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THE WELLBEING OF ADOLESCENTS DURING THE PRIMARY-SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSITION

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The wellbeing of adolescents during the primary-secondary school transition

Katherine Mollart

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Clinical Psychology, validated by the University of Oxford

(Trinity Term)

July 2013

Word count: 21,216



The wellbeing of adolescents during the primary-secondary school transition

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Trinity Term 2013

Abstract

The transition to secondary school can represent a significant life-event for many adolescents and can adversely affect their psychological adjustment and wellbeing. Little is known about how adjustment to this transition can be facilitated for young people. The review paper critically evaluated the evidence-base for school transition programmes that target pupil's mental wellbeing. A keyword search of abstract databases was conducted and 20 studies were evaluated. The majority of studies could not conclude that their intervention improved mental wellbeing to a statistically significant level, and numerous methodological limitations weaken the existing evidence-base. However, the most promising areas of research pertain to intervening with the parents and teachers of adolescents experiencing school transition. Further research should investigate this further.

The empirical paper employed a qualitative methodology to examine how adolescents make sense of and create meaning from their experience of going to boarding school, and to explore what can be done to facilitate this adjustment. Ten female and male adolescents were interviewed in their second year of attending boarding school. The interviews, analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, yielded three superordinate themes: 1) 'Home is where the heart is', which captures adolescents experiences of homesickness, the stronger relationships formed with their family, and the development of new attachment figures with their house matron and peers, 2) 'Living in a

bubble', which reflects a feeling of being constrained at boarding school and an awareness of it being a hierarchal environment, and 3) 'Gaining familiarity with the place and just being me' as adolescents appeared to positively adjust over time. Results are discussed in terms of attachment, coping and adjustment theories and models of psychosocial development. Clinical and organisational implications for professionals working in boarding schools, as well as suggestions for future research are discussed.

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PAPER A

The effectiveness of primary-secondary school transition programmes for improving mental wellbeing: A systematic review

Katherine Mollart

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The effectiveness of primary-secondary school transition programmes for improving mental wellbeing: A systematic review.

Katherine Mollart, Harris Manchester College,

University of Oxford, Doctorate in Clinical Psychology,

Trinity Term 2013

Abstract

Previous research highlights the negative impact of school transition on mental health. Furthermore, there are no review papers on the effectiveness of transition programmes that focus on improving psychological wellbeing. The aim of the review was to critically review the evidence-base for school transition programmes that target pupil's mental wellbeing. A keyword search of abstract databases was conducted. 20 studies evaluating both universal and targeted interventions for adolescents, parents and teachers in group and individual formats, were found. The majority of studies could not conclude that their intervention improved mental wellbeing to a statistically significant level, and numerous methodological limitations weaken the existing evidence-base. However, the most promising areas of research pertain to intervening with the parents and teachers of adolescents experiencing school transition. Research should be replicated while employing more robust methodologies, and utilising more appropriate wellbeing measures. Exploring the mechanisms of change within transition programmes, identifying whether they would be best implemented in primary or secondary schools or both, and comparing the effectiveness of different types of transition programmes is needed.

Keywords: school transition, wellbeing, adolescence

Proposed Journal: Journal of Adolescence

Introduction

Impact of school transition on mental health and wellbeing

Periods of transition are often stressful and it is widely acknowledged that the transition from primary to secondary school, which occurs at around 11 years of age in the United Kingdom (UK), can adversely affect adolescents' emotional and psychological adjustment and wellbeing (Rice, Frederickson & Seymour, 2011). Studies have shown that in the UK as many as 16% of all pupils will have difficulty adjusting to life in secondary school, particularly those with identified learning, social, emotional and behavioural problems (Evangelou et al. 2008) and 40% of pupils show a hiatus in progress following the transition (Galton et al. 2000).

The transition represents a significant life-event for many adolescents (Sirsch, 2003) and has been linked to increased stress, loneliness, somatisation, and depressive symptoms (Chung, Elias & Schneider, 1998; Newman, Newman, Griffen, O'Connor & Spas, 2007; Benner & Graham, 2009), increased alcohol use (Shortt, Hutchinson, Chapman & Toumbourou, 2007), discipline problems (Theriot & Dupper, 2010), decreased academic motivation and attainment (Galton, Morrison & Pell, 2000) reductions in global self-esteem (Seidman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell & Feinman, 1994; Wigfield, Eccles, Mac Iver, Reuman & Midgley, 1991), and de-motivation and disengagement from school which may lead to placement in Pupil Referral Units or home tuition (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm & Splittgerber, 2000; Wassell, Preston & Jones, 2007).

Transition to secondary school occurs at the same time as the normative physical, emotional, and cognitive changes (Wassell, et al. 2007; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Steinberg & Morris, 2001), associated with puberty, which may be a further source of stress. Adolescents have to also contend with a sudden change in role: they move from

being the oldest and most experienced children in primary school to being the youngest and least mature in the new secondary school, where there are new expectations for independence and personal responsibility (Rosenblatt & Elias, 2008). Adolescents' developmental characteristics, such as an increased desire for autonomy, social acceptance and establishing their identity may therefore be discordant with the increased control, compartmentalisation and competition often characteristic of the secondary school environment (Eccles, 2004).

Studies assessing young people's perspectives show that commonly reported worries during transition include, getting used to new school routines and environments, new social structures with peers and members of staff, travelling to and from school, managing increased academic demands e.g. workload, exams and homework, detentions/doing wrong, and bullying (Anderson et al., 2000; Brown & Armstrong, 1982; Lucey & Reay, 2000; Zeedyk et al., 2003). However, the more organisational/procedural concerns tend to subside quite quickly (Rice et al., 2011).

Current approaches to facilitating transition in British schools

According to West, Sweeting and Young (2010) and Zeedyk et al. (2003), educational authorities and policy in Britain are increasingly giving attention to pupils' needs during transition. In recent publications, the government has argued that if health problems are identified and addressed early, that over time, the health inequalities gap will close (Department of Health DH, 2009, 2010). The *Healthy Child Programme* suggests that one of the ways of achieving this is by identifying vulnerable children with incipient emotional or mental health problems, and providing targeted input at the transition from primary to secondary school (DH, 2009). More recently, *Getting it right for Children, Young People and Families* (DH, 2012) recognises 'improved school readiness' (e.g. at the transition to secondary school), as a key public health outcome, and

acknowledges its significance in the potential health and wellbeing of children and young people.

The primary-secondary transition has not featured strongly in the British academic research agenda and the research that does exist is inconsistent and incomplete (West et al. 2010). Shepherd and Roker (2003) found that due to the lack of review papers, transition programmes in the UK are often started with little opportunity to build on the learning from existing programmes.

One such review paper conducted by Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999), reported on the Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools (CSCS) project that investigated current approaches to facilitating transition in 215 schools across the UK. Specific transition interventions were not mentioned in the review. This is problematic as schools which place little emphasis on easing the transition process have higher dropout and failure rates than those with specific intervention programmes (Legters & Kerr, 2001).

Shepherd and Roker (2003), (Rocker & Colman, 2007) carried out a review of 125 primary-secondary transition programmes in schools, youth services, and social services across the UK. The three most common aims of these programmes were to promote a smooth personal/emotional transition for children (34%), to promote a smooth academic transition (15%) and to improve children's confidence and self-esteem around transition (15%). Contrary to this, Zeedyk et al., (2003) found that during transition schools are more likely to focus on improving organisational or administrative procedures, rather than social and emotional issues and psychological wellbeing. Considering the aforementioned literature on the impact of school transition on mental health and wellbeing, and the fact that young people tend to raise far more socio-emotional concerns than learning and academic concerns, it is argued that transition programmes need to be addressing socio-emotional issues.

Both Galton et al. (1999) and Shepherd and Roker (20003) fail to comment on the effectiveness of the transition interventions reviewed. This is essential in order to meet the needs of young people and to know where funding and resources should be allocated. A review paper that brings together relevant British and international research on the effectiveness of different transition programmes is therefore needed.

Aim of the review

This paper aims to critically review the evidence-base for school transition programmes that target pupils' psychological well-being. As school transition is an inter-disciplinary issue, it is hoped that this review will inform clinical and educational psychologists, those who work in education and any other professional involved in adolescents' psychological wellbeing, on how they can implement effective and comprehensive transition programmes to ease the transition to secondary school for young people. This in turn may help to prevent mental health problems arising from poor transition and reduce referrals to mental health services.

Methodology

Search strategy

A list of search terms was drawn up by consulting previous research. Using the NHS Athens University of Oxford domains, NHS Evidence (including EMBASE, MEDLINE and psycINFO databases) was systematically searched for relevant publications. The search terms utilised were:

1. school
2. transition
3. program* OR group* OR project* OR mentoring OR counselling

These three search terms were then systematically combined (see appendix 1 for full search strategy). Results were subjected to initial screening for suitability by reading

titles and abstracts. Secondary searches of the shortlisted papers' reference lists and online-citation searches using Google Scholar were undertaken to identify further studies. The final sample was obtained using the criteria below.

Table 1.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Study aims	Studies with a primary aim of assessing the effectiveness of a transition programme that targets pupil's mental wellbeing (either indirectly or directly). The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) (2009) state that 'wellbeing' encompasses: • Emotional wellbeing - Happiness, confidence, and not feeling depressed • Psychological wellbeing – A sense of autonomy, problem-solving skills, resilience, attentiveness, a sense of involvement with others • Social wellbeing - Ability to have good relationships with others and to avoid disruptive behaviour, delinquency, violence and bullying
Design Papers	In order to maximise the representativeness of the review, all designs from randomised controlled trials (RCT) to small 'n' designs were accepted. were excluded if they only used qualitative methods of analysis.
Participants	Students who fall within an at-risk population (targeted programmes) and those who fall within the normal population (universal programmes) were included. Interventions targeting students' parents and teachers were also included. Children with learning disabilities and learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia) were excluded as they may need different support.
Settings	Studies conducted in mainstream primary or secondary schools
Interventions	Transition programme that targets pupil's mental wellbeing (either indirectly or directly) were included.
Measures (e.g. if	Studies needed to have some quantifiable measure of mental wellbeing emotional, psychological or social wellbeing). Papers were only included they had pre and post data on outcome measures.
Journal	All literature published in a peer reviewed journal, in the English language and in the last ten years were included in the review.

Review guidelines

The review was guided by the Cochrane Collaborations (2011) handbook for systematic review of interventions and the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic

reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA Moher, Liberati, Tetzloff & Altman, 2009) (see appendix 2 for PRISMA statement). The key characteristics of the quantitative research that were considered included: design, sample (e.g. size, characteristics, representativeness), choice of measures (e.g. internal consistency, validity), clarity (e.g. research questions, rationale, method), reliability of intervention procedures, generalizability, strength of results and acknowledgment of limitations.

Study selection

In keeping with systematic review guidelines (e.g. PRISMA), the process of study selection is summarised in a flow diagram (figure 1).

Figure 1. Study Selection

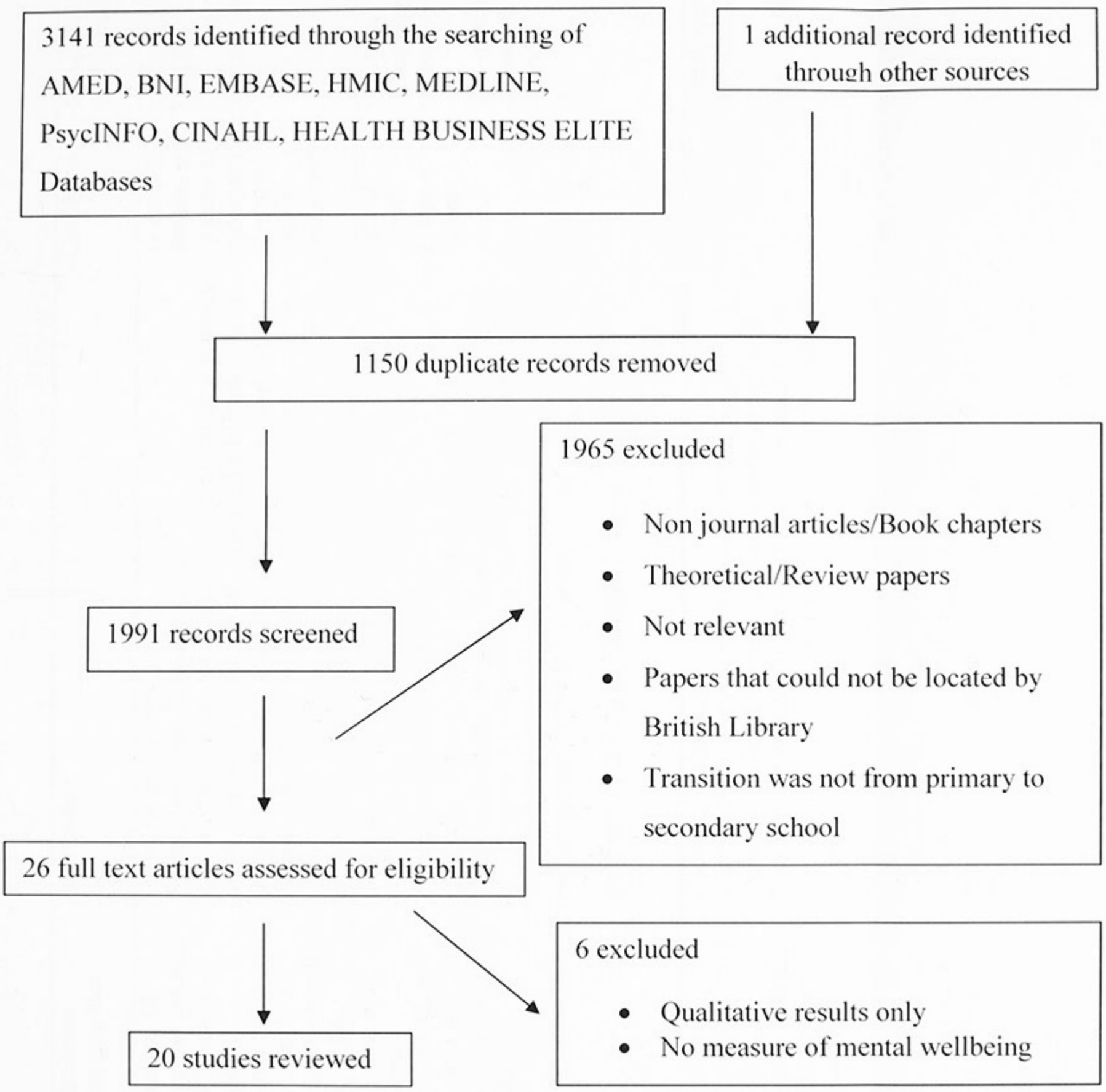


Table 2.
Study characteristics

Author, Country, Setting	Targeted or universal transition programme	Participant demographics	Intervention	Conditions	Measure of mental wellbeing & follow-up
Akos & Martin (2003) (USA Primary School)	Targeted 15 students volunteered & teachers selected 5 'anxious' students	Number: 19 Age: not reported (5^{th} grade=9 -11 years) Gender: 53% male Ethnicity: 37% African Americans, 37% white	Group for adolescents 5 weekly sessions (30 mins). Topics: - Introductions & pen pal activity with older students & teachers, personal growth & identity development and relationships with peers & parents and addressing worries about academic, organisational & procedural issues & developing skills Delivered by school counsellor	1) group of females, n=6 2) group of males, n=5 3) mixed-gender group, n=8	- School Transition (STQ) Pre-post intervention
Dickinson, Coggan & Bennett (2003) (New Zealand, Secondary School)	Targeted Inclusion: answered 'no' to 'do you feel good about yourself most of the time?', scored above 40 on SED scale, 4 or more major life events in past 12 months, attended 7 or more schools. Exclusion: behavioural or language problems, or learning disability	Number: 34 (2 schools) Age: 13-14 years Gender: 29% male Ethnicity: 'mainly white'	Group for adolescents – *Travellers* 8 group sessions (60-90 mins) on: - Exploring change, loss & transition experiences - Developing Cognitive-Behavioural strategies (CBT) to look at how thoughts & feelings influence how they cope, respond & make meaning in the transition experience - Using support from adults & peers Delivered by clinical psychologist & school counsellors	1) rural school 2) urban school	- Distress (WAI – SEDS) - Frequency of transition concerns Pre - post intervention & one-month follow-up interview
Spier (2010) (USA, Primary school)	Targeted Inclusion: Identified by teachers as having poor coping skills &/or disruptive behaviours	Number: 6 Age (mean): 13.2 years Gender: 67% male Ethnicity: Not reported	Group for adolescents 4 weeks, twice weekly sessions (45-60 mins) of group art therapy:- 'Me in the 9^{th} grade' drawing, drawing stress in my body/how I relive stress, making a stress mobile, mask making, stressful situation story board & role-playing stressful situations Delivered by an art therapist	No control group	-Adolescent coping behaviours (A-COPE) Pre-post intervention
Lyons & Woods (2012) (UK, Primary & Secondary school)	Targeted Inclusion: Identified by school staff as shy, under-confident or withdrawn & at risk of becoming socially isolated at secondary school	Number: 9 (3 schools) Age (range): Not reported (year 6= Gender: Not reported Ethnicity: Not reported	Group for adolescents – *Transition Pyramid Club* 10 session after school activity programme: - Opportunity to make friends, rehearse social skills, develop self-esteem & resilience through confidence-building activities e.g. arts & crafts & physical games, teaching & discussion on transition-related issues Delivered by High Level Teaching Assistants trained by Local Authority Pyramid co-ordinator	No control group	- Pupil adjustment & well-being (SDQ) - Pro-social orientation & social initiative (SCI) Pre-post intervention

Author, Country, Setting	Targeted or universal transition programme	Participant demographics	Intervention	Conditions	Measure of mental wellbeing & follow-up
Carmen, Waycott & Smith (2011) (Australia, Primary School)	Targeted Inclusion: Identified by teachers as 'at risk' from disengagement from school	Number: 13 Age (range): Not reported (grades 5 – 7 =10 -13 yrs) Gender: 46% male Ethnicity: Not reported	Transition programme for adolescents – *Rock up* Individual 1hr weekly sessions: - Setting individual learning goals, developing skills & strengths 6 week group (2 hours per session): - Developing skills in confidence, self-esteem, resilience, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, organisation & leadership & introducing CBT concepts Delivered by education service employees	No control group	- Social and emotional and behavioural characteristics (RUQ) Pre, during, & post intervention
Wassell Preston & Jones (2007) (UK Primary & Secondary School)	Targeted Inclusion: Pupils who Primary school teachers perceived to be vulnerable to an emotional, behaviour or social difficulty	Number: 15 Age (range): 11-12 years Gender: Not reported Ethnicity: Not reported	Transition programme for adolescents - *Student Assistance Programme* - Induction day over the summer to have a tour, meet pupils - Group in first 8 weeks of term: - Sharing life experiences, negative family messages - Identifying & expressing feelings, defence mechanisms - Taking control & responsibility for themselves - Giving & receiving feedback, forgiveness - Daily additional support from a learning mentor - Optional additional follow-up or individual sessions using solution-oriented brief therapy - Parents evening to monitor student progress & gain parent views Delivered by educational psychologist	No control group	- Self-esteem & locus of control (BGS) Pre-post intervention
Bloyce & Fredericks on (2012) (UK Primary & Secondary School)	Targeted Criteria used to prioritise: social care involvement, excluded/school refusal, young carer, learning or physical disability, social/emotional or speech & language difficulty. Exclusion: SEN statement	Number: 351 (75 schools) Age (range): 10 – 12 years Gender: 62% male Ethnicity: 77% white	Transition programme for adolescents – *Transfer Support Team* - Individual support by a Transfer Support Assistant in their last year of primary school for 6 sessions - Up to 6 sessions of group support in first term of secondary school on organisational, social and academic aspects of transition Delivered by educational psychologist, assistant educational psychologist & specialist teacher	Non-equivalent benchmark comparison group (106 pupils)	- Pupil adjustment & well-being (SDQ) - Pupil concerns regarding school transition (SCQ) Pre, post & follow-up end of autumn term at secondary school

Author, Country, Setting	Targeted or universal transition programme	Participant demographics	Intervention	Conditions	Measure of mental wellbeing & follow-up
Slater & McKeown (2004) (UK Secondary School)	Universal	Number: 12 Age (range): Not reported (year 7 = 11–12 years) Gender: 50% female Ethnicity: White, afro-Caribbean, African, Eastern European and Asian	Peer mentoring for adolescents - Support & guidance in first few weeks of school - Group work exercises on emotional literacy, social skills & assertiveness training - Individual work with students experiencing distress - Mentoring for academic work Peer mentors (10 female and 2 male 15 year olds) trained by teacher/counsellor	Comparison benchmark group (12 students) from another school receiving standard student support	- Level and impact of pro-social skills, peer relations, & emotional difficulties (SDQ) - Extent and degree emotional support from others (NSSQ) - Impact of psychosocial stress (GHQ) Data collected at start & middle of academic year
Qualter, Whitely, Hutchinson & Pope (2007) (UK, Secondary School)	Universal	Number: 170 Age (range): 11-12 years Gender: 57% male Ethnicity: Not reported	Peer mentoring for adolescents - Book for each pupil 'Keep cool @ secondary school' on transition-related issues e.g. socio-emotional skills e.g. friendships/relationships, bullying, caring for others, personal & family problems & self esteem - 'cool cards' to use with peer mentors once a week to discuss feelings - Training & support packs for teachers to help pupils engage with materials Peer mentors (year 10) from same school	Control group (169 pupils from different year 7 cohort at same school)	- Emotional intelligence (BarOn EQ-iYV) - Self-concept (SPPC) - School reports of number of concerns at the end first year at secondary school Pre-post intervention
McQuillin, Smith & Strait (2011) (USA, Secondary school)	Targeted Inclusion: Parents, school community coordinator & teachers identified students considered 'vulnerable' & needing extra assistance e.g. shyness, disorganisation, lack of motivation. Exclusion: 'high risk' students e.g. SEN	Number: 60 Age (range): Not reported (6th grade =11-12 years) Gender: 58% female Ethnicity: 66% African American	Peer mentoring for adolescents Weekly over first 8 weeks of term & involved: - Getting to know each other - Promoting school connectedness through modelling, discussion & problem-solving Mentors were university students matched on sex, race & general interests & trained on motivational interviewing	Wait-list control group (60 pupils)	- Behaviour at school based on referrals for discipline problems - School connectedness (HMAC) Pre, mid & post intervention

Author, Country, Setting	Targeted or universal transition programme	Participant demographics	Intervention	Conditions	Measure of mental wellbeing & follow-up
Yadav, O'Reilly & Karim (2010) (UK, Primary & secondary school)	Targeted Inclusion: Identify by Primary schools as students who were 'at risk' or vulnerable. Screened by research team using classroom observations, parent's interviews and SDQ's	Number: 88 (10 schools) Age (mean): 10 years, 11 months Gender: 69% male Ethnicity: 92% white SES: low	Intervention for adolescents & parents Took place over 10 months & involved: - Weekly individual sessions with mentor - Group work on behaviour and anger management & friendship groups - Home-based support for parents on behaviour, relationship & making links with the school Delivered by 8 'mentors' – adults from teaching, fostering & nursing backgrounds	No control group	- Pupil adjustment & well-being (SDQ) - Self-esteem & locus of control (BGS) Pre-, during- & post-intervention
Van Ryzin, Stormshak & Dishion (2012) (USA, secondary school)	Universal	Number: 386 families (3 schools) Age (mean): 11.88 years Gender: 51.4% male Ethnicity: 36.1% white, 18% Latino	Intervention for adolescents & parents –*The Family Check-up* -Family resource centre containing pamphlets, & books on parenting - 3 session intervention engaging families in the process of change using motivational interviewing techniques - Parents needing additional support received adaptive, tailored interventions & targeted specific parenting skills e.g. positive behaviour support, monitoring & limit setting, derived from the *Everyday Parenting curriculum* Profession of facilitators (not reported)	Matched control group (207 families)	Likert scales: Youth report of: - Family conflict - Antisocial behaviour - Deviant peer involvement - Alcohol use Every spring term over 4 years
Lochman & Wells (2004) (USA Primary & secondary school)	Targeted Inclusion: teacher ratings (1- 5) of aggressive behaviours	Number: 183 (11 schools) Age (range): Not reported (4th & 5th grades = 9-11 years) Gender:100% male Ethnicity:61% - 66% African American, 31% - 38% white across conditions	Intervention for adolescents & parents – *Coping Power Program* - Child component: 33 groups sessions over 15 months: behavioural & personal goal setting, awareness of feelings & psychological response, use of coping self-statements, distraction & relaxation, organisational & study skills, social problem solving skills, dealing with peer pressure - Parent component: 16 group sessions over 15 months: identifying behavioural targets for child, giving rewards & instructions, establishing rules & expectations, applying consequences & establishing effective communication Delivered by psychology & social work graduates & counsellors	1) Child intervention only 2) Child & parent 3) Control	-Delinquency & substance use (NYS) Pre-post intervention & 1 year follow-up

