



*Educators' interactions with refugee pupils:  
knowledge, attitudes, and practices*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The value of school for refugee and asylum seeking children is well established, in terms of their right to education under international law, their socio-emotional well-being, and their adaptation to living in a new country and culture. Yet there is a critical gap in our understanding of refugee education from the perspectives of educators – the people who interact with young refugees on a daily basis and influence the quality of their educational experiences. This mixed-methods study employs a survey (n=295), interviews, and participant observation to investigate how educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices interact when working with refugee and asylum seeking pupils at schools in one county in England. It explores: 1) the knowledge educators have about refugee pupils and how they acquire this knowledge, 2) the attitudes educators have towards refugees and refugee pupils and how these attitudes are formed, and 3) the practices educators employ when teaching refugee pupils and how these practices are shaped. Throughout, it considers the ways in which educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices interact – that is, how they affect each other in multi-faceted and multi-directional ways.

Educators with more previous experience of refugees – or pupils with similar characteristics – had a range of relevant knowledge and felt better prepared to teach refugee pupils. Formal training played a role in educator knowledge acquisition; however, educators emphasised previous experience and interactions with experienced colleagues as more important sources of information. Educators’ attitudes towards refugee pupils were complex, reflecting the heterogeneity of the pupil population, but overall tended strongly towards the positive. Across the study, previous experience teaching refugees was associated with more positive attitudes towards refugee pupils. At the case study schools, educators displayed a range of holistic practices related to refugee pupils’ academic and non-academic well-being. These practices were influenced by educators’ knowledge and attitudes, as well as by their school environments and larger, structural factors. Based on these findings, a novel conceptual framework – the Integrated Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices framework or IKAP – is introduced.

Overall, the thesis builds on literature showcasing positive practices with refugee pupils, adding the less-studied perspectives of mainstream educators alongside specialists. The study also contributes to literature showing that educators with more experience of refugee pupils have better knowledge about teaching refugee pupils and more positive attitudes towards refugee pupils. Finally, the study adds to knowledge by considering how educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices are formed and how they influence each other, via the KAP and IKAP frameworks. The findings have key implications for policy and practice, at the level of the individual, school, and education system.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EAL	English as an Additional Language
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices
LEA	Local Education Authority
PEP	Personal Education Plan
SATs	Statutory Assessment Tests
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TA	Teaching Assistant
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VPRS	Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

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**Note:** Material from parts of this thesis has been published as journal articles (see below). The journal articles were published based on the thesis and not vice versa. Therefore, all data and analysis in the thesis is the student's own work and not that of any co-authors.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It was first period in the English as an Additional Language (EAL) base and the teenagers in the beginner sixth form, many of whom were refugees or asylum seekers, yawned and stretched as they copied the date into their books. Their teacher, Margaret<sup>1</sup>, brought up images of four houses on the whiteboard – a yurt, high rise tower blocks, Buckingham Palace, and a sleek modern house in a forest – and asked the class to describe them. Vocabulary words such as ‘tiny’ and ‘huge’ were available on the whiteboard, but the discussion quickly went in another direction.

Aziz pointed at Buckingham Palace and said, ‘King lives there’.

Margaret smiled. She took such a friendly delight in the pupils’ errors that they sometimes nearly tripped over each other to speak up in class. ‘The *queen* lives there,’ she corrected.

She used the internet to bring up a picture of Queen Elizabeth II and chatter erupted about the queen being very rich. Suddenly, the discussion turned political. Across the room, I heard Sidar telling Aziz, ‘No, Saddam finished. Finished.’ My seatmate asked what I thought of George W. Bush. Then Osman asked where the British president lives. Margaret explained that there is no president in the UK, but rather a queen and a prime minister. She brought up a picture of Theresa May on the whiteboard.

‘Oh, it’s a girl!’ said Eduardo. We all laughed.

Someone asked to see the prime minister’s house and Margaret brought up a picture of 10 Downing Street, then an aerial view of Chequers with the large wall and guard towers surrounding it.

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<sup>1</sup> Names are all pseudonyms.

Eduardo reckoned he wouldn't want to live at Chequers: 'too many security'.

Osman disagreed with Eduardo: 'In Europe, no need security'. He struggled for the word 'Asia' and Margaret somehow ascertained his thoughts and filled in the blank. These beginner EAL classes were often an energetic *mélange* of words, gestures, and facial expressions on the part of pupils and educators. I was surprised at how well it worked – how Osman could act out 'Asia', how Margaret could explain complex concepts like the Irish border, how I soon found myself miming parts of a kitchen and my opinion of US presidents 2000 to present.

'Yes, Asia,' continued Osman. 'Need security. Many security. Here no. Who going punch? No one punch.' For not the first time in the past weeks, I wondered what a pupil had experienced in a war zone and in their journey to an English secondary school. Margaret nodded, acknowledging Osman's comment, then looked at the clock.

We were running out of lesson time. Margaret had encouraged the tangential discussion but now it was back to business. Each pupil said a sentence about which house they would want to live in and why. Margaret modelled adding 'because' to extend a sentence, mimed 'floors' as in 'ground floor' and 'first floor' for Senait, and counted words on her fingers for Jamal's sentence, leaving a space to show where he forgot the word 'is'. Everyone wrote their sentence in their book, then read it aloud to the class. The bell was about to ring but we still needed to write the homework in our planners, on a new page for a new week, with the date correctly spelled at the top.

What can a glimpse into Margaret's EAL classroom tell us about the education of refugee pupils in England? More than half the beginner class were refugees or asylum seekers, their home countries reading like a Home Office asylum statistics bulletin: Syria, Sudan, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, and Iran. Some had arrived in the UK with their families, others were unaccompanied asylum seeking children here on their own. All had interrupted schooling; some were literate in multiple languages already, a few were learning to read

and write for the first time. What sort of pedagogical knowledge did Margaret employ to effectively teach this diverse group of pupils? What sort of attitudes towards her pupils facilitated their eagerness to participate in lessons? More generally, how can schools and educators best engage with refugee children in classrooms in England, and worldwide?

As refugee and asylum seeking children continue to arrive in schools around the world, it is imperative that policy makers, administrators, and educators are informed and prepared to meet the challenges – and to embrace the benefits – of providing quality educational experiences to this growing population. I came to this topic of research as a primary school teacher. In the midst of the European ‘refugee crisis’ of 2014-2016, I became interested in public perceptions of refugees as threats or social service ‘drains’ in contrast with my own experience of refugee pupils as enthusiastic, capable members of our school community. My interest became focused specifically on educators as I watched my colleagues interact with newly arrived refugees and noted their comments about difficulties and advantages encountered. This project is ethically motivated and policy relevant. I start from the premise that all human lives have equal value; therefore, all children should have the right to live safely with access to a quality education, whether or not they have forcibly migrated. Schools and the educators within them often provide the primary and most sustained formal contact points for newly arrived refugees. If educators in host countries require support or training, then this should be provided as soon as possible. If educators are adequately prepared, this bolsters the case that these countries, such as the UK, have the capacity to admit more refugees.<sup>2</sup>

The aim of this DPhil, therefore, is to advance our understanding of how educators respond to young refugees and asylum seekers through an exploration of educators’

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<sup>2</sup> The main concerns of people who are opposed to admitting refugees tend to be housing and employment; however, use of public services such as schools and medical centres also features and it therefore of interest in research and policy.

knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to these pupils. The study is comprised of a questionnaire survey of practising primary and secondary educators (n=295) across one county in England and case studies of 17 educators at two schools in the same county. Data from the survey and case studies is compiled to investigate the knowledge and attitudes educators hold, the practices they enact, how knowledge, attitudes, and practices are shaped, and how they interact – with the overarching goal of improving educational experiences and outcomes for refugee pupils.

## **1.1 Rationale**

Worldwide, half of refugees are children (UNHCR, 2017). At the end of 2020, there were 82.4 million forced migrants worldwide, including 26.4 million refugees and 4.1 million asylum seekers, with the vast majority of refugees (86%) hosted by neighbouring – usually low-income – countries (UNHCR, 2021a). The UK does, however, resettle and grant asylum to tens of thousands of refugees each year (UNHCR, 2020). For example, since 2015, more than 20,000 Syrian refugees have been admitted through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS), with women and children prioritised in the selection criteria (UNHCR, 2021c). More recently, over 15,000 Afghan citizens were airlifted to the UK in August 2021, followed by a pledge to resettle another 20,000 Afghans through the newly created Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (Home Office, 2021). As work on this project draws to a close, the war in Ukraine has caused more than 5 million people – again, mainly women and children – to flee across international borders. While the UK has lagged behind other European countries in terms of welcoming Ukrainian refugees, they had approved over 70,000 visas for Ukrainians as of 20th April 2022 (Home Office, 2022).

The UK is also a recipient of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), who are additionally vulnerable as they are out of their parents' care. At the end of March 2019

there were 5,070 UASC in England, around 6% of all children in the children's social care system (Department for Education, 2019) – and about a quarter of care leavers (National Statistics, 2021); the difference between these figures reflects the fact that most UASC arrive in later adolescence. UASC mainly arrive 'spontaneously', without any government programme or support. However, in addition to spontaneous arrivals, in 2016 several hundred UASC arrived in the UK via combinations of the Dublin III Regulation and the Dubs Amendment – both of which have since been discontinued.

Child refugees and asylum seekers face a series of life stresses that do not necessarily end when they arrive in their new country. Although they may have left trauma and a long journey behind, the 'secondary trauma' of settling into a new country can be demanding (Fazel & Stein, 2002). Not only must they learn a new language, culture and customs, but they may encounter racism, xenophobia and prejudice, and, in the case of UASC, may be thrust into adulthood as children (Arnot & Pinson, 2005). Perhaps unsurprisingly, young refugees and asylum seekers present higher levels of mood and anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder than the population at large (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Fazel, et al., 2005; Jakobsen et al., 2014), with the stress of resettlement known to be a trigger (Tyrer & Fazel, 2014).

Schools play an integral role in young refugees' resettlement, with positive educational experiences linked to faster, fuller integration into host societies and higher well-being for refugee young people (Candappa & Egharevba, 2000; Chase, 2017; Fazel & Stein, 2002). In part, this link is due to the opportunities schools provide to learn the host language, in this case English, which is central to accessing further education and employment and is associated with higher well-being (Ott & O'Higgins, 2019; Tip et al., 2016). Just as importantly, schools can provide young refugees with important non-academic experiences – such as daily routine, friendships, and a sense of identity – that function as protective factors against mental illness (Chase, 2017; Fazel, 2002). These

types of outcomes are clearly important to young people themselves, but are also beneficial to host societies; higher levels of education, well-being, and employment contribute to national economies rather than costing them (Gladwell, 2020).

Despite the known importance of education and schools to refugee resettlement, there is a lack of research investigating the particular mechanisms at play in good practice, especially with regards to the people who shape the quality of the educational experience – educators. Whilst there are numerous studies that document refugee pupils’ perspectives on their schooling (see, for example, reviews by Aleghfeli & Hunt, 2022; Hek, 2005), at the inception of this project few studies explored the views of educators, though they are often mentioned by young people as central to their experiences. Since then, a number of studies have been published that focus on the role of educators in refugee education (in England, see for example, McIntyre & Abrams, 2021; McIntyre & Hall, 2020) but the area is still emerging. Thus, the present study aims to improve our understanding of refugee education through examining the perspectives of educators at schools in one county in England. The study does not make claims to statistical generalisation; rather, it aims to be one building block in the construction of a more comprehensive body of evidence that can inform policy and practice in England and further afield.

## **1.2 Concepts and definitions**

For the purposes of this study, the term ‘refugee pupils’ encompasses both refugees and asylum seekers – children who arrived in the UK with refugee status (for example as part of a resettlement scheme) or who arrived seeking asylum (applied for refugee status after entering the UK). In England, schools do not record the immigration status of pupils, nor whether pupils consider themselves to be refugees. And although an individual’s immigration status is clearly of importance to them, for the purposes of this study, I have decided to join the labels of ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘refugee’ under the same umbrella term.

Asylum seekers do face additional challenges including stress related to waiting for their asylum decisions and extremely limited financial resources – both of which matter to their experiences of school. However, throughout data collection, I found that many participant educators were unclear about the difference between refugee status and seeking asylum and often asked me to explain. Thus, in terms of educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices with pupils, it appeared that drawing a distinction based on immigration status would not be helpful or accurate.

The term 'refugee pupils' also includes unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), the UK government's term for asylum seekers under 18-years-old who are not in the care of their parents or usual caregivers. Most of these children will have arrived in the UK by themselves, however, there are some asylum seeking children who are separated from their parents after arriving in the UK due to child protection issues or other family conflict. In cases where I wish to refer specifically to unaccompanied children, I will use the term UASC for the sake of consistency with policy and practitioner discourse, but I acknowledge that it is a contested label, with each component of the acronym sparking various suggestions for alternatives. 'Unaccompanied', for example, is sometimes replaced with 'separated' to emphasise the social and psychological separation a child may experience when so far away from their family (UNHCR, 2004). 'Asylum seeking' is sometimes replaced with 'migrant', so as to include children who are trafficked, who do not seek asylum because they fear deportation, or who have had their asylum applications refused but remain in the UK. 'Asylum seeking' can also be replaced with 'refugee' to denote or include children who have had their asylum applications approved. Besides considerations of legal accuracy, it is important to note that such labels have connotations to the public. 'Refugee' is usually equated with 'deserving' while 'migrant' is equated with 'undeserving', for example, and word choice can affect public attitudes and actions (Crawley & Skleparis, 2017; Sigona, 2018).

Additionally, the term ‘child’ in UASC is often replaced with ‘young person’, emphasising individuals’ agency alongside their oft presumed vulnerability (Hart, 2014; O’Higgins, 2012). This contestation has its roots in the wider movement of the ‘New Sociology of Childhood’, where childhood is seen not only as a biological/psychological developmental phase but also as a social construction (Crivello & Espinoza-Revollo, 2018). In wealthy, Western societies, children are conceptualised as dependent, passive recipients of adult input and care, rather than capable actors who can have duties, responsibilities and economic utility for their families (Rosen & Newberry, 2018; Woodhead, 1997). Rosen et al. (2017), for example, argue that young asylum seekers are not only care receivers but also agents of care themselves, looking out for each other and for their families. As part of the *Becoming Adult Project*, Allsopp & Chase (2017) found that some young people in the asylum system had worked for several years before migrating to Europe and were frustrated to be treated as school children upon arrival. On the other hand, because the UK equates being under age 18 with being a child and being vulnerable, a host of rights and services are available to young asylum seekers that would otherwise be withheld.

For the purposes of this project I will continue to use the term UASC, whilst recognising its lack of accuracy and nuance, and its connotations of vulnerability over agency. UASC is currently the most common term used in policy and practice in the UK, making my use of it practical in data collection and dissemination of results. Furthermore, other countries use slightly different terms, such as ‘unaccompanied immigrant children’ in the US. I will continue to use the term UASC when discussing literature from these countries; while some details may differ, for our purposes here the meaning is much the same.

Finally, the concept of ‘educator’ is defined as any school staff member who facilitates curriculum learning. This includes primary class teachers, secondary subject

teachers, EAL teachers, teaching assistants (TAs), middle managers such as phase or subject leaders, and senior managers such as head teachers, deputy head teachers, and assistant head teachers. All of these professionals engage with children to help them learn, so it is important to know what all of them think, feel, and do in relation to refugee pupils. Additionally, job titles can be misleading in that depending on the size and organisation of a school, a TA or head teacher may regularly be in charge of a class of pupils. All of these school staff will be subsumed under the umbrella of ‘educators’ for this study – to have a convenient label for ‘people who work in schools to educate children’ and to reflect the reality on the ground in many schools. I have, however, kept track of individual participants’ job titles throughout the process and sometimes use titles in place of ‘educator’ when this additional information is relevant.

