Perceived Control and School Attendance

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities

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ABSTRACT

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This research explores the link between pupils' perceived control and their level of attendance in school. Whilst there is research into the link between perceived control and disaffection in pupils it has not been possible to identify any research which links school non-attendance to perceived control. Research into pupils' reasons for non-attendance identified a range of different factors, many of which the author felt could be attributed to perceived control.

Forty-one participants took part in the study. Participants were male and female year nine pupils at two secondary schools in the north west of England. Participants were grouped according to their levels of attendance as high (98%+) attenders, mid-range attenders (90-94%) and low (below 80%) levels of attendance. Participants' levels of perceived control were measured using the Multi-dimensional Measure of Children's Perceptions of Control (MMCPC) (Connell 1985). This research also explored the pupils' experiences of school using appreciative inquiry.

Responses on the MMCPC were analysed using a one way ANOVA and descriptive statistics. No significant differences were found between scores for each of the attendance groups and the reasons for this are discussed. Thematic analysis of focus groups with an appreciative inquiry structure identified key themes raised by pupils in regard to positive experiences in school. The findings for both parts of the research are discussed and suggestions for the implications for future research and the practice of teachers and educational psychologists supporting attendance in school are made.

DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Not attending school has a variety of labels ranging from truancy (Kearney 2006, Reid 2006, Spencer 2009) and school refusal (Kearney and Silverman 1995) to absenteeism, (Kearney 2008, Reid 2006) school phobia (Tyrell 2005) and school avoidance (Wilkins 2008). It is felt that these labels carry with them somewhat negative connotations with the labels of truancy and school refusal suggesting a somewhat defiant standpoint. The labels of school phobia and school avoidance however suggest a powerful fear of school. It is felt that these labels are somewhat emotive and do not fit all the pupils who choose not to attend school regularly. For this reason the term non-attendance (Davies and Lee 2006 and Pellegrini 2007) will be used in this research as it is felt that this is a more neutral term and more fitting to the range of pupils who choose not to attend school.

Non-attendance at school has been linked to poorer outcomes for pupils (The Audit Commission, 1996; Parsons, 1999 and Kearney and Bensaheb, 2006) and may be linked to greater risk of harm (Baginsky, 2007 and Kurtz, Gaudin, Wodarski and Howing 1992). Research into pupils' reasons for non-attendance identifies a range of different factors, many of which could be attributed to perceived control. Whilst there is research into the link between perceived control and disaffection in pupils it has not been possible to identify any research which links school non-attendance to perceived control.

The research which follows looked at the relationship between perceived control and pupils' attendance in school. The research was carried out by a Trainee Educational Psychologist on a two year placement in a large local authority in the North West of England. Through meetings with schools and discussions with colleagues in the authority the researcher felt that research into how schools could support pupils' attendance was of particular relevance to the authority generally at this time (for more information see the rationale in chapter 3). This research was then agreed with Senior Educational Psychologists in the authority.

The literature review begins with a review of the literature related to non-attendance both the reasons and theories of non-attendance and the suggested

strategies to support non-attenders and promote attendance in school. From this literature there seemed to be many factors discussed which related to a pupil's sense of control in school. Studies which had used pupil's views particularly Davies and Lee (2006) and Le Riche (1995) drew out many factors which related to pupils' sense of autonomy and control. A review of the literature upon control was carried out both generally and more specifically in relation to education. This found that there were studies which had looked into perceived control and achievement and engagement in school. There was, however, no literature which explored a link between perceived control and school non-attendance.

This research is exploratory in nature. As there is no current research which considers a link between perceived control and school attendance the research which follows seeks to explore this with pupils. Appreciative inquiry focus groups are also included in the research in order to gain further insight into the pupils' experiences of school. It is hoped that the findings of this research will enable the development of strategies to promote attendance in school which can be shared with the schools involved with the research. It is also hoped that such strategies can also be shared with colleagues within the Educational Psychology Service in order that they can then support other schools. This will be discussed further in the final chapter.

The chapter which follows is a review of the literature related to this research. As illustrated in figure 1 (below) the literature is considered in three main areas, non-attendance, perceived control and transition.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the current research. The literature review which follows is structured into three main sections, non-attendance, perceived control and transition. It began with a literature search into school attendance using the terms: attendance, non-attendance, truancy, absenteeism, school phobia, school refusal and school avoidance. As will be discussed later in the literature review this led to further literature searches into perceived control and issues relating to transition. The literature search used education databases, including: British Education Index, Current Education Research, Education: A Sage Full-text Collection, ERIC and Intute - Social Sciences. Google Scholar was also used to identify more recent research which had cited key texts; this was of particular relevance to research into perceived control. The Department for Children, Schools and families website was also searched for publications which were relevant to attendance. This literature search yielded a range of research looking at a variety of approaches to explain non-attendance and to support attendance in school.

From the research identified the researcher felt that there appeared to be a lack of psychological research or theory in relation to non-attendance other than clinical research related to school phobia. Many of the studies particularly those by Davies and Lee (2006) and Le Riche (1995) identified reasons for attending or not attending school which may have been linked to control. For this reason a literature search was then carried out, searching databases related to psychology, these included: Comprehensive Clinical Psychology, Elsevier Reference Works, Embase, MEDLINE (Ovid), PsycInfo and Web of Science. The search terms used included 'control', 'locus of control', 'perceived control' and 'autonomy'. Google Scholar was also searched and used to identify relevant literature which had cited key papers such as those by Connell (1985) and Rotter (1966). In their 2006 study Davies and Lee also highlighted the link between times of transition in school and the impact this had upon attendance. For this reason a search of the literature was also carried out for transition. The databases for psychology and education were searched for search terms related to transition, school transition

and also for any literature on transition and control or transition and autonomy together.

Davis and Lee (2006) carried out research with pupils with similar levels of expected academic attainment who either attended school regularly or did not attend school regularly. They identified year seven and year ten as the times when a pupil was most likely to begin to be absent from school. Looking carefully at the events which occur in a pupil's life at these times, both can be viewed to be times of transition. The transition at year seven in UK schools is quite clear, pupils are moving from primary school to secondary school. Often at a different location, with a different structure to the day, different styles of teaching, new peers, new teachers and a new curriculum. The transition at year ten may, perhaps, to those outside of school be a little less clear. In year ten pupils embark upon their GCSE studies. It is at this point when the link between school work and future work or study becomes more apparent to pupils. The pressure upon pupils is likely to be greater, as often coursework is introduced as an important part of their GCSE course they may be aware of increasing pressure academically. For this reason a literature search was carried out with regard to transition generally and pupils' experiences of change. More specifically consideration was also given to any relationship between increased or decreased levels of control during this time.

In summary there were three main parts to the literature review, non-attendance, perceived control (and theories of control) and transition. These are illustrated in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Literature Review
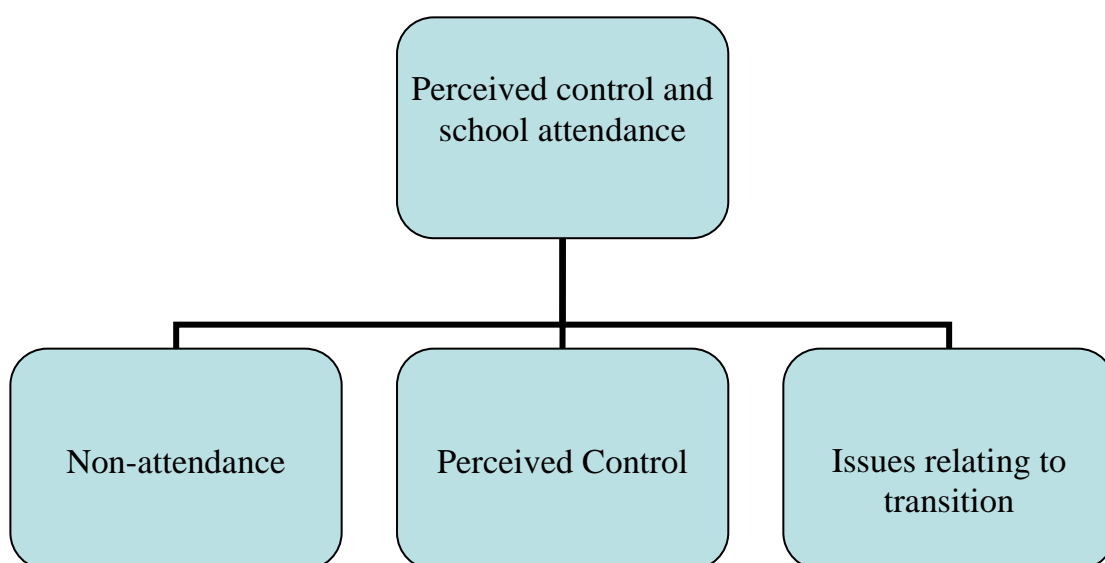
2.1 Non-attendance

Persistent Absence

The DCSF define persistent absence as 'a pupil who is absent for more than twenty percent of all possible half days' (DCSF 2009, p. 2). The rate of overall absence both authorised and unauthorised for persistent absentees is nearly thirty-three percent which is five times higher than the average pupil. This rate of absence on average amounts to more than a day and a half off school each week. Across primary and state funded secondary schools persistent absentees account for nearly twenty percent of overall absences, nearly fifteen percent of authorised absences and just over forty-six percent of unauthorised absences. The DCSF (2009) highlight the goals of the Children's Plan in reducing the level of persistent absence. Their aim is to ensure that no authority has more than five percent of secondary aged pupils who are persistently absent by 2011. Non-attendance is a concern for those working with children and young people as not only is it likely to be linked to less positive outcomes in the longer term for the pupils, pupils who do not attend school regularly may also be at a greater risk of harm.

Non-attendance and Safeguarding Children

The DCSF (2010) highlight the key role teachers and other adults in school play in safeguarding children. This document states that the safety and welfare of children and young people is the responsibility of the local authority. This means that professionals working for the local authority are key in identifying children and young people who are at risk of harm or neglect or who may currently be experiencing harm or neglect. For most children the professional they have most regular contact with outside of their home is their teacher. For children who do not attend school regularly this regular contact does not exist. Indeed Baginsky (2007) highlights the key role teachers can play in identifying changes in behaviour, appearance and mood which may signify concern as well as any more obvious signs such as bruising. If a pupil is not at school regularly then this is likely to have an impact upon the pupil-teacher relationship and any changes such as these are unlikely to be observed over time. In this way non-attenders can be less 'visible' to professionals and therefore their well-being is likely to be less closely monitored than their peers who do attend school regularly.

Baginsky (2007) highlights the decreasing role of Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) and describes the way in which non-attenders are a group who may be at significant risk of harm but go unnoticed by professionals. Kurtz, Gaudin, Wodarski and Howing (1992) found that children who were neglected were significantly more likely to be absent from school. This suggests that in some cases persistent absence from school may be linked to a wider issue of neglect.

DCSF (2010) identify the key role of schools in educating children and young people about their personal safety and ensuring that they are aware of behaviours which are exploitive, neglectful or abusive towards them. For pupils who regularly do not attend school much of this information will not be shared and as such their access to information about their rights and the responsibilities of the adults around them may be compromised. This in itself may put them at greater risk of abuse than their peers.

School non-attenders are a safe-guarding concern for a number of reasons. Firstly they are less visible to professionals and therefore any neglect or abuse may go unnoticed. They may also miss valuable sessions in school where abuse and neglect, their rights and sources of help are discussed which may mean they are more vulnerable than there peers due to a possible lack of awareness. Furthermore their non-attendance at school may be symptomatic of wider neglect issues for the pupil. It could be argued that non-attendance at school may be a form of neglect in itself due to the impact it may have upon long term outcomes for the pupil. These outcomes are discussed further in the following paragraphs.

Every Child Matters

The Every Child Matters (DCSF 2008a) Outcomes Framework identifies five important outcomes for children and young people. These are 'be healthy', 'be safe', 'enjoy and achieve', 'make a positive contribution' and 'achieve economic well-being'. The 'enjoy and achieve' outcome highlights the importance of attending and enjoying school. One of the national indicators of success towards this outcome is a decrease in the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. Clearly the government at this time identified school attendance as a key factor in positive outcomes for young people but is this view supported by research?

Absence from school has been linked to negative outcomes in the other four outcomes also. Kearney (2008) carried out a review of psychology, social / criminal justice and education research from which he outlines some of the long term outcomes associated with pupils who regularly do not attend school. Kearney states that persistent absenteeism may be linked to substance abuse, suicide attempts, risky sexual behaviour, asthma and psychological problems such as anxiety and depression, all of which would impact upon the 'Be Healthy' outcome. Kearney also states that there are links between persistent absence, violence and injury which would also impact upon the 'Stay Safe' outcome. He reports an increased incidence of disruptive behaviour disorders, social, occupational and marital problems in adulthood. This, in turn, may impact upon the 'Make a positive contribution' outcome. Furthermore Kearney also

highlights the fact that permanent school drop out, for which persistent absentees are at high risk, may lead to economic deprivation thus impacting also upon the outcome of 'Achieve economic well-being'.

Kearney is a key author in the area of school non-attendance. The School Refusal Assessment Scale (SRAS) which he developed (Kearney and Silverman 1993) highlights a key interest in understanding and combating non-attendance. Research by other authors has also found a correlation between school attendance and positive outcomes for children and young people. The Audit Commission (1996) and Parsons (1999) draw attention to the possible negative consequences of absence from school in terms of criminal activity and anti-social behaviour. Kearney and Bensaheb (2006) highlight potential school drop-out, delinquency, economic deprivation, occupational and marital problems and the need for psychiatric assistance in adulthood as a long term consequence of school non-attendance. Evans (2000) highlights the negative impact school non-attendance has upon level of qualifications, poor self-esteem and lower future opportunities. Evans (2000) also highlights the negative impact this can have on family life particularly where parents have to miss or leave work as a result of their child's non-attendance which may lead to increased conflict in the home.

Clearly pupils who do not attend school regularly pose something of a concern to professionals working in education. The risk of harm and the impact non-attendance may have upon positive outcomes seem valid reasons for seeking effective strategies and approaches to promote attendance. In the paragraphs which follow the strategies and approaches which have been suggested in the current research will be considered.

Explanations and approaches to non-attendance

Clearly there is a vested interest in promoting attendance however non-attendance is a complex issue with wide ranging views upon causes and solutions. These range from within child factors (Kearney and Bensaheb 2006 and Southworth 1992), family factors (Evans 2000, Kearney and Silverman 1995 and Reid 2002) and school factors (Goldstein, Little and Akin-Little 2003, Le

Riche 1995 and Pasternicki, Wakefield, Robertson and Edwards 1993 and Southwell 2006). Furthermore many studies consider the interaction of two or all of these factors (Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams and Dalicandro 1998).

Clearly views upon the causes have an impact upon 'solutions' and there are a range of strategies which are suggested to tackle non-attendance. Reid (2006) suggests monitoring attendance and the use of a multi-staged warning process followed by prosecution for the parents of persistently absent pupils. The use of classical conditioning techniques with individual techniques such as those used by Roth and Fonagy (1996) promote exposure to school to reintegrate pupils whereas cognitive behavioural therapy (King, Tonge, Heyne and Ollendick 2000) concentrates upon changing the child's response to the school environment. Pasternicki, Wakefield, Robertson and Edwards (1993) however focus upon how the school environment can be changed so that pupils are more motivated to attend. The paragraphs which follow will begin by considering the 'within' child factors which have been identified by some studies.

Within-child factors

Many authors identify school non attendance as a within child problem. Kearney and Bensaheb (2006) identify pupils who do not attend school as having a complex clinical picture of internalising and externalising behaviour problems. They found that non-attenders demonstrated internalising problems through anxiety, fear, self-consciousness, depression, suicidal behaviour, fatigue and somatic complaints. They also found non-attenders to demonstrate externalising behaviours such as defiance, non-compliance, running away, verbal and physical aggression, temper tantrums and clinging.

Kearney and Bensaheb (2006) go on to describe pupils who do not attend school as having diagnoses of emotional difficulties at the following rates:

- Separation anxiety disorder 22.4%
- Generalised anxiety disorder 10.5%

- Oppositional defiant disorder 8.4%

- Depression 4.9%

- Specific phobia 4.2%

- Social anxiety disorder 3.5%

- Conduct disorder 2.8%

Kearney and Bensaheb (2006) also highlight a significant remainder of pupils who do not attend in order to pursue other interests or to gain attention. Evans (2000) identifies three groups of pupils who do not attend school regularly; the anxiety, the avoidance and the malingering subtypes. Evans (2000) highlights the anxiety subtype as having a developmentally inappropriate response to the perceived danger or consequences of attending school, for example the pupils who feel the need to stay at home with their families for fear something bad may happen if they do not. The avoidance subtype he describes as having a maladaptive response to the perceived negative aspects of school for example a pupil whose view of school is somewhat gloomy and does not attend in order to avoid this negative experience. The malingering subtype, according to Evans, relates to non-attendance as a result of persistent and maladaptive attraction to positive non-school activities, for example a pupil who prefers to stay at home and play computer games rather than attending school. These could be considered as push factors which push pupils away (for example a fear of school) and pull factors which pull them towards other activities (for example participating in activities which are perceived as more rewarding to the pupils outside of school during the school day.)

In their study of college students Webb, Christian and Armitage (2006) identified personality differences such as conscientiousness, motivation and openness to experiences as a key factor in whether or not a student would attend classes regularly. Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams and Dalicandro identify non-attenders as having a lower academic self concept, lower global self esteem, and having fewer competencies in social relations. Schwartz, Gorman, Nakamoto and McKay (2006) found that highly aggressive adolescents who were also popular in school had higher rates of non-attendance. Birkett, Espelage and Koenig

(2009) also highlighted pupils who identified themselves a lesbian, gay or bisexual or who were questioning their sexuality as feeling unsafe in school and therefore had lower rates of attendance due to concerns about being picked out and bullied. Sellman (2006) highlights a fear of bullying as a key factor in pupils' non-attendance.

Each of these studies suggest a within child factor or factors which has a negative impact upon their experience of school and therefore their motivation to attend. A pupil whose experiences of school are somewhat negative or who views experiences away from school as significantly more positive is more likely to choose not to attend school. There has been much research into how such pupils can be supported to attend school and the Targeted Health in Schools (TaMHS) project (DCSF 2008b) is a key publication issued by the government to advise schools on how best to support the emotional well-being needs of their pupils. The guidance for head teachers highlights therapeutic interventions which focus upon cognition and behaviour as evidence based interventions for non-attenders with a phobia of school or anxiety. This clearly highlights a within child approach to school refusal.

Of course a child lives within a wider context. Perhaps the most influential context any child lives in is that of their family. Many studies have sought to explore the relationship between family factors and non-attendance and these will also be considered.

Family Factors

Research suggests that family factors are a key factor in whether or not a pupil attends school. Evans (2000) highlights the importance of parental involvement in tackling non-attendance and Southwell (2006) believes that school non-attendance may run in some families. Reid (2002) suggests some school non-attenders may form relationships with fellow non-attenders and have children with them due to shared experiences and attitudes. Their views of school may have an impact upon their children's views of school also and the value they place upon school attendance.

Le Riche's large scale study of year eleven pupils in three cities in the United Kingdom explored pupils' views about non-attendance in school (Le Riche 1995). She found that twenty percent of all pupils highlighted non-attendance as a result of parental lack of interest whereas nineteen percent felt that support and encouragement from their parents was a factor in attendance. Furthermore forty-six percent of non-attenders cited home problems as a reason for non-attendance and nine percent felt not attending would jeopardise the faith and trust their parents had in them. A further seven percent said they attended school due to fear of their parents if they did not and seven percent said they attended as not attending went against their upbringing. This directly highlights the role of parental involvement in encouraging pupils to attend school however it could also be suggested that many of the other factors pupils highlighted as reasons for non-attendance such as 'dislike of teachers', 'dislike of lessons' and 'homework not done' may also be linked to parental attitudes towards school and its value. Reasons for attending such as 'waste of time truanting'. 'fear of consequences', 'need qualifications for a job', 'feel guilty if off school', 'enjoy school', 'enjoy the subjects', 'fear of a bad reference', 'I have a sense of responsibility', 'regret it later' and 'want to be successful' may all reflect values which have been passed on to the pupil from their parents.

Le Riche (1995) highlights the fact that many parents may not value education as they themselves believe that they have succeeded without it. Furthermore she also highlights the fact that some parents may keep their children off school as they are useful in the home for example completing domestic chores or caring for siblings and feel this is a more appropriate use of time for them. This is supported by Evans (2000) who highlighted pupils being absent from school in order to meet family needs.

Southwell (2006) highlights the fact that the educational needs of the parents may have remained unmet at school and these educational needs, in which he includes Special Educational Needs (SEN) but not exclusively, may have been passed onto their children and they may also not be met in the school environment. Parents who have not attended school for this reason may be sympathetic to a child who does not want to attend school for the same or similar reasons.

Southwell (2006) also highlights the fact that many parents will be reluctant to allow their children to go through the same negative experiences of school which they themselves encountered.

Both Le Riche (1995) and Southwell (2006) highlight some of the social and economic barriers to attending school. Le Riche (1995) describes pupils who do not attend school because their parents cannot afford a new uniform and they fear being ridiculed. Whereas Southwell (2006) highlights the way parents who had negative experiences of school may be disadvantaged in gaining support for their children if they are experiencing difficulties and a result simply staying away from school may seem an easier option. Reid (2006) indicates the fact that there were higher than average rates of authorised and unauthorised absence amongst pupils who were in receipt of free school meals further supporting the suggestion that socio-economic factors may be a factor, perhaps linked to the fact that higher paid jobs correlate to higher levels of education whereas lower paid jobs correlate to lower levels of education (Blundell, Dearden and Sianesi 2004). It may be that those with a lower household income (i.e. those who claim for free school meals) are more likely to have gained less academic qualifications and may attach less value to education. These values may be passed to their children in two ways on the one hand they condone their children's absence and write them letters hence the higher levels of authorised absence and they may also not view education as having been an important factor in their lives and their job so their children may feel perfectly able to get through life without attending school regularly hence the higher levels of unauthorised absence.

Reid (2006) highlights the importance of parental involvement in tackling absence from school. He emphasises, however, that even when parents cite a desire to ensure their child attends school they may not be adopting the most effective means of supporting this. Dalziel and Henthorn (2005) conducted research into the attitudes of parents and careers towards school attendance. They found no significant difference between the attitudes of parents and carers of poor/ non-attenders attitudes and those of the general population regarding their views on education, the acceptability of non-attendance and the law

regarding attendance. However they did identify four different types of parents/carers:

- Those who try hard to tackle poor attendance
- Those who describe themselves as powerless in tackling non-attendance
- Those who appear to be over-dependent upon or over-protective of their child
- Those who are apathetic about tackling non-attendance or who do not appear to engage with the school and other professionals.

This suggests that it is the parent's actions and responses to their child's non-attendance rather than their views of school and attendance generally which impact upon whether or not a pupil attends school. Could it be, perhaps, that parents recognise the importance of education however for many reasons they do not reinforce this view in their children. For example following Bandura's Social Modelling Theory (Bandura 1977a) a child may see a parent whose life is perceived as successful, who has a job they enjoy but who achieved very little in the way of academic attainment. Even though that parent values education and realises that a good education may mean more career opportunities for their child, their child may still feel that they, like their parents can succeed perfectly well without arriving at school every single morning. This may be particularly true if the child perceives themselves as unlikely to achieve the benchmark of five A to C grades at GCSE.

Each of the studies in the preceding paragraphs highlight a within pupil difficulty which the pupil needs to be helped with in order for them to be able to attend school or a family difficulty which the family need support to tackle in order for the pupil to attend school. However from a social constructivist point of view does the child have a difficulty? Are there ways the pupils can be supported in their environment to lessen the impact of these difficulties and motivate them to attend school?

School Factors

There is much evidence to suggest that there is a third significant factor in whether or not a pupil attends or does not attend school regularly. Pasternicki, Wakefield, Robertson and Edwards (1993) suggest looking closely at school itself, its lessons, its management and its processes and considering how each impact upon attendance. If children are legally required to attend school, if their parents are prosecuted for their non-attendance and children are given therapeutic treatments to prevent non-attendance then perhaps it is wise to ensure the environment they are being encouraged to enter is appropriate. Southwell (2006) does not feel that this is the case. He believes that when children truant from school it is a symbol of unmet educational needs. He adopts a 'truantist' approach which views non-attendance as resulting from a school deficit rather than a pupil deficit.

Many different within school factors are suggested by a range of studies. These include:
- Personal relationships (Davies and Lee 2006 and Le Riche 1995)
- Individualised learning (or lack of) (Christenson and Thurlow 2001, Davies and Lee 2006, Le Riche 1995 and Southwell 2006)
- Bullying / feeling unsafe (Birkett, Espelage and Koenig 2009 and Davies and Lee 2006)
- Relevance of the curriculum (Davies and Lee 2006, Pasternicki et al 1993 and Southwell 2006,)
- Pupil/teacher relationships Davies and Lee 2006, Southwell 2006)
- Work overload (Pasternicki et al 1993, Southwell 2006,)
- Fear of return to school after legitimate absence (Southwell 2006)
- School attitudes towards parents (Southworth 2006)
- Attractiveness of building (Pasternicki et al 1993)
- Absence not followed up (Pasternicki et al 1993, Reid 2000)

In his study in America Spencer (2009) found that pupils who were labelled as truants were more likely to be bilingual or to have been kept back an academic

year due to lack of progress. These findings are also supported by Christenson and Thurlow (2001) who emphasise a need to monitor the progress of individual pupils in school and provide appropriate support for them to succeed. Reid (2006) found a higher than average level of authorised and unauthorised absence among pupils who had been identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN), suggesting perhaps that the needs of these pupils are not being met. Davies and Lee (2006) looked into pupils who truanted and those who did not, where both groups of pupils were likely to achieve relatively low academic attainments in comparison to their peers. They interviewed seventeen pupils in one local authority with severe attendance issues. They also interviewed students with higher levels of attendance who met the following criteria:

• Students likely to be entered for the lower tier in GCSE mathematics.
• Students in the lowest sets for English and science but not those formally identified as having special educational needs.
• Students identified by the school as likely to attend part-time FE provision.
• Students who had a robust school attendance profile

They found truanting to be more prevalent in years seven and ten at secondary school both of which they identify as times of transition. They felt that self-withdrawal (truancy) was the result of a contractual breakdown which is clearly described in the following statement;

'Schools insist upon compulsion and compliance but in exchange offer a safe environment, meaningful and relevant learning, opportunities for association with friends, and dignified and respectful treatment.' (Davies and Lee 2006, page 208)

Where these conditions are not provided pupils may feel justified in truanting. Davies and Lee's study was only carried out in one Local Authority and uses a relatively small sample. As such, as they highlight themselves, it may not accurately reflect the views of all non-attenders or indeed all attenders with low expected levels of academic attainment. Interestingly, however, Davies and Lee worked with pupils with low levels of expected academic attainment at two very different schools. One was a school in an area of social deprivation and the other

was in a more affluent area. They found there to be no significant difference between the views these two groups of pupils held of school and the reasons they gave for choosing to attend regularly.

Davies and Lee do not appear to have carried out any form of systematic analysis of the data they had gathered though illustrative comments were used throughout a narrative of their data so it is assumed that some form of analysis, though perhaps somewhat informal, had been carried out. Davies and Lee also refer to this study as a pilot study, which highlights the limitations in the scope of the study. However as they highlight themselves their research did explore some very important issues for attendance, particularly the differences between pupils who choose to attend regularly and their seemingly similar peers who do not.

In their study of excluded pupils Solomon and Rogers (2001) highlight the role of the school in engaging pupils. They believe that the curriculum and the way in which it is taught is a key factor in whether or not pupils engage with school life. O'Keefe (1994) found that non-attenders generally saw the value of education and over half of the truants interviewed expected to carry on studying post sixteen. The pupils in O'Keefe's study highlighted the curriculum and their relationship with teachers as a key factor in whether or not they attended school. They also felt that changing the curriculum would have the biggest impact upon their attendance and also upon their relationships with their teachers. If the pupil is seen as the 'customer' for the school then perhaps it is appropriate to identify the needs of the customer and provide an appropriate service for them. In drawing parallels to the world of work an adult generally has some control in the type of work they do and some degree of choice. For a school pupil it is often the case that they have to study the same subjects, in the same way and at the same rate as everyone else regardless of their level of interest or ability in a subject. How would most adults respond to this on a daily basis?

There is a wealth of studies offering a range of reasons as to why pupils may choose not to attend school regularly. Viewing with-in child, family and school factors as separate entities is perhaps unrealistic and unhelpful in trying to ascertain ways in which attendance can be supported in school. It could be

argued that non-attendance needs to be viewed from a more holistic perspective, looking at how each of these factors interact and have an impact upon a pupil's decision to attend or not attend school.

A holistic view of Non-attendance

Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams and Dalicandro (1998) and Southwell (1992) believe that non-attendance is not simply the result of any one factor in a child's life but that differences in characteristics of pupils who attend and those who do not occur in the three domains of personal, family and school factors. Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams and Dalicandro (1998) and Goldstein, Little and Akin-Little (2003) identify an interaction between each of the factors which impacts upon a pupil's decision to attend or not attend. This could suggest, therefore, that difficulties in one domain (personal, family or school) are not enough to stop a pupil attending school but that support from one of the other domains could encourage attendance at school. The research carried out by Davies and Lee (2006) suggests that this could be the true for some pupils. Perhaps in their study where pupils were expected to gain very little in terms of academic attainment but still attended school they did so because they were supported by their parents to attend. Alternatively their perceptions of school may have been different. Perhaps a less likely hypothesis is that the reality of their school experience differed as they were being compared to peers with seemingly similar experiences of school and some pupils who were expected to gain little in terms of academic achievement, for one reason or another, may have experienced school differently. For example some of the pupils may have formed better relationships with adults or peers in school and therefore school was a more enjoyable experience and the academic factors were less significant for these pupils. On the other had some of the pupils may not have had such social connections and therefore the academic factors may have been more pertinent for them therefore meaning that their day-to-day experience of school life differed. It could also be argued that the pupils who chose to attend were perhaps more resilient in the school environment.

Resilience

Educational Psychologists are encouraged to look at the whole picture with any child (DECP 1999) and to consider the personal and social factors which may be impacting upon their learning and well-being. As such it is important to look at the difficulties the pupil experiences but also the skills and resources that pupil has to support them in overcoming these difficulties (these may be related to personal, family or school factors). Studies of resilience such as those by Werner (1995) found that children who had supporting factors in their lives, for example the ability to engage with others are more likely to overcome difficulties in their lives. Masten (2001) defines resilience as 'good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development.' (Masten 2001, p. 228)

Lown (2005) and Rees and Bailey (2003) highlighted the importance of resilience in order for pupils to achieve positive outcomes in difficult situations. Masten (2001) advocates a focus upon the positive when dealing with adversity and believes that very ordinary human resources were what resilient individuals used during difficult times. Perhaps the pupils Davies and Lee (2006) identified as choosing to attend school despite being unlikely to gain academic qualifications had more 'protective factors' which supported them in attending school everyday whereas the pupils who chose not attend do not have any 'protective factors' to support them in attending school. If it is to be suggested that pupils need to be resilient to attend school regularly, that would seem to suggest that perhaps their experiences of school are not positive. Davies and Lee (2006) based their study upon pupils who were unlikely to achieve the general measure of academic success, in England and Wales this generally translates to five GCSE's between the grades of A* and C. Their choice of student suggests that they felt that such pupils were likely to have less positive experiences of school. In the paragraphs which follow consideration will be given to pupils' experiences of school and perhaps the reasons why these may not be positive.

Disaffection and Non-attendance

Disaffection can be defined as a sense of alienation from school and may be an important factor for pupils who choose not to attend school. According to Hustler, Callaghan, Cockett and McNeill (1998) disaffected pupils do not perceive school as being relevant. Keys (2006) found that around ten percent of the school population could be identified as 'disaffected' from school. Irving and Parker-Jenkins (1995) found disaffection to be a key factor in non-attendance and felt that tackling this disaffection was vital in tackling attendance.

Both Kagan (1990) and Keys (2006) believe that disaffection is an appropriate reaction to a negative school experience. Furthermore Reid (1999), Thomas and Denton (2007) and Rusinek (2008) believe that the relevance of the school curriculum is a key factor in whether or not pupils become disaffected. Reid (1999) believes that highlighting the relevance of the curriculum for future employment, and indeed ensuring that it is relevant to future employment, is a key factor in tackling disengagement.

Non-attendance at school can take more than one form. In addition to pupils who choose not to attend school there is also a group of pupils who, as a result of their behaviour, are not allowed to attend. Solomon and Rogers (2001) highlighted the way in which the behaviour of disaffected pupils can be challenging to teachers. As such this behaviour can often result in fixed term or permanent exclusion. According to Riley, Ellis, Weinstock, Tarrant and Hallmond (2006) boys aged between 13-14 years are most vulnerable to exclusion.

Humphrey, Charlton and Newton (2004) and Solomon and Roger (2001) report that self-efficacy is a key factor in disaffection whereby pupils feel that they are unable to achieve positive outcomes for themselves in school. Riley, Ellis, Weinstock, Tarrant and Hallmond (2006) found that pupil's views are often given very little consideration despite their importance. Riley and Docking (2004) believe that positive relationships whereby pupils' views are taken into account are a useful first step in tackling disaffection in schools.

Non-attendance at school may be a more extreme manifestation of disaffection from school. As such pupils may be taking a positive step in removing themselves from what is perceived as a negative or irrelevant environment for them. Non-attenders may not be the only pupils not accessing education fully. Disaffected pupils more generally may be physically in lessons but participating very little and therefore gaining very little. It may also be the case that such pupils are often excluded from lessons either by isolation within school or by being sent home due to challenging behaviours they exhibit in class. It could be argued that the pupils in each of these scenarios are not actually fully present at school either.   If this perspective is taken and attendance at school is taken to refer to those pupils whom attend and engage with school while they are there then it would seem likely that non-attendance in its many forms is indeed a significant concern in schools.

Researching Non-attendance

Pupils who choose not to attend school may be both a hard to reach group and also a vulnerable group. Such pupils may be hard to reach firstly because they do not attend school and therefore it may not be possible to ask them to participate in research through school which is usually the most effective way of reaching school age pupils. Secondly such pupils may not engage well with any professionals linked to education, be they teachers or those researchers in Education.   Such pupils may be reluctant to agree to take part in research and their parents may be reluctant to permit them. Furthermore in the United Kingdom regular non-attendance is an offence which carries with it a legal penalty. As such pupils and their families may be reluctant to discuss their non-attendance for fear of any repercussions.

Sheldon (2009) describes young people who are regularly absent from school and their families as a 'hard to reach' group. As such she believes this has had an impact upon the interventions which have been put into place to support attendance. Mounteney, Haugland and Skutle (2010) describe pupils who do not attend as a vulnerable group who can be difficult to engage. Clearly this can create difficulties when carrying out research into attendance, however,

Mounteney, Haugland and Skutle (2010) provided information sessions for schools and professionals working with pupils in order to gain access to non-attenders. These professionals had some contact with non-attenders and through them Mounteney, Haugland and Skutle were able to explain the research to them fully. Through these methods they reported that they were able to access and recruit an appropriate number of participants from this group.

The experiences of pupils who do not attend school are, perhaps somewhat hidden. These pupils are not present in school as often as their higher attending peers and their decision not to attend school regularly does suggest, perhaps, a level of avoidance. Such pupils may not relish opportunities to express their views or share their experiences in school. With this in mind in the following paragraphs consideration will be given to the voice of the child and their perspectives upon their school experience.

Voice of the Child

Mitsoni (2006) highlights the positive impact listening to the views of pupils can have upon classroom practice. Gunter and Thomson (2007) illustrate the way in which the use of pupils' voices gives a clarity and depth to a pupil's experience of school which adults are unable to reach in any other way. Smyth (2006) highlights the way in which schools are increasingly alienating their pupils who in turn make an active decision not to attend school. Harding and Atkinson (2009) highlight the role that Educational Psychologists have, in their work with children, in gaining their views so as to work with them rather than doing things for them or to them. When considering the reasons why pupils do or do not choose to attend schools it is the pupils who can best describe their own experiences and the reasons for their choices.

Prout (2000) believes listening to children's views and opinions and enabling them to play an active role in decision making develops their self-realisation and also enables them to develop a sense of autonomy. He believes that children are more likely to engage and participate in school life if they are active in making decisions. Prout feels that there is a need to create a balance between complete

authority over children in schools and giving them complete freedom, neither of which is desirable for children or adults in school. However by listening to their views and negotiating outcomes with them an effective balance can be found and children can then learn valuable lessons about negotiation and compromise which will serve them throughout their lives. Prout (2000) highlights schools as often being undemocratic places for children and suggests that this could be a key factor in the lack of enthusiasm for school which some children demonstrate. Utilising pupils' voice in research could be an effective way of involving them and encouraging participation.

Le Riche (1995) researched truancy using the voice of the child. From her research she found pupils highlighted many factors related to school attendance which she referred to as 'push' and 'pull' factors. In her analysis of essays written by pupils she found the following reasons given for truancy:

Table 1: Reasons Given for Truancy (Le Riche 1995)

Reason	Frequency (% of responses)
Dislike of teacher	66
Dislike of lessons	62
Home problems	46
Peer pressure	42
Bullying	38
Fear of being called names/ ridiculed	36
Escapism/can't cope/ psychological reasons	35
Find work difficult	32
Homework not done	29
Bored	29
Like appearing 'tough', 'big	22
Parental lack of interest	20
Dislike school	15
The thrill of it	14
Teacher doesn't like them	13

Pupils lack interest, lazy	10
Lonely, no friends	8
Fear of exams	4

When she analysed the essays for reasons for attending she identified the following reasons:

Table 2: Reasons Given for Attending School (Le Riche 1995)

Reason	Frequency (% of responses)
Waste of time truanting	29
Fear of consequences	23
Parents support and encourage me	19
Need qualifications for a job	13
Fear of accidents	11
Jeopardise trust and faith parents have in me	9
Fear of parents	7
Against my upbringing	7
Feel guilty if off school	7
Like to see my friends	7
Never thought of it	7
Enjoy school	5
Enjoy the subjects	5
Fear of a bad reference	5
Fear of fine	5
I have a sense of responsibility	5
Regret it later	5
Want to be successful	5

As this research used the voice of the child to explain the reasons for attendance and non-attendance it is hoped that the reasons Le Riche (1995) has highlighted reflect the pupils' own experiences of attending or not attending school rather

than reflecting the views of the researcher. Le Riche identified a range of reasons as to why pupils chose to attend or not to attend school. The reasons given by the pupils may seemingly be put into two categories, reasons related to other people such as attending in order to please others such as parents and future employers or not attending because of others for example teachers do not like me or lack of parental interest and reasons relating the pupils sense of responsibility and control for example reasons given for attending included waste of time truanting and reasons for not attending included a sense of escapism.