Author, Country, Setting	Targeted or universal transition programme	Participant demographics	Intervention	Conditions	Measure of mental wellbeing & follow-up
Lochman, Wells, Qu & Chen (2012) (USA Primary & secondary school)	Targeted Inclusion: teachers ratings (1-5) of aggressive & disruptive behaviour	Number: 245 (17 schools) Age (range): not reported (4th grade = 9-11 years) Gender: 66-67% males Ethnicity: 75-80% African American	Intervention for adolescents & parents – *Coping Power Program* As in Lochman & Wells (2004) above	Comparison – services-as-usual within school	-Aggressive behaviour (TOCA-R, RAT) Pre, during & post-intervention & 3 year follow-up
Hamm, Farmer, Dadisman, Gravelle & Murray (2011) (USA Secondary School)	Universal	Number: 14 teachers (6 schools) 242 students Age (range): Not reported (6th grade=11-12 yrs) Gender: 44% male Ethnicity: white & latino SES: Low	Intervention for teachers – *Supporting Early Adolescent Learning and Social Strengths (SEAL) model* 12 hour face-to-face training & 8 online models (45 mins) on social dynamics & academic, behavioural & social aspects of adolescent adjustment	Control group (12 teachers) received no training	-Emotional risk of academic participation (ER) -School belonging (PSSMB) -Perception of school bullying (PPES) Pre-post intervention
Tonkin & Watt (2003) (Australia, Primary & Secondary school)	Universal	Number: 47 Age (range): Not reported (year 7= 12-13 years) Gender: 0% male Ethnicity: Not reported	Intervention for adolescents & teachers Adolescents: - IT integral part of all subject areas - Having same teachers for number of subjects in same room - Classes organised based on ability & needs of pupils - Accelerated learners program for gifted students - Problem-solving exercise in a number of subject areas - Keeping a learning journal. Teachers: - Team meetings and working with chaplain to develop ethics-based program	Control group in another school (76 pupils)	- Self-perception (SPPC) Pre- post intervention

Author, Country, Setting	Targeted or universal transition programme	Participant demographics	Intervention	Conditions	Measure of mental wellbeing & follow-up
Lochman & Wells (2002) (USA Primary & secondary school)	Universal &Targeted Inclusion for targeted intervention: Teachers ratings of students with aggressive & disruptive behaviours using a scale from 1 – 5	Number: 473 (17 schools) Age (range): Not reported (5th and 6th grade =9-12 years) Gender: 63-68% males across conditions Ethnicity: 75-81% African American across conditions	Intervention for adolescents, teachers & parents – *Coping Power Program* Universal intervention involved: 4 Parent meetings: - Promoting involvement with the school, discussing child's peer relationships & addressing concerns about the transition 5 teacher meetings: Promoting parental involvement in school & enhancing children's study, social, self-control & self-regulation skills Indicated (targeted) intervention involved: 34 groups sessions & individual session with students: - Managing anger & anxiety & peer pressure, social problem-solving skills & increasing study & organisation skills 16 parents groups sessions: - Parenting skills & stress management Delivered by grant funded staff & school counsellors	1) Universal & indicated intervention 2) Universal intervention & indicated control 3) Universal comparison & indicated intervention 4) Universal comparison & indicated control	-Substance use (CSAP) -Aggressive behaviour (PRS, BI, TOCA-R) -Internal-behavioural processes (EAT, DI) -Social behaviour (SSI, TOCA-R, PSC) -Social cognition (AM, PSI, OEQ, PPBN) -School bonding (KSB, PAC, PIS) Pre, during & post-intervention
Lochman & Wells (2003)	1 year follow-up of the sample studied by Lochman & Wells (2002)		As above	As above	-Delinquency (NYS) -Substance use (CSAP) -Aggressive behaviour (TOCA-R)
Peterson, Hamilton, & Russell (2009) (USA secondary school)	Targeted Inclusion: Teachers who referred those who perceived to be at risk for behavioural difficulties at school	Number: 63 (5 schools) Age (range): 10-12 years Gender: 59% male Ethnicity: 31 Hispanic	Intervention for adolescents, teachers & parents – *Coping Power Program* Abbreviated 24 session version of the targeted transition program for adolescents, teachers & parents used in Lochman & Wells (2002) study (as above) Delivered by clinical psychologist & graduate assistants	Control group (56 pupils)	- Behaviour & self-perception (BACS-2) Pre-post intervention

See appendix 3 for the name and authors of the measures employed in the studies

Study characteristics

Information about each study's design, participant demographics, intervention and measures were extracted, as summarized in table 2.

Review

Research design

Eight studies employed a randomised control design (RCT; Peterson et al., 2009; Lochman & Wells, 2002, 2003, 2004; Lochman et al., 2012; Hamm et al., 2011; McQuillin et al., 2011; Van Ryzin et al., 2012). RCTs are designed to maximise safeguards against threats to internal validity (Bower, 2003). However in all studies interventions were conducted in schools, a real world setting which makes it difficult to control for confounding variables. Bower (2003) would describe these studies as 'pragmatic' RCTs: procedures such as randomisation occur; but in order to balance internal and external validity, conditions may be less strict and more realistic to real world practice than in 'explanatory' RCTs (Bower, 2003).

Conducting RCTs in naturalistic settings raises methodological issues. In all the RCT's, treatment and control conditions were not of comparable size at baseline so groups were less likely to be similar. No RCT's reported if the conditions were concealed from participants and personnel, and only four studies reported if there were independent, blind outcome assessors (Lochman & Wells, 2002, 2003, 2004; Lochman et al., 2012). Therefore, there may have been both performance and detection bias in studies. Participants not blind to the intervention may report improvements on outcome measures because they think they 'should'. In seven studies, adolescents within the same school were randomly assigned to either intervention or control groups (McQuillin et al., 2011; Lochman & Wells, 2002, 2003, 2004; Lochman et al., 2012; Van Ryzin et al., 2012; Peterson et al., 2009). With this approach, participants within different conditions are able

to interact with each other, which risks cross contamination of intervention effects. To avoid this problem, Hamm et al, (2011) recruited schools in pairs by matching them on a series of demographic features such as size, student achievement, rurality and student SES, and then randomly assigned each matched pair to control and intervention conditions.

Four studies employed a controlled trial design using a non-randomised or quasi randomised control group (Tonkin & Watt, 2003; Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012; Slater & McKeown, 2004; Qualter et al., 2007). Observed effects in these studies may be due to selection or assignment bias thus limiting the inference that can be drawn.

Eight studies employed a quasi-experimental questionnaire based pre-post design with no control group (Lyons & Woods, 2012; Spier, 2010; Van Ryzin, 2010; Wassell et al., 2007; Carmen et al., 2011; Akos & Martin, 2003; Dickinson et al., 2003; Yadav et al., 2010). A control group is essential for the validation of an intervention and a significant limitation of these studies. It has been suggested that 84% of all pupils will not have difficulty adjusting to life in secondary school (Evangelou et al., 2008) so without a suitable control group the observed effects may in fact be simply the natural adjustment to the new school over time.

The majority of studies did not investigate and/or control for, the many factors that may have impacted on the outcome of the interventions e.g. the intervention facilitators' professional background and competence, their training in the intervention, experience of working with children and their supervision. The number of intervention facilitators and the dosage of the intervention were also not considered in the majority of studies.

Sample

Demographics.

Samples sizes varied considerably, ranging from 6 (Spier, 2010) to 593 (Van Ryzin et al., 2012). The level of detail regarding participant demographics also varied between papers, with the majority only reporting information relating to age, gender and ethnicity. Participants were predominantly White in seven studies, African American in six studies, and Hispanic in one study. Six studies did not report ethnicity which limits generalisability of findings. All but two studies included both female and male participants (Lochman & Wells, 2004; Tonkin & Watt, 2003), though the majority of studies included samples where participants were mostly male. This raises questions as to the generalizability of findings to female students. Two studies did not report on gender of participants. Participants' year group/grade as opposed to age was reported in a number of studies. Only four studies provided information regarding socio-economic data which is a limitation as such information is required when considering the generalizability of findings.

Representativeness/generalisability.

Consent rates were not reported in the majority of papers and eight studies did not report attrition rates (Yadav et al., 2010; Carmen et al., 2011; Akos & Martin, 2003; Rosenblatt & Elias, 2008; Peterson et al., 2009; Slater & McKeown, 2004: McQuillin et al., 2011; Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012). Impressively, Lochman and Wells, (2002; 2003; 2004) and Lochman et al. (2012) reported that they measured systematic differences between groups in withdrawals from the study.

The impact of cultural differences on the generalisability and applicability of findings to other countries and cultures needs to be considered. Less than half of the studies were conducted in schools in the UK (Lyons & Woods, 2012; Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012; Wassell et al, 2007; Yadav et al, 2010; Slater & McKeown, 2004; Qualter, et al, 2007). Studies conducted in the United States, Australia and New Zealand,

may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalised to the potentially very different British school system.

Intervention characteristics

Studies have not adequately described how their interventions are linked to existing research and theory on the factors that contribute to a successful or unsuccessful school transition. Furthermore, very few studies described the theoretical underpinnings in sufficient detail for the reader to understand how and why their interventions were developed. It is not clear how the theoretical mechanisms underlying the interventions' effectiveness were conceptualised. Without an understanding of the mechanisms for change, it will be hard for practitioners to judge the applicability of interventions and tailor it to the needs of different groups of students in different settings.

Ten studies produced treatment manuals (Wassell et al., 2007; Lyons & Woods, 2012; Peterson et al, 2009; Van Ryzin et al., 2012; McQuillin et al., 2011; Lochman & Wells, 2002, 2003; Lochman et al., 2012; Hamm et al., 2011; Qualter et al., 2007). Studies that did not produce a treatment manual and failed to describe intervention procedures in sufficient detail for the reader to understand clearly what tasks or activities participants were asked to perform, makes it difficult for schools to implement these transition programmes and for researchers to replicate interventions.

Professional discipline of facilitator and fidelity to manual

Studies provided information on frequency and duration of intervention and professional discipline of the facilitator, with varying levels of detail. The professions of facilitators included teachers, teaching assistants, school counsellors, educational psychologists, and clinical psychologists. Most studies stated that facilitators had the appropriate qualifications and experience to conduct the interventions specified.

The majority of studies described the training facilitators completed, with the exception of a few (Akos & Martin, 2003; Carmen et al., 2011; Bloyce & Federickson, 2012; Van Ryzin et al., 2012; Tonkin & Watts, 2003). However, only eight studies reported that facilitators were being supervised (Wassell et al., 2007; Lochman & Wells, 2002, 2003, 2004; Lochman et al., 2012; Hamm et al., 2011; Yadav et al., 2010; Peterson et al., 2009).

The majority of studies did not refer to any attempt to assess fidelity to a manual. This is a limitation as this is important to ensure the quality of implementation of programmes when delivered under naturalistic conditions and is a way of attempting to control for confounding variables in the delivery of interventions. Interestingly, Bloyce and Frederickson (2012) argue that their variability in session content may have offered the flexibility and responsiveness to pupils' needs that contributed to the overall success of the intervention.

Outcome measures

A variety of mental wellbeing measures were used across the studies identified. All studies used at least one standardised questionnaire where established reliability and validity was reported on, with the exception of four studies (Speir, 2010; Akos & Martin, 2003; Carmen et al., 2011; Van Ryzin et al., 2012), three of which utilised author-created, study-specific questionnaires. Van Ryzin et al. (2012) reported adequate internal consistency reliability, whereas the other two studies provided limited information on the content of their author-created measures and reliability and validity was not commented on, which is limitation. Seven studies did not include Cronbach's alpha scores for their sample, which is needed to demonstrate acceptable internal consistency for any scales used (Lochman & Wells, 2004; Spier, 2010; Tonkin & Watt, 2003; Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012; Wassell et al., 2007; Slater & McKeown, 2004; Qualter et al., 2007).

Most studies collected data through the administration of self-report measures. This raises potential issues around demand characteristics and social desirability bias, potentially impacting upon the validity of findings. Furthermore, self-report measures are reliant upon participant's willingness and ability to accurately disclose personal information. Six studies neglected to gather quantitative data from key people involved in the pupil's life, such as, staff and families (Van Ryzin, 2010; Slater & McKeown, 2004; Van Ryzin et al., 2012; Akos & Martin, 2003; Yadav et al., 2010; Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012). Impressively, two studies gained qualitative feedback in addition to outcome measures (Akos & Martin, 2003; Slater & McKeown, 2004) and six studies collected qualitative feedback from multiple informants, such as teachers and parents, (Lyons & Woods, 2012; Spier, 2010; Tonkin & Watt, 2003; Dickinson et al., 2003; Carmen et al., 2011; Wassell et al., 2007), a valuable addition to written format outcome measures.

Only six studies collected follow-up quantitative data (Lochman et al., 2012; Lochman & Wells, 2003, 2004; Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012; Van Ryzin et al., 2012; Slater & McKeown, 2004). With the exception of Van Ryzin et al. (2012) who had a four year follow-up, and Lochman et al (2012) who had a three year follow-up, the other four studies had very short follow-ups, which prevents exploration of the long term effect of transition programmes.

Statistical analysis

Three studies did not measure statistical significance (Lyons & Woods, 2012; Spier, 2010; Slater & McKeown, 2004) and two studies did not include statistical statement of confidence of results (Akos & Martin, 2003; Wassell et al., 2007). Lastly, studies have failed to report clinical as well as statistical change. Clinical and reliable

change is more indicative of what would be expected in clinical settings and therefore more meaningful.

Ethics

The majority of studies stated whether they gained informed consent from parents and/or assent from students. However, only two studies stated whether they gained ethical approval (Yadav, et al 2010; McQuillin, et al 2011), and only one study stated whether they discussed confidentiality with participants (Yadav, et al 2010). Following safe and ethical research practice is important to ensure vulnerable students are adequately supported during and/or following participation. It is important to note that Dickinson et al. (2003) excluded students with behavioural problems and McQuillin et al. (2011) excluded students deemed to be at high risk e.g. SEN; all of which are groups of pupils who are most in need of interventions but were not offered them.

Results and duration of effect

Groups for adolescents.

Four studies evaluated targeted group-based transition programmes for adolescents.

Akos and Martin (2003) compared three groups of anxious primary school pupils: female only, male only and a mixed gender group, in a targeted intervention. Post-intervention, participants found a decline in frequency of concerns and an increase in terms of how helpful they perceived their friends and middle school students to be but there were no statistically significant differences between groups or between pre- to post-intervention. The authors argue that a 5-session intervention was not long enough. However, the qualitative feedback showed that 93% of participants reported that the group was helpful in reducing their concerns and 100% felt more prepared for middle school.

Dickinson et al. (2003) evaluated a post-transition intervention group. They compared an urban and rural school and found a statistically significant reduction in participants' distress in the urban school but only slight, non-significant reduction in the rural school post-intervention. The authors argue this was due to having two group facilitators in the urban school and one in the rural school. Qualitative analysis revealed themes such as key concepts being relevant, receiving support and help, feeling more positive about self, looking at thoughts, relating differently to others, no stigma, improved school performance, sharing stories and making meaning and recommending the programme to a friend. Facilitators and parents/carers expressed satisfaction with the group and the school counsellor's feedback was that more students had self-referred to counselling as a result of attending the group.

In an art therapy group intervention, Spier (2010) found that 4 out of the 6 participants showed positive changes on the measure of coping behaviours post-intervention, whereas 2 showed negative changes on the measure. Furthermore, 4 participants had no disciplinary referrals post-intervention, 2 had fewer or the same number of referrals. Qualitative feedback from facilitators included, increased student confidence, physical growth, social roles, understanding of peer groups, and involvement in school experience from pre-post intervention. Feedback from parents included, decreased student feelings of frustration and disruptive behaviours, increased confidence, improved preparedness and positive attitude towards transition, from pre-post intervention. However, these results are not conclusive or generalizable due to the very small sample and lack of statistical analysis.

Lyons and Woods (2012) evaluated a UK-based group intervention, but again had a small sample size of nine. All but one participant's scores on SDQ improved post-intervention, suggesting fewer social-emotional difficulties. On the SCI overall social and

interpersonal functioning improved post-intervention. Greater improvement was found on the pro-social orientation subscale than social initiative subscale suggesting that the intervention was more effective in supporting the development of competencies such as empathy and helpfulness than ease of talking to peers.

These studies evaluating transition groups for adolescents have produced mixed findings. All lack follow-up data and a comparable control group, so causal inferences cannot be drawn.

Individual and group work for adolescents.

Three studies developed targeted transition programmes combining individual work with group work for adolescents. Carmen et al. (2011) evaluated an intervention pre-transition. Quantitative analysis revealed significant and positive changes in social, emotional, behavioural and school attendance from pre to during-intervention but this was not maintained at post-intervention. However, the authors noted that data was collected by different teachers at the different time points, who knew students for different lengths of time which could be a potential confound. Furthermore, a sample of only 13 participants was used. Qualitative feedback from adolescents included that they were more confident, resilient and less anxious about secondary school; they had learnt a number of social skills and would recommend the group to other students. Parents/carers' feedback was that the program was flexible and adaptable to individual needs, and allowed their children to communicate their feelings and concerns. Teachers' felt that the students had improved organisational and social skills and facilitators' liked the flexibility in venues, times of meetings, and in the session material.

In the UK both Wassell et al. (2007) and Bloyce and Frederickson (2012) evaluated an intervention over the whole transition period. Wassell et al. (2007) demonstrated that their intervention increased self-esteem in half the group but pupils'

locus of control was not significantly affected by the intervention. Qualitative feedback from staff at school was that the group had been a success in facilitating a smooth transition, and that the more withdrawn pupils had grown in confidence. Pupils asked for more support once the group was over which was seen as a positive outcome.

Pre-intervention, Bloyce and Frederickson (2012) found that the intervention group had higher levels of transition concerns than a group of comparison pupils. The concerns of the intervention group reduced to the same levels of the comparison group following the intervention. On measures of pupils' emotional symptoms and self-reported peer relationship problems, intervention pupils continued to show improvements into the first term of secondary school at follow-up, but showed reductions in pro-social behaviour. The authors found that improvements in emotional problems (but not peer problems or pro-social behaviour) were significantly correlated with reductions in school-related concerns over time. They therefore argued that changes observed were specific to internalising anxiety-related issues targeted by the intervention. The intervention was found to be equally effective for girls and boys, pupils receiving free school meals and those with special educational needs but not for those where English was their second language. Although this study used the more robust design of a large sample, follow-up data, and using a comparison group, it should be noted that follow-up data was not collected for the comparison group and it was not a control group, so we do not know whether these improvements may have occurred anyway. The authors argued that they did not have a control group because it was unethical to not offer vulnerable adolescents an intervention.

Overall, the results for working with adolescents alone, again are quite mixed and therefore inconclusive.

Peer counselling/mentoring for adolescents.

Three studies evaluated post-transition peer counselling/mentoring programmes for adolescents. The quantitative results from a universal intervention using individual and group peer counselling Slater and McKeown (2004) were not conclusive in supporting the idea of a peer counselling programme. In fact, SDQ scores worsened slightly from pre to post intervention, for the intervention school. General health problems improved slightly but they also did for the control pupils. Perceived social support increased for both schools over the school year but the rate of increase was higher for the intervention school. Total number of social relationships, duration of relationships and frequency of contact increased in both schools but to a greater degree in the intervention school. The authors suggest these relationships may be with the peer counsellors. Qualitative analysis was more positive as students found the peer counselling helped them to settle in and find their way around, provided a friendly face, and dispelled rumours about bullying.

Qualter et al. (2007) evaluated a universal peer counselling intervention aided with a book on relationships, family problems, self-esteem and emotions. There was a significant increase in emotional intelligence scores across the year for the low baseline emotional intelligence (EI) intervention group only, but was not effective for those with already high levels of emotional intelligence. All control groups showed a decline in EI scores. Scholastic and social competence increased for all three baseline EI groups but there were no significant differences between intervention and control groups on athletic, physical appearance, behavioural and global self-worth subscales. The authors argued that positive scholastic and social self-worth are the domains most likely to help adolescents through school transition. They noted that a limitation of their study was that control and experimental group were not tested concurrently so any school changes i.e. different teachers, curriculum etc., may be potential confounds. Secondly, because

teachers were part of the intervention as they were trained in EI awareness, it is not possible to know whether the outcome effects were due to the pupils or teachers changing or both.

Using a more rigorous RCT design, McQuillin et al. (2011) evaluated a targeted peer counselling intervention focused on enhancing school connectedness and found no significant benefits in terms of school connectedness, teacher connectedness or school referrals post peer mentoring intervention. The authors questioned whether these negative results were due to the intervention being too short, mentor incompetence, lack of mentor supervision and/or the intervention taking place in a school setting. They emphasised the need to rigorously assess the outcomes of mentoring programs to establish safety and efficacy. This certainly seems important as the outcomes of these three peer mentoring/counselling studies are poor.

Interventions including parents.

Four studies evaluated interventions that included the parents of adolescents in the transition period. In a targeted intervention for both adolescents and their parents in the UK, Yadav et al. (2010) found significant post intervention changes on measures of self-esteem, locus of control, and total SDQ scores, (specifically on the hyperactivity, peer relationship and pro-social subscale of the SDQ but not the emotional subscale). Yet the study suffers with no longitudinal data and a lack of control group. Indeed, the authors noted that there were a number of initiatives at the school taking place at the same time as the intervention so the lack of control group would not differentiate the effectiveness of the intervention. Strong causal effects can therefore not be claimed.

Van Ryzin et al. (2012) however, compared a universal individual parenting skills intervention with a matched control group over a four-year period. The intervention group had significantly less family conflict, antisocial behaviour, deviant peer

involvement and alcohol at follow-up. Limitations include the use of only adolescent self-report measures and the fact that data was gathered from three schools so differences in student populations may be a confound.

Also using an RCT design, Lochman and Wells (2004) found that following a targeted intervention for aggressive male adolescents and their parents, delinquent behaviour and parent-rated substance use at a one year follow-up reduced compared to the control, and these intervention effects were greater for the parent and adolescents components combined rather than the adolescent component alone. Lochman et al. (2012) supported these results using female as well as male participants and with a three year follow-up period. However, their analysis tested patterns of change on the outcome measures over this time period, rather than significant differences between control and intervention groups at specific time points post-intervention.

Overall, these four studies that have included parents in interventions have produced encouraging results.

Groups for secondary school teachers.

A universal group for teachers was evaluated using an RCT design: Hamm et al. (2011) compared a group intervention on academic, behavioural and social aspects of transition for teachers, with a control group. Students in intervention schools reported a more positive school social environment and sense of belonging at the end of the school year compared to control schools. The authors suggest that this is because teachers had a more supportive and caring attitude towards students and they may have been more likely to prevent and intervene with misbehaviour. Students perceived their schools to be more protective against bullying when their teachers were more attuned to peer group affiliations. The authors suggested that this was because teachers were more aware of the bullies and more likely to intervene. This study was conducted in rural schools which

limits the generalizability of results. Longitudinal data was also not collected so it is difficult to establish the long-term effectiveness of interventions. Despite this, results are reasonably promising.

Transition programme for adolescents and teachers.

Tonkin and Watt's (2003) and Van Ryzin (2010) conducted universal interventions for both adolescents and teachers. Tonkin and Watt's (2003) intervention had very little focus on psychological wellbeing, and un-surprisingly was not effective in enhancing self-concept. In fact, behavioural conduct worsened in the intervention school. Van Ryzin (2010) found that 40% of their sample considered their advisor to be a secondary attachment figure and those students reported significantly greater engagement in school, and greater gains in adjustment (hope) compared to those who did not. The authors note that students spent differing amounts of time with their advisor, leading to a potential bias in the results. This study also lacks an experimental design so causal links cannot be made.

Individual and group work for adolescents, teachers, and parents pre-transition.

Both Lochman and Wells (2002; 2003) and Peterson et al. (2009) evaluated a targeted and universal transition programme. Lochman and Wells (2002) found that the 3 intervention groups produced significantly lower rates of substance use at post-intervention than did the control group. The interventions also produced significant effects on children's social competence, and self-regulation, but not on school bonding. These results were maintained for the at-risk students (targeted intervention) at one year follow-up (Lochman & Wells, 2003). The intervention had preventative effects on delinquency and aggressive behaviour and on substance use for older and moderate-risk adolescents.

Using an abbreviated 24 session of the same programme, Peterson et al. (2009) found improvements in adaptive skills in both intervention and control pupils. Teachers reported that intervention students showed significant decreases in depressive symptoms, learning difficulties and school problems and improvements in social skills, and functional communication than controls. With the exception of greater self-reliance, students' self-reported data did not show significant differences from pre to post intervention. No parents attended the parent sessions which may have limited the development and reinforcement of new coping skills for the adolescents. This suggests that the abbreviated version of the programme without parental involvement, may not be as effective.