It is worth noting as part of this discussion that my intention is not to belittle the benefits of formal teaching qualifications held by certified teachers, or to argue that teachers and TAs are the same entity. The role of TAs within schools has been scrutinised by researchers over the past decade, in terms of cost-effectiveness and impact on pupil academic achievement (Blatchford et al., 2012; Farrell et al., 2010), resulting in a body of literature aiming to improve how TAs are deployed within classrooms (Sharples et al., 2016; Webster et al., 2013). The present study does not aim to evaluate different educators based on their job titles or to examine whether TAs are worth their salary costs vis a vis their support of refugee pupils – although this would be a pertinent area of further study.

### **1.3 Policy context**

As background to the study, it is useful to briefly consider some aspects of both education policy and asylum policy. The following is not intended to be a comprehensive history; rather, its purpose is to provide a basic foundation from which to understand the study’s findings.

### *1.3.1 Education policy in England*

A number of changes to the English education system have occurred over the past twenty-five years that have relevance to the present study. When the Labour government came into power in 1997, they promised extensive investment in, and reform of, the education system. The Every Child Matters green paper (2003) emphasised well-being and achievement for all children, especially those considered most vulnerable, and sparked a number of policies and documents relevant to refugee pupils that will be discussed in further detail below. Meanwhile, the Learning and Skills Act (2000) was also passed under Labour, establishing ‘academies’ – schools funded directly by the Department for Education rather than through local authorities and governed by private and charitable sector organisations.

The process of ‘academisation’ was accelerated under the Conservatives – Liberal Democrats Coalition government with the passing of the Academies Act (2010). The same year, LEAs were abolished (The Local Education Authorities and Children’s Services Authorities Order, 2010) with non-academy schools moved under the jurisdiction of local authorities more generally. These changes were key components of the ‘self-improving school system’, which aimed to shift power from a centralised education system to more local, school-based control (Greany & Higham, 2018; Stoll, 2015) – a move that has also been argued to be a shift away from a model of education as a public good towards a neoliberal model of private, business-lead governance (Keddie, 2012). Once a school becomes an academy, its funding no longer passes through the democratically-elected local authority, which previously would have made decisions about training and programming priorities (West & Bailey, 2013). Instead, academies receive their funding directly, and may or may not elect to purchase local authority services, leaving the local authorities with much reduced power.

Accompanying this move towards academisation was an increased emphasis on examination results in the evaluation of schools and educators (Harrison et al., 2015; Watkins, 2010). With relevance to the present study, pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 take end of Key Stage 1 and 2 curriculum tests – although Year 2 SATs are a teacher assessment rather than official test papers – and pupils in Year 11 sit General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) papers, or equivalent vocational qualifications. The results of these tests can have large repercussions for educators and schools; the system has been argued to incentivise good performance on exams over the best interests of children, especially vulnerable children such as refugees (Greany & Higham, 2018).

One of the key foundations of this emphasis on exam results is the school inspection regime by Ofsted. The first step in Ofsted's inspection process is to check a school's attainment levels, thus attainment has become a higher priority for school staff (Perryman et al., 2018). Furthermore, it has been noted that whilst schools in England have ostensibly gained more autonomy through academisation, the concurrent rise of Ofsted's inspection powers means that national priorities are still enforced. Indeed, numerous studies have found that school policies, management decisions, and classroom pedagogy are strongly shaped by Ofsted's definitions of success and failure, causing shifts in school culture towards performativity and accountability (Hoyle & Wallace, 2007; Perryman, 2006; Perryman et al., 2018). Moreover, schools that have lower performance on standardised exams may feel additional pressure to conform to perceived Ofsted demands in order to avoid poor inspection results (Keddie, 2017).

Against this general backdrop, a number of education policies in England are more specifically relevant to refugee pupils. Between 1999 – 2011, Ethnic Minority Achievement Grants provided additional funding to LEAs to support ethnic minority pupils, some – but not all – of whom were refugees. Many LEAs used this funding to create

Ethnic Minority Achievement services that provided training to schools and educators; most of these services were cut when the grants ended in 2011 (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021). The early 2000s also saw government publications specifically related to refugee pupils, including a guidance document from the Department for Education and Skills (2004) and an Ofsted report covering the education of asylum seeking children (2003). Since then, there has been a dearth of refugee-specific education policy at a national system level. Refugee pupils are encompassed within the larger umbrella of pupils with EAL, and this area has also seen a reduction in guidance. The National Curriculum simply states that educators should ‘take into account’ the needs of EAL learners and acknowledge that they may know more than they are able to communicate (*National Curriculum in England*, n.d.). Finally, in relation to refugee pupils and exams, there is a two-year exemption rule whereby schools are not required to submit results of pupils who have arrived in the country within the previous two years.

Refugee pupils who are UASC have additional associated policies and practices because they are looked after by the children’s social care system. This means they have the involvement of Virtual Schools – services of each local authority tasked with ensuring the educational needs of looked after children are met – and have regular meetings with educators and social workers to create and update Personal Education Plans (PEPs). Schools also receive Pupil Premium Plus funding for UASC and local authorities are supposed to find them a school place within 20 days of their entrance into care.

### 1.3.2 Refugee and asylum policy in the UK

In the years leading up to this project, UK immigration policy was also undergoing notable changes. In 2012, the Coalition government launched its ‘hostile environment’ approach to immigration policy, aiming to make everyday life difficult for irregular migrants by limiting access to necessities like healthcare and housing and by increasing

the rate and speed of deportation. Notably, many of these policies have ended up having repercussions for ‘regular’ or legally present migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021). The Brexit referendum of 2016, while theoretically pertaining only to immigration from EU countries, also affected refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, for example through rhetoric around ‘waves’ of immigrants arriving and the use of images of asylum seekers by ‘Leave’ campaigners (Goodman & Narang, 2019).

In terms of policies specific to refugees and asylum seekers, the UK receives people through a number of channels, some of which are described in section 1.1, above. The UK is a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention, meaning it has a duty to protect people with a ‘well-founded fear of persecution’ who are outside their country of nationality or residence (UNHCR, 1951, Article 1A). The UK resettles refugees through programmes that target particular groups or nationalities – for example, through the recent Syrian and Afghan resettlement programmes. People arriving on these programmes arrive in the UK with refugee status and are supported by case workers. People who arrive in the UK as asylum seekers do not yet have refugee status and apply upon arrival, but may have their applications refused. The application process can take up to several years, during which time asylum seekers are not permitted to work and are sometimes kept in detention centres, a practice that has been criticised by the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2011).

The UK is also a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), meaning it recognises the right to education of all children, regardless of their national origins. Furthermore, the UK passed the Human Rights Act (1998), stating that ‘no person shall be denied a right to an education’ (Protocol 1, Article 2). Thus, the legal basis for refugee children to access education in the UK is strong. In practice, a number of additional policies can impede the realisation of this right (Refugee Support Network, 2018). The

policy of ‘dispersal’, for example, means that asylum seekers waiting for their applications to be processed are allotted housing in areas outside of London and the southeast of England. Dispersal areas are most often in places with available affordable housing, and therefore in areas that are more economically deprived, which, in turn, is linked with refugee pupils attending schools that already face a number of challenges (McIntyre & Hall, 2018). UASC are similarly moved between local authorities through the National Transfer Scheme, which can cause delays to accessing education (Refugee Support Network, 2018).

#### **1.4 Overview of the thesis**

The thesis is comprised of eight chapters. Succeeding this introductory chapter, **Chapter 2** draws together the literature in the main areas where the thesis contributes – refugee education and educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices – and outlines the conceptual framework referred to throughout the work. **Chapter 3** details the methodology employed for the study, providing a rationale for the study design and discussing issues pertaining to trustworthiness, validity, positionality, and ethics.

**Chapters 4, 5, and 6** consist of findings from the study organised by the topic of the sub-research question they aim to address: knowledge, attitudes, and practices. Rather than divide the findings by method of data collection (survey / case study) or type of data (quantitative / qualitative), I have organised the chapters by themes and subthemes. For example, the chapter dealing with knowledge is subdivided into sections including what knowledge educators have and where they acquire this knowledge. Each of these sections, in turn, includes data from either the survey (quantitative and qualitative), the case studies (primarily qualitative), or both, if both are relevant. In this way, I hope to foreground the content of the findings rather than the methods used, interweaving data of multiple types

and from multiple sources to address the complexity of social phenomena in a robust manner.

**Chapter 7**, the discussion chapter, situates the study's findings within the existing literature, demonstrating how the thesis contributes to the fields of refugee education and educator learning and development. I introduce a new model, the Educators' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (IKAP) framework, to explain the findings and guide the discussion of their relevance. **Chapter 8** concludes the thesis by summarising key findings, reviewing the study's limitations, and considering implications for future research, policy, and practice.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This project aims to improve our understanding of education for refugee pupils, with a particular focus on the roles and perspectives of educators. To this end, it explores the interactions between educators' knowledge about teaching refugee pupils, their attitudes towards refugee pupils, and their practices with refugee pupils. In the following, I synthesise previous research and define key concepts in order to provide a foundation for the study. The chapter is divided into three main sections: 1) refugees and refugee education, 2) educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices, and 3) the intersection between refugee education and educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1 Refugees and refugee education

#### 2.1.1 *Legal and ethical frameworks for refugee education*

Society has obligations to refugees via both legal and ethical frameworks. According to either perspective, people are equal in terms of their rights – including the right to a good education. In accordance with the 1951 Refugee Convention (UNHCR, 1951), people fleeing conflict or persecution have the right to asylum in a safe country. The receiving country has the responsibility not to discriminate against refugees or send them back to an unsafe situation – the principle of non-refoulement. Furthermore, following both international law (1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child) and national

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<sup>3</sup> This study uses the term 'educator', as defined in Chapter 1, to mean class educators, specialised educators, teaching assistants, and school leadership. Most other studies, in contrast, use the term 'teacher' and do not tend to include teaching assistants as participants. I will use 'educator' here for consistency, although it is worth noting the difference.

law (1998 UK Human Rights Act), children have the right to a quality education no matter where they come from. In the case of UASC, the state has further legal obligations because they are looked after by children's social services, as discussed above in section 1.3.

Besides these legal frameworks, many argue that we have ethical obligations to refugees based on our common humanity. Gibney (2004) compares the views of partialists – who privilege the rights of citizens of the nation state over non-citizens – and impartialists – who believe states should take an equal interest in the rights of citizens and non-citizens. Impartialists base their stance on the premise that there is nothing essentially different between humans because they were born in different parts of the world or live on different sides of a border. Singer (1993) brings a consequentialist perspective to the topic, arguing that if we aim for the best possible outcomes for the most people, refusing refugees is morally indefensible. Following this consequentialist tradition, Bhabha (2018) contends that physical proximity to strangers in need should not matter, that we should do all we can to help others without overwhelming ourselves, and that 'for rich societies like ours, this sets a low threshold for engagement' (p. 52). Furthermore, Bhabha notes that wealthy countries have an ethical obligation to what she terms 'distress migrants', since we are the main or partial cause of the distress – through inequality, conflict, and climate change.

### *2.1.2 Challenges facing refugee children*

First, it is worth noting that the vast majority of refugees worldwide (86%) are displaced to low-income or 'developing' countries (UNHCR, 2021a). Worldwide, only half of refugee children are enrolled in school, with access dropping for older age groups: primary school = 68% enrolled, secondary school = 34% enrolled, and tertiary education = 5% enrolled (UNHCR, 2021b). Young refugees in developing countries often encounter large class sizes and limited resources for support, in addition to facing language barriers

and missing years of schooling (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). In a comparison study of 14 developing countries' responses to refugee education, Dryden-Peterson et al. (2019) found that in many contexts, refugee children had limited or no access to national education systems at all. This literature review acknowledges the enormity of these challenges; however, the following will focus on the situation of refugee children in high and middle-income countries because the present study is situated in the UK.

Studies of child refugees in middle and high income countries often focus on psychological challenges and interventions and within this literature there can be an emphasis on clinically diagnosable mental disorders over the promotion of general emotional well-being (Chase et al., 2008). While mental illness among refugees should not be ignored, it is also important to acknowledge that an excessive focus on trauma can deny other aspects of individuals, such as their resilience and agency (Marlowe, 2010). Indeed, authors such as Pupavac (2002) have argued that 'the West' tends to pathologise refugees by focusing on pre-migration trauma, meanwhile overlooking the difficulties of settling into a new country. A meta-analysis by Porter & Haslam (2005) backs this claim empirically, finding that while being a refugee was moderately associated with poorer mental health outcomes, post-displacement factors such as accommodation and economic opportunity mediated this relationship. A more recent review by Esses, Hamilton, & Gaucher (2017) concurred, showing that post-displacement economic status and experience of discrimination played a key role in refugees' mental health. Thus, while the effects of violence and persecution in the home country and in transit should not be ignored, it is also important to acknowledge that post-displacement factors – those which are more within our responsibilities in host countries – play an important role in refugees' well-being.

Immigration processes deserve special mention here as a post-displacement stressor, especially for people who are seeking asylum rather than resettled with refugee

status. Asylum seeking children, including UASC, may spend years not knowing whether they will be deported or permitted to stay in their new country – meanwhile attending school, making friends, and working towards career goals. In the Netherlands, Sleijpen, Mooren, Kleber, & Boeije (2017) found that while young asylum seekers mentioned trauma in home countries, their main focus was the current stress they were experiencing – primarily in relation to immigration processes. In Norway, Jakobsen et al. (2017) found that prolonged asylum processes were associated with higher levels of psychological distress, especially when young asylum seekers were age assessed as adults and placed in independent accommodation. Similarly, in Switzerland, Lems (2019) found that while asylum seeking minors were given extra support with housing and education, this was ‘often no more than a brief reprieve from a life of extreme uncertainty’ (p. 406) as they feared the loss of this support – and possible deportation – upon turning 18. Finally, in the UK, McIntyre & Abrams (2021) have argued that uncertainty about immigration status is a major stressor for asylum seeking children.

### *2.1.3 Importance of school for refugee children*

As outlined in Chapter 1, school has repeatedly been identified as central to young refugees’ lives and settling-in processes. Pupils emphasise the importance of feeling welcomed by their peers and say they are motivated to attend school regularly, both to achieve longer term career goals and to distract themselves from stressful situations in the present (Chase et al., 2008; Hek, 2005b; McIntyre & Abrams, 2021; O’Higgins, 2019; Sleijpen et al., 2017; Wade et al., 2012). In interviews with 54 UASC pupils, Chase et al. (2008) found that a few individuals felt their educators had low expectations of them because they were asylum seekers and learning English; however, many pupils described ‘warm’, ‘lovely’, and ‘helpful’ educators who supported them beyond their remit of

academic learning. Similarly, Hek's (2005) review of the experiences of refugee children in English schools found that some pupils experienced racism from peers and educators, yet overall refugee pupils were highly motivated to attend and found it frustrating when disruptive behaviour from other pupils interrupted their learning, when English language input felt insufficient to catch up with the mainstream curriculum, and when they had to wait for a place before starting. A more recent review by Aleghfeli & Hunt (2022) had similar findings across international settings, with supportive teachers contributing to educational resilience for UASC and unsupportive teachers identified as risk factors.

When considering these types of studies based on young people's voices, it is important to note that some types of voices are missing. Allsopp & Chase (2017) found that some UASC opted to 'lean out' from services for a variety of reasons, such as fearing deportation, needing to find work, or fulfilling debts to traffickers. These young people's perspectives are less likely to be included in studies since participants are generally recruited through schools or social services. Nonetheless, pupil voice studies still provide a window into the lives of many young refugees and show that for them, school is an important part of their lives.