Le Riche's study involved work with three hundred and twenty-two male and female pupils who were sixteen years of age between the years 1986 and 1994. Her study used questionnaires, essays written by pupils and interviews carried out with them. Le Riche does not explain her choice of methodology in her book and although she does refer to analysing the essays, questionnaires and interviews from the pupils a clear approach for carrying this out is not identified. In Le Riche's analysis illustrative quotes are used in her narrative of the data. She also charts specific areas pupils have highlighted such as subject areas pupils particularly like or dislike. In light of the wealth of data working with three hundred and twenty-two pupils would create, this lack of systematic analysis is something of a concern. There is no mention of how Le Riche chose the illustrative comments she uses or her reasoning for identifying particular areas mentioned by pupils, for example the reasons they gave for attending or not attending. As is such it is likely that her interpretation of the data holds some bias which she has not acknowledged in her book.

Le Riche was a secondary school teacher and her research, like much of the research into non-attendance, is based upon an educational perspective. In the paragraphs which follow the research into non-attendance will be considered from a psychological perspective.

2.2 Psychological Theories and Non-Attendance

Clearly there is an abundance of research into attendance and the factors which may be linked with non-attendance and effective strategies which can be used to

encourage pupils with attendance issues to attend school more regularly.   This research however lacks a psychological framework.   In the following paragraphs non-attendance will be considered in relation to existing psychological theories.

From a psychological perspective the research into non-attendance (Davis and Lee 2006, Birkett et al 2009, Christenson and Thurlow 2001, Le Riche 1995, and Pasternicki et al 1993) seems to highlight factors related to a lack of autonomy or sense of control. Pupils describe negative factors such as disliking teachers and lessons as reasons for non-attendance; this suggests that they do not believe there is any way of changing their situation either by improving their relationships with their teachers or changing their lessons.   In the section which follows psychological theories of autonomy and control, in particular perceived control, self-efficacy and attributional style will be considered in relation to non-attendance.

Self –efficacy, Attributional Style and Perceived Control

Self-efficacy, attributional style and perceived control are all approaches to understanding how individuals perceive their world and respond to it.   Though there is a shared basis in social cognition the three are quite distinct from one another. Self-efficacy (Bandura 1997b) describes an individual's perceptions of their own skills and abilities and how these skills and abilities will have an impact upon a particular outcome.   Attributional style (Abramson, Seligman and Teasdale 1978) refers to how individuals attribute the cause of past events and whether they perceive success or failure as due to themselves or others, global or specific and stable or unstable. Attributional style plays a key role in explanations of past behaviour and in personality theories.   Perceived control refers to an individual's perception of the extent to which it is their behaviour or the behaviour of others which is likely to have the biggest impact upon their environment.   Skinner (1996) identifies perceived control as a key factor in determining future outcomes.   One explanation of the difference between the three could be that attributional style refers to the perception of the past; self-efficacy identifies the perceived ability to act in an appropriate way in the present whereas perceived control is linked to perceived control of events in the future.

Davies and Lee (2006) and Southwell (2006) highlight the social factors which play a key role in whether or not pupils choose to attend school regularly. Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) also highlight the effect positive social relationships can have in interaction with a pupil's perceived control. Bandura (2004) highlights the positive effect social interactions can have upon behaviour. Bandura also highlights the way in which strong social systems can moderate the behaviours of the individual. Whilst he describes the importance of internal motivation for the individual to change their behaviour, and, in this he places particular emphasis upon self-efficacy, the belief of the individual that their actions can lead to a positive outcome, he also highlights the role of social systems in bringing to the attention of the individual relevant information about their behaviour, for example the benefits of a well-balanced diet and exercise. Bandura emphasises the role of social systems in supporting individuals to see their actions as potentially making a difference, empowering them to believe that they are able to change things and behave in different ways and, perhaps most importantly that these behaviours will indeed lead to positive changes for them.

Clearly there is a role for social influences in determining behaviour, and this is noted in many of the studies relating to why pupils choose to attend or not attend school (Le Riche 1995, Davies and Lee 2006, Birkett et al. 2009) and therefore it does seem that social relationships are likely to have an impact upon a pupils choice to attend or not attend school. This includes social interactions within school as described but also social interactions at home as shown in studies by Southwell (2006), Reid (2002) and Evans (2000). However, as highlighted by Bandura, it is the motivation of the individual which is the starting point, and it is this which the social structures support. For this reason the emphasis will be placed upon internal motivational factors for regular attendance or non-attendance. That is not to say that social interactions are not a key factor, as they clearly are, however it is suggested that social factors interact with internal motivational factors and these are the starting points for any behaviours. For this reason the concepts of self –efficacy, attributional style and perceived control will be considered in relation to attendance or non-attendance in school. In the

sections which follow each of these concepts will be considered in relation to the way in which they could be applied to school attendance.

Perception of control

It may be argued that reasons pupils give for truanting such as 'dislike of teachers' or dislike of lessons and reasons given for attending 'waste of time truanting' and 'fear of consequences' may reflect pupils' sense of control. Indeed Le Riche (1995) highlights the role of schools in ensuring pupils feel a sense of belonging whereby they are an active part of school life as opposed to alienation where things are done to them. Davies and Lee's description of pupils who do not expect to achieve academically at school but still choose to attend may also have links to perceived control (Davies and Lee 2006). In their study those who chose to attend described their attendance in terms of how they could make school work for them. This is something which did not appear to be a factor for those who chose not to attend as they simply felt it had no purpose for them.

Theories of Control

In 1959 White challenged the theories of behaviourism whereby human behaviour was shaped by responses to prior experiences and present stimuli and psychoanalysis where behaviour was determined by strong basic drives. White (1959) highlighted the importance of human agency which he called effectance whereby humans strove for competence.   In 1966 Rotter developed this theory further and referred to internal and external locus of control. According to his theory individuals either identified events as being within their own control (internal) or in the control of others (external).

Figure 2: Locus of control

Internal	**External**
My actions and behaviours have an impact upon my environment.	The actions and behaviours of others have an impact upon my environment

Seligman and Maier (1967) have highlighted the negative effect that an external locus of control can have upon behaviour. They referred to learned helplessness whereby it is learnt over time that an individual's actions have no effect upon their environment. This learned helplessness leads to them effectively 'giving up' and making no attempt to change anything. In Seligman and Maier's example dogs did not attempt to stop themselves receiving electric shocks. Whilst it is true that this is an example using animals and there are many reasons why human responses are more complex, Hiroto and Seligman (1975) found that performance in a task where there was a loud distracting noise improved when participants had a button to switch the noise off even though many did not actually use the switch provided to turn the noise off. This suggests that a sense of control, even if that control is not utilised, has a positive effect upon performance. In this light it may be argued that pupils who become disenchanted with school and feel unable to change the environment opt out despite the negative consequences this may have. Their learned helplessness behaviour is simply to avoid the situation.

Perceived control is a term used by Connell (1985) and in common with Abramson, Seligman and Teasdale (1978) it refers not to the reality of control in any given situation but the perception of who is in control. Furthermore, as has been explored by Kee (2001) and discussed by Abramson et al (1978) sometimes it is not an awareness of the reality of control which is important but perhaps the impact of the perception upon the individual's behaviour. For example

sometimes with very negative events it is a more positive and protective psychological response to believe that that particular event was just bad luck. This would mean that the event was not the fault of the individual and furthermore as it was unstable it is less likely to happen again.

Positive illusions are described by Taylor and Brown (1994) as where an individual perceives a situation more favourably than it may be in reality. Taylor and Brown (1994) believe that positive illusions can have a positive impact upon mental health. They described the way in which some individuals viewed themselves in unrealistically positive terms, believing they have greater control over their environment than they do in reality and viewing the future more rosily than would be predicted from baseline data. They describe most 'normal' adults as optimistic and highlight the fact that these unrealistic illusions make people feel better, are associated with positive social relationships, high motivation to engage in productive work as well as being associated with an ability to recover faster from health related stressors and cope more successfully. They do point out, however, that these only have a positive effect if the level of illusion is moderate as at extreme levels unrealistic illusions can be viewed as maladjustment. Furthermore it is unclear as to whether adults who suffer from depression have a more negative perception of events than adults who do not suffer from depression or whether their perception is simply more realistic.

Frazier (2003) found that increased perceived control had a positive effect upon an individual's ability to cope with a traumatic event and Skinner (1996) reports that high levels of perceived control are linked to a variety of positive outcomes including health, achievement, optimism, persistence, motivation, coping, self-esteem, personal adjustment, and success and failure in a variety of life domains. Thompson, Sobolew-Shubin, Galbraith, Schwankovsky and Cruzen (1993) found that patients suffering from cancer generally had better mental health if they had a greater perception of control regardless of the severity of their illness. Furthermore they found patients adopted what they referred to as a 'compensatory model of control' whereby patients concentrated upon controlling their daily emotional reactions to the disease and the physical symptoms of the disease rather than controlling the disease itself. Perhaps this is linked to Davies

and Lee's research whereby the pupils who did not expect to achieve academically simply switched their control to areas where they felt that they could achieve (Davies and Lee 2006). For example they identified skills and relationships in school which could be useful to them and they could be successful in and concentrated upon these. It would seem from Skinner (1996) that pupils who have an optimistic view of their perceived control in school are more likely to experience positive outcomes which may mean a better engagement with school and higher levels of attendance.

Heckhausen and Schulz (1995) describe primary and secondary control. The term primary control refers to an individual behaving in a particular way in response to their environment with the aim of having an effect on that environment in some way. Secondary control refers to internal processes, behaviours which seek to minimise losses, maintain and expand their primary control. One of the main functions of secondary control is to enable the individual to cope with disappointment and failure whilst supporting primary control by channelling motivation and behaviours towards appropriate goals. Secondary control is used when primary control does not result in a positive outcome. In this situation Skinner (1996) highlights two possible responses. Where an individual has been unable to reach a target they have set for themselves they may extend the time scale they give themselves so that the target may still be achievable in order to avoid experiencing this as failure and all the negative connotations this has. Another option an individual may take in response to a situation which is to relinquish all control whereby no attempt is made to change a negative environment. This is not dissimilar to the learned helplessness described by Seligman and Maier (1967) and typical behaviours would include passivity and helplessness.

When considering non-attenders there needs to be further exploration as to which of these three categories they may belong to. It would seem that there are three possible explanations of non-attendance from this perspective:

- Pupils are utilising primary control and changing their environment by 'voting with their feet' and not attending school

- Pupils are using secondary control and lowering the level of esteem they give to school and education, instead prioritising other areas of their lives (for example working at home) where they may receive more positive reinforcements for their actions
- Pupils may be relinquishing control and avoiding a negative situation due to a sense of helplessness when in school

Whether non-attenders would universally fit one of these explanations or whether there are groups of non-attenders which would fit each explanation seems unclear. Le Riche's findings seem to highlight an avoidance of a negative situation with pupils highlighting reasons for not attending such as dislike of teacher, dislike of lessons and fear of being called names/ ridiculed. Whether not attending school for these reasons is avoidance or an informed choice is unclear. Furthermore reasons such as home problems, peer pressure and like appearing 'tough' or 'big' do seem to suggest that pupils may perhaps be utilising secondary control and prioritising other areas of their lives. Further exploration of this would be beneficial in understanding why some pupils choose not to attend school and how schools can support them. Research into a link between perceived control and achievement in school does suggest a link though there is limited research into perceived control and school attendance.

Perceived Control and Achievement

Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) studied the role of perceived control in engagement and achievement in school. Where control was perceived as external to the child this had a negative impact upon engagement and achievement. Skinner, Wellborn and Connell also found that there were two factors that could 'buffer' this; increased autonomy and relatedness to school. Skinner, Wellborn and Connell's study took place with two hundred pupils aged between nine and twelve years. All of the pupils attended the same school and were present on the day they arrived to carry out the research. Clearly although this is not a small sample it is a very specific population. Skinner, Wellborn and Connell describe the pupils as being from upper-middle to lower socio-economic classes from a

large city in the United States of America. As such this may not reflect the way in which all pupils may have responded in the United States or indeed in the Western world. Also the age range of nine to twelve is quite large. Although it only covers a three year period, this is a period in which much cognitive development occurs and conceptual understanding may differ greatly for a nine year old in comparison to a twelve year old.

Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck and Connell (1998) describe the relationship between perceived control and achievement as cyclic whereby pupils who perceived control as being internal were more likely to engage in classroom activities and therefore develop positive relationships with adults and peers and generally achieve. This would then further reinforce their view of themselves as having control over positive outcomes for themselves. However if a pupil perceives control as being external to themselves they are less likely to engage in classroom activities and therefore form positive relationships with adults and peers and generally achieve. This would reinforce their view that they have no control over positive outcomes for themselves. In these scenarios it seems likely that the pupils who perceive control to be internal are likely to stay motivated and perhaps even put more effort into their work. The pupils who perceive control to be external are likely to become more de-motivated and put less effort into their work. Skinner et al (1998) report that pupils who perceive control to be internal are more likely to cite effort as the most important factor in achievement whereas pupils who perceive control to be external are more likely to cite ability as the most important factor in achievement.

Stevenson, Lee, Chen, Stigler, Hsu and Hatano (1990) found that across American, Japanese and Chinese culture pupils who attributed failure to lack of effort (internal control) demonstrated the highest achievements in maths and reading. Dweck (2006) builds upon this further. She believes there to be two mindsets, the fixed mindset whereby the individual believes that intelligence and ability are fixed, and, therefore, it is the role of the individual to constantly succeed and prove their skills and abilities. In contrast to this there is the growth mindset, whereby the individual sees challenges and indeed failures as an opportunity to grow and develop their skills. Such individuals do not see their

intelligence as fixed and rather than seeing failure as a threat to their perceived abilities, they see difficult challenges and failures as an opportunity to grow. In such a way they do not stay with tasks and activities which they see as ones they can succeed at, they stretch themselves continually. This may account for the differences in attainment described by Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990).

Skinner (1996) reports that when individuals experience high levels of control in a situation this should result in uniformly positive effects as in this situation their actions should show a direct relationship to outcomes therefore it would be hoped that they would seek to act in a way which led to positive outcomes. Self-efficacy, described by Bandura as 'the exercise of control' (Bandura 1997b) is linked with the way in which an individual may or may not choose to exert control in a particular situation and this is discussed further below.

Self Efficacy

"People have always striven to control the events that affect their lives" (Bandura 1997b p. 1)

Bandura describes the need to control outcomes as a basic human drive. He describes the way in which prehistoric humans sought to control their world by appealing to supernatural beings and deities. Bandura views the growth of knowledge and the development of technology as a development of this basic need. He highlights the way in which our attempts to control our world change as our knowledge, skills and resources develop.

Bandura (1977b) describes locus of control as an individual's belief that a particular behaviour would or would not result in a particular outcome. Bandura however believes the relationship to be more complex than this. He states that an individual also has to believe that they themselves are capable of executing this behaviour to achieve the expected outcome. This relates well to theories of perceived control in that individuals who perceive control to be internal and therefore believe that their behaviour can have a positive effect upon outcomes are likely to believe that they are capable of executing this behaviour effectively

to achieve the desired outcome.   However individuals who perceive control to be external may realise that their behaviour can have a positive effects upon outcomes but do not believe that they are capable of executing the behaviours appropriately to achieve the desired outcome.   For example they may recognise that if a pupil works hard in school generally, they achieve more but may not believe that they have the motivation or capacity to commit to this level of work. In social relationships they may realise that engaging others in conversation and using positive body language such as smiling will increase positive social interactions however they feel that they may lack the personal skills they need for these types of behaviours and may feel a sense of awkwardness and therefore avoid using them.

Returning to the research by Stevenson et al. (1990) the students who felt that effort was a key factor presumably felt that they had the necessary skills to achieve high scores whereas those pupils who identified ability as a key factor in achievement may not have.   Therefore they felt that effort on their part would be futile as they did not have the necessary skills to achieve high scores to begin with.

Bandura describes a link between locus of control and self efficacy.   In the diagram below he demonstrates how an individual's beliefs about how an action can have an impact upon an outcome and their ability to perform that behaviour adequately interact.   It also describes the impact of these interactions upon the individual:

Figure 2: Locus of Control and Self-Efficacy (Bandura 1997b)

	- Outcome expectations +	
+ Efficacy Beliefs **-**	Protest Grievance Social activism Milleu change	Productive engagement Aspiration Personal satisfaction
	Resignation Apathy	Self-devaluation Despondency

However Jernigan (2004) highlighted the fact that sometimes having low self-efficacy in a particular area may motivate a pupil to try harder, whereas where they feel they are good at a subject they may not spend as much time preparing for an exam for example. However this was a study specifically of students learning Portuguese and only rated their self-efficacy for learning Portuguese as low. It could be argued that there was an over-arching factor here related to perceived control whereby though the students felt they lacked self-efficacy in learning Portuguese they had an overall perception that they had control over outcomes and they were generally good learners therefore if they put in extra work they could eventually achieve their goals regardless of their ability in this area. Motivation to learn Portuguese may have also been a factor in this study in that the students who chose to learn it, despite viewing themselves as having low self-efficacy, did so because they had a strong motivating force to learn that particular language for example for work or travel reasons.

Theories related to attributional style help to explain the ways in which individuals may interpret past events. As discussed below such theories may help to explain why and how individuals develop self-efficacy beliefs and perceptions of control.

Attributional Style

Kee (2001) explored the relationship between attributional style and school truancy amongst pupils in Hong Kong. His study was based upon Abramson, Seligman and Teasdale's reformulated learned helplessness model (Abramson et al 1978) which they developed further to explain differences in individual's attribution of control at different times. To this end they added two further dimensions, global-specific and stable-unstable.

Figure 3: Attributional Style

Dimension	Event	Internal		External	
		Stable	**Unstable**	**Stable**	**Unstable**
Global	Failing student	Lack of intelligence	Exhaustion	They always give unfair tests	Today is Friday 13th
Specific	Failing student	Lack of mathematical ability	Fed up with maths problems	They always give unfair maths tests	The maths test was from number 13

(Adapted from Abramson et al 1978)

This model allows for more options than simply an internal or external locus of control. It also allows for individuals to attribute different explanations for different situations. Furthermore as with locus of control each dimension is on a continuum whereby, for example, an individual's view of whether a difficulty is specific or global could range from a general "I'm no good at anything" to "I find algebra difficult" with "I find sciences hard, I'm better at the arts" somewhere between the two.

Kee (2001) found a difference in scores for the pupils he worked with for good and bad events. He found that pupils who truanted were more likely to explain negative events (for example failure) as internal, stable and global (for example I always fail tests because I am not clever enough) whereas non-truants were more likely to explain such events as external, unstable and specific (for example I failed the test today because I was unlucky with the maths questions that came up on that paper). Conversely when asked to rate positive events the truants were likely to attribute their success to external, unstable and specific factors (for example I passed that maths test because I was lucky to get easy questions) whereas the non-truant pupils were more likely to attribute their success to internal, stable and global factors (I do well on tests because I always work hard). In identifying attributional style as a factor in attendance Kee believes that attributional retraining may be a key factor in supporting pupils to gain more positive experiences of school and therefore increase the likelihood that they will attend.

Perceived Control and Attendance

Attribution style places emphasis upon reflecting upon events which have already happened and theories of self-efficacy are related to decisions the individual may make about their ability at the present time whereas perceived control relates to an individual's perception of their ability to control events. As such perceived control has an impact upon the individual's behaviour in the future. Whilst theories of attributional style and self-efficacy are of relevance to perceived control due to the fact that it may be assumed that some level of perceived control is related to past experiences and how the individual reflects upon such experiences (attributional style) and there is also some level of judgement of self-efficacy in perceived control as surely the most constructive exercise of control is that where the individual is most likely to be able to work most effectively for a positive outcome, it is felt that perceived control is the most pertinent theory for this research. Davies and Lee (2006) found that lack of academic ability was not always a barrier to school. As such this suggest that self-efficacy is not a determining factor, these pupils were aware that their academic achievement would not meet the expected standard of five GCSEs above a C grade however

they continued to attend school because they still felt that they were able to use aspects of school to their advantage, they sought out ways in which they could take control of their experiences and ensure positive outcomes for themselves. The reasons pupils gave for not attending school in Le Riches study (Le Riche 1995) also link more closely to perceived control than they do to attributional style or self-efficacy as discussed earlier in the chapter. For these reasons the research which follows will focus upon perceived control in relation to school attendance.

Though Kee (2001) claims that a handful of studies have explored the link between perceived control and attendance in school pupils he does not cite any references for this and literature searches have not identified these studies either. However Keller (1983) identifies health locus of control as a factor in attendance rates at work. In Keller's research health locus of control refers to whether or not an individual believes that their health is substantially under their control through habits which promote good health. He found that workers who had an internal health locus of control and believed that they were mostly in control of staying healthy had a significantly lower absence rate than their co-workers. Dwyer and Ganster (1990) found an interesting relationship between control at work and absenteeism. They found that workers with high control over their work were more likely to be absent if their workload was low and less likely to be absent if their workload was high whereas for workers with low control the opposite was true. This would suggest that workers with high control over their work prefer to be stretched whereas those with low control do not.

Figure 4: Interaction between perceived workload and control on absence (Dwyer and Ganster 1991)
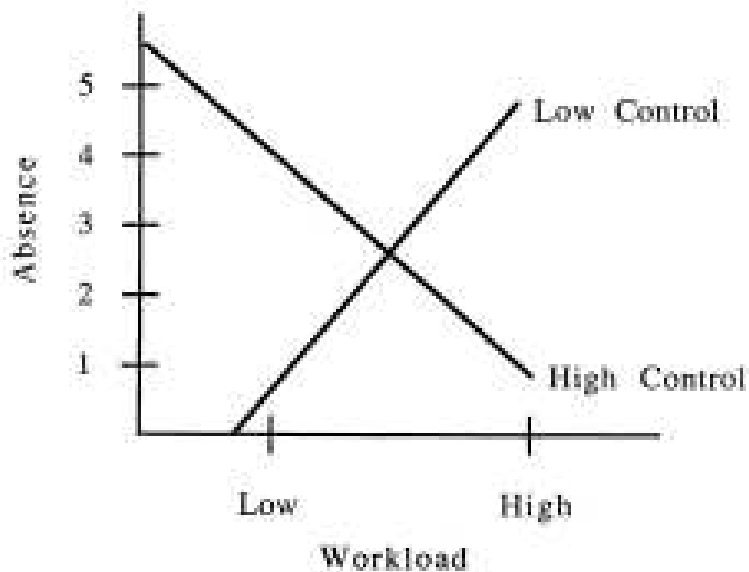
How these findings relate to pupils in school it is not known. Looking at the relationship between perceived control and attendance Dwyer and Ganster could be interpreted as there potentially being two groups of non-attenders. Those with an internal perceived control who feel that they have a low level of workload and those who perceive control to be external and feel they have a high level of workload. More importantly are the two in effect the same thing? Do pupils who do not feel that their workload matches their available skills and resources choose not to attend school? In their work on 'flow' Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) believed that individuals could only become fully engaged and involved with a task and therefore experience flow, if the task was at an appropriate level of challenge for the individual. The work by Csikszentmihalyi (1997) may have particular relevance to the classroom and some of the reasons as to why some pupils choose to attend regularly whilst others do not.

'Flow'

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) discusses the idea of flow whereby an individual becomes completely engrossed in an activity to such an extent that their awareness of their surroundings and space and time are somewhat diminished, he describes the individual as being 'absorbed' by the activity they are undertaking.

Csikszentmihalyi describes this as an optimum state where the individual is able to perform to their full potential as their focus upon an activity is complete and all their energies are channelled towards it. This is viewed as a positive and enjoyable experience for the individual and one which the individual will actively seek out.

Figure 5: The Experience of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997)
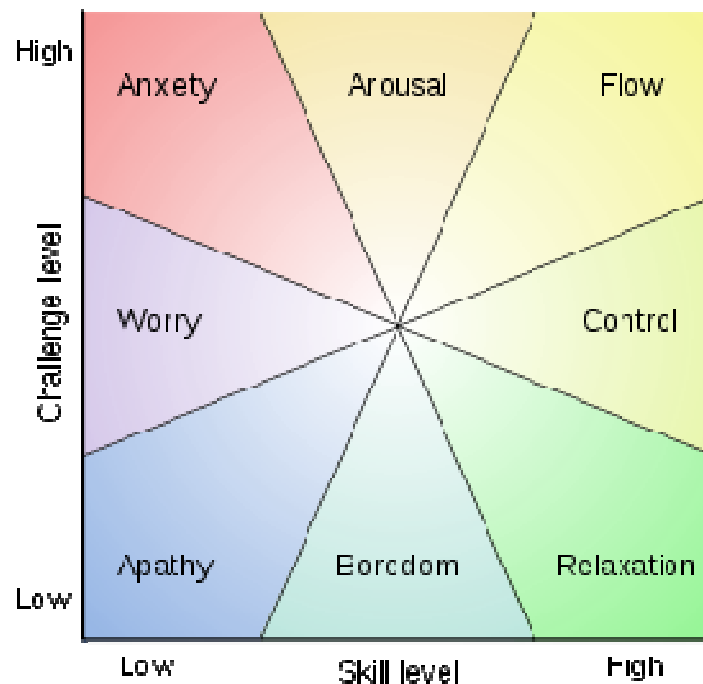
Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) studied the relationship between level of skill and level of challenge in flow. They believe that flow can only be experienced if the individual has a level of skill which is stretched by the level of challenge. In figure 5 (above) Csikszentmihalyi (1997) illustrates the relationship between level of skill and level of challenge. This illustration corresponds well with the findings of Dwyer and Ganster (1991) in figure 4 (also above) highlighting the need for the level of challenge in a task to correspond to the individual's ability to deal with that level of challenge and that both low and high levels of challenge can be experienced negatively. An individual is unlikely to become engaged in a task which is seen as too easy for them and is likely to become bored, where a task is perceived as being too difficult the individual is likely to become anxious or frustrated.

Where the level of challenge and the individual's level of skill are not well matched, Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) describe the way in which an individual will seek to increase their level of skill to meet the level of challenge or will seek out a more difficult challenge if the challenge is not great enough for them. They identify control as a key part of flow, stating that an individual needs to be able to identify their own learning needs and develop new skills and to be able to select a task of appropriate level of difficulty. Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) refer to an 'autotelic' personality whereby some individuals will constantly seek out the experience of flow by enhancing their level of skill and selecting increasingly more challenging tasks. They believe that such individuals are more likely to become talented and creative.

Hunter and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) report that if students are engaged in activities in school and experience flow in them, then they are likely to achieve higher levels of attainment than if they are disengaged. Hunter and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) studied two groups of students identified to as 'Interested' and 'Bored' according to their responses on an Experience Sample Measure (ESM). They found that the 'Bored' group were more likely to identify themselves as having little control whereas those who were identified as 'Interested' were more likely to identify themselves as having higher levels of control. Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider and Shernoff (2003) found that perceived control was a key factor in student engagement but they found that school classrooms in general offered very little opportunity for pupils to use and develop their level of skill to meet an appropriately challenging task. Indeed they found that a significant proportion of the school day was spent involved in more passive activities such as listening to the teacher. Shernoff et al (2003) found that pupils reported higher levels of engagement where the level of challenge of the task was slightly greater than the level of skill the pupil had. They also described engagement in co-operative group work activities. Both of these findings fit well with the idea of a Zone of Proximal Development (Vygostsky 1978). From this study Shernoff et al highlighted the importance of giving pupils choice in their activities if they are to become engaged in tasks. MacDonald and Marsh (2004) found that pupils quickly became disengaged with their school curriculum if they

perceived the tasks they were given as too easy and not stretching their abilities in any way or leading to an increase in skills or knowledge.

It may be suggested therefore that some pupils choose to attend school as within the school environment they are able to use their skills to tackle appropriate challenges in order to experience flow in their daily tasks. However for other pupils it may be that they feel unable to do this. They do not feel that they have sufficient control over the development of their own skills or of the level of challenge in the activities they complete. As such they are unable to engage fully with school activities and experience the positive state of 'flow' described by Csikszentmihalyi (1997). For this reason it may be that school becomes a somewhat unrewarding experience and this may be a key factor in their decision not to attend school regularly. For flow to be experienced the task undertaken has to be slightly greater than individual's level of skill but achievable for them with effort. Quite clearly this would require the task to be somewhat personalised to the individual and may be difficult to achieve in classrooms where the same, somewhat rigid, task is given out to the whole class. Shernoff et al (2003) believe that giving pupil's greater choice in their tasks is the most effective way of providing opportunities for flow to be experienced in a classroom environment. Greater choice in class may be linked to a pupil's sense of autonomy, which is quite separate from perceived control which will now be explored further.

Autonomy

Patrick, Skinner and Connell (1993) distinguish between autonomy and control in the following way; perceived control refers the child's perception of what is required to succeed and whether or not they have what is required. This refers to their view of whether or not their actions and behaviours are likely to have an impact upon the situation. Autonomy on the other hand refers to whether or not the child feels that they had a choice in taking part in an activity, whether the activity was initiated by them. Patrick et al. further highlight the difference between perceived control and autonomy through the experiences of the individual as illustrated in figure 6 (below). This diagram illustrates the way in

which perceived control centres around the individual's perception of the effect their actions will have upon outcomes whereas autonomy is related to the sense the individual has of completing an activity of their own volition. Interestingly for low perceived control the outcome is learned helplessness whereas for autonomy the individual has the option of either conforming to or disobeying the instructions given to them. Patrick et al believe that the distinction between perceived control and autonomy is an important one as it is possible to have high autonomy and low perceived control, for example where a pupil is given a choice of activities but perceives themselves as not having the necessary abilities to succeed at any of them. They also believe it is possible to have high perceived control and low autonomy. They believe that many classrooms can be described in this way, with many pupils aware that if they try hard and put in a lot of effort they are likely to succeed at a task but being given no choice at all in the task that they are then expected to complete.

Figure 6: Control and Autonomy (based upon Patrick et al 1993)

Autonomy

Compliance/
Disobedience

Freedom to demonstrate
behaviours of choice

Low

High

Control

Helpless

Capable
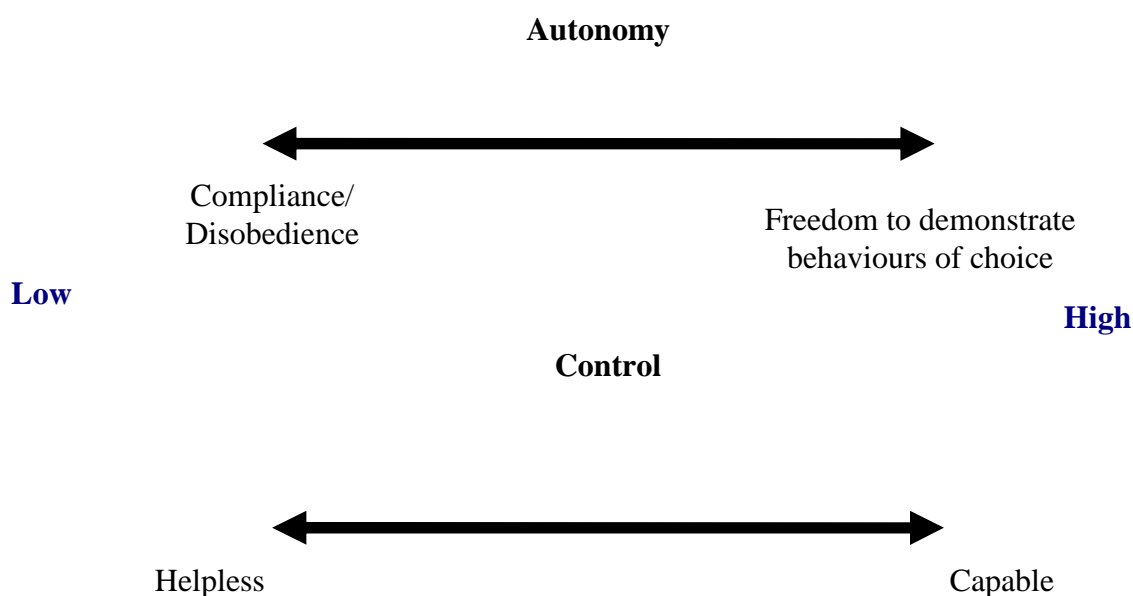
Shernoff et al (2003) clearly identified the importance of autonomy in enabling pupils to engage with classroom activities. Prout (2000) also highlights a need for autonomy for pupils in order for them to engage in school and indeed wider

society. Patrick, Skinner and Connell (1993) found that both high levels of autonomy and perceived control were necessary for positive behaviours and emotions in children aged between eight and ten years. They felt that success at an activity did not necessarily result in behavioural engagement or positive emotions. If a child achieved a task and that task was perceived as too easy or had no intrinsic motivation to them they may not behave or feel positively towards the task. Patrick et al. found that pupils responded positively to activities where they felt that the reasons for engaging in the task were autonomous and that success in the task relied upon the amount of effort they had put into the activity. Reeve, Bolt and Cai (1999) describe how a teacher can be 'autonomy-supportive' and enable pupils to have more choice in the activities in which they participate. They describe in some detail the specific behaviours which such teachers engage in to support the pupils in their class.

Perceived control and a sense of autonomy may be somewhat threatened by significant changes in an individual's life circumstances. For pupils in school there are key points or milestones in their school career where there are many great changes in many spheres of school life for them. In the following section the impact of these transitions upon the pupils and upon their perceived control, sense of autonomy and their willingness to attend school will be considered.

2.3 Transition

Davis and Lee (2006) identified year seven and year ten as the times when a pupil was most likely to begin to be absent from school. Both of these year groups can be identified as times of transition in school. Blackwell, Trzesniewski and Dweck (2007) view adolescence as a time of dramatic change for pupils, a time when their behaviour can change, they can become unsettled and less engaged with school. As Davies and Lee (2006) and Blackwell, Trzesniewski and Dweck (2007) highlight this is also a time when many pupils experience transition periods in their school careers.

Robinson, Garber and Hilsman (1995) believed that transition was a significant stress in a pupil's life and a time when their personal resources would be

challenged. They found that pupils with a negative attributional style were more likely to experience transition negatively. Sellman (2006) identified fear of bullying as a key factor in absence from school. Furthermore he found that a fear of bullying was most prevalent in pupils in years seven and eight at secondary school, immediately after transition.

Fisher (1990) identifies the importance of control during transition. She highlights the importance of identifying appropriate domains for control as an individual who perceives themselves as having low levels of control over one domain may perceive themselves as having high control over another domain of their lives and they may use this to compensate and ensure their needs are met. The example which Fisher cites is of a person with a physical disability who may perceive themselves as having low levels of control in the physical domain but who perceives themselves as having high levels of control in the social domain. As such they have the interpersonal skills to make their needs known and ensure that their needs are met.   Fisher suggests that it is an individual's expectations of their perceived control which will have the biggest impact upon how they respond to transition. For example if a pupil perceived themselves as having high levels of internal control in the physical domain as they generally succeeded at sport in primary school they may expect this to continue at secondary school. However if there was no opportunity to exercise control in this domain after a move to secondary school this may have a negative impact upon their perceived control in this area.   Fisher highlights the importance of prior exposure to a new environment so that pupils can develop realistic expectations for themselves and identify areas where they can exercise high levels of control.   She also highlights the need for further research to identify whether low levels of control are the cause or the consequence of distress caused by transition.