Discussion

Summary of evidence

Heterogeneity of the transition programmes and their methodological designs, outcome measures and targeted populations in the reviewed literature meant that no formal synthesis of the outcome data was possible and that the treatment effects of transitions programmes should be compared with caution. There are a number of recurring methodological flaws in the studies that should be considered, as they greatly limit inferences regarding the effectiveness of the transition programmes. However it should be acknowledged that conducting and evaluating school based interventions is a highly complex task and many of the studies have methodological strengths such as randomised controlled designs, data collected on large samples, fidelity to manual checks and rigorous statistical analysis. Through balancing the strengths and limitations of the literature, some tentative conclusions can be drawn.

Overall, findings are mixed. The most positive outcomes are from the interventions that included parents (Van Ryzin et al., 2012; Yadav et al., 2010; Lochamn

& Wells, 2004; Lochman et al., 2012), followed by the interventions for teachers (Hamm et al., 2011; Van Ryzin., 2010), and the interventions targeting adolescents, teachers and parents (Lochman & Wells, 2002, 2003).

It is hypothesised that the interventions for parents may have strengthened the attachment between child and parent. Drawing from the attachment literature (cf Bowlby, 1982), it is presumed that children who have secure attachments with their parents believe in the availability and support of their parents. These factors, in turn, are assumed to assist children through stressful life events such as school transition (Papini, Roggman & Anderson, 1991). Consistent with this theory, research has shown that adolescents who report having more positive attachment relationships (Papini & Roggman, 1992; Duchesne, Ratelle, Poitras & Drouin, 2009), and whose parents are both caring and encouraging of autonomy (Lord, Eccles & McCarthy, 1994; Newman, Lohman, Myers & Smith, 2000), are more likely to successfully manage transitions.

For young people who might be experiencing problems in the family, the stable relationships or attachments formed with school teachers can also be vital (Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008). Students themselves have recognised the importance of having good relationships with teachers (Akos, 2004; Zeedyk et al., 2003). This may explain the positive outcomes of the interventions for teachers. The eco-systemic model of development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), also draws attention to the variety of proximal and distal influences on the adolescents' experience of transition, such as peers, teachers and parents, and emphasises the importance of a good interaction (or goodness of fit) between the individual and his or her environment for mental wellbeing.

Research does not suggest that groups for adolescents and peer mentoring/counselling are helpful for improving psychological well-being. This may be a reflection of age and thus developmental level and ability of adolescents to implement

strategies. Parents and teachers may have more motivation to engage in interventions than adolescents. With regards to peer mentoring, it may be that students have less training, experience and knowledge to be helpful to other students, in comparison to teachers, school counsellors and psychologists. These findings raise questions regarding the usefulness and cost effectiveness of implementing group programmes and peer mentoring/counselling interventions for adolescents.

Interestingly, when adolescents were offered individual work alongside the group work, findings were slightly more positive (Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012; Wassell et al., 2007). However, no study provided a strong argument for the efficacy of interventions with adolescents alone. It is important that further research be conducted so firm conclusions can be drawn.

Finally, there appeared to be no trend showing that targeted interventions specifying the presence of emotional, social and/or behavioural difficulties as inclusion criteria, thereby minimising celling effects, were more effective than universal interventions.

Clinical and research implications

As the current evidence for the effectiveness of transition programmes is inconclusive, funding could be allocated to further research. When a sufficient evidence-base has been developed, this could be disseminated to teachers, psychologists and school counsellors and nurses.

Empirically-validated criteria for reducing biases (e.g. randomisation, comparison groups, and follow-up periods) were not consistently met in the studies reviewed. Future research could aim to replicate the current findings while employing more robust methodologies. Researchers could develop and evaluate programmes utilising outcome measures of wellbeing and they must allow adequate sample size to provide sufficient

power, long term follow up and calculate and report clinical as well as statistical change. Research exploring the mechanisms of change within transition programmes is also required.

Factors that may lead to poor transition are likely to affect the receptiveness of participants to the transition programme, yet these factors were either not measured or not controlled for and should be investigated in future research. The views of adolescents themselves, on what would be helpful during school transition also need to be considered in the development of a transition programme.

Within the transition programme literature, there is a particular focus on academic achievement as an outcome. Considering the vast research on the impact of school transition on psychological wellbeing highlighted in the introduction of the review, future research may want to measure these aspects of mental wellbeing.

Future studies could include a more general process group to explore the supportive effects of receiving an intervention versus the specific effects inherent to the transition programme (Peterson et al., 2009). Future research may also want to compare types of transition programmes e.g. mentoring, group, individual and group/individual etc. (Carmen et al., 2011; Akos & Martin, 2003).

The transition programmes covered in this review took place in primary and secondary schools and some in both, so a better understanding of when interventions are most effective, is needed. It is also a challenge to know whether to focus on researching the effectiveness of targeted or universal transition programmes, as the review provides no conclusive evidence on this. Through universal programmes, improvements can be made to the wellbeing of a population as a whole which will ultimately have a direct impact on the most vulnerable individuals within that population. It also avoids isolating young people by labelling them as different from their peers. However, targeted

interventions give more time and resources to the vulnerable pupils who most need input. For either approach, the financial support e.g. for equipment and resources to be purchased and whether professionals such as teachers can be released from other teaching duties to implement transition programmes (Humphrey & Ainscow, 2006), needs to be considered.

The question also remains about who are the most appropriate professionals to run these interventions and train facilitators. The majority of programmes included in this review were provided by teachers trained to deliver manualised programmes. The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE, 2009) emphasise the key position teachers can hold in supporting students' wellbeing and suggest that teachers should be trained and supported in responding to students' emotional difficulties. *Getting it right for Children, Young People and Families* (DH, 2012) describes school nurses as being Specialist Community Public Health Nurses who have a range of skills to work with young people to improve health.

Clinical psychologists have core skills in assessing, developing formulations and intervening accordingly, whether individually or with groups, with young people and parents or with professionals. However, educational psychologists, teachers and school nurses and counsellors, have the advantage of being ensconced in the school environment and may be more accessible and approachable to students. Clinical psychologists may instead have a role in providing training and consultation, and are well placed to use these skills to train and supervise school professionals. It is likely that a multiagency approach is required.

Limitations of the review

Due to the scope of the project, unpublished studies and non-English publications were not included in the current review. This may have introduced systematic biases in

the findings, as studies with negative findings are less likely to be published than studies with positive findings.

Conclusion

This is the first review to critically evaluate the effectiveness of transition programs promoting psychological wellbeing. The majority of studies could not conclude that their intervention improved psychological wellbeing to a statistically significant level, and numerous methodological limitations weaken the existing evidence-base. However, the most promising areas of research pertain to intervening with the parents and teachers of adolescents experiencing school transition.

This review concludes that current findings should be replicated while employing more robust methodologies, and utilising more appropriate wellbeing measures. Exploring the mechanisms of change within transition programmes and identifying whether they would be best implemented in primary or secondary schools or both, would be beneficial. Once this has been achieved, a comparison of the effectiveness of different types of transition programmes is needed. Finally, the role of clinical psychologists in the training and consultation of professionals in schools has been discussed.

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Appendix 1. Search strategy and search terms **Evidence Search Journals and Databases**

Katherine

NICE

Healthcare Databases Advanced Search

☐	1	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	school.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2012-Current]	45781	Apply Limits
☐	2	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	transition.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2012-Current]	45085	Apply Limits
☐	3	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	(program* OR project* OR group* OR mentoring OR counselling).ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2012-Current]	737135	Apply Limits
☐	4	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	1 AND 2 AND 3 [Limit to: Publication Year 2012-Current]	449	Apply Limits
☐	5	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	school.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2011-2011]	36199	Apply Limits
☐	6	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	transition.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2011-2011]	31578	Apply Limits
☐	7	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	(program* OR project* OR group* OR mentoring OR counselling).ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2011-2011]	554622	Apply Limits
☐	8	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	5 AND 6 AND 7 [Limit to: Publication Year 2011-2011]	412	Apply Limits
☐	9	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	school.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2010-2010]	35383	Apply Limits
☐	10	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	transition.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2010-2010]	29297	Apply Limits
☐	11	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	(program* OR project* OR group* OR mentoring OR counselling).ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2010-2010]	531707	Apply Limits
☐	12	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	9 AND 10 AND 11 [Limit to: Publication Year 2010-2010]	436	Apply Limits
☐	13	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	school.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2009-2009]	33529	Apply Limits

☐	14	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	transition.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2009-2009]	27252	Apply Limits	
☐	15	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	(program* OR project* OR group* OR mentoring OR counselling).ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2009-2009]	489202	Apply Limits	
☐	16	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	13 AND 14 AND 15 [Limit to: Publication Year 2009-2009]	370	Apply Limits	
☐	17	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	school.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2008-2008]	30203	Apply Limits	
☐	18	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	transition.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2008-2008]	23659	Apply Limits	
☐	19	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	(program* OR project* OR group* OR mentoring OR counselling).ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2008-2008]	403817	Apply Limits	
☐	20	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	17 AND 18 AND 19 [Limit to: Publication Year 2008-2008]	286	Apply Limits	
☐	21	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	school.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2006-2007]	50998	Apply Limits	
☐	22	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	transition.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2006-2007]	40550	Apply Limits	
☐	23	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	(program* OR project* OR group* OR mentoring OR counselling).ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2006-2007]	730306	Apply Limits	
☐	24	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	21 AND 22 AND 23 [Limit to: Publication Year 2006-2007]	454	Apply Limits	
☐	25	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	school.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2004-2005]	43123	Apply Limits	
☐	26	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	transition.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2004-2005]	35101	Apply Limits	
☐	27	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	(program* OR project* OR group* OR mentoring OR counselling).ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2004-2005]	633206	Apply Limits	
☐	28	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	25 AND 26 AND 27 [Limit to: Publication Year 2004-2005]	403	Apply Limits	
☐	29	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	school.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2002-2003]	35363	Apply Limits	
☐	30	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	transition.ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2002-2003]	29892	Apply Limits	

☐	31	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	(program* OR project* OR group* OR mentoring OR counselling).ti,ab [Limit to: Publication Year 2002-2003]	535840	Apply Limits	☐
☐	32	AMED, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, BNI, CINAHL, HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	29 AND 30 AND 31 [Limit to: Publication Year 2002-2003]	331	Apply Limits	☐
☐	33	AMED,EMBASE,HMIC,MEDLINE,PsycINFO,BNI,CINAHL,HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	Duplicate filtered: [1 AND 2 AND 3 [Limit to: Publication Year 2012-Current]]	449107 Unique results342 Duplicate results		☐
☐	34	AMED,EMBASE,HMIC,MEDLINE,PsycINFO,BNI,CINAHL,HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	Duplicate filtered: [5 AND 6 AND 7 [Limit to: Publication Year 2011-2011]]	412119 Unique results293 Duplicate results		☐
☐	35	AMED,EMBASE,HMIC,MEDLINE,PsycINFO,BNI,CINAHL,HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	Duplicate filtered: [9 AND 10 AND 11 [Limit to: Publication Year 2010-2010]]	436351 Unique results85 Duplicate results		☐
☐	36	AMED,EMBASE,HMIC,MEDLINE,PsycINFO,BNI,CINAHL,HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	Duplicate filtered: [13 AND 14 AND 15 [Limit to: Publication Year 2009-2009]]	370279 Unique results91 Duplicate results		☐
☐	37	AMED,EMBASE,HMIC,MEDLINE,PsycINFO,BNI,CINAHL,HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	Duplicate filtered: [17 AND 18 AND 19 [Limit to: Publication Year 2008-2008]]	286227 Unique results59 Duplicate results		☐
☐	38	AMED,EMBASE,HMIC,MEDLINE,PsycINFO,BNI,CINAHL,HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	Duplicate filtered: [21 AND 22 AND 23 [Limit to: Publication Year 2006-2007]]	454428 Unique results26 Duplicate results		☐
☐	39	AMED,EMBASE,HMIC,MEDLINE,PsycINFO,BNI,CINAHL,HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	Duplicate filtered: [25 AND 26 AND 27 [Limit to: Publication Year 2004-2005]]	403314 Unique results89 Duplicate results		☐
☐	40	AMED,EMBASE,HMIC,MEDLINE,PsycINFO,BNI,CINAHL,HEALTH BUSINESS ELITE	Duplicate filtered: [29 AND 30 AND 31 [Limit to: Publication Year 2002-2003]]	331166 Unique results165 Duplicate results		☐

Appendix 2: The PRISMA statement

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on page
TITLE			
Title	1	Identify the report as a systematic review, meta-analysis, or both.	
ABSTRACT			
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary including, as applicable: background; objectives; data sources; study eligibility criteria, participants, and interventions; study appraisal and synthesis methods; results; limitations; conclusions and implications of key findings; systematic review registration number.	
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known.	
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of questions being addressed with reference to participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes, and study design (PICOS).	
METHODS			
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate if a review protocol exists, if and where it can be accessed (e.g., Web address), and, if available,	

		provide registration information including registration number.	
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify study characteristics (e.g., PICOS, length of follow-up) and report characteristics (e.g., years considered, language, publication status) used as criteria for eligibility, giving rationale.	
Information sources	7	Describe all information sources (e.g., databases with dates of coverage, contact with study authors to identify additional studies) in the search and date last searched.	
Search	8	Present full electronic search strategy for at least one database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	
Study selection	9	State the process for selecting studies (i.e., screening, eligibility, included in systematic review, and, if applicable, included in the meta-analysis).	
Data collection process	10	Describe method of data extraction from reports (e.g., piloted forms, independently, in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought (e.g., PICOS, funding sources) and any assumptions and simplifications made.	
Risk of bias in individual studies	12	Describe methods used for assessing risk of bias of individual studies (including specification of whether this was done at the study or outcome level), and how this information is to be used in any data synthesis.	
Summary measures	13	State the principal summary measures (e.g., risk ratio, difference in means).	

Synthesis of results	14	Describe the methods of handling data and combining results of studies, if done, including measures of consistency (e.g., I^2) for each meta-analysis.	

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on page
Risk of bias across studies	15	Specify any assessment of risk of bias that may affect the cumulative evidence (e.g., publication bias, selective reporting within studies).	
Additional analyses	16	Describe methods of additional analyses (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression), if done, indicating which were pre-specified.	
RESULTS			
Study selection	17	Give numbers of studies screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally with a flow diagram.	
Study characteristics	18	For each study, present characteristics for which data were extracted (e.g., study size, PICOS, follow-up period) and provide the citations.	
Risk of bias within studies	19	Present data on risk of bias of each study and, if available, any outcome level assessment (see item 12).	

Results of individual studies	20	For all outcomes considered (benefits or harms), present, for each study: (a) simple summary data for each intervention group (b) effect estimates and confidence intervals, ideally with a forest plot.	
Synthesis of results	21	Present results of each meta-analysis done, including confidence intervals and measures of consistency.	
Risk of bias across studies	22	Present results of any assessment of risk of bias across studies (see Item 15).	
Additional analysis	23	Give results of additional analyses, if done (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression [see Item 16]).	
DISCUSSION			
Summary of evidence	24	Summarize the main findings including the strength of evidence for each main outcome; consider their relevance to key groups (e.g., healthcare providers, users, and policy makers).	
Limitations	25	Discuss limitations at study and outcome level (e.g., risk of bias), and at review-level (e.g., incomplete retrieval of identified research, reporting bias).	
Conclusions	26	Provide a general interpretation of the results in the context of other evidence, and implications for future research.	
FUNDING			
Funding	27	Describe sources of funding for the systematic review and other support (e.g., supply of data); role of	

		funders for the systematic review.	

From: Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG, The PRISMA Group (2009). Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses: The PRISMA Statement. PLoS Med 6(6): e1000097. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed1000097

Appendix 3: Measures employed by the studies included in the review

Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (A-COPE, Patterson & McCubbin, 1996)

Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ, Shelton, Frick & Wootton, 1996)

Attachment Network Questionnaire (ANQ, Trinke & Bartholomew, 1997)

Attributional Measure, (AM, Lochman & Dodge, 1994)

Bar-On Emotional Intelligence Inventory: Youth Version-Short Form (EQ-i:YV, Bar-On & Parker, 2000)

Behaviour Assessment Scale for Children-2 (BASC-2, Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004)

B/G Steem (BGS, Maines & Robinson, 1991)

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP, Pentz et al, 1989)

Classroom Life Scale (CLS, Johnson, Johnson, Buckman & Richards, 1985)

Client Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ, Eyberg, 1993)

Community and Neighbourhood Measures (CNM; Tolan et al, 2001)

Conflict Behaviour Questionnaire (CBQ, Prinz, Foster, Kent & O'Leary, 1979; Robin & Foster, 1989)

Depression-Anxiety-Stress Scale (DASS-21, Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995)

Dispositional Hope Scale (DHS, Snyder et al, 1991)

Dysregulation Inventory (DI, Mezzich et al, 1997)

Early Adolescent Temperament (EAT, Capaldi & Rothbart, 1992)

Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA, New Jersey Department of Education, 2004)

Emotional Risk (ER, Hamm & Faircloth, 2005)

Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning Scale (EDLS, Furrer & Skinner, 2003;

Patrick Skinner & Connell, 1993

Family Relations Scale (FRS)

General Health Questionnaire (GHQ, Goldberg & Williams, 1988)

Hemingway: Measure of Adolescent Connectedness (HMAC, Karcher, 2003)

Inclusion of Other in Self Scale (IOS, Aron et al, 1992)

Interpersonal Competence Scale –Teacher (ICS-T)

Kentucky School Bonding (KSB)

National Youth Survey (NYS)

Norbeck Social Support Questionnaire (NSSQ, Norbeck, Lindsey & Carrieri, 1981)

Outcome Expectations Questionnaire (OEQ, Perry, Perry & Rasmussen, 1986)

Parent Involvement in Schools (PIS, Fast Track Project, CPPRG, 1992)

Parenting Beliefs Scale (PBS, Sanders, 2002)

Parent Problem Checklist (PPC, Dadds & Powell, 1991)

Parenting Scale for Adolescents (PS-A, Irvine, Biglan, Smolkowski, & Ary, 1999)

Perceived Academic Competence (PAC, Harter, 1982)

Perceived Competence Scale for Children (PCSC, Harter, 1982)

Perceived Peer Behaviour Norms (PPBN)

Proactive-Reactive Scale (PRS, Dodge & Coie, 1987)

Problem-Solving Improvement (PSI)

Psychological Sense of School Membership-Brief (PSSMB, Goodenow, 1993)Rock up

Questionnaire (RUQ, Carmen, Waycott & Smith, 2011)

Reduction of Aversive Treatment (RAT; subscale of the Outcome Expectation

Questionnaire, Perry et al, 1986)

Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI, Berscheid et al, 1989, 2004)

Relationship Structures Questionnaire (RSQ, Fraley et al, 2006)

School Concerns Questionnaire (SCQ, Thomason, Field, O'Donnell & Woods, 2006)

School Transition Questionnaire (STQ, Akos, 2002)

Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC, Harter, 1985)

Social Cognitive Maps (SCM, Alston, 1998)

Social Competence Inventory (SCI, Rydell et al, 2007)

Social Relations Problems subscale (from TOCA-R)

Social Skills Improvement (SSI)

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1997, 2001)

Student Peer Norms for Effort and Achievement (SPNEA, Hamm et al, 2010)

Subjective Closeness Index (SCI, Berscheid et al, 1989, 2004)

Subjective Experience of Distress Scale – short-form of the Weinberger Adjustment Inventory (WAI – SEDS, Weinberger, 1996)

Teachers Assessment of Academic Effort and Achievement (TAAEA, Hamm et al, 2010)

Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation –Revised (TOCA-R)

PAPER B

Adolescents' experiences of adjusting to the transition to an English boarding school: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Abstract

There is a considerable gap in the literature in understanding how adolescents adjust to the transition to boarding school. The aim of this qualitative study was to examine how adolescents make sense of and create meaning from their experience of going to boarding school, and to explore what can be done to facilitate this adjustment. Ten female and male adolescents were interviewed in their second year of attending boarding school. The interviews, analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, yielded three superordinate themes: 1) 'Home is where the heart is', which captures adolescents experiences of homesickness, the stronger relationships formed with their family, and the development of new attachment figures with their house matron and peers, 2) 'Living in a bubble', which reflects a feeling of being constrained at boarding school and an awareness of it being a hierarchal environment, and 3) 'Gaining familiarity with the place and just being me' as adolescents appeared to positively adjust over time. Results are discussed in terms of attachment, coping and adjustment theories and models of psychosocial development. The discussion highlights the implications for parents of boarders and professionals working in boarding schools, including promoting pupils' relationships with their matron and peers, encouraging more autonomy and free time, reducing the sense of hierarchy in schools, and introducing coping strategies to manage

homesickness and ease the transition for adolescents. Suggestions for future research are also offered.

Key words: Boarding school, School transition, Qualitative research, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Proposed journal: Journal of Adolescence

Introduction

A period of apprehension around the transition to secondary school can be part of a normative response to change (Lucey & Reay, 2000), and adolescents typically worry about the new environment, new or strict teachers, peer relationships, high academic expectations, tests, increased workload, detentions, school routines, and bullying (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm & Splittgerber, 2000; Lucey & Reay, 2000; Zeedyk et al., 2003). The transition also occurs at the same time as the normative physical, emotional, and cognitive changes (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008), associated with puberty, and is a time of self-reflection when young people may be searching for their identity (Erikson, 1968).

Transition to boarding school not only involves facing these potential challenges, but also an interruption of daily life and a distancing from the emotional and practical support normally provided by the family. The adolescent has to adjust to the new school environment as well as institutional life without parents; learning self-reliance and independence (Fisher, Frazer & Murray, 1984; 1986). Boarding school is a structured environment where discipline is imposed and rules must be adhered to 24 hours a day, giving the adolescent little control over their immediate world (Fisher, Frazer & Murray, 1984; 1986).

Clinical and personal observations of boarding school transition

Clinical observations and personal experiences of the transition to boarding school have been described by psychotherapists working with current and former boarders (Shaverien, 2004; 2011; Duffell, 2005), patients in psychotherapy (Partridge, 2007) and boarding school staff (e.g. Moriarty, National Director of the Boarding Schools' Association, *n.d.*).

Partridge (2007) and Shaverien (2011) have suggested that many boarders feel anger towards their parents for sending them away; some may feel abandoned, rejected and even betrayed that boarding was not the experience that their parents told them it was going to be; and others may conclude that they have been sent away because they have done something wrong. Duffell (2005) and Shaverien (2004) hypothesise that some may experience 'internal shame' because going to boarding school is regarded as a privilege which is expensive for their parents. Therefore they may feel as though they should be appreciative, which makes it harder to say if they are unhappy. Many of Shaverien's (2011) clients reported feeling a longing for their mother especially in all boys' schools. It has been noted that children may present with various physical ailments which are likely to be attributed to homesickness (Shaverien, 2011).

Partridge (2007) and Shaverien (2011) suggest that some boarders when returning home for holidays, may feel unable to talk to their parents as they did before because they have learnt to cope by themselves and depend on other people for support. Shaverien (2011) notes that the repetitive pattern of term time at school and holidays at home can leave the young person feeling unsettled in both places. Holidays can become lonely and boring as school friends often live all over the country or world and boarders may gradually lose contact with local friends. Shaverien (2004, 2011) and Duffell (2005) also argue that adolescents need to engage in 'typical' teenage behaviours and state that boarders have fewer opportunities to mix with people of different ages, toys, and pets, and their relationships with their siblings can also be disrupted.

Duffell (2005) and Shaverien (2004, 2011) theorise that the sudden loss of parental attachment figures, lead many boarders to protect themselves from emotion that cannot be processed which they describe as a form of 'unconscious splitting'. This may manifest itself through avoiding expressing emotions, showing vulnerability or seeking

out emotional support and instead adolescents may 'put on a brave face'. They may develop 'facades designed to please and to succeed', which as a consequence may lead to the development of a dissociative false self, which Duffell names the Strategic Survival Personality. 'Strategic' because the boarder does anything to escape trouble and to avoid identifying with difficult emotions. Duffell argues that once this set of unconscious coping behaviours is established, they may exist indefinitely and distort adult intimate relationships. Adults may fear rejection or abandonment from their partner, leading to a sense of mistrust in relationships (The Making of Them, 1994).

In direct contrast to these assertions, Moriarty argues that adolescents today are far more involved in the decisions that families make about attending boarding school. She argues that boarding schools work hard to make the transition from home to school as smooth as possible, especially for adolescents coming from overseas. She also suggests that the companionship of living with peers, coupled with a busy life outside the classroom and easy contact with parents, helps a young person adjust to boarding school life. Moriarty states that the extended day gives adolescents the time and the opportunity to make the most of the wealth of clubs and activities available to them. She suggests that 'a choir practice, a game of football and a swim before cocoa with friends and bed with a good book is a better framework for an evening than hours spent at a computer or watching television' (The Boarding School Association *n.d.*).

Shaverien (2004, 2011) has acknowledged that not everyone has negative experiences of boarding school and states that many consider the advantages of the high standard of education they received as a privilege. Indeed, ninety per cent of boarders proceed to the university of their choice (Moriarty, *n.d.*). Shaverien (2004, 2011) also suggests that the age at which a person starts boarding may impact on how they cope. For

instance, a child at age 13 is psychologically and physically more mature than a primary school child, and may therefore adjust more easily.

