Disclosure and Barring Service			
If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
Has a DBS certificate been obtained?	☒	☐	☐

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

Feedback

What feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?

Pupils and parents will be thanked for their involvement. Following all research and the write up and evaluation of this, participants will be asked if they would like to meet with me to go through the main findings and in particular conclusions and recommendations. This will be completed at a time and place convenient for them. Parents will be provided with a hard copy of the project summary.

Pupils who request feedback on overall findings will be given this in pupil-friendly terms eg using appropriate language for the age of child.

Informed consent

Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded.

All parents of participating pupils will be provided with an overview of the project and asked to sign a consent form.

Consent will be sought from pupils. The researcher will explain the project to the children using age appropriate explanations, and consent (or verbal assent from the child, accompanied by written parental consent) will be sought.

All participants will be aware that participation is voluntary, they have the right to withdraw from the research at any point, no coercion will be used to make participants join or remain in the study and during observations researchers will remain vigilant to non-verbal signals indicating that a participant may wish to withdraw.

Confidentiality / Anonymity

Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.

Pupils will be numbered for the purpose of anonymity as will any data or reference to them. Likewise parents and support staff will be numbered and again any reference made by them will be numbered also. All raw data from interview and observation data will be anonymised and coded during transcription and analysis. No individual will be identifiable from any of the data in line with Data Protection Act 1998. Consent forms will be stored separately from raw data in a locked filing cabinet at school which only I have access to.

(this box should expand as you type)

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

In completing this section refer to the University's Research Data Management Policy and the extensive resources on the University's Research Data Management web pages (<http://uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/>).

	YES	NO
Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the Data Protection Act)? <i>“personal data”</i> means data which relate to a living individual who can be identified— (a) from those data, or (b) from those data and other information which is in the possession of, or is likely to come into the possession of, the data controller, and includes any expression of opinion about the individual and any indication of the intentions of the data controller or any other person in respect of the individual.	☒	☐
If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected: Data collected for pastoral reasons will be collected. This includes looking at attendance and a school system which scores students on their attitudes to learning. This can be used to look at students attitudes and any patterns or changes. (this box should expand as you type)		
Does it involve sensitive personal data (as defined by the Data Protection Act)? <i>“Sensitive personal data”</i> means personal data consisting of information as to – (a) the racial or ethnic origin of the data subject, (b) his political opinions, (c) his religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) whether he is a member of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) his physical or mental health or condition, (f) his sexual life, (g) the commission or alleged commission by him of any offence, or (h) any proceedings for any offence committed or alleged to have been committed by him, the disposal of such proceedings or the sentence of any court in such proceedings.	☐	☒
If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected: (this box should expand as you type)		

Will the research activity involve storing personal data on one of the following:	YES	NO
Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☒	☐
University computers?	☒	☒
Private company computers?	☐	☒
Home or other personal computers?	☐	☒
Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
“Cloud” storage or websites?	☐	☒
Other – specify:	☐	☒
For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure data confidentiality, including details of password protection, encryption and anonymisation:		
The only paper files will include consent forms which will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my school office. All data collected will be numbered as explained above and so not including any pupil names. The data will be stored on a personal computer which requires password to log on to the computer and all documents too will be password protected. This laptop is kept at home in a lockable cupboard.		
Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☐	☒
Sharing of data with others at the University?	☐	☒
Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
Export of data outside the European Union or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
Use of data management system?	☐	☒
Data archiving?	☐	☒
If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act (and/or any international equivalent):		

List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:
This will only be myself and my dissertation supervisor, Siân Brooks.
List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:
This will be myself.
Give details of data storage arrangements, including where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.
Data collected will be stored on a personal laptop which is kept at home. This will be password locked and encrypted. This will be kept for the duration of writing the dissertation (June 18). Following its use in this dissertation the data will be cleared.

SECTION K: Declaration

The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.

In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's [Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice](#)

Signature of applicant:



Date: 18/12/17

For students:

Director of Studies/Supervisor:	
Signature:	
Date:	

For staff:

Head of School/Assistant Dean:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☒	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☒	I have attached a full risk assessment (and have NOT completed Section H of this form) (where appropriate)
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Head of School.

RESEARCH STUDENTS AND STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

You will be informed of the outcome of your claim by email; therefore it is important that you check your University and personal email accounts regularly.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS

PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

This form is available electronically from the Academic Office web pages:

<http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/>

Application Process

All staff research projects and all research students must submit the Ethical Approval Form to the **University Ethics Committee** via the Academic Office (pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk). Staff research directly in relation to personal study for taught undergraduate or Masters programmes should be submitted via the Faculty procedures explained below.