Within the literature on the importance of school for refugee children, the issue of access plays a prominent role. Refugees often arrive mid-year and tend to live in lower-income housing, so they are more likely to attend schools that face additional challenges (Rutter, 2006). The situation for UASC is more complex, due to the need for an accommodation placement and the older age of most unaccompanied pupils. The UK government stipulates that looked after children must have a school place within 20 days of starting an emergency care placement. For UASC, this is permitted to be an alternative provision as long as it is full time and prepares them for mainstream education. In practice, however, pupils age 16+ frequently end up in patchy provision such as adult language classes at college (Reed & Fazel, 2012) and it can be particularly difficult to find school

places for pupils who arrive in Years 10 and 11, due to GCSE pressure (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021; Morrice et al., 2020; Ott & O’Higgins, 2019; Wade et al., 2012). In a survey of 133 UASC, Wade et al. (2012) found that 34% had difficulty of some sort in accessing education and 10% were not in any type of education provision. Non-participation was more likely for UASC living in independent or semi-independent accommodation than in foster care.

#### *2.1.4 The perspectives of educators and schools*

At the beginning of this project, there was a small body of research looking at the perspectives of educators within refugee education. In recent years, this body of literature has grown substantially. It tends to use case study methodology, varying in terms of the aims of each study and how the cases are defined –from micro to macro levels.

Several studies focus on the level of the school, often showcasing examples of good practice. Examples of this ‘showcase’ literature include Wilkinson & Kaukko (2020) and Pugh et al. (2012), who describe primary schools with welcoming, ‘whole school’ approaches in Australia and Finland. Wilkinson & Kaukko (2020) and Kaukko et al. (2021) dubbed the ethos and associated practices at their case study schools a ‘pedagogy of love’, in contrast with hostile immigration policies. In the UK, recent examples include the case studies featured in McIntyre & Abrams (2021) and Peterson et al. (2017), both of which detail provision for secondary age refugee pupils and focus on education for UASC. All of the aforementioned studies set out with the aim of seeing what works well in schools that are successful with refugee pupils, with results often juxtaposed against less supportive national policy landscapes.

Other studies take a more zoomed out perspective, looking at a number of educators, schools, or local authorities across a geographic area. In England, Ofsted (2003) looked at

37 schools across 11 Local Education Authorities (LEAs – now defunct, see section 1.3) to ‘evaluate the impact of the arrival of pupils from asylum seeking families’ (p. 1) and Arnot & Pinson (2005) surveyed 58 LEAs about their procedures with refugee pupils. On a smaller scale, other researchers have examined the experiences of educators and pupils at schools across a given city or local authority, for example Madziva & Thondhlana (2017) in Nottinghamshire, Baak (2019) and Dabbous (2019) in Glasgow, and Vidal de Haymes et al. (2018) in Chicago. Rather than showcasing positive practices, these studies generally aim to evaluate practices and identify needs – for refugee pupils, educators, and schools. Across the studies, there is a common theme of variation between schools, depending on factors such as previous experience, access to resources – including human resources – and the lens through which refugee pupils are conceptualised. Baak (2019), for example, found that refugee families felt more welcome at some schools than others, and that the difference could usually be explained by an individual staff member or ‘agent of inclusion’. Similarly, Vidal de Haymes et al. (2018) found that schools with pre-existing cultural and linguistic diversity were able to provide an appropriate provision for refugee pupils while less diverse schools were not.

On a larger scale still, a handful of cross-country comparisons detail how national education systems support or impede education for refugees. Crul et al. (2019), for example, brought together studies from Sweden, Germany, Greece, Turkey, and Lebanon to compare how Syrian refugee children were educated in different systems. Koehler & Schneider (2019) compared how Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands have handled the education of immigrants more broadly over previous decades, looking for guidance in terms of what might work with more recent arrivals who are refugees. Both of these studies found that ‘tracking’ within education systems was associated with lower participation and worse outcomes for refugee pupils, whether caused by pupils dropping out or being pushed out of school. Finally, McIntyre et al. (2018) analysed how policies and practices with

refugee pupils vary between the UK and Sweden, finding that Sweden has refugee-specific education policy that is not always put into practice, while the UK has no refugee-specific policies but some schools enact good practice nonetheless.

## 2.2 Educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices

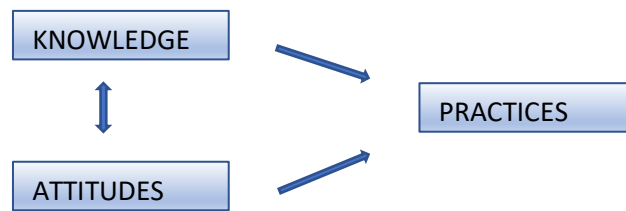
Frameworks consisting of knowledge, attitudes, and practices have been used extensively in the fields of family planning and public health over the last several decades (for example, in chronological order: Swee-Hock, 1968; Konde-Lule et al., 1989; Manderson & Aaby, 1992; Krentel et al., 2006; Farley et al., 2014). In its simplest form, the relationship between the variables is linear: better knowledge means a better attitude which means better health behaviours. Causality is perceived as unidirectional and practices are conceptualised mainly as an outcome of the process (**Figure 1**).

**Figure 1. A unidirectional, linear relationship between knowledge, attitudes, and practices**



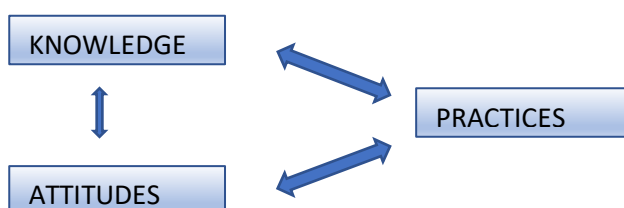
However, this linear model has been challenged by empirical results suggesting that the relationship is more complex, with knowledge and attitudes related to each other and each independently related to practice (Muleme et al., 2017; Rav-Marathe et al., 2016). In the field of education, a similar concept is outlined by Ernest (1989), with educator knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes influencing practices. In these models, practices are still framed as the outcome, with unidirectional arrows leading from knowledge and attitudes, which are framed as predictors or causes of practices (**Figure 2**).

**Figure 2. A modified KAP model**



For this study, I base my initial conceptual framework on this adapted model, with the further revision of allowing for feedback from practices back to knowledge and attitudes. Following Guskey's (1986) model of educator learning, changes in attitudes and beliefs can come *following* changes to practice. Clarke & Hollingsworth's (2002) educator learning model conceptualises knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes as personal attributes that both influence and are influenced by classroom practices. An educator could make a change to their practice that results in a successful outcome, for example, and this would in turn augment their knowledge base. This multi-directionality of cause seems particularly likely given the way educators work – with day-to-day or even minute-to-minute deadlines, and often with little training or time to develop their knowledge on a topic before encountering it in the classroom. Thus, I have used the following adapted conceptual framework as a guide throughout collection and analysis of data (**Figure 3**).

**Figure 3. A modified, bidirectional KAP framework as the initial model for this study**



Below, I define each of the three concepts in the KAP model and discuss the literature on factors that influence the development of educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

### 2.2.1 Educators' knowledge: definitions and acquisition

Lee Shulman created frameworks of educator knowledge based on observations of experienced, 'expert' educators, and argued that educator knowledge should be defined broadly. In his seminal 'Those Who Understand' paper (1986), Shulman proposed that educators should not be seen simply as bundles of skills but rather as craftspeople who accumulate and conglomerate different forms of knowledge – whether learned in formal courses or through experiential case studies of various lessons and pupils. Following on from this, Shulman (1987) listed categories of knowledge that an educator has at the minimum, including content knowledge about their subject(s), general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of pupils, knowledge of the broader education system, knowledge of education's purposes, and pedagogical content knowledge – that is, knowledge about how to teach specific content or concepts.

Beyond these categories, there is a tension in the conceptualisation of educator knowledge between tacit and explicit knowledge. Eraut (2000) reflects the earlier ideas of Michael Polanyi on tacit knowledge, arguing that what educators learn informally and implicitly is influential but underemphasised in the literature; given that it is tacit, it is difficult to perceive and measure. Whereas explicit, formal knowledge normally involves a given framework, designated trainer, and external set of outcomes, tacit knowledge is informal, sometimes unconsciously acquired, and often associated with 'routinised' practices (Eraut, 2000, p. 123). The theme of explicit versus tacit knowledge also emerges in differing conceptualisations of educators as craftspeople – with intuitive, 'practical wisdom' – and technicians – holders of technical knowledge acting in a controlled,

predictable process (Winch et al., 2015). This tension between tacit and explicit knowledge and the conceptualisation of teachers as craftspeople versus technicians will be discussed in further detail in relation to educators' practices, in section 2.2.3 below.

This project asks not only *what* knowledge educators have but also *how* they acquired that knowledge. In the educator knowledge literature, there is an emphasis on both individual and social learning. Frameworks such as Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning and Schön's Reflective Practitioner model portray learning as a rational, individual process of reflection (Philpott, 2014; Schon, 1987). In contrast, concepts such as Vygotsky-inspired Cultural and Historical Activity Theory emphasise the importance of the sociocultural context for educator-learners (Philpott, 2014). In empirical studies, educators frame their knowledge acquisition both as individual and social phenomena, crediting their personal experiences and the advice of colleagues as their main knowledge sources. Dimmock (2016), Datnow & Hubbard (2016), and Cooper et al. (2017) found that educators' main source of knowledge tends to be other educators, though they also accessed knowledge through individual means like reading research. The educators in Cooper et al. (2017), for example, explained that they liked learning from colleagues because they were most likely to understand the specific scenario encountered, although they also looked for information in publications by government departments and their union. Furthermore, in a review of the evidence for 'Joint Practice Development', Sebba et al. (2012) note that effective collaborative learning between professionals can be more effective when built on existing social relationships. Thus, it appears that educator knowledge acquisition has a vital social aspect, in addition to individual learning and reflection.

Literature that evaluates continuing professional development (CPD) programmes also makes an important contribution to understanding how educators acquire knowledge. A review by Kennedy (2016) found that educators, on average, did not feel that traditional

CPD courses were beneficial – primarily because the knowledge they gained was not necessarily relevant to their particular classrooms. A review by DeMonte (2013) found that embedded, ‘on-the-job’ CPD was also more effective than traditional CPD in terms of educator learning and changes to practice. Similarly, the review by Kennedy (2016) and another by Cordingley (2015) found that CPD that treats participant educators as active collaborators and colleagues is effective.

### 2.2.2 Educators’ attitudes: definitions and formation

It is widely recognised that educators’ attitudes play an important role in the actions they take, their expectations of pupils, and outcomes for these pupils (Fang, 1996; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Pettit, 2011; Yoon, 2008). Furthermore, the effects of educators’ expectations are larger for pupils from low socio-economic status backgrounds and pupils who have low achievement (Jussim & Harber, 2005), which has relevance for many newly arrived refugee pupils. However, the concept of ‘attitude’ is difficult to define, shifting between disciplines, authors, and over time. Richardson (1996) gave a brief history of research on educators’ attitudes, noting that there was a peak in interest in the topic in the 1950s and 1960s, when researchers wanted to understand how educators helped or hindered the goal of racially integrated classrooms. This led to a number of studies examining educators’ attitudes towards racial and cultural outgroups. Since then, research on educators’ attitudes shifted somewhat to look instead at educators’ *beliefs* – about subject matter or groups of pupils.

The boundary between attitudes and beliefs, however, is fuzzy, with the two terms used interchangeably in some of the literature. Nespor (1987) argues that beliefs, being cognitive, are actually a type of knowledge – but knowledge that is affective. Pettit (2011) contends that attitudes and knowledge are both types of beliefs – affective beliefs in the

case of attitudes and true beliefs in the case of knowledge. To add to the confusion, within psychology one of the most common definitions of attitudes is the multicomponent ‘ABC’ (affective, behavioural, cognitive) model, which defines knowledge and behaviour as components of attitudes. For this study, I use a modified version of the psychological ABC model. Attitudes are defined as the affective state a person has in relation to an object, focusing on the affective aspect over the related cognition or behaviour aspects as these are covered as ‘knowledge’ and ‘practices’ in the KAP conceptual framework. In this literature review, I have included articles that use the term ‘belief’ to refer to an affective state so as not to miss relevant research. However, in my own data collection, analysis, and writing I use the term ‘attitude’, delineating that I mean a person’s feelings about a topic rather than their thoughts or behaviours.

The literature on educators’ attitudes tends to focus on how these attitudes affect pupil outcomes, as described above, rather than how the attitudes form. In this absence, we can look to the literature on the general public’s attitudes towards immigrants and refugees. Given that educators are part of the general public – albeit with some special features – this literature is useful in terms of shaping the study and understanding the results. Within this literature, studies of people’s attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers, specifically, are much less common than studies of people’s attitudes towards immigrants more generally. Again, given the overlap in concepts, the following will include literature on attitudes towards both refugees and immigrants more generally, while keeping in mind some key differences.

The literature on attitudes towards immigrants crosses a variety of academic disciplines (politics, economics, psychology) and methodologies (experiments, small scale surveys, international polls), and frequently produces divergent results. Many of these seemingly contradictory results reflect the complexity of attitude formation and measurement. First, there are issues with terminological clarity. In a review of

multinational survey studies, Ceobanu & Escandell (2010) found that public attitudes towards *immigrants* often differ from attitudes towards *immigration* but that the concepts are usually seen as one in the literature. Similarly, although attitudes towards refugees are normally studied under the umbrella of attitudes towards immigrants, there is substantial evidence that people are more positive about refugees than general immigrants (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010). Finally, study results can diverge due to growing socio-political divisions across populations. In the UK, attitudes towards immigration became more positive, on average, between 2002-2014; however, the population is more sharply divided on the issue than in the past, with the split based on economic, political, educational, cultural, and age differences (NatCen, 2017; Wike et al., 2016). Thus, study results can vary depending on several possible features of their participant sample.

Despite these divergences, there are some generalisations that can be made across the field, namely the importance of non-economic factors in attitude formation and the correlation between increased education levels and positive attitudes towards immigrants. First, although it is often assumed that personal economic situation is a major influence on people's attitudes towards immigration, empirically this claim is disputed. Hainmueller & Hopkins' (2014) review of over 100 experimental and observational studies in the area found that concerns about cultural differences and whole-country economic impacts were more strongly associated with negative attitudes than personal economic status. Likewise, Sides & Citrin's (2007) study of European Social Survey data found that 'symbolic' concerns such as a preference for a distinct national identity were more predictive of negative attitudes than economic concerns. Furthermore, higher levels of education are consistently associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants, across a range of study types summarised in large reviews (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; NatCen, 2017; Wike et al., 2016). The mechanisms behind this association, however, are unclear. While the obvious assumption would be that increased knowledge

improves attitudes, there is scant evidence linking these phenomena causally (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017). Indeed, Ceobanu & Escandell (2010) have argued that other factors associated with education – such as higher socio-economic status and living in diverse urban settings – are as likely to account for the association as education itself.

Within the literature on attitudes towards immigrants and immigration, there is a smaller body of research dealing with attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers specifically. A Pew Center poll on European attitudes towards refugees found concerns about security, terrorism, and economic burden across all countries (Wike et al., 2016). Correspondingly, a multinational Ipsos (2016) poll reported that 63% of UK respondents agreed that terrorists pretend to be refugees to enter their country and cause violence, and 48% agreed that people pretend to be refugees to access jobs and social services; this level of concern was broadly similar across all countries polled. A few studies have investigated the factors influencing attitude formation specifically towards refugees and asylum seekers. (Again, the terms are often combined, which could be problematic if participants differentiate between the two). Schweitzer et al. (2005) found that 59.8% of their sample scored above mid-point on a ‘thermometer’ scale of negative attitudes towards asylum seekers. Meanwhile, Esses et al. (2008) found that the wording and tone of media reports strongly influenced attitudes towards refugees, even if the content in terms of information about economic costs stayed the same. It is important to note that in both of these studies, results likely underestimated negative attitudes since the participants were university students and higher education, as outlined above, is associated with more positive attitudes.