It needs to be acknowledged that there is little empirical evidence with which to substantiate any of the above observations, and it could be argued that they are coloured by the writers' own experiences of boarding school and/or by their own political position. It is likely that boarding school has changed considerably since the 1950s/1960s when Duffell and Partridge attended, for numerous reasons including advances in technology enabling easier communication with parents during term-time and peers during the holidays.

Empirical research

No empirical research to the author's knowledge, has investigated adolescents' experiences of adjusting to the transition to boarding school since the 1980's. The two studies that have investigated transition to boarding school focused on homesickness. Homesickness is defined as distress and functional impairment caused by actual or anticipated separation from home and attachment figures such as parents (Thurber & Walton, 2007). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-IV) recognises homesickness as an adjustment disorder with mixed anxiety and depressive symptoms. Adolescents with homesickness can present as being tearful, depressed, withdrawn, anxious, feeling helpless, displaying externalising behaviours such as fighting, swearing or destroying property, and can experience social problems, somatic complaints, academic difficulties, absentmindedness, low self-esteem and obsessive thoughts and behaviours (Thurber & Walton, 2007).

Fisher et al. (1984) asked fifty Scottish boarding school pupils to record daily problems and the amount of time spent worrying about each problem in a diary over the first two weeks of term-time. Adolescents reported more school related problems (e.g.

school work, friends, and sport) than home related problems (e.g. homesickness) but more time was spent worrying about home. Homesickness was found to be unrelated to previous separation experience, perceived control over the decision to attend boarding school, geographical distance, recent life events, age and gender. Having an older sibling at the school caused pressure to live up to the standards set by them. In contrast, Shaverien (2011) has suggested that having older siblings at the school may ease the transition.

In a later study Fisher et al. (1986) conducted the same diary investigation and also asked the boarders to report their experiences retrospectively over the past year. In the first 2 weeks homesickness was the most commonly reported problem and gradually decreased for most students, excluding the very homesick who reported on-going homesickness. The incidence of homesickness was approximately 70% irrespective of being reported at two weeks or one year. Having a sibling at the same school did not impact on homesickness, whereas previous experience of boarding school had an ameliorating effect. Homesick students reported more illnesses and visits to the doctor. The most homesick pupils struggled with the social aspect of boarding school and had problems at home. In support of this, Briscoe (1985) found that over an eleven year period, male boarders admitted to the sanatorium four or more times were more likely to come from broken or problem homes. 11% of admissions to the sanatorium had miscellaneous causes and included asthma, gastrointestinal-intestinal problems, rashes, headaches, depression, anxiety, behaviour problems, hypomania and overdoses, which may have been attributed to homesickness.

A final observation on homesickness, made by Fisher and Hood (1988), was that university students were less likely to be homesick if they had attended boarding school, therefore potentially preparing adolescents for separation from their parents in later life.

Factors impacting on transition to boarding school

Individual factors.

Lazarus's transactional model of stress and coping (Lazurus & Folkman, 1984), suggests that a successful school transition will be based on the individual's *judgment* or *perception* of the transition as a challenge or threat. It will depend on their *appraisal* of their own competence, anxiety, academic achievement and personal controllability and predictability. In line with these ideas, Self-Determination Theory stipulates that the three basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness must be satisfied by the social environment in order for individuals to have good psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Research suggests that satisfaction of the needs of autonomy and relatedness but not competence, predicts successful school transition (Gillson, Standage & Skevington, 2008).

Attachment theory explains the importance of primary caregivers in providing a feeling of security and in regulating difficult emotions (Bowlby, 1973). Going to boarding school may lead to a loss of or disruption in attachment security and emotional dysregulation. Based on her clinical observations as a psychotherapist, Power (2007) discusses how children with different attachment styles may respond to the transition to boarding school. Children with a secure attachment see others as reliable and caring and the self as worthy of care. They may therefore feel abandoned by their parents when sent to boarding school and present as tearful and homesick.

In comparison, children with an insecure-avoidant attachment style do not see others as reliable and caring, and will minimise the importance of others and their rejection, to maintain their self-esteem (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Power (2007) suggests that these children may not confide in their parents about any troubles, may internalise their distress and engage in maladaptive coping strategies such as bullying

others, anorexia, substance abuse, and may experience physical somatic symptoms when they go to boarding school. Studies have demonstrated how these maladaptive coping strategies can develop in boarders: Stewart, Troop, Todd and Treasure (1994) found that 68% of UK boarding school matrons had come across a pupil (both males and females) with anorexia or bulimia. Limbert (2001) found that English female university students who went to boarding school scored higher on an Eating Disorder Inventory, than those who went to day schools.

It is also argued that children with an insecure-ambivalent attachment see others as reliable and caring but the self as not worthy of care, and will blame themselves for the rejection (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Power (2007) suggests these children may present with visible signs of homesickness and anger at the abandonment, and may be so preoccupied with their desire to go home that they may fail to integrate with their peers and achieve academically.

Psychosocial factors.

It should be acknowledged that for some young people, boarding school offers respite from a difficult home situation (Shaverien, 2011). For children who are experiencing problems in the family, the stable relationships or attachments formed with school teachers can be vital (Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008). Moriarty also notes that house staff can become the most significant people in an adolescent's boarding life. Having the same housemaster and matron over the duration of pupils' time at boarding school appears to contribute to boys' good physical and mental health (Briscoe, 1985), indicating the importance of these relationships.

Newman and Newman's (2003) model of psychosocial development emphasizes the need for adolescents to join a peer group so that the need for belonging will be met. It could be argued that boarding school provides more opportunities for adolescents to have

a close peer group than day school. Priel et al. (1998) found that female boarders and those with a secure attachment style tended to seek more social support and closeness to peers and were perceived by their peers as being more supportive and close.

Moriarty argues that by learning to understand, respect and live with others, making friends with people from different cultures, and by resolving conflict when it occurs, adolescents may develop important interpersonal skills they will need for adult life. Conversely, Partridge (2007) and Shaverien (2011) argue that some boarders may feel they need to 'perform' to fit in with peers and not express their individuality. It has been suggested that if young adolescents are not accepted by a peer group they will experience alienation, which in the longer term may lead to difficulties in developing social support networks that are particularly important for health and well-being (Newman & Newman, 2003). This alienation from peers may be intensified at boarding school where adolescents are with peers 24 hours of the day, often sharing small dorms with little privacy or personal space. Without adults around all the time they may be more easily subject to bullying and abuse (Partridge, 2007; Shaverien, 2011).

Gathering the view of school staff, Sparks (1983) discussed the occurrence of 'group mobbing' in boarding schools, which was defined as group physical and/or psychological abuse towards one person. Staff reported that bullying can be hard to detect but were aware of 'initiation ceremonies' in houses. One headmaster stated that a hierarchy in a house with a rigid power structure can lead some pupils to 'advance their own case by doing down others' (p318), and that 'victims of teasing repeat the process on others as they become older' (p318). Whether victim or bully, boarders do not have homes to come back to at the end of the day where they can then be safe, regress if they need to, reflect and talk things through, receive touch and affection or be alone, as they wish (Duffell, 2005; Shaverien, 2011).

Moriarty argues that all modern day boarding schools have firm policies to deal effectively with bullying: 'with boarding staff increasingly availing themselves of the university-accredited training offered by the Boarding Schools' Association, schools are safer, more secure and more aware of pupils' needs than ever before' (Boarding Schools' Association, *n.d.*).

Aim

It is apparent there is a considerable gap in the literature in understanding how adolescents adjust to the transition to boarding school. The lack of research is of concern considering the psychotherapy literature describing the potential adverse psychological effects of boarding school on the individual and the literature on the impact of homesickness on mental health. Furthermore, the recent National Minimum Standards for Boarding schools (2011), stipulates that there should be an appropriate process of induction and guidance for new boarders, and that boarders should have the opportunity to contribute views to the operation of boarding provision, be able to raise concerns and make complaints and their views are given appropriate weight in decisions about the running of the school. Therefore this study aims to gain a better understanding of how adolescents adjust to the transition to boarding school through interviewing them.

Research Questions

The study's major research question was: How do adolescents describe their experiences of the transition to boarding school? Secondary questions included: How do adolescents describe themselves, their relationships with family, peers, and school staff, following the transition to boarding school? What can be done to facilitate the adjustment to boarding school?

Method

Design

In view of the exploratory nature of the study and the scarcity of previous research in this area, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate. This study employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which focuses on how individuals make sense of their lived experience and the meanings they ascribe to these experiences and events (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This method was felt to be appropriate to the current study as the researcher wished to elucidate the subjective experience of adolescents adjusting to boarding school. Further details regarding the use of IPA can be found in Appendix 4.

Participants

In accordance with IPA methodology (Smith et al., 2009), the aim was to find a small, homogenous sample for whom the research question was significant. Ten participants from a boarding school where the research supervisor provided regular psychological input took part. The school was an independent day and boarding school with approximately 650 pupils, aged between 13 and 18 years old. The school was coeducational, with approximately two thirds boys and a third girls.

Homogeneity of the sample was ensured through the inclusion/exclusion criteria. For inclusion, participants needed to have just completed their first year of boarding at a secondary school. This ensured that participants had recent and therefore relatively accurate memories of the transition. As previous boarding school experience could have an ameliorating effect on the transition experience (Fisher et al. 1986), participants were excluded if they had boarded previously. Participants were 6 girls and 4 boys and ranged in age from 14-15 years old. None of them had received support from the school's clinical psychologist during their time at the school and they all attended an independent primary school. Table 1 provides further participant information.

Table 1

Participant demographics

Participant	Sophia	Jacob	Emma	Ethan	Isabella	Olivia	Noah	Ava	Emily	William
Age	14	14	14	15	14	14	14	15	15	14
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male
Ethnicity	White British	White British	White Other	White British	White British	White Other	White British	White British	White Other	White British
School House	A	B	A	B	A	A	B	C	C	D
Distance between home and school (approx.)	30 miles	60 miles	Father: abroad Mother: 60 miles	60 miles	60 miles	Abroad	60 miles	30 miles	Abroad	60 miles
Siblings at school	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Number of weeks away from home prior to boarding school	1	2	1	1	1	2	2-3	1	4	2
Parents marital status	Married	Married	Divorced	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married	Divorced	Married
Amount of telephone contact with parents per week	7	1-2	3-4	3	3-4	1-2	4	1-2	7	1
Amount of email contact with parents per week	0	1	0	5	3-4	0	1	0	1	1
Visits home during term	12	3	12	12	3-4	0	4	12	0	4
Extra learning support	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Received a scholarship or assisted place	No	No	Assisted place	No	Scholarship	Scholarship	No	Scholarship	Scholarship	Scholarship
SDQ score for overall stress	7 (average)	7 (average)	4 (average)	8 (average)	9 (average)	7 (average)	2 (average)	7 (average)	10 (average)	9 (average)
SDQ score for emotional distress	1 (average)	0 (average)	2 (average)	3 (average)	4 (average)	2 (average)	0 (average)	2 (average)	4 (average)	0 (average)
SDQ score for behavioural difficulties	1 (average)	1 (average)	0 (average)	0 (average)	0 (average)	2 (average)	0 (average)	1 (average)	2 (average)	4 (slightly raised)
SDQ score for difficulties getting along with peers	1 (average)	2 (average)	0 (average)	1 (average)	2 (average)	1 (average)	1 (average)	0 (average)	2 (average)	0 (average)
SDQ risk for emotional, behavioural or hyperactivity or concentration disorder	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk

Procedure and ethical considerations

Ethical review and approval was granted prior to conducting this research by the Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology research subcommittee, University of Oxford ethics committee (CUREC), and the participating boarding school (appendix 5 and 6).

A boarding school was approached to explain the purpose of the study, and to identify participants who met the inclusion criteria. Parents and students were contacted by the school about the study to discuss participation before the researcher commenced recruitment (appendix 7 and 8). Participants were then emailed by the researcher to ask for volunteers to take part in the study (appendix 9). Written parental consent was obtained for participants who volunteered (appendix 10) and their house mistress/master signed a consent form (appendix 11). Participants were given information on confidentiality, anonymity, right to withdraw from the study and the voluntary nature of participation and written student assent was obtained before the interview (appendix 12). Detailed discussion of the recruitment procedure and ethical issues involved is located in appendix 13 and 14.

Prior to the interview, participants were asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire developed by the researcher (appendix 15). The questionnaire asked about factors that have been investigated in previous research. Participants also completed a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997) which provided information on their mental health status at the time of the interview (appendix 16). All the information gathered with these measures was used to situate the sample and add context to the individual participant's experience.

Data collection

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed to guide the topics of discussion (appendix 17). It was informed by the themes noted in existing literature on boarding school and also incorporated ideas generated through discussion with the researcher and supervisor. In line with the IPA guidelines (Smith et al., 2009), questions were open-ended and served as prompts to lead discussion. Participants were asked about their experiences at three time points: the summer leading up to going to boarding school, the first few weeks, and looking back on the past year. Extra prompts were used when necessary, or to follow interesting areas that arose. Although the interview schedule was used to guide the discussion, the order of the questions was flexible and a non-directive approach was adopted to encourage participants to develop and elaborate their own narratives about their experiences. A pilot interview with an older pupil in the school confirmed that the questions were clear and answerable by participants.

Interviews were conducted by the researcher at the boarding school. Interviews lasted between 20 and 50 minutes and were digitally recorded. Time was set aside at the end of the interview to debrief participants. No situation arose in which further support was required. At the end of the study, participants were sent a summary of results.

Data analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim for sematic content. All identifying information was removed and participants were assigned a pseudonym to preserve anonymity. Guidelines for IPA analysis provided by Smith et al. (2009) were followed. This involved detailed reading and re-reading the transcripts and becoming immersed in the data. Using phenomenological analysis, descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments were noted on the transcripts. From this, emerging themes were identified and noted, using Interpretative analysis. Emerging themes were kept in mind when analysing the remaining transcripts, though the researcher also remained sensitive to new and

unique information, to ensure an idiographic approach. A summary analysis for each participant was then developed to cluster together the emerging themes with corresponding extracts from the transcript, together with the main researcher's reflections on the interview and initial coding process. The final step involved searching for recurrent themes across transcripts, exploring both commonalities and discrepancies between transcripts. Closely related sub-theme clusters or subordinate themes were grouped together under superordinate headings. Each transcript was then re-read to ensure that all relevant occurrences of each theme were identified. This resulted in a final summary analysis for the whole data set. See appendix 18 for an example of an interview transcript with emergent themes and appendix 19 for the overall theme structure.

Credibility

This study employed a set of accepted procedures throughout the analysis phase to ensure the integrity of the final themes (Yardley, 2008). Credibility was ensured by grounding the analysis in the participant's account through the detailed compiling of extracts from the transcripts for each corresponding theme. Furthermore, the researcher met with both the research supervisor and an IPA peer research group, to compare independent analyses of a selection of the transcripts. Themes were found to be largely consistent with the researcher's interpretation. Where differences did arise, this was discussed and an agreement was reached over emerging themes. Feedback on the coherence and integrity of subordinate and superordinate themes was also provided. Further details of these credibility checks are found in appendix 20.

Reflexivity

In qualitative research, the importance of context in interpreting the data means that it is vital for the researcher to reflect on their own beliefs, assumptions and values and how this might influence or inform the development of the research and how they

interact with the participants and their narratives (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher has a particular interest in this area which stems predominantly from her parent's negative experiences of boarding school. Throughout the study the researcher remained aware of how her own personal family history and the potential bias that may come with that, impacted on how the project was conducted at all stages. Reflexivity was ensured throughout the research process through the use of a reflective journal which was used to record thoughts, curiosities, reflections and observations at every stage of the study (appendix 21). The research supervisor interviewed the researcher about their own beliefs, assumptions and values when developing the research proposal and then again when writing up the findings. The outcome of such conversations often involved refining existing themes which were more fully grounded in the adolescents' accounts.

Results

Three overarching superordinate themes were identified by this process. These themes were labelled: 'Home is where the heart is', 'Living in a bubble' and 'Gaining 'familiarity with the place and just being me' (table 2).

Table 2

Themes

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
1. 'Home is where the heart is'	1.1 Leaving 'the nest'
	1.2 'Distance makes the heart grow fonder'
	1.3 Finding a new family
2. Living in a 'bubble'	2.1 Feeling constrained
	2.2 Hierarchy within the school
3. Gaining 'familiarity with the place and just being me'	3.1 Developing strategies to adapt
	3.2 Positive self-discovery

1. 'Home is where the heart is' ***(Noah, 726-727)***

This superordinate theme captures the participants' emotional reaction to living away from home. Some described their experiences of homesickness and others talked about boarding school bringing them closer to their family. Many found comfort in the new relationships they formed with their house matron and friends.

1.1 Leaving 'the nest' (Sophia, 35)

Participants spoke about it being a joint decision between themselves and their parents to go to boarding school. Two participants described wanting to go because their older siblings had attended boarding school. Isabella described how her parents would not have sent her to boarding school if she was not '*emotionally stable enough'* (58), but because she was an independent person, they felt she would cope well. The three participants from overseas revealed that they came to England for a better education. Emily was sent to boarding school, despite her family knowing she would struggle:

'Every parent wants, wants the best for their child. So they knew that English education...will open so many doors for me in the future that...was why I had to come here, but erm my mum knew I'll feel homesick. She knew that I would really wanna go home because she knew like the type of person I was' (260-265).

Participants spoke about being kept busy in the first few weeks of term, to keep their mind off home: *'I think one of the most important things they did was keep us busy the whole time. Make us so tired that we all like fall asleep at 9 and no breaks between things, just constant, keeping going...because if you keep going the whole time, if you constantly do something, you don't have time to think and reflect on your emotions and...feeling homesick' (Emily, 372-381).* There was a general consensus that being kept busy was helpful. However four participants felt overwhelmed by the pace of the first few weeks.

Half of the participants described times when they missed home, whereas the other half did not. Most spoke about homesickness subsiding with time. Emily's homesickness remained and she described it as a physical pain and a real sense of hopelessness associated with it: '*the most [emphasis added] horrible feeling ever. It's, it's the horrible pain. It's pain. It's real, it's real pain you feel. Because you know you can't do anything about it. And even like calling your family or calling your friends, it's not gonna help. Because it's, it's maybe not even the feeling of missing a person, it's the feeling of missing a place. Like your own, like little bubble you lived in. Erm, and just feeling confused and lost...Because you can't do anything about it' (326-334)*. Emily reported that her homesickness had led to a period of depression. A few described feeling more comfortable, confident and safe at home. Noah called home his '*safe place'* (726), whereas William stated that: '*I prefer it at school than I do at home. Like being by my friends and everything. I feel comfortable here'* (342-343). For William, there was a sense that home was not his safe place as he had a poor relationship with his parents.

When talking about homesickness, incongruence between some participants' verbal and non-verbal language was observed. For instance, although a few participants described the separation from their parents as manageable, their tone of voice and body language suggested that it was challenging for them and they attempted to minimise this. Furthermore, participants' who described not experiencing homesickness reported this with a sense of pride, as indicated by Emma: *'I wasn't homesick at all, which people find quite weird...especially because home's quite. One of my homes is really far away so you'd expect me to be really home sick because I can't really go home, that often. But I really, I just genuinely really, really like being away from home. Not because I don't get on well with my parents' (324-328).* Others also talked about how a greater distance from home, made homesickness more acceptable. There was a sense from participants that one

had to have a reason for being homesick. It appeared that those who did not experience homesickness negatively judged those who did, and a small number of the participants who were homesick either minimised or denied this to protect themselves from judgement from their peers.

The interviewees went on to describe factors that mediated the experience of homesickness. Six participants felt they had adjusted well to being away from their parents because they were already mature and independent young people, who did not rely on their parents. Olivia drew conclusions as to why she had not experienced homesickness: *'my mum she went back to work like one week after I, after she'd gave birth to me, because erm she's always been a working woman... that is actually now a good thing because we don't get upset just because we've never been around our parents very much' (92-98).* In direct contrast, Emily explained that it was because she was '*a home girl*' (19) that she had been homesick. She stated *'we're not like mother and daughter, we're more like best friends' (355-356),* potentially indicating an enmeshed relationship with her mother.

Some felt their adjustment to boarding school was easier because they had previously spent time away from home. Two participants believed it was because their siblings were at the same school. Participants had noted the times when homesickness was most prevalent. Olivia was aware this was when she was most stressed at school: *'there's still times, for some reason I miss my mum...if I'm having a bad time or something...I was kind of distant from the others, from my friends, and...when it comes to work, and like generally when I'm really stressed, that's when I just really want to go home to be with my family' (100-115).* Others also talked about wanting to go home after arguments with friends. There was a sense that if the adolescents did not feel connected to

their peers, they missed home. Some participants had noted an increase in homesickness at the end of the term, when they were more tired and irritable with each other.

1.2 'Distance makes the heart grow fonder' (Sophia, 358)

There appeared to be some consensus among the participants that they had developed closer relationships with their family since going to boarding school: '*we try and make the most of the time together, I think, we have gotten closer because I don't spend every single moment of my time around them' (Sophia, 347-252).* Four participants noted how they no longer '*fight*' (Olivia, 381) with their parents and as a consequence their relationships had improved. Most appreciated their parents more since going to boarding school: '*When you're at boarding school you realise that actually she does do quite a lot of things for me. So you do realise like it's actually quite nice having her around. So you realise then that cheesy quote, you only realise what you have until it's not there anymore' (Noah, 340-344).*

William was an exception and felt that his relationship with his parents had further deteriorated since he left to go to boarding school. He felt unaffected by this: *'we don't have the best of relationships…Just progressively, there's just less talking. Less like how's school going and stuff like that it's become more like. You're on your own now it's like you can do what you want…You can just get on with it. We don't really need to speak to you anymore like. Just get on with your life. Other people might think well that's quite bad or something. I just don't to be honest' (298-312).*

Most participants were either told or had a sense that they were missed by their parents, and this made them feel loved and cared for. Noah explained that this made him think '*so you do love me'* (333), perhaps implying he had doubts as to whether they cared for him. Emily described how her being at boarding school had caused a rift between her parents and her grandmother: *'my grandma wasn't talking to my parents for maybe like*

two months. Because she was like...you're so selfish and you have no heart and you send your child away...she was quite angry and still sometimes when I back home, she goes like, well maybe you've been to this school for like a year and a bit, maybe that's enough, you should come back now' (268-274).

1.3 Finding a new family

Although participants maintained a strong connection to their family, it appeared that they found new sources of emotional support from their matron and friends. It was striking how many participants spoke about the important relationship they had formed with their matron. A few participants used the word 'love' when discussing their feelings towards her and there was a sense that they experienced her as a nurturing maternal figure. Noah captured this well: '*it's like she's your grandma...Especially the free food there...you sort of imagine like your own family living here. Like and the fact that it is in some ways similar to where my grandparents lived...Like I knew they had the same tea pot as well. So, it was just memories of home really...It's like you're at home...you know you can talk freely. Have a chat... it's comfortable. It's quite nice. So immediately you think, relax' (280-301).* Others also expressed this need to have a feeling of or connection with home. However, Emily stated that there were limits to how much one could say to matron, due to confidentiality being breached.

There was a sense from two participants that although some members of staff felt like parent figures, they were not a replacement for their actual parents. For example, they described feeling uncomfortable confiding in them and also being told '*your room is not tidy you have to tidy it up*' (Emily, 152) by someone who was not their parent. William felt that ultimately he was at boarding school on his own: *'when you're at boarding you don't have that parent like figure around you like all the time. While*

you've got your friends perhaps, they're not likely to be your parents really. And the housemaster can't be round the whole time, so you kind of there on your own' (98-102).

A number of participants spoke of the close friendships they had formed with their peers at boarding school. Emma reflected on the quality and strength of friendships formed compared to at a day school: '*having to live with them 24/7 really makes you want to get along with them…you really want to be friends with them and not mess it up. I think maybe at a day school friendships…can be broken easily, and they can be on and off. I think here there's a real sense of friendship at boarding school' (550-555).*

William, who described coming from a difficult home situation, went as far to say that his friends were like a family to him: *'when you, you get that 15 squad together like that is your, like as family. Like that, that probably was my family to start with, the rugby, the coaches when I came here so…they were the first real family you got to know. And then so those are people you feel more comfortable with' (50-59).*

Many perceived it to be important to have close friends, whom they could turn to at difficult times and spoke of finding comfort in the fact that they were all going through the same experience together. However, being with peers seven days a week and sleeping in dorms, appeared to also bring challenges: '*We just get tired and annoy each other, because we've been with each other for a long time, especially if you're in a dorm with them. It can get a bit frustrating at times' (Ethan, 207-209)*

2. Living in a 'bubble' *(Sophia, 411; Emma, 331; Ava, 655)*

This superordinate theme reflects several participants' descriptions of boarding school being like a bubble, a microcosm; an environment closed off from the outside world. Two subordinate themes are discussed: the first, a feeling conveyed by participants that they felt constrained in the bubble which was both a positive and negative experience, and the second, a culture of hierarchy within the bubble.