Nicholson (1990) identifies a transition cycle in which he identifies four main tasks and goals for the individual along with the pitfalls and problems which may occur at each step:

Figure 7: The tasks and goals of transition (Nicholson 1990)

Preparation
Developing helpful expectations, motivations and feelings

Encounter
Confidence in coping, enjoyment and sense making

Stabilization
Sustained trust, commitment and effectiveness with tasks and people

Adjustment
Personal change, role development and relationship building
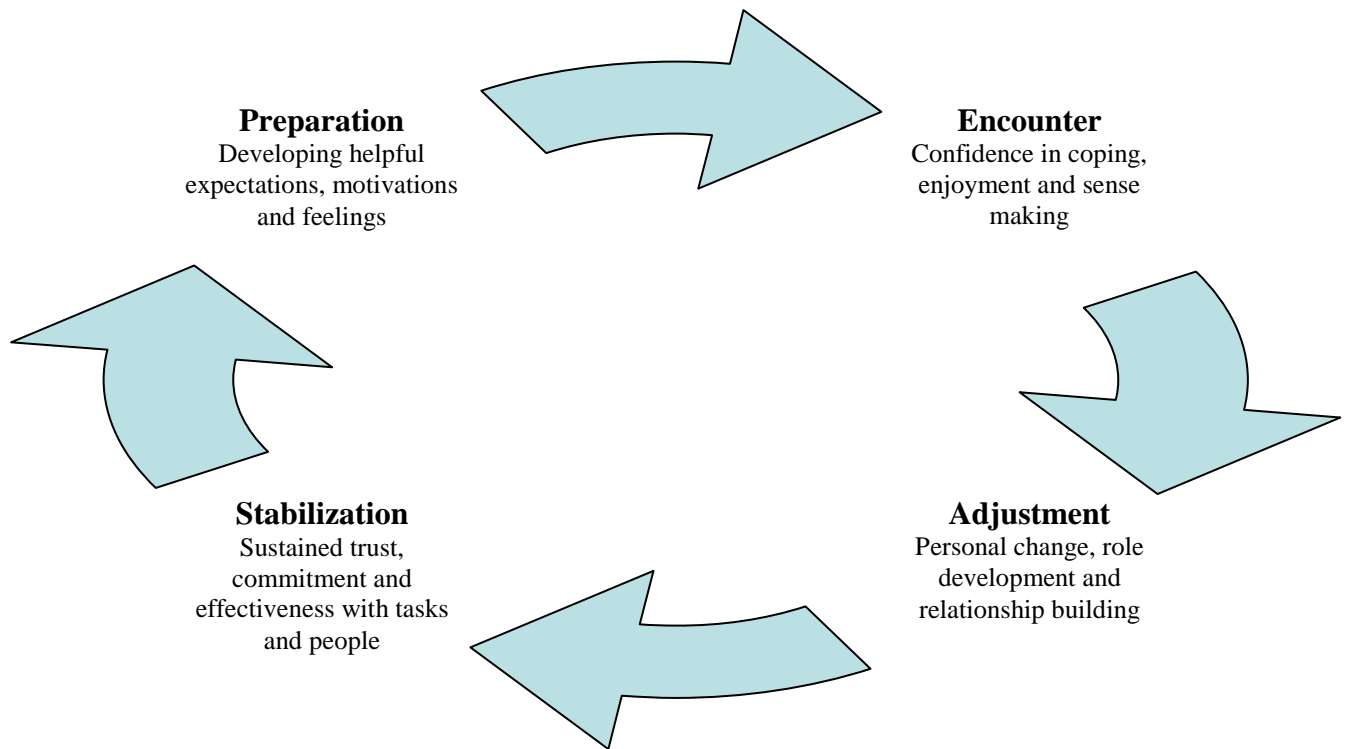
Figure 8: The pitfalls and problems in transition (Nicholson 1990)

Preparation
Fearfulness, reluctance and unreadiness

Encounter
Shock, rejection and regret

Stabilization
Failure, fatalism and faking

Adjustment
Misfitting, degrading and grieving
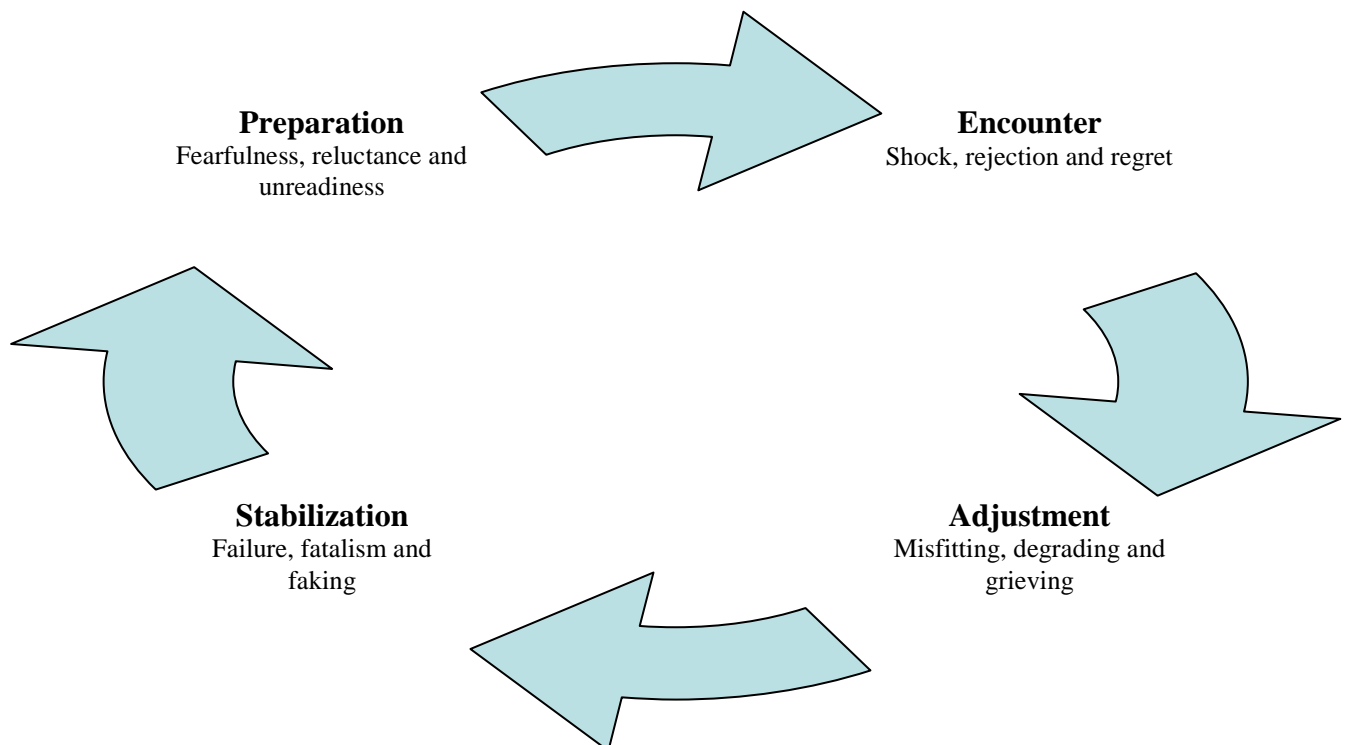
Nicholson (1990) highlights the way in which a positive approach to transition and a belief that the individual will be able to adapt to their new environment is likely to have a positive impact upon their response to transition as the changes are viewed as a challenge with goals to achieve. However Nicholson suggests that if an individual's experiences of transition are negative in the early stages they are likely to develop coping mechanisms which may be unhelpful. For example a new secondary school pupil may choose to simply conform to systems in school in order to conceal what they view as short-comings but may actually reflect individual differences which are natural and indeed useful. This is likely to have a negative impact upon their motivation in school. Furthermore they may experience feeling of fatalism (a loss of control) and therefore not seek to change their environment for the better in ways which would benefit themselves and their performance in school. This then leads to a self-fulfilling prophesy whereby a pupil expects to fail and feels helpless to change this. They do not draw attention to this or try to change the environment they are working in any way as they view this as pointless and they therefore find themselves stuck in an environment which they do not excel in.

Vernberg and Field (1990) identify a range of tasks which may place demands upon a pupil's personal resources during times of transition. These occur in three different areas of life. Psychological whereby the pupil has to accept the loss of a person, activity or object, social where the pupil has to break old social bonds and create new ones and behavioural whereby the pupil has to change their behaviours in response to a change in their role. They highlight also developmental differences in children and young people in each of these areas. Vernberg and Field believe that pupils rely upon their families during times of transition for stability and that those pupils without this support are more likely to experience difficulties. They also identified transfer to a new school with a close friend as being helpful during transition.

Thomson, Bell, Holland, Henderson, McGrellis and Sharpe (2002) identify the choosing of optional subjects in year nine and studying for General Certificates in Secondary Education (GCSEs) as possible key transitions in a pupil's life at school. Interestingly Riley et al (2006) found that boys aged between 13-14

years are the most likely group to be excluded from school. This age group roughly corresponds with year nine in secondary schools in England and Wales. This is a year in which pupils are asked to choose their optional subjects for their GCSE's and the beginning of studying for academic qualifications. MacDonald and Marsh (2004) found that during their GCSE studies some pupils began to perceive education as increasingly irrelevant to them especially if they believe their teachers to have low expectations of them. Lenton (2005) identifies success at GCSE as a key factor in whether or not pupils choose to enter non-compulsory education. Interestingly however it was the occupation of the pupil's parents which most clearly correlated with GCSE success and not the pupil's level of ability.

Perhaps another important consideration for pupils in year nine is the fact that they are also experiencing adolescence. Adolescence is often viewed as a challenging time for the individual. Piaget believed that it was a time when the individual entered the formal operational stage of cognitive development (Piaget and Inhelder 1969). During this stage of development the individual becomes able to think in a more abstract manner and reason theoretically. Erikson believed that this was also a time where the individual begins to question their identity and seek to form a strong identity for themselves, to discover where they fit and decide upon their future directions in life (Erikson 1963). It would seem that during this period of their lives adolescents begin to be able to think in a more abstract way, which in turn may enable them to reflect more critically upon their lives. In light of Erikson's theory it may also be that they are also striving to form an identity for themselves, to identify a place for themselves. This period of life could be considered transitional in nature also, as the individual, through the period of adolescence, develops from a child into an adult. It may also be a time when they wish to exert more control over their lives. Erikson highlighted the importance of allowing the individual to explore their identity at this time and believed that putting pressure on them to conform may lead to identity crisis (Erikson 1963).

Thomson et al. (2002) believe that the way in which young people can interpret key transitions in their lives and the ways in which they can utilise their own

personal resources during these transitions can ensure that their experiences of these transitions are more positive. Thomson et al. (2002) refer to 'critical moments' where the young person has to make a decision about their future. Choosing GCSEs is identified as one such moment as is sitting the GCSE exam. Thomson et al (2002) believe that such transitions for young people are socially structured and as such are an interaction between choice, chance and opportunity, with the young person's assessment and management of risk at a 'critical moment' being a key factor in the outcome of transition. It could be suggested that pupils who feel that they have more control, linked to the choice aspect, in ensuring positive outcomes for themselves may experience transition in a more positive manner and more readily accept the resulting changes.

It would seem that transition places a great deal of stress upon perceived control and an individual's ability to exercise control upon an appropriate area is a key factor in their experience of transition.

2.4 Summary

Pupils who regularly do not attend school are at a higher risk of negative outcomes than their peers who do attend school regularly. Non-attendance has an impact upon the individual and the wider school community and indeed if schools wish to promote positive outcomes for their pupils then supporting non-attenders to attend school more regularly has clear benefits. The reasons for non-attendance are varied and superficially there appears to be a wide range of reasons as to why an individual pupil may not attend school regularly. The factors related to attendance are many and varied. In the research which follows the focus will be upon motivational factors in school. More specifically theories of perceived control will be considered. As discussed in earlier sections perceived control looks at how an individual perceives a situation and has an impact upon future behaviours. This seems particularly relevant to school attendance. Attribution theory is mostly concerned with events which have happened in the past and this seems less relevant to encouraging pupils to attend school in the future, Self-efficacy is related to an individual's perception of their ability within a particular area. Whilst this is relevant to school experience, self-

efficacy can vary hugely between different subjects in school and in different areas of pupils' lives.

 Perceived control was chosen for this research due to the links between perceived control and achievement which have already been identified (Skinner, Wellborn and Connell, 1990; Stevenson, Lee, Chen, Stigler, Hsu and Hatano 1990; Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck and Connell 1998 and Skinner 1996) and also because of the links which have been found between perceived control and attendance at work (Keller 1983 and Dwyer and Ganster 1990). Furthermore the work of Davies and Lee (1996) and Le Riche (1995) which highlighted reasons pupils gave as to why they chose to attend or not attend school regularly identified many reasons which could be interpreted as perceived control. In Davies and Lee's study it may have been that case that the low attenders chose not to attend as they did not feel that they were able to control any of the factors in school in order to make it a worthwhile experience. However the higher attenders, with similar levels of expected attainment, may have chosen to attend school regularly because, even though they were aware that expectations of their academic attainment were low they still felt that they could gain something from school and use the school environment to their advantage.

A review of the literature on school non-attendance identified many factors which may be linked to perceived control. Patrick, Skinner and Connell (1993) did identify autonomy as a key factor in pupil engagement and this fits well with Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). However if it is assumed that pupils generally share similar experiences of school then it seems unlikely that autonomy is what differentiates those who choose to attend school from those who do not and the pupils in Davies and Lee's study (Davies and Lee 2006) seem to illustrate this. The literature upon perceived control highlights the role of perceived control upon outcomes for individuals. Furthermore Davies and Lee (2006) highlight transition as a key time when pupils do not attend school. Transition itself has close links to perceived control (Fisher 1990) which seems to support the view that there may be a link between perceived control and attendance. This literature search did not find any research which looked

specifically at perceived control and attendance in school pupils. This suggests that this is currently a gap in the research.

This research suggests the hypothesis that perceived control has an impact upon school attendance and it is suggested that pupils with high levels of perceived control will choose to attend school as they believe that it is their behaviour which has an impact upon positive outcomes for themselves, whereas pupils who choose not to attend school regularly make this choice because they believe that they have limited control over outcomes for themselves and, therefore, see little purpose in attending school regularly. It may also be the case that such pupils have lower levels of perceived control in the school environment but higher levels of perceived control elsewhere. This may mean that they choose to engage more in places where they feel they are able to exert more control such as at home or in social groupings outside of school. With this hypothesis in mind the research which follows seeks to explore the following research questions:

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between pupils' perceived control and their level of attendance?

Research Question 2 How can pupils' perception of control be improved in the school context?

Research Question 3 Is there a difference in the scores of low, mid-range and high attenders on the MMCPC?

Research Question 4 Is there an interaction between perceived control, level of workload and attendance?

Research question four relates to the findings of Dwyer and Ganster (1991) and the relationship they found between levels of control, workload and attendance (see page 50) and seeks to explore whether an interaction between a pupil's level of perceived control, their workload ,the difficulty of the work they are given and their level of attendance.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

The research described in this chapter is exploratory in nature and as such seeks to explore the possibility of any links between a pupil's level of perceived control and their level of attendance in school. This chapter will begin with a rationale for the research followed by the aims of this research followed by the research questions and a description and discussion of the methods used for data gathering and data analysis. Ethical good practice will be considered and the methodology of this research will be critiqued.

In order to address the research questions stated in the previous chapter a mixed measures design was used. The study utilised quantitative methods in the measurement of pupils' perceived control using the Multi-dimensional Measure of Children's Perceptions of Control (MMCPC, see appendix 3) and in the analysis of the data this generated. Qualitative methods were also used through the use of appreciative inquiry focus groups with the pupils and the thematic analysis of the transcripts of these sessions. It was hoped that the use of both methods would explain any links which were found between perceived control and attendance or the lack of them if this was found to be the case.

The research involved two high schools in the North West of England. Forty-one pupils took part in the research altogether, with all forty-one completing the MMCPC (Connell 1985) and thirty-two of the original forty-one pupils taking part in appreciative inquiry focus groups.

During the negotiation phase of the research, attendance emerged as a local authority priority area. The researcher arranged from the outset to feed the research findings back to the schools involved and to the Educational Psychology Service in order to consider further the ways in which schools could support attendance and the how Educational Psychologists could support schools in doing so. This chapter describes the rationale for the study, the approaches and methods used and the reasons such methods were chosen.

Figure 9, below, highlights the different stages of the research and the way in which they relate to each other, the research question and how the data gathered was analysed and recorded.

Figure 9: Research Overview
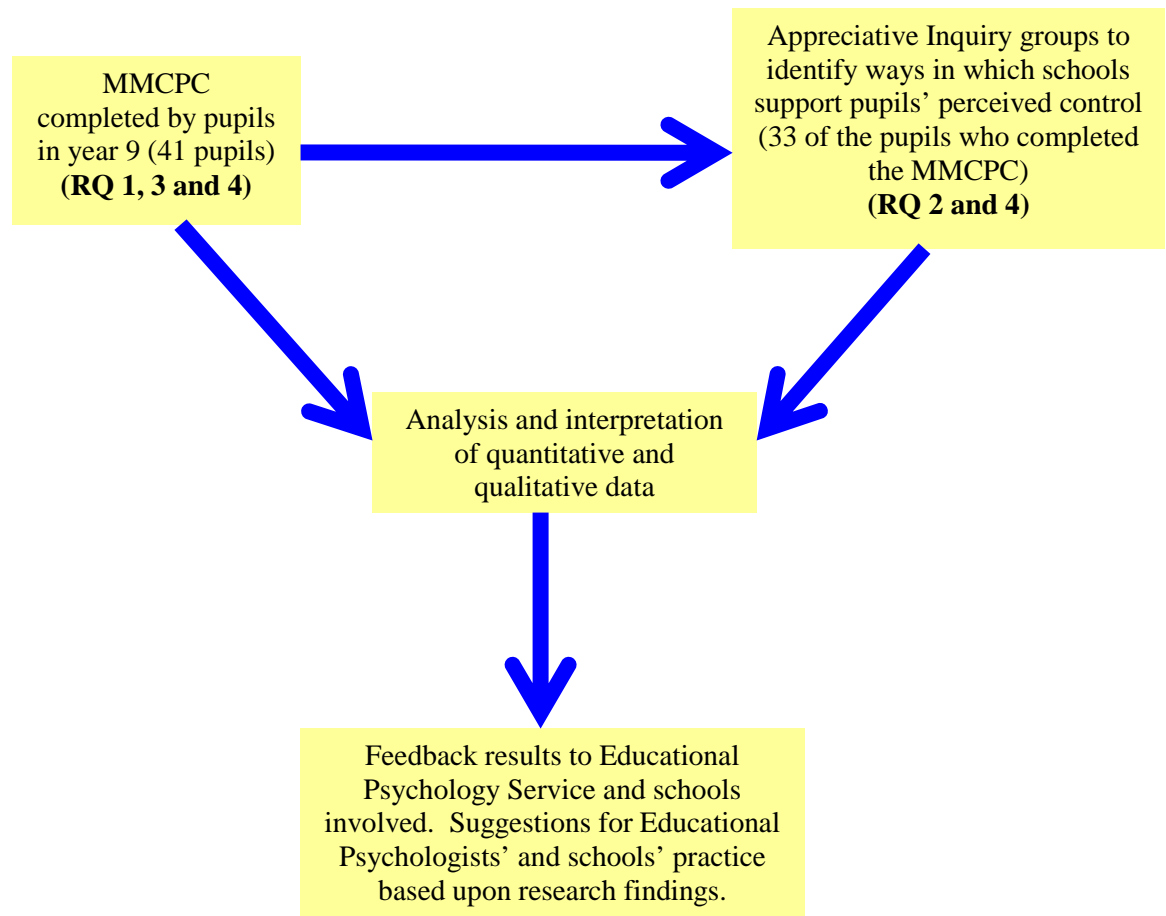
As figure 9 illustrates the research began with forty-one pupils completing the MMCPC. Thirty-two of the pupils who completed the MMCPC were then asked to participate in an appreciative inquiry focus group. An ANOVA was carried out in order to identify differences in scores on the MMCPC between the three attendance groups and descriptive statistics were also used. Transcripts from the appreciative inquiry focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis. The data from the MMCPC and the transcripts from the appreciative inquiry focus groups were analysed separately initially, however findings from the appreciative

inquiry focus groups were considered in relation to the findings from the MMCPC. The researcher reported the findings at a conference for Educational Psychologists in the authority and then to staff and staff at the schools. The findings are discussed further in the chapters which follow.

3.2 Rationale

This research was carried out by a Trainee Educational Psychologist on a two year placement in a large local authority in the North West during their second and third year of doctoral training. The researcher currently works in two secondary schools and nineteen primary schools. Whilst at planning meetings with schools at the beginning of the two year placement a few raised concerns about the attendance of pupils and asked for effective strategies to support attendance. Through discussions with colleagues in the authority the researcher felt that this was an area where further work was needed.

When the research first began an attendance committee was being formed within the local authority to explore attendance in the county and how it could be improved. This committee included Educational Psychologists. It was felt that research into how schools could support pupils' attendance was of particular relevance to these particular schools and the authority generally at this time.

Through a review of the literature it was felt by the researcher that many of the reasons pupils who chose not attend school regularly and the reasons pupils who chose to attend regularly gave for their level of attendance seemed to be linked to their sense of control in school. Consideration was give to ways of measuring a pupil's perceived control and from reviews of the literature two measures of control were commonly used with school aged pupils. These were the Locus of Control Scale for Children by Nowicki and Strickland (1973) and Connells Multi-dimensional Measure of Children's Perceived control (MMCPC, Connell 1985). The MMCPC was chosen for this research and the rationale for this choice is discussed further in subsequent paragraphs. In light of the findings by Dwyer and Ganster (1991) two further questions were added to the MMCPC on level of difficulty and workload in order to ascertain whether there was an

interaction between perceived control, the work a pupil was asked to do and their level of attendance.

This research is exploratory in nature as the researcher was unable to identify any research currently which looked at the relationship between control, perceived control or locus of control and attendance in school. The closest studies available to these topic areas are discussed in the literature review. As no research was found in this area it was decided that a small scale study using the MMCPC would be appropriate to indicate if there was any relationship between perceived control and school attendance. The researcher felt that as this was an exploratory study it would also be appropriate to include focus groups to discuss pupils' experiences of school in the research. The reason for this was twofold. If a relationship between perceived control and school attendance was identified, focus groups would give further insight into what perceived control meant in schools and enable pupils to describe their own experiences. Alternatively if such a relationship was not identified these discussions would still offer some insight into pupils' experiences of school and perhaps highlight further areas for study. In line with the suggestions of Riley and Docking (2004) it was felt that it was important to give due consideration to pupils' views and that the use of appreciative inquiry focus groups was an opportunity for this.

Using the MMCPC would give a measure of pupil's' perceived control and the average levels of perceived control for pupils with different levels of attendance could be compared in order to ascertain whether or not there is indeed a link between level of attendance and perceived control. The researcher felt that this information in itself did not provide much scope for supporting pupils who chose not to attend school. Indeed had the research stopped there this research may be seen as adding to the 'within child factors' research by suggesting that pupils did not attend due to an internal cognitive state, namely their perceived control.

Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) believe that increased autonomy and relatedness to school could 'buffer' the effects of low perceived control in relation to a pupil's level of attainment. This seems to suggest that even if perceived control is a within child concept (for which there is likely to be a

significant experiential contribution) environmental factors can modify the effect these perceptions have upon the pupil's behaviour. It was felt that further exploration of pupils' experiences of school was needed and for this reason the decision was taken to use focus groups in order to utilise pupil voice in the research. The researcher felt that appreciative inquiry, with its' focus upon the positives and the emphasis upon the participants to decide upon improvements and how they could be implemented, would be an effective approach for the focus groups. In previous studies using appreciative inquiry such as Conklin (2009) and Carter (2006) involvement in appreciative inquiry itself has been described as a positive and empowering experience where the participants are asked about what is going well and then given the opportunity to carefully consider their ideal situation. It was felt that this would give all pupils the opportunity to think about the positive aspects of school and enable them to reflect upon these as well as allowing them to voice their ideas for improvement.

Previous research has gathered data both qualitative and quantitative regarding non-attendance from a social perspective, looking at a pupil's experiences of school and their experiences at home and the impact this has upon their decision to attend or not attend school (Davies and Lee 2006, Pasternicki et al 1993 and Southwell 2006). Apart from consideration of a 'within-child' model of non-attendance which places emphasis on school refusal and school phobia (Evans, 2000 and Kearney and Bensaheb, 2006) the researcher was unable to identify any research with a clear psychological basis which explored why pupils chose not to attend school or perhaps more tellingly why they did choose to attend school. This research attempts to draw together the current research about school attendance from different disciplines and consider the issue of non-attendance using psychological perspectives.

Absence in the Authority

In recent years the DCSF has published attendance rates for local authorities for each academic year. The rates of absence for the Local authority compared to national averages for autumn term 2008 and spring term 2009 are shown below

Table 3: Absence rates in the Authority and Nationally

	Percentage of sessions missed due to overall absence	Percentage of enrolments classed as persistent absentees
England (secondary)	7.28	5.7
Local Authority (secondary)	7.17	5.9
England (primary)	5.46	2.2
Local Authority (primary)	5.33	2.3

(DCSF 2009)

These are the figures for the academic year prior to the beginning of this research. These figures highlight the fact that although the rate of absence in the authority is lower than the national average overall, the number of children who are persistently absent is higher than the national average across both primary and secondary school age. This suggests that there is a group of children in the authority who are persistently absent which is larger than the national average. When it is considered that attendance generally is higher than the national average it would be expected perhaps that the percentage of persistent absentees would be lower also. It also brings into question the level of attendance across the authority if those pupils who are persistently absent are removed from the data. Average levels of attendance for the authority in 2009 were 92% (DCSF 2009).   Without the data for persistent non-attenders included in this average it is assumed that the attendance rate would be higher, particularly as the authority has a higher than expected number of persistent non-attenders and lower overall levels of absence than would be expected. With this in mind it may be suggested that the persistent low attenders are missing significantly more school sessions that it may first appear as the average attendance rates for students generally (i.e. when persistent non-attenders data is removed), it is assumed, is much higher. This data suggests that on average a persistent non-attender in the authority (identified as having eighty percent attendance or below) is missing at the very

least twelve percent more sessions of school than their peers who attend school more regularly.

In this authority the DCSF (DCSF 2009) aim of less than five percent of pupils persistently absent would mean a reduction of 0.9% based on last year's attendance. This equates to nearly one in every hundred secondary aged pupils in the authority having improved their attendance levels so that their level of attendance would be higher than eighty percent.

Aims of this research

This research aims to consider non-attendance from a psychological perspective and ascertain whether pupils' levels of attendance are related to their perceived control. This research will also discuss with the pupils their experiences of school and explore with them the factors which could improve their perceived level of control in school through appreciative inquiry.

Whilst there is research into the link between perceived control and disaffection in pupils and limited research into attributional style and attendance it has not been possible to identify any research which links school non-attendance to perceived control. Research into pupils' attendance lacks a clear, coherent psychological perspective and the reasons identified for pupils choosing not to attend school highlight a range of different factors, many of which, the researcher felt, could be attributed to perceived control. This exploratory research seeks to explore whether there is any link between a pupil's level of perceived control by comparing the average scores for perceived control on the MMCPC.

Research Questions

The methodology described in the following chapter aims to explore further the following research questions:

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between pupils' perceived control and their level of attendance?

Research Question 2 How can pupils' perception of control be improved in the school context?

Research Question 3 Is there a difference in the scores of low, mid-range and high attenders on the MMCPC?

Research Question 4 Is there an interaction between perceived control, level of workload and attendance?

Epistemological position

Quantitative methods will be used to gather a measure of pupils' perceived control and qualitative methods will be used in the form of thematic analysis of appreciative inquiry interviews in order to gain an insight into the pupils' perceptions of their own experiences of school. This research seeks to look at non-attendance from a psychological perspective which seems to be lacking in the current literature. It is hoped that the MMCPC will identify any relationship between a pupil's level of attendance and their perceived control whilst the use of appreciative inquiry interviews will help to identify which aspects of school pupils find positive thus illuminating the findings. Furthermore the use of appreciative inquiry interviews may also bring to light further areas for consideration in relation to pupils' choices to attend or not attend school regularly. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006) describe this as sequential mixed design whereby the qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analysed independently. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006) believe that comparing the qualitative data to the quantitative data gives the researcher a clearer overview of their findings. They identify a sequential mixed design as being particularly useful in exploratory studies, particularly when carried out by researchers with limited research experience.

Ontology

This research will take a critical realist approach. Critical realism as described by Parker (1999) refers to an acknowledgement that we can only know about what works in any given situation. According to Parker critical realism:

'exposes positivist psychology's pretensions to model itself on what it imagines the natural sciences to be, and it grounds discursive accounts of mentation in social practices whose underlying logic and structure can, in principle, be discovered' (Parker 1999, p. 69)

Parker (1999) sees critical realism as a balance between positivist approaches and relativist approaches. The former he believes place far too much emphasis upon the scientific 'facts', highlighting the fact that such 'facts' can often change over time as further research is carried out and more is known about a specific area. The latter he believes place far too much emphasis upon the individual and upon their experiences of the world. Parker believes that an overall view of the bigger picture is important. Parker argues that critical realism with the emphasis upon studying the mechanisms which work in a given situation is an effective balance of these issues.

A critical realist approach will be taken in exploring pupils' perceived control and their experiences of school. In the research which follows the use of the MMCPC will implement quantitative methods in exploring differences in MMCPC scores for the different attendance groups. This will give a very general overview of any link between perceived control and attendance in school. The use of appreciative inquiry with small groups will enable more in-depth exploration of the pupils' experiences in school. As described by Richards and McEvoy and Richards (2003) both quantitative and qualitative methods will be used, however the data produced will be interpreted using a critical realist approach. In this way careful thought will be given to the relationship between perceived control, pupils' experiences and their attendance at school. This will be explored within the context of the pupils' current experiences. In line with the approach described by Richards and McEvoy the aim of this research will be to identify the specific factors which support pupils in choosing to attend school and why they work in this context.

Clearly the use of the MMCPC does suggest a measurement of a within child characteristic, furthermore the use of a measure suggests that such traits can indeed be measured. This is seemingly in conflict with the general approach of

the research. It may be argued however that previous research into school attendance such as that carried out by Davies and Lee (2006) and Le Riche (1995) which focused upon pupil views highlighted many issues which the researcher believes to be linked to perceived control. Clearly this is the researcher's interpretation and it is not possible to clarify this interpretation with those involved in the original research mentioned. The researcher believes, however, that when given self report questionnaire individuals are able to record accurately their perceptions at that particular time. Whilst the MMCPC itself is based upon Connell's interpretation of perceived control and the key domains of importance (Connell 1985) it is argued that this is a reliable measurement of perceived control in the areas which it measures (further discussion of the reliability and validity of the MMCPC is given later in the chapter). The researcher feels that the use of the MMCPC would allow for the measurement of perceived control of the individual pupils, the use of the appreciative inquiry focus groups would create the opportunity for further exploration, with the pupils, their experiences of school. This would also enable some consideration of how school experiences may, in some ways, impact upon a pupil's perceived control.

The use of appreciative inquiry with the pupils gives an insight into the views of the pupils and their perceptions of school. Any discussions about perceived control will help to clarify what the concept of perceived control means to the pupils and how it manifests itself in daily school life. The use of appreciative inquiry and the development of 'provocative statements' enables the researcher to create a verbal statement which encapsulates a shared understanding of what the pupils have shared and discussed.

Axiology

In considering the values of the researcher, it is clear that the researcher's own experiences and perceptions of education have some bearing upon the values of the research. Having been previously employed as a teacher and now as an Educational Psychologist it is true to say that the researcher places great emphasis upon education, and furthermore as a teacher placed further value upon

attendance. As a teacher it is not possible to teach pupils who are absent for large periods of time. The researcher is aware of these views and where possible will make a concerted effort to challenge these views when necessary. This will be considered further in the discussion section.

This research is strongly influenced by a positive psychology approach (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). Here the emphasis is upon looking at the individual's skills and abilities and seeking to use those for better outcomes. In this research it is assumed that the pupils themselves have a great deal to contribute to any understanding of why pupils choose to come to school regularly or why they do not. This research seeks to discover from the pupils what their personal experiences of school are. Where these experiences are positive experiences this research seeks to explore which aspects make these positive and perhaps more pertinently how we can make them more positive and increase the incidences of positive experiences in school for all pupils. The researcher also sought to use the appreciative inquiry groups as an opportunity to teach the pupils ways to reflect upon their experiences in school in the hope of them benefitting from their participation as described by Conklin (2009).

3.3 Procedure

The research took place in two secondary schools in the North West of England. One was a small school and the other was a much larger school. This research used a mixed methods approach. The researcher worked directly with the pupils involved in the research and explained their role as a trainee Educational Psychologist who was completing a doctorate as part of their training. The researcher also explained to the pupils their previous background as a teacher before starting this training. A questionnaire was administered to forty-one pupils and follow up appreciative inquiry interviews, exploring pupils experiences of school, were then held with thirty-two of the pupils who completed the completed the questionnaire (see figure 10 below). The research began with the MMCPC (Connell 1985). This was administered to pupils in three categories of attendance:

- High (99-100%)

- Mid-range (90-94%)

- Low (below 80%)

These categories of attendance relate to the DCSF (2009) whereby pupils with attendance of less than eighty percent are defined as persistent absentees. The average level of attendance in the authority is approximately ninety-two percent for all pupils so the range of ninety to ninety-four percent absence rate for the average attendance group should reflect this. For the high attendance rates of ninety-nine to one hundred percent attendance were used to include pupils who had not been absent this academic year or whose absence was very rare.

Pupils were identified from each attendance group at both schools. The numbers of pupils involved from each attendance group at each school are illustrated in Figure 10 below:

Figure 10: Research Design

	Completing MMCPC	Participating in focus groups using appreciative inquiry
	9 high attenders →	6 high attenders
School A	10 average attenders →	7 average attenders
	8 low attenders →	6 low attenders
	5 high attenders →	5 high attenders
School B	4 average attenders →	4 average attenders
	5 low attenders →	4 low attenders
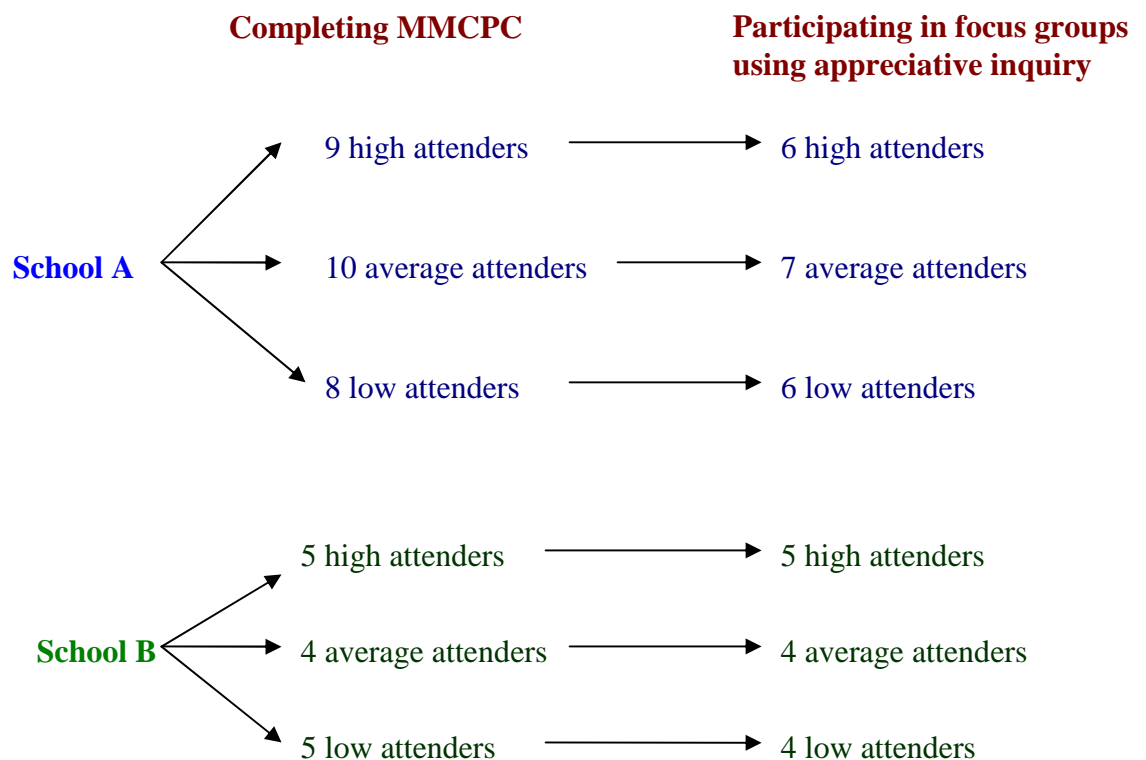
The MMCPC was administered by the researcher (see appendix 3). The pupils completed the questionnaires in their respective attendance groups (high, mid-range and low attenders) in each of the schools. The MMCPC questionnaires were colour coded for each group of attenders to avoid confusion (orange for low attenders, yellow for mid-range attenders and green for high attenders so there was no need for the pupils to identify themselves on the questionnaires). The researcher introduced the questionnaire and explained that it was of American origin and as such some of the phrasing of the questionnaire reflected this. The likert scale and the four options within it were explained to the pupils along with the format of the questionnaire which was a series of statements which the pupils then had to rate. The first question on the MMCPC for example is as follows:

When I win at sport, a lot of times I can't figure out why I won.

The pupils were then asked to rate the statement on the following scale:

1	2	3	4
Not at all true	Not very true	Sort of true	Very true

Each statement was read twice to the pupils and they were given time to answer. The pupils were asked not to record their names or any other form of personal data on the form in order to maintain anonymity. . Two further statements about workload and difficulty of the work were also added which used the same likert scale as illustrated below:

School work

The work I am given at school is far too difficult:

1	2	3	4
Not at all true	Not very true	Sort of true	Very true

I am given far too much work to complete at school:

1	2	3	4
Not at all true	Not very true	Sort of true	Very true

Appreciative inquiry in the form of an appreciative interview was used in this research to explore times when the pupils felt that they may have had a positive effect upon outcomes in school, this will be described further later in this chapter. For this stage pupils were given the opportunity to draw or write about a good lesson, day or event in school and to consider the factors which may have made this a positive experience. They were then asked to share their descriptions with the group. For the 'discovery' stage pupils were asked to consider an ideal situation in school and describe it. They were then asked to discuss their ideas and from that discussion the researcher sought to draw out the main aspects of their vision through the use of 'provocative statements'. Once a provocative statement had been agreed upon with the group they were then asked to move towards the design stage. In this part of the session the pupils were asked what could be done to help them move closer to the provocative statement that was agreed upon. From this discussion strategies were drawn up to be shared with school staff. The 'destiny' part of this research was quite limited though it is hoped that the feedback to staff in school from the 'design' stage would encourage the development of systems to sustain the development of the strategies the pupils have shared.

In school A the MMCPC was completed by all three attendance groups on one day and the appreciative inquiry interviews were carried out two weeks later. It was intended that pupils in school B would complete the MMCPC and the appreciative inquiry interviews on different dates also but due to unforeseen circumstances the first date arranged had to be cancelled. This meant that the MMCPC was completed by all three attendance groups in the morning and the appreciative inquiry interviews took place in the afternoon of the same day. As the research was carried out near the end of the summer term it was not possible to arrange the research on two different days due to the commitments the school and the researcher already had.

Pupil scores on the MMCPCs were analysed to calculate their perceptions of control. The scores for each of the three groups were compared. Two groups of six and one group of seven pupils from each of the three groups were asked to attend an appreciative inquiry focus group in school A. All of the pupils who completed the MMCPC were asked to attend an appreciative inquiry focus group in school B, this comprised of thirteen pupils in total five pupils from the high attendance group, and four from the mid-range and four from the low attending group.

In line with the research of Le Riche (1995) these groups explored the voice of the child through appreciative inquiry. It was hoped that this would give insight into the experiences pupils have of school and times in school when they feel that they are able to have a positive impact upon outcomes. It was felt that only the pupils could truly explain their own experiences of school and more importantly their perceptions of control therefore these sessions were used to explore, with the pupils, times when they have felt that their input has had a positive effect upon an outcome and ways in which they may feel more in control of their school life and their education.

3.5 Sampling and participant recruitment

The researcher began by contacting the lead professional for attendance in the authority in order to identify suitable schools for research. From these discussions ten schools were identified and the researcher contacted all ten schools with information about the research and contact details if they wished their schools to take part. The researcher highlighted the fact that the research findings would be shared with schools in both paper form and as a face to face feedback session to the staff if appropriate. Three of the ten schools responded to this request but only two of them were able to participate during the time scales involved.

The MMCPCs was administered in one medium sized and one large high school. The large high school had levels of attendance below the average for the local authority, the medium sized school had higher than average levels of attendance.

They were completed by year nine pupils at the end of the summer term just prior to beginning year ten. Davies and Lee (2006) identified year ten pupils as one of two age groups most likely to truant from school along with year seven. Year nine pupils were chosen due to the transition issues involved in moving up to year ten where the curriculum is based around academic qualifications and preparations for future employment. In both schools the attendance officers felt that attendance dropped most dramatically between year nine and year ten and through negotiation with both schools it was felt that further exploration of this would be useful. In both schools there was a very limited sample of low attenders in year seven and both schools felt that attendance was not a major issue for this year group.

 The end of year nine is likely to be a time when pupils' perceptions of control are placed under stress as the link between school and future employment becomes very clear. Riley, Ellis, Weinstock, Tarrant and Hallmond (1995) identified the thirteen to fourteen age group which, in schools in England and Wales, translates to year nine pupils, as being at higher risk of disaffection.   The professionals involved in supporting attendance in both school identified year nine as group with whom they felt input would be most beneficial.