Finally, an additional area of scholarship with relevance to educators’ attitudes is the literature on intergroup contact. The intergroup contact hypothesis was proposed by Allport (1954) and states that contact between different groups should reduce prejudice between them, if certain conditions are met, including: 1) both parties having equal status, 2) both parties having common goals, 3) the presence of cooperation, and 4) the presence

of support from an overseeing authority. Since 1954, a field of study has developed to test intergroup contact theory in a wide variety of contexts, from classrooms to neighbourhoods to Iraqi football pitches (Mousa, 2020). A number of reviews and meta-analyses concur that while details regarding the four conditions and mediating factors are unclear, on the whole there is support for intergroup contact improving intergroup attitudes (Paluck et al., 2019; Pettigrew et al., 2011).

### 2.2.3 Educators' practices: definitions and how they are shaped

The concept of practice is broad, vaguely bounded, and encompasses a wealth of possible definitions. Most broadly, practices are just 'what people do' so educator practices are 'what educators do'. Within this definition, competing perspectives follow similar arguments to those in the area of educator knowledge. Practices can be intuitive, channelling tacit knowledge like a craftsperson, or they can be calculated, utilising explicit knowledge like a technician – or some combination of the two (Winch et al., 2015). Practice is often seen as individual agency, as in Kolb's cycle of reflective practice (Philpott, 2014), but it can also be seen as the product of social structures. Cultural Historical Activity Theory proponents, for example, argue that practices are inherently *relational* in nature: individuals act together in a manner mediated by cultural resources (Edwards, 2010). Educators and other professionals are not 'the sole guardians of exclusive sets of knowledge' but individuals who share their own tacit and explicit knowledge with others in order to work on complex issues (Edwards, 2010, p. 1). From an Activity Theory perspective, characteristics of a society regulate social interactions and shape the thinking and feeling of individuals, which in turn shapes the way individuals act in the world, or practice (Daniels, 2010). Empirically, these socially based conceptions of practice are well founded. Numerous studies have found that the key factors influencing educators'

practices are their colleagues' practices and features of the school or education system in which they work (Brown & Zhang, 2016; Dagenais et al., 2012; Dimmock, 2016). For the purposes of this project, educator practices will be conceptualised as the actions educators take as actors within a wider social and cultural milieu. Educators are individuals but they are social individuals. Their practices are shaped by their knowledge and attitudes, which in turn are shaped by socially mediated experiences – whether speaking with colleagues, echoing the actions of a childhood educator, or choosing to read one source of information over another.

The question of how educators' practices are shaped is addressed by a large number of sub-disciplines within education research. Given this project's use of a modified KAP framework to guide its inquiry, studies related to educators' knowledge and attitudes and how they affect practices are most relevant to discuss here.

First, Shulman (1986) gives a brief history of the types of knowledge society has expected educators to have over time, and how this has influenced classroom practices. In the Victorian era, for example, there was a strong focus on content knowledge – memorising facts – for educators, accompanied by teaching practices that also emphasised rote memorisation. A century later, Shulman noted that the focus had shifted away from content and instead emphasised pedagogical knowledge – that is, knowledge about methods and practices of teaching (Shulman, 1986). The differences between tacit and explicit knowledge can also add to our understanding of how knowledge shapes practices. An educator with tacit knowledge enacts practices without necessarily being able to explain their underpinning knowledge. An educator with explicit knowledge, in contrast, enacts practices based consciously in standards and skills they have learned (Winch et al., 2015). In addition, Winch et al. (2015) argue that a third process sets effective educators apart – critical reflection that mediates which knowledge should be applied in practice.

In this discussion of tacit and explicit knowledge and how they shape practices, some scholars have suggested that the analogy of improvisation is apt, as it involves both conscious and unconscious processes. Holdhus et al. (2016) compared the use of improvisation in music, theatre, and rhetoric with the act of teaching, noting that the skills required and scenarios encountered in a classroom can be similar to that of an improvised performance: ‘In daily use, improvisation often takes place and is understood as an intuitive, spontaneous and responsive activity, sometimes to make the best of things when plans fail or something unforeseen happens’ (p. 4). Just as in the cases of improvised music, theatre, or rhetoric, teaching involves learning repertoires or scripts that are drawn on within specified structures and domains – although the process may appear unplanned. Sawyer (2004, 2011) also expounds the analogy of improvisation, noting that experienced educators tend to spend less time planning but more often reuse known ‘scripts’ to respond to scenarios arising in their classrooms. Sawyer emphasised that while teaching is a creative performance art, and while educators’ actions may appear spontaneous, their improvisations are structured within broader frameworks – just as an improvising musician may play within the structure of a given key. Thus, the ways in which educators’ knowledge shapes their practices can be understood as unconscious, spontaneous, and automatic – but also have conscious, calculated, and planned aspects. More recently acquired knowledge may require a conscious effort to influence practices, whereas older, more embedded knowledge may unconsciously shape practices.

Educators’ attitudes have also been documented to shape their practices. A good deal of this literature relates to educators’ attitudes towards particular curricular content, technology, or policies; however, there is also literature dealing with educators’ attitudes towards pupils and associated educator practices and pupil outcomes. Fang’s (1996) review of the literature included both types of attitudes, or in this case beliefs, and explored whether educators’ attitudes were consistent or inconsistent with their practices. The

review found a large body of literature linking educators' beliefs and the teaching practices they employ, particularly in the area of literacy, but also some studies that show the opposite – that educators' beliefs are not reflected in their practices. Fang argues that the latter studies likely found inconsistency due to larger, system-wide factors that prevented educators from enacting their beliefs, such as the availability of particular textbooks or the absence of support for particular pupils. A more recent review by Pettit (2011) looked at the beliefs educators' held specifically related to pupils who were English language learners, and how these beliefs – defined as attitudes, knowledge, or perceptions – influenced their practices. Much like Fang, Pettit found an association across studies between beliefs and practices, with some exceptions involving structural constraints, such as laws – at the time – that required teachers in some US states to use only English instead of creating multilingual learning opportunities. Thus, educators' attitudes may not always be reflected in their practices, due to overriding policies at the school, local authority, academy chain, or national level.

Another line of inquiry into the relationship between educators' attitudes and practices investigates the 'Pygmalion effect' or self-fulfilling prophecy – that is, the hypothesis that educators' expectations of pupils shape outcomes for pupils, via differing practices. This literature has been polarised in its findings since the start. In 1968, Rosenthal & Jacobson published a study titled 'Pygmalion in the Classroom' where they reported that by telling educators that random pupils had been assessed as having greater learning potential, they had caused these pupils to make more progress. Even as the study results became part of popular culture, researchers criticised the study's methodology and a series of follow-up studies both supported and contradicted the findings. In a 2005 review, Jussim & Harber summarised decades of competing findings, concluding that although some methodologies have indeed been flawed, overall there is both naturalistic and experimental evidence that educators' expectations of pupils influence their outcomes –

though not as strongly or consistently as has sometimes been claimed. One important caveat – with high relevance for many newly arrived refugee pupils – is that self-fulfilling prophecies that are normally ‘small, fragile, and fleeting’ (Jussim & Harber, 2005, p. 151) have a larger effect for pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds and pupils who have low previous attainment. Additional studies look specifically at educators’ racial and ethnic prejudices and their expectations for pupils, finding a negative effect (Agirdag et al., 2012; Lorenz, 2021) – which also has relevance for refugee pupils, given that many new arrivals are visible minorities in their new communities. Finally, it is notable that most studies of educators’ attitudes, expectations, and pupil outcomes tend to focus solely on academic outcomes via achievement or attainment data. While these outcomes are important – and are certainly easily defined and measured – it is worth considering that educators’ attitudes also shape ‘fuzzier’ outcomes, such as well-being and feeling welcome in an environment.

### **2.3 KAP and education for refugee pupils**

In the final section of this literature review, I look at the intersection between the first two areas covered: 1) education for refugee pupils and 2) educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices. I cover the previous literature on educators’ knowledge about refugee pupils, educators’ attitudes towards refugee pupils, and educators’ practices with refugee pupils, and outline how the present study will add to current knowledge.

#### ***2.3.1 Educators’ knowledge about teaching refugee pupils***

Shulman’s categories of educator knowledge, as described above in section 2.2.1, can be applied more specifically to the topic of educators’ knowledge related to refugee pupils. Educators can have, for example, knowledge about specific refugee pupils, such as

the country they come from, the languages they speak, and their education history. They can have content knowledge about what refugees may experience – missed school, traumatic events, xenophobia – and both content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge about relevant areas of the curriculum, like English grammar, and how best to teach it. Finally, educators can have pedagogical knowledge specific to refugee pupils – that is, how best to teach this group in general.

In terms of the existing literature, a number of studies aim to identify the challenges schools and educators encounter when it comes to teaching refugee pupils. These studies link the difficulties refugee pupils face – such as language barriers, disrupted education, experiences of trauma and discrimination, and inflexible curricula – with gaps in the knowledge and skills of educators, and call for more training and support (Biasutti et al., 2020; Dabbous, 2019; Kronick, 2013; Matthews, 2008; Stathopoulou, 2020). Notably, these findings are similar across several countries, from Italy to Scotland to Australia, Kenya, and Greece.

Another body of literature also focuses on specific types of knowledge that educators are found to be missing. In Glasgow, Baak (2019) found that educators were underprepared in terms of meeting socio-emotional needs, while Due et al. (2015) and Matthews (2008) have made similar arguments about Australian educators and schools. In a series of case studies of LEAs and schools in Wales, England and Scotland, Reakes (2007) found that educators lacked key information about individual pupils and felt this hindered their ability to teach effectively. Although educators rated as helpful the pedagogical advice they received from LEAs about supporting asylum seekers, the lack of information about features like pupils' home language abilities or the underlying causes of particular behaviours was seen as a limitation (Reakes, 2007). Again in Glasgow, Dabbous (2019) found that educators were unclear about which pupils were refugees; in one case, an experienced educator was surprised to discover that she had been teaching refugee

pupils for years. Dabbous (2019) also found that educators tended to have more knowledge about EAL strategies than other topics, such as cultural differences, and that this gap in their knowledge had repercussions in terms of holistic good practice.

Other studies, however, have found that schools and educators with prior relevant experience are more prepared to teach refugees. These studies include a report by Ofsted (2003) that found variation in knowledge and practices across 37 schools in England, as well as the study by Arnot & Pinson (2005) that found LEAs to have variable knowledge about teaching refugee pupils and correspondingly different conceptualisations of refugee pupils and refugee education. Whiteman's (2005) survey study of schools in Newcastle upon Tyne found a wide variability between schools' access to information, but schools with more experience of refugee pupils tended to know which agencies or individuals to contact for support and had created their own systems for knowledge collection and sharing. Similarly, the study by Arnot & Pinson, (2005) found that less experienced LEAs – often in 'dispersal areas' – borrowed documents on teaching refugees from more experienced LEAs and non-governmental organisations. It is worth noting that these studies are now nearly 20 years old, and that education in England has changed substantially in the interim – including the demise of LEAs, as described in section 1.3. More recently, McIntyre et al. (2018) noted that despite the absence of specific policy around educating refugee pupils in England, some schools with experience of welcoming new arrivals had a high level of support available, suggesting they had relevant knowledge within their institutions. The variation of knowledge levels between schools may have increased, however, as academisation has increased and local authority control has diminished. Several recent studies note that education policy related to refugees in England is ad hoc or piecemeal, with knowledge and associated practices led by individual schools or academy chains rather than being centrally coordinated (Baak, 2019; McIntyre et al., 2018; Murphy, 2019).

In terms of how educators acquire knowledge about teaching refugee pupils, a number of sources are possible. The above has detailed the role of previous experience and collegial support. In addition, educators could learn about teaching refugees via formal means – through initial educator training (see Gagné et al. 2017 for a description of programmes in Canada) or through continuing professional development courses. Less formally, there is a wealth of information available to educators online. The Department for Education published a document in 2004 titled *Aiming High: Guidance on Supporting Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children* (Department for Education and Skills, 2004), which is still available through channels such as the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum website. Organisations like the National Education Union, Bell Foundation, Headteacher Update, and Refugee Education UK (formerly the Refugee Support Network) also publish advice for schools and educators who interact with refugee pupils<sup>4</sup>. In the county where the present study took place, the Virtual School (2017) produced a ‘UASC Handbook’ and accompanying resources to support educators and other professionals when working with UASC. It includes background information such as an explanation of the asylum process and a description of the county’s orientation programme for new arrivals, along with practical tips and a case study showcasing best practice. To what extent educators access this information, however, is unknown, and is one of the questions driving this study.

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<sup>4</sup> Available at:

<https://neu.org.uk/refugee>

<https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/guidance/welcoming-refugee-and-asylum-seeking-learners/>

<https://www.headteacher-update.com/best-practice-article/supporting-refugees-in-your-school-community/86115/>

<https://www.reuk.org/resources>

### 2.3.2 Educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils

There are few studies that focus specifically on educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils. At the inception of this project, a search of the literature turned up only a 2013 study by Kronick on educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils in Nairobi, Kenya. At the time of writing, the situation remains largely the same, with the exception of two survey studies of Turkish educators' attitudes towards Syrian pupils. Ekin & Yetkin (2021) found that mainstream educators acknowledged challenges around language barriers but were 'eager' to engage refugee pupils, while Saglam & Ilksen-Kanbur (2017) found that educators with experience teaching refugee pupils were also more positive about their interactions with these pupils. The latter study is published only in Turkish, so a more detailed analysis is unfortunately not possible here.

Given this limited literature specific to educators' attitudes towards refugees, the present study also looks to two related areas that can help provide a foundation for the research: 1) studies of educators' attitudes towards different outgroups at their schools, and 2) studies of educators' interactions with refugee pupils that mention affective aspects, even if attitudes are not the intended focus of the research.

First, there is a body of studies that looks at intergroup contact in a school environment – although the outgroup pupils are not specifically refugees. In Finland, Rissanen et al. (2015) found that pre-service educators with more interaction with diverse cultures were more positive in their attitudes towards Muslim pupils. Similarly, Glock et al. (2019) found that pre-service educators held more negative implicit biases against ethnic minority pupils than in-service educators with experience in diverse schools, and that the pre-service educators were also more likely to associate cultural diversity with increased workload. In a review of educators' attitudes towards the inclusion of disabled children in classrooms, Avramidis & Norwich (2002) found that educators with more years

of experience had more negative attitudes, but this finding was updated with an important addition by de Boer et al. (2011), who found that if the educators' experience was *with disabled pupils*, this was associated with more positive attitudes. In a more recent study in Finland, Alisaari et al. (2021) found that experience working with language learners – i.e. recent immigrants – made educators more likely to say that working with language learners brought them joy. Thus, most studies find that educators with experience of pupil outgroups are more positive about those outgroups. A few caveats to this classroom literature are worth keeping in mind, however. First, the studies tend to be observational, finding associations rather than testing causality. Second, there are some exceptions to positive findings, including a study in Belgium that found that educators in schools with more Muslim pupils (greater than 50 percent) had *less* positive attitudes towards Muslim pupils (Agirdag et al., 2012).