2.1 Feeling constrained

The subordinate theme encompasses how participants described a lack of freedom to leave the school grounds, and to do what they want to do, when they want to do it. It also captures their experiences of being unable to express their individuality and have privacy. However, being within a bubble also made it feel safe and containing.

All participants spoke about having a limited sense of freedom at boarding school: *'I don't like how, not locked down, but just don't have a lot of freedom, we're very confined. That's why I prefer about day school, you know, I could go home and meet up with friends and go somewhere else and you know do all kinds of things after school, where like here you can't do much'* (Olivia, *334-338)*. Noah described boarding school as a '*concentration camp'* (661-663). Emily suggested that being confined to the school environment hid them from the reality of the outside world, and felt over-protected.

Participants enjoyed being able to leave the school environment as it reduced stress. However, Noah spoke about the school having a sense of control over their freedom: *'I need permission to have fun, sometimes, most of the time, so but when you're at day school you're not at school so often, so school doesn't have that much control over your life. So it's more easy' (653-656).*

Four participants acknowledged that boarding school offered them a wealth of opportunities and activities, but a number of participants expressed the need for more free time. They felt this would allow them more time to do homework, activities of their choice and also to have time to relax: '*at school there isn't a single day of the week when you can have a lie in, because of chapel on Sunday. So I think our sleep pattern is quite hard to deal with. Whereas at home you're kind of free to sleep whenever, whenever you need to and however long you need to and that really helps' (Isabella, 391-396)*. There

was a sense that boarding school emphasised the 'doing' side of life and neglected the 'being' side of life.

Isabella explained that because of the fast pace of boarding school people often end up feeling '*exhausted' (751)*. She emphasised the importance of learning time management and balancing activity with rest. Emma articulated how boarding school offered freedom from parents but having to be so self-reliant could lead her to feel less free. Isabella also described this: '*the whole time at school you're kind of buzzing with so many different like thought paths and at home you're just really relaxed you haven't got much to think about, which kind of relates back to the independence thing because it's, you've got to be so independent...I've got this activity before dinner, this activity after dinner, however I'm going to fit in dinner' (377-385).*

Participants spoke of the lack of freedom to make choices about when they do things because of the regimented nature of boarding school: '*Everything is kind of like timetabled for you. So you need to be willing to follow it, which is quite a big change from being at home mainly, when you can like go to bed when you want, you can eat when you want, you can choose what you want for dinner' (Isabella, 101-106).*

Although the only participant to make this point, Noah explained that he felt boarding school did not give young people the freedom to express their individuality: *'at a day school you can probably tell...if that person's more into...being an Emo or a Goth...you'd be able to know like if you went into their room at their house, there would probably be candles everywhere and other things but if you are at a boarding school, because everyone's wearing uniform'* (593-598).

Finally, adolescents described have little time to be alone and have privacy. The male participants, in particular, spoke of not having privacy in their dorm: *'we all had to write down one thing that you want most...one thing you would change, ... and everyone*

wrote like world peace, we'll stop wars, and be a better person, but that's not, I wrote down can I get a room to myself...even though it's like a room where you each have your own space and things, it's just the fact that you're in the same room with five other people, it's quite claustro, claustrophobic...I'm much better on my own' (Noah, 388-412). Three participants stated that they needed more privacy to do their academic work. Olivia described not feeling able to have a private life: *'you don't have lots of privacy...it's practically impossible to like talk to someone outside without someone seeing you and someone telling everyone and then everyone knows' (353-360).*

Many participants articulated the positive aspects of the school environment. Emma observed that the regimented nature of boarding school allowed her to be more organised with her work. Two participants did not perceive the school's rules as controlling; instead this made them feel safe: '*it's normally regimented for a reason... Like a few years ago people used to be able, were allowed to go out at 1 o'clock and go out to the fields and things, but then people just misbehaved and I think even though now we'd prefer to have things like that, they're there for a reason, and kind of actually they are for our safety' (Ava, 772-779)*

Several participants spoke about the convenience of having everything to their disposal within the school. For instance, they described having to get up early to travel if they were at a day school and not being able to see friends after school because of travelling home. Ava highlighted the convenience of having one's social life at the school.

2.2 Hierarchy within the school

The majority of participants made reference to the school as a hierarchical environment, and perceived a power differential between pupils in different years. At times this would manifest itself in the form of verbal and physical intimidation or teasing

from the older years, particularly towards the first years: *'I think it's traditional in (house name) you're like child Pokemon where a guy in the 6th form takes a (1st year) and he challenges another 6th form and he has to pick a (1st year) and they have to fight each other the (1st years), until you know someone gets money or whatever' (Olivia, 175-179).*

Ava noted that this type of behaviour was more prevalent in the boys' houses and would often take the form of physical fights, whereas there would be more verbal intimidation in the girls' houses. Participants described often feeling scared of the older years and the higher status that they held. In an attempt to make sense of this behaviour, some participants would explain that it was due to school tradition and having respect for those who are older: *'you can't go and be rude to any one, like an upper sixth, it's like the real world, it's like you don't you're not rude to adults. It's just kind of a respect for other people, which I think's good' (Ava, 413-431).* Emily recalled feeling confused when told that it was tradition to not speak to or make friends with pupils from other years. Emma mentioned that she was glad to not be in the first year anymore and did not continue the tradition of intimidating behaviour towards the year below.

Two participants also spoke of being fearful of their teachers and house mistress/master at times. Emma reflected on the differences between the teachers at her old school and her current teachers: *'here I think the teachers have a very high status. I mean I think there's a big difference ...between the like teachers and staff and us and I think they'd really like to keep that mutual respect, but erm to really, really respect your, your, your teacher or whatever....with teachers they just somehow feel like a hundred like times more powerful than you do. Erm and sometimes it's kind of scary to know that...I think it's really good to have respect, but sometimes I think teachers should be more involved with the students' (297-312).*

3. Gaining 'familiarity with the place and just being me' (Sophia, 339)

This superordinate theme reflects participant's awareness of themselves adjusting over their time at boarding school.

3.1 Developing strategies to adapt

All participants talked about the strategies they had learnt to adapt to boarding school life. Six participants emphasised the importance of seeking help, whether from friends, staff or family. Having a positive attitude and keeping oneself busy were commonly cited strategies used by participants. Some used reading or music as a distraction. Isabella talked about the importance of having a hobby: '*I think it's nice if you have a hobby that like dance…it's almost relaxing, and like makes you less nostalgic' (132-135).* Ethan was the only pupil who reported taking a herbal remedy to relieve stress in the first few weeks.

Contact with parents or siblings seemed important for participants. Two participants noted that they only contacted parents about something significant. Others found returning home helpful: '*I think it's really nice when you're really stressed and struggling, to go back home, if you can, for like a day or two and to get your mind clear and then come back to school. It just kind of clears your thoughts and you've had, you've slept well' (Emma, 601-606).*

Three participants spoke about the importance of having reminders of home. Isabella put photos on her wall to remind her of home and Emily would eat food from her home country. Noah revealed that he visited places local to the school that reminded him of home: *'trying to get the feeling of home, like once I found myself sitting in Starbucks for half an hour because there's a Starbucks near my house. Sounds sad, but, yeah. Just can't really get used to it' (Noah, 782-785).*

Participants spoke about maintaining a connection with home through keeping contact with home friends. Some were not able to maintain relationships with home

friends or chose to focus on making new friends at boarding school. Isabella talked about the challenge of keeping in contact with home friends because of different holidays but technology facilitated communication.

Many participants discussed how they had adapted to live with their peers. A frequently mentioned strategy to aid friendships to develop in the first few weeks was to be themselves. Participants spoke about the importance of being confident to actively make friends. They noted that those who were shy struggled to integrate with peers. Skills such as being considerate, non-judgemental and listening to others were mentioned as important when living with peers seven days a week. Ava suggested that being open to be friends with different people was important, and not to '*hang on to people that were cool' (563)*. William had learnt to be less intimidating towards others in order get on with peers.

A final strategy used by participants was in relation to getting on with staff at boarding school and learning to '*stay on their good side' (Emma, 227-237)*. Four participants perceived good behaviour and following the rules as important: '*Because you want to keep your house master, like you have to make sure that he does like you. If something, if you do something wrong, you don't want to pick up the worst punishment' (Noah, 797-802)*

3.2 Positive self-discovery

Participants spoke about how they had changed since being at boarding school and the experience afforded positive self-discovery. No participant spoke of having changed in a negative way. Sophia felt a '*stronger person' (268)*, Ava felt more self-confident to interact with peers and Ethan stated that he believed in himself more. Two participants spoke of having to become more organised in order to adapt to boarding school life. Half the participants felt they had matured during their time at boarding

school. Isabella believed this was due to having greater independence: '*I've grown up a lot quicker than I would have done if I was at a day school, because you're so much more independent' (529-532)*

The adolescents also felt they had become more independent and self-sufficient. Ava gave the examples of doing her own washing, going into town on her own, managing her money and looking after her possessions. Many spoke of having learnt to live without their parents: '*I think homesickness would still be quite a big factor if I was at home, and now that I've come here it's fine' (Ethan, 264-265).* Others explained that being a more independent person will prepare them for future life: '*you're not always with your parents. And they're not really looking over you, looking after you, so when you actually do leave home you're used to being on your own and you can just get out and that's it. Used to being on your own. If your used to like standing on your own two feet' (William, 326-330)*

Ava felt that having learnt to live with peers, would also prepare her for future life: '*So say I'd been at a day school and then going off to university and living in halls and things, I think you'd probably find that harder because you're not used to sharing your space with people who aren't your family and also here...if you have a massive fight with someone you're gonna be next to them for the next four years...so it almost makes you kind of not be a kind of snappy at people...hold in if you're really angry at someone...if you're annoyed with your boss of whatever, you can't just shout at them. So it's quite good life skills' (655-680)*

Participants noticed that their worries before going to boarding school were largely disconfirmed. Half the participants spoke of feeling as though they had adjusted to living at boarding school. Ethan spoke about how he used to be '*ticking off the days'* (182-183) but had learnt to '*just going with the flow'* (183-184) and was enjoying

boarding school. Olivia spoke of adjustment as feeling '*comfortable'* at school. Noah had noticed how he was more '*laid back'* (357) in the second year of boarding school, compared to the first. Finally, Ava noted that: *'you kind of do it without realising you're learning things almost, subconsciously. Like things like, you, you self-consciously kind of adapt*' (*273-275).*

Discussion

The personal accounts of participants allowed insight into the lived experiences of adolescents making the transition to boarding school. The IPA analysis yielded three superordinate themes. Each of which will now be discussed in light of the current literature. The limitations of the study, organisational and clinical implications and ideas for further research will additionally be detailed.

1. 'Home is where the heart is'

Participants spoke about it being a joint decision to go to boarding school between themselves and their parents. This is consistent with Moriarty's view that adolescents are far more involved in the decisions that families make about attending boarding school. Being told by their parents that they would be and were missed seemed very important for participants to feel loved and cared for. We saw that for one participant, when told that he was missed by his parents, thought '*so you do love me'* indicating that he may have had doubts about his parents' feelings towards him. Another participant, who was told by her parents that she was going to boarding school for a better education despite acknowledging that they knew she would struggle, may have concluded that her parents thought her education was more important than her happiness. This adolescent was the most homesick of all the participants and had the highest SDQ score of overall stress. Being sent to boarding school may therefore have had a negative impact on some participants' family relationships, and this fits with Partridge (2007) and Shaverien

(2011) suggestion that some boarders may feel angry, abandoned, rejected, or betrayed by their parents. Nevertheless, there appeared to be some consensus among the participants that they had actually developed closer relationships with their family since going to boarding school. This does not support the same authors' claims that some boarders feel unable to talk to their parents because they have learnt to cope by themselves and depend on other people for support. Most continued to seek support from their parents, with the exception of one participant who felt that his relationship with his parents had further deteriorated since he left to go to boarding school. This participant scored reasonably high on the behavioural difficulties subscale of the SDQ and reported displaying aggression towards property and intimidation towards peers and staff. Interestingly, Power (2007) suggests that children with an insecure-avoidant attachment may not confide in their parents about any difficulties, may internalise their distress and engage in maladaptive coping strategies such as bullying others at boarding school, as this participant did. He stated that he preferred being at boarding school than at home. This does not fit with Fisher et al. (1986) and Briscoe (1985) who found that the homesick adolescents had problems at home. This is more in line with Shaverien's (2011) view that boarding school might offer respite from a difficult home situation for some young people.

In order to aid adjustment over the first few weeks, the adolescents were kept very busy to keep their mind off home. There were mixed views amongst participants about whether this was a helpful strategies to ease the transition. Distraction and activity are well documented as effective strategies in reducing rumination (e.g. Stallard, 2009), but a lack of pacing can lead to both physical and mental exhaustion. It is arguable that adolescents may therefore require both activity and time for reflection and processing of their experiences.

In the early stages of adjustment to boarding, half of the participants described missing home and experienced varying degrees of homesickness. Similar to Fisher et al. (1986), it was found that homesickness gradually decreased for most adolescents, excluding one very homesick participant who reported on-going homesickness. There was a sense from some of the participants who did not experience homesickness that they were proud of this, and therefore negatively viewed those who were homesick. This resonates with Duffell (2005) and Shaverien (2004, 2011) postulations that boarders may want to avoid showing vulnerability and expressing difficult emotions linked with missing home and instead 'put on a brave face'.

Those who felt they had adjusted well to being away from their parents had spent time away from home previously. In contrast to this, Fisher et al. (1984) found that homesickness was unrelated to previous separation experience. The current study indicates that the young person's perception of themselves as being mature and independent may have protected them against homesickness. This resonates with Lazarus's transactional model of stress and coping (Lazurus & Folkman, 1984), which suggests that a successful school transition will be based on the positive *appraisal* of adolescent's own competence, anxiety, and personal controllability and predictability. Fisher et al. (1984) found that having an older sibling at the school caused pressure to live up to the standards set by them, whereas Fisher et al. (1986) found that the presence of siblings did not impact on homesickness. In the current study, participants felt their adjustment to boarding school was easier because their siblings attended the same school, which is in line with Shaverien's (2011) observation.

It seems that homesickness was most prevalent at the beginning and end of the term and when adolescents had academic pressures. Most commonly though, homesickness increased when adolescents experienced difficulties with their peers.

Newman and Newman's (2003) model of psychosocial development emphasizes the need for adolescents to join a peer group so their need for belonging will be met. If they are not accepted by a peer group they may experience alienation. Consistent with this, Fisher et al. (1986) found that the most homesick pupils had problems with relating to peers. In this study, it was the most homesick participant who seemed to have the most difficulties making friends. It is unclear whether it was her difficulty making friends that increased her homesickness or whether her preoccupation with wanting to go home meant she failed to integrate with her peers, as Power (2007) suggests the children with insecure-ambivalent attachment styles may do.

This study highlighted the significance of the attachments that participants had formed with their peers at boarding school, and the central position that friends occupied within their support system. The participant who had a difficult relationship with his parents felt his friends were like a family to him. Priel et al. (1998) found that female boarders tended to seek more social support and closeness to peers and were perceived by their peers as being more supportive and close, yet the current study did not find this trend: male boarders equally sought and offered support to their friends and strongly valued their friendships.

This study also indicated that, in addition to the significant relationships with their parents and friends, most found new attachment figures in their matron. There was a sense that participants perceived their matron as a nurturing maternal figure, who they would turn to for care and support. This echoes Moriarty's as well as Briscoe's (1985) observation that house staff can become the most significant people in an adolescent's boarding life and are important for good physical and mental health. It differs from Duffell (2005) and Shaverien (2004, 2011) postulations that boarders avoid seeking emotional support as a way of managing the sudden loss of parental attachment figures.

2. Living in a 'bubble'

Several participants described boarding school as a 'bubble'. All participants spoke of their sense of freedom being restricted in the school environment. This resonates with Fisher et al's (1984; 1986) view that being in a school environment where discipline is imposed and rules must be adhered to may give adolescents little control over their immediate world. Participants described boarding school as regimented and many felt they needed more autonomy and free time. Furthermore, some participants mentioned that boarding school did not allow them to express their individuality and to have privacy. This increased desire for independence, autonomy, privacy, and self-expression are typical developmental characteristics of adolescence (Erikson, 1968). It may be that the boarding school environment restricts the development of these characteristics. Interestingly though, the school's rules made two participants feel safe and another participant felt the schools regimentation helped her to be organised. Having boundaries around them seemed to provide reassurance. Participants also described feeling the pressure of being so self-reliant without their parents there. They appeared to be oscillating between wanting more independence but also seeking the closeness and security in their relationships at school and at home.

Within this 'bubble', participants experienced a status or power differential between the younger and older pupils and staff and pupils. Despite being written in the 1980's, this is similar to what Sparks (1983) had written about: the presence of hierarchies, rigid power structures and bullying and teasing of younger pupils. Sparks also reported how victims of teasing repeat the process on others as they become older. Repeating the process could be due to views on following school tradition and being respectful to ones elders, and this emerged from participants' narratives in the current study.

3. Gaining 'familiarity with the place and just being me'

All participants talked about the strategies they had learnt to adapt to boarding school life. These included having a positive attitude, keeping oneself busy and distracted, contacting home friends, spending time at home, and having reminders of home. When participants spoke about having a positive attitude regarding the transition, it fits with Lazarus's model (Lazurus & Folkman, 1984), which suggests that successful school transition will be based on the individual's *judgment* or *perception* of the transition as a challenge rather than threat. Many participants discussed how they had adapted to live with their peers by being themselves, being confident to actively make friends, being considerate, non-judgemental and listening to others. Participants emphasised the importance of forming positive relationships with staff to avoid getting into trouble. This resonates with Duffell's (2005) claim that adolescents develop 'facades designed to please and to succeed' at boarding school.

Participants spoke about how they had changed since being at boarding school and that the experience afforded positive self-discovery. This is important considering adolescence is a time when many young people are establishing their personal identity (Erikson, 1968). They reported feeling stronger, more self-confident both in themselves and in interactions with peers, and more organised. Many felt they had matured and were more independent and self-sufficient. Others spoke of having learnt to live without their parents and with their peers instead, which would prepare them for future life. This is consistent with Fisher and Hood's (1988) finding that university students were less likely to be homesick if they had attended boarding school. It is also consistent with Moriarty's observation that by learning to live with peers, adolescents may develop skills for adult life. Half the participants spoke of feeling as though they had adjusted to living at boarding school. They talked of gaining familiarity with the school, being able to be

themselves, feeling more comfortable and not needing to count down the days to go home.

Limitations

The current study has explored an under-researched area and provides a useful insight into the experiences of adolescents making the transition to boarding school. However, the findings should be considered in the light of the study's limitations.

The methodology of IPA is inherently subjective and even though measures were taken to help protect against researcher bias and to ensure the credibility of the results, the researcher may have unintentionally been attuned to the participant's negative experiences of boarding school during the interviews and data analysis. The superordinate theme 'Home is where the heart is', certainly reflects the researcher's view that, in most circumstances, a child is happier at home with their parents. The researcher, as a trainee clinical psychologist, is also trained to draw on clients' positive coping and adjustment strategies, which may reflect the subordinate theme 'developing strategies to adapt'. This needs to be acknowledged when considering the results of the study. Confidence in the credibility of the results could have been strengthened by seeking the participants' views of the researcher's interpretation of their accounts. However, due to time constraints the researcher was unable to do this.

The sample was self-selecting so it may well be that only those adolescents with either very positive or very negative experiences chose to take part in the study. The young people who were interviewed may have been particularly self-confident, inherent in the fact that they had volunteered to talk to a stranger about a personal experience of theirs. This potential sampling bias may mean that the accounts were not representative of other adolescents and their experiences.

As with the majority of IPA studies, the small sample size and the greater proportion of female participants limits the generalizability of findings. The study was also conducted in a single boarding school and it may well be that the transition experiences for adolescents in other boarding schools are different. The aims of IPA, however, are not to provide a generalizable set of results, but rather to provide an in-depth exploration of a small number of participants' experiences.

It also needs to be acknowledged that participants may have withheld certain thoughts and feelings about their experiences of boarding. As Duffell (2005) and Shaverien (2004) suggest, some boarders may feel as though they should be appreciative of a boarding school education, making it harder to report any negative experiences. Despite fully explaining the process and issues relating to confidentiality and anonymity, participants may have had concerns that this would be breached and may have withheld information. Furthermore, Duffell (2005) and Shaverien (2004, 2011) argue that some boarders may develop a 'Strategic survival personality' where they may avoid expressing difficult emotions and showing vulnerability and instead 'put on a brave face'. If adolescents presented this way during the interviews, this may also confound the data.

Clinical, organisational and research implications

The results of this study may be relevant for parents of boarders, teaching and pastoral staff working in boarding schools, as well as mental health professionals working clinically with both current and former boarders. The in-depth exploration of adolescents' experiences of going to boarding school raises a number of questions which may direct how boarding schools ease young people's transition, as well as psychological interventions and future research.

Organisational and clinical implications.

This study indicated that adolescents who have already managed spending time away from home, who perceive themselves to be self-reliant and independent, and have older siblings at the school, adjusted well to boarding school life. When considering sending their child to boarding school, parents could be provided with this information about adolescents who adjust successfully to the transition, which may be useful in helping them to make an informed decision. They could also be advised about how best to help their child adjust to the transition, for example the significance of telling their child they are loved and are missed, and to continue offering emotional support. Organisations for both parents and adolescents such as the *Boarding School Association,* present an overly positive view of boarding school and conversely websites such as *Boarding Concern* present an overly negative view. Our findings suggest a far more balanced view of boarding school life, with both positive and negative aspects, which should be considered by such organisations.

This study highlighted that the house matron was a key figure of support for boarders. It is suggested that the relationship between matron and pupil could be further enhanced and promoted, by matrons attending training courses on basic counselling skills. The limits of confidentiality should be explained as this was a concern for participants. Matrons could direct pupils who require a more directive approach to psychotherapists and/or clinical psychologists who are increasing being employed in boarding schools to offer individual support (personal communication, 'Boarding School Syndrome: Broken Attachments a Hidden Trauma' workshop, 16th March 2013)

This study also highlighted how homesickness was most prevalent at the beginning and end of the term, when adolescents had academic pressures and when they experienced difficulties with their peers. It might be helpful for staff to be mindful of

these particular set of triggers, in order to intervene more effectively. Furthermore, in situations where pupils have failed to make friends in their own house, promoting friendship development within houses or exploring the possibility of moving pupils to other houses, may be needed.

Lack of autonomy and free time was expressed by participants and may well be an inherent feature of boarding school life. However, Self-Determination Theory states that one needs autonomy (i.e. a person's need for agency and to perceive oneself as the origin of one's own behaviour), in their social environment for good psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). It is therefore worth considering giving pupils more free time and to enable them to make their own choices about how they use this time e.g. for additional study, activities and hobbies, leaving the grounds, time with friends or for sleep, relaxation and time alone. More emphasis could be placed on 'being' rather than 'doing'.

The interviewees also highlighted a status or power differential between older pupils and younger pupils and between staff and pupils. Hierarchies are often encountered in closed institutional environments, and it is important to consider how to address this issue and minimise the significant impact that this can have on individuals' wellbeing. Psycho-education to staff and pupils about the negative impact of verbal and physical intimidation and teasing is important, and that the pathways of reporting bullying are clear to pupils. It is also important that schools have carefully considered policies about how to deal with bullying and that clear and transparent consequences are in place for pupils displaying such behaviour. Although part of the culture of many boarding schools, using honorifics when referring to house staff, and names such as 'warden' and 'mistress/master' inherently hold power and status.

This study suggests that pupils expressing sadness and vulnerability because they are homesick may be judged negatively by peers. Messages from staff about

homesickness being 'normal' and acceptable may be required. A number of strategies that participants had learnt to adapt to boarding school life were mentioned. It may be helpful to inform new boarders of these strategies during an induction phase. These ideas may also direct clinical interventions for psychotherapists and clinical psychologists working in boarding schools.

Research implications.

The insights into participants' experiences of the transition to boarding school in this study offer important considerations for future research. Longitudinal studies may be advantageous, and could explore the trajectory of adolescents' experiences, as adjustment may change over time with cognitive maturation that occurs naturally with age. Follow-up studies could be conducted with late adolescents and adults, as it is possible that some difficulties only arise later, as Duffell (2005) suggests. Research in other boarding schools would also be beneficial.

The generalizability of the themes or concerns expressed by participants could be assessed in a larger sample and lead to the construction and development of a self-report measure of transition experiences. This could help identify pupils most in need of support during the transition period. The research might be complimented by a study using a quantitative design. For example, it would be interesting to see whether there are any statistically significant relationships between factors such as adolescent self-reported 1) levels of independence and self-reliance before going to boarding school, 2) attachment style or quality of relationships with parents before and after going to boarding school, 3) problems with peer relationships at school, and levels of homesickness experienced.

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Appendix 4

Additional information on IPA

IPA is a qualitative research approach that aims to examine how individuals make sense of their lived experience and the meanings they ascribe to these experiences and events (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The approach has been primarily informed by three key areas of philosophy – phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography.