Taught masters and taught undergraduate research Ethical Approval Forms are considered **within Faculties**. Faculties will provide details of the specific processes for this. Where the Ethical issues within any single ethical application are of particular concern the Faculty will refer these to the University Ethics Committee. Any student activity that involves the collection of primary data needs to undergo Ethical approval, this includes assignment work as well as dissertations.

Notes for guidance in completion of this form**Section A: About You**

Please complete all relevant sections

Section B: Approval for research activity

Research proposals must be approved in principle before applying for Ethical Approval. The proposal approval only becomes final when the ethical approval is received.

The process for proposal approval varies according the individual and programme of study:

- Research students, by application on form PG1 to the Research Degrees Committee
- Taught students by review of research proposal within Faculties (Faculties provide specific details of these processes)
- Staff, by agreement by the Head of School/Assistant Dean

Section C: External Ethical Guidance materials

Many discipline areas are required to operate with the discipline specific codes of research ethics (for example health, psychology, education etc.), any such codes must be listed and you must tick to confirm that you have consulted with these.

Section D: External Collaborative Research Activity

Provide details of the external collaborative partners, where appropriate you might want to submit a copy of the external collaboration agreement with the Ethical Approval Form. If the partner requires the research to be subject to its own internal Ethical approval process then please provide details of that process and a copy of any final (or interim) approvals received from the organisation.

Section E: Details of Research Activity

Remember that the individuals reviewing this Ethical Approval Form may not have seen your research proposal, and also may not be experts in the specific area of your research. The information provided should therefore be jargon free and clearly stated.

Indicative Title: please use the same title as used on the research proposal.

Purpose: the Ethical approval process will want to ensure that the methods you propose are adequate and appropriate to address the research aims and objectives. Excessive additional data collection can be seen as unethical.

Proposed Methods: the Ethical approval process seeks to ensure that you understand the methods that are intended, and that the implementation of those methods will be appropriate and without unnecessary impact on respondents. Please be specific.

Location: this needs to mention geographical location and also local situation (for example, within Local Authority Offices in Cardiff, using a private room but close to other individuals). If you are collecting data within an organisational setting then you need to explain the permissions that you have obtained to do this.

Research Activity outside of the UK: please complete this section in detail, and note any guidance you have received. Also describe your own familiarity (or not) with the location that you will be utilising.

Section F: Scope of Research Activity

Please tick ALL of the research activities that might be undertaken. If any additional types of activity are intended then please add an extra box and describe these.

If you have answered no to all questions in F then sections G and J do not need to be completed. Section H should be considered, and may be completed. Signatures are still required in section K.

Section G: Intended Participants

Please tick all categories that might apply.

Numbers & Source: if you are using a series of different methods or research activities please list numbers for each stage/phase. Be clear about how you will find respondents. Will you use intermediaries, and if so how? How will you ensure compliance with your sampling strategy?

Information for participants: all participants should be appropriately informed about the research, what is expected of them and what will happen to the information that they provide. The Ethical review process does not ask to see this documentation, but requires this to be reviewed and approved by the Director of Studies in the case of research students, the supervisor/module tutor in relation to students on taught programmes and the Head of School/Assistant Dean in relation to staff research.

Section H: Anticipate Risks

All research carries some level of risk. The answers you provide to questions in this section will be reviewed to ensure that you have an appropriate understanding of the type of risks involved and how you can mitigate against these risks. If you have completed a full risk assessment, as required for example for laboratory work, field work, clinical tests, diving operations, or by a collaborative partner, you may append that to this form. In that case, please tick the box indicating this has been provided. You will not then be required to complete Section H.

Risk to participants Think very carefully about how your actions/questions/discussions might affect the people you are involving as participants. You might identify the risk as small but it would still be a risk. Many types of question have the potential to make respondents less content with their life / job; you need to recognise and try to ameliorate any such effects

If these are business owners, time with you may reduce profit.

In some locations physical risk is very real to both participants and yourself, please consider this.

Risk to you, the researcher Think about where you will meet people, if there are any dangers involved in the location. If you are meeting people as individuals think about using a public place. In general do not visit people in their own homes or remote locations. If you are talking to individuals about certain issues think about how their responses might affect you emotionally. What about the risk of collecting insufficient data?