The MMCPC is intended for pupils in the age range of eight to fourteen years and year nine pupils fall neatly into this category. Interestingly Harter and Connell (1984) found that perceived control was a more consistent and negative predictor of perceived competence, motivation and autonomous judgement in older pupils and year nine pupils are at the end of the age range for this measure. Follow up appreciative inquiry interviews (Carter 2006) were then held with the three different groupings of attendees at each school.

In the high range the highest attenders were sought and in the low range the lowest attenders were sought (if this was feasible due to their levels of attendance). Pupils with low attendance who have a long term medical condition were excluded from this study. Pupils with low attendance were included whether their absence was authorised or unauthorised this was due to the fact that as Reid (2006) noted many schools authorise absences which may have been

unnecessary due to a reluctance to challenge the reasons they have been given and pressure to lower unauthorised absence rates in school. Furthermore as Southwell (2006) comments many parents also take a negative view of schools and may condone their children's absence and therefore write letters which offer legitimate reasons for their absence.

The research was carried out with the support of the attendance officers in school A and school B. In school A the attendance officer was able to identify thirty suitable participants for the research and gain consent from their parents for them to take part in the research. Unfortunately on the day when the questionnaires were completed one of the pupils in the group of average attenders was absent and therefore did not take part. In school B the attendance officer was able to identify thirty suitable participants for the research however she was only able to gain consent from fifteen pupils and their parents for them to take part in the research.

3.6 The Multi-dimensional Measure of Children's Perceptions of Control (MMCPC)

For the purpose of this research the emphasis was upon perceived control with the aim being to identify who pupils feel is in control of outcomes for them. As perceived control is identified as a factor in future outcomes this information will be considered in relation to pupils' attendance rates.

The MMCPC was introduced by Connell (1985). It is standardised on children from eight to fourteen years of age. The MMCPC does not simply measure whether the child perceives control as being internal or external; it also identifies two aspects of external control. One of these is powerful others, which in this study may be parents or teachers, or unknown control, which may refer to ideas such as luck or fate. The MMCPC also identifies three areas in which pupils may perceive control, these are physical (for example in sport), social (for example reasons why people may or may not choose to be their friend) and cognitive (for example performing well at exams). A general score for perceived control is also given under the heading of general domain. This enables the consideration of

attendance in relation to perceived control in each of these domains as well as a more general overall view of perceived control. This may help to pinpoint specific areas of a pupil's life where levels of perceived control may have a positive or negative impact upon attendance.

Frederickson and Cameron (1999) highlight two main strengths of the MMCPC. Firstly it is domain specific and, as such, enables the exploration of specific areas where a child or young person may feel that their internal control is higher or lower. Secondly the MMCPC was developed through open-ended interviews with children, from age groups where developmental differences may be of particular relevance. Connell (1985) used one thousand and three hundred children between the ages of eight and fourteen years of age from New York and Chicago in the construction, standardisation and development of the MMCPC. Connell describes the MMCPC as being useful in highlighting developmental differences in the way which children perceive their level of control in the different domains. Frederickson and Cameron (1999) report that the MMCPC compares favourably to other existing measures of children's locus of control in terms of internal consistency. Connell (1985) reports that the MMCPC is a more reliable measure of perceived control in the eight to eleven years group than in the twelve to fourteen years group, however even in the twelve to fourteen group reliability estimates were greater than 0.55 for the majority of the four item subscales. Muldoon, Lowry, Prentice and Trew (2005) tested the reliability and validity of the MMCPC with six hundred and eighty-eight primary school aged children in Northern Ireland. They concluded that their findings supported Connell's three sources of control and the domain specific nature of these perceptions.

In line with the findings of Dwyer and Ganster (1991) after completing the MMCPC pupils were then asked about their level of workload. This was to ascertain whether there were indeed two groups of non-attenders, those who do not attend as they perceive themselves as having low control and high workload (overwhelmed) and those who perceive themselves as having high control and low workload (unchallenged).

The MMCPC scale was created over twenty years ago and as such may not be as valid as it was. However it is still used in modern studies as a measure of perceptions of control and was reviewed in 2005 by Muldoon, Lowry, Prentice and Trew who found it on the whole to be reliable measure of perceived control. As a multi-dimensional model it gives insight into a variety of areas within which a pupil may or may not feel that they have control in their lives.

3.7 Focus Groups

The use of focus groups is gaining in popularity as a data collection technique in qualitative research. A focus group involves a group of individuals who share a common interest meeting to discuss an issue in a collective interview. This information is used to gain participants' views on a particular area of interest.

In a focus group the researcher takes the role of moderator and 'steers' the group towards areas of discussion the researcher is interested in. Participants may be given a stimulus to introduce the focus of the group discussion. The questions put to the participants are open and the aim of the questions is to provoke discussion within the group. Interaction between participants is important as participants explore their own views and the views of the other group members. The focus group aims to make this interaction as natural as possible to encourage the flow of discussion. In order to do this the researcher must give careful thought to creating questions and stimuli which will provoke discussion and lead to good interaction between participants and encourage personal involvement in the discussion. The data created from the focus group is usually transcribed. When the researcher studies the transcriptions the interaction between participants is as important as what is actually said. The researcher must also decide upon the most appropriate method of data analysis for their data.

Focus groups were developed early in the nineteenth century. In the late 1930's social scientists investigated different ways to conduct interviews. During the second world war Robert Merton began to explore the use of focus groups. He worked for the United States military's War Department and during this time he discovered that people disclosed more sensitive information in a comfortable

group situation with people like themselves. In 1956 he published The Focused Interview (Merton, Fiske and Kendall, 1956) describing many techniques which are used in focus groups today.

Merton's techniques were not widely used in the social sciences when he developed them but in the 1950s the industrial and commercial sector increasingly began to use focus groups and invested a great deal of time and money into creating effective focus groups for businesses. More recently the focus group has grown in popularity as a qualitative research method. Researchers have begun to use this method more and more utilising many of the practices developed by market researchers. Focus groups have been used in education in order to gain the views of groups of pupils. Osborne and Collins (2001) found focus groups to be a useful and effective tool in the study of pupils' views on the science curriculum.

Hoppe, Wells, Morrison, Gillmore and Wilsdon (1995) have highlighted the usefulness of using focus groups to discuss sensitive topic areas with children. They argue that the use of a focus group can encourage discussion to flow more freely than it otherwise might. They highlight the importance of building rapport with those involved in the group and of ensuring that there are firm ground rules and that everyone in the group feels 'safe'. In working with school aged pupils it can be a far more productive way of gathering information as it may be easier for them to discuss sensitive topics with peers who are also joining in the discussions rather than simply having to discuss such issues on a one to one basis with an adult. Hoppe, Wells, Morrison, Gillmore and Wilsdon (1995) highlight the importance of considering carefully the demographics of the pupils involved in such groups. For some situations (such as sexual health discussions which they conducted) they suggest single gender groupings are most appropriate. They also highlight the importance of grouping pupils of a similar age together as conceptual understanding develops over time and the pupils responses may differ greatly, and as they found, in unexpected ways. Kitzinger (1995) believes that focus groups are of most use when discussing stigmatized or taboo subjects, particularly if the participants feel that their views are likely to differ greatly from the views of the person facilitating the research. By participating in a focus

group with others with similar beliefs and experiences participants can feel empowered and less marginalised. They may feel safer in expressing their views openly amongst like minded people. Furthermore as Kitzinger also points out even the most reticent participants can feel compelled to engage in discussions where other group members are voicing views and experiences which they themselves share. As attendance can be a sensitive subject at school, with those who do not attend regularly perhaps being seen as deviant and those who attend regularly being seen as overly compliant or 'swots' careful consideration has been given to the groupings. For this reason all of the focus groups in this study will be with pupils in the same year group and they will be grouped with peers with similar levels of school attendance.

Focus groups are not always the most effective method of data collection. Participants may not wish to discuss sensitive or personal issues in a group situation and may be more likely to make disclosures during a one to one semi-structured interview. A group situation may not allow all participants to become involved as some group members may be more domineering and others more passive. The researcher should consider the effect these factors may have upon the data which is gathered. Ultimately a group interview with six participants is different to six individual interviews. When using focus groups it is important to consider the aim of the analysis data created. If the aim is to gain valid and reliable information about the participants' views then it is necessary to employ analysis techniques that will remove distorting influences such as the influence of domineering group members. If the aim is to consider how social constructions are made then it is necessary to carefully consider all contributions.

As mentioned previously a focus group with multiple participants is very different to carrying out multiple individual interviews. However it was felt by the researcher that though the subject of why pupils attend school may not be something they feel able to express freely with their teachers and school staff, it is hoped that pupils would generally be comfortable discussing most issues with their peers and sharing their experiences. As the pupils were split in attendance groups it was hoped that to some extent the pupils had some shared experiences of attending or not attending school regularly. As such the pupils in the group

would not be judgemental about other pupils' contributions. Furthermore very clear ground rules were set for the focus groups. Pupils were told that the discussions in the focus group were within the focus group only and it was made clear that everyone's contribution was valued and should not at any time be ridiculed or belittled. Clearly, though pupils were made aware that they were discussing issues in a group situation and that the discussions were being used for research, being in a group situation may have impacted upon their level of contribution particularly around sensitive issues.

3.8 Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry was first introduced by Coopperrider and Srivastva (Coopperrider and Srivastva 1987) as an ethnographic method for gathering data about an organisation. Appreciative Inquiry is a relatively new approach in Educational Psychology however, it has often been used in medicine to ascertain positive aspects of patient treatment and build upon it (Carter 2006). Furthermore this approach also allows for consideration of how what is being done well can be done even better. This seemed particularly pertinent for this research in order to draw out from pupils which aspects of school life were viewed positively. Ryan, Soven, Smither, Sullivan and VanBuskirk (1999) believe their study to be the first example of appreciative inquiry being used in schools. They described the way in which appreciative inquiry can be used effectively and believe that the positive experience of being involved in appreciative inquiry can be a positive force for change within schools, which are ultimately, for better or worse, organisational in nature. Doveston and Keenaghan (2006) used appreciative inquiry to evaluate a programme in school with staff and pupils, whereas Calabrese, Goodvin and Niles (2005) used appreciative inquiry in order to identify attributes of 'effective' teachers working with 'at risk' students. Doveston and Keenaghan (2006) highlight the role of appreciative inquiry in educational research, particularly since it involves, so fully, those for whom the research is most pertinent.

Appreciative inquiry is based upon positive psychology, it is an approach which looks at what is currently going well and empowers those involved to consider

the possibilities for development and the resources they have to achieve these possibilities. Seligman, Steen, Park and Peterson (2005) describe the positive impact of positive psychology as it is used and applied in everyday life. Conklin (2009) suggests that the use of appreciative inquiry with students in particular is a clear example of this. Conklin feels that appreciative inquiry is particularly useful when used with groups of people who are usually expected to be quite passive. He cites students as an example of this as they are generally expected to adhere to the structure and aims imposed by the teacher. The teacher plans the syllabus of work and organises the classroom and whilst the teacher may consult the students on certain aspects it is clear that it is the teacher who is ultimately in control of where, when and how the syllabus is taught. Conklin believes that giving students the opportunity to consider what is going well is not only empowering to the students but is positive in preparing them for decision making in their future careers. Conklin highlights the role of appreciative inquiry in creating a sense of partnership in organisations, particularly as it aims to build on the positives rather than highlighting the negatives which may be present.

Appreciative Inquiry involves looking carefully at what an organisation, in this case a school, is currently doing well. Preskill and Catsambas (2006) describe this as looking at 'what is'. As such appreciative inquiry focuses upon the strengths of an organisation rather than upon any deficits it may have. Preskill and Catsambas believe that in this way appreciative inquiry is often able to elicit more detailed and in-depth responses than other approaches. In asking the participant about their positive experiences they are asking the individual to reflect upon what was good (and also what may be bad) and about their experiences. During this process the participant themselves may become increasingly aware of the main factors which were important for them, factors which they may not have been fully aware of or have voiced previously. Preskill and Catsambas believe that appreciative inquiry is flexible enough to facilitate this firstly through the very open and positive nature of the questions but also in the follow-up questions the researcher may use. Appreciative inquiry is applied using a four phase model (see figure 11 below).

Phase one of the model 'discovery' involves considering the best of what is currently happening and identifying what is being done well. The second phase is 'dreaming' whereby an ideal future is considered. Here 'provocative statements' are made to evoke an image of what could be with a strong focus upon the strengths of the current situation. This is then followed up with phase three which is the 'design' phase whereby the second phase of dreaming is combined with the realities of the current situation. Here a decision is made as to what aspects of the 'dream' phase are most important and these aspects are then focused upon. During this phase plans are made to build upon what is already working in order to move closer towards the ideal. The final phase is 'destiny' which is linked to the implementation of plans. This is where structures and networks need to be in place to enable the changes to be sustained in this case during the day-to-day practicalities of school life.

Figure 11: The Appreciative Inquiry Cycle (from Carter 2006)
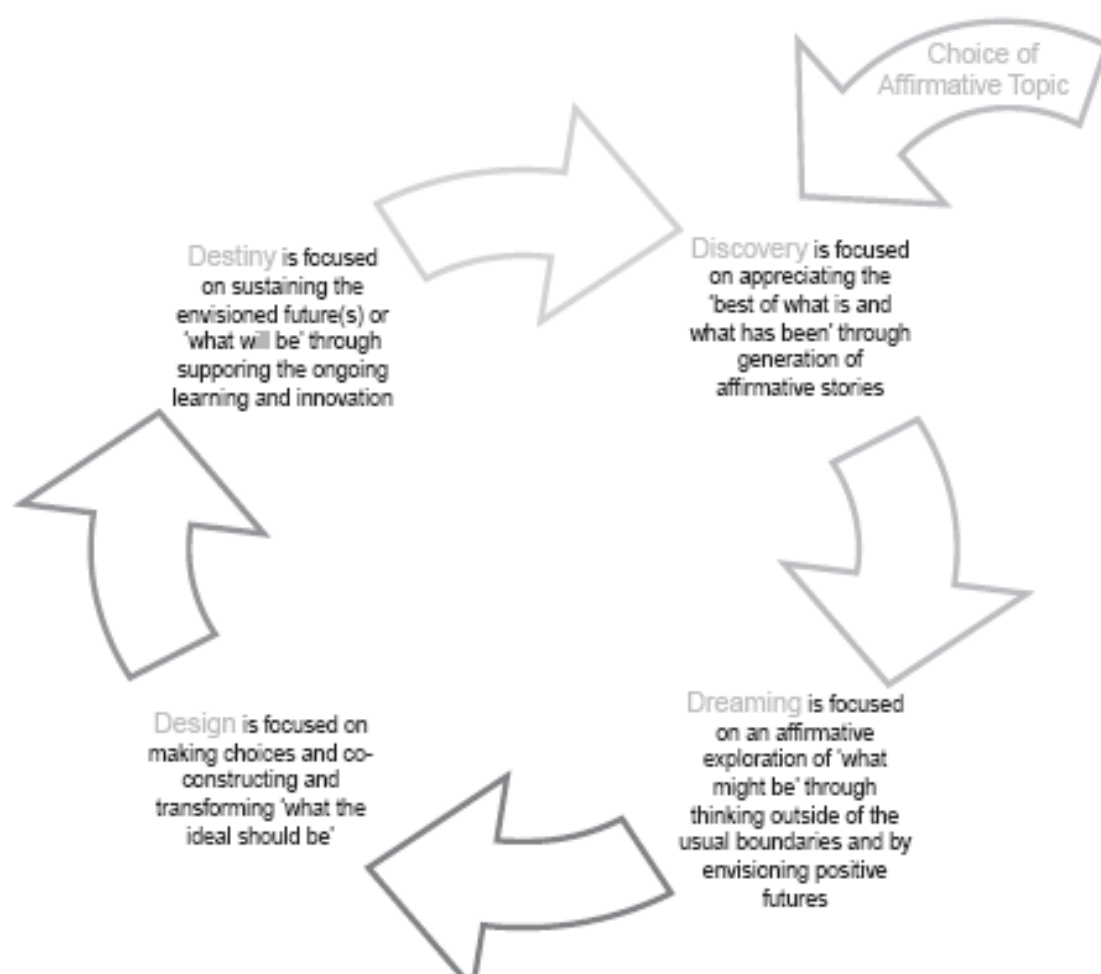
At the beginning of the appreciative inquiry interview the researcher began by explaining the purpose of the research and how the session fitted in with the questionnaire the pupils had already completed. The researcher explained that that the purpose of this session was to explore times in school where they felt that their input led to a positive outcome. The stimuli used in the appreciative inquiry groups were developed following the structure given by Carter (2006) and Conklin (2009). It was decided that the focus would be upon positive experiences of school in order to draw out the aspects of school life and the use of an 'ideal' experience used in the dream phase explored this further. The questions posed were as open as possible to enable the pupils to describe any positive experience within school, not specifically lessons.

The 'discovery' phase was introduced to the pupils using the following stimulus which was read out and also presented as text for the pupils:

Describe a really good day/ lesson/ event in school

What did you do which was important?

What do you think others (your classmates, teachers or other adults) did which was important?

How did it feel to be part of this day/ lesson/ event?

The pupils were encouraged to record their responses either by drawing or writing. They were given five minutes to complete the task after which they were then given the opportunity to discuss their ideas in turn with the researcher prompting the questions about what they did, what others did and how they felt during this experience where necessary.

After the pupils had discussed all of their ideas the dreaming phase of the session was introduced to them using the following stimulus:

Imagine a perfect day/ lesson/ event in school.

What would it be like?

What would you do?

How would it feel to be at school?

The researcher highlighted that the fact that this question involved thinking about an 'ideal situation' where all things could happen as the pupils wished. The pupils were again given the opportunity to draw or write their responses. The pupils were given five minutes to complete the activity after which they were asked to share their responses with the group. The researcher then drew the responses of the pupils together in each of the groups and created a 'provocative statement' which would summarise what the group had discussed. In each of the groups this provocative statement was discussed and changes made if necessary until the whole group agreed that it reflected their views. The provocative statement drew upon the positive descriptions the pupils gave about their experiences in school alongside their ideal described in the 'dream' phase. The researcher created a provocative statement which highlighted key themes which seemed to occur in both descriptions for the pupils.

In the design phase of the appreciative inquiry focus group the researcher explained to the pupils that their ideas were going to be shared with their teachers. The pupils were asked what steps could be taken in order for school to move closer towards their 'dream'/ideal situation? The pupils were then given a short time to discuss this with their peers after which they were asked to agree upon three action points to share with the teachers which the researcher noted down for them. The action points from all three groups were shared with staff at both schools when feedback about the research was given.

Unfortunately the researcher had very little input into the destiny stage of the appreciative inquiry cycle. The researcher gave feedback about the research to both schools and also shared with them the pupils' three action points. In school A in particular school staff seemed very keen to follow up these suggestions and engage in further discussions with the pupils involved and other pupils in the school. Whilst it would have been more effective to have 'all systems in the room' as described by Conklin (2009) from the first stage of appreciative inquiry

it is hoped that the pupils and staff coming together to discuss further the points raised will also be of real value to the school.

Preskill and Catsambas (2006) believe that appreciative inquiry does not have to be used as a complete process and that indeed the use of a few appreciative inquiry questions can offer valuable insight into a system or organisation. They highlight the effectiveness of appreciative inquiry questions within focus groups. Preskill and Catsambas believe that appreciative inquiry offers the opportunity for the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of what is meaningful about an experience for the participants involved. A written questionnaire, particularly one with a likert scale would not produce this depth of information.

The use of appreciative inquiry as a research tool is relatively new particularly in educational psychology. As such it has not been subject to rigorous peer review which may bring into question its robustness. However the benefits of using this tool in this research are likely to outweigh the drawbacks as appreciative inquiry provides a method for drawing out the positive ways in which schools currently support pupils and how this can be built upon. It is felt that this positive approach may be more effective with groups of pupils than simply asking them directly about how schools could support them. Furthermore it is felt that this is a positive approach which enables participants to consider what they already do well and what they should do more of. Such a positive and empowering model sits well with the overall theme of perceived control and supporting pupils to view themselves as having some control over their lives.

Conklin (2009) highlights the importance of having all parts of the system in the room together for appreciative inquiry. In this instance this would have meant having teachers in the room and preferably some members of the senior management teams in both schools. In this way each strand of the organisation would be discovering together what was going well, dreaming of a shared ideal together and then design an action plan that they were all involved in and could support. However the main aim of this research was to gain the views of the pupils without the pupils self censoring their views due to the presence of teachers. Whilst this limits the ability of the school, to then work together to act

upon the sessions it was felt by the researcher that this was a useful introduction. When feeding back to the schools the researcher suggested the further use of appreciative inquiry with staff and pupils to develop some of these ideas further.

3.9 Data gathering methods

Data was gathered through MMCPC surveys and appreciative inquiry interviews generating both quantitative (MMCPC) and qualitative data (appreciative enquiry interviews). The MMCPC was administered to the pupils in six groups (according to their levels of attendance) by the researcher, one group of high attenders, one group of average attenders and one group of low attenders in each of the two schools. The questions were read out to the group who were then given the opportunity to select their answers. The MMCPC generated scores in four domains with control attributed to three different areas (see below):

Table 4: The Four Domains of the MMCPC

	Unknown Control	Powerful Others	Internal Control
Cognitive Domain			
Social Domain			
Physical Domain			
General Domain			

The appreciative inquiry interviews took place in the six attendance groups (three groups at each school) and were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. These recordings were fully transcribed to facilitate analysis.

3.10 Data analysis methods

Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered. The quantitative data was analysed using a one way ANOVA. Descriptive statistics were also used. Whilst it was recognised that a correlational analysis of the relationship between level of attendance and responses on the MMCPC would have been preferable the anonymous way in which the MMCPC was completed by pupils meant that it was not possible to correlate attendance data with responses on the MMCPC.

The qualitative data was transcribed and then analysed using thematic analysis. The processes involved in each of these analyses is described further in the paragraphs below.

Analysis of MMCPC

Individual responses on the MMCPC and scores for perceived control were calculated. Each of the questions on the MMCPC pertained to either the cognitive, social, physical or general domain. Within each domain there were further questions to ascertain whether the individual perceived control over that domain to be held by themselves, powerful others or whether there was some unknown control (for example luck or fate). In line with the directions given in the MMCPC responses from 1 (not at all true) through to 4 (very true) were grouped together according to the domain to which they pertained. An average score was calculated for each domain for internal control, powerful others control and unknown control. Each completed questionnaire was assigned a number for ease of recording data.

The average score for each group of attenders (high, mid-range and low attenders) was then calculated for unknown control, powerful others control and internal control for each of the domain areas, cognitive, social, and physical and a general domain score. Average scores for workload and difficulty were also calculated for each group of attenders. For this part of the research there was one categorical independent variable where the pupils were placed into groups according to their level of attendance (high, mid-range or low attendance). The three categorical groups contained different participants with no participant belonging to more than one group. There were twelve dependent variables. These were the scores upon each of the four domains identified by the MMCPC (the social, cognitive, physical and general domain) with each domain scored for control by powerful others, unknown control and internal control. Mean scores for level of difficulty and workload were also calculated.

A one way ANOVA was used to identify any differences in mean scores between each of the attendance groups. Unfortunately it was no possible to carry out a correlational analysis as the anonymous way in which the MMCPC was completed meant that the researcher did not have access to precise attendance data for each pupil. As a result of this and also due to the small sample size involved in the research descriptive statistics were also used. This enabled the researcher to present the responses according to attendance group and explore any patterns in the data. The results were represented graphically to highlight the average scores for each group.

Thematic Analysis of Appreciative Inquiry Interviews

Responses given in the appreciative inquiry interviews were fully transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) as shown in the table below:

Table 5: Phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006)

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with the data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research

	question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Thematic analysis was chosen as it was felt that the process of appreciative inquiry lent itself well to this method. During the focus groups a provocative statement was made and this statement was developed through the researcher drawing together themes form the groups' discussions. In this way a preliminary and very rudimentary thematic analysis had been carried out and these themes were considered during the process of thematic analysis as they had already received participants' feedback as described by Aronson (1994). Thematic analysis is a flexible tool for analysing transcripts and as such can be applied to a variety of data, it does not align itself to a specific research approach (Braun and Clarke 2006).

After the appreciative inquiry interviews were carried out the audio recording of the sessions was then fully transcribed by the researcher as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). The transcriptions were then shared with the pupils involved who were asked to indicate and any changes which they wished to be made, extracts they wished to be deleted or any inaccuracies they identified. The pupils did not ask for any changes of this nature to be made to the transcript.

After each appreciative inquiry interview was transcribed and checked by the pupils the transcriptions were then initially coded individually as indicted in phase two of Braun and Clarke's guidelines. For this stage each transcript was read, reread and then pertinent comments were highlighted. These pertinent comments were the returned to and coded by the researcher. Inductive thematic analysis was used, that is to say the researcher sought to identify themes within the data rather than matching the data to a coding frame which had already been developed. The coding process was carried out manually with the use of post-it notes, it was felt by the researcher that this approach allowed for more flexibility than the use of a computer package.

The transcripts for low attenders from both schools, for mid-range attenders from both schools and high attenders from both schools were then collated and

common themes identified as indicated in phase three. For phase four careful consideration was given to the codes given and these were reviewed and changed where necessary. At this point some extracts were moved to different codes, some codes were grouped together and some codes were discarded due to lack of data. It was at this point that the coded extracts were then assigned to the relevant themes (see appendix 4) and an initial thematic map was developed. In phase five of the thematic analysis careful thought was given to the headings and subheadings for each 'theme' identified.

During the process of thematic analysis of each of the attendance groupings it became apparent to the researcher that there were many common themes across all pupils, in both schools across all three attendance groups. For this reason phase one to five was repeated using all of the data for all of the attendance groups. Interestingly when this was carried out one of the main themes 'Control' which was identified across all the attendance groups became a sub-heading under the theme of curriculum. This will be discussed further in the discussion chapter of this research.

At this point the themes were shared with the pupils involved in the research and discussed with them. The researcher discussed the themes identified with the pupils involved in the research. They were asked about the themes identified firstly for their specific appreciative inquiry focus group and also for the themes identified from all of the appreciative inquiry focus groups. After having had the opportunity to check the written transcripts they were given time to consider the themes and discuss them with the other pupils involved in their group. Aronson (1994) believes that it important for the researcher to verify the themes they decide upon with the participants in order to ensure that the researcher's interpretation of the themes is in agreement with that of the participants involved in the research. The pupils generally agreed with the themes identified for their specific attendance group and for all pupils overall. Indeed many commented that some of the themes identified were not as prominent in their sessions as their peers but that they agreed with the points made.

Coolican (2004) highlights the importance that the specific responses of the group of participants taking part in studies hold a qualitative value. Such responses add a depth of meaning to any research. As Coolican points out it is not the fact that the views of the participants may differ from the view of the researcher or of others in society, in the case of this research the pupils' teachers, but the ways in which they differ. Simply identifying that the perceptions of the pupils differ, as may be demonstrated through the use of the MMCPC, gives a very limited insight into what these differences actually mean in real terms. For this reason thematic analysis of the transcripts was used. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis is an approach in its' own right. It is a relatively flexible method of analysis and is not tied to any particular theoretical framework. Boyatzis (1998) refers to thematic analysis as 'seeing as...' whereby the researcher interprets patterns in the data and encodes them as themes.

Braun and Clarke see the researcher as playing an active role in determining the themes in the data. They do not believe that themes emerge from the data but that the researcher themselves constructs the themes based upon their own interpretation of the transcripts and the links they make between what the participants have said and their understanding of the issues.

Thematic analysis of the data can be somewhat subjective. It is hoped however that through the sharing of the transcripts with the pupils who participated and through sharing the themes decided upon as a result of the thematic analysis that themes are a more accurate reflection of the views of the pupils rather than simply the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data set. Due to the limits of doctoral research the coding of the data set and the interpretation of the data set into themes was carried out by and then checked by the researcher. The only other check of how accurately the themes matched the data was made through discussion with the pupils.

3.11 The Research Cycle

The diagram below illustrates the way in which the research proposal was developed, how the research was carried out and how it fits within current research and practice.

Figure 12: The Research Cycle

Identify non-attendance as a research area and investigate current practice

Review the literature on non-attendance

Consider the implications of the research findings upon current practice and identify any further research needed.

Perceived Control and Non-attendance

Develop methodology for researching non-attendance based upon research questions and literature

Share research findings with colleagues in the EPS and schools

Analyse data gathered and develop conclusions with reference to relevant research

Gather information about perceived control and attendance using MMCPC and appreciative inquiry

Research questions and research design

Research question	Data gathering method	Information gathered
Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between pupils' perceived control and	Analysis of MMCPC responses according to attendance group	Identification of relationship (or non relationship) between scores for perceived

		control and level of attendance.
Research Question 2 How can pupils' perception of control be improved in the school context?	Thematic analysis of appreciative inquiry focus group transcripts	Thematic analysis of appreciative inquiry to draw out positive experiences of school and identify steps to improve perceived control.
Research Question 3 Is there a difference in the scores of low, mid-range and high attenders on the MMCPC?	Analysis of MMCPC responses according to attendance group	Identification of difference (or no difference) between scores for perceived control between the different attendance groups
Research Question 4 Is there an interaction between perceived control, level of workload and attendance?	Analysis of MMCPC responses and responses on workload and difficulty questions according to attendance group	Identification of difference (or no difference) between scores for perceived control, perceived workload and difficulty and level of attendance

3.12 Critique of method

Clearly each of the methods described here have their limitations, however, through the use of triangulation to gain a more complete picture of perceived control and attendance it is hoped that these limitations will not restrict the validity of the research.   The use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies should highlight any inconsistencies (Kelle 2001) in the data gathered, and, it is hoped that these will be compensated for as a result.

It is hoped that the use of the MMCPC for these three groups of attenders will show if there is a difference in perceived control in each of the groups. The use of Appreciative Inquiry interviews should provide further information about what perceived control means in school and how it can be supported. The quantitative data from the MMCPC was used to identify whether or not there is a relationship between perceived control and attendance. Thematic analysis of the Appreciative Inquiry interviews was used to highlight what schools are currently doing well to support a sense of control and furthermore what more they could be doing according to their pupils. Whilst the MMCPC was used to highlight whether there is a relationship between perceived control and attendance, Appreciative Inquiry was used in order to clarify and deepen understanding of what this relationship is and what this means in practical, real life terms for pupils and schools.

A total sample size of forty-one pupils was used and according to G*power the power analysis program (Erdfelder, Faul and Buchner 1996) a sample size of two hundred and fifty two pupils would be required for a medium effect size with a significance level of .05. Due to the limited sample size there is a risk of a type II error, whereby the null hypothesis, i.e. that the differences in mean scores for the attendance groups are due to chance when in fact the sample size was too small for the ANOVA to detect any significant differences and indeed with a larger sample size the differences may be significant. The lack of access to specific attendance due to the pupils MMCPC questionnaires being anonymous meant that it was not possible to carry out a correlational analysis. Such an analysis may have identified a correlation between perceived control and level of attendance, however this would also have been limited by the small sample size involved in this research.

Putting together the attendance groups from both schools for thematic analysis may have masked any differences between the two groups. However this research was exploring common themes between pupils, key aspects of school life which had an impact upon positive experiences. As such it was not felt necessary to draw out individual differences between the schools. Furthermore,

as discussed there were great similarities between all six groups as a result of which the researcher decided to combine the data from all groups. When combining both the data from two schools for each attendance group and the data from all groups the researcher was aware of the origin of comments made by each group and did seek to ensure that any themes which were identified were based upon a balance of input form the groups.

3.13 Operational risk analysis

The following risks to the research were identified:

- Drop out due to other commitments in school

- Low response rate

- Unable to reach enough participants for MMCPC due to poor attendance

- Parents may be unwilling to allow pupils to take part in research

Student drop out due to other commitments in school was identified as the highest risk factor. In order to minimise this risk there was some flexibility about dates and times and reminders were given to students and staff where necessary beforehand. A low response rate was identified as a medium level of risk. The schools who took part in the research already had a positive working relationship with the researcher or a colleague of the researcher and the staff involved were very supportive. The purpose of the research was discussed beforehand and times, dates and feedback were negotiated with staff. Being unable to reach enough participants for MMCPC due to poor attendance was identified as a medium risk factor. It was hoped that at least twenty children could be identified for each group in school (ten were required) to allow for absences on the day. The possibility of returning to school on another day if necessary or another school if necessary was also an option. Parents' unwillingness to allow pupils to take part in research was identified as a low risk. It was ensured that

clear explanation of the study and what it involved was given to parents or carers of participants. School staff also contacted parents to give them a verbal explanation of the research and discuss any concerns they had. The researchers' contact details were also given if parents or carers had any concerns or queries or just wanted further information.

Interestingly accessing the low attenders was not as difficult as expected. The professionals at the school who organised the groups made great efforts to encourage the low attending pupils to attend on the day of the research which they did. The mid-range attenders were the most difficult to access and in school B one of the high attenders was absent on the day of the research. Only three of the ten schools initially contacted registered an interest in participating. Of those three schools only two were able to participate within the time scales specified. However the two schools who registered their interest showed a high level of commitment to the research and committed time and resources to ensuring that it was completed successfully with their pupils.

Some flexibility was needed in the dates and times the researcher offered to schools particularly as one of the sessions at school B had to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances which did result in the last part of the research being carried out in the last days of the summer term. In both schools parents did not initially respond to the letters sent to them asking for permission for their children to take part in the research. However when staff at both schools contacted parents to discuss the research with them and the purpose of the research they were happy to give their consent. Staff at both schools felt that the information sent out to parents was somewhat lengthy and many parents were unwilling or unable to engage with it and therefore did not reply initially to the request.

3.14 Statement of ethical good practice

In line with the guidance from the British Psychological Society (BPS 2006) and Health Professions Council guidelines (HPC 2008) careful consideration was given to the impact of the research upon participants. Disruption to the pupils'

school timetable was kept to minimum and every effort was be made to ensure that pupils who were involved in both parts of the study did not miss the same lesson on both occasions. The research was carried out towards the end of the school term and in the second school it was carried out on the last day of school. At this time of year the curriculum was less formal than it had been earlier in the year, which in some ways would perhaps minimise the class time lost through participation.

Children and young people are a vulnerable group therefore fully informed consent was obtained from both the parents or carers of the pupils and pupils involved in the research. The researcher sought to make clear and transparent the aims and the implications of the research to the participants and their parents from the outset. It was made very clear to them at the beginning of each session that their participation was entirely voluntary and that the research was in no way part of their compulsory curriculum. School staff were also dissuaded from coercing pupils to take part. It was made clear to both the parents and the pupils that they were able to cease participation at any point even after data had been gathered at which point any data would then be destroyed. All data was anonymised, kept confidential, used only for the purposes of this research and will be destroyed once the research is fully completed. All participants and their parents/ carers were given contact details if they felt that they needed or would like more information if they had any concerns about the research.

The researcher was aware that in the focus group situation pupils may feel uncomfortable expressing their views on school and their experiences of school life. At the outset it was made clear that anything discussed should not be shared with others outside of the group. All data was anonymised and no individual pupil's comments were identifiable. In the course of the focus groups the researcher was aware that issues may have be discussed which were linked to child protection. It was made clear at the beginning of each session that although all data would be confidential if an issue was discussed which suggests a child or young person may be in danger of harm that information will be passed on to the appropriate adult/ professional due to child protection regulations. Pupils were told that they could withdraw from the research even after they had taken part in

the research and their data, if they wished, could be removed from the data used and any records of their involvement could be destroyed. Two pupils withdrew from the research. Both had completed the MMCPC and were happy for the data from this to be included in the research. One pupil did not want to take part in the appreciative inquiry focus group, at which point they were thanked for their participation and made aware that they could still ask for their data from the MMCPC to be destroyed, however the pupil in question was happy for their data to be included but was simply reluctant to participate in the appreciative inquiry focus group. This pupil was in the low attending group at school. The second pupil asked to leave the appreciative inquiry focus group part way through the session. The pupil was concerned about some work they had to complete and was anxious to return to the lesson they were missing. This was respected and the pupil was thanked for their participation at this point. The researcher also asked this participant if they were happy for their data from both the MMCPC and from the beginning of the session to be included in the research. The pupil was happy for this to take place. It was then explained that if they changed their mind at any point that they could ask for any of the data gathered from their participation to be destroyed. This pupil was a high attending pupil at school A. Both of these pupils were also invited to the subsequent feedback sessions in their schools which they both attended.

After the research was completed all participants were debriefed as to their role in the research. All findings were shared with the participants in an accessible manner. The research findings were used to inform practice in schools and in the Educational Psychology Service in order to support pupils with attendance difficulties. The research findings were presented at a regional Continuing Professional Development conference and discussed with colleagues there. The research was also shared with staff in school and the findings discussed along with the pupils' suggestions as to how their experiences of school could be more positive. The research was planned with the aim exploring any link between perceived control and attendance. It was hoped that this research would look into pupils' experiences of school life and offer some suggestions for strategies which could be used to support pupils with low attendance in school. In line with the work of (Conklin 2009) it was felt that involvement in the appreciative inquiry

focus groups would be a positive experience for the pupils involved and would present them with an opportunity to reflect upon their school experiences as well as enabling them to voice these experiences in a constructive manner. It is hoped that the benefits of this research would outweigh any inconvenience caused to participants.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The data gathered for this research is both qualitative and quantitative. In the chapter which follows the data will be described and analysed separately. Firstly the results of pupils' responses on the MMCPC will be considered in relation to each of the attendance groups and then the transcripts from the appreciative inquiry focus groups will be analysed using thematic analysis (see methodology for further explanation). This data will then be discussed in relation to the research questions in the final chapter.

4.1   Findings from the Multi-dimensional Measure of Children's Perceptions of Control (MMCPC)

A one way ANOVA was carried out in order to identify any significant differences between the scores of each of the attendance groups on the MMCPC. Each of the twelve domains and the two questions for difficulty and workload were analysed and no differences were found to be significant at the 0.05 level. However differences for scores for difficulty fell just outside of this ($f (2,38) = 3.125$, p= .055). The results for the twelve domains and the question on workload are as follows: workload ($f (2,38) = 2.175$, p= .128), cognitive unknown ($f (2,38) = .758$, p= .476), cognitive powerful others ($f (2,38) = .258$, p= .774), Cognitive internal ($f (2,38) = .930$, p= .403), social unknown ($f (2,38) = 1.519$, p= .232), social powerful others ($f (2,38) = 1.576$, p= .220), social internal ($f (2,38) = 1.394$, p= .260), physical unknown ($f (2,38) = 1.621$, p= .211), physical powerful others ($f (2,38) = .100$, p= .905), physical internal ($f (2,38) = 1.295$, p= .286) general domain unknown ($f (2,38) = 1.228$, p= .304), general domain powerful others ($f (2,38) = .063$, p= .939) and general domain internal ($f (2,38) = .169$, p=.845).