The second body of literature relevant to educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils is comprised of studies that deal with affective aspects of educators' interactions with refugees, without making attitudes the main focus of their enquiry. Within this body of literature, there is a prominent theme of seeing refugees through asset versus deficit lenses. Some studies have found that educators are affected by, and perpetuate, deficit narratives in society more generally. In a study of UASC in Switzerland, for example, Lems (2019) observed an educator tell pupils they had not worked hard enough to find a work placement. When pupils said they were having difficulties due to a lack of internet access in their accommodation, and the willingness of Swiss companies to host them, the educator called them ungrateful for the opportunities provided through their education programme, appealing to negative societal narratives of asylum seekers being lazy and abusing social service provision. While the previous example clearly illustrates a negative attitude, it is important to note that a deficit perspective can stem from positive roots (e.g. compassion), but may still be a deficit if it emphasises vulnerability and results in a loss of

power and autonomy for refugees. In a study of a specialised secondary school for new arrivals in Queensland, Australia, Keddie (2012) illustrated how deficit paradigms can have a positive veneer. An educator at the school explained how newly arrived Rohingya girls – small in stature, dressed in saris, and perceived as ‘cute’ – were infantilised, seen as the ‘exotic other’, and thereby met with low academic expectations (p. 207). Several researchers argue that focusing on the trauma refugees may have experienced can also lead to deficit perceptions via the privileging of a psychological model (Ingamells & Westoby, 2008) or a neo-colonial narrative of ‘us’ helping ‘them’ (Rah et al., 2009). Finally, whether arising from negative or positive roots, numerous studies have documented how deficit-based paradigms function as self-fulfilling prophecies, with low expectations resulting in missed learning opportunities, reinforcing low expectations (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Roy & Roxas, 2011; Schachner et al., 2018; Shapiro, 2014).

UASC can be particular targets of low expectations, or perhaps more precisely, narrow expectations. O’Higgins (2012) discusses the tension between agency and vulnerability for UASC and demonstrates how young people sometimes presented as more vulnerable than they actually were in order to access services. This expectation is augmented by European societies’ Western concept of childhood as a time of innocence and passivity rather than agency (Rosen & Newberry, 2018; Woodhead, 1997). In the UK, some UASC have had their underage status challenged on the basis of not appearing upset enough in interviews or for asserting their rights and preferences rather than showing deference to adults (O’Higgins, 2012). Part of appearing ‘vulnerable enough’ can include appearing ignorant. Bhabha (2001) details the parallel cases of two Chinese boys seeking asylum in Canada. One claimed he knew nothing about his parents’ plan to smuggle him around the world and was granted asylum. The other boy said he knew about his parents’ plan and his application was refused. Bhabha argues that a lack of knowledge makes UASC seem more helpless, which better plays to deficit lens expectations that they be passive

recipients of host societies' benevolence. More recent studies by Lems (2019) and Wernesjo (2020) similarly argue that while UASC are expected, on the one hand, to be passive and appreciative recipients of welfare and education programmes, they can also be accused to being lazy or unappreciative if they do not also show agency and initiative. Wernesjo notes that the very enthusiasm that UASC show for education may be partially for the benefit of the host society – or at least play into narratives of being deserving through hard work.

In contrast with deficit views of young refugees, there is a call in much of the literature for refugees to be seen through an asset – or strength, or resource – lens. Numerous studies note that in order to make it as far as they have, refugees and asylum seekers – and particularly UASC – must be highly resilient and resourceful individuals (Bronstein et al., 2013; Butler, 2005; Muecke, 1992). Or, as Matthews (2008, p. 40) puts it: 'Indeed, it is because of their independence, not their dependence, that people become refugees in the first place.' Refugee children, rather than lacking in skills and experiences, may bring different types of skills and experiences to the classroom. Roy & Roxas (2011) for example, described how Somali Bantu refugee parents in Texas contributed to their children's education through oral storytelling, even when they themselves are illiterate. Moll et al. (1992) documented a plethora of knowledge and experience that migrant Mexican children in the US accumulated at home that could potentially be seen as a rich resource at school.

More recently, some studies have documented educators' asset-based views of refugee pupils as reflected in their practices, and several of these studies are set in England. McIntyre & Abrams (2021), for example, describe a number of provisions for refugee pupils, highlighting the ways in which educators support newly arrived pupils to feel safety, belonging, and success. While they focus on educators' practices rather than specifically addressing their attitudes, it is clear through the educators' actions that they

recognised the strengths refugee pupils bring to the classroom as well as their needs. At 'Fern College', for example, educators made sure to give new arrivals thorough assessments, with a translator, so that pupils' abilities in subjects like maths were recognised, despite their lack of English language skills. Similarly, Peterson et al.'s (2017) study of a comprehensive school in Kent describes how educators encouraged refugee pupils to become prefects and took a number of steps to ensure refugee pupils had access to tertiary education. These types of practices, again, show that educators recognised refugee pupils' strengths. Finally, in Madziva & Thondhlana's (2017) study of schools in Nottinghamshire, a resettlement caseworker commented on the variation in attitudes towards newly arrived pupils, noting that schools with more experience of refugee pupils had more positive attitudes towards receiving them:

The attitudes have been different, depending on where. If schools have the experience of taking refugee children the attitude is completely different ... there's a lot more leniency there and understanding that the children are going to struggle and will need extra support ... but one school had a really bad attitude and they were saying 'what do we do with these children?' (p. 951)

### *2.3.3 Educators' practices with refugee pupils*

In terms of best practice recommendations for teaching refugee pupils, the current consensus emphasises a holistic approach that takes into account multiple possible needs of individuals (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Block et al., 2014a; McIntyre & Neuhaus, 2021; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). English language and tailored academic support are central, but so is a welcoming environment and meeting any socio-emotional or psychological needs (Rutter, 2006). This body of literature equating holistic practice with good practice is based on interviews with young people, their families, and education and social work practitioners. While this is a valuable form of evidence, it is worth noting that there is a

dearth of studies that evaluate education programmes by comparing participant pupils' outcomes with that of a comparison group.

Recent literature on trauma-informed teaching practice, while focused on vulnerable pupils more generally, also has relevance to discussions of good practice with refugee pupils. A 2015 report by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommends that educators receive training in attachment and trauma awareness, given the centrality of school to vulnerable young people's lives. Trauma-informed practices overlap substantially with the concept of holistic practices with refugees, as described above; educators are encouraged to interact in a supportive, asset-based manner with pupils, building positive relationships rather than focusing solely on academic targets (Thomas et al., 2019). Whole-school approaches to attachment and trauma are associated with better outcomes for vulnerable pupils, and studies suggest that refugee pupils benefit from these types of approaches (Franco, 2018; Sullivan & Simonson, 2016).

Another body of literature notes that although refugee pupils may have some shared traits, it is important for educators to acknowledge their heterogeneity and avoid making assumptions based on the experiences of other pupils (Block et al., 2014; Naidoo, 2015). These recommendations concur with feedback from pupils themselves. In a review of interviews with refugee children in the UK, Hek (2005) found that a welcoming school ethos, extra support from specialist educators, having educators from the same linguistic and cultural background, and the opportunity to form strong friendships were themes that arose frequently. In a similar Australian study, refugee pupils emphasised the importance of educators considering their prior life experiences, the centrality of learning English, and the role of a warm, culturally sensitive learning environment (Naidoo, 2015).

Thus, good practice with refugee pupils is conceptualised as holistic in nature and aware of differences between individuals. Records of actual teaching practices with refugee pupils, however, range considerably. Many studies have found educators engaged

in holistic good practice as described above. Taylor & Sidhu (2012) showcased inclusive, holistic practices with refugee pupils at four schools in Australia, noting the importance of school leadership and liaising with outside agencies. At schools in Australia and Finland, Kaukko et al. (2021) and Wilkinson & Kaukko (2020) documented educators' practices of caring for the whole child, to an extent that they dubbed what they observed a 'pedagogy of love'. Kaukko et al. (2021) argue that educators at case study schools went beyond what was considered their normal duty of care to keep children safe, creating a sense of welcome and belonging, adjusting the definition of success for individual pupils, and making each pupil feel recognised and appreciated for what they brought to the school community. Meanwhile, Wilkinson & Kaukko (2020) described a school where educators focused on pastoral care and encouraged pupils to play outdoors frequently, with the aim of lessening the impact of high stakes testing pressures.

In the UK, several papers discussed in section 2.3.2 above, on educators' attitudes, also have relevance for educators' practices. Peterson et al.'s (2017) case study of the secondary school in Kent, for example, found a highly inclusive environment where staff had created a holistic, whole-school approach lauded by staff and pupils alike. Similarly, Madziva & Thondhlana (2017) found educators going out of their way to promote a welcoming ethos and support a range of learning needs with newly arrived Syrian pupils, including making home visits to communicate with parents and being innovative in their approach with two profoundly deaf pupils. In another example from McIntyre & Abrams' (2021), educators at 'Larkspur Academy' sought to make new arrivals feel welcome and safe through a thorough induction process – an important aspect of which was pupil interpreters. Larkspur also had an EAL base where pupils chose to spend lunches socialising, long after they were done needing the language support provided there. At another provision, 'Fern College', 16 to 19-year-old new arrivals encountered a bespoke provision that aimed to provide language and academic qualifications while emphasising

well-being. Educators at Fern College acknowledged that pupils would sometimes feel lonely, angry, or guilty, and aimed to create an environment where pupils could support one another (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021). Thus, a growing body of literature documents examples of educators' positive, holistic practices with refugee pupils. However, it is important to note that the stated purpose of some of these studies is to showcase good practice, which would have affected the researchers' selection of cases, data collection, data analysis, and framing of the findings. This does not make the findings biased, it simply should be noted when considering the implications of the studies.

Other studies report a more negative set of practices. Educators can behave in a less welcoming manner towards asylum seeking pupils, due to the additional work burden involved and the frequency with which these pupils must leave schools due to accommodation changes or being deported (Reakes, 2007). At a newcomer programme for teenage refugees in Canada, Li & Grineva (2016) found a void between educator intentions and practices as experienced by the pupils. One educator thought she was being helpful by telling a new pupil to wash his clothes more regularly without realising she had embarrassed him and that he only owned one set of clothes. Also in Canada, Guo et al. found that newly arrived Syrian pupils encountered racism and Islamophobia at school – and that educators had brushed off the incidents as unimportant, leaving pupils feeling like they were not welcome. Similarly, in Australia, Miller et al. (2021) recorded instances of refugee pupils encountering racism by school staff. Baak's (2019) study of newly arrived Syrians in Glasgow found a more mixed picture, where some pupils felt welcomed and supported but an 'ad hoc, piecemeal' response across the city meant other pupils did not feel welcome and did not want to attend school. In Sweden, Nilsson & Bunar (2015) found that newly arrived pupils' pre-migration knowledge and experience was not sufficiently recognised by educators, despite policy outlining that this should be the case and Tajic &

Bunar (2020) argued that an excessive focus on learning Swedish caused refugee pupils to not be fully included in mainstream provision.

Yet another group of studies document how educators' good intentions can be derailed by overarching structural demands. Hanna (2013) describes how educators in a US school consciously enacted poor practice – separating out refugee pupils into test preparation classes – in the hopes of complying with state accountability measures and avoiding associated penalties, meanwhile knowing that their actions were not best for the pupils involved. A number of studies document how exam pressures and the related curriculum in England interfere with the provision educators are able to provide for refugee pupils, for example by limiting inclusion into mainstream schools and classrooms because the primary focus is GCSE preparation (Gladwell, 2020; McIntyre & Abrams, 2021; Morrice et al., 2020). Additionally, McIntyre & Hall (2018) found that even when headteachers were committed to including refugee pupils and providing holistic good provision, they faced challenges such as not being able to recruit skilled staff. Overall, Morrice et al. (2020) note that as a society we tend to focus on the individual-level challenges refugee pupils face, rather than structural barriers:

Less acknowledged in the literature is how education systems based on assumed linearity and normative pathways prevent refugee children's entry into, and progression through, the education system. Inflexible age based systems, coupled with lack of tailored support and high levels of testing fail to accommodate migrancy. (p. 4)

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Education is recognised as an important factor in refugee children's well-being and integration into host societies. Educators are an essential factor shaping refugee pupils' experiences, yet the literature on educators' perspectives on refugee education has significant gaps. In terms of educators' knowledge about teaching refugee pupils, studies

about information sources are outdated, describing a system run solely by local authorities. In terms of educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils, few studies exist and those that do tend to fall into a dichotomy between agency/vulnerability or deficit/asset rather than offering a more nuanced exploration. The literature on educators' practices with refugee pupils often focuses on EAL specialists and senior leadership members rather than foregrounding the perspectives of mainstream educators, including teaching assistants. Furthermore, current studies tend to cover *what* educators' practices are without an in-depth exploration of *why* and *how* these practices have developed – meaning it is difficult to know what types of policy changes, training, and support may be beneficial.

The present study aims to address these gaps in the literature by investigating the following question:

*How do educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices interact when working with refugee pupils?*

Within this main research question, the following sub-questions are addressed:

*Sub RQ1: What is educators' knowledge about refugee pupils and how is this knowledge acquired?*

*Sub RQ2: What are educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils and how are these attitudes formed?*

*Sub RQ3: What are educators' practices with refugee pupils and what shapes these practices?*

Throughout, the project aims to provide an in-depth look at educators and their practices with refugee pupils, to explore educators' knowledge and attitudes as key contributors to these practices, and to include a wide selection of school staff as educators, rather than only specialists and school leadership. Its main contribution is its focus on educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices, and the interactions between these phenomena.

The study also contributes to the current literature in terms of its methodology. First, the survey gives an overview of perspectives of a relatively large (n=295) sample of educators, in contrast with most studies in the field that are based only on interview data. Secondly, the case studies are based on participant observation data alongside interviews, providing increased depth and richness to the findings and allowing for triangulation between data sources. These methodological points will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This chapter starts with an overview of the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the study, followed by a justification of the chosen research design. Next, I describe the methods used, including recruitment and data collection for the survey and case studies. This is followed by a description of data analysis, including a consideration of my positionality as a researcher and the challenges of mixing data from different methods and research traditions. Finally, I examine potential ethical issues related to the study and how they were addressed. Throughout, I reflect on the ways in which the project's methodology both facilitates and limits the claims it can make in contributing to new knowledge.

### **3.1 Philosophical underpinnings**

Education research, like other social science research, gets entangled in the long-standing skirmish between positivist and interpretivist paradigms and their related philosophical assumptions, research designs, and methods. However, this debate can also be seen as a false dualism (Pring, 2000), and as a distraction from the more urgent purpose of conducting quality research, whether it be quantitative, qualitative, or somewhere on the continuum between the two (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Accordingly, my ontological assumptions underlying this project are that reality is concurrently subjective and objective – that is, individuals have unique internal realities but are also part of an external, shared reality. Correspondingly, the nature of knowledge, or epistemology, is also both subjective and objective. From this ontological and epistemological foundation, I have aimed to focus on conducting robust research that best addresses the research questions, whether the methods employed be quantitative, qualitative, or somewhere on a continuum between the

two (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 20). As noted by Oancea & Pring (2008), different types of explanation and evidence are needed to answer different types of question about the exceedingly complex contexts of real life. While philosophical assumptions are important to consider in the research process, there are not good reasons for elevating one set of assumptions above others, or for the exclusion of possible perspectives over their inclusion.

From similar premises, Greene (2007) outlines a mixed methods stance she terms ‘dialectic’, a respectful conversation to be had between different paradigms in order to improve the quality of the research. She argues that by mixing philosophical paradigms, and not just methods, researchers gain a ‘deeper, broader, and more insightful understanding’ of their topic (2012, p. 757). Mixing mental models is not only unproblematic, but preferable; the differences and dissonances that result are not a drawback to be overcome but rather an advantage to be seized (Greene, 2007). In practice, this means positivist and interpretivist paradigms may both receive consideration, not just to corroborate each other but to gain a more nuanced understanding through the exploration of difference (Greene, 2012).