Risk to the University When undertaking your research, you are acting as a member of the University (student or staff). Professionalism is important, so it is important to be well organised and well prepared. Punctuality, clarity etc. are all part of this. What will you do to ensure this? You must ensure you do not harm the good name of the University in any way and do nothing to undermine the reputation of the research it conducts and sponsors. Upholding high standards of conduct and integrity are vital in this regard. You must also conduct the research in such a way to minimise the potential for claims of negligence made against the University, its researchers and any collaborating individual or organisation. In this respect you should always comply with ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards as required by statutory and regulatory authorities, as well as the university's Research Integrity and Ethics Code of Practice. Research misconduct in this respect can take many forms, including:

- fabrication: making up results or other outputs (eg, artefacts) and presenting them as if they were real
- falsification: manipulating research processes or changing or omitting data without good cause
- plagiarism: using other people's material without giving proper credit
- failure to meet ethical, legal and professional obligations: for example failure to declare competing interests; misrepresentation of involvement or authorship; misrepresentation of interests; breach of confidentiality; lack of informed consent; misuse of personal data; and abuse of research subjects or material
- improper dealing with allegations of misconduct: failing to address possible infringements such as attempts to cover up misconduct and reprisals against whistle-blowers

Adverse Outcomes. Think carefully about the possibilities, and cover here

Section I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

Feedback to participants: outline your approach. Will interview transcripts be shared with respondents to check accuracy? Will summaries of questionnaire analysis be made available to respondents in some way? Will an overview report be provided? How and when?

Informed consent: Draft letter / e-mail / or heading (or footer) section of questionnaire must be approved by DoS/supervisor (if research student), supervisor/module tutor if taught student, or Head of School / Assistant Dean if a member of staff.

Confidentiality/Anonymity. Explain clearly how you will ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Section J: Data Protection and Storage

Before completing this section it is necessary to read the University's Research Data Management information. The questions that follow are designed to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act as well as established research protocols.

Many research activities will involve electronic transfer of data and use of data management systems in the summarisation and analysis of data. You will need to explain these in relation to compliance with the Data Protection Act.

Think carefully about who will have access to your data, this will include supervisors and examiners. Also that a thesis will be made available via the University library and the British Library system. If you are seeking an access bar for a period of time after completion then mention it here. If you will provide a copy of your findings, or intend to give a presentation, to a facilitating/ supporting/accessing organisation then explain that in this section. But also think about the general principle of data sharing, as explained in the Research Data Management information.

In terms of storage of data please ensure security, and also mitigate against loss of data.

Section K: Declaration

Ensure the appropriate countersignatures have been provided

Look carefully at the checklist and ensure that you comply with and tick all that are relevant to your research.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA					
MASTER'S LEVEL DESCRIPTOR					
Elements of Assessment Criteria	Fail – E (0-34 marks)	Fail – D (35-49 marks)	Pass – C (50-59 marks)	Merit – B (60-69 marks)	Distinction – A (70+ marks)
1a Development of professional practice	Descriptive. Practice not analysed in any depth.	Limited evidence of some analysis of practice.	Satisfactory evidence of analysis of practice with some recognition of complex issues	Sound evidence of analysis of practice and an ability to understand complex issues.	Insightful analysis of practice and a convincing ability to understand complex issues.
	Very limited or no suggestion for intervention or development of practice or recommendations for ways forward.	Limited or inappropriate suggestions for intervention or development of practice, and recommendations for ways forward.	Satisfactory suggestions for intervention or development of practice. Interventions justified.	Sound suggestions for intervention or development of practice.	Clear and thoughtful suggestions for intervention or the development of practice.
	No evidence of how practice has been taken forward.	Identifies problems to be solved. Evidence of some development of practice.	Evidence of careful development of practice.	Sound evidence of pragmatic and effective approaches to tackling and solving problems.	Clear evidence of well-principled, systematic development of practice, and an ability to deal with complex issues. Evidence of originality in tackling and solving problems.
	No rationale for proposed actions presented.	Limited or inappropriate rationale for proposed actions presented.	Satisfactory rationale for proposed actions presented.	Clear rationale for the purposes pursued and strategies employed.	A persuasive rationale for the purposes pursued and the strategies employed.
1b Personal professional	Personal values not problematised nor explored in wider context.	Able to state personal values and link these to context.	Personal values, concerns, priorities and actions have been	Personal values, concerns, priorities and actions have been	Personal values, concerns, priorities, and actions have been critically