Acknowledging that the limited sample size in this research reduces the power of the one way ANOVA to detect differences in perceived control between the different attendance groups calculated levels of significance, further consideration will be given to such differences through descriptive statistical analysis. The pupils' scores for each of the domains were calculated by

calculating an average score for each of the statements relating to a particular domain. These scores were then used alongside peers' scores in the same attendance group to give an average score for each attendance group. The average scores for each attendance group are shown in the table below:

Table 6: Mean scores for each domain by attendance group

	Low attenders mean	Mid-range attenders mean	High attenders mean
Difficulty	2.230763	1.857143	2
Workload	2.769231	2.142857	2.5
Cognitive unknown control	2.230769	2.017857	1.928571
Cognitive powerful others	2.038462	2.142857	2.196429
Cognitive internal control	3.211538	3.285714	3.517857
Social unknown others	2.480769	2.071429	2.214286
Social powerful others	2.019231	1.803571	1.589286
Social internal control	2.557692	2.785714	2.910714
Physical unknown	2.134615	1.892857	1.714286
Physical powerful others	2.365385	2.482143	2.410714
Physical Internal control	2.365385	2.410714	2.625
General domain unknown	2.634615	2.303571	2.232143
General domain powerful others	2.25	2.160714	2.214286
General domain internal control	2.884615	2.982143	2.910714

Descriptive Statistics

Below are a series of graphs which illustrate the mean scores for each attendance group in each of the domains and for the questions related to workload and

difficulty.   The graphs highlight the direction of the differences in each area (for example high attendance, low scores or high attendance high scores).
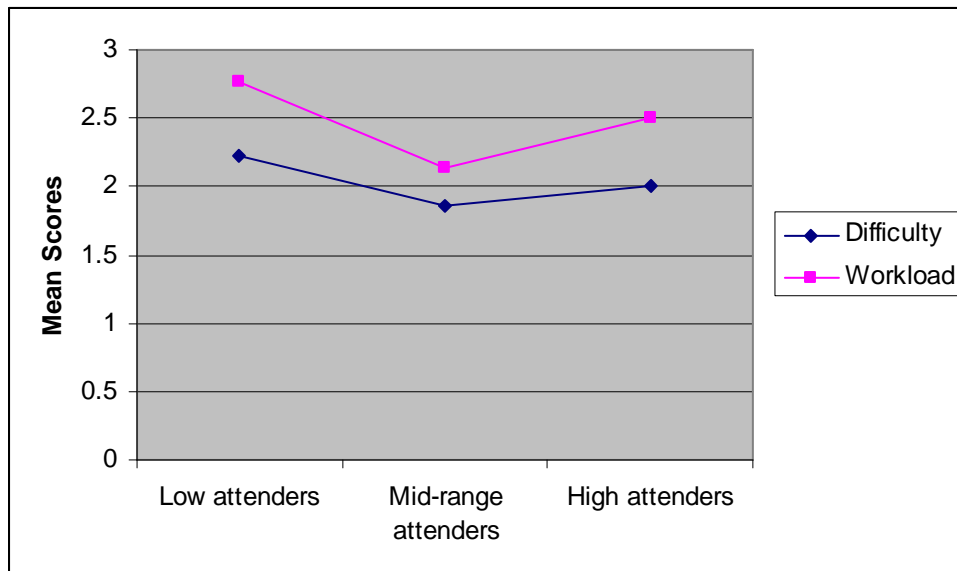
Difficulty and workload

The graph below shows the average scores for each attendance group when asked to rate the statements 'The work I am given at school is too difficult' and 'I am given far too much work to complete at school'.   As with all of the statements a likert scale was given where by a score of 1 indicated that the statement was 'not at all true' a score of 2 indicated that a statement was 'not very true', a score of 3 indicated that the statement was 'sort of true' and a score of 4 indicated that a statement was 'very true'.

A high score for difficulty would suggest that the pupil found the work that they were given at school difficult. If the pupils who chose not to attend school regularly did so because they found the work too difficult it would be expected that low attenders would have the highest mean scores, high attenders would have the lowest mean scores and the mean scores of the mid-range attenders would be somewhere in between.   Conversely if the low attending group chose not to attend school regularly because the work they were given at school was too easy and did not challenge them enough it would be expected that the low attenders would have the lowest mean scores, the high attenders would have the highest scores and the scores for mid-range attenders would be somewhere in the middle.

A high score for workload would suggest that the pupils felt that they were given too much work to complete at school. If the pupils who chose not to attend school regularly did so because they felt they were given too much work to complete it would be expected that low attenders would have the highest mean scores, high attenders would have the lowest mean scores and the mean scores of the mid-range attenders would be somewhere in-between.   Conversely if the low attending group chose not to attend school regularly because they were not given enough work to complete at school it would be expected that the low attenders

would have the lowest mean scores, the high attenders would have the highest scores and the mid-range attenders would be somewhere in the middle.

Figure 13: Mean scores for each attendance group for difficulty and workload

Mid-range attenders' mean scores for level of difficulty were lowest followed by the high attenders' mean scores. Low attenders' mean scores were the highest. Mid-range attenders' mean scores for workload were the lowest followed by the high attenders' mean scores. Low attenders' mean scores were the highest.
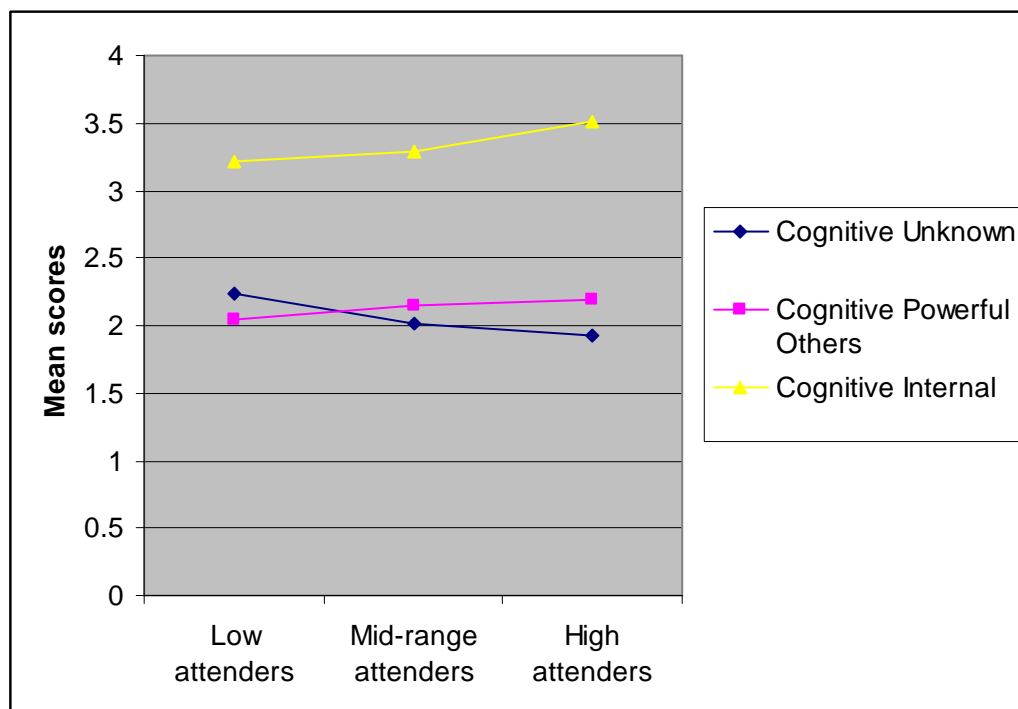
Cognitive Domain

The graph below shows the average scores for each attendance group when asked to rate a series of statements which suggested that success in the cognitive domain was controlled by an unknown source (cognitive unknown), for example if success was the result of luck or an inborn ability, statements which suggested that success in the cognitive domain was controlled by powerful others, for example teachers and statements which suggested that success in the cognitive domain was controlled internally, by the individual themselves and the actions they chose.

A high score for cognitive unknown (above three) suggests a strong belief that success in the cognitive domain is controlled by an unknown source. If low attenders choose not to attend as they feel that they have a lack of control over their success in the cognitive domain it would be expected that they would score more highly in this area, with the high attenders scoring the lowest and the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in-between.

A high score for cognitive powerful others (above three) suggests a strong belief that success in the social domain is controlled by powerful others. If low attenders choose not to attend as they feel that others have control over their success in the social domain it would be expected that they would score more highly in this area, with the high attenders scoring the lowest and the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in between.

A high score for cognitive internal control (above three) suggests a strong belief that success in the cognitive domain is controlled by themselves and their actions. If low attenders choose not to attend as they feel that they have a lack of control over their success in the cognitive domain it would be expected that they would score lower in this area, with the high attenders scoring the highest and the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in between.

Figure 14: Mean scores for each attendance group for cognitive domains

High attenders' mean scores for cognitive unknown control were lowest followed by the mid-range attenders' mean scores. Low attenders' mean scores were the highest. High attenders' mean scores for cognitive powerful others were highest followed by the mid-range attenders' mean scores. Low attenders' mean scores were the lowest. High attenders' mean scores for cognitive internal control were highest followed by the mid-range attenders' mean scores. Low attenders' mean scores were the lowest.

Social domain

The graph below shows the average scores for each attendance group when asked to rate a series of statements which suggested that success in the social domain was controlled by an unknown source (social unknown), for example if success was the result of luck or an inborn ability, statements which suggested that success in the social domain was controlled by powerful others, for example teachers and statements which suggested that success in the social domain was controlled internally, by the individual themselves and the actions they chose.

A high score for social unknown (above three) suggests a strong belief that success in the social domain is controlled by an unknown source. If low attenders choose not to attend as they feel that they have a lack of control over their success in the social domain it would be expected that they would score more highly in this area, with the high attenders scoring the lowest and the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in-between.

A high score for social powerful others (above three) suggests a strong belief that success in the social domain is controlled by powerful others. If low attenders choose not to attend as they feel that others have control over their success in the social domain it would be expected that they would score more highly in this area, with the high attenders scoring the lowest and the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in between.

A high score for social internal control (above three) suggests a strong belief that success in the social domain is controlled by themselves and their actions. If low attenders choose not to attend as they feel that they have a lack of control over their success in the social domain it would be expected that they would score lower in this area, with the high attenders scoring the highest and the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in between.

Figure 15: Mean scores for each attendance group for the social domain

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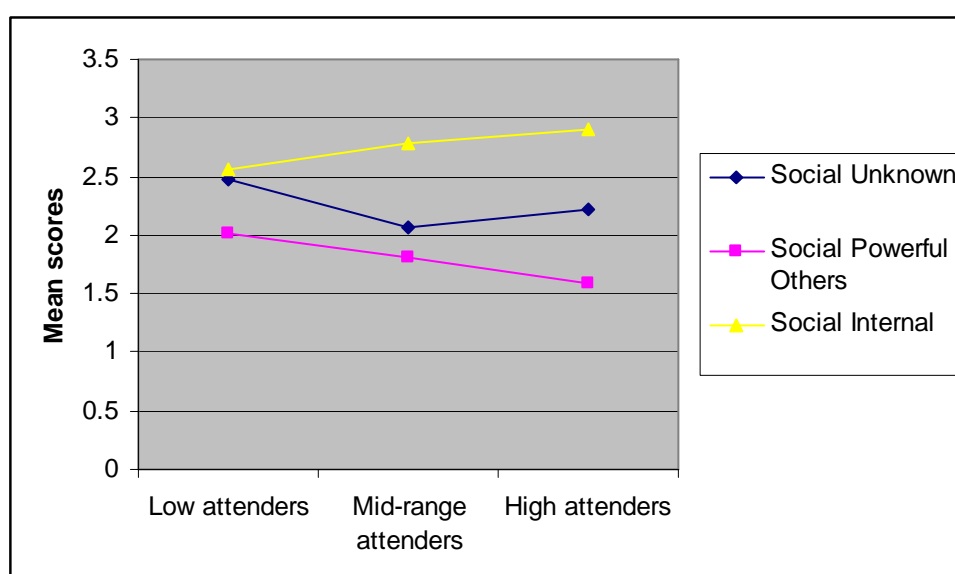
Mid-range attenders' mean scores for social unknown control were lowest followed by high attenders' mean scores. Low attenders' mean scores were the highest. High attenders' mean scores for social powerful others were lowest followed by the mid-range attenders' mean scores. Low attenders' mean scores were the highest. Low attenders' mean scores for social internal control were lowest followed by the mid-range attenders' mean scores. High attenders' mean scores were the highest.
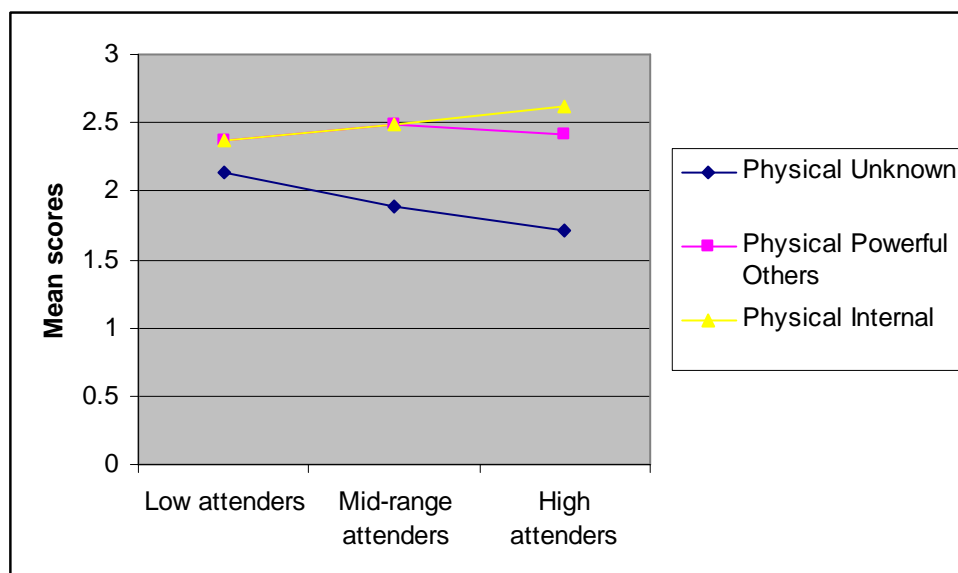
Physical domain

The graph below shows the average scores for each attendance group when asked to rate a series of statements which suggested that success in the physical domain was controlled by an unknown source (physical unknown), for example if success was the result of luck or an inborn ability, statements which suggested that success in the physical domain was controlled by powerful others, for example teachers and statements which suggested that success in the physical domain was controlled internally, by the individual themselves and the actions they chose.

A high score for physical unknown (above three) suggests a strong belief that success in the physical domain is controlled by an unknown source. If low attenders choose not to attend as they feel that they have a lack of control over their success in the physical domain it would be expected that they would score more highly in this area, with the high attenders scoring the lowest and the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in-between.

A high score for physical powerful others (above three) suggests a strong belief that success in the physical domain is controlled by powerful others. If low attenders choose not to attend as they feel that others have control over their success in the physical domain it would be expected that they would score more highly in this area, with the high attenders scoring the lowest and the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in between.

A high score for physical internal control (above three) suggests a strong belief that success in the physical domain is controlled by themselves and their actions. If low attenders choose not to attend as they feel that they have a lack of control over their success in the physical domain it would be expected that they would score lower in this area, with the high attenders scoring the highest and the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in between.

Figure 16: Mean scores for each attendance group for the physical domain

High attenders' mean scores for physical unknown control were lowest followed by the mid-range attenders' mean scores. Low attenders' mean scores were the highest. Mid-range attenders mean scores for physical powerful others were highest followed by high attenders. Low attenders mean scores were lowest.

Low attenders' mean scores for physical internal control were lowest followed by the mid-range attenders' mean scores. High attenders' mean scores were the highest.
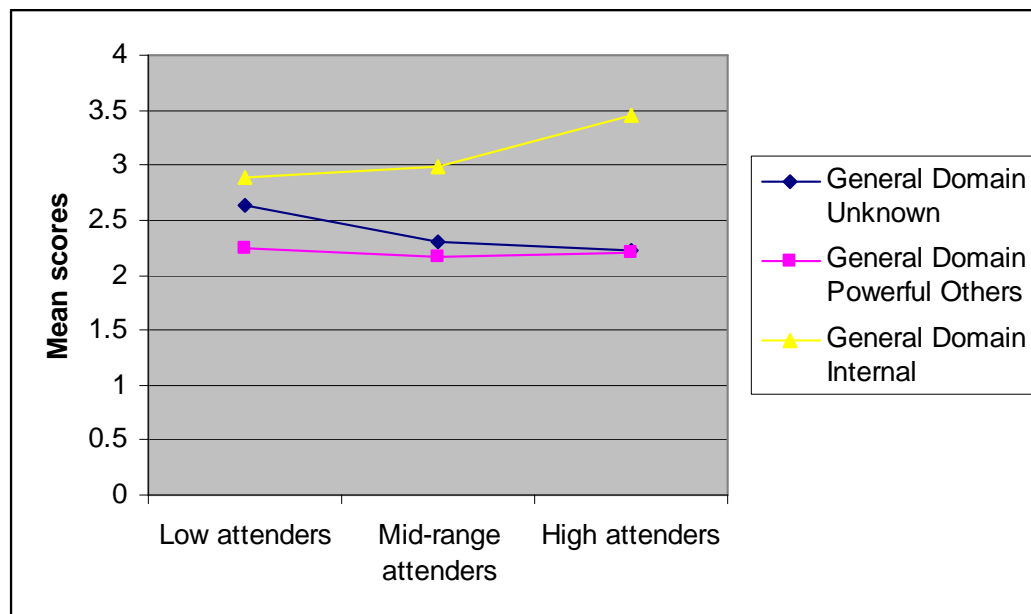
General domain

The graph below shows the average scores for each attendance group when asked to rate a series of statements which suggested that success in the general domain was controlled by an unknown source (general unknown), for example if success was the result of luck or an inborn ability, statements which suggested that success in the general domain was controlled by powerful others, for example teachers and statements which suggested that success in the general domain was controlled internally, by the individual themselves and the actions they chose.

A high score for general unknown (above three) suggests a strong belief that success in the general domain is controlled by an unknown source. If low attenders choose not to attend as they feel that they have a lack of control over their success in the general domain it would be expected that they would score more highly in this area, with the high attenders scoring the lowest and the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in-between.

A high score for general powerful others (above three) suggests a strong belief that success in the general domain is controlled by powerful others. If low attenders choose not to attend as they feel that others have control over their success in the general domain it would be expected that they would score more highly in this area, with the high attenders scoring the lowest and the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in between.

A high score for general internal control (above three) suggests a strong belief that success in the general domain is controlled by themselves and their actions. If low attenders choose not to attend as they feel that they have a lack of control over their success in the general domain it would be expected that they would score lower in this area, with the high attenders scoring the highest and the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in between.

Figure 17: Mean scores for each attendance group for the general domain

High attenders' mean scores for general domain unknown control were lowest followed by mid-range attenders' mean scores. Low attenders' mean scores were the highest. Mid-range attenders' mean scores for general domain powerful others were lowest followed by high attenders' mean scores. Low attenders' mean scores were the highest. High attenders' mean scores for general domain internal control were highest followed by mid-range attenders' mean scores. Low attenders' mean scores were the highest.

4.2   Summary of MMCPC findings

The ANOVA did not yield any significant differences between the three attendance groups. However, the due to the limitations of the use of an ANOVA with the small sample in this research a descriptive statistical analysis was also made.

The graphs above do not seem to illustrate clearly a positive or negative relationship between mean scores and attendance group. Indeed for mean scores on workload, difficulty and social unknown others it was the mid-range attenders

whose mean scores were lowest. However mean scores for each attendance group for cognitive unknown control, social powerful control, social internal control, physical unknown control, physical internal control and general domain unknown control seem to suggest both positive and negative relationships.

The descriptive statistics seem to suggest that the differences in scores between the mid-range and high attenders is very small but is more marked between the low and mid-range attenders and between the low and high attenders. The largest difference in mean scores between these two groups was for workload and this difference was less than 0.4. This may suggest that the pupils in this study who attended school between 90 and 94% of the time do not have significantly different perceptions of their own level of control to those pupils who attended school for over 99% percent of the time. This seems to suggest therefore that that perceived control is not a significant factor in pupils' rates of attendance when their attendance reaches a level of 90%. This point perhaps warrants further exploration in order to ascertain at which point perceived control becomes less connected with levels of attendance. Perhaps conversely it could be suggested that improving a pupil's level of perceived control would only encourage them to attend school at the rate of a mid-range attender.

The smallest differences in scores seem to be between scores for cognitive powerful others, physical powerful others, general domain powerful others or general domain internal control. The differences in scores are also small between scores for low and mid-range attenders for physical internal control. This suggests that for the pupils involved in this research their perception of control in each of these areas was not linked to their level of attendance in school. Differences in scores for 'powerful others' only appear to be of note in the social domain suggesting that the perception of the control 'powerful others' had over the other domains was not a key factor for these pupils in their level of attendance. Internal control in the general domain is perhaps, also less of a factor for these pupils as there were only small differences in perceived internal control in the physical domain between low and mid-range attenders.

Differences in scores for perceived control in the social domain seemed to be most closely linked to attendance. For social internal control, where the pupils were asked to rate statements which indicated that it was their own behaviours which impacted upon their success in the social domain, there appear to be greater differences between the low and high attenders and between the low and mid-range attenders. This suggests that the pupils in the low attender group may perceive themselves as having less control over their own success in the social domain. The relevance of the social domain will be discussed further when exploring the data in relation to the research questions in the next chapter.

The low attenders mean scores on the social domain were 2.48 for social unknown others, 2.02 for social powerful others and 2.56 for social internal control. This seems to indicate that the low attenders agreed more strongly with statements suggesting that success in the social domain could be attributed to powerful others or an unknown control their score for social internal control was the highest. Suggesting that they do, in fact, perceive success in this domain to be more of a direct result of their own actions than the actions of others or luck. However it seems that perhaps they do not believe this as strongly as their higher attending peers.

Differences were noted between low and high attenders for physical unknown control and low and mid-range attenders for physical unknown control and for physical internal control. This may suggest that pupils' perceptions of their control over their success in the physical domain may be related to their level of attendance. The statements on the MMCPC related to skills and abilities in sporting activities and games. It may be the case that the physical domain and the social domain may be linked in some ways. Games and sport generally involve social interaction through being part of a team and often have supporters from the school to encourage a good performance. Pupils who achieve well in sports and games activities may firstly be more sociable with their peers as a result of being part of a team and may also have a higher social status if they are seen as being part of a sports team which is valued by their peers. In this way social and physical success may be linked for pupils.

The low attenders mean scores on the physical domain were 2.13 for unknown control, 2.37 for powerful others and 2.37 for internal control. This seems to indicate that low attenders agree equally strongly with statements that suggest success in the physical domain is related to powerful others or internal control. Although the low attenders agreed more strongly with statements relating to success in the physical domain being related to unknown controls than their mid-range and high attending peers they did not agree as strongly with these statements as they did the statements which suggested success was related to powerful others and internal control.

Whilst it may have been expected that perceived control in the cognitive domain may have been linked closely to attendance this did not seem to be as strong a link as perceived control in the social and physical domain. Small differences were noted between the mean scores of low and high attenders for cognitive unknown control and cognitive internal control. Small differences were also noted in scores for cognitive unknown control between low and mid-range attenders. The scores indicated that the high attenders were more likely to indicate on the likert scale that they agreed most strongly with statements which suggested that their actions impacted upon their success in the cognitive domain. The low attenders however were more likely to indicate that that they agreed more strongly than the high attenders with statements which suggested that success in the cognitive domain was the result of luck or inborn ability.

However whilst there is a difference in the scores of each group of attenders it is also true to say that on the whole all attendance groups indicated more strongly that success in the cognitive domain was a result of their own actions rather than due to an unknown factor such as luck. The low attenders' average score for cognitive unknown control was 2.23 and for cognitive internal control it was 3.21. As responses on the likert scale ranged from one to four with one indicating that the statement was not at all true and four indicating that it was very true this indicates that even the low attenders perceived control in the cognitive domain as being within them themselves more than they perceived it to be controlled by an unknown factor such as luck or ability.

The mean scores for powerful others on the cognitive domain are also of interest. It may have been expected that the low attenders would have agreed more strongly than the high attenders with statements which suggested that powerful others had most control over success in the cognitive domain with mid-range attenders mean scores falling somewhere between the two this was not the case. On this scale the high attenders agreed most strongly with statements with the low attenders agreeing least strongly with these statements. It is somewhat interesting that the high attenders rated more highly statements suggesting that powerful others such as teachers have control over success in the cognitive domain than did their low or mid-range attending peers. This difference in score cannot be attributed to a very high score from an individual pupil; the standard deviation for these scores is 0.5, just below the average standard deviation for all scores. Perhaps more significant is the fact that this did not happen on any of the other domains.

For mean scores on the general domain differences were noted between scores for low and mid-range attenders and low and high attenders for unknown control. The differences between mean scores for powerful others and internal control was very small suggesting that differences in the mean scores of the pupils in each attendance group for perceived control more generally were small. Indeed for statements relating to powerful others the mean score for the low attenders was 2.25, for medium attenders 2.16 and for high attenders 2.21. These mean scores would seem to indicate that all three groups rated statements relating to powerful others at around two on average, a score which indicates that they felt the statement was 'not very true'. When asked to rate statements which indicated that success in the general domain was related to internal control the mean score for low attenders was 2.88, for mid-range attenders it was 2.98 and for high attenders it was 2.91. Again there is not much difference between these mean scores and the scores for each group are very close to three which on the likert scale for the MMCPC is worded as 'somewhat true'.

Interestingly mean scores for the groups did not always follow the expected pattern. If it is assumed that low attenders choose not to attend school because they perceive themselves as having a lack of control over positive outcomes for

themselves in the school environment then it would be expected perhaps that the low attenders would rate statements relating to internal control lower than their high attending peers with the mid-range attenders rating them somewhere between the two groups. Conversely it would also be expected that the high attenders would rate statements relating to powerful others and unknown control lower than their low attending peers again with ratings for mid-range attenders falling somewhere between the low and high attenders. Whilst the low attenders rated the internal control consistently higher than the high attenders and the high attenders rated the powerful others and unknown control consistently lower than the low attenders the mid-range attenders did not always follow this pattern. For social unknown control the mid-range attenders' scores were lower than either the high or the low attenders' scores. This suggests that the mid-range attenders rated the effect of luck or ability as having less of an impact upon success in the social domain than both their high and low attending peers.

The differences in mean scores between low and high attenders and low and mid-range attenders for all three areas in which control could be attributed for the social domain (social unknown control, social power others and social internal control) are of interest. Indeed the largest differences were for noted between low and high attenders for social unknown control and social powerful others. This was not the case for any of the other domains. In the appreciative inquiry focus groups social factors were mentioned consistently by all of the groups.

Responses to the question on workload were also of interest. For this question the pupils were asked to respond to the statement 'I am given far too much work to complete at school'. The high and low attenders scored 2.5 and 2.8 respectively, which would mean that their response for this statement would be closest to a rating of 3, which corresponds to 'somewhat true'. The mean score for the mid-range attenders however was 2.14 which would be closer to a rating of 2 which corresponds to a response of 'not very true' for these pupils. This was one of the statements, as mentioned earlier whereby the mid-range attenders' responses did not follow the expected pattern. For example for this statement it may be expected perhaps that the low attenders would have had the highest ratings suggesting that they felt that they did receive far too much work whereas it may

perhaps be expected that the high attenders would view their workload as more manageable with the mid-range attenders somewhere in between but this did not seem to be the case.

Looking carefully at the data perhaps it is the high attenders whose scores do not fit this pattern. Their mean scores are closer to 'somewhat true' than they are to 'not very true'. Could it be perhaps that both the low and high attenders view their workload as being quite high but respond to this workload in a different manner? Do the high attenders perhaps attend as often as possible in order to get through this great workload and ensure that they do not miss any sessions in school for fear of missing work and adding to their workload through the need to catch up any work that they may have missed? The low attenders on the other hand may take a very different view and feel that they get far too much work and simply attend school less in order to avoid having to complete the volumes of work expected of them. The responses of the mid-range attenders are very interesting. On average the mid-range attenders do not seem to view their workload as being too great. The mid-range attenders responses on many areas of the MMCPC were very interesting, particularly for this statement. There appear to be very small differences between the responses the mid-range attenders gave to each area of the MMCPC and the two statements about workload and difficulty of work and the responses the high attenders gave. However there appear to be greater differences in scores between the low and mid-range attenders in a number of areas. This suggests perhaps that the mid-range attenders respond more like the high attenders than the low attenders for each of the statements.

Mean scores for the statement related to the difficulty of the work pupils were asked to do mirrored this pattern. The mid-range attenders mean score for the statement 'the work I am given at school is far too difficult' were lower than either their lower or higher attending peers. This would seem to suggest that the low and high attenders generally perceive the work that they are given in school as more difficult than do the mid-range attenders.

As discussed in chapter three, appreciative inquiry focus groups were carried out to further illuminate the responses given by pupils in the MMCPC. With this in mind the findings from these groups are considered in relation to the quantitative data generated by the MMCPC.

4.3 Findings from appreciative inquiry focus groups

Transcriptions for each of the focus groups were firstly analysed according to attendance group using thematic analysis. The data from both schools was combined for each attendance group as it was felt that identifying themes common themes across both schools would ensure that the themes identified were more likely to be linked to more general school experiences rather than specific to one school. At this stage it was noticed that there were many similarities in the pupils' discussions regardless of the attendance group they belonged to and thematic analysis was the carried out upon all of the transcripts together to find common themes across all groups. Below are the thematic analyses of discussions for each group of attenders separately and also of all six groups combined. Also included are illustrative comments and quotes made by the pupils in order to demonstrate the points they made.

Themes identified for low attenders

Figure 18: Thematic analysis of appreciative inquiry focus groups for low attenders in school A and school B
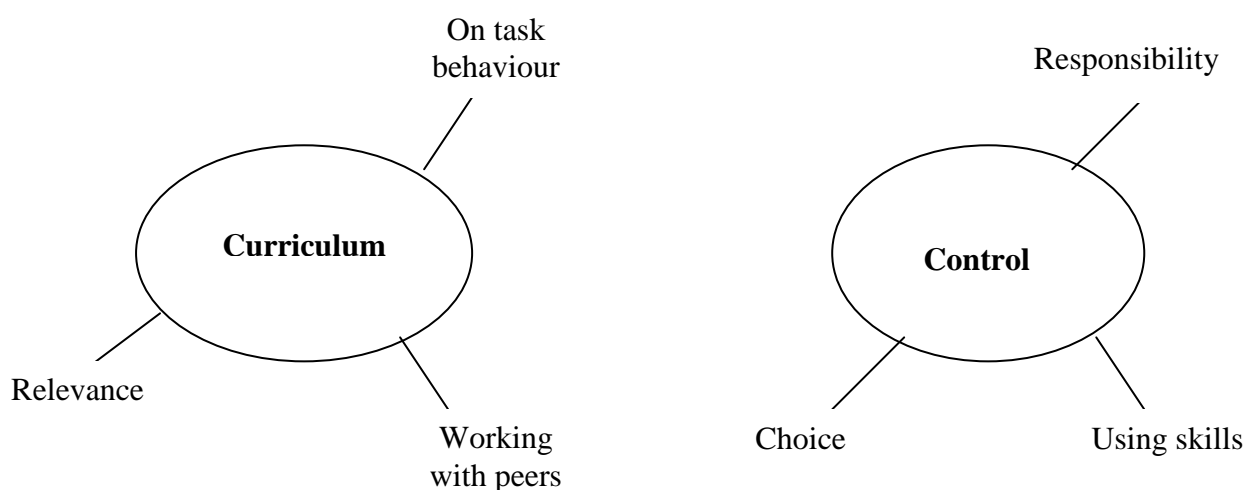
Curriculum

The first major theme identified through thematic analysis of the low attending groups' appreciative inquiry focus group was the curriculum. Within this theme four further subthemes were identified. These were on-task behaviour, relevance and working with peers.

Relevance

Pupils discussed working on a range of activities which they viewed as more relevant to them. These included art lessons, nail art activities and sports. Pupils discussed having an end product when they had finished an activity and how worthwhile this felt. They referred to some of the subjects they did currently as 'pointless' and some of the work they produced as a result as 'rubbish'. These points are illustrated in the selected comments below:

I'd learn more, I'd pay attention and I wouldn't mess about as much. I'd feel more relaxed and I'd do more posters and work that I wanted to do for my work instead of writing loads of pointless stuff. (Male, school A)

To let us create things more in our own way. (Female, school A)

I'd do stuff I was good at so that the work I did would be good and I wouldn't be doing rubbish stuff. (Female, school B)

We'd get to watch more films about stuff, it's much more interesting than when someone tells us stuff. Then after we'd be able to write or draw what we'd learnt about instead of just answering loads of questions. (Male, school B)

On task behaviour

Pupils described positive experiences of school where both themselves and their peers were engaged in a task and displaying on task behaviour. 'Joining in' and

'getting on with it' were referred to as positive behaviours of themselves and their peers. This is illustrated in the quotes below:

We just get on with our work and we get a treat when we do it. Our teacher tells us what do and we get on with it. She trusts us to do our work. (Female, school A)

I'd be working; I'd be getting on with it and not messing about. (Male, school A)

I'm sensible and I follow the instructions carefully (Female, school B)

I just draw; I get on with my work. I work hard and I do my best. (Male, school B)

Working with peers

Pupils discussed being able to work with their peers on activities. They described having little opportunity for this during traditional subjects but felt that where the opportunity for this was given activities were more enjoyable and beneficial.

Everyone is joining in and they're all playing good. (Male, school A)

Pupil: Would it be group work?

Researcher: It could be, would you prefer that?

Pupil: Yes. (Female, school A)

I'd show everyone what I could do and I'd enjoy seeing different people. (Female, school B)

Good, I like dancing and everyone is joining in. (Female, school B)

Control

Control was the second major theme identified for this group using thematic analysis. Within this theme there were three further subthemes; using skills responsibility and choice.

Using skills

Pupils in both schools seemed to value opportunities to use their skills when describing positive experiences in school. Indeed one pupil in school B highlighted this as a point which should be shared with teachers. This is illustrated in the comments reproduced below:

Art. I like drawing. I can choose what I want to draw and how I want to draw it. It's my work. (Male, school A)

I'd do stuff I liked more and stuff that I was good at. I think I'd do more. (Female, school A)

I'd do stuff I was good at so that the work I did would be good and I wouldn't be doing rubbish stuff. (Male, school B)

More chances to use our skills in school (Male, school B)

Responsibility

When asked to describe positive experiences in school low attenders at both schools described situations where they were given some level of responsibility suggesting that this was an important factor for them. This is illustrated in the comments below:

We just get on with our work and we get a treat when we do it. Our teacher tells us what do and we get on with it. She trusts us to do our work. (Female, school A)

We'd be more like adults. (Female, school A)

I'm sensible and I follow the instructions carefully. (Female, school B)

They were just having fun too. No one was falling out and we all made sure we were on time to check in. (Female, school B)

Choice

Having an element of choice in the activities that they were asked to complete was referred to in discussions by low attenders at both schools,. Interestingly both groups highlighted having more choice as one of the three key points they wanted to feed back to their teachers. The selected comments below illustrate this:

A lesson where I choose what I want to do. I'd do healthy stuff like sports. I'd have more freedom and I'd be able to do what I wanted more. We do too much different stuff at the moment. (Female, school A)

Give us more choice. (Male, school B)

More lessons where we could choose what we were going to do like in dance we're given some music and then we decide what dance we're going to do. (Female, school B)

More choices in what we do. (Male, school B)

Themes identified for mid-range attenders

Figure 19: Thematic analysis of appreciative inquiry focus groups for mid-range attenders in school A and school B
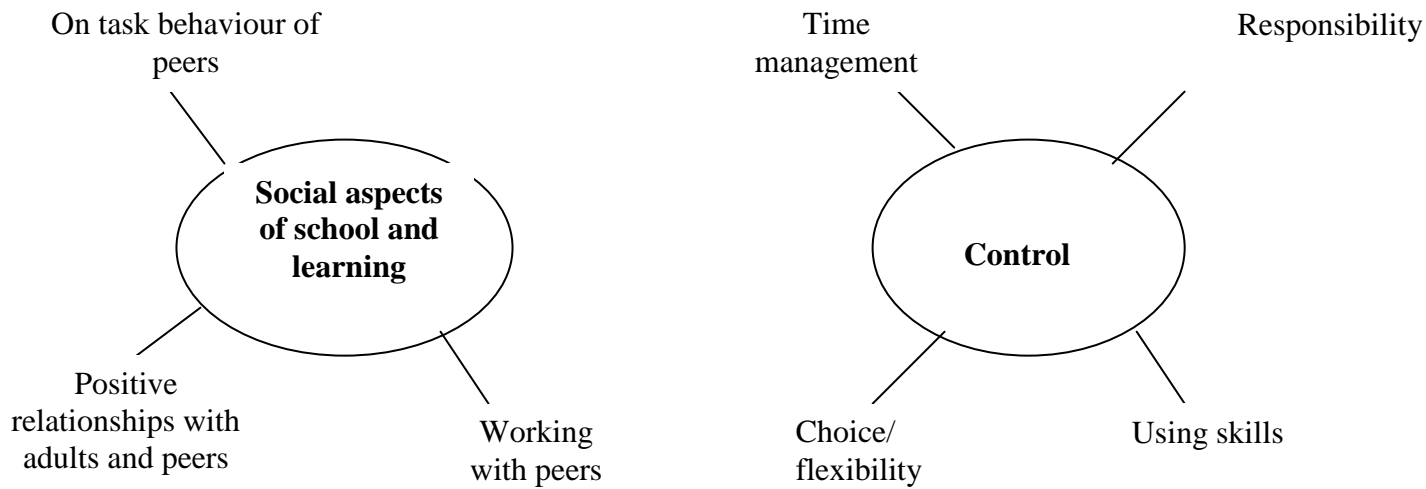
Social aspects of school and learning

The first major theme identified through thematic analysis of the mid-range attending groups appreciative inquiry focus group was the social aspects of school and learning. Within this theme three further subthemes were identified. These were on-task behaviour of peers, positive relationships with adults and working with peers.