In this study, I assume a post-positivist perspective by administering a largely quantitative survey. I acknowledge that there is a real world beyond my perception of it, but that any measure of this world is an abstraction, or as Sapsford (2007) expresses it, a map rather than the territory itself. However, I have also conducted qualitative case study research using interviews and participant observation. These methods are constructivist in epistemology; there are as many social realities as people (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Rather than being irreconcilably contradictory, this mix of philosophical perspectives facilitated both broad and nuanced research to address the research questions, leading to a deeper, more complex understanding of the topic of enquiry. More specifically, the survey contributes an overview of many educators’ knowledge and attitudes, allowing for trends

and associations to be identified. The case studies provide a detailed look at a smaller number of educators, examining their knowledge, attitudes, and practices in a deeper, contextualised manner. Throughout, knowledge and attitudes are conceptualised as existing within individuals; my knowledge of them is gained through educators' shared perceptions and self-presentation. Educators' practices are conceptualised as existing as physical acts that I could observe in classrooms – though what I noticed and did not notice in the observation process is a function of myself and the lenses through which I see the world.

### **3.2 Overview of research design**

In the present study, I sought to address the following research questions:

*RQ: How do educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices interact when working with refugee pupils?*

*Sub RQ1: What is educators' knowledge about refugee pupils and how is this knowledge acquired?*

*Sub RQ2: What are educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils and how are these attitudes formed?*

*Sub RQ3: What are educators' practices with refugee pupils and what shapes these practices?*

Building from these research questions and the philosophical underpinnings described above, I selected a mixed methods research design, including a survey and case studies of educators situated within their schools of employment. Through the survey, I aimed to find out *what* knowledge and attitudes educators have on a broad scale. Through the case studies, I sought to understand *how* knowledge and attitudes interact with practices and *why* educators think and act in the way that they do – in a depth that would be

impossible using only surveys. Furthermore, the survey allowed an exploration of educators’ knowledge and attitudes across a variety of school types and locations, while the case studies allowed a ‘zoomed in’ examination of educators’ practices at multicultural, urban schools with experience teaching refugee pupils. Sub-research questions 1 and 2 were addressed using survey and case study data, while sub-research question 3 was addressed using only case study data, as illustrated in **Figure 4** below.

**Figure 4. Research questions and associated methods**

<i>How do educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices interact when working with refugee pupils?</i>		
Sub RQ1: Educators’ knowledge	Sub RQ2: Educators’ attitudes	Sub RQ3: Educators’ practices
CASE STUDY DATA (Interviews, participant observation)		
SURVEY DATA		

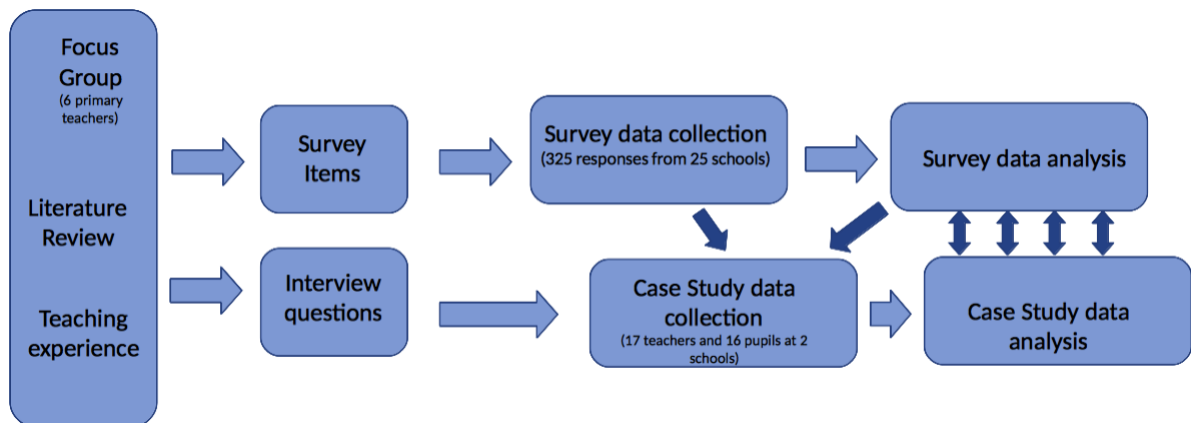
Whilst the research methodology was designed specifically to best address the research questions of the project, several changes were made in response to ethical considerations and the situation on the ground in schools, as discussed throughout this chapter. This flexibility aided my ability to successfully collect a wide range of data from many different participants, and has methodological implications for future research, as discussed in Chapter 8.

The questionnaire items for the survey produced both quantitative and qualitative data, while the case studies were largely qualitative. Initially, I tried to make my study design fit one of the structures set out by various mixed methodologists – sequential QUAL → QUANT, sequential QUANT → QUAL, concurrent, convergent, etc.

(Cresswell, 2014; Tashakorri & Teddlie, 2009), but eventually, like Hesse-Biber (2015), I came to the conclusion that ‘simply matching one’s research to a given diagram offered little guidance when it came to deciding what to do with two different data sets’ (778). Taking into consideration both the goals of the research and practical constraints, I planned the study to be both sequential and parallel in design, with frequent feedback between strands, as detailed in **Figure 5**.

I conducted a focus group with educators to develop several of the questionnaire items and the responses led to some quantitative results – like a sequential QUAL → QUANT study. However, I then used information from the survey distribution and results to shape interviews and observations at the case study sites – more like a QUANT → QUAL study. For example, at one school where I gave the survey, an educator asked whether it was alright to say she felt she would be good at providing pastoral care to refugee pupils, even if she had no prior experience teaching them. Around the same time, I noticed that every survey respondent up to that point had answered YES rather than NO to the question ‘Do you think you need (or would need) further knowledge to teach refugee pupils effectively?’ In the subsequent interviews at case study schools, I preceded questions about knowledge, skills, and training with the caveat that it was alright to say you already felt confident in the area, and this produced more nuanced responses about the applicability of general knowledge and skills to specific situations and pupils.

**Figure 5. Overview of the study design**



*The survey and case studies were carried out mainly in parallel strands, with frequent feedback represented by arrows, above. For example, initial responses to survey questions informed interview questions with case study educators. Survey and case study data was analysed separately but combined by theme (eg. educators' knowledge acquisition.)*

One disadvantage of a purely parallel design is that it can be difficult for a novice researcher to have sufficient expertise in multiple methods to carry out both studies concurrently (Tashakorri & Teddlie, 2009). Although my study had the two strands of survey and case studies, I staggered the data collection, making the design semi-sequential and giving myself more time to learn multiple research methods and incorporate what I learned into the next stage. At the same time, it was useful to have some overlap between research stages, allowing the different strands to feed into each other, inform each other, and create new directions of enquiry as I went.

I chose to carry out the study in the city and county where I had lived and taught for several years prior to commencing doctoral studies, so I could begin my research with a good understanding of the local context and more easily arrange access to field sites through social ties. The study makes no claims of generalisability to the county as a whole, let alone the whole of England; however, it is notable that the county's average exam results consistently hover around the national average, and that it presents a political

contrast between the more conservative rural areas and more liberal urban ones, as is the case nationally.

### **3.3 Survey**

A self-report survey of educators was used to investigate sub-research questions 1 and 2: *What is educators' knowledge about refugee pupils and how is this knowledge acquired?* and *What are educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils and how are these attitudes formed?* The use of a survey allowed for a larger number of participant educators than interviews alone, though at less depth. It provided broader insight into educators' thoughts across the county and was valuable as a backdrop to contextualise the more in-depth case studies.

#### ***3.3.1 Survey recruitment and distribution***

In September 2018, the Virtual School Head for the local authority agreed to send, on my behalf, a short explanation and link to the online questionnaire to her mailing list of all the state-maintained schools in the county (n=300). After one week, only one survey was completed so I began contacting schools directly. Between October 2018 and January 2019, I phoned, emailed, or both phoned and emailed every state-maintained school in the county and asked if the head would allow me to attend a staff meeting or briefing to introduce the project and provide access to the questionnaire. In some cases, I contacted former colleagues (n=4), a parent of my former pupils (n=1), and teacher-researchers associated with the University of Oxford Department of Education (n=2) in addition to headteachers.

In recruiting for the survey, I sought to include educators at a variety of schools in terms of age level (primary, secondary), reported results, and socio-economic status and

multiculturalism of pupils (**Figure 6**). As I contacted schools, I noticed that I was getting more primary than secondary schools to participate, so I made another round of phone calls and emails to recruit secondaries. I also noticed that several city schools that serve refugee pupils had not responded to my requests. I was concerned that some of these schools were also in socio-economically deprived areas where staff were more likely to be stressed on a daily basis and therefore less likely to respond, so I used a combination of personal connections and repeated phoning and emailing to involve them in the study. In total, 25 schools participated, yielding 325 responses. Of these 325 responses, 295 were included in data analysis. The excluded responses consisted of partially complete questionnaires (less than 25% completed, did not progress beyond background information) and one full response from an educator outside the county. Questionnaires that were not fully complete but had progressed beyond background information were included. Thus, self-selection – or opting out – of individual educators played a role in the composition of the survey sample. See **Table 1** for demographic information about survey respondents.

**Table 1: Characteristics of survey respondents***Totals do not equal 295 due to missing responses (3.1-6.1%)*

<b>Demographic characteristic</b>	<b>Number of participants (%)</b>
Female	230 (82.7%)
Male	48 (17.3%)
Immigrant	20 (7.2%)
Non-immigrant	257 (92.8%)
White British	247 (88.5%)
Not White British	32 (11.5%)
0-2 years teaching	32 (11.2%)
3-5 years teaching	58 (20.3%)
6-8 years teaching	45 (15.7%)
9-11 years teaching	43 (15.0%)
12+ years teaching	108 (37.8%)
<b>Furthest level of education</b>	
Some secondary school	3 (1.1%)
GCSEs	17 (6.1%)
A-levels or equivalent	17 (6.1%)
Undergraduate university degree	106 (38.1%)
Postgraduate university degree	135 (48.6%)

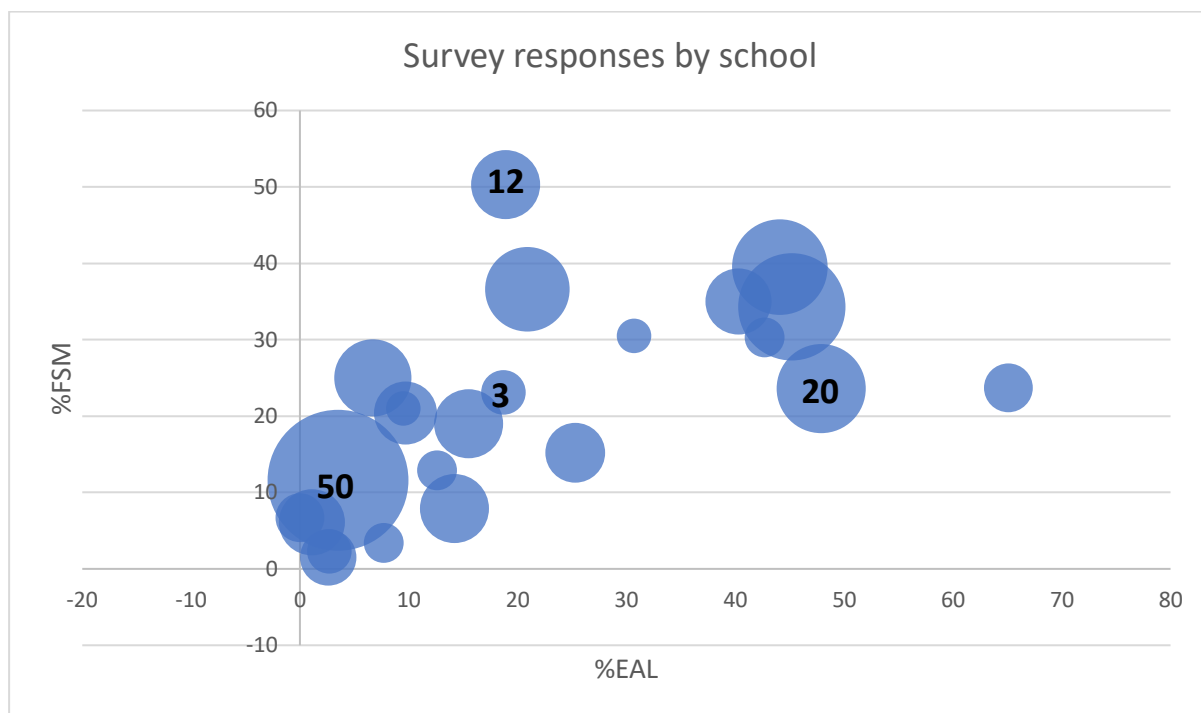
I attended afternoon staff meetings (n=18) or morning briefings (n=3) at 21 schools, and at four schools the link was introduced by a member of staff, without me present. At the meetings and briefings, I gave a short explanation of the project, then the staff present took the survey online through the Qualtrics platform. I also made paper copies available to staff who preferred it or did not have an electronic device handy, or when the internet was unreliable at some rural schools. Following meetings, I left behind paper copies or a request to forward the link to non-present staff, depending on the

preference of my school contact. Of the total 295 questionnaires completed, 229 were completed online and 66 on paper.

The first staff meeting I attended was at a school where my former line manager is now the headteacher. She introduced me as a former colleague and named the school where we had worked together, which had gone through several changes recently. This gave the meeting a relaxed, casual tone and sparked a discussion among the educators present about Ofsted, the exam regime, how I had become a doctoral student, and how I had become interested in the topic of research. It was a small school, so there were only four educators present and as they took the survey they became an impromptu focus group, commenting on the various items and how they felt answering them. A few commented that it was difficult to capture such a complex topic with tick-boxes, which made them feel frustrated. My former line manager noted that she felt pressure to give socially desirable answers rather than what she actually thought. Krumpal (2013) note that social desirability bias is common in surveys that address taboo topics but also note that this can be reduced via techniques such as assuring confidentiality and anonymity.

At subsequent schools I introduced myself as an educator-turned-researcher, framing myself as an insider, and told how I became interested in the topic of research while teaching primary school in the area. I reminded participants that the survey was anonymous and that I was curious to hear what educators genuinely thought, so they should answer the questions as honestly as possible without worrying about being judged. I explained that the project consisted of in-depth case studies as well as the survey, and that I knew that surveys could be frustrating but it was a useful way to access many educators' opinions around the county. I drew their attention to the open response section at the end of the questionnaire and said that I would be analysing comments recorded there, so they should say anything they thought was missing or remained uncaptured by the preceding items.

**Figure 6: Surveyed schools by percent free school meals (FSM) and percent EAL**



*Each bubble represents a surveyed school; the size of the bubble is proportionate to the number of educators who participated.*

At all but two schools, I stayed at meetings while educators completed the survey, to answer any questions and collect paper copies. Some groups of staff had many questions, usually clarifications about terminology, while others were silent. In the smaller schools, staff often discussed the survey and related topics as they went – asking questions and making comments about topics such as immigration policy, EAL teaching, academisation, and new curricula. I took part in the conversations when they happened but made sure to position myself so that I could not see, or be perceived to be looking, at participants’ laptop screens or paper questionnaires. The whole process usually took around 15 minutes, with a couple of minutes introduction, around 10 minutes for everyone to complete the questionnaire, and a couple of minutes to conclude. Following the

meetings, I entered the responses from any paper copies into Qualtrics, the online survey platform. Some participants wrote comments in the margins of the paper copies; I typed these into the open response section at the end of the online questionnaire for later analysis.