IPA is phenomenological as it explores an individual's personal perception or account of an event or experience as opposed to attempting to produce an objective record of the event or experience itself. This method recognises that whilst aiming to get close to the participants' personal world, one cannot do this directly or completely. As a result any phenomenological analysis is always an interpretation of the participants' experience and will therefore be influenced by the researcher's beliefs, experience and biases (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA studies are usually based on a small sample to ensure data is of good quality rather than quantity. Smith et al. (2009) suggest four to eight interviews for PhD studies. 10 participants were interviewed in this study, which may appear rather large. However, as the sample consisted of adolescents who may have struggled to articulate their thoughts, there was a concern that the data would not be extensive or rich enough and therefore more participants were required to elicit significant themes.

Data collection for IPA is usually based on purposeful sampling, in which participants are selected according to a set of pre-determined criteria which is relevant to the research question. Additionally, it is recommended that a homogenous sample is obtained whereby participants share key characteristics. Given these criteria and recommendations, IPA does not claim its findings are necessarily generaliseable to other situations or samples; it values in depth exploration at an individual level. However, a key aim of IPA is to contribute to the psychological literature base. Due to this, findings should be discussed in line with the current theory and evidence. IPA is a technique that is still in development and as such, the exact method of the approach can be flexible and creative (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA studies are typically conducted using semi-structured interviews, and these have been deemed the most appropriate method of eliciting a detailed picture of an individual's perception or account of a topic. One to one interviews allow the participants to think about their responses and to have the experience of being listened to and heard. Another advantage is that the researcher is in a position to be able to follow interesting lines of enquiry that have emerged (Smith et al., 2009).

A review of the published literature regarding the transition to boarding school identified two studies using quantitative methods and a number of personal and clinical observations made by psychotherapists. However, it was felt that relying solely on quantitative research designs and on the views of psychotherapists missed an important opportunity to explore in depth what adolescents themselves might contribute to the literature. A qualitative methodology was therefore pursued.

In contrast to other qualitative approaches which are often concerned with explaining factors which account for behaviour (e.g. Grounded theory) or how people talk and

interact with others about particular topics (e.g. discourse analysis and content analysis), IPA was chosen because of its focus on understanding the meaning of a person's lived experience in a particular context, for people who share a particular experience. IPA allows flexibility for the researcher to adapt his or her style of interviewing to fit the needs and abilities of the participants (Smith & Dunworth, 2003), which was pertinent to interviewing adolescents. IPA has also been argued to be useful in new areas of enquiry and is particularly suited to the exploration of major life events (Smith et al., 2009). The current study would meet these criteria.

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Appendix 5

Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology research subcommittee approval letter

Katherine Mollart

Cc Louisa Canham

Ian B

Dear Katherine

Thank you for your reply to the Research Sub Committee. You now have full approval for your dissertation project. Please bear in mind that when it comes to the final write up I think you should put a little more emphasis on the application of both Papers to clinical psychology.

We wish you all be best with your study.

YS

MC

Appendix 6

MEDICAL SCIENCES DIVISIONAL OFFICE
LEVEL 3, JOHN RADCLIFFE HOSPITAL
HEADINGTON, OXFORD, OX3 9DU

Tel: +44(0)1865 228974 Fax: +44(0)1865 750750
www.medsci.ox.ac.uk

Mrs Rosie Mortimer
Senior Assistant Registrar (Planning and Resource Allocation)

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref: MSD/IDREC/C2/2012/15

Katherine Mollart
Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology
Isis Education Centre
Warneford Hospital
Roosevelt Drive
Oxford OX3 7JX

6th July 2012

Dear Ms Mollart

Application to IDREC

I am writing to let you know that your application for ethical approval has been approved on the basis of the information which you have provided.

It is your responsibility to comply with the requirements for administering any tests or questionnaires and if in doubt to contact the publisher of those tests or questionnaires.

Principal Researchers: Katherine Mollart
Department: Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology, Isis Education Centre
Project title: Adolescents experiences of adjusting to the transition to an English boarding school
Start date: July 2012
IDREC approval: 06-July-2012
IDREC Number: MSD/IDREC/C2/2012/15

Amendments

If your research requires you to change techniques or procedures then you should first go through your research and check whether this changes the ethical issues. If these remain the same then the committee will require notification of the changes to lodge with the project. If there are significant alterations then the committee will require a succinct letter explaining these.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries about this matter.

Yours sincerely

Rosie Mortimer
Senior Assistant Registrar

Appendix 7

Email to pupil's from school's sub-warden

Dear

As a school we have always been keen to endorse scientific research linked with the University of Oxford. This year we have been approached by a clinical psychologist in training, Miss Katherine Mollart, whose doctoral thesis is looking at the experiences of young people going to boarding school for the first time.

We have agreed that Miss Mollart will email you all shortly, with some information on the purpose of the study and what it will involve. If you volunteer to take part, Miss Mollart will contact your parents to request their consent for your participation. Miss Mollart will then arrange to meet with you.

I do hope you will be willing to participate in the research project.

With good wishes

Email to parents from school's sub-warden

Dear

As a school we have always been keen to endorse scientific research linked with the University of Oxford. This year we have been approached by a clinical psychologist in training, Miss Katherine Mollart, whose doctoral thesis is looking at the experiences of young people going to boarding school for the first time.

In endorsing this piece of research, we have agreed that my secretary will forward an email from Miss Mollart to all our pupils who we know are boarding for the first time this year. Miss Mollart's email will include some information about the purpose of the study and what it will involve.

Please see the attached information sheet for further details of the study. If your child volunteers to take part, Miss Mollart will contact you to request your consent for their participation. Miss Mollart will then arrange to meet with your child.

With good wishes

Yours sincerely

Appendix 8

Oxford Health NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology

An NHS Course validated by the University of Oxford

Research study information sheet for parents

Title of study: Adolescents' experiences of adjusting to the transition to boarding school

This study is being conducted in partial fulfilment of a doctorate in clinical psychology and carried out by a trainee clinical psychologist under supervision. This study has been reviewed and approved by St Edward's school sub-warden, the Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology research subcommittee and the University of Oxford ethics committee (CUREC).

Before you decide whether or not you would like your child to take part, please read the following information carefully; it tells you more about the study and what is involved in taking part. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions (see details at the end of the sheet).

What is the purpose of this study?

Previous research suggests that the transition to boarding school can be a stressful time for many young people and can impact on their emotional and psychological adjustment and well-being. By sharing their experiences, your child will contribute to a better understanding of how young people adjust to the transition to boarding school. It is hoped that the results of this study will be used to inform schools on how they can ease this transition for young people.

Who is this study for and why have I been approached?

This study is for young people who have just completed their first year at boarding school and have no previous boarding school experience prior to the year just completed.

What will be expected of my child if they take part?

If you agree for your child to take part, I will arrange a convenient date and time for an interview. On the day of the interview, your child will be given information on what the study involves, will be given the opportunity to ask any questions, and will be asked to sign an assent form if they wish to participate. They will then be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire. I will ask them a series of questions about their experience of

going to boarding school during an audio-recorded interview that will last around an hour.

What will happen to my child's information?

The content of your child's interview will be kept confidential between me and my supervisor Louisa Canham. However, there may be certain circumstances where it is necessary to breach confidentiality (for example, if your child was to disclose information about harm to themselves or harm to others). If this were to happen, I would ensure that you and your child will be involved in any discussions about the best way forward.

The audio-recordings of each interview will be transferred onto a password-protected memory stick. The audio-recordings will then be destroyed following transcription of the interviews. The questionnaires and interview transcript will be assigned a number or pseudonym to protect your child's identity and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet owned by one of the researchers, along with the encrypted memory stick. Only I and my supervisor will be able to access this information. The information will be kept for five years and then safely destroyed.

The researcher intends to submit the study for publication and anonymised quotes from your child's interview may therefore appear in print. Your child will be offered the opportunity to receive a two page summary of the project findings.

What happens if my child becomes distressed as a result of participating in the study?

It is not anticipated that the study will cause any distress, however, if any distressing experiences are discussed, your child will be able to take a break at any point during the interview or to stop it altogether, without having to give a reason.

Does my child have to take part?

No. Your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are welcome to contact the researcher if you have any further questions. Your child will be able to withdraw from the study at any point prior to participating and in the following two weeks post-interview, without having to give a reason.

What if I have a concern or complaint about the study?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please speak to me or Dr Louisa Canham and we will do our best to answer your query. If you remain unhappy and wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford (ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; +44 (0)1865 614871; Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee, Oxford University, Hayes House, 75 George Street, Oxford, OX1 2BQ, UK).

Contact details

Researcher:

Katherine Mollart, Trainee Clinical Psychologist

Email: katherine.mollart@hmc.ox.ac.uk

Supervisor:

Dr. Louisa Canham, Clinical Psychologist

Email: lcanham@oxfordshireindependentpsychology.com

Appendix 9

Email from researcher to pupils

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology

An NHS Course validated by the University of Oxford

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Dear

I am conducting a piece of research on adolescents' experiences of going to boarding school for the first time, as part of my doctorate in clinical psychology. I am writing to ask whether you would consider taking part. Before you do, please read the following information carefully; it tells you more about the study and what is involved in taking part.

What is the purpose of this study?

Previous research suggests that the transition to boarding school can be a stressful time for many young people and can impact on their emotional and psychological adjustment and well-being. By sharing your experiences, you will contribute to a better understanding of how young people adjust to the transition to boarding school. It is hoped that the results of this study will be used to tell schools how they can ease this transition for young people.

Who is this study for and why have I been approached?

This study is for young people who have just completed their first year at boarding school and have no previous boarding school experience before the year just completed.

What will be expected of me if I agree to take part?

If you agree to take part, I will contact your parents to gain their consent for your participation. We can then arrange to meet at a time and date convenient to you. When we meet I will ask you to complete two brief questionnaires. I will then ask you a series of questions about your experience of going to boarding school during an audio-recorded interview that will last around an hour.

What will happen to my information?

Your interview will be kept confidential between you, me and my supervisor Louisa Canham. However, there may be certain circumstances where it is necessary to break confidentiality (for example, if you were to tell me something that made me worried about harm to yourself or harm someone else). If this were to happen, I would make sure that you are involved in any discussions about the best way forward.

The audio-recordings of each interview will be transferred onto a password-protected memory stick. The audio-recordings will then be destroyed following transcription of the interviews. The questionnaires and interview transcript will be assigned a number or pseudonym to protect your identity and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet owned by one of the researchers, along with the encrypted memory stick. Only I and my supervisor Louisa Canham will be able to access this information. The information will be kept for five years and then safely destroyed.

The researcher intends to submit the study for publication and anonymised quotes from your interview may therefore appear in print. You will be offered the opportunity to receive a two page summary of the project findings.

What happens if I become upset as a result of participating in the study?

It is not expected that the study will cause any distress, however, if any potentially distressing experiences are discussed, you will be able to take a break at any point during the interview or to stop it altogether, without having to give a reason.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask me if you have any further questions. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign a form to confirm that you understand, and agree to take part in the study. You will be able to withdraw from the study at any point prior to participating and in the following two weeks post-interview, without having to give a reason.

The study has been reviewed and approved by your school's sub-warden Mr James, the Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology research subcommittee and the University of Oxford ethics committee (CUREC).

What if I have a concern or complaint about the study?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please speak to me or Dr Louisa Canham and we will do our best to answer your query. If you remain unhappy and wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford (ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; +44 (0)1865 614871; Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee, Oxford University, Hayes House, 75 George Street, Oxford, OX1 2BQ, UK).

What should I do next?

Thank you very much for taking time to read this information. I encourage you to talk to your parents, teachers or housemasters/mistresses about participating before you decide whether to take part. **If you are interested in taking part, please email me within the next week** on katherine.mollart@hmc.ox.ac.uk, so that I can gain consent from your parents. I will then be in contact to arrange a date and time for the interview.

Yours Sincerely,

Appendix 10

Email from researcher to parents

Dear

Your child has volunteered to be interviewed about their experiences of going to boarding school, as part of my doctoral thesis in clinical psychology. Please see the attached information sheet for further details of the study. I am writing to ask whether you will give consent for your child to take part in the study, via email within the next week. Upon return of your email, your child's house master/mistress will sign the consent form on your behalf.

Yours Sincerely,

Appendix 11

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology

An NHS Course validated by the University of Oxford

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Consent form for parents and house masters/mistresses

Title of study: Adolescents' experiences of adjusting to the transition to boarding school

Researcher: Katherine Mollart, Trainee Clinical Psychologist

Supervisor: Dr. Louisa Canham, Clinical Psychologist

Please ensure that you have read the information sheet accompanying this consent form carefully before completing. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, using the details found at the bottom of the information sheet.

	Please initial yes or no	
	Yes	No
1) I confirm that I have read and fully understand the research study information sheet. I have had the opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification.	☐	☐
2) I understand that my child's/pupils's participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw from this study at any point prior to the interview and in the following two weeks. They do not have to give a reason for their withdrawal.	☐	☐

3) I give permission for my child's/pupil's interview to be audio recorded and for anonymised quotes from this interview to be used in any subsequent write-up. ☐ ☐

Name (printed): .....

Signature: .....

Researcher's signature: .....

Date: ..... / ..... / .....

Appendix 12

Assent form for pupils

Oxford Health NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology

An NHS Course validated by the University of Oxford

Title of study: Adolescents' experiences of adjusting to the transition to boarding school

Researcher: Katherine Mollart, Trainee Clinical Psychologist

Supervisor: Dr. Louisa Canham, Clinical Psychologist

Please make sure that you have read the information sheet that comes with this consent form carefully before completing. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, using the details found at the bottom of the information sheet.

	Please initial yes or no	
	Yes	No
1) I confirm that I have read and fully understand the research study information sheet. I have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐	☐
2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from this study at any point prior to the interview and in the following two weeks. I do not have to give a reason for my withdrawal.	☐	☐

3) I give permission for my interview to be audio recorded and for anonymised quotes from this interview to be used in any subsequent write-up. ☐ ☐

4) I would like a summary of the study's findings following its submission and approval. ☐ ☐

Name (printed): .....

Signature: .....

Researcher's signature: .....

Date: ..... / ..... / .....

Participant contact details *(This will be detached from the consent form & kept separately and securely. The information will be destroyed once the project has been completed).*

Name (printed): .....

Email address: .....

Telephone number: .....

Preferred contact method: Email / Phone (please circle as appropriate)

Appendix 13

Recruitment procedure

The research supervisor worked within the boarding school which agreed to take part in the study. A meeting was arranged with the school's sub warden to provide information about the study. The school's sub-warden provided written confirmation that the school agreed to participate. The researcher completed a CRB check as requested by the school. The researcher presented the study to the school's house masters/mistresses to provide information about the study.

A list was drawn together of the pupils who met the inclusion criteria with the school. The school's sub-warden emailed these pupils and their parents informing them that the researcher would be in contact with the pupils about the study. An information sheet about the study was attached to the email to the parents. The researcher then emailed the pupils about the study, asking them to email the researcher within a week if they were interested in taking part in the study. A follow-up email was sent asking for volunteers. With each volunteer, the researcher emailed their parents to gain their consent. The parents were required to respond to the email within a week, giving their consent. Once parents gave their consent, house masters/mistresses signed the consent forms on the parents' behalf (as they have loco parentis). The researcher arranged with each participant the time, date and place for the interview, via email.

On the day of their interview, each participant was provided with information about the study and provided written assent before taking part. Participants were asked to complete the demographic information questionnaire, assent form and SDQ. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed based on ideas generated by the researcher and supervisor who is experienced in working with adolescents in boarding schools. Development of the interview schedule was guided by recommendations from Smith et al. (2009). Questions were open-ended and designed to invite participants to narrate and then reflect upon their experience of boarding school life.

All participants were interviewed at their school. In order to overcome the 'bravado', 'façade' and 'brave faces' described by Duffell (2005) and Shaverien (2004, 2011), time was spent building rapport with the participant at the beginning of the interview and emphasising the importance of openness and honestly. This was delivered along with an explanation of the aims of the study, types of questions that would be asked, duration of the interview, right to withdraw, confidentiality and what to do if they wanted a break or feel upset at any point. The interview schedule was used in a flexible manner. The interviewer ensured the participant is listened to, resisted interpreting what they reported, and monitored the effect of the interview on the participant. The interviews were recorded digitally and all semantic content was transcribed in full by a transcription service. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants for anonymity purposes.

References

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Schaverien, J. (2004). Boarding school: the trauma of the 'privileged' child. *Journal of Analytical Psychology, 49*, 683-705. DOI: 10.1111/j.0021-8774.2004.00495.x

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Appendix 14

Ethical considerations

Ethical review

The study was approved by the following bodies: Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology research subcommittee, University of Oxford ethics committee (CUREC), and the school's sub-warden.

Consent and withdrawal

All parents of the potential participants and the participants themselves read the information leaflet detailing the aims of the study, what was involved in participation, confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any point up to two weeks following the interview. The potential participants were encouraged to talk to others (e.g. their parents) about their participation before they agreed to take part. Written consent was obtained from parents of those who volunteered to participate. Participants' House mistress/master then signed a consent form. Assent was obtained from participants themselves.

Confidentiality

The participants were informed that the content of their interview would be kept confidential. However, it was explained that there may be certain circumstances where it is necessary to breach confidentiality (for example, if they were to disclose information about harm to themselves or harm to others). If this were to happen, the researcher would ensure that the participant was made aware that their parents, school, the researcher's supervisor and any other necessary professionals would need to be informed, in accordance with the relevant Health Professions Council (2009) and British Psychological Society (2009) guidance.

The participants were informed that the researcher would listen to the tapes and remove any identifying information before the tape was transcribed. If it became apparent that the person transcribing the tapes knew a participant, the researcher would transcribe the tape(s) to ensure confidentiality.

The participants were informed that the audio recordings of each interview would be transferred onto an encrypted memory stick. The audio-recordings would then be destroyed following transcription of the interviews. The demographic questionnaires and interview transcript would be assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and would be stored in a locked filing cabinet owned by one of the researchers, along with the encrypted memory stick. The consent forms would be stored securely and separately from these documents. It was made explicit to participants who would have access to the transcripts and for what reasons. The information would be kept for five years and then safely destroyed, in accordance with standard requirements. It would not be used by anyone else.

The participants were informed that the study would be written up and anonymised quotes from their interview would be used. The researcher intends to submit the study for publication and anonymised quotes from the interview may therefore appear in print. All practical steps necessary were used to disguise the participant's identity, but it was possible that participants would be able to recognise the content of some quotes. All participants were offered the opportunity to receive a two page summary of the project findings.

Management of distress

In order to minimise distress, participants were informed they could take a break at any point during the interview or to stop it altogether, without having to give a reason. If the researcher felt that the participant was becoming distressed, she would also suggest a break or an early end to the interview. As a trainee clinical psychologist, the researcher was adequately qualified to deal with any distress that could arise. Participants were debriefed after the interview and recommended to contact the research supervisor, their parents and/or their house master/mistress if they needed extra support due to the issues raised in the interview.

Appendix 15

Demographic questionnaire

1. Age:_____
2. Gender:_____
   Ethnicity:_____
3. Do you live abroad outside of term time?
   _____
4. If you answered no to question 4, approximately how many miles is your school from home?_____
5. Do you have any siblings at school?_____
6. If you answered yes to question 6, how many siblings and how old are they?
   _____
7. Approximately what was the longest time you spent away from home before you went to boarding school? _____
8. Are your parents are married, separated or divorced? _____
9. Approximately how often do you have telephone contact with your parents?
   _____
10. Approximately how often do you have email contact with your parents?
    _____
11. Approximately how often do you go home per term? _____
12. What is your parent's job? _____
13. Which house do you belong to? _____
14. Have you had any support from a counsellor or psychologist since starting boarding school? _____
15. Have you had any extra learning support since starting boarding school? _____
16. Did you attend a private or state preparatory school? _____
17. Did you receive a scholarship or assisted place? _____

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

S 11-17

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of how things have been for you over the last six months.

Your Name ..... Male/Female

Date of Birth.....

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I try to be nice to other people. I care about their feelings	☐	☐	☐
I am restless, I cannot stay still for long	☐	☐	☐
I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	☐	☐	☐
I usually share with others (food, games, pens etc.)	☐	☐	☐
I get very angry and often lose my temper	☐	☐	☐
I am usually on my own. I generally play alone or keep to myself	☐	☐	☐
I usually do as I am told	☐	☐	☐
I worry a lot	☐	☐	☐
I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	☐	☐	☐
I am constantly fidgeting or squirming	☐	☐	☐
I have one good friend or more	☐	☐	☐
I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want	☐	☐	☐
I am often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	☐	☐	☐
Other people my age generally like me	☐	☐	☐
I am easily distracted, I find it difficult to concentrate	☐	☐	☐
I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence	☐	☐	☐
I am kind to younger children	☐	☐	☐
I am often accused of lying or cheating	☐	☐	☐
Other children or young people pick on me or bully me	☐	☐	☐
I often volunteer to help others (parents, teachers, children)	☐	☐	☐
I think before I do things	☐	☐	☐
I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere	☐	☐	☐
I get on better with adults than with people my own age	☐	☐	☐
I have many fears, I am easily scared	☐	☐	☐
I finish the work I'm doing. My attention is good	☐	☐	☐

Do you have any other comments or concerns?

Please turn over - there are a few more questions on the other side

Overall, do you think that you have difficulties in one or more of the following areas: emotions, concentration, behaviour or being able to get on with other people?

No	Yes-minor difficulties	Yes-definite difficulties	Yes-severe difficulties
☐	☐	☐	☐

If you have answered "Yes", please answer the following questions about these difficulties:

- How long have these difficulties been present?

Less than a month	1-5 months	6-12 months	Over a year
☐	☐	☐	☐

- Do the difficulties upset or distress you?

Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
☐	☐	☐	☐

- Do the difficulties interfere with your everyday life in the following areas?

	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
HOME LIFE	☐	☐	☐	☐
FRIENDSHIPS	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLASSROOM LEARNING	☐	☐	☐	☐
LEISURE ACTIVITIES	☐	☐	☐	☐

- Do the difficulties make it harder for those around you (family, friends, teachers, etc.)?

Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
☐	☐	☐	☐

Your Signature .....

Today's Date .....

Thank you very much for your help

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Appendix 17

Semi-structured interview schedule

The aim of developing an interview schedule is to open up possible areas for discussion and to convey to the participants what the areas of interest are. In IPA, questions should be open and encourage participants to talk at length, with minimal verbal input from the interviewer (Smith, et al., 2009). In this study a balance had to be struck between adhering to these principles of IPA, and the need to provide enough structure within the schedule to guide participants aged 14-15, who developmentally may potentially struggle to articulate their thoughts and feelings.

The schedule was informed by the themes noted in existing literature on boarding school and also incorporated ideas generated through discussion with the researcher and supervisor. The resulting schedule is presented below.

- What were you thoughts about going to boarding school?

Possible prompts:

How did you feel?

Were you looking forward to going?

Whose decision was it?

- How did you prepare for coming to boarding school?

Possible prompts:

What did you do to prepare?

Who helped you prepare?

- What advice would you give to someone who was about to go to boarding school?

- How did you find the first few weeks of boarding school?

Possible prompts:

How did you feel?

What did you enjoy in the first few weeks of boarding school?

Was anything difficult in the first few weeks of boarding school?

What was it like being away from your family and friends from home?

How did you get on with your classmates?

How did you get on with your house-mates?

How did you find your school work?

- Did you feel well-supported in the first few weeks?

Possible prompts:

Who did you turn to when you needed support?

- How did it compare to your previous school?
- What advice would you give to someone who was struggling in their first few weeks of boarding school?

- Looking back over the past year, how have you found boarding school?

Possible prompts:

How have you felt about boarding school overall?

What has gone well in the past year at boarding school?

What has been difficult about the past year at boarding school?

How has it been being away from home?

How have you got on with your classmates?

How have you got on with your house-mates?

How have you found your school work?

How has your relationship been with your parents?

- What advice would you give to someone who was struggling at boarding school?
- How do you think a day school differs from a boarding school?
- How do you think your parents/family have felt about you being at boarding school?
- How do you think your peers have seen you?
- How do you think your house staff/teachers have seen you?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about boarding school that I have not asked about and you feel may be important?