On-task behaviour of peers

When mid-range attenders at both schools were asked to describe positive experiences in school their discussions included descriptions of their peers and themselves being involved in the activity and being on task. Interestingly this was the case for descriptions of positive experiences which had already occurred in school and for their ideal lesson/ event or day. This is demonstrated in the selected comments below:

Well the teachers just watch us really and help us if we need it. They don't really have to tell us what to do. We have a sheet and we just get on with it. Everyone kind of does what they should be doing. (Male, school A)

The teachers are kind there and they help us a lot and we work together and we don't fall out. (Female, school A)

Everyone else was just doing what they were supposed to be doing. Even when they were waiting round and it was a bit boring we were being sensible. (Male, school B)

Everyone was joining in and cheering. (Male, school B)

Positive relationships with adults

Relationships with adults in school were discussed by mid-range attenders in both schools when discussing their positive experiences in school. Pupils made comments about being listened to, and feeling supported by adults in school. This is illustrated in the quotes reproduced below:

The teacher listened to them and they had more say in what they did. (Female, school A)

The teachers are kind there and they help us a lot and we work together and we don't fall out. (Female, school A)

Everyone was more relaxed including the teachers. (Male, school B)

They enjoyed it and the other teachers were even cheering everyone on. (Male, school B)

Working with peers.

Working with peers was mentioned by mid-range attending pupils at both schools. Their descriptions of positive experiences in school included descriptions of times when they had worked or possibly could work with their peers. This is illustrated in the quotes reproduced below:

When I go into A group on a Wednesday and we get to make things. It's a group of people and all my friends are there. We all help each other. (Female, school A)

My friends helped me and we worked together. I like working with my friends. (Female, school A)

I took part and I enjoyed it. I joined in with cheering everyone. (Male, school B)

If you were doing it you could help out the other year groups too. (Male, school B)

Control

The second major theme identified through thematic analysis of the mid-range attending group's appreciative inquiry focus group was control. Within this theme four further subthemes were identified. These were time management, responsibility, using skills and choice/ flexibility.

Time management

The pupils in the mid-range attenders groups at both schools described positive learning experiences where they had more opportunities to manage their time better. The pupils' discussions highlighted a sense of learning too much content in school whereby everything was squeezed into quite a small space of time. The selected comments below illustrate this:

I'd get all my work done and I'd feel less stressed about everything. I'd have more time. (Male, school A)

Having a free period like at college. I'd be able to catch up with my work and do my homework. (Male, school A)

More time so that we can get things finished. We never get enough time really. You have to rush stuff and if you make a mistake you have to start again. You don't really get to do your best work. (Female, school B)

Yeah I think we should say something about like having a choice whether or not you do RE, citizenship, functional skills and stuff like that. Some people don't like doing that, like I'd rather do some extra English and stuff. (Male, school B)

Responsibility

Pupils with mid-range attendance rates at both schools discussed having more responsibility when asked about positive experiences in school. Pupils discussed times in school when they were given or would like to be given more responsibility for themselves. This is illustrated in the selected quotes included below:

I have more responsibility, I can choose what I want to do and if I want to do well in an activity I have to be there and I have to be ready. (male, school A)

Trust us more, don't assume that we won't do what they tell us to do. On trips and at sports day they just tell us at the beginning of the day and we do it. We need more responsibility. (Male, school A)

The teachers were more relaxed and just let us get on with it. They left us to it. Everyone else was just doing what they were supposed to be doing.   Even when they were waiting round and it was a bit boring we were being sensible. (Male, school B)

We got chance to just do what we wanted, I enjoyed it. There was more freedom. (Male, school B)

Using skills

In the mid-range attending groups' pupils at both school commented upon being able to use their skills when describing positive experiences in school. Conversely having to complete activities which they felt they did not have the necessary skills for was viewed negatively. The selected quotes reproduced below illustrate these comments:

I'd get chance to do stuff I enjoyed, stuff that I'm good at. And I'd be able to do things that I'm not doing anymore that I liked. There'd be drawing competitions and we'd make things. (Male, school A)

I'd like us to have our options sooner so that we could choose what lessons we wanted to do instead of spending so much time doing things we don't want to do or that we're not good at. (Male, school A)

I take part more, I get to do things I am good at more. (male, school B)

Like the subjects we've just picked I'd like to have chance to move if we realise it's difficult. (Male, school B)

Choice/ flexibility

Pupils with mid-range attendance in school A and school B seemed to value opportunities to make choices in their descriptions of positive learning experiences. Having a less rigid curriculum seemed to feature prominently in discussions. This is illustrated in the comments below:

I'd get chance to do stuff I enjoyed, stuff that I'm good at. And I'd be able to do things that I'm not doing anymore that I liked. There'd be drawing competitions and we'd make things. (Male, school A)

I'd like us to have our options sooner so that we could choose what lessons we wanted to do instead of spending so much time doing things we don't want to do or that we're not good at. (Male, school A)

We'd get to choose our lessons and we'd get to pick which ones we wanted to do. (Female, school B)

Like the subjects we've just picked I'd like to have chance to move if we realise it's difficult. (Male, school B)

Themes identified for high attenders

Figure 20: Thematic analysis of appreciative inquiry focus groups for high attenders in school A and school B
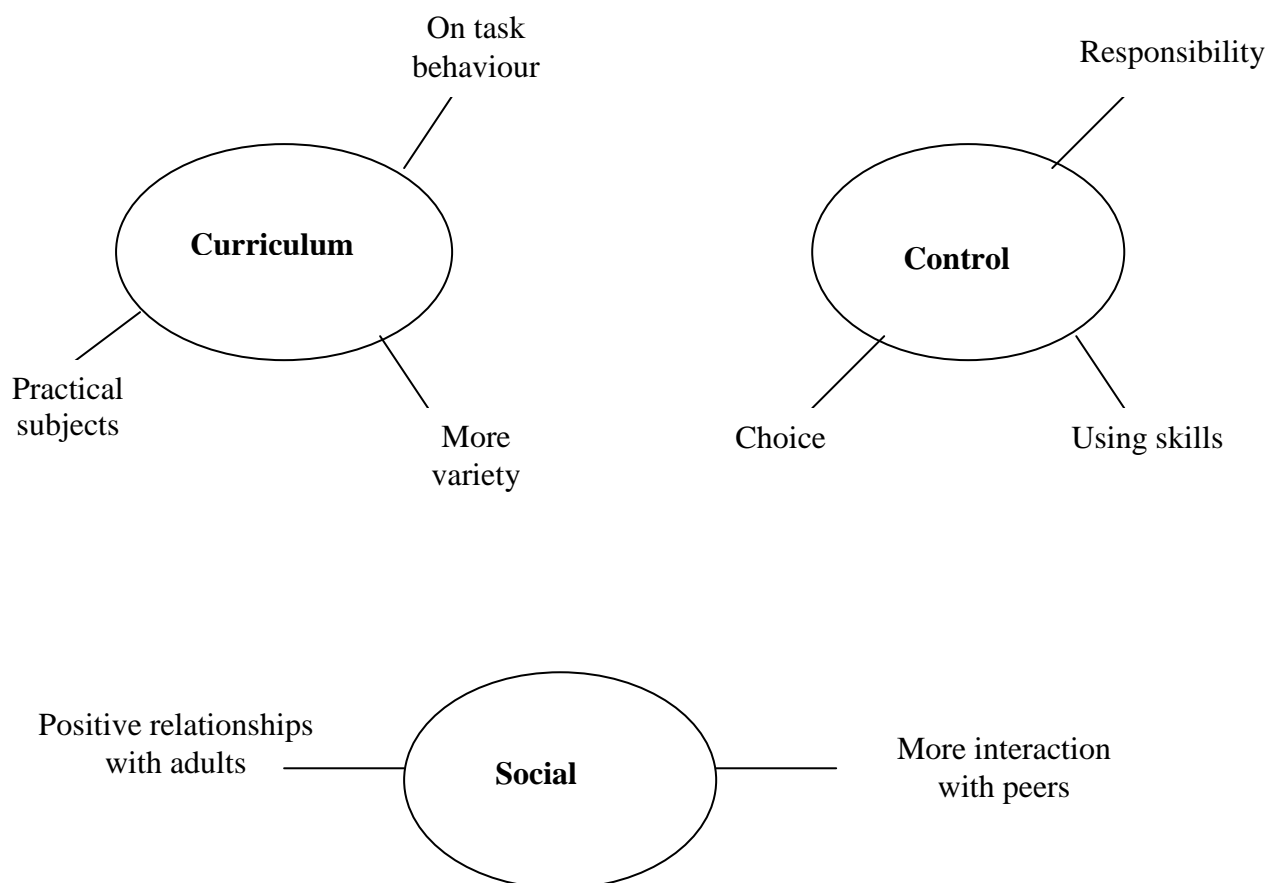
On task
behaviour

Responsibility

Curriculum

Control

Practical
subjects

Choice

Using skills

More
variety

Positive relationships
with adults

Social

More interaction
with peers

Curriculum

The first major theme identified through thematic analysis of the high attending group's appreciative inquiry focus group was the curriculum. Within this theme four further subthemes were identified. These were on task behaviour, more variety and practical subjects.

On task behaviour

On task behaviour was described when discussing positive experiences in school. Pupils referred to times when they were participating and involved in an activity and displaying positive learning behaviours. Examples of this are given in the quotes below:

It's easier to listen, everyone is listening. (Male, school A)
Interested, taking more notice. (Male, school A)
I got involved and I really enjoyed it. (Female, school B)

I put more effort in, concentrated more and made the most of the opportunities I had. (Male, school B)

More variety

During discussions about positive experiences in school the pupils described opportunities to do activities which differed to some extent from their usual daily timetable in school. They described activities which were somewhat novel or involved a variety of choices. This is illustrated in the selected quotes given below:

Just let us do more exciting activities and like take us outside if the weather is good. (Female, school A)

Yeah and it'd be interesting. We'd use the lessons to do proper stuff like asking for food in French and that. (Male, school A)

Good, it'd feel different. I'd be learning lots from them. (Female, school B)

Last year's sport's day. There were loads of activities and lots of interesting stuff to do. I liked playing dodgeball. (male, school B)

Practical subjects.

When asked about positive experiences in school the pupils often described more practical, hands on activities, many of which had a tangible outcome (for example making food or jewellery). This is highlighted in the quotes below:

We'd use the lessons to do proper stuff like asking for food in French and that. (male school A)

Happy and I'd have something to show for it. You could eat it and if it was good you'd know you'd cooked something good and if not you'd know you hadn't. (Female, school B)

When I got to make jewellery, making bracelets and earrings. (Female, school B)

Being with the army on sport's day. We did loads of fun activities like archery and paintball and that. (Male, school B)

Control

The second major theme identified through thematic analysis of the high attending group's appreciative inquiry focus group was control. Within this theme three further subthemes were identified. These were responsibility, using skills and choice.

Responsibility

When discussing positive experiences in school the high attending pupils referred to taking responsibility for themselves and described opportunities for this positively. Being 'treated like adults' as one pupil described it seemed an important part of any positive experience. This is highlighted in the selected quotes below:

They help you if you're stuck but they will just leave you to get on with it if you're okay. We have an instruction sheet that we can follow we don't need someone telling us all the time. (Female, school A)

Have a meeting and decide what they want us to do and whether we can change stuff. (Male, school A)

I did what I wanted but I made sure I was sensible. (Female, school B)

I felt like we were treated like adults (Female, school B)

Using skills

Pupils across both groups of high attenders (school A and school B) identified opportunities to use and develop their skills as an important part of positive experiences in school. The selected quotes below illustrate these discussions.

Yes and I get to use my skills (male, school A)

I'm good at acting, I practise my acting skills. I get to use my acting skills. (male, school A)

Jewellery making but we'd get to design it ourselves and not just follow someone else's design. We'd be able to choose what materials we used and not just use what's there. (Female, school B)

I'd be able to do stuff that I'm good at. I'd be able to make computers and I'd be able to fix computers if they were not working. I'd be able to use my skills. (Male, school B)

Choice

High attending pupils in both school A and school B identified having choice in activities as a factor in positive experiences. Pupils discussed having more say in what they did and described having to do lots of activities in school which were not of their choosing and they felt had little value for them as negative experiences. This is illustrated in the quotes below:

She does like a circle time where we can choose what we want to do. (Male, school A)

Give us more input. (Male, school A)

Having more choices to do lessons. I could spend more time on things I enjoy or things I'm not good at so I could spend more time on it. (Male, school B)

More choices. We'd get to choose more of the stuff we do. (Female, school B)

Social aspects of school and learning

The third major theme identified through thematic analysis of the high attending groups appreciative inquiry focus group was the social aspects of school and learning. Within this theme two further subthemes were identified. These were positive relationships with adults and more interaction with peers.

Positive relationships with adults

High attending pupils in both schools described positive relationships with teachers in their descriptions of positive experiences in school. These descriptions seemed to suggest that the traditional view of the pupil-teacher relationship whereby the teacher 'instructed' the pupil was not viewed positively by the pupils. As is illustrated in the quotes below the pupils viewed relationships more positively where the teachers listened to them and took on board their views and where the relationship balance of power was not as heavily in the teachers favour.

Well the teachers really cool. She's not just boring she doesn't just sit there, she like will walk round and help you with stuff. (Female, school A)

Yes, it's better when the teachers listen and stuff. (Male, school A)

They were all shouting for each other and the teachers were shouting for them too. It was good being in our house teams. (Male, school B)

Happy because teachers wouldn't like be telling me what to do so I'd enjoy it more. (Female, school B)

More interaction with peers

High attending pupils in school A and school B described opportunities to interact with their peers when describing positive learning experiences. They

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described activities where they were able to work together and described the outcome as positive. One pupil felt that working with more able peers would be of great benefit. These views are illustrated in the quotes below:

PE because we just have fun. We play with lots of people. (Male, school A)

Yes, they're allowed to help in cookery but not in other lessons. (Female, school A)

I would get people who were good at something I found hard to help me to tell me how I could be better at something. (Male, school B)

They were putting lots of effort in to get points for their teams.(Male, school B)

Themes across all attendance groups

As discussed in chapter three, the data from all three attendance groups was also analysed together using thematic analysis.

Figure 21: Thematic analysis of appreciative inquiry focus groups for pupils in all three attendance groups

Opportunities to
work with peers
Responsibility
and trust

**Social
relationships**

Positive
relationships
with
adults

Practical and
relevant
On task
behaviour

Curriculum

Control
Using skills

Social relationships

The first major theme identified through thematic analysis of all appreciative
inquiry focus groups was social relationships. Within this theme three further
subthemes were identified. These were opportunities to work with peers,
responsibility and trust and positive relationships with adults.

Opportunities to work with peers

Pupils in all six focus groups expressed a desire to be given more opportunities to
work with their peers. They described positive experiences in school where they
had been given the opportunity to work with their peers. Many felt that there was
a lack of opportunity for this within lessons as they currently were. The pupils
seemed to identify a real value in working alongside their peers and working with
them as is illustrated in the quotes below:

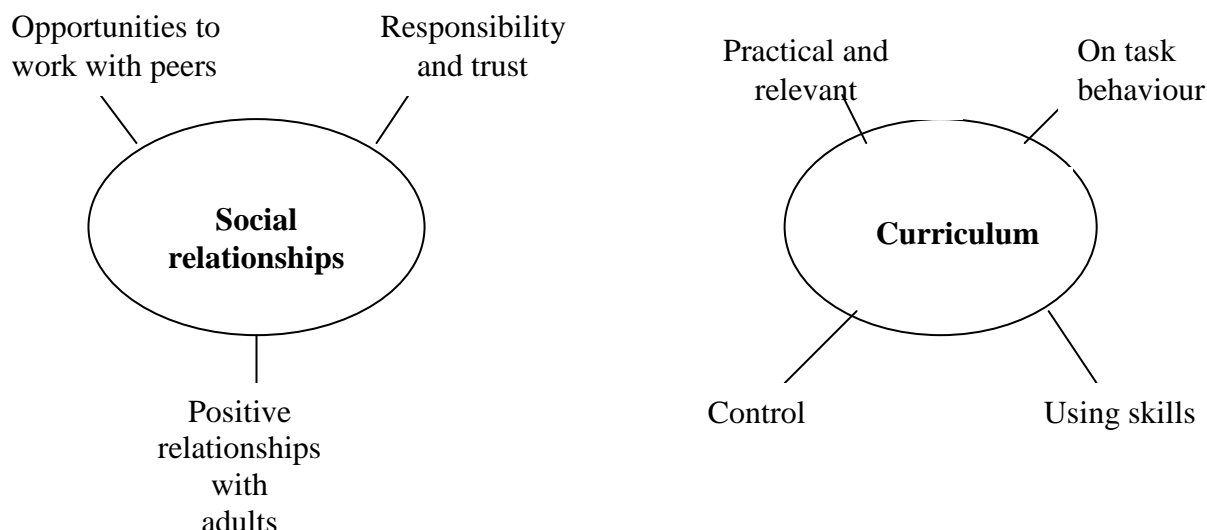*You don't really get to use teamwork in class at all, not properly.* (Male high,
attender, group 1)

*I would get people who were good at something I found hard to help me to tell
me how I could be better at something.* (Male, high attender group 6)

My friends helped me and we worked together. I like working with my friends. (Female, mid-range attender, group 2)

We could choose what we did and who we wanted to work with. (Female, low attender group 2)

Responsibility and trust

Pupils across all groups commented that they felt that they were not given enough responsibility in school and that their teachers did not trust them fully to 'do the right thing'. The pupils described positive learning experiences where they felt that the teachers trusted them rather than supervising them closely. The quotes below illustrate such views:

We just get on with our work and we get a treat when we do it. Our teacher tells us what do and we get on with it. She trusts us to do our work. (Female low attender, group 2)

They [the teachers] *will just leave you to get on with it if you're okay. We have an instruction sheet that we can follow we don't need someone telling us all the time.* (Female, high attender, group 1)

They [the teachers] *treat us differently, more like and adult. I follow a rota so no-one tells me what to do I just follow the rota.* (Female mid range attender group 3)

Trust us more, don't assume that we won't do what they tell us to do. On trips and at sports day they just tell us at the beginning of the day and we do it. We need more responsibility. (Male, mid-range attender, group 3)

Positive relationships with adults

Pupils across all groups discussed having a more equal relationship with their teachers. They described positive learning experiences where teachers listened to them and acted upon what they had to say. The groups described teachers who supported rather than 'instructed' pupils in school. The quotes below illustrate these views:

Yes she does, she helps us but she doesn't like tell us what to do. She doesn't just sit there like some of the other teachers, she's bothered about whether your cooking turns out okay or not. (Female, high attender, group 1)

Listen to us more. (Male, low attender, group 2)

They put ideas across to the teacher and made suggestions about the dance. The teacher listened to them and they had more say in what they did. (Female, mid range attender, group 3)

They could listen to us more because sometimes they listen more to those who are misbehaving. (Male, mid-range attender, group 3)

Curriculum

The second major theme identified through thematic analysis of all appreciative inquiry focus groups was the curriculum. Within this theme four further subthemes were identified. These were practical and relevant tasks, on task behaviour, using skills and control.

Practical and relevant tasks

Pupils in all attendance groups commented that they often did work which they viewed as irrelevant to them describing such work as 'pointless'. When they described positive experiences in school they discussed work which had a purpose or a relevance for them. This is illustrated in the quotes below:

I'd be happy and not bored. There'd be a point to it. It wouldn't be rubbish like some of the other lessons where the teachers have you doing stupid stuff. (Male, low attender, group 2)

Well I'd actually want to wake up in the morning and come into school. Sometimes I get to school and think I shouldn't have bothered. (Male, mid-range attender, group 3)

I'd do stuff I was good at so that the work I did would be good and I wouldn't be doing rubbish stuff. (Male, low attender, group 4)

Yeah I think we should say something about like having a choice whether or not you do RE, citizenship, functional skills and stuff like that. Some people don't like doing that, like I'd rather do some extra English and stuff. (Male, mid-range attender, group 5)

I would get people who were good at something I found hard to help me to tell me how I could be better at something. (Male, high attender, group 6)

On task behaviour

Interestingly when asked to describe positive experiences in school the pupils across all groups of attendance discussed both themselves and their peers engaging in on-task behaviour. They described activities where they and other pupils were actively involved in learning and displaying positive learning behaviours. This is demonstrated in the selected quotes below:

It's easier to listen, everyone is listening (Female, high attender, group 1)

Everyone does their work, they don't mess about. The teacher just leaves us alone and doesn't like nag at us (Female, low attender, group 2)

I just draw, I get on with my work. I work hard and I do my best. (Male, low attender, group 4)

I'd get more involved, I don't like it when people tell me what to do. I'd do much more. (Male, low attender, school A)

I take part more, I get to do things I am good at more. (Female, mid-range attender, group 5)

I put more effort in, concentrated more and made the most of the opportunities I had. (Male, high attender, group 6)

Using skills

The pupils across all groups discussed the way in which tasks were often assigned to them by their teachers. They seemed to feel that they were often given activities which did not give them the opportunity to demonstrate or develop their skills.   Interestingly when describing positive learning experiences they highlighted opportunities to use their existing skills to their full potential and to develop their skills further, not only in activities they were already good at or enjoyed but also in areas where they felt they needed further development. The quotes below illustrate this:

To let us create things more in our own way (Female, low attender, group 2)

I'd like us to have our options sooner so that we could choose what lessons we wanted to do instead of spending so much time doing things we don't want to do or that we're not good at. (Male, mid-range attender, group 3)

I'd do a lot more science and technology stuff because that's what I want to do when I'm older. Some of the stuff I study now is pointless for me. (Male, mid-range attender, group 3)

More chances to use our skills in school (Female, low attender, group 4)
I take part more, I get to do things I am good at more. (Male, mid-range attender, group 5)

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I would get people who were good at something I found hard to help me to tell me how I could be better at something. (Male, high attender, group 6)

Control

The pupils across all groups made many comments regarding wishing for a greater sense of control. There were many comments to suggest that pupils felt that they were unable to exert the level of control they would like over the activities they were asked to complete in school. Furthermore when asked to describe positive experiences in school there were many discussions regarding having more control over the work they were asked to do. The quotes below highlight the range of ways in which the pupils hoped for more control in school.

Give us more input. (Male, high attender, group 1)

It'd feel more like me instead of just doing what school said I had to do all the time. (Female, mid-range attender, group 3)

Yeah I think we should say something about like having a choice whether or not you do RE, citizenship, functional skills and stuff like that. Some people don't like doing that, like I'd rather do some extra English and stuff. (Male, mid-range attender, group 5)

More time so that we can get things finished. We never get enough time really. You have to rush stuff and if you make a mistake you have to start again. You don't really get to do your best work. (Male, mid-range attender, group 5)

I'd feel like I was making much better use of my time instead of doing things which are pointless. (Male, high attender, group 6)

Provocative statements

The provocative statements made to each of the groups are recorded below:

We need more opportunities to do things which we feel are worthwhile. School is better when things are worthwhile. (High attenders, school A)

We would like more opportunities to be creative and to be given more freedom. (Low attenders, school A)

We would like to have more choice in what we do and to be given more responsibility.   (Mid-range attenders, school A)

We like more choice about what we do so that we can do things we are good at and have more opportunities to use our skills. (Low attenders, school B)

We would like to have more choice and to be given more chances to do the things that we are good at. (Mid-range attenders, school B)

We'd like to be able to do things we're good at and use our skills and more opportunities to develop our skills. (High attenders, school B)

Each of the provocative statements for all of the groups refers to the lesson content.   Three of the provocative statements emphasised a desire for more choice whilst the provocative statement low attenders in school A emphasises a wish for more creativity and freedom.   Two of the provocative statements referred to a need for work in school be relevant and worthwhile.

Next steps

In the appreciative inquiry focus groups pupils were asked for three or four steps they felt could be taken in school to make school a more positive experience for them. Below are the suggestions the pupils made at each of the schools and in each of the attendance groups.

School A, high attenders:

- More input

- More space

- Teachers to have a meeting and then let pupils know what they can change

School A, mid-range attenders:

- More non-uniform days
- Listen to us more (not just those who misbehave)
- Trust us more
- More group work

School A, low attenders

- Group work
- Let us create things in our own way
- Give us more choice
- Listen to us

School B, high attenders:

- More chances to develop our skills
- More visitors, (experts) to tell us about things and teach us
- More choices

School B, mid-range attenders:

- More choice.
- More time to get things finished.
- A range of activities in lessons
- More flexibility to do subjects which are more relevant (e.g. extra literacy instead of functional skills)

School B, low attenders

- More choices
- More chances to use our skills in school
- More visuals

Four of the six focus groups asked for more choice and three groups wanted school staff to listen to them more. One of the mid-range attenders at school A commented that often it was the pupils who misbehaved who were listened to most whilst those pupils who behaved well were not listened to. All of the attendance groups at school B felt that they needed more opportunities to engage in work which they felt to be relevant to them or which enabled them to use or develop their skills.

4.4 Summary of thematic analysis findings

Several of the themes were shared by the different groups. Indeed similar points were made by different pupils, in different groups, often phrased in a very similar way. Further discussion of these themes and the link between the themes identified and the pupils' scores on the MMCPC will be explored in the discussion which follows.

The appreciative inquiry focus groups offered some insight into the differences in the way in which the different attendance groups perceived school. Perhaps most noticeably the transcripts for both the mid-range attendance groups are longer than the transcripts for the other attendance groups. Perhaps most noticeable was that fact that the theme of time management was highlighted for the mid-range attenders but not for their peers. In both mid-range attendance groups the pupils discussed managing their workload (see results for corresponding comments). They explained why they did not get enough time to complete tasks in school and suggested strategies which would help to overcome this difficulty. Furthermore three pupils suggested changes which could be made to their timetable in order to accommodate their heavy workload. Could it be perhaps that these pupils

manage their workload more carefully? They attend school enough to ensure that they do not get into trouble for not attending and also to ensure they attend what they may perceive to be an appropriate number of school sessions every week. As such they are not avoiding school to an extent which gets noticed by an attendance officer, as the low attenders are, and neither are they coming to school every single day and feeling over burdened with the work that is expected of them. The mid-range attenders may, in fact, be the pupils who have most control over their attendance and choose not to attend school where they feel it is irrelevant or that they are feeling overstretched. It may indeed be these pupils who take time off school in order to complete homework tasks which have been set for them. In such ways these pupils may be more able to manage and take control of their workload more effectively than their lower or higher attending peers.

These findings may also be closely related to the mean ratings for each attendance group for cognitive powerful others. Here the high attenders rated statements which suggested that powerful others impacted upon success in the cognitive domain more highly, on average, than did their low and mid-range attending peers. It may be suggested perhaps that the high attenders' perception of control in the cognitive domain is linked to their seemingly stronger view that their workload is too great and the work can be too difficult. However this does not explain the low attenders' mean scores which seem to suggest that they agree less strongly with statements which suggest that success in the cognitive domain is the result of powerful others. Perhaps this can be attributed to the fact that the low attenders attribute success in the cognitive domain more to unknown control. As mentioned earlier all three attendance groups agreed most strongly with statements which suggested success in the cognitive domain was the result of their own actions and behaviours. For the mid-range and high attenders their next highest average score was for statements which suggested success was controlled by powerful others with statements suggesting success was the result of an unknown factors being rated the lowest. For the low attenders' statements which suggested that control over success in the cognitive domain was unknown had the second highest mean ratings followed by statements which suggested powerful other controlled success.

Further consideration of these findings and the possible implications for schools and the way in which Educational Psychologists support schools with attendance will be considered further in the chapter which follows.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This section will begin by considering the data gathered in relation to the three research questions. The findings and research questions will then be considered with reference to the relevant literature. A summary of the findings will then be discussed along with any conclusions drawn. The implications of this research for the role of the Educational Psychologist will be considered and suggestions will be made for further research in this area. The limitations of this research will also be explored.

5.1 Relating the findings to the research questions

In the following paragraphs the results of this research will be considered with regard to the research question they relate to. Quantitative data from pupils' responses on the MMCPC will be used to explore research question one; 'is there a relationship between pupils' perceived control and their level of attendance?' For this question some consideration will also be given to the qualitative information from the appreciative inquiry focus groups, where necessary, in order to explain the findings. Both the quantitative data from the MMCPC and the qualitative data from the appreciative inquiry focus groups will be used to explore research question two; 'how can a pupils' perception of control be improved in the school context?' For the third research question; 'is there a difference in the scores of low, mid-range and high attenders on the MMCPC?' the results of the one-way ANOVA will be considered alongside descriptive statistics. For the fourth research question 'is there an interaction between perceived control, level of workload and attendance?' both the quantitative data from pupils' responses on the MMCPC and qualitative data from the appreciative inquiry focus groups will be considered in order to respond to this question.

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between pupils' perceived control and their level of attendance?

As attendance data for each pupil was not available it was not possible to carry out a correlational analysis so descriptive statistics were used. From the descriptive statistics it seems that there may be some relationship between scores

in the social domain and level of attendance. It is interesting that the social domain seemed to be the domain most linked to attendance in school. This sits well with the findings of Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) who found that two factors that could 'buffer' a pupil's low level of perceived control; increased autonomy and relatedness to school.   Relatedness to school is closely linked to social factors, perhaps as discussed further in later paragraphs, this may also be linked to the relationship pupils perceive themselves as having with their peers and with adults in school. Davies and Lee (2006) also found that the pupils who chose to attend school regularly despite having low expectations for academic attainment cited the importance of forming social relationships in school both for school life but also in their community outside of school. Social relationships will be discussed further in reference to research question two.

The results for the cognitive domain are also of interest. It may have been expected perhaps that the pupils' perception of their level of control over success in the cognitive domain would have been related to their attendance. However the differences for mean scores for each of the three attendance groups were quite small. The clearly unexpected difference in scores for cognitive powerful others will also be considered further in relation to research question two. Interestingly Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) did describe the effect social factors can have upon perceived control in the cognitive domain. Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) believed that social relationships with adults in school were a key factor in how pupils developed their sense of perceived control.   According to Skinner, Wellborn and Connell where adults used high levels of contingency, responding regularly and consistently to pupils behaviour and work and where this response or 'involvement' was positive then pupils were more likely to have higher levels of perceived control. Conversely where the response was regular and consistent but negative or if the response was inconsistent the opposite was true and this had a negative effect upon the pupils control beliefs. Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) found, in line with the findings here, that the sense of relatedness (a sense of connection to teachers) was a key factor in whether or not pupils felt that they were able to achieve in school. Interestingly the results here seem to suggest that this is also the case for pupils' positive experiences in school and whether or not they choose to attend regularly.

Muldoon, Lowry, Prentice and Trew (2005) supported Connell's finding that control was domain specific and that scores on each domain could, and often, did vary. Furthermore they found that attributions on the social, cognitive or physical domain could often be very different to scores on the general domain. Connell (1985) believed a child or young person's perception of control was developmental and through the development of scales which measure perceived control in different domains the development of perceived control can be seen. It could be, perhaps, that the emphasis upon the social domain seen in mean scores for each group on the MMCPC here reflects such development. Furthermore, as will be discussed further in subsequent paragraphs, Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) highlight the role of those in a child's life in supporting them to develop a sense of perceived control.

Pupils' responses on the MMCPC do seem to suggest that there may be some relationship between perceived control and school attendance, particularly within certain domains. However the limitations of this research in ascertaining the extent of this relationship will be discussed further in the subsequent paragraphs.

Research Question 2 How can pupils' perception of control be improved in the school context?

Control was a key theme in each of the attendance groups. Much emphasis was placed upon having more choice. With this in mind perhaps one clear strategy for schools would be to enable their pupils to have more input into the work that they do and give them perhaps more opportunities to have some input into how their workload is balanced.

The pupils in the focus groups had some very interesting suggestions as to how their workload could be managed for them with suggestions ranging from having free study sessions to complete work (as is the case in further and higher education) to being given the option to opt out of non-compulsory subjects such as citizenship in order to enable them to develop their basic skills in literacy and numeracy if necessary. One pupil specifically said that they wished not to take

part in RE, citizenship or a lesson called functional skills. They felt that their time would be much better spent if they had opportunities to further develop their literacy skills instead. This comment does perhaps highlight some underlying frustration and perhaps the beginnings of a sense of hopelessness. Other pupils made further comments about having to do "pointless" or "rubbish" work. Work which they did not feel had any relevance to them, their future aspirations or their needs and abilities. Perhaps from this perspective there is a role for schools in identifying subjects and activities which are relevant to pupils or conversely demonstrating to pupils how and why a particular subject is relevant for them. The relevance of the curriculum seems to be a key area for disaffection and if non-attendance is considered as a form, perhaps the most extreme form, of disaffection then these issues are relevant here also. Hustler, Callaghan, Cockett and McNeill (1998) define disaffected pupils those 'who do not perceive school as being relevant'. Keys (2006) identifies around ten percent of the school population as disaffected and perhaps it could be assumed that some of these pupils regularly choose not to attend school. Interestingly Riley, Ellis, Weinstock, Tarrant and Hallmond (2006) identify boys aged between 13-14 years as most vulnerable to exclusion, this correlates to pupils in year nine at secondary school, the cohort of pupils involved in this research due to the increased levels of non-attendance. As Reid (1999) highlights, there is perhaps a role for schools in highlighting for pupils the relevance of their work for their future careers, whatever those careers may be.

Social relationships and the curriculum were the main themes identified from all of the focus groups. It is interesting that social relationships were highlighted as the social domain was also highlighted in the MMCPC. Clearly schools are very social organisations and indeed the learning process in schools involves a great deal of social interaction. Furthermore pupils in schools generally spend the school day in close proximity to large numbers of their peer group. As such there is a great deal of social interaction within school. In the appreciative inquiry focus groups all attendance groups discussed working with their peers and expressed a wish for more opportunities for this in school. Pupils felt that they could gain a great deal from working with their peers. They indicated that their learning experiences were more positive when they were able to work with their

peers and when they were involved in a team task. Furthermore some pupils commented upon how they felt that they could learn more if they learnt with their peers, with one pupil stating that they would like the opportunity to work with a more able peer who would be able to teach them in some of the areas which they find more difficult. This pupil felt that working one to one with a peer who was more able in that particular area would be of more value to them.

All of the focus groups discussed a need to be given more responsibility and a need to be trusted more by the adults in school. The pupils cited examples of times when they were not heavily supervised but followed instructions and perceived themselves as being more responsible during these occasions. Perhaps linked to this the sub-theme of positive relationships with adults was identified for both the low and high attending groups. These groups discussed teachers and adults in school whom they felt interacted well with them. They felt that such adults listened to them and gave them opportunities to take responsibilities for themselves and their work. This is reflected in the selected quotes in the results section. These discussions do appear to sit quite well with Skinner, Wellborn and Connell's descriptions of a sense of relatedness.

Perhaps linked to the need for more responsibility and trust was the finding that the curriculum seemed to be a key factor for pupils. They described positive learning experiences where the activities they completed enabled them to use the skills they had and where there was a clear relevance of the curriculum. Perhaps if student voice was more central to decision making in schools then pupils could share their views regarding what they felt to be an appropriate curriculum for them. The pupils in the research did not simply state that they wished to only have opportunities to do their favourite subjects or indeed the subjects they were best at or found easy. Instead they asked for opportunities to access support for key subjects that they felt they needed to develop their skills in such as literacy. Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) highlighted the role of autonomy is supporting a pupil in school. They described the way in which a high sense of autonomy could 'buffer' the effects of low perceived control. Pupils asked for more choice, the opportunity for more input and to be listened too. Pupils

themselves seem very aware of their need for autonomy and were able to identify ways in which they could work more autonomously in school.

All of the groups involved in the appreciative inquiry focus groups discussed on task behaviour. Interestingly they described themselves and their peers being absorbed in their work, doing their best and generally focussing upon the task at hand and applying themselves. These were described as positive experiences in school; furthermore they described their ideal experience in school as being one where they were fully absorbed in an activity. The descriptions given by the pupils echoed Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi's description of flow (Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). The pupils referred a great deal to being given the opportunity to be able to use their existing skills or to develop the skills they had. The pupils took a very negative view of work which did not enable this describing it as 'rubbish' and 'pointless'. As Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi describe a true experience of flow involves having the opportunity to participate fully in a task which is appropriately challenging. In order for an appropriate task to be matched to the individual the individual would generally choose a task which they felt met their skills or if they were given a task which was beyond their skills take opportunities to develop their skills to an appropriate level so that the activity becomes challenging in a positive way.

The pupils in schools A and B highlighted the lack of opportunities they felt that they had for this. They felt that they did not always get to use the skills that they had and furthermore they were not always given the opportunities they might need to develop these skills. The pupils' suggestions as to how they could have more positive experiences in school were very closely linked to flow theory. Firstly they made a number of suggestions which would give them more opportunities to choose appropriate activities for themselves, in particular they wanted more choice in the subjects and activities they completed and more say in how they completed and presented their work. The idea of having more opportunities to work creatively was also discussed. Adults generally choose occupations to which they feel their skills and abilities are best suited, where they do not feel their skills and abilities match an occupation they will generally choose to develop the appropriate skills accordingly. For adults this is generally

an individual decision and adults generally undertake any training which meets their specific needs. Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi's description of flow sits well with Skinner, Wellborn and Connell's sense of autonomy for pupils. In reaching a sense of flow the individual would need the opportunity to either choose or alter a task or the outcome of the task in order to meet their own skills or abilities or to take opportunities to develop and practise their existing skills in order to meet the challenge presented to them. Being able to do either would involve a certain level of autonomy. A level of autonomy which is, perhaps, sometimes absent from a pupil's usual experience of school. Interestingly a member of staff from school A described a small group of year eleven students who had finished school the previous year, who had not been willing to attend school but who had completed work set for them to complete at home. He reported that these pupils achieved far more than they were expected to. As the attendance officer had visited these pupils at home he was able to describe the way in which these pupils organised their own learning and responded positively to the opportunity to do so. He felt that this was a key factor in their achievement. Whilst this is simply anecdotal evidence, when considered alongside the research presented here it does, perhaps, warrant further investigation.

Group work was another key theme identified by the pupils. They clearly felt that their learning experiences would be enhanced if the were able to learn co-operatively. Indeed one pupil believed that working with a more able peer in a subject that they struggled with would be extremely worthwhile. Furthermore other pupils also described the value they placed upon being able to share their own skills and knowledge with their peers. This links well to the work of Vygotsky (Vygotsky 1978) and his zone of proximal development. The pupils felt that having a more able pupil to support them would help them to learn. Vygostsky would agree that this is indeed the case and that optimal learning occurs when an individual is supported to complete a task just beyond their capabilities by someone who is more able. This would also fit quite neatly with Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi's description of flow (Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) as it may be assumed that for the less able partner they would be pushing themselves just beyond their capabilities and it is here, according to Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi that flow is usually experienced.

Furthermore the more able peer, though more able, may also experience flow because although they are engaging in a task over which it is presumed they have some level of mastery the challenge involved in supporting a peer to complete the activity means that they are being stretched also.