There were both advantages and disadvantages to conducting the survey through staff meetings. The clearest advantage was that I was able to obtain a larger number of responses than expected. Educators planned on attending the meetings anyway, so it did not put them under additional time pressure. Furthermore, I was able to use comments and questions from survey participants to inform subsequent survey administration as well as data collection at the case study sites.

The main disadvantage of surveying via staff meetings was that it was difficult to recruit TAs, as they do not normally attend meetings outside school hours. At some schools, headteachers agreed to distribute the Qualtrics link to absent staff or to keep a few paper copies and post them back to me, but the response rates were low, likely due to the additional time burden. There are also questions of selection bias and school effects. Perhaps headteachers who agreed to participate were more sympathetic to research or more interested in refugee issues, and this interest could manifest in how they run their schools – and therefore in the thoughts and opinions of their staff. Conversely, recruiting through headteachers could have meant less selection bias, as the staff who took the surveys did not necessarily have a special interest in research or refugees. They simply took the survey because there was staff meeting time allocated to do so. Some educators agreed to take the survey but did not continue past the first few questions, as discussed above, which also affected the sample; however, since I do not know participants' reasons for opting-out, it is unclear in what ways it influenced the findings. Thus, when considering the study's claims to knowledge, it is essential to note that the survey sample was not randomly selected and covered only a small proportion of schools and educators across the county.

### 3.3.2 *Survey content*

Peterson (2000) provides the following guidelines for evaluation of survey questions: participants must be able to understand the questions, have the ability to answer them, and have the desire to answer them. Thus, questions must be brief, unambiguous, specific, and relevant, and worded to anticipate participants' likely connotations or confusion (Peterson, 2000). I piloted the study questionnaire with educators at a local school to ensure that it was clear, accessible, and of maximum utility for the proposed project. A sub-set of this group of educators also took part in a focus group to develop questionnaire items involving knowledge sources and reasons given for stated attitudes about refugee pupils. (See Appendix A for questionnaire draft and Appendix B for a description of the piloting process.) Following the pilot phase, a final draft of the questionnaire was employed for all data collection without further changes to content or lay-out.

In the final draft of the questionnaire, general knowledge about refugees and asylum seekers was measured using questions based on common misconceptions published by The Refugee Council. General attitudes towards refugees were measured using a 12-item instrument created by Stephan et al. (1997) and an attitudes 'thermometer' pioneered by Esses et al. (1993). These attitudes instruments were chosen because they do not assume a deficit model and include the option for positive or mixed attitudes towards refugees. Furthermore, they have been used in studies in the US, Canada, Australia, Spain, Israel and New Zealand (Louis et al., 2013; Stephan et al., 1998; Stephan et al., 2005; Stephan et al., 1999) to measure attitudes towards a variety of minority out-groups,

including refugees and asylum seekers, and this allowed for comparison with existing results.<sup>5</sup>

Educators' knowledge about the education of refugee pupils was explored through questions about how prepared they felt to teach these pupils – in terms of academic learning, pastoral care, English language learning, and cultural differences. These categories reflect common themes in the literature on refugee education, including an Ofsted report (2003) on the state of education for refugee and asylum seeking pupils in English schools and a survey study of schools in Newcastle (Whiteman, 2005). Additionally, educators were asked what sources of information they already access and whether they think they require further information to teach refugee pupils effectively, thereby identifying possible training needs. This section of the questionnaire is based on Michaelsen et al.'s (2004) study of health professionals' sources of knowledge about immigrant patients, as well as ideas of the primary school educators in the initial focus group.

Educators' attitudes about the education of refugee pupils were explored through open-ended questions asking for a description of these pupils (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954), as well as an attitudes thermometer asking them to rate how favourable their attitude was towards these pupils. The thermometer was followed by a list of possible reasons for their answer, which was developed through discussions with the initial educator focus group. The final section of the questionnaire included background and demographic questions about the participant, which allowed for a description of the characteristics of the participant educators and testing of hypotheses involving education levels and previous teaching experience.

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<sup>5</sup> The questionnaire included measures of educators' knowledge and attitudes towards refugees generally, beyond their pupils. The associated results are not included in this dissertation due to issues of relevance and space but I have included a description of the measures so the reader has a full understanding of the document participants encountered.

I have taken steps to support the validity of the survey throughout the process, from the development and dissemination of the questionnaire to the analysis of the results. For the items that are based on previously validated scales, I make a claim to concurrent validity, with the caveat that some adaptations have been made (Sapsford, 2007). The scale for general attitudes is used with the permission of its originator, Walter Stephan. In previous studies, the 12-item instrument has been reliable, with reported Cronbach's alphas ranging from .85 – .93. It has not undergone psychometric validation but consistently correlates with related constructs such as negative stereotyping (W. Stephan, personal communication, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018).

In general, attitudes can be difficult to measure accurately due to social desirability bias (Lüke & Grosche, 2017); the use of a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire aimed to improve validity in this regard. Conversely, individuals' knowledge can be difficult to measure accurately by self-report given the Dunning-Kruger effect – that is, people with less knowledge or competence in an area tend to assess themselves as more knowledgeable or competent than they are, and vice versa (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). This is an inherent limitation of the survey portion of this study. It was taken into account when analysing survey data in that educators' ratings of their knowledge were seen as a combination of their actual knowledge and their perception of that knowledge. Furthermore, the use of case studies provided a useful counterpoint to the survey in that the multiple methods used allowed for a comparison between what educators said they knew and what types of knowledge they were observed to use in their practice.

### **3.4 Case studies**

Previous studies of refugee pupils in the UK – and elsewhere – largely employ qualitative methods, most commonly semi-structured interviews or observations as part of a case study of a group of refugees or a school (see, for example, Chase, 2010; Crawley,

2011; Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017; McIntyre & Abrams, 2021; O’Higgins, 2012; Reakes, 2007). In the present project, case study data was used to explore all research sub-questions. However, case studies particularly allowed for a nuanced investigation of sub-research question 3: *What are educators’ practices with refugee pupils and what shapes these practices?*

Case studies were ideal for this portion of the project, as they seek to interpret phenomena, exploring the *whys* and *hows* rather than simply the *whats* (Basse, 1999). They create detailed, contextualised knowledge by employing a range of different methods to examine an individual case or cases. Benedicte-Meyer (2001) notes that case studies are particularly useful when studying real-life, contemporary phenomena that are not yet well understood – as is the case of educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices with refugee pupils. In the context of this project, case studies were also important to allow triangulation of educators’ self-report of their practices with what they were observed to be doing in classrooms.

Although case studies do not allow for statistical generalisation through ‘sampling logic’, Yin (2014) argues that their findings can be generalised following a ‘replication logic’, seeing each case as an ‘experiment’ repeated to increase the robustness of the findings. Cases do not have to be selected for their representativeness of the larger phenomenon. Rather, much can be learned from a single strategically selected case (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Luker, 2008).

### 3.4.1 Case study selection

The case study schools were not selected as representative of the county or country as a whole. Rather, the aim was to use two schools as a lens through which to examine the dual phenomena of refugee education and educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

Initially, I sought out the case study schools because their intake of refugee pupils was higher than elsewhere in the county, and in the case of the first site, due to its reputation for being welcoming to newly arrived pupils of all types. As the project progressed, it became clear that staff at both case study schools displayed many elements of good practice with refugee pupils as defined by literature in the area. Thus, the aim became not only to record what educators at the two schools were thinking, feeling and doing, but also to explore what features allowed them to succeed in a particular context – recording characteristics to aspire to rather than picking holes in schools that were struggling.

The first case study site, Altford School, was a secondary school located in the largest population centre of the county, and was selected for the high proportion of refugee, asylum seeking, and UASC pupils it serves. It had a specialised EAL provision for pupils of A-level age, an Ofsted ‘Good’ rating, and a reputation in the local area for being welcoming to pupils from diverse backgrounds (40% EAL, 35% FSM). I contacted Altford through their ‘research champion’. She reviewed my proposal, put me in contact with the headteacher to gain approval, and arranged a timetable of classes for me to visit. I visited Altford for eight weeks, from mid-November 2018 through the end of January 2019 with the Christmas holiday mid-way through.

The second case study site, Belloway School, was a primary school located in the same city. Like Altford, Belloway had a diverse intake (48% EAL, 24% FSM). In 2016, it received an ‘Inadequate’ grade from Ofsted but since then has had a dramatic improvement in results under a new headteacher.<sup>6</sup> I attended a staff meeting at Belloway in November 2018 to give the survey for this study and learned that they had a number of Syrian refugee pupils on roll. When I was looking for another school to visit towards the end of my stay at Altford, I contacted the headteacher at Belloway, who gave approval to use the school

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<sup>6</sup> In the academic year following my research visit, Belloway was Ofsted inspected and received a ‘Good’ rating.

as my second case study site and arranged a timetable of educators and classes to visit. Belloway was an ideal site because it was similar to Altford in terms of its pupil demographics, strong leadership, and outcomes for pupils – but at the primary rather than secondary level. At the start of the study, I was unsure whether I would visit a primary school but as I interviewed educators at Altford, a prominent theme emerged about the age at which refugee pupils arrived and how this affected their English language development and access to the curriculum. I visited Belloway for seven weeks from the beginning of February until the beginning of April 2019, with one week’s half term holiday mid-way through. The visit was shorter than for Altford, but this was appropriate since I was already familiar with the primary context and did not need as much time to learn about the curriculum, norms, or day-to-day rhythms of the place. Although Belloway had many similar characteristics to Altford, it was not considered a ‘feeder’ school due to its proximity to another city secondary.

In both schools, the educator ‘cases’ were selected mainly by the member of staff who facilitated my visit – the ‘research champion’ at Altford, and the headteacher and inclusion manager at Belloway. My only request was that the educators I spent time with have refugee pupils in their classes. It is likely, however, that my gatekeepers would want to showcase the best their school had to offer and therefore would have steered me towards educators they saw as having good practice.<sup>7</sup> See **Tables 2, 3 and 4** for a description of case study educators and their demographic characteristics.

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<sup>7</sup> Despite this likely bias, it is worth noting that I was directed to observe one educator who was clearly struggling and another educator whose methods were highly unconventional and could have been construed as poor practice.

**Table 2: Case study educators at Altford**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Professional experience</b>
Catherine	English teacher	34 years teaching
Don	Physics teacher	9 years teaching
Eleanor	EAL and English teacher	30+ years teaching
Fiona	EAL and English teacher	10 years teaching
Michael	Humanities teacher	19 years teaching
Margaret	Head of EAL	30 years teaching
Syed	Maths teacher	6 years teaching
Shauna	English teacher	4 years teaching
Simone	History teacher and senior leader	19 years teaching

**Table 3: Case study educators at Belloway**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Professional experience</b>
Kasia	Year 5 teacher	5 years teaching, 2 as TA
Habibah	Year 5 TA	4 years as TA, 1 as volunteer
Palesa	Reception teacher	1 year teaching, 7 as TA
Beatrice	Reception TA	3 years as TA, 19 teaching
Samantha	Reception TA	3 years as TA
Safiya	Year 2 teacher / EAL lead	27 years teaching
Aaron	Year 2 TA	2 years as TA
Ruth	Inclusion manager	15 years teaching

**Table 4: Characteristics of case study educators**

<b>Demographic characteristic</b>	<b>Number of participants (%)</b>
Female	13 (76.5%)
Male	4 (23.5%)
Immigrant	4 (23.5%)
Non-immigrant	13 (76.5%)
0-2 years teaching	1 (5.9%)
3-5 years teaching	4 (23.5%)
6-8 years teaching	2 (11.8%)
9-11 years teaching	2 (11.8%)
12+ years teaching	8 (47.1%)
Class/subject teacher	9 (53.0%)
EAL specialist	3 (17.6%)
Teaching assistant	4 (23.5%)
Inclusion manager	1 (5.9%)

### *3.4.2 Participant observation*

Data collection for the case studies was carried out using three different methods:

1) observations in lessons and other activities around school, 2) semi-structured interviews with educators, and 3) group interviews with pupils in a Year 5 class at Belloway.

Throughout the case study visits, I observed lessons and other activities to see what practices educators engaged in, as well as what knowledge and attitudes they projected in their practice (see Appendix C for observation protocol). I followed the lead of each participant educator in terms of my involvement in tasks. However, I acknowledge that no matter my level of involvement, my presence in the room in some way changed the social interaction, so I considered myself to be a participant observer along a spectrum of observing and participating (Cohen et al., 2011) and aimed to be accordingly reflexive in my thinking about the findings.

At Alford, I was introduced to the educators via email as a researcher who would provide ‘extra help’ in classrooms. When I arrived in each classroom, I told the educator that I could help as much or as little as they liked. I had a staff badge, so pupils assumed that I was a TA, but if they asked, I said I was a primary teacher and university student there to learn more about secondary school. I did not disclose the precise topic of research with pupils – and none asked – because neither I nor the school gatekeepers wanted refugee pupils to feel singled out. On balance, it seemed that this deception by omission was less harmful than potentially exposing or embarrassing dozens of adolescents who were likely keen to fit in with their peer group – particularly because the focus of the study was educators rather than the pupils themselves.

My participation in lessons at Alford ranged from highly involved (e.g. helping a group of beginner English learners form letters and write words) to peripherally involved (e.g. taking a mental maths quiz along with the rest of the class). My skills as a primary educator were more useful in the beginner EAL classes and Years 7 and 8, and I found myself less actively involved in classes with older children and less familiar subject matter (e.g. Year 10 Physics).

At Belloway, I presented myself as a researcher who was also an experienced primary educator and happy to take an active role in the classroom. I spent the first two weeks in a Year 5 classroom where the class teacher directed particular pupils to sit with me, gave specific instructions about what type of support each pupil needed, and frequently left me with the class when she needed to make photocopies or find resources. I felt a part of the class within a few hours of arriving, and soon found myself too engaged with classroom activities to take notes. My experiences were similar in the Foundation Stage and Year 2 classrooms that I subsequently visited, with my activities ranging from supporting children with writing tasks to ‘eating’ mud pies to taking over a lesson when the class teacher had a family emergency.

Before commencing fieldwork, my plan was to conduct more unstructured observations to get an overview of each situation, then move towards more focused, structured observations to verify and challenge my tentative conclusions. Perhaps somewhat naively, I planned to decide on a purpose and focus before each observation, as well as clarifying which research questions I would be addressing (Simpson & Tuson, 2003). In actuality, I ended up much more involved in lessons than I expected, both at Altford and Belloway, and my observations were more flexible and opportunistic than focused and structured. However, I was able to gather broad, descriptive data, for example the tasks educators assigned to refugee pupils and the layout of the classrooms, and as I went, I noted questions that arose about each educator and used these questions to inform subsequent observations. I did verify and challenge tentative conclusions, but in a less systematic way than I had anticipated.

I intended to record observation data as handwritten field notes as the action occurred, or as soon as possible afterwards, thereby reducing the impact of unreliable memories (Murchison, 2010). At Altford, I was usually able to jot notes on scrap paper or in my notebook during lessons or just after. The secondary pupils took little notice as they were also busy note-taking, and the hourly breaks between lessons were useful times to summarise what I had just experienced. At Belloway, however, my high level of involvement, the younger children's curiosity, and the lack of breaks throughout the day meant I often jotted my thoughts only at lunch and after school. Jottings often read like a riddle: 'kg. kilograms. Voice of lady, paper mâché fish, you are the big students. Time. Y-O-U-R. 59x52. Soviets = USSR = Russia, Fast Track to Reading by Peter Viney, because it is beautiful'. For both case study sites, I typed my field notes as soon as possible – usually each evening – so that I could flesh out the detail as I went.