	201	P: Erm it wasn't really resolved. It was kind of just, oh well we talked	
	202	and she said she was sorry and I said I was sorry. Erm and I mean there	
Making up with friends	203	was sort of like tension, you know silent tension between us for a bit, but	
	204	then, erm towards the end of the shells we started talking way more again.	
	205	So, it was fine.	
	206	I: OK. And erm did you feel supported by the school in the first few	
	207	weeks?	
No support	208	P: Erm I didn't.	Lack of support
	209	I: By teachers and friends.	
	210	P: Erm in house?	
	211	I: Mmm.	
Feeling scared of teachers, power	212	P: Well I mean some of the teachers in prep they sometimes scare me.	Fear of powerful others, figure of authority
Matron as a mother figure?	213	Erm we have quite scary tutors. But yeah they generally erm my matron,	
Can talk to matron, nurturing	214	she's a, I love her so much. She's, she's just the person you go to talk to	Matron as maternal figure
Safe base?	215	about anything. She's so nice and she's really understanding so having	Figure of support
	216	her in the house just kind of made things ten times better.	Having a safe base
	217	I: What do you think she did in particular?	New attachment figures
	218	P: She's just, she'd never leave you, give you tea…She's just a really like	
Left by parents?	219	nice person and all the other matrons I met, in school they're not as nice.	
Comparison to others matrons	220	She's just generally really caring and really like sympathetic. And she's	
Matron s caring	221	just really, really nice. And somehow like her niceness is like, it's just	
and sympathetic	222	like, it just infects everyone else. And it's just really nice to be around her,	
Repetition	223	so.	
Niceness is infectious	224	I: And how does that make you feel knowing that she's there?	Importance of relationships
Connection to house	225	P: I really like having her in this house. I mean, if I didn't have her as a	House identity
Importance of	226	matron I don't think I'd like this house as much, so.	
relationships	227	I: And you mentioned some scary tutors. Tell me a bit more about that.	
Social roles of being older	228	P: Erm, they were just kind of like typical like older women kind of	Fear of powerful others, figures of authority
Power Strict teachers	229	thing. And they were quite loud and quite strict and things (whispers).	
Staying on good	230	They kind of freaked me out. Erm but we just learned to stay on their	
side, learning process	231	good side. So it was fine for the first few weeks. And then we, now they	
Fear of their bad	232	just know us and now it's mutual respect for each other, so it's fine.	Strategies for adaptation
side	233	I: So how did you stay on their good side, what did you do?	
Fear turns to respect	234	P: Erm we were just, every time they'd walk in we'd pretend like we	
Mutual respect	235	were working. Erm and we'd just be really polite and try to be quiet. Erm	
Strategies for staying on good	236	and just not cause any disruptions, which sometimes went wrong but we	Shared experience
side: pretending, being polite and	237	mainly tried to stay on their better sides.	Group identity
quite	238	I: Any else the school did that made, helped in the first few weeks?	
	239	P: Well we had quite a few like meetings with all of us together as well.	
Bonding through shared experience	240	We had like a barbeque thing where all of our year got to know each	

	241	other. I wasn't there. I was ill, but I think that really helped quite a few	
	242	people. So, yeah.	
	243	I: Why do you think it was a good thing?	
	244	P: Because everyone was put in the same place, just after the first week	Opportunities to bond with each other
Done to you	245	and I think you were kind of forced to go. Erm I wasn't there so I	
	246	wouldn't know about exactly what happened. And just people kind of felt	
Social expectations	247	like they should go and introduce themselves. And I think loads of people	Social expectations
Friendships forming	248	became friends because of that. So I'm really happy that happened.	
Left out, isolated	249	I: OK. And how was the school work, in the first few weeks?	Feeling disconnected
	250	P: Erm well I'd missed, as I said like a few months of school, because I,	
Fear of academic incompetence	251	came over here. So I was kind of stressing out that I wouldn't get what's	Fear of academic incompetence
	252	going, what was going on, and I wouldn't be able to catch up. But erm it	
	253	was fine. At first at my old school, we didn't have prep as it was a day	
	254	school, we just had … and homework and it wasn't as organised. We	
Change from chaotic to organised work	255	didn't have nights where we had to do certain preps. Erm and it was more	
	256	chaotic. But somehow prep here at first seemed harder and there was	
Academic pressures	257	more of it. But I really, I like getting things done. So, it stopped stressing	Adjustment
	258	me out after a while and so, so.	
	259	I: What do you think it was about the prep that was stressful?	
Pressure on self to perform academically to gain approval	260	P: Erm I think it was just you really wanted to get it right and impress the	Gaining approval
	261	teachers and you know, start off doing well so.	
	262	I: OK, and you mentioned your previous school, how did it compare to	
	263	your primary school, going to boarding school?	
	264	P: Erm well my old school, was, it was from like 4 – 18, so there was, it	
	265	was quite a, it was a really big school. Erm and it was one of, erm it was a	
	266	really, really good school. It was probably one of the better ones in	
Gratitude to parents	267	(country). And erm I'm really grateful for my parents for sending me	Being grateful
	268	there because it was a really nice experience. But it was just erm your	
Cultural differences	269	whole attitude was quite different. I mean the whole Latin, generally the	Cultural differences
	270	whole Latin attitude towards things is quite different from English	
	271	people's attitudes. Erm but I guess the, the main difference erm I guess	Separation vs closeness
Less close to peers at day school	272	people weren't maybe as close. I mean it was way more separated. Erm	
	273	we didn't really have the time to be able to socialise all the time, because	
Boarding school enables socialising	274	we got to go home. So I think that was probably the main difference. We	
	275	didn't ever get to really know each other.	
	276	I: OK. OK. Any other differences you noticed between day school and	
	277	boarding school?	
More time at a day school	278	P: Erm I loved going to day school, because I had more time and I just. I	Lack of free time
Missing home	279	mean, I really like just going back home and things. Erm but somehow	Separation from home
	280	being at boarding school, things are more organised and it seems easier to	

Structure and routine aids organisation	281	get things done. And also it really helps you know when you should be	Routine and structure
	282	working and when you have free time and to be able to just have to get	
	283	something done, even if you don't want to. I mean at a day school you	
	284	could stay up until like 10 doing your homework where here you, it's just	
	285	so much nicer to just get it done by 9 and then have free time. So that was	Less autonomy
Less autonomy	286	really nice.	
	287	I: Anything else?	
	288	P: Erm just like social or like?	
	289	I: Any, any, any differences, any other differences.	
	290	P: Erm, erm all the teachers are different, I guess. And they were a bit	
	291	more, they kind of, we didn't really call them Mrs, whatever, we kind of	
Less at our level, power differential	292	called them by their first name and they seem more at our level, well some	Power differential
	293	of the teachers, not all of them. So it was quite nice , it was quite relaxing	
	294	because we weren't intimidated or scared or anything, and they just kind	
Feeling relaxed by informality	295	of, erm they just got along really well and it was quite easy to do things.	
Fear and intimidation	296	Of course there were the occasional teachers that were quite strict and	Figures of authority
	297	they were just a bit scary. Erm but here I think the teachers have a very	
	298	high status. I mean I think there's a big difference between like warden	
higher status of teachers, power	299	and sub-warden, teachers and students and I think. I mean, I think there's	
	300	a very big difference between the like teachers and staff and us and I think	Respect for hierarchy
repetition	301	they'd really like to keep that mutual respect, but erm to <u>really, really</u>	
	302	respect your, your, your teacher or whatever. Erm and at my old school it	
	303	was a bit different. So.	
	304	I: Tell me more about that, the differences between your…	
Teachers feel more powerful and scary	305	P: Erm I just think you can, you just feel. I mean with teachers they just	
	306	somehow feel like a hundred like times more powerful than you do. Erm	Power differential
	307	and sometimes it's kind of scary to know that, because you can't really	
	308	tell, if you like make a joke or kind of you know, chill with them. Erm or	
You do what you are told	309	if you really should be on your best and just not say anything, or just	
	310	being silent and trying to do whatever she says or he says. Erm and I think	
	311	it's really good to have respect, but sometimes I think teachers should be	
	312	more involved with the students.	Lack of support
Teachers should be more involved with students	313	I: Anything else, any other ways they should be different?	
	314	P: Erm I don't think so. I don't really remember anything else.	
	315	I: OK. Was there anything else significant in those first few weeks?	
	316	P: In …?	
	317	I: Mm.	
Enjoyed having separate life to siblings	318	P: Erm well I really, really like being away from my sisters and brother.	
	319	It was really nice being on my own and being with people my sister and	Having independence
	320	brother didn't know and I kind of had my own world and they had theirs	

	321	and I suddenly, and I could live my own life without them always being	
	322	involved in it. And I really liked that feeling, so. Yeah.	
	323	I: OK. And what was it like being away from home?	
No homesickness, weird People didn't understand? Not typical?	324	P: I wasn't home sick at all, which people find quite weird. I just, I mean	Homesickness
	325	especially because home's quite. One of my homes is really far away so	
	326	you'd expect me to be really home sick because I can't really go home,	
	327	that often. But I really, I just genuinely really, really like being away	
	328	from home. Not because I don't get on well with my parents. I love them.	Separation from home
	329	We get along really well. Erm but it was just nice like having my own	
Enjoyed being away from home Separation from outside world	330	break and I knew that they trusted me in school. So it was just kind of nice	Parental support and closeness
	331	living in my own little bubble for a bit.	
	332	I: How did you know that there was that sense of trust?	
	333	P: Erm, there's always been. I mean my mum and I are very, very close.	
Felt trusted Close to parents They were proud, needed their approval?	334	So erm, we, I can talk to her about everything. Erm my dad and I are	
	335	quite close. Erm and it was kind of just, I knew they were proud of me	Needing approval
	336	and I knew they trusted me, and it was kind of just a feeling. I've never	Parental support and trust
	337	done anything to break that trust, so it was still there.	
	338	I: OK. And what was it like being away from home friends?	
	339	P: Erm, I really missed. I mean I made new friends and I was happy I	
Missed home friends but made new friends	340	made new friends. But there were sometimes when I was just like oh I	
	341	wish she was here to see this. I wish you guys could walk out with me	Missing home
	342	and laugh at this, but erm and I really, really did miss them because I	
	343	don't get to see them. I still do. Erm I don't get to see them that often	
Had to concentrate on making new friends	344	(coughing). But erm it was, it was nice to be able to contact them every	
	345	once in a while. Erm but I thought it was really important to concentrate	Contact with home Developing friendships
	346	on at least making some, making new friends and new friendships. So	
	347	although I knew they were still there in (country), I can, I could live my	
	348	own life here as well.	
	349	I: Mm. OK. And what advice would you give to someone in those first	
	350	few weeks of boarding school?	
	351	P: Erm apart from making friends and all of that?	
	352	I: Mm.	
	353	P: Well I guess in the first few weeks you should, erm if you want to do	
Try and get along with friends and teachers	354	well generally in school erm, even if you're home sick I think it's really,	Developing friendships Strategies for adaptation
	355	or upset about, I think it's really important to try erm to get along well	
	356	with your teachers or get along well with everyone in your class. At least	
	357	have that base, of just, you know having someone there. Erm because	Safe base
Having a base, someone there	358	there are some people that just never really talked in the first term, in the	
	359	first few weeks. And, and I think there's nothing with them or anything,	
	360	there's, they're not shy or anything, I just, they kind of just stayed on their	

Appendix 19 – Overall theme structure

Super-ordinate themes	Sub-ordinate themes	Key emergent themes	Contributors to emergent theme	Indicative quotes
1. Home is where the heart is	1.1 Leaving the nest	Making the decision to go	Sophia Jacob Emma Ethan Isabella Olivia Noah Ava Emily William	*'they sort of felt it was time that I'd left the nest kind of thing. It was like, they weren't really keen on me going, well they were. I don't really know. They were fine with me going. It was sort of my choice, yeah'(Sophia, 35-37)* *'when we looked round and said I really, really like it and then I was, I think I was always going to go to a boarding school unless like I didn't get in. Erm but er it was my parents decision to look round and then it was my decision to come here. And I don't think they would have put, they wouldn't have let me apply for a boarding school if they thought I, would be like...not emotionally stable enough. So because I'm an independent child and I am quite comfortable around this kind of environment'(Isabella, 52-62)*
		Having phones removed	Jacob Ethan Isabella Emily	*'suddenly you're there and it's kind of, well, like what's happening and my family have gone, I'm all by myself for the next five weeks and when am I going to see them. And also they took our phones away. Erm as well like every day we could only have them for like half an hour before we went to bed or something. It's like why, why are you taking them away from us, like it's our family and stuff. But obviously after you realise it's for the better good...So that...you will actually get over the fact that you were at boarding school and like you're not gonna be able to see your family. You're not gonna have parents to like speak to them 24/7. And really, like the first night it was really strange, like not being able to speak to them. Erm but after that you kind of get used to it'(Isabella, 156-167)* *'I think it was quite good of them to take our phones away for the night so we were able to get to know people in our rooms well. So we'd chat about things we'd done and our experiences and other like anything, views on things, which I think that was important' (Emily, 394-398)*
		Being kept busy	Sophia Ethan Isabella Olivia	*'you're never really left doing nothing. You're always doing an activity. Like at Wednesdays and Mondays we always had an activity to keep us busy, so you're not left to just sit and think about, about what's going on, you're always actually doing something else, and thinking about that...Just trying not to think about home...just keep focused on what we're doing at school'(Ethan, 80-95)*

			Ava Emily	*'I was just stressing about all these new things that were happening. Like new teachers, new people, new subjects, new like new school. Like everything that was all new and it was all happening at once. And there were just like tiny things. Like…check if you could swim properly. The health centre check and like you were, kind of like. I'm just never going to remember where all these places are…They're just kind of like thrown on you'(Isabella, 198-212)*
		The experience of homesickness	Sophia Jacob Emma Ethan Isabella Olivia Noah Ava Emily William	*'the second I had to leave my parents that's when I was the saddest (laughing) it was really sad but I got over it quite quickly, you know then that night I was a bit pensive'(Olivia, 88-89)* *'My parents were almost gonna, we were thinking of even buying a house near (town) because I hated it that much. But I think after about, the first two or three weeks I was actually alright' (Ethan, 3-8).*
		Factors exacerbating homesickness	Jacob Olivia Ava	*'It's normally the beginning and the end. At the end of every term everyone gets a lot er more tired. And everyone gets more aggravated at what everyone's doing. Everyone kind of is ready to go home. Especially if you don't go home much most weekends'(Ava, 234-244)* *'maybe when it's a long term and you haven't been home for quite a long time, maybe you'd just like to go home. But it's not really a problem. It's just having the urge, you'd quite like to leave'(Jacob, 140-144)*
		Factors preventing homesickness	Sophia Emma Isabella Olivia Ava Emily William	*'it's almost like they've got my back in a weird way. Like if anyone's ever mean to me and I know that my brother will be there for me. Not that I've ever had a situation where that has happened. And also I've known what to expect. I think it's been quite helpful having my brother here and it's also, it's kind of more like a little family environment' (Ava, 802-811).* *'I've been away from my family quite a lot. Because I've been on like over 5 or 6 international tours. I've been involved in sport and so on so, for 5 weeks and possibly more so. I'm, I'm quite used to it'(William, 14-16)*

	1.2 Distance makes the heart grow fonder	Improved relationship with parents	Sophia Jacob Emma Isabella Olivia Noah Ava Emily	*'I think I've become closer to them, because issues have come up that like wouldn't have happened at home…I have to trust them more and they have to trust me more. And I think I'm more open to them…obviously they don't see me nearly as much so they do make an effort to be you know like nicer…Because obviously if you're at home 24/7 and you're gonna experience the like mood swings and stuff that happens at home. So, I think that erm it has benefitted, my relationship with my parents and also with my sister'(Isabella, 476-490)* *'it meant that when I did go home I was actually, I was probably nice to each other. Because when you're with them the whole time you and if, especially if you're going own home and after, after school and your tired and you've got loads of prep and your snappy at them, whereas if you see them you kind of more appreciate them, more appreciative maybe of them'(Ava, 580-585)*
		Feeling missed by parents	Sophia Jacob Ethan Isabella Noah Ava Emily	*'when I do come home on a Sunday night, she says I'm really going to miss you. And I'll say I miss you too'(Sophia, 41-42)* *'I think they, erm they kind of, they missed me a bit, like obviously because Saturday because I was here and they are not'(Ava, 570-579)*
	1.3 Finding a new family	Matron as a maternal figure	Sophia Emma Ethan Isabella Olivia Noah	*'my matron, she's a, I love her so much. She's, she's just the person you go to talk to about anything. She's so nice and she's really understanding so having her in the house just kind of made things ten times better'(Emma, 213-223)* *'She's just really, really nice and says like hi girls and hi …other houses always come to our matron. Because their matron not as nice as our matron. We've got the nicest matron ever. She's so nice. Yeah she's like come for a cup of hot chocolate, yeah we're like woooh'(Sophia, 186-194)*
		Lack of connection with staff	Emma Isabella Emily William	*'you won't feel comfortable, I mean as comfortable as like talking to your house mistress as you would to your own parents. So it's quite hard to speak to someone who is older and mature, you know erm would usually make decisions for you without having your parents at school. So it's quite hard'(Isabella, 111-120)* *'We have our ups and downs really…He still likes me but in my opinion I don't think he. I think he prefers the others in a way, because he, because the academic side he prefers, and then just*

				because I'm here on sport. That's all I'm here for. And that's what I feel I'm here for. And he wants me to push academics as well. And he's asked me to concentrate in lessons instead of like just dosing off and then just distracting others. I think he can't really see my side and how hard it is for me as well'(William, 217-225)
		Importance of friendships	Sophia Jacob Emma Isabella Olivia Noah Ava Emily William	*'If you got a friend, that's all you need. I think in boarding school the most important is having good friends'(Emily, 566-567)* *'But the good thing was that all of us were unsettled. So er you know, we were all equal. We all equally didn't really get what was going on. So that made it better'(Olivia, 239-242)*
		Challenges to living with peers	Jacob Emma Ethan Ava Noah Emily	*'I'd say it's a bit easier a day school, because you don't have to make friends'(Noah, 570-574)* *'not gonna say who that was, but there were like sometimes stealing and stuff happening. Like I got my perfume stolen and it was like really special for me and I, I couldn't buy a second thing, like a second bottle of it, which was quite annoying'(Emily, 480-488)*
2. Living in a bubble	2.1 Feeling contained	Feeling confined and controlled	Sophia Emma Isabella Olivia Noah Ava Emily	*'going to day school gives you more freedom because you're not confined to the school at the most times, at all times. Erm so I'd really like being able to finish at 4.10 and go back to my home or just feel free. I think that would be really nice…here we're allowed to go to (town) most of the time. Erm I mean it's quite, you do get a sense of freedom but it's still within the walls of the school. So you, it's kind of the minute you step back into the school walls you kind of get this rush of, which preps you have to do or what you have to do in the afternoon or who you have to go and give this in to, or when you have a test, or when do you have to start packing and all of that. And so I think freedom is kind of confined when it comes to boarding school'(Emma, 568-588)* *'one of my friends lives just literally on the school grounds and even going her house for a couple of hours, it does feel really relaxing when you come into school, even though it's on the school grounds…it kind of really reduces stress quite a lot…it's just really relaxing and I think your mind relaxes a lot'(Isabella, 369-375)*

		Convenience of being confined to the school	Sophia Ethan Isabella Olivia Noah Ava	*'in my old school, it was a day school, but I lived like an hour away. Because I lived in a different city. And so I would have to travel with the train, which again is, you know, annoying… I could never meet up with my friends in town after going to school because I have to get home to get the train'(Olivia, 366-371)* *'it's nice as you have your social life here. So, whereas maybe people might, almost, not safer, not, not in the meaning as if erm that I, if I was going to (name of city) late at night on Saturday nights and things like that because you have to go out of your way to meet your friends and socialise and go into (name of city) all the time, taking buses and things like that. Whereas here your social life is here… I'm less likely to go out and do things whatever, because I don't need to because I've got everything here really'(Ava, 720-730)*
		Lack of free time	Ethan Isabella Olivia Noah Ava	*'finishing earlier would be nice,….Just more free time really…More chance to relax and finish prep and stuff like that. Do more outside activities and stuff, play tennis'(Ethan, 215-224)* *'I had to stay in my Saturday night, I had to come in in my free time, I don't want to do that, that's bad memories, I don't want, I don't like it…at a day school, you're at school for, from lessons start started at 8.10 and finish at quarter to four, you'd have six hours, like doing prep down, having lunch, being with your family…until you had to like finish your day, and it's just so much quicker and easier compared to what like, what you'd have to do at boarding school'(Noah, 628-636)*
		Having a wealth of opportunities	Isabella Noah Ava Emily	*'there were so many opportunities to do things that you couldn't usually do. Like going to do shooting and like all, loads of activities'(Isabella, 422-424)* *'boarding school, there's loads of opportunities. You've got all these like fields and sports and dance and drama and things like that and a lot of space for fresh air (laughing)' (Emily, 599-601)*
		Challenges of being self-reliant	Emma Isabella Noah Emily	*'I mean everyone goes to boarding school because you have your own freedom. I mean it's a freedom in a sense that you don't have your parents around you but I guess freedom of a sense of having your mind clear and me being free mentally'(Emma, 280-286)* *'it feels like it's a bit, at lunchtime you've still got things to come, there's still, tonnes of things you've got, to do preps, which you weren't able to finish last night. Things that you've forgotten to do. You've gotta reply to e-mails, you've gotta search things'(Noah, 737-747)*

		Lack of autonomy	Jacob Isabella Olivia Noah	*'I would just like to be able to do what I really want to do. While here you have two hours of free time and you can, the only thing you can do is go to (town name). While if I was a day school, I could go home, meet up with friends somewhere and just generally, it would give me, it would give me a better feeling in a way'(Olivia, 345-350)* *'I: Yeah. What is it about then going home that helps?* *P: It means spending time for yourself, like doing what you want to do, and maybe seeing your parents...just doing exactly what you want to do. So I like TV and stuff like that'(Jacob, 144-149)*
		Lack of privacy	Jacob Ethan Olivia Noah	*'work, prep, working with a lot of people. I was in a room with 14 other people was quite hard to do work'(Jacob, 59-61)* *'When you're trying to work and then you've got a load of other people in the room because they don't have work so they're just talking loudly and don't get out'(Ethan, 215-217)*
		Safety of rules	Ava Emily	*'sometimes people want to be more relaxed then I think actually it's erm, it's gotta be quite some, because it's normally regimented for a reason, regimented for a reason. Like a few years ago people used to be able, were allowed to go out at 1 o'clock and go out to the fields and things, but then people just misbehaved and I think even though now we'd prefer to have things like that, they're there for a reason, and kind of actually they are for our safety' (Ava, 772-779)* *'I think a bit more controlled here in a way of talking about like drinking and smoking. Obviously some people still do it, but it's not like in a day school. Because in a day school is just 5 lessons and then just go drinking and smoking and some things like this, for example erm so I think it's more controlled, that that's what I like about it' (Emily. 580-586)*
	2.2 Hierarchy within the school	Power differential between school years	Sophia Emma Olivia Noah Ava Emily	*'there's just some of the boys in the year above. They were just kind of intimidating. Or they'd like call out your name or something. It was just kind of embarrassing... there was one who wasn't very nice to some people and he like pushed my year, like people around and it was just kind of scary at times'(Emma, 459-464)* *'I used to talk to all years in my school and for me it wasn't like ashamed to talk to the year below me or something. When here's it's like oh yeah she's talking to the year below, she's a weird, she's weird. Like some people think that. It's not like everyone'(Emily, 117-122)*

		Power differential between staff and pupil	Emma Ava	*'you're kind of more wary of them because obviously like your house mistress, not scared of them, but you're kind of, you go round by all the rules. So you're kind of, and that means because you go by all the rules, that they're really nice to you, not that they wouldn't be anyway'(Ava, 307-315)* *'all the teachers are different, I guess. And they were a bit more, they kind of, we didn't really call them Mrs, whatever, we kind of called them by their first name and they seem more at our level, well some of the teachers, not all of them. So it was quite nice , it was quite relaxing because we weren't intimidated or scared or anything...they just got along really well and it was quite easy to do things. Of course there were the occasional teachers that were quite strict and they were just a bit scary. Erm but here I think the teachers have a very high status'(Emma, 290-312)*
3. Emerging sense of self	3.1 Learning strategies to adapt	Being positive	Sophia Jacob Ethan Noah Emily	*'It could be worse. Because you're constantly thinking well at least I'm not dead. Or at least I'm not in Russia. Or at least I have an education then you'll be fine' (Noah 841-844).* *'Well there's nothing wrong with it and everyone's doing (clearing throat) exactly the same so you're not by yourself. And just think positive thoughts and that will be, it won't, won't be long until it's all, it's alright and you'll settle down' (Ethan, 41-45)*
		Keeping busy	Isabella Olivia Emily	*'I think reading always helps because of kind of, it doesn't, it gets my mind, like away from what's happening'(Olivia, 128-129)* *'Just trying to forget everything. Just find like, find a thing you're fascinated about at the moment. I don't know, a new song, or doing some art or like just going into lessons'(Emily, 211-214)*
		Seeking support from others	Sophia Jacob Emma Ethan Ava William	*'I think you don't have it closed up to yourself. And you're just so much better knowing you can trust someone and just not keeping it all into yourself and suddenly just having a mental breakdown. Just crying, and you can't stop crying, just because you've just never spoken to anyone about it. Also it just feel like it weighs on you. You just feel like you always have this constant feeling of something like falling on you and I think it's quite uncomfortable. So I think it's really important to get that off you and feel, I don't know, not under pressure I guess'(Emma, 609-616)* *'think about like who, what the support groups are and who they can talk to about it. Erm and then look at the issues... sometimes it's just confidence and things like that and then you, that's when you kind of need your friends, or is it someone who's bullying them and they kind of talk out about it and if it's educational then...talk to a tutor...about having some extra help'(Ava, 786-792)*