development			discussed.	considered in some depth.	explored.
	Ethical issues not considered	Aware of ethical issues but insufficient evidence.	Satisfactory evidence of ethical issues have been discussed.	Ethical issues have been considered in some depth.	Ethical issues have been critically explored.
	Little or no evidence of personal professional development.	Limited understanding of personal professional development and learning.	Satisfactory understanding of personal professional development and learning, and how this was achieved.	Sound evidence of personal and professional development and learning, and how this was achieved.	Strong evidence of a developed and analytical approach to personal professional development and learning, and how this is achieved.
	Little or no evidence of critical reflection.	Limited evidence of limited critical reflection.	Satisfactory evidence of critical reflection.	Sound understanding of critical reflection. Explores a link between learning from reflection and future action.	Strong evidence of high level of critical reflection as a learning process. Critically evaluates the link between learning from reflection and future action.
2a Literature review	Narrow range of reading.	Limited range of reading.	Satisfactory range of reading.	Carefully selected range of reading.	Judicious choice of range of reading.
2b Understanding of concepts	Concepts are misunderstood.	Limited understanding of concepts minimally explored.	Satisfactory understanding of concepts explored in limited contexts.	Sound understanding of concepts explored in wider contexts.	Has assimilated literature, and engaged critically and systematically with the main concepts and theories explored in a range of concepts.

3 Ethics/ Research design and methods	Ethical issues not considered/ no ethical approval sought.	Aware of ethical issues but insufficient evidence and/ or no ethical approval sought.	Ethical issues have been discussed and correct approval and sought.	Ethical issues have been considered in some depth and correct approval sought.	Ethical issues have been critically explored and correct approval sought.
	Research design and methods do not match purpose, or not discussed.	Research design and methods are only partly appropriate to purpose	Research design and methods appropriate to professional context and well evidenced.	Sound research design and methods suited to purpose and clearly justified.	Logical research design with comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable techniques.
	Data collection flawed.	Limited understanding of data collection methods	Methods justified and understood.	Methods justified; strengths and limitations explored.	High quality of evidence collected.
4a Presentation and analysis of results	No evidence of understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.	Limited understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.	Satisfactory understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.	Sound understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.	Critical understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.
	Little or no analysis. Mostly descriptive account.	Limited analysis of results.	Satisfactory evidence of critical analysis.	Sound evidence of critical analysis.	Presented in a critical and analytical framework throughout.
5a Validity of findings	Conclusions presented in a <i>descriptive</i> framework or not explored.	Limited conclusions presented with some analysis.	Satisfactory argument presented.	Findings presented in a critical and analytical framework.	Findings presented in a sophisticated critical and analytical framework.
	Weak conclusions.	Limited link between text and	Satisfactory conclusions based upon evidence	Strong conclusions, firmly based upon the	Strong and well substantiated

		conclusions.	presented.	evidence presented.	conclusions.
5b Critical evaluation	Little attempt at evaluation of work. Reflection uncritical.	Evaluation of work with some reflection.	Satisfactory reflection evaluation of work with evidence.	Critically reflective evaluation of work.	Highly reflective evaluation.
6a Clarity of structure/ presentation	Structure is inappropriate.	Structure is mostly appropriate but lacks clarity and coherence	Satisfactorily structured and logically progressed. Coherent presentation of material generally.	Effectively structured and progressed. Secure presentation of material sound.	Highly effective structure with thoughtful presentation of material.
6b Development of argument	Little or no development of an argument.	Limited development of an argument.	Satisfactory argument presented.	Strong argument developed.	Complex argument developed and refined.
6c Expression and grammar	Quality of expression and grammar poor.	Significant errors in expression and grammar.	Work is clearly expressed and has few minor errors in expression and grammar.	Work is clearly expressed and accurate throughout.	Accurate and fluent writing throughout.
6d Referencing techniques	Little or no understanding of the use of sources.	Limited understanding of referencing techniques to support academic writing.	Satisfactory understanding of referencing techniques to support academic writing.	Secure understanding of reference techniques to support academic writing.	Comprehensive understanding of referencing techniques to support academic writing.
	Regularly breaks Harvard conventions.	Follows conventions with some errors.	Consistent use of Harvard conventions both in body of text and in reference list.	Harvard system mainly used accurately, including secondary sources.	All references consistently and accurately referenced.