Although my high level of participation in lessons changed the way I observed lessons, it became one of the main strengths of my fieldwork. The more involved with a

class I became, the more I shared goals with the educators and the better I understood their day-to-day lives. This improved my rapport with educators, facilitating informal discussions about practice as well as giving us common ground to draw on in the interviews.

### 3.4.3 Educator interviews

I interviewed each educator that I spent time observing, with the goal of having more structured conversations about their attitudes, knowledge, and practices. Lamot & Swindler (2014) write that while ethnography/observation can give insight into people's behaviour, interviews allow for an insight into people's '*imagined* meanings of their activities, their self-concepts, their fantasies about themselves'. Interviewing meant setting time aside to converse with a specific purpose, which was of particular importance working with educators since they had limited time to chat throughout the school day.

Educator interviews were 1:1, usually around half an hour in length, and at a time named as convenient for the interviewee. Interviews during lunch breaks tended to be more time pressured and therefore shorter; the longer interviews were around an hour in length and took place during planning time or after school. Most interviews took place near the end of my stay in a particular classroom. This was due to educators' busy schedules but ended up being methodologically advantageous as they could refer back to incidents I had been present for in their classrooms. Participants received verbal and written information about the project when I began observing in their classrooms and gave written consent before being interviewed.

Initially, I used a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix D) then added and replaced questions as the research progressed. At the end of the first educator interview, for example, I asked whether there was anything I should have asked but had

not. The educator, who was an EAL specialist, said she would be interested to hear what mainstream educators thought about the EAL department and what they thought the school would be like without it. In subsequent interviews, I added these questions and they opened several new lines of discussion around allocation of EAL support, school funding issues, and communication between EAL and mainstream educators. In another case, I noticed that a question asking educators to rate the contributions of refugee pupils in their lessons using a 0-10 scale made most participants feel uncomfortable. I continued asking the question, however, until a particularly frank educator said, 'Well that's a stupid question'. In subsequent interviews, I asked participants to name some positive and some negative aspects of having refugee pupils in their classes. This got them speaking about the topic in a more forthcoming manner as they were not put off by the numeric rating.

Apart from the question content, my style of interviewing also changed over the course of the study. The first interview had a formal tone. I spoke very little outside of the questions written on the interview schedule, often nodding or using facial expressions to respond. In retrospect, I think I was overly aware of the audio recorder and how the interview would look once transcribed. The participant educator followed my lead and her answers were thoughtful but controlled and formal. At the end of the interview, I turned the recorder off and as we were packing up, I mentioned something I had overheard in Science class the previous week. She responded with a stream of anecdotes and off-the-cuff analysis, I responded as a fellow educator rather than an interviewer, and suddenly we were having a *conversation* rather than an *interview*. A few weeks later, I interviewed an educator who did not want to be recorded and I found that the whole interview felt less formal in tone and richer in content. Following these experiences, I continued to audio record interviews but attempted to maintain the conversational tone I had experienced with the recorder off. I spoke more about my own experiences as an educator and my experiences spending time in participants' lessons. In most cases, this seemed to help

educators to relax and share more detail. In my research journal, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019, I wrote: ‘Very pleasant lunch time interview with C. Felt like a regular, thoughtful conversation, but recorded.’

#### *3.4.4 Pupil interviews*

Pupil interviews were conducted in four groups of four pupils (n=16) from a Year 5 class at Belloway. Unfortunately, my gatekeeper at Alford did not want pupils to participate in interviews due to logistical issues and fear of refugee young people feeling singled out.

At Belloway, I invited both refugee pupils and pupils with no refugee background to take part in the interviews, in order to avoid as much as possible any feelings of being singled out. The interviews loosely followed a Nominal Group Technique method, which offered a higher level of structure than a focus group and invited private responses from individuals before building to a communal response (Macphail, 2001). Participants recorded their ideas about the topic before discussing it as a group, which meant it was less likely that one or two outgoing personalities dominated the results (Chapple & Murphy, 1996). One common issue with group interviews can be the variability of social dynamics in a group of strangers (Parker & Tritter, 2006). I selected groups of pupils who were friendly with each other and avoided groupings that might cause one individual to dominate the discussion.

In the group interview, I asked the participants to imagine a new pupil had arrived at their school from another country (see Appendix E). What are some good things educators at their school would do? The pupils had individual thinking time, then were asked to record the items they thought were most important in words or pictures. These recordings were used to generate a list of possible practices, which the pupils ranked from

most to least important in order to generate discussion. I audio recorded the sessions from start to finish; in most groups the pupils spoke about what they were thinking while they drew and wrote as well as in the discussion time.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

#### *3.5.1 Survey data*

Quantitative analyses were conducted in SPSS 25. Data from the questionnaires are mainly reported descriptively, reflecting the descriptive nature of research sub-questions 1 and 2: *What is educators' knowledge...? What are educators' attitudes...?* Since very little is known about educators' knowledge or attitudes towards refugee pupils, descriptive data are a useful source of information in their own right and act as building blocks for future study.

The questionnaire items dealing with knowledge and preparation are reported as number (%) of educators reporting different levels of preparedness, number (%) of educators feeling they needed or did not need more knowledge to teach refugee pupils effectively, and ranking of different sources of information that educators accessed related to teaching refugee pupils. There is currently little research in this area, so these frequencies provide a baseline for future comparisons. Additionally, I tested bivariate associations between educator preparedness and personal characteristics such as teaching experience, immigration status, and education level. Responses to open-ended attitude questions (e.g. *Complete the sentence: At our school, refugee and asylum seeking pupils...*) were entered in NVivo and thematically coded following the protocol used for the interview and observation data, described in section 3.5.2, below, on analysis of case study data.

Although the data was mainly analysed descriptively, two hypotheses regarding factors associated with positive attitudes were also tested. First, it was expected that educators with higher levels of education would have more positive attitudes towards refugees and refugee pupils (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; NatCen, 2017; Wike et al., 2016). Second, it was expected that educators with previous experience working with refugee pupils – or pupils with shared characteristics – would have more positive attitudes towards refugee pupils (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Ofsted, 2003; Whiteman, 2005). Correlation analysis was used to test for associations between educators' attitude thermometer scores and ordinal variables, including: furthest level of education, levels of experience with refugees, levels of experience with pupils with EAL, and levels of experience with pupils looked after by children's social care.

A sample size of n=242 usable responses was obtained. As a comparison, the mean sample size in previous studies is 102 for the attitudes thermometer measure (Esses, et al., 2008; Louis et al., 2013; Schweitzer et al. 2005; Stephan et al., 2002, 2005, 1999, 1998, 1997) and Ekin & Yetkin's (2021) survey study of Turkish teachers' attitudes towards Syrian pupils had a sample of 95. Similar hypotheses were explored regarding educator knowledge; correlation analysis between educator preparedness and educator characteristics – including education level, previous experience, and demographic characteristics – was carried out. Mann-Whitney-U-tests were used in the case of the nominal variables of educators' immigrant status (Yes/No) and ethnicity (White British/other ethnicities).

### 3.5.2 Case study data

For the case studies, collection and analysis of data was ongoing and iterative. Earlier findings informed the direction of enquiry in following visits, allowing for

modification of initial theories as the project progressed (Yin, 2014). For example, observing the difference in pupil behaviour when a group of pupils with EAL was withdrawn from a Year 7 English class helped lead me to explore the allocation of EAL support and communication between EAL and mainstream educators in interviews. In another case, I observed that an educator was strict about behaviour and presentation and had the expectation that all pupils contribute to class discussions. I wondered whether this would apply equally to a pupil from Syria and kept a particular eye on how and when the educator spoke with him or called on him to speak.

Both educator and pupil interview recordings were transcribed as soon as possible following their completion – in some cases this meant within a few days, but mostly it meant waiting several weeks until I had time between school visits. I uploaded the transcriptions to NVivo along with my field notes. In NVivo, I used a mix of deductive and inductive coding to explore the data (see Appendix F for code index). I knew before starting, for example, that I wanted to have groups for ‘knowledge’, ‘attitudes’, and ‘practices’ in order to address my research questions. However, I also created a number of codes while reading and analysing, such as ‘EAL is hard’, ‘funding’, and ‘refugees are all different’. Throughout the process, I continually updated the groupings and hierarchies of codes to reflect the additional data. As a general guide, I followed the framework presented by Srivastava & Hopwood (2009), continually asking: *1) What are the data telling me? 2) What is it I want to know? and 3) What is the dialectical relationship between the two?* As the research progressed, I moved towards tentatively answering my research questions and testing my conclusions by looking for examples and counter examples (Miles et al., 2014), as well as attempting to think of rival explanations for my findings (Yin, 2014).

### 3.5.3 *Positionality*

Throughout data collection and analyses, I was mindful of my positionality and how it may have affected the behaviour of participants, as well as what I valued and therefore took note of when observing and interviewing.

I am a white woman and an immigrant to the UK from the US – the latter of which is immediately apparent from my accent. I am also more highly educated than the average, as is apparent in that I am a doctoral student. These factors are markers for positive attitudes towards immigration and immigrants, and it is likely that participant educators noted the same factors and correctly assumed my attitudes. This could have affected how educators responded to questionnaire items about their own attitudes, how they treated refugee pupils when I was present in their classrooms, and how they framed their thoughts and opinions in interviews.

I have been a primary school teacher in the UK for eight years, mostly at schools in high poverty areas, which I think gave me a more nuanced perspective when observing other educators' lessons. I continued teaching one day per week at my previous school of employment throughout data collection, and I often found myself checking my judgements of other educators with my own experience. 'That was a chaotic maths lesson' was followed by 'but remember when you tried to teach equivalent fractions last week?' Continuing to teach throughout fieldwork had a host of benefits for data collection, including up to date local education knowledge and awareness of systemic challenges, which improved my rapport with participant educators and allowed for richer interviews and informal conversations. There is a rich literature discussing the advantages and disadvantages of being a relative insider or outsider while conducting research.<sup>8</sup> While it

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<sup>8</sup> 'Insider' and 'outsider' are conceptualised here as two distinct categories in order to discuss their relative merits clearly. It is more accurate, and also a topic of much academic literature, to see insider and

is noted that being an ‘insider’ has considerable advantages, such as improved access and rapport with participants (Beoku-Betts, 1994; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), it is also noted that insider research raises many ‘hidden dilemmas’ (Larabee, 2002) such as failing to notice everyday phenomena and issues around pre-existing friendships and power dynamics with participants (Mercer, 2007). Thus, being a relative insider may have made it difficult for me to take note of underlying assumptions and unquestioned practices of schools and teaching in England. By visiting schools in a familiar setting, but not schools where I had actually worked, I aimed to maintain the access advantages of an insider while avoiding issues related to pre-existing friendships and power dynamics that I would have felt at my school of employment.

When interacting with and interviewing pupils, my position was decidedly one of authority, simply by virtue of being an adult in a school setting. At Alford, there were several pupils in Years 7 – 10 who I had taught in primary school, so word got around quickly that I was an educator. Depending on the tone set by the class teacher and my level of participation in the lessons, pupils perceived me as more or less of an authority figure. In primary classes, EAL classes, and some secondary classes, I felt like a member of staff and the pupils treated me like one, asking me for help and whether they could go to the toilet, and modifying their phone-using or line-jostling behaviour when I was present. In other classes, I played more the role of a helpful-co-pupil, keeping group discussions focused and sharing the occasional eye-roll with the pupil beside me: ‘You know what Sir is like...’

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outsider as ends of a continuum, and to see the researcher as moving along this continuum depending on a variety of personal characteristics (gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, personality, etc.) and contextual factors (topic of research, occurrence of notable events, cultural or institutional norms, etc.) (Mercer 2007, Beoku-Betts 1994, Olson 1997).

Finally, when analysing the data from the group interviews, I considered not only my position in relation to the participants, but also their positions in relation to each other (Parker & Tritter, 2006). Since I knew the children participating, I was aware of which children might be trying to impress others and which children needed support to speak up, for example.

#### 3.5.4 *Data mixing*

Triangulation between interviews, observations, and survey responses improved the robustness of the findings. Data interaction in mixed methods analysis is not limited to triangulation, or simply comparing results, however. Other motivations for mixing data from different methods include ‘development’ – one strand informing another – or ‘initiation’ – using contradictions to reframe questions (Greene, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2010). It is important to note that although mixed methods researchers often make claims to synergy – that is, the combination of methods creating a product greater than the sum of the parts – this outcome is by no means automatic; ‘mixed methods research does not provide a magic elixir for overcoming the so-called “weakness” of methods’ (Hesse-Biber, 2015, p.786).

Throughout this project, however, I did find that comparing a variety of sources allowed for complexities and contradictions to be explored, for example when an educator reported having a particular attitude in an interview but was observed to have a different attitude in lessons, or the difference between survey respondents’ reported knowledge levels and those of interviewed educators. Following Greene (2007, p. 144), dissonance in results should not be avoided but rather actively sought out, as exploring these differences is the key to ‘highly generative analytic work’. She suggests planning ahead set times to pause and compare results between different portions of an integrated mixed methods

study to allow for these interactions between data (Greene, 2007). I planned such pauses for the end of each case study visit, as well as throughout the data analysis process. These pauses helped me to re-focus on the research questions and to explore relationships between data types after being immersed in the details of data collection and analysis.

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

Before commencing the study, ethical approval was procured from the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). Throughout the planning and execution of the study, I followed CUREC's Approved Procedures 15 (*Educators and teaching in education settings*) and 25 (*Non-invasive research methods with children*) as well as the principles listed by the British Educational Research Association's *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2018).

Survey participants gave written consent before commencing the questionnaire, after they had read a description of the project and in most cases had had an opportunity to ask me questions. Case study educators gave written consent for observations and interviews to take place after receiving oral and written information about the project. Two educators – one subject educator and one TA – declined to be audio recorded in interview, suggesting that they felt sufficiently comfortable asserting their preferences. Pupil group interviews were carried out at Belloway, where the headteacher and inclusion manager agreed that texting parents with the project information sheet and opt-out consent form would be more accessible than sending a paper copy. One parent (non-refugee) contacted the school to opt-out. Opt-out consent was considered appropriate because no personal data about pupils was collected and the topic of questioning was not controversial or potentially upsetting, as per CUREC Approved Procedure 25. Furthermore, opt-out consent was preferable to opt-in consent in that it did not skew the included voices towards children with fewer vulnerabilities whose parents have been shown to be more likely to

engage with and return permission documents (see, for example, Shaw et al., 2015). The participant pupils also gave opt-in verbal consent directly before interviews, as described below. At both Altford and Belloway, pupil and parent consent were not obtained for me to be present and conducting observations in lessons since – in accordance with CUREC Approved Procedure 15 – the research was focused on educators and did not interfere with pupils’ normal classroom experiences.

BERA guideline number 6 states the importance of ‘maximising the benefits and minimising the risks’ to study participants. In light of this, I aimed for the research not to place an excessive burden on participants, thus minimising the risk of causing them stress. I aimed for educators and pupils to feel their time had been well spent by keeping interviews to a set length and trying to make the experience positive for all involved, for example by using creative techniques to make the group interviews engaging for pupils. The pupil interviews took place at a time that did not interfere with curriculum learning, as assessed by their educator, and the educator interviews took place at times the educators named as most convenient, usually during planning time, lunch time, or after school. Additionally, in exchange for educators allowing me to observe lessons, I offered to act as a TA so that the exchange was more reciprocal. A few educators did not give me work to do while observing in their classrooms, but on the whole my offer was taken up and I spent most lessons supporting groups or individual pupils with their learning. From my perspective, my contributions ranged from mildly helpful (