		Contact with family	Emma Isabella Olivia Emily William	*'I would say erm try and get like erm as much help from your parents as possible... if it's something more like emotional...so a couple of people did go home so I would suggest going home on the Sunday to Sunday'(Isabella, 356-357)* *'in boarding school you can't really open to like everyone. Maybe you can have, you have one person you can open everything to. Sometimes you don't, sometimes still no one can know about it and the only person who knows is obviously your mum or your dad'(Emily, 691-696)*
		Having reminders of home	Isabella Noah Emily	*'I kind of bought quite a lot of erm like stuff to put on my wall. Like memory, like reminders and stuff' (Isabella, 34-3)* *'I call home or watch movies or eat food I eat at home and sometimes makes it really, makes you feel better. For example this time I brought loads of (language) books' (Emily, 337-342)*
		Contact with home friends	Sophia Jacob Emma Isabella Emily	*'I knew my friends wanted me back, me back. That made...our friendships stronger. Because obvious, we don't see each other, we have so much to tell. We'll chat. We'll Skype. We'll call each other. We'll tell everything...and it doesn't feel like you're so far away from home if you, you constantly talking to someone, from your country and in your own language'(Emily, 295-300)* *'I try to like especially know people at my old school I try to see them. But it's quite hard because at boarding school you have different holidays usually, erm so it is quite hard to see them. So but obviously with stuff like Facebook and texts it's quite easy but it's harder to see them face-to-face and you know sometimes you're like, is this relationship going to fizzle out at some point, that would be really sad. So you've got to try and keep on top of everything'(Isabella, 519-526)*
		Being yourself	Sophia Emma Noah William	*'Always like be yourself and things... because that's how you make friends by being yourself and showing people who you are, so that you can be friends with them'(Noah, 461-465)* *'just be myself really. I mean. I didn't act in a different way. I didn't act really like to push myself. I mean I was, I was happy the way I am and things'(William, 28-30)*
		Actively making friends	Emma Isabella Noah Ava	*'you're always in close proximity but you know you've got to be able to get on with everyone and you've got to be able to listen and always be the one in the group. So that's quite an important skill to learn which is different from being at a day school'(Isabella, 139-142)*

			Emily	*'there are some people that just never really talked in the first term, in the first few weeks…they kind of just stayed on their own, and I think that still carries out to this year and people just think that they want to be on their own because they never really came to talk, like they just never went anywhere or showed any interest in wanting to make new friends. So I think it's really important to try, erm to make, well, to try to make new relationships with people'(Emma, 357-367)*
		Staying on the staff's good side	Emma Ethan Noah Ava	*'they were just kind of like typical like older women kind of thing. And they were quite loud and quite strict and things (whispers). They kind of freaked me out. Erm but we just learned to stay on their good side. So it was fine for the first few weeks. And then we, now they just know us and now it's mutual respect for each other, so it's fine'(Emma, 227-237)* *'I've got on well with everybody. I don't think I've done anything naughty or wrong, or anything… I haven't done anything to get on their bad side so, I think it's all good with them'(Ethan, 230-232)*
	3.2 Positive self-discovery	Developing self-confidence	Sophia Ethan Ava	*'I: What have you learnt about yourself?* *P: Mmm. That if I believe in myself, I actually can do it'(Ethan, 297-298)* *'I've changed loads. I'm not sure that's me personally… my kind of whole outlook on everything is so different. Looking back I can't believe it's only been a year and a bit. Just generally I think confidence would be the most, the biggest thing'(Ava, 610-627)*
		Growing up	Sophia Emma Isabella Ava Emily	*'I think, I think, yeah I've grown up more'(Sophia, 392-393)* *'I just think they just see me as a more mature person now. I've grown into myself more'(Emma, 545-546)*
		Becoming independent	Emma Ethan Ava Emily William	*'if I went to a day school… I guess I'd be maybe a bit more dependent on my mom. Erm I think I'd just fall into that trap of just having her there. I think I'd rely on her quite a lot'(Emma, 589-593)* *'I think I matured a lot. I think I realised that my mum is not there for me anymore. So I have to do everything myself… I have to be able to wash everything myself, tidy everything up myself. Being responsible for things I've done… when I was younger my grandma always used to check my prep and no one's gonna check my prep now. If I've done badly that's my fault'(Emily, 631-638)*

		Ability to live with others	Sophia Ava William	*'I think I'm a lot more, well really considerate, but like, I know how to get along with people, so much more, like adults and older children a lot more'(Sophia, 377-379)* *'I've become generally just a more approachable person. Like less intimidating. Because er I mean I could be, like my house master says, you could be quite an intimidating figure for like other people in your year'(William, 287-294)*
		Disconfirmed worries	Sophia Emma Ethan Isabella	*'I was quite naïve and I just generally thought it would be scary and all those things. Erm but then I really took ... to it and I chose ... so I was kind of happy'(Emma, 35-37)* *'I was kind of like, how quickly am I gonna make friends and, that was probably like the first thing I was thinking about and then also kind of like, erm how hard is it gonna be not being with my parents and things like that, and how much am I gonna miss home, but once you're here it doesn't really affect you that much, I found'(Isabella, 17-22)*
		Adjustment to the environment	Sophia Ethan Olivia Noah Ava	*'the whole cycle, the meals, like when you can go to (town name), then like your friends and the house, and there's the schools uniform. Everything's generally just getting into it, but then when you are settled in it just, you know it was very easy, it was quite comfortable you know what you're doing'(Olivia, 330-235)* *'you realise the same things as when you're in (1st year) but you're more laid back about it. So you don't realise, so you don't really think about it as much as you would have if it was your first year'(Noah, 357-359)*

Appendix 20

Credibility and validity checks

To ensure methodological rigour and validity checks were carried out which are detailed below.

Feedback on interview schedule

Friends and family of the researcher (both current and former boarders), professionals working in boarding schools, including the research supervisor were consulted during the planning and design of research materials including the participant information sheets and interview schedule. This ensured fidelity with the literature, wider research questions, and appropriateness for the sample population. A pilot interview was conducted with a pupil from the same school, which helped to evaluate whether the questions captured the information sought. No changes were made following this.

IPA course

The researcher attended a full day IPA workshop at the University of Aston. The course provided information about the theoretical underpinnings of the IPA approach and its method. Practical exercises allowed the researcher to practice coding transcripts and discuss the different stages of analysis with IPA an expert.

Discussions with IPA expert

Once the data had been collected, the researcher met with Michael Larkin and peer colleagues to discuss the process of analysing interviews. Emerging ideas were discussed and considered in relation to the data and concerns and questions were raised.

Meetings with research supervisor

The researcher met with their supervisor regularly throughout the interviewing and analysis stages. This provided an invaluable source of discussion, reflection and support. A pre study interview was carried out which explored the researcher's expectations and assumptions in relation to the study and how that might impact on the analysis and write up.

Sections of transcripts were reviewed by the researcher's supervisor and meetings were held to discuss the coding carried out. This revealed agreement on emerging ideas and key themes. The researcher developed subordinate then superordinate themes and discussed these with the research supervisor. This led to collapsing some themes together and refinement of others, as part of the process of theme development. The research supervisor agreed that the final themes were an accurate reflection of the experiences of participants. The fit of themes with clinical experience and the current literature was also discussed.

IPA peer support

Throughout all stages of the project the researcher attended meetings with three fellow peers who were also conducting IPA projects. During the meetings discussions were held including the following: our understanding of IPA's theoretical framework, any challenges we faced with data collection, and our understanding and experiences of the analytical procedure. The peer group was also used as a forum to review each other's transcripts, initial noting and emerging themes. Overall, this revealed similar ideas and feelings being evoked from the sections read, although some differences were apparent in the words used to describe themes. I was acknowledged that this is likely to be because of differences in the experiences, assumptions and beliefs of the peer group members themselves. The researcher was also able to place the selected section of the interview in context of the participant's complete interview. See appendix 22 for IPA peer support group meeting minutes.

Audit trail

It has been argued that an independent audit trail is a good way to ensure validity (Smith et al, 2009). The aim of the audit trail is to ensure that another researcher could follow the project from the initial stages, through the analysis, to the final report. Tables were made detailing emergent themes for each individual case as well as a master table of quotations supporting each theme. Readers are able to check that themes are grounded in the data as the researcher has presented a range of quotes, both in the results section and appendices (see appendix 19). Additionally a reflective diary was kept, detailing the researcher's thoughts and decisions at each stage of analysis (see appendix 22).

References

Smith, J.A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, method and research*. SAGE.

Appendix 21

Excerpts from reflective diary

Reflexivity invites the researcher to reflect on their own perspective and the impact one's assumptions, background, and biases which could impact on data collection and analysis. I kept a reflective diary which included thoughts and feelings related to the research throughout the research process from initial idea development to write up. Excerpts from my reflective diary are presented below:

Generating a topic and research question

22.7.11 - I met with my supervisor for the first time to discuss areas of interest. I am feeling enthused by our discussion and excited to be working with her. Our initial ideas are around the transition experiences of young people going to boarding school. We talked about how transition can be a difficult time for young people. I don't really know much about this area. I feel like I need to be a bit more familiar with the literature in area of boarding school and school transition in general.

Our discussions made me think about what has drawn me to be interested in researching the area of boarding school. So many of my family members and friends have gone to boarding school. My parents in particular, have also spoken so negatively about their time at boarding school. I'm concerned that I'm not going to be able to turn off my own judgements when doing this research.

Writing the proposal

18.8.11 - So I have been looking at literature in the area of boarding school transition and I'm really surprised by how little there is, so far I can only really find two empirical papers which have focussed on homesickness and they were written in the 80s! Why is there so little out there? I have come across a few articles written by psychotherapists working with boarders, but just their clinical observations. It's shocking how negative they are about boarding school. A lot of them are talking about their personal experiences of boarding too.

I have come across a psychotherapist, Duffell (2005), who believes the lack of research in the area is due to the fact that a boarding school education is so tied up with the British class system, and no one would dare say anything negative about it as parents spent so much money on sending their children to boarding school. I've realised how controversial my research is if it were to reveal any negative experiences about boarding.

Most of the literature on boarding school appears to focus on the negative and I can feel myself being convinced that boarding schools are these terrible places! I must find other viewpoints for my introduction, to give a more balanced argument. I wonder if this is something that I need to be aware of in the interview process, will I inadvertently draw out only their negative experiences through my questioning? But I am also aware that as psychologists we are always encouraged to think about positives and negatives. So I will

I guess inside me, I will want to find positives about boarding school as well. It will be interesting to see what comes out.

Finding no qualitative research on adolescents experiences of going to boarding school, has made me think how my research may prove important to this forgotten population rather than just serving the function of passing the course. I feel responsible for making sure I do justice to the experiences of these young people and inadvertently my parents, as no one asked them when they were children what it was like for them. They couldn't even tell their parents that they were unhappy.

Planning the project

15.3.12 - I just got approval from course research sub-committee. They said I needed to strengthen the relevance of the study to clinical psychology. I'm not really sure how to do that and to make it any clearer. Maybe I should emphasize the impact of the transition on mental health more.

25.6.12 - I'm slightly frustrated because CUREC have taken so long to get to me I cannot do my data collection this summer term. I will have to do it in September. This means that my participants will have to recall their experiences over the previous 18 months, risking the possibility of inaccurate recollection. However, I'm aware that IPA assumes that the important reality is what people perceive it to be at the time, so it may not matter. 18 months might also give participants the opportunity to reflect and potentially give a more balanced account of their experiences.

3.9.12 - IPA peer group met for the first time today. I feel less concerned about the whole process and that I have a space to check things out with others now.

Before the interviews

12.11.12 - It's the first interview tomorrow and I'm starting to feel a bit nervous. I've been re-reading my interview schedule and I hope that the questions aren't too direct and specific. I guess the interview schedule is only a guide and I'll be able to adapt the questions as the interviews progress.

I think I need to be aware of the power differential between me and the young person. I noticed that even in their emails to me they put 'Miss' rather than my first name, despite me signing off with my first name. I think they are likely to be negotiating how much to tell me and how personal and open to be. I imagine they will be wondering if I will tell their parents or the school if they say anything negative about other pupils or staff. I need to make sure I fully explain the process and issues relating to confidentiality and anonymity.

I want to understand the whole experience at a deeper level and I am slightly worried that they will speak at a very surface level, be very descriptive or even worse say nothing! I expect that they may talk about their friends experiences (even though they are likely to

be similar) than their own as this is possibly less exposing. But this is okay and will still provide useful information.

I need to be very aware that it's not my role to do therapy with these young people. I will have to ignore my instinct to offer support and therapeutic interventions as I will bias participants' accounts. I think that might be quite hard to step back from, I will have to listen to them and take them as they are and just go with what they say. Of course it will be my ethical obligation to intervene if they do become distressed.

The interviews

13.11.12 - I've just finished the first interview and think overall it went OK. I was surprised how positively she spoke about boarding. It is interesting how my prior assumptions about it being a mostly negative experience having to leave your parents, were quickly dispelled.

It felt strange not to develop more of a relationship first and build trust as I would if I was seeing someone clinically. I found it hard to inhibit my usual therapeutic style of questioning. I made sure I used the appropriate probes but noticed that I had an urge to summarise or check that I had understood what she had said. I know IPA aims to capture the participants' personal experience and it felt strange to be led by the participants' direction. On occasions I found it difficult not to ask questions that were leading, closed and not adhering to the IPA model.

I was aware that I was sometimes trying to keep questions or points to come back to in my mind as I didn't want to interrupt her. I worried about forgetting these questions and in the process of worrying I was aware that I wasn't listening at points.

27.11.12 - Interview 2 was not very talkative and didn't elaborate on anything he said. I needed to use the interview guide a lot more. It was only a 20 minute interview! Was this natural for him or did I not elicit his experiences enough? Will there be enough material to analyse?

4.12.12 - Interview 3 was extremely reflective and gave a very coherent account of her experiences. She seemed to speak much more openly than the first two interviews. Phew! Coming from overseas, it was interesting how she observed so many cultural differences, particularly this idea of there being a hierarchy in the school and what a high status both the older pupils and staff hold.

1.2.13 - Interview 7 was a character and so talkative compared to the others! He often went off on tangents that seemed irrelevant. I know that with IPA you allow participants to tell their story so I didn't really want to interrupt. Towards the end of the interview, his mood shifted and he seemed to have tears in his eyes. It felt strange to not think about ways of coping together as I would normally do as a therapist. Of course, I asked him if there was anything that he needed or wanted to talk about following the interview but he didn't.

19.2.13 - I've completed most interviews now. I notice that I'm feeling more comfortable and confident in asking questions and am feeling much less like I need to follow the sequence of questions as I did in the first few interviews. I feel that familiarity with the interview schedule helps with improving the flow of conversation and being guided by the young person. Each interview seems different to the next but it feels like there are similarities occurring. A few more have mentioned this hierarchy in the school and bullying from the older years. I wasn't expecting to hear this. I'm also struck by how many have mentioned their important relationship with their matron.

I was surprised that 3 of the participants that I interviewed were from overseas. They appeared to face additional challenges: integrating with their peers and being a greater distance from home. I am aware that their experiences differed, making it less of a homogenous sample, which is needed for an IPA study.

Boarding School Syndrome Workshop

16.3.13 – Today I attended a workshop run by Nick Duffell and Joy Schaverien titled 'Boarding School Syndrome: Broken Attachments a Hidden Trauma' at the Tavistock Centre in London. Drawing from Schaverien's 2011 paper, the talk focused on a cluster of symptoms and behaviours that she has identified when working with current and ex-boarders in private practice, which she proposes to be classified as 'Boarding School Syndrome'. She argued that the loss of primary attachment figures may constitute a significant trauma for many boarders, which may lead to problems that continue into adult life. She believes that in psychoanalysis the transference may replay the trauma of these repeated losses. She illustrated this with her clinical material.

I was struck by how many people had attended, over 100, mainly psychotherapists wanting to know how best to work with their clients who are ex-boarders, but a number of psychotherapists and pastoral staff who currently work in boarding schools, wanting to know how best to care for their students. For the latter, there weren't many answers, just the message that 'however much you try to show love and support for these students, it is not the same as the love of a parent', which was pretty disheartening. So the workshop left me with both positive and negative feelings. I realised what a growing area of interest this has become and it is exciting that my research will hopefully be able to add to the very small body of literature.

Transcription

2.4.13 - Despite listening to the tapes a number of times, I'm feeling guilty for not doing all the transcription myself. Have I been lazy? Have I truly immersed myself in the data? Through reading and re-reading the transcripts, I'm starting to make some initial notes of what I'm noticing. I feel like I have a good grasp of the interviews already, despite this guilty feeing. I am starting to get a little anxious about the prospect of analysis as I'm worried I won't be able to do it and don't know what I am looking for.

Workshop with Michael Larkin

17.4.13 - Just finished a morning workshop with Michael Larkin. It was incredibly helpful and has made me feel much more confident about doing my analysis. He encouraged us to stay close to the experiential claims of the participants and to avoid becoming top down and too conceptual, and to avoid using psychological terms in order to describe experiences, until we write the discussion. We talked about how it's important to make sure that emerging themes are not too descriptive either. In some ways I have been reminded of how far I still have to go but in other ways it has inspired me to keep going with the analysis.

Analysis

14.5.13 - Nearly finished analysing each individual interview, not looking forward to trying to pull this altogether, feels overwhelming as there's so much information. I have noticed that I am already thinking about commonalities across interviews. I have gone back and re read the transcripts just to make sure that the emerging themes really capture what the participants experience is and I haven't missed anything. I feel confident that I have done that. I am now returning to my research question for inspiration and direction.

30.5.13 - One thing that has struck me is how there are so many ways to group the themes. I'm aware that a theme needs to be relevant to half of the sample for it to be included. Some of my subordinate themes are only relevant to four of my participants, but I don't want to lose this data! I have started to read published IPA studies to get an idea of the number of superordinate and subordinate themes.

4.6.13 - I have begun to put emergent themes together to make potential superordinate themes and subordinate themes. I'm struggling with coming up with the labels for the themes. I'm trying to use the participants' words as much as I can e.g. 'Home is where the heart is'. The labels where I haven't done this still seem too descriptive. It feels like I could keep going forever changing the labels.

12.6.13 - I had a meeting with my supervisor to discuss what I had done so far. Both her and I felt that my themes too descriptive and not Interpretative enough. We came up with a few ways to collapse themes down into larger themes. I'm worried about losing data. Although I know that it is not possible to capture every detail of the participants' accounts within the word constraints but I want to do the participants justice. I guess what you lose in terms of the individual nuances from each young person's account; you gain something else from the strength of the collective voice. I am really pleased I saw my supervisor to go through the themes with her as it helped me to gain a wider perspective and introduced greater flexibility in my thinking about themes.

It's been interesting to note how the analysis has evolved over time. Some of the themes that I felt to be important initially haven't come out in the overall analysis. However, the theme 'hierarchy in the school' came out very strongly in my initial reflections following the first few interviews and this has translated into themes in the final analysis.

Write up

15.6.13 – I'm finding it difficult to write up the results section. It's quite hard to include interpretative descriptions of the themes as well as capture everyone's voice through quotes in such a small amount of words. How am I going to be able to decide what quotes to include and what to leave out? I have noticed myself seeking out a lot of feedback on my analysis and write up. I keep questioning is it 'good enough'.

8.7.13 – I met with my supervisor again to look over the final write-up. She wondered whether the subordinate theme 'lack of freedom' was too negative and didn't acknowledge how some of the participants felt the regimentation and rules were containing and made them feel safe. So I've changed the label to 'feeling contained'.

Appendix 22

IPA Peer Supervision Group -12th November 2012

Present: (names) **Apologies:** None

Agenda:

1- Minutes from 15th October **accepted.**

2- (name) – feedback from training

3- Tips for interviewing

4- (name) – steps for analysis

2- (name) feedback from training

(name) presented key points from the IPA training day at Aston University she had recently been on and very kindly gave everyone a copy of the slides. Key points that (name) presented included:

- A discussion on the importance of reflexivity and using your reflective log
- When first analysing transcripts put any descriptive thoughts on one side of the transcript and then interpretations on the other
- Remember your research questions – easy to start answering other things!
- Remember that findings are transferable not generalisable
- It's good to use names rather than numbers – (name) suggested that it can be a good touch to include a pen picture of each participant rather than just including a table or snapshot of the group as a whole...however we also considered that we are in the position of having a word count to keep to.
- (name) highlighted some useful tables in the slides for how to put together your data once you have themes.
- Explore contradictions in themes and if you have 2 experiences at opposite ends of the scale these can be grouped by overarching themes.
- Draw evenly from your quotes for illustrating themes – don't follow just one person's story...if someone declines the use of their quotes – say this!
- Ensure you include a rationale for choosing IPA over other approaches in your write up.

Many thanks to (name) for providing us with the slides and her top tips from the training day!

3-Tips for interviews

- Remember that the interview is not about getting an answer to your research question. The interpretation of data is for answering the questions!
- A useful prompt is: "can you tell me more about that?

- When people say it's a hard question don't worry – participant feedback suggests that this means it's something they've had to think about more.
- Be clear when you set up the interview that there are no right or wrong answers – many peoples' only experience of "interviews" is for jobs.
- Be clear what the interview will be like to help your participant. Possible descriptions included that it is; a bit of a one sided conversation, interested in their opinions, it's ok to take time in thinking about answers, give permission not to answer something or to ask for breaks, acknowledge it will be a bit strange with the recording but that people soon get used to it and forget the recorder is there.
- Follow the participant and be flexible when listening to them to follow them rather than simply moving down your interview schedule.
- Don't book in interviews too late in the day and be aware of the lone worker policy – have a system set up with someone (supervisor) to keep you safe!

4 – (name) Steps for analysis

(name) gave out step by step resources of how to go from the raw data to collating themes and how to keep this organised. These were given by her supervisor and are from a recent clinical doctorate IPA project. (Please shred if you don't keep them as they are about patient experiences).

AOB: None

Next meeting: Monday 7th January 5.15-6.15

Agenda: - (name)– what makes a good IPA paper/study

Full agenda to be emailed round the week before.

IPA Peer Supervision Group - 7th January 2013

Present: (names) **Apologies:** None

Agenda:

1- Minutes from 12th November **accepted.**

2- Update from each group member

3- (name) – tips on what makes a good IPA paper/study

2- Update from each group member

(name) – recruitment is on-going; it has been challenging to engage with the MDT to recruit, completed 5 interviews.

(name) – completed recruitment and transcription for 10 participants

(name) – yet to begin interviews, aim to in the next 2 months, has broadened inclusion criteria to help with recruitment, one person has expressed an interest in taking part, has begun approaching teams to recruit.

(name) – completed 4 interviews which have been transcribed and coded, recruitment is on-going

The group discussed the challenge of sticking with the interview schedule vs. going with what the person brings.

3-(name)- Tips on what makes a good IPA paper/study

(name) discussed the Yardley (2000, 2008) criteria for assessing quality in qualitative research, focusing on the use of these criteria in IPA research (informed by Smith et al, 2009). Helpful hand-outs summarising this information were given to each group member. Papers demonstrating excellent use of IPA were considered.

Actions:

(name)– email group members' papers that use reflexivity well and also papers that are weak examples of IPA (so we know what not to do!)

(name) – email (name) about additional teaching from Michael Larkin

AOB: None

Next meeting: Monday 4th February 5.15-6.15

Agenda: (name) – to bring a good example how to code data from a (course name) trainee

ALL- If possible, bring some coded data for group to discuss

Appendix 23

Author Guidelines - Journal of Adolescence

Introduction

The Journal is an international, broadly based, cross-disciplinary, peer-reviewed journal addressing issues of professional and academic importance to people interested in adolescent development. The Journal aims to enhance theory, research and clinical practice in adolescence through the publication of papers concerned with the nature of adolescence, interventions to promote successful functioning during adolescence, and the management and treatment of disorders occurring during adolescence. We welcome relevant contributions from all disciplinary areas.

For the purpose of the Journal, adolescence is considered to be the developmental period between childhood and the attainment of adult status within a person's community and culture. As a practical matter, published articles typically focus on youth between the ages of 10 and 25. However, it is important to note that JoA focuses on adolescence as a developmental period, and this criterion is more important than age per se in determining whether the subject population or article is appropriate for publication.

The Journal publishes both qualitative and quantitative research. While the majority of the articles published in the Journal are reports of empirical research studies, the Journal also publishes reviews of the literature, when such reviews are strongly empirically based and provide the basis for extending knowledge in the field. Authors are encouraged to read recent issues of the Journal to get a clear understanding of style and topic range.

Types of contributions

Specific instructions for different manuscript types

Full research articles: The majority of the articles carried in the Journal are full research articles of up to 5000 words long. The word count relates to the body of the article. The abstract, references, tables, figures and appendices are not included in the count. These can report the results of research (including evaluations of interventions), or be critical reviews, meta-analyses, etc. Authors are encouraged to consult back issues of the Journal to get a sense of coverage and style, but should not necessarily feel confined by this. Articles should clearly make a new contribution to the existing literature and advance our understanding of adolescent development.