All of the pupils involved in the focus groups were very keen to share their experiences of school. They had clear views about how they could have more positive experiences of school and offered constructive suggestions for strategies which could support this. The pupils were able to articulate their views in an appropriate manner and the comments made were all relevant to the topic. One member of staff I approached regarding carrying out the research felt that the focus groups would give the pupils an opportunity to simply voice their grievances and may lead to facetious or inappropriate suggestions and comments being made. However it is clear from the transcripts that this was not the case. The pupils welcomed the opportunity to discuss, in a positive and constructive manner, their views and experiences.

As Harding and Atkinson (2009) highlight pupils offer a valuable insight into their own experiences, insights which others, particularly adults, do not always have. The voice of the child gave a clear insight into what a positive experience of school was really like for these pupils and which elements made this positive experience possible. For example a number of pupils discussed sports' day as their positive experience. Superficially it may be assumed that this was simply because they were able to take part in sports' which may have been something they particularly enjoyed. However when the pupils were given the opportunity to reflect upon these experiences and discuss them it transpired that there were many elements which made these days enjoyable and a positive experience. The pupils referred to the opportunity to choose which activities they took part in and being able to take part in the activities they felt most able to participate in. Furthermore there was much discussion of the social interaction involved in sports' day either through working together as a team of through cheering on their peers. The pupils also described the way the pupil-teacher relationship differed on sports' day, stating that they felt they were trusted more, given more

responsibility. One pupil described the way in which he was much more sensible and arrived at the activities on time throughout the day.

In summary it would seem that perceived control may be increased by giving pupils a voice within school and when appropriate acting upon their suggestions. Pupils would also like more choice in lessons and more positive social interactions with adults and peers.

Research Question 3 Is there a difference in the scores of low, mid-range and high attenders on the MMCPC?

The one-way ANOVA did not identify any significant differences between the scores of each of the attendance groups on each of the domains of perceived control or on the questions related to difficulty and workload.   Differences in mean scores for the question related to difficulty of work had a significance level of .55, just outside the accepted range. As mentioned in chapter 3 the small sample size involved in this research reduces the power of the ANOVA was able to identify any differences, therefore due to this limitation it is not seem appropriate to accept the null hypothesis which would suggest that any differences in mean scores were due to chance and further research in relation to this research question is needed.

The descriptive statistics show differences in scores between different groups of attendance on some of the domains. However these differences were more apparent between low and mid-range attenders and low and high attenders. This seems to suggest that level of perceived control was perhaps less of a factor in whether pupils were mid-range or high attenders than it was in whether or not pupils were low attenders. Further research with a larger sample size would enable this research question to be answered more reliably.

Research Question 4 Is there an interaction between perceived control, level of workload and attendance?

It was interesting that the mid-range attenders rated statements which suggested that the level of difficulty and workload that they were given in school was far too much, much lower than either their low or high attending peers. Indeed for these statements it could be suggested that the mid-range attenders responded in a way that reflected more accurately the expected responses of the high attenders than did the high attenders themselves. The findings of Dwyer and Ganster (1991) would suggest that pupils with high control and high workload would attend regularly and the pupils with low workload and low control would also attend regularly (see figure 4 reproduced below). Generally the high attenders rated statements which suggested high levels of perceived control for each of the domains higher than their low attending peers with the mid-range attenders scoring somewhere in between. The high attenders conversely rated statements which suggested that control over success was attributed to powerful others or an unknown control lower than their low attending peers again with the mid-range attenders mean scores somewhere in between. The only exception to this was for social unknown others control where the mid-range attenders' mean scores were lowest followed by high attenders with low attenders' mean scores the highest.

Figure 4: Level of control and workload and the impact upon attendance at work (Dwyer and Ganster 1991)
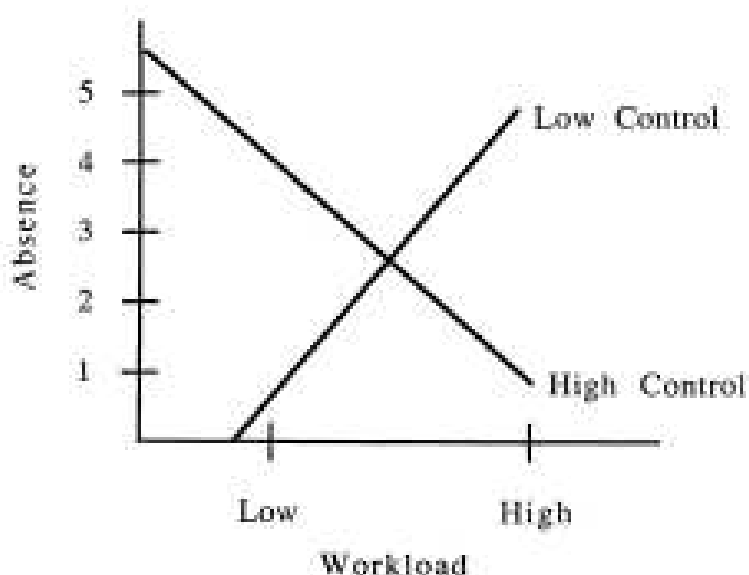
These findings do not, on the surface, seem to match Dwyer and Ganster's clear correlation as illustrated above. However it may be considered perhaps that the

mid-range attenders have mid-range attendance and perceive themselves as having lower levels of difficulty and workload in school than their higher and lower attending peers. The mid-range attenders level of perceived control derived from the MMCPC is generally midway between their higher and lower attending peers. The high attending pupils' mean scores suggested higher levels of perceived control than their lower attending peers (both the low attending group and the mid-range attending groups). They rated the level of workload and level of difficulty as higher than their mid-range attending peers but lower than their low attending peers. The low attending pupils' mean scores on each of the other domains generally suggested lower levels of perceived control than their peers, whilst their scores for level of difficulty and workload are higher than their higher attending peers. In this way it could be said that these results do, to some extent, follow the pattern Dwyer and Ganster found. The high attending pupils perceive themselves as having higher control and a relatively high workload and a high level of difficulty in the work they are given, hence their higher attendance. The low attenders perceive themselves as having less control than do their peers and having a high level of workload and level of difficulty, hence their lower attendance. The mid-range attenders, who appear to be the anomaly in the data, have mean scores which suggest a level of perceived control which is somewhere between their low and high attending peers, however they do not perceive their level of workload or the level of difficulty of the work they are asked to do to be as high as either their low or high attending peers. As discussed earlier choosing when to attend and when not to attend may be the way in which these pupils manage their workload, indeed it was both groups of mid-range attenders who discussed having opportunities to better manage their time and workload.

The views of the mid-range attenders did challenge the views of the researcher. As discussed in the methodology section, the researcher was aware that as an Educational Psychologist who had been previously employed as a teacher the researcher did place great value upon education and the importance of attending school regularly in order to access education fully. However the mid-range attenders seemed to suggest that by attending regularly enough not to miss large amounts of work, or to evoke any sanctions that they were able to balance their

school workload better than either their low or high attending peers. Furthermore it was the mid-range attenders whose views on school were, the researcher felt, most insightful. Indeed the group of high attenders at school A were somewhat disaffected with one pupil describing having been previously excluded and now having to come in every day and being watched carefully. He said he that he could not wait to leave. Perhaps the motivation for high attenders in attending regularly needs to be studied further as it may bear some similarities to presenteeism in the workplace which as John (2010) highlights is generally not a positive way of working. Indeed perhaps there needs to be some further questioning of what compels higher attending pupils to attend so regularly, as in some cases it may mean attending school when ill which may have negative consequences not just for the individual pupils but also for their peers.

It would seem therefore that there is a relationship of some form between perceived control, difficulty of work and workload however it is not possible to identify how significant this relationship is from this research and further research would be needed in order to clarify this and to explore in more detail the nature of this relationship.

Summary

It does seem from the information gathered that there is some relationship between a pupil's perceived control and their level of attendance in school. The small sample size in this research however means that, unfortunately, the one-way ANOVA may not have accurately calculated the levels of significance for the differences in scores between the attendance groups. The prominence of the scores in the social domain on the MMCPC and the themes which were interpreted from the appreciative inquiry focus groups around social relationships in school highlight the significance of the social interactions pupils experience in school upon both their perceived control as described by Skinner Wellborn and Connell (1990) and the pupils descriptions of positive experiences of school.

Pupils' descriptions within the appreciative inquiry focus groups of being listened to, having an input into their work, being given responsibility all link

quite closely with Skinner, Wellborn and Connell's description of a sense of autonomy. It would seem, therefore, that the participants in the research would agree with Skinner, Wellborn and Connell's findings that autonomy played a key role in pupil engagement. Pupil descriptions of positive experiences in school seem to be closely linked with the work of Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and their descriptions of flow. Pupils described the need for the appropriate level of challenge and the opportunity to use and develop their skills and knowledge. The pupils involved in the research described positive experiences in school where both they and their peers were fully absorbed and focussed upon a particular task.

Social factors seemed to be very important to pupils, both from their responses on the MMCPC and from their discussions in the appreciative inquiry focus groups. Connell (1985) highlighted the fact that scores on the social domain differed for this age group. Connell describes the way in which pupils increasingly see themselves as responsible for lack of success in the social domain however he also describes the way in which such pupils will also believe that their teacher contributes to their lack of acceptance. Connell refer to this as 'self-derogation', suggesting that adolescence is, in itself, a time of transition for young people as their perceptions of themselves and the world around them develops and matures. This sits well with the theories of Erikson (Erikson 1963) who highlights the importance of allowing the individual the opportunity to develop a strong identity. It may be suggested that the pupils involved in this research sought to assert their identity through their social interactions.

Bandura (2004) describes the way in which behaviour can be shaped by social interactions and indeed it seems to be the case that positive experiences of school are indeed shaped by positive social interactions with adults and peers. Bandura (2004) refers to a 'psychosocial model for social change'. He believes that the emphasis should not be upon the individual to change their behaviour but upon a change in the culture of the social group. Perhaps this bears some consideration in relation to Davies and Lee's study (Davies and Lee 2006). It may be suggested perhaps that the attitudes and views of the pupils unlikely to obtain high levels of academic attainment but who still viewed school positively and

attended regularly are views and attitudes which should be encouraged. In line with the findings of Skinner, Wellborn and Connell perhaps emphasis should be placed upon the things which are within a pupil's control, the level of effort they put in, the amount of responsibility they take for their own actions in particularly in terms of coming to school regularly. Would this change pupils' perceptions of school and make them more likely to attend? Does the current system of placing emphasis upon obtaining higher level GCSE passes alienate a significant number of the school population who, for a variety of reasons, do not consider themselves to be in that mould?

Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) offer some suggestions as to how social aspects of learning relate to perceived control. They highlight the way in which consistent rewards and sanctions for behaviours and emphasis upon the areas a pupil can control have an impact upon will support the pupil in taking control of their actions and, in this case, attaining more. Frayne and Latham (1987) showed how social learning theory could be applied to supporting adults to attend work more regularly. In this study adults were given training which encouraged them to consider a range of barriers to them attending work and then to consider possible ways to overcome such barriers. They found that this training (along with consistent rewards and sanctions) led to increased levels of attendance when compared to a control group. This does seem to suggest that social interaction can help to change an individual's views about perceived control.

5.2 Implications of the research and the role of Educational Psychologists

For the researcher the biggest implication for their personal practice was the use of student voice. It is clear from the literature that student voice is a powerful tool and whilst the researcher was aware of this and saw it's purpose this research has demonstrated the importance of pupils' insights (Mitsoni 2006, Gunter and Thomson 2007 and Prout 2000). School staff were very surprised by the comments which the pupils made and the articulate way in which they made them. The pupils' insight into their lives at school and their ability to make constructive suggestions about how school could be improved was quite staggering. In feeding back the research the researcher felt that simply sharing

the comments the pupils made helped the staff at both schools to view their pupils differently, perhaps going some way in encouraging staff to listen more closely to what their pupils had to say and consider their suggestions. One of the main implications of this research for Educational Psychologists, therefore, would be that this is yet another piece of research that highlights the real and powerful value of pupil voice. As Harding and Atkinson (2009) highlight pupil voice is not simply the 'icing on the cake' in a good piece of work for an Educational Psychologist, it should be at the heart of what the Educational Psychologist does. In the role of Educational Psychologist it can be all too easy to fall into the role of serving a schools' needs however if the Educational Psychologist is to be an advocate of the child, and as highlighted in HPC guidelines (HPC 2009), ensure that the interests of the child are paramount then it is essential that the voice of the child is listened to. After all how can it be possible to work in the best interests of any child or young person if very little consideration has been given to that particular child's view of their own individual needs?

In supporting attendance student voice is also a powerful tool. The pupils involved in the research highlighted a desire to be listened to and described positive experiences where they felt that they had an active role in making decisions. Prout (2000) highlights the positive effect involving pupils in decision-making can have. He believes that pupils are more likely to be enthusiastic about school when they are taking an active, genuine and practical role in improving their school. According to Prout schools can often be an anti-democratic place for children. He believes that there is a delicate balance in today's society between controlling and protecting children whilst at the same time enabling self-realisation and supporting children and young people to develop a sense of autonomy. According to Prout giving pupils the opportunity to participate more in decisions made about them allows them to negotiate what will happen and how, he believes this to be a way in which happy balance between complete control and complete freedom can be found. Smyth (2006) supports these findings, in his own research he found that pupils were more likely to become disengaged and alienated from school if they did not feel that the adults around them were willing to listen to their views. It would seem that the

views the pupils expressed in this research do mirror the views of pupils in previous research by other authors. Being given an opportunity to play an active role in school is an important factor for pupils, not least perhaps, because this may be linked to their perceived control in school. Perhaps a conclusion to be drawn from this is that staff in schools need to be perceived by the pupils as listening to their concerns and where appropriate acting upon these concerns. There is perhaps a role for Educational Psychologists in reiterating this message and supporting schools to develop systems which are democratic and utilise student voice where possible.

The pupils involved in the research seemed to respond well to a positive psychology approach as discussed in the axiology (chapter two). The researcher's initial assumption that pupils had a great deal to contribute to the understanding of non-attendance, was, it is felt, particularly valuable in this research. It was the pupils' contributions in the appreciative inquiry focus groups which illuminated their responses on the MMCPC. Without their input, interpretation of some of the unexpected scores would have been based purely upon the researcher's assertions however the pupils' input informed this interpretation. Feedback from the pupils when the research was fed back to them suggests that they did find taking part in appreciative inquiry focus groups to be a positive experience, they felt that the research allowed them to reflect upon their experiences of school and discuss them in a constructive manner.

Participating in an appropriate and relevant curriculum was a key theme in discussions with pupils. Interestingly pupils did not simply ask to be allowed to be able to complete their favourite subjects or activities which came easily to them. In this way it may seem that perhaps some changes could be made to the way in which the curriculum is decided upon or the particular learning outcomes the pupils are given for each lesson, perhaps, as suggested by some pupils, with a menu of activities for them to complete. A sense of autonomy also seemed to be of importance and as such there may be a role for Educational Psychologists in highlighting this to schools and supporting them in supporting pupils' autonomy in school in a practical and manageable way. Group work was mentioned often and perhaps giving pupils more opportunities to work with and learn from their

peers may ensure that they are more engaged with the curriculum. It was felt by the researcher that many of the descriptions the pupils gave of positive experiences in school fitted very well with Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi's description of flow (Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi 1996). Perhaps there is a role for Educational Psychologists in sharing some aspects of this work with schools and explaining the ways in which pupils can enjoy the intrinsic reward which comes from being involved in a sufficiently challenging task. Educational Psychologist's may wish to consider supporting schools in using pupil led research as described by Burton, Smith and Woods (2010) as a way to explore further these issues with their pupils. The use of peer mentoring may also have benefits upon engagement in school and upon attendance (Parsons, Maras, Knowles, Bradshaw, Hollingworth and Monteir 2008) and Educational Psychologists could support schools in developing peer mentoring in school.

5.3 Research Limitations

The biggest limitation of this research was the sample size involved. Unfortunately the small sample size used limited the power of inferential statistics such that true differences in scores on the MMCPC may not have been detected by the one way ANOVA which was used. The anonymity of the MMCPC questionnaires the pupils completed meant that the researcher was unable to carry out a correlational analysis in order to explore whether there was a relationship between level of perceived control and attendance. As a result analysis of the quantitative data was somewhat limited.

Furthermore, as is the case with all qualitative studies, the pupils' discussions in the appreciative inquiry focus groups only involved a small proportion of pupils from each school. As such the views expressed may not be an accurate reflection of the views of pupils in the school more generally. Some parents were reluctant to give permission for their children to take part in the research and others did not respond to the request. As such those pupils who were selected to take part in the research may have been an accurate reflection of pupils generally and were perhaps the children of parents who were more willing to allow their children to engage in such research. Indeed the children of parents who either did not

respond or who did not wish their children to take part may, as a harder to reach group, had a different perspective and their views may have been quite different and of at least equal if not greater value than the views already gathered. Pupils who participated in this research required a reasonable level of literacy in order to complete the MMCPC. For this reason pupils with literacy difficulties or pupils who were not fluent in English were not involved in the research. This means that the participants who took part shared quite a limited set of characteristics. As with the hard to reach pupils the views of pupils with literacy difficulties or pupils who were not fluent in English are of at least, if not greater interest, to such research on attendance. The impact of language in conjunction with perceived control upon attendance would have been of great value to study, however it would have required a very different methodology which enabled the pupils to communicate their views effectively despite the difficulties they may experience with language.

The schools involved in the research were schools where the headteacher was initially approached and it was the headteacher who agreed to participation. Of the schools approached only two were willing to take part and able to do so within the time constraints of the research. Clearly the sample of schools was highly self-selective from the start of the research, and, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, the pupils from the two schools were also self-selected. Their participation relied upon the agreement of their parents and their own agreement to take part. In considering the pupils who took part it is clear that they firstly had to belong to the minority of schools were felt able to participate and then their parents had to respond to the request and agree to them taking part in the research. The pupils themselves had to then agree to taking part and they had to be in school on the days when the research took place. Clearly through this process a great number of pupils, perhaps with common characteristics were missed from the research. One common characteristic may have been their parents' levels of literacy or willingness to respond to such research requests. The attendance office at school A highlighted the fact that he had mentioned the research to parents who had received the information about participating and that many of them had said that they had not actually looked at the letter. When he explained the research to them they were generally happy for their child to take

part. Perhaps another interesting point was that the majority of consent forms which were returned within the first week in both schools A and B were from pupils who would fit within the high attendance group.

This research used only two high schools which were in close geographical proximity to each other therefore though the results of each attendance group on the MMCPC from both schools and their discussions in the appreciative inquiry focus groups may have shared some similarities this is not to say that this is an accurate reflection of all pupils in all schools, at all levels of attendance in the United Kingdom. Indeed, schools do vary a lot in their approaches to their pupils and their curriculum. Pupils with very different experiences may have highlighted some very different points. This means, therefore, that there is a limit to how far these findings can be generalised to pupils of this age in other schools. This research also concentrated upon pupils in year nine, a time of transition for the pupils, it may be that their responses are a result not only of the changes in their curriculum they experience but also as a result of developmental changes at this stage of adolescence may mean that their responses were somewhat different to the responses which may have been gathered from their younger or older peers. As such further research to ascertain whether there were indeed differences in perceptions of younger an older pupils would clarify this further.

Due to time restrictions and unforeseen circumstances the pupils at school B completed the MMCPC and the appreciative inquiry focus group on the same day with the first in the morning and the latter in the afternoon. The pupils at school A however completed the two a week apart. This may have had a positive or negative impact upon pupils at either school, for example pupils at school B may have been less enthusiastic about the task after having been asked to return to the group later the same day, however pupils at school A perhaps may have had a different approach to each task on the two different days for example for they may have had a limited recollection of the activity they were asked to complete the previous week and the explanation they were given for the research. For group A the pupils were given a full explanation of the research on both days however pupils at school B were given a full explanation for the first part of the

research however in the afternoon they were simply given a quick summary as a reminder. This may have had an impact upon their responses, however as they had only completed the first task a few hours previously and were given the opportunity to ask questions in order to clarify what they were being asked to do and the reasons for this and may have become impatient had another full explanation been given. The pupils at school A, with a week between the activities, may have had the opportunity to reflect upon their experiences of school before the second activity in the week after the research had been explained to them. The pupils at school B however were only told in the morning and only had the later part of the morning and lunchtime to reflect. This could have had two different consequences, on the one hand the pupils at school B, with limited time for reflection may have answered more honestly giving their instinctive responses with little time for self moderation, however conversely it could also mean that the pupils at school A gave more considered answers and perhaps their responses showed a little more of an overview of their experiences of school rather than a response based upon experiences that day. It is however difficult to judge whether any of these scenarios are actually the case, however in order to prevent this becoming a factor in the research it would have been better had all pupils had the same time difference between the first and second part of the study, circumstances beyond the researcher's control prevented this on this occasion but perhaps for further research a careful contingency plan should be put into place to allow for this where possible.

The transcripts from the appreciative inquiry focus groups were only coded by the researcher and as such there may be biases within the interpretation and the development of themes. However it is hoped that through the original process of appreciative inquiry where the use of a provocative statement enabled the researcher to clarify the groups views, along with a checking of the themes with the pupils involved ensured that these biases were limited. Furthermore had the transcripts been coded by another person it is very likely that the person doing so would have had a very similar professional background as the researcher and as such held some similar views upon education and attendance. Such a process may not have guarded against all bias in interpretation. It is hoped therefore that clarifying the themes with the pupils themselves may indeed have been more

productive. Firstly because the pupils would have had a very different perspective to the researcher or their colleagues and secondly because the data, in a way, 'belongs' to the pupils and as such it is of utmost importance that any interpretation of what the pupils says is seen as 'true' to them.

The MMCPC was used as the measure of perceived control for this research. This is a measurement from 1985 and is not perhaps as recent as would be desirable for such a measure. However it was reviewed in 2005 by Muldoon, Lowry, Prentice and Trew who found it to still be applicable to children and young people. They also found that the MMCPC was an appropriate measure of perceived control, the three sources of control Connell identified (powerful others, unknown and internal) were appropriate and that there were differences in perceived control which were domain specific. This research seems to suggest that the MMCPC is still a relevant and reliable measure of perceived control. Another consideration to be taken into account when looking at the data from the MMCPC is that the pupils who took part in this research were fourteen years of age or very nearly fourteen years of age as it was completed at the end of the academic year. The MMCPC covers quite a wide age range from eight to fourteen years and the pupils in this research were at the top of this age range, as such their responses at this age may have been somewhat different than at an earlier age, particularly if, as Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) and Muldoon, Lowry, Prentice and Trew (2005) believe perceived control is developmental and changes in attributions in each of the domains is likely to develop and change over time.

The MMCPC is American in origin and as such is worded accordingly. This meant that when the statements on the MMCPC were read out they may not have been immediately clear to the pupils taking part in the research. As such it was necessary on occasion to give alternative phrases to pupils where they did not fully understand the question, one example of this is the phrase 'I can't figure out' which was used for each of the domains. Appropriate alternatives such as 'I can't work out' were offered to the pupils. The pupils were told to ask about any phrases they were unsure of and the researcher explained that the MMCPC was American in origin and that some of the phrases were a little different. This may

however have had an impact upon the way the pupils responded, perhaps pupils in the United Kingdom may respond differently to such questions than pupils in America due to slight nuances in the use of language. On the whole pupils did not appear to be confused by the phrases used, however they were distracted by some phrases which they found humourous. The researcher did consider rephrasing some of the statements on the MMCPC but was concerned that this may have an impact upon what was actually being measured and so the wording developed by Connell was used. The researcher did explain any phrases pupils were unsure of but most were acquainted with American patterns of language and after a brief explanation were able to understand the statements.

5.4 Further research

Clearly the sample size used for this research was too small for any significant differences in scores for perceived control between the different attendance groups to be found. Further research on a much larger scale with a far bigger sample would allow for inferential statistics to be used more accurately in order that the statistical significance of any differences between scores could be detected and any relationship between level of perceived control and attendance could be explored further. The use of a range of different schools and pupils from different year groups may help to gather data which may be more appropriate to make generalisations from for the wider school populations. As mentioned previously this research was limited to pupils with a reasonable level of literacy who would be able to understand fully the statements made on the MMCPC and the way in which they were expected to respond. This means that this research did not gather the views of pupils who experienced literacy difficulties or those who were not fluent in English. Further research for these groups of pupils, with appropriate methodology to gather their view effectively would help to give a clearer picture of their experiences also.

Further exploration to ascertain at which point perceived control becomes less connected with levels of attendance may help to explain further why differences in mean scores for low and mid-range attenders and low and high range attenders were appear greater than differences in scores between mid-range and high

attenders on any of the domains. The cut off point for mid-range attenders in this research was ninety percent (linked to average levels of attendance in the authority) however it would be interesting to identify at what point differences in mean scores become less apparent and if there are significant differences in mean scores for different attendance groups at what point this becomes most significant. This would, however, require a very large sample size.

'Sense of relatedness' as referred to by Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) seems particularly relevant to the research. However it is not clear whether or not pupils who choose to attend school more regularly do so because they experience a greater sense of relatedness to the adults in school. Perhaps further research which seeks to explore a pupil's sense of relatedness and their level of attendance could illuminate this further.

Many suggestions have been made as to how pupils' experiences of school can be improved along with their perceived control and sense of autonomy. However these are simply suggestions and further research to ascertain whether providing more opportunities for student voice, giving more input into the curriculum and providing more opportunities for group work had an impact upon school attendance, not just within the immediate timescale but also within the longer term.

This research looked at the role of perceived control in whether or not a pupil chose to attend school regularly. Further research perhaps into the role of the Educational Psychologist in supporting schools to support pupils to attend school and perhaps, more specifically, to support pupils with the lowest levels of attendance in particular would be a useful addition to this field of research.

CHAPTER 6: REFERENCES

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CHAPTER 7: APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter to Headteachers

MANCHEstER
1824
The University of Manchester

Dear………

Further to our discussion I would like to invite your school to take part in a research study as part of a research project into attendance in school and the reasons why pupils choose to attend or not attend.   The title of this research is 'Perceived control and Attendance' and it will explore pupil's experiences of school and their level of attendance. The aim of the research is to explore why some pupils attend school regularly and others do not.

Pupils in Year nine will be selected to take part in the study if their attendance falls into one of the following categories: above 99% attendance, between 90 – 94 % attendance or below 80% attendance. Around sixty pupils are expected to be involved in the research in total with approximately half of that number from your school. Pupils will be asked to complete a questionnaire which contains forty questions. They may then also be asked to discuss their experiences of school with a group on six to eight other pupils in school. Completing the questionnaire should take between thirty minutes to an hour. If pupils are asked to take part in a discussion about their experiences of school this will take a maximum of an hour.

All information given in the questionnaire will be confidential and pupils will not be asked to write their name on the questionnaire. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed but all information will be anonymised. All data will used for the purposes of this research only and once the research has been assessed the original data (questionnaires and audio recording) will be destroyed. No names of pupils or

the schools they attend will be used. All research findings will be shared with yourself and, if you wish, your staff.

With this letter I have enclosed the questionnaire I intend to use with pupils along with a copy of the questions they will be asked in the focus groups and an information letter which will be sent to parents. I have also included a form for you to indicate if you wish your school to take part in this research.

If you have any further queries about this research or would like more information please contact me by e-mail: Vicki.Meredew@XXX.gov.uk or telephone 07789927994.

Many thanks for your time.

Yours Sincerely,

Vicki Meredew

Trainee Educational Psychologist
University of Manchester
XXXXX Educational Psychology Service

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet and consent form

Perceived Control and Attendance

Participant Information Sheet

Your child is being invited to take part in a research study as part of a research project into attendance in school and the reasons why pupils choose to attend or not attend. Before you decide whether or not your child should take part it is important for you and your child to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything you are not clear of or if you would like more information. Take time to consider whether or not you and your child wish your child to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?

The research will be carried out by Vicki Meredew, an Educational Psychologist in Doctoral training as part of the research for her thesis.

What is the research about?

Perceived control and Attendance is the title of this research. The research will look at pupil's experiences of school and their level of attendance.

What is the aim of the research?

The aim of the research is to try to explore why some pupils attend school regularly and others do not.

Why has my child been chosen?

Pupils at your child's school have been selected to take part in the study if their attendance falls into one of the following categories: above 92% attendance,

between 77 – 83 % attendance or below 70% attendance. Over sixty pupils will be involved in the research in total with different levels of attendance in school.

What would my child be asked to do if he/she took part?

Your child would be asked to complete a questionnaire which contains forty questions. They may then also be asked to discuss their experiences of school in a group on 6-8 other pupils at their school.

What happens to the data collected?

All information given in the questionnaire will be confidential and your child will not be asked to write their name on the questionnaire. The information from their responses will be analysed along with answers from other pupils filling in the questionnaire.

If your child takes part in discussions they would be recorded and transcribed but all information will be anonymised. All data will used for the purposes of this research only and once the research has been assessed the original data (audio recording) will be destroyed. The anonymised data will be used with interviews from other pupils to draw out any common experiences between them.

How is confidentiality maintained?

All data used in the research will be anonymised. Audio recordings of interviews will be stored securely on a computer which is password protected. No names of pupils or the schools they attend will be used in the research.

What happens if I do not want my child to take part to take part or change my mind?

It is up to you and your child whether or not your child takes part. If you do decide they will take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to

complete a consent form. If your child does take part they are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to themselves.

What is the duration of the research?

Completing the questionnaire should take between 30mins to 1hr. If your child is asked to take part in a discussion about their experiences of school this will take a maximum of an hour.

Where will the research take place?

In your child's school.

Criminal records Check

As an Educational Psychologist in Doctoral Training the researcher has full CRB clearance to work with children and can provide documentary evidence of this.

Contact for further information

Vicki Meredew
Area Education Office
XXXX
XXXX
XXXX
Tel: XXXXX XXXXXXX
vicki.meredew@XXXX.gov.uk

What if something goes wrong?

If you would like any help or advice contact:
Vicki Meredew
Area Education Office
XXXX

XXXX

XXXX

Tel: XXXXX XXXXXXX

vicki.meredew@XXXX.gov.uk

If you have any further concerns or wish to make a complaint contact:

Head of the Research Office

Christie Building

University of Manchester

Oxford Road

Manchester

M13 9PL

Perceived control and attendance

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below:

Please

Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service

3. I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded

4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of participant	Date	Signature

Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

Appendix 3: The Multi-Dimensional Measure of Children's Perceptions of Control (MMCPC)

MUTILDIMENSIONAL MEASURE OF CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF CONTROL (MMCPC)

RECORD FORM

NFER-NELSON
INFORMING YOUR DECISIONS

Instructions: This is not a test. It is just a way of trying to find out why you think you do well at some things and not so well at others. There are no right or wrong answers, but it is important that you complete all the items as honestly as you can.
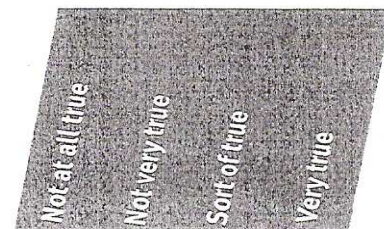
Please read the following statements (or listen to them being read to you). Decide how far each statement is true of you or not. If it's not at all true, please put a tick in the box under the answer NOT AT ALL TRUE. If it's not very true, please put a tick in the box under the answer NOT VERY TRUE. If it's sort of true, put a tick in the box under SORT OF TRUE. If it's very true, put a tick in the box under VERY TRUE.

	Not at all true	Not very true	Sort of true	Very true
1. When I win at sport, a lot of times I can't figure out why I won.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. When I am unsuccessful, it's usually my own fault.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. The best way for me to get good marks is to get the teacher to like me.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. If somebody doesn't like me, I usually can't figure out why.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. I can be good at any sport if I try hard enough.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. If an adult doesn't want me to do something I want to do, I probably won't be able to do it.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. When I do well in school, I usually can't figure out why.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. If somebody doesn't like me, it's usually because of something I did.	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. When I win at sport, it's usually because the person I was playing against played badly.	☐	☐	☐	☐

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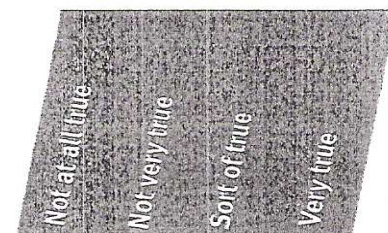|	Not at all true	Not very true	Sort of true	Very true

10. When something goes wrong for me, I usually can't figure out why it happened.

□ □ □ □

11. If I want to do well in school, it's up to me to do it.

□ □ □ □

12. If my teacher doesn't like me, I probably won't be very popular with my classmates.

□ □ □ □

13. Many times I can't figure out why good things happen to me.

□ □ □ □

14. If I don't do well in school, it's my own fault.

□ □ □ □

15. If I want to be an important member of my class, I have to get the popular pupils to like me.

□ □ □ □

16. Most of the time when I lose a game at sport, I can't figure out why I lost.

□ □ □ □

17. I can pretty much control what will happen in my life.

□ □ □ □

18. If I have a bad teacher, I won't do well in school.

□ □ □ □

19. A lot of times, I don't know why people like me.

□ □ □ □

20. If I try to catch a ball and I don't, it's usually because I didn't try hard enough.

□ □ □ □

21. If there is something that I want to get, I usually have to please people in charge to get it.

□ □ □ □

22. If I get a bad mark at school, I usually don't understand why I got it.

□ □ □ □

23. If somebody likes me, it is usually because of the way I treat them.

□ □ □ □

24. When I lose at an outdoor game, it is usually because the pupil I played against was much better at that game to begin with.

□ □ □ □

25. When I win an outdoor game, a lot of times I don't know why I won.

□ □ □ □

26. When I don't do well at something, it is usually my fault.

27. When I do well in school, it's because the teacher likes me.

28. When another pupil doesn't like me, I usually don't know why.

29. I can be good at any sport if I work hard enough.

30. I don't have much chance of doing what I want if an adult doesn't want me to do it.

31. When I get a good mark in school, I usually don't know why I did so well.

32. If someone is nasty to me, it's usually because of something I did.

33. When I play an outdoor game against another pupil, and I win, it's probably because the other pupil didn't play well.

34. A lot of times I don't know why something goes wrong for me.

35. If I want to get good marks in school, it's up to me to do it.

36. If the teacher doesn't like me, I probably won't have many friends in the class.

37. When good things happen to me, many times there doesn't seem to be any reason why.

38. If I get bad marks, it's all my own fault.

39. If I want my classmates to think I am an important person, I have to be friends with the really popular pupils.

40. When I don't win at an outdoor game, most of the time I can't figure out why.

41. I can pretty much decide what will happen in my life.

Appendix 4: Thematic analysis of transcripts

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Work with peers

We play with lots of people.
that gets everyone involved.
they help you to cook and they cook themselves as well.
It's teamwork, I'm good at teamwork.
You don't really get to use teamwork in class at all, not properly.
yes, they're allowed to help in cookery but not in other lessons.
yes because everyone is joining in and they're all playing good.
I pass the ball and help the team.
They pass the ball and help the team, everyone joins in.
Breaktime because I get to see my friends and we have a chat, they make me laugh.
Breaktime. I like to talk to my friends.
I'd work with my friends.
1st pupil: Would it be group work? *It could be, would you prefer that*? 1st pupil: Yes.
we could choose what we did and who we wanted to work with.
My friends helped me and we worked together. I like working with my friends.
Everyone did something with music and dance and everyone did something.
All my friends I like are there so I don't argue. I get on with people there.
I like being in that group, I can do things in there and everyone is nice.
I'm much more sociable, I socialise more. I talk to people more. I'm down to earth in the library and more responsible, I can act like an adult.
maybe letting us do more group work with our friends
It's a group of people and all my friends are there. We all help each other.
I was louder and I joined in more. I enjoyed it and I had fun. We could go on what rides we wanted and we got to choose. I spent the day with my friends. It was like a day off but all my friends were there.
I felt happy, it was good, I got to spend the day having fun with my friends

I'd show everyone what I could do and I'd enjoy seeing different people.
More lessons where we could choose what we were going to do like in dance we're given some music and then we decide what dance we're going to do
A day where we could choose our lessons but we'd wouldn't have to stay in our year groups. Like if someone in year 10 wanted to do drama but they hadn't chosen it as one of their options they could do it on that day. If you were doing it you could help out the other year groups too.
Everyone else met up at the checkpoints on time. They all got on no-one fell out. They were really protective and we made sure everyone was okay. The teachers just let us get on with it
They were all shouting for each other and the teachers were shouting for them too. It was good being in our house teams.
Everyone else met up at the checkpoints on time. They all got on no-one fell out. They were really protective and we made sure everyone was okay. The teachers just let us get on with it.
I would get people who were good at something I found hard to help me to tell me how I could be better at something.
They were putting lots of effort in to get points for their teams. Good, I felt good about myself because I made an effort, participated and helped my team to win.

Positive relationships with adults

They [teachers] just let you get on with it.
They [teachers] help you if you're stuck but they will just leave you to get on with it if you're okay. We have an instruction sheet that we can follow we don't need someone telling us all the time.
She [teacher] does like lots of French games with us and she does like a circle time where we can choose what we want to do.
There's just stuff to do and the teacher doesn't hassle us. The teacher is easy to get on with.
well the teachers really cool. She's not just boring she doesn't just sit there, she like will walk round and help you with stuff.
Yes she does, she helps us but she doesn't like tell us what to do.. She doesn't just sit there like some of the other teachers, she's bothered about whether your cooking turns out okay or not.
yes, it's better when the teachers listen and stuff.
Our teacher tells us what do and we get on with it. She trusts us to do our work.

The teacher just leaves us alone and doesn't like nag at us
Happy, and not like a kid, she just lets us get on with it.
The teacher just lets me draw what I like and just makes sure I have everything I need.
It wouldn't be rubbish like some of the other lessons where the teachers have you doing stupid stuff.
Listen to us more.
and they don't really do anything it'd be better if they did stuff about what we said
They put ideas across to the teacher and made suggestions about the dance. The teacher listened to them and they had more say in what they did.
The teachers are kind there and they help us a lot and we work together and we don't fall out.
they treat differently, more like and adult. I follow a rota so no-one tells me what to do I just follow the rota.
Well the teachers just watch us really and help us if we need it. They don't really have to tell us what to do. We have a sheet and we just get on with it. Everyone kind does what they should be doing.
The teachers just leave you to it. They tell you what to do at the beginning of the day and then that's it really they leave you to it. They let you get on with it. All they do is watch the activities and referee them. Everyone else just goes around doing the activities they want to do.
I'd like the teachers to give us more choices.
More like college. You'd have a place where you could chill out and listen to music and you could call the teachers by their first names like at college because they call us by our first names.
They could listen to us more because sometimes they listen more to those who are misbehaving. They don't really listen to what everyone else has to say.
Trust us more, don't assume that we won't do what they tell us to do. On trips an at sports day they just tell us at the beginning of the day and we do it. We need more responsibility
I'd get more involved , I don't like it when people tell me what to do. I'd do much more.
Everyone else just enjoyed making everything and they joined in more. The teachers just helped they didn't really tell us what to do.
Everyone else met up at the checkpoints on time. They all got on no-one fell out. They were really protective and we made sure everyone was okay. The teachers just let us get on with it.
Good, it was fun. I felt like we were treated like adults.

They were all shouting for each other and the teachers were shouting for them too. It was good being in our house teams.
The army instructor helped with the activities. They helped instead of telling you but they were more strict. But that's what they're like with people in the army.
A famous dancer coming to school to show us all how to dance. We'd like make up a dance. It'd be really fun. We wouldn't know the instructor so it'd be fun.
happy because teachers wouldn't like be telling me what to do so I'd enjoy it more.

Responsibility and trust

they just let you get on with it.
they will just leave you to get on with it if you're okay. We have an instruction sheet that we can follow we don't need someone telling us all the time.
There's more freedom and things like that.
Teachers aren't usually there. Everyone else is sensible because if they don't want to play they can just go away they don't have to join in.
she does like a circle time where we can choose what we want to do.
There's just stuff to do and the teacher doesn't hassle us. The teacher is easy to get on with.
Yes she does, she helps us but she doesn't like tell us what to do.
Give us more input.
Have a meeting and decide what they want us to do and whether we can change stuff. yes and then we can tell them what we want to change. Because we could come up with loads of stuff and they'd just say no you're no doing that.
We just get on with our work and we get a treat when we do it. Our teacher tells us what do and we get on with it. She trusts us to do our work.
I get on with my work and I get it done because I get a treat at the end.
Happy, and not like a kid, she just lets us get on with it.
I can choose what I want to draw and how I want to draw it. It's my work.
Everyone else just does their own drawing and they get on with it, they don't mess about as much.
Getting to choose. Having a free lesson and we choose what we're going to do..
I'd like to have a free lesson where I could choose what to do.
free lesson and I choose what I wanted to learn about. I'd enjoy it and I'd do stuff I was good

at.
A lesson where I choose what I want to do. I'd do healthy stuff like sports. I'd have more freedom and I'd be able to do what I wanted more. We do too much different stuff at the moment.
I'd have a room where we could do what we wanted and eat and drink like the adults do. I could bring in a bottle of pepsi if I wanted and drink it like I wanted. It'd be comfy and we'd do our work and not mess about. We'd be more like adults.
I'd learn more, I'd pay attention and I wouldn't mess about as much. I'd feel more relaxed and I'd do more posters and work that I wanted to do for my work instead of writing loads of pointless stuff.
I'd be able to express myself more, I'd be more like an adult.
We were given topics to choose from and we could choose what we did and who we wanted to work with.
To let us create things more in our own way.
Give us more choice
Everyone does their work
They put ideas across to the teacher and made suggestions about the dance. The teacher listened to them and they had more say in what they did.
Being a librarian in the library.
they treat differently, more like and adult. I follow a rota so no-one tells me what to do I just follow the rota.
I feel proud because I'm doing a job.
I have more responsibility, I can choose what I want to do and if I want to do well in an activity I have to be there and I have to be ready.
We have a sheet and we just get on with it. Everyone kind does what they should be doing.
I choose what I like doing and then I make sure that I can join in those activities.
The teachers just leave you to it. They tell you what to do at the beginning of the day and then that's it really they leave you to it. They let you get on with it. All they do is watch the activities and referee them. Everyone else just goes around doing the activities they want to do.
We could finish earlier on a Friday and wear our own clothes on a Friday like people do at work. We could come in earlier or finish later on other days like people at work do.
It's just be better because I'd work hard and then we'd have a reward at the end of the week

where we could just relax.
It'd feel good, I'd enjoy it and I wouldn't mind working hard so much. I would feel like I was being treated like an adult.
To be able to choose what we want to do in lesson time, not to have to wear uniform and to have a free period. I'd like the teachers to give us more choices.
I'd like us to have our options sooner so that we could choose what lessons we wanted to do instead of spending so much time doing things we don't want to do or that we're not good at.
Kind of like the options, you get to choose what subjects you don't want to do, the ones which aren't important and you're not going to use. Then you can just concentrate on the important stuff.
More like college. You'd have a place where you could chill out and listen to music and you could call the teachers by their first names like at college because they call us by our first names. You don't have to go to lessons which you don't think are important and you can concentrate on what you want to do instead of having to do loads of lessons which you're never going to use like Drama.
More days when we can wear our own clothes.
They could listen to us more because sometimes they listen more to those who are misbehaving. They don't really listen to what everyone else has to say.
Trust us more, don't assume that we won't do what they tell us to do. On trips an at sports day they just tell us at the beginning of the day and we do it. We need more responsibility..
Having a free period like at college. I'd be able to catch up with my work and do my homework.
I'd get all my work done and I'd feel less stressed about everything. I'd have more time.
I'd feel like I could cope better with all my work and that I could get all my work done. I'd be happier and less stressed.
We'd get to choose form lots of different activities and we'd decide what we wanted to do each day. Perhaps just for one day a week or something.
I'm sensible and I follow the instructions carefully.
They are just enjoying it, getting on with it.
Our school trip. We were allowed to wander round and do what we liked
They were just having fun too. No one was falling out and we all made sure we were on time to check in.
They get on their own work but they do talk more about what they're doing and stuff.

More lessons where we could choose what we were going to do like in dance we're given some music and then we decide what dance we're going to do.
We'd be able to choose what we wanted to do. We had different things to choose from. In lessons we'd be able to choose what activities we wanted to do.
More choices in what we do.
The teachers were more relaxed and just let us get on with it. The left us to it. Everyone else was just doing what they were supposed to be doing.   Even when they were waiting round and it was a bit boring we were being sensible.
I did more. We had a piece of paper and we were given a choice of what to do on the sheet. I did the 100 metres and football and some other races. I enjoyed it. I was at the races on time and stuff.
Sport's day. I enjoyed it. We got to do whatever we wanted.   Like activities or sport's day together. So that like on activities day we can choose what we want to do but there's football and stuff.   There are more sports choices. There was dodgeball on sport's day but I'd have more games that that because people had to wait a lot.   The activities would be for people who didn't want to do sport's for example watching films and playing games.
We'd get to choose our lessons and we'd get to pick which ones we wanted to do.
A day where we could choose our lessons but we'd wouldn't have to stay in our year groups. Like if someone in year 10 wanted to do drama but they hadn't chosen it as one of their options they could do it on that day. If you were doing it you could help out the other year groups too.
Yeah I think we should say something about like having a choice whether or not you do RE, citizenship, functional skills and stuff like that. Some people don't like doing that, like I'd rather do some extra English and stuff.
Everyone else just enjoyed making everything and they joined in more. The teachers just helped they didn't really tell us what to do.
Going to the pleasure beach on a school trip. We could do whatever we wanted it was really good.
I did what I wanted but I made sure I was sensible.
Everyone else met up at the checkpoints on time. They all got on no-one fell out. They were really protective and we made sure everyone was okay. The teachers just let us get on with it.
Good, it was fun. I felt like we were treated like adults.
Jewellery making but we'd get to design it ourselves and not just follow someone else's design.

We'd be able to choose what materials we used and not just use what's there.
I'd be more enthusiastic. I'd do more, It'd be my design so I'd put more time in and more effort so it'd look right. I'd concentrate more and I'd behave better. It'd be mine, I'd have designed it.
Having more choices to do lessons. I could spend more time on things I enjoy or things I'm not good at so I could spend more time on it.
More choices. We'd get to choose more of the stuff we do.

CURRICULUM

Control

I get to use my skills
We have an instruction sheet that we can follow we don't need someone telling us all the time.
There's more freedom and things like that.
where we can choose what we want to do.
Well I'd just be able to stay and do one thing instead of doing loads of boring stuff. I'd get to finish stuff.
she doesn't like tell us what to do..
No there's no space at break and I get more stressed so I've not relaxed when I come back to class.
yes, it's better when the teachers listen and stuff.
Give us more input.
Have a meeting and decide what they want us to do and whether we can change stuff.
We just get on with our work and we get a treat when we do it. Our teacher tells us what do and we get on with it. She trusts us to do our work.
I get on with my work and I get it done because I get a treat at the end.
Everyone does their work, they don't mess about. The teacher just leaves us alone and doesn't like nag at us
Happy, and not like a kid, she just lets us get on with it.
I can do what I want and choose what I want to do
There's no one on at me to do something.
I like being with my friends and I don't have to be near people who annoy me.
I can choose what I want to draw and how I want to draw it. It's my work.

The teacher just lets me draw what I like and just makes sure I have everything I need. Everyone else just does their own drawing and they get on with it, they don't mess about as much.
it [art] goes really quick and I don't get bored.
Getting to choose. Having a free lesson and we choose what we're going to do.
I'd do stuff I liked more and stuff that I was good at. I think I'd do more.
I'd be happy I wouldn't get bored and I'd enjoy school more.
I'd like to have a free lesson where I could choose what to do.
I'd do P.E. and stuff, things I'm good at.
I'd be happy, I'd be getting on with it and I wouldn't be bored.
free lesson and I choose what I wanted to learn about. I'd enjoy it and I'd do stuff I was good about. I'd do lots of different things like using the internet and looking things up. I'd work with my friends.
I'd be happy and not bored. There'd be a point to it. It wouldn't be rubbish like some of the other lessons where the teachers have you doing stupid stuff.
A lesson where I choose what I want to do. I'd do healthy stuff like sports. I'd have more freedom and I'd be able to do what I wanted more. We do too much different stuff at the moment.
I'd be happy and I'd come to school more because I'd want to do the lessons.
I'd enjoy school, I wouldn't have to do stuff I didn't like or that I wasn't good at. I'd like school more.
I'd have a room where we could do what we wanted and eat and drink like the adults do. I could bring in a bottle of pepsi if I wanted and drink it like I wanted. It'd be comfy and we'd do our work and not mess about. We'd be more like adults.
I'd learn more, I'd pay attention and I wouldn't mess about as much. I'd feel more relaxed and I'd do more posters and work that I wanted to do for my work instead of writing loads of pointless stuff.
I'd be able to express myself more, I'd be more like an adult.
We were given topics to choose from and we could choose what we did and who we wanted to work with.
School work, but more interesting stuff, things I was good at.
Happy, there'd be more point in coming to school.
To let us create things more in our own way.

Give us more choice.
Listen to us more.
they don't really do anything it'd be better if they did stuff about what we said
I listened and I designed the maze.
They put ideas across to the teacher and made suggestions about the dance. The teacher listened to them and they had more say in what they did.
I like being in that group, I can do things in there and everyone is nice.
I'm much more sociable, I socialise more. I talk to people more. I'm down to earth in the library and more responsible, I can act like an adult.
they treat differently, more like and adult. I follow a rota so no-one tells me what to do I just follow the rota.
Sport's day. We get play different sports and we get to choose what we want to do.
Trust us more, don't assume that we won't do what they tell us to do. On trips an at sports day they just tell us at the beginning of the day and we do it. We need more responsibility.
They could listen to us more because sometimes they listen more to those who are misbehaving. They don't really listen to what everyone else has to say.
More days when we can wear our own clothes.
Well I'd actually want to wake up in the morning and come into school. Sometimes I get to school and think I shouldn't have bothered.
I'd do more PE and subjects I was good at.
More like college. You'd have a place where you could chill out and listen to music and you could call the teachers by their first names like at college because they call us by our first names. You don't have to go to lessons which you don't think are important and you can concentrate on what you want to do instead of having to do loads of lessons which you're never going to use like Drama.
I'd want to work harder because I'd be doing stuff that was worth doing. I'd feel better about doing it.
It'd feel more like me instead of just doing what school said I had to do all the time.
I'd do stuff I like, stuff I'm good at not stuff I'm rubbish at.
I'd feel much better because it would be up to me what I wanted to do, I wouldn't have to do anything I didn't want to do or that I wasn't good at.
I'd get to be me more and I'd have more freedom.
I have more responsibility, I can choose what I want to do and if I want to do well in an

activity I have to be there and I have to be ready.
Kind of like the options, you get to choose what subjects you don't want to do, the ones which aren't important and you're not going to use. Then you can just concentrate on the important stuff.
I'd do a lot more science and technology stuff because that's what I want to do when I'm older. Some of the stuff I study now is pointless for me.
I'd like us to have our options sooner so that we could choose what lessons we wanted to do instead of spending so much time doing things we don't want to do or that we're not good at.
Sport's day, I like playing football and dodgeball. We do have set sports but you get to choose which ones you want to do. I choose what I like doing and then I make sure that I can join in those activities.
The teachers just leave you to it. They tell you what to do at the beginning of the day and then that's it really they leave you to it. They let you get on with it. All they do is watch the activities and referee them. Everyone else just goes around doing the activities they want to do.
We could finish earlier on a Friday and wear our own clothes on a Friday like people do at work. We could come in earlier or finish later on other days like people at work do.
It'd feel good, I'd enjoy it and I wouldn't mind working hard so much. I would feel like I was being treated like an adult.
Having a free period like at college. I'd be able to catch up with my work and do my homework.
get all my work done and I'd feel less stressed about everything. I'd have more time.
I'd feel like I could cope better with all my work and that I could get all my work done. I'd be happier and less stressed.
We'd get to choose form lots of different activities and we'd decide what we wanted to do each day. Perhaps just for one day a week or something.
I'd get chance to do stuff I enjoyed, stuff that I'm good at. And I'd be able to do things that I'm not doing anymore that I liked.
To be able to choose what we want to do in lesson time, not to have to wear uniform and to have a free period. I'd like the teachers to give us more choices.
Happy, I get to do something I enjoy something that I'm good at.
Our school trip. We were allowed to wander round and do what we liked.
I was louder and I joined in more. I enjoyed it and I had fun. We could go on what rides we

wanted and we got to choose. I spent the day with my friends. It was like a day off but all my friends were there.
They were just having fun too. No one was falling out and we all made sure we were on time to check in.
Art lessons. I like drawing, just getting on with my work.
I just draw, I get on with my work. I work hard and I do my best.
They get on their own work but they do talk more about what they're doing and stuff.
I was really interested and I was listening carefully and following what the instructor was telling us to do. I was watching everyone else and following what they were doing.
They weren't bored like in lessons. They were all joining in and they were happier.
I'd show everyone what I could do and I'd enjoy seeing different people.
More lessons where we could choose what we were going to do like in dance we're given some music and then we decide what dance we're going to do.
I'd get more involved , I don't like it when people tell me what to do. I'd do much more.
A lot better, I'd be doing things that I'm good at and things that I enjoy.
We'd get to watch more films about stuff, it's much more interesting than when someone tells us stuff. Then after we'd be able to write or draw what we'd learnt about instead of just answering loads of questions.
I'd be able to draw pictures to show what I'd learnt and put all the information in it.
More relaxed because I'd know what work I was going to do and that no one would ask me to do stuff I couldn't do or didn't want to do.
We'd be able to choose what we wanted to do. We had different things to choose from. In lessons we'd be able to choose what activities we wanted to do.
I'd do stuff I was good at so that the work I did would be good and I wouldn't be doing rubbish stuff.
Good, I wouldn't have to do stupid stuff.
More choices in what we do.
More chances to use our skills in school
Activities day. We got a chance to choose an activity we wanted to do. It was good because that day we could choose to do stuff we wouldn't normally get to do.
We got chance to just do what we wanted, I enjoyed it. There was more freedom.
It was better than every other day. We could relax without being told what to do. It's better than normal school. I enjoyed it much more and felt happier.

It was sport's day. We got to choose what sport's we wanted to do.
I take part more, I get to do things I am good at more.
The teachers were more relaxed and just let us get on with it. The left us to it. Everyone else was just doing what they were supposed to be doing.   Even when they were waiting round and it was a bit boring we were being sensible.
Sport's day. We got to choose what we wanted to do and did lots of football games and stuff.
I did more. We had a piece of paper and we were given a choice of what to do on the sheet. I did the 100 metres and football and some other races. I enjoyed it. I was at the races on time and stuff.
Sport's day. I enjoyed it. We got to do whatever we wanted.
Like activities or sport's day together. SO that like on activities day we can choose what we want to do but there's football and stuff.   There are more sport's choices. There was dodgeball on sport's day but I'd have more games that that because people had to wait a lot.   The activities would be for people who didn't want to do sport's for example watching films and playing games.
I'd get involved in more things. There'd be more stuff that I wanted to do
We'd get to choose our lessons and we'd get to pick which ones we wanted to do.
Sport's day but we'd be in non-uniform and we could play football, basketball and stuff and we could have water fights.
I'd be excited to come in everyone would want to be here. I'd join in and do loads of stuff.
A day where we could choose our lessons but we'd wouldn't have to stay in our year groups. Like if someone in year 10 wanted to do drama but they hadn't chosen it as one of their options they could do it on that day. If you were doing it you could help out the other year groups too
.We'd enjoy it. We'd like having a choice.
More choice
More time so that we can get things finished. We never get enough time really. You have to rush stuff and if you make a mistake you have to start again. You don't really get to do your best work.
Yeah we should do different stuff in lessons like not just reading all the time like in English. So we don't just do the same thing, and maybe we could have a choice of what to do?
Yeah I think we should say something about like having a choice whether or not you do RE, citizenship, functional skills and stuff like that. Some people don't like doing that, like I'd rather do some extra English and stuff.

Like the subjects we've just picked I'd like to have chance to move if we realise it's difficult
I enjoyed doing it and I'm quite good at it. I did more than I do in class
Everyone else just enjoyed making everything and they joined in more. The teachers just helped they didn't really tell us what to do.
Going to the pleasure beach on a school trip. We could do whatever we wanted it was really good.
I did what I wanted but I made sure I was sensible.
Everyone else met up at the checkpoints on time. They all got on no-one fell out. They were really protective and we made sure everyone was okay. The teachers just let us get on with it.
Good, it was fun. I felt like we were treated like adults.
I put more effort in, concentrated more and made the most of the opportunities I had
They were putting lots of effort in to get points for their teams.
Good, I felt good about myself because I made an effort, participated and helped my team to win.
I was really interested. I behaved well and I enjoyed it. I listened to what the instructor asked me to do
The army instructor helped with the activities. They helped instead of telling you but they were more strict. But that's what they're like with people in the army.
A famous dancer coming to school to show us all how to dance. We'd like make up a dance. It'd be really fun. We wouldn't know the instructor so it'd be fun.
Jewellery making but we'd get to design it ourselves and not just follow someone else's design. We'd be able to choose what materials we used and not just use what's there.
I'd be more enthusiastic. I'd do more, It'd be my design so I'd put more time in and more effort so it'd look right. I'd concentrate more and I'd behave better. It'd be mine, I'd have designed it. happy because teachers wouldn't like be telling me what to do so I'd enjoy it more.
I'd be able to do stuff that I'm good at. I'd be able to make computers and I'd be able to fix computers if they were not working. I'd be able to use my skills.
Having more choices to do lessons. I could spend more time on things I enjoy or things I'm not good at so I could spend more time on it.
I would get people who were good at something I found hard to help me to tell me how I could be better at something.
I'd feel like I was making much better use of my time instead of doing things which are pointless.

An all day sport's day where someone could come in and help us. Like a sport expert or something and there'd be sport's activities all day. There'd be loads of activities to choose from. You could do what you are good at.
Happy, I'd help set it up so I'd feel happy about it.
Like you said more chances to develop our skills.
More choices. We'd get to choose more of the stuff we do.

Skills

I get to use my skills
I'm good at teamwork.
I'm good at acting, I practise my acting skills. I get to use my acting skills.
I'm good in drama and I like being in that lesson.
P.E., I scored 12 goals and I celebrated.
I felt good, I was playing football, I got loads of goals.
Art. I like drawing. I can choose what I want to draw and how I want to draw it. It's my work.
good, it goes really quick and I don't get bored.
I'd do stuff I liked more and stuff that I was good at. I think I'd do more.
I'd do P.E. and stuff, things I'm good at.
free lesson and I choose what I wanted to learn about. I'd enjoy it and I'd do stuff I was good about.
A lesson where I choose what I want to do. I'd do healthy stuff like sports. I'd have more freedom and I'd be able to do what I wanted more. We do too much different stuff at the moment.
I'd enjoy school, I wouldn't have to do stuff I didn't like or that I wasn't good at. I'd like school more.
I'd do more posters and work that I wanted to do for my work instead of writing loads of pointless stuff.
School work, but more interesting stuff, things I was good at.
To let us create things more in our own way
Well I really enjoy singing and dancing so I put a lot into it.
Excited, I really enjoyed it and I was pleased with what we did..

I like being in that group, I can do things in there and everyone is nice.
I enjoy it, it's good. I'm quite good at sports.
I'd feel much better because it would be up to me what I wanted to do, I wouldn't have to do anything I didn't want to do or that I wasn't good at.
I'd like us to have our options sooner so that we could choose what lessons we wanted to do instead of spending so much time doing things we don't want to do or that we're not good at.
I'd do stuff I like, stuff I'm good at not stuff I'm rubbish at.
I'd do a lot more science and technology stuff because that's what I want to do when I'm older. Some of the stuff I study now is pointless for me.
I'd do more PE and subjects I was good at
Drawing. Art lessons. I like drawing, just getting on with my work.
I just draw, I get on with my work. I work hard and I do my best.
I was really interested and I was listening carefully and following what the instructor was telling us to do. I was watching everyone else and following what they were doing.
Good, I like dancing and everyone is joining in.
I'd show everyone what I could do and I'd enjoy seeing different people.
Good, I'd be doing something I'm good at.
A lot better, I'd be doing things that I'm good at and things that I enjoy.
More relaxed because I'd know what work I was going to do and that no one would ask me to do stuff I couldn't do or didn't want to do.
I'd do stuff I was good at so that the work I did would be good and I wouldn't be doing rubbish stuff.
Good, I wouldn't have to do stupid stuff.
More chances to use our skills in school
I take part more, I get to do things I am good at more.
I did more. We had a piece of paper and we were given a choice of what to do on the sheet. I did the 100 metres and football and some other races. I enjoyed it. I was at the races on time and stuff.
Like activities or sport's day together. SO that like on activities day we can choose what we want to do but there's football and stuff.   There are more sport's choices. There was dodgeball on sport's day but I'd have more games that that because people had to wait a lot. The activities would be for people who didn't want to do sport's for example watching films and playing games.

I'd try and relax more and do dodgeball and stuff. I'd get involved in more things. There'd be more stuff that I wanted to do.
We'd get to choose our lessons and we'd get to pick which ones we wanted to do.
Happy it'd be good, I'd enjoy it.
I'd do more drama. I'd be happier and I'd do more.
More time so that we can get things finished. We never get enough time really. You have to rush stuff and if you make a mistake you have to start again. You don't really get to do your best work.
Like the subjects we've just picked I'd like to have chance to move if we realise it's difficult.
I enjoyed doing it and I'm quite good at it. I did more than I do in class.
I put more effort in, concentrated more and made the most of the opportunities I had.
They were putting lots of effort in to get points for their teams.
Good, I felt good about myself because I made an effort, participated and helped my team to win.
I was really interested. I behaved well and I enjoyed it. I listened to what the instructor asked me to do.
Jewellery making but we'd get to design it ourselves and not just follow someone else's design. We'd be able to choose what materials we used and not just use what's there.
I'd be more enthusiastic. I'd do more, It'd be my design so I'd put more time in and more effort so it'd look right. I'd concentrate more and I'd behave better. It'd be mine, I'd have designed it
I'd be able to do stuff that I'm good at. I'd be able to make computers and I'd be able to fix computers if they were not working. I'd be able to use my skills.
I'd be happier. I could do more technical stuff, it'd be more useful.
Having more choices to do lessons. I could spend more time on things I enjoy or things I'm not good at so I could spend more time on it.
I would get people who were good at something I found hard to help me to tell me how I could be better at something.
I'd feel like I was making much better use of my time instead of doing things which are pointless.
An all day sport's day where someone could come in and help us. Like a sport expert or something and there'd be sport's activities all day. There'd be loads of activities to choose from. You could do what you are good at.
Like you said more chances to develop our skills.

On task behaviour

It's easier to listen, everyone is listening
Interested, taking more notice.
Everyone behaves better and they do more in P.E. than they do in class.
Everyone else is sensible because if they don't want to play they can just go away they don't have to join in.
now we're just watching French films and reading French books and having to try and work out what it's all about.
like when we're reading the book we all take turns to read a paragraph or a passage and that gets everyone involved.
I feel like I'm involved in it.
Well some of them do the work and some of them don't really. Most of them do the work. The others watch mostly but that's good too.
I'd enjoy it more than usual. I'd do more. I'd be happy.
I'd work more. It wouldn't be boring so I'd want to do it and I'd have some food at the end.
yes because everyone is joining in and they're all playing good.
They pass the ball and help the team, everyone joins in.
Everyone does their work, they don't mess about. The teacher just leaves us alone and doesn't like nag at us
The teacher just lets me draw what I like and just makes sure I have everything I need. Everyone else just does their own drawing and they get on with it, they don't mess about as much.
good, it goes really quick and I don't get bored.
I'd do stuff I liked more and stuff that I was good at. I think I'd do more.
I'd be happy I wouldn't get bored and I'd enjoy school more.
I'd be happy, I'd be getting on with it and I wouldn't be bored.
I'd be working, I'd be getting on with it and not messing about.
I'd be happy and not bored. There'd be a point to it. It wouldn't be rubbish like some of the other lessons where the teachers have you doing stupid stuff.
be happy and I'd come to school more because I'd want to do the lessons.
I'd learn more, I'd pay attention and I wouldn't mess about as much. I'd feel more relaxed and

I'd do more posters and work that I wanted to do for my work instead of writing loads of pointless stuff.
I listened and I designed the maze.
Trust us more, don't assume that we won't do what they tell us to do. On trips and at sports day they just tell us at the beginning of the day and we do it. We need more responsibility.
Well I'd actually want to wake up in the morning and come into school. Sometimes I get to school and think I shouldn't have bothered.
I'd want to work harder because I'd be doing stuff that was worth doing. I'd feel better about doing it.
I'd feel good about myself and I'd enjoy being at school.
I'd feel like I could cope better with all my work and that I could get all my work done. I'd be happier and less stressed.
The teachers just leave you to it. They tell you what to do at the beginning of the day and then that's it really they leave you to it. They let you get on with it. All they do is watch the activities and referee them. Everyone else just goes around doing the activities they want to do.
Well the teachers just watch us really and help us if we need it. They don't really have to tell us what to do. We have a sheet and we just get on with it. Everyone kind does what they should be doing.
I have more responsibility, I can choose what I want to do and if I want to do well in a an activity I have to be there and I have to be ready
they treat differently, more like and adult. I follow a rota so no-one tells me what to do I just follow the rota.
My friends helped me and we worked together. I like working with my friends.
Everyone did something with music and dance and everyone did something.
When I go into A group on a Wednesday and we get to make things. It's a group of people and all my friends are there. We all help each other.
Well I really enjoying singing and dancing so I put a lot into it.
The teachers are kind there and they help us a lot and we work together and we don't fall out.
I'm much more sociable, I socialise more. I talk to people more. I'm down to earth in the library and more responsible, I can act like an adult.
I'm sensible and I follow the instructions carefully..
They are just enjoying it, getting on with it.

They were just having fun too. No one was falling out and we all made sure we were on time to check in.
Drawing. Art lessons. I like drawing, just getting on with my work.
I just draw, I get on with my work. I work hard and I do my best.
They get on their own work but they do talk more about what they're doing and stuff.
I was really interested and I was listening carefully and following what the instructor was telling us to do. I was watching everyone else and following what they were doing.
They weren't bored like in lessons. They were all joining in and they were happier.
I'd show everyone what I could do and I'd enjoy seeing different people.
I'd get more involved , I don't like it when people tell me what to do. I'd do much more.
I take part more, I get to do things I am good at more.
The teachers were more relaxed and just let us get on with it. The left us to it. Everyone else was just doing what they were supposed to be doing.   Even when they were waiting round and it was a bit boring we were being sensible.
I did more. We had a piece of paper and we were given a choice of what to do on the sheet. I did the 100 metres and football and some other races. I enjoyed it. I was at the races on time and stuff.
The adults were alright and if people were messing around they had to go straight inside so there wasn't anyone messing about, they made them all behave. Everyone was joining in and cheering.
I took part and I enjoyed it. I joined in with cheering everyone
I'd try and relax more and do dodgeball and stuff. I'd get involved in more things. There'd be more stuff that I wanted to do.
I'd be excited to come in everyone would want to be here. I'd join in and do loads of stuff.
I'd do more drama. I'd be happier and I'd do more
.More time so that we can get things finished. We never get enough time really. You have to rush stuff and if you make a mistake you have to start again. You don't really get to do your best work.
I enjoyed doing it and I'm quite good at it. I did more than I do in class.
Everyone else just enjoyed making everything and they joined in more. The teachers just helped they didn't really tell us what to do.
I did what I wanted but I made sure I was sensible.
Everyone else met up at the checkpoints on time. They all got on no-one fell out. They were

really protective and we made sure everyone was okay. The teachers just let us get on with it.
I got involved and I really enjoyed it.
They were all shouting for each other and the teachers were shouting for them too. It was good being in our house teams.
I put more effort in, concentrated more and made the most of the opportunities I had.
They were putting lots of effort in to get points for their teams.
Good, I felt good about myself because I made an effort, participated and helped my team to win
I was really interested. I behaved well and I enjoyed it. I listened to what the instructor asked me to do
I'd enjoy it. I'd be joining in and taking part.
Good, it'd feel different. I'd be learning lots from them.
I'd be more enthusiastic. I'd do more, It'd be my design so I'd put more time in and more effort so it'd look right. I'd concentrate more and I'd behave better. It'd be mine, I'd have designed it.
I'd be able to do stuff that I'm good at. I'd be able to make computers and I'd be able to fix computers if they were not working. I'd be able to use my skills.
I would get people who were good at something I found hard to help me to tell me how I could be better at something.
I'd be joining in, taking part in all the activities.

Practical and relevant

It would be English, when we get to watch films, usually we take notes and sometimes when we go somewhere else it's hard work.
Yeah, it's better than sitting in class all day.
3rd pupil: Cook and make stuff and find out what goes into food and stuff. Then we get to take it home and eat it.
Happy and it's useful because I make something. learning a new language.
We'd do cooking and stuff but it'd be related to French and that, we'd cook French food.
it'd be interesting. We'd use the lessons to do proper stuff like asking for food in French and that.
Well I'd just be able to stay and do one thing instead of doing loads of boring stuff. I'd get to

finish stuff.
It'd be cooking. We'd cook different things all day. From different ranges, different recipes.
Happy and I'd have something to show for it. You could eat it and if it was good you'd know you'd cooked something good and if not you'd know you hadn't.
They'd let us on the field. It wouldn't be so crowded outside there'd be more space.   I could relax more and chill out. I would be able to rest. I'd be able to learn more because I'd be relaxed.
I'd be cooking. Making lots of food that I enjoyed.
It's much better than being in class.
science, we get to eat and do interesting stuff.
Art. I like drawing. I can choose what I want to draw and how I want to draw it. It's my work.
Getting to choose. Having a free lesson and we choose what we're going to do. do stuff I liked more and stuff that I was good at. I think I'd do more.
I'd do P.E. and stuff, things I'm good at.
be happy, I'd be getting on with it and I wouldn't be bored.
free lesson and I choose what I wanted to learn about. I'd enjoy it and I'd do stuff I was good about. I'd do lots of different things like using the internet and looking things up.   I'd work with my friends.
I'd be happy and not bored. There'd be a point to it. It wouldn't be rubbish like some of the other lessons where the teachers have you doing stupid stuff.
A lesson where I choose what I want to do. I'd do healthy stuff like sports. I'd have more freedom and I'd be able to do what I wanted more. We do too much different stuff at the moment.
I'd enjoy school, I wouldn't have to do stuff I didn't like or that I wasn't good at. I'd like school more.
I'd learn more, I'd pay attention and I wouldn't mess about as much. I'd feel more relaxed and I'd do more posters and work that I wanted to do for my work instead of writing loads of pointless stuff.
We were given topics to choose from and we could choose what we did and who we wanted to work with.
School work, but more interesting stuff, things I was good at.
Happy, there'd be more point in coming to school.

To let us create things more in our own way.
Happy, and I liked my maze at the end when we'd finished.
Well I'd actually want to wake up in the morning and come into school. Sometimes I get to school and think I shouldn't have bothered.
I'd do more PE and subjects I was good at.
More like college. You'd have a place where you could chill out and listen to music and you could call the teachers by their first names like at college because they call us by our first names. You don't have to go to lessons which you don't think are important and you can concentrate on what you want to do instead of having to do loads of lessons which you're never going to use like Drama.
I'd want to work harder because I'd be doing stuff that was worth doing. I'd feel better about doing it.
I'd do a lot more science and technology stuff because that's what I want to do when I'm older. Some of the stuff I study now is pointless for me.
They put ideas across to the teacher and made suggestions about the dance. The teacher listened to them and they had more say in what they did.
Excited, I really enjoyed it and I was pleased with what we did.
When I go into A group on a Wednesday and we get to make things. It's a group of people and all my friends are there. We all help each other.
Being a librarian in the library.
I feel proud because I'm doing a job.
Sport's day. We get play different sports and we get to choose what we want to do.
Sport's day, I like playing football and dodgeball. We do have set sports but you get to choose which ones you want to do.
Having a free period like at college. I'd be able to catch up with my work and do my homework.
I'd get chance to do stuff I enjoyed, stuff that I'm good at. And I'd be able to do things that I'm not doing anymore that I liked. There'd be drawing competitions and we'd make things.
I'd feel much better because it would be up to me what I wanted to do, I wouldn't have to do anything I didn't want to do or that I wasn't good at.
I'd like us to have our options sooner so that we could choose what lessons we wanted to do instead of spending so much time doing things we don't want to do or that we're not good at.
I'd do stuff I like, stuff I'm good at not stuff I'm rubbish at.

Kind of like the options, you get to choose what subjects you don't want to do, the ones which aren't important and you're not going to use. Then you can just concentrate on the important stuff.
Doing nail art. I get do it sometimes in the afternoon. I get to decorate people's nails. It's something I enjoy doing.
Happy, I get to do something I enjoy something that I'm good at.
Our school trip. We were allowed to wander round and do what we liked.
Drawing. Art lessons. I like drawing, just getting on with my work.
Someone came in and gave us a dance class. It was really good because they knew lots of things about dancing.
I'd do nail art stuff more, I'd be able to do it on more people.
Good, I'd be doing something I'm good at.
More lessons where we could choose what we were going to do like in dance we're given some music and then we decide what dance we're going to do.
A lot better, I'd be doing things that I'm good at and things that I enjoy.
We'd get to watch more films about stuff, it's much more interesting than when someone tells us stuff. Then after we'd be able to write or draw what we'd learnt about instead of just answering loads of questions.
I'd be able to draw pictures to show what I'd learnt and put all the information in it.
More relaxed because I'd know what work I was going to do and that no one would ask me to do stuff I couldn't do or didn't want to do.
We'd be able to choose what we wanted to do. We'd have different things to choose from. In lessons we'd be able to choose what activities we wanted to do
I'd do stuff I was good at so that the work I did would be good and I wouldn't be doing rubbish stuff.
Good, I wouldn't have to do stupid stuff.
More chances to use our skills in school
We got a chance to choose an activity we wanted to do. It was good because that day we could choose to do stuff we wouldn't normally get to do.
Like the subjects we've just picked I'd like to have chance to move if we realise it's difficult.
Yeah I think we should say something about like having a choice whether or not you do RE, citizenship, functional skills and stuff like that. Some people don't like doing that, like I'd rather do some extra English and stuff.

Yeah we should do different stuff in lessons like not just reading all the time like in English. So we don't just do the same thing, and maybe we could have a choice of what to do
I'd do more drama. I'd be happier and I'd do more.
A day where we could choose our lessons but we'd wouldn't have to stay in our year groups. Like if someone in year 10 wanted to do drama but they hadn't chosen it as one of their options they could do it on that day. If you were doing it you could help out the other year groups too.
Sport's day but we'd be in non-uniform and we could play football, basketball and stuff and we could have water fights.
We'd get to choose our lessons and we'd get to pick which ones we wanted to do.
Like activities or sport's day together. So that like on activities day we can choose what we want to do but there's football and stuff.   There are more sport's choices. There was dodgeball on sport's day but I'd have more games that that because people had to wait a lot.   The activities would be for people who didn't want to do sport's for example watching films and playing games.
They enjoyed it and the other teachers were even cheering everyone on.
Sport's day. I enjoyed it. We got to do whatever we wanted.
Sport's day. We got to choose what we wanted to do and did lots of football games and stuff.
I take part more, I get to do things I am good at more.
It was sport's day. We got to choose what sport's we wanted to do.
When I got to make jewellery, making bracelets and earrings.
I enjoyed doing it and I'm quite good at it. I did more than I do in class.
Going to the pleasure beach on a school trip. We could do whatever we wanted it was really good.
Football at sport's day.
Being with the army on sport's day. We did loads of fun activities like archery and paintball and that.
I'd feel like I was making much better use of my time instead of doing things which are pointless.
A famous dancer coming to school to show us all how to dance. We'd like make up a dance. It'd be really fun. We wouldn't know the instructor so it'd be fun.
Good, it'd feel different. I'd be learning lots from them.
Jewellery making but we'd get to design it ourselves and not just follow someone else's design. We'd be able to choose what materials we used and not just use what's there.

I'd be more enthusiastic. I'd do more, It'd be my design so I'd put more time in and more effort so it'd look right. I'd concentrate more and I'd behave better. It'd be mine, I'd have designed it.
Building computers. Making computers, it'd be lots of lessons. It'd be really interesting.
I'd be able to do stuff that I'm good at. I'd be able to make computers and I'd be able to fix computers if they were not working. I'd be able to use my skills.
I'd be happier. I could do more technical stuff, it'd be more useful.
Having more choices to do lessons. I could spend more time on things I enjoy or things I'm not good at so I could spend more time on it.
I would get people who were good at something I found hard to help me to tell me how I could be better at something.
An all day sport's day where someone could come in and help us. Like a sport expert or something and there'd be sport's activities all day. There'd be loads of activities to choose from. You could do what you are good at.
Like you said more chances to develop our skills.
More visitors, like experts to tell us about stuff and teach us

Key:

Group 1 (high attenders school A)

Group 2 (low attenders school A)

Group 3 (Mid-range attenders school A)

Group 4 (Low attenders school B)

Group 5 (mid-range attenders school B)

Group 6 (high attenders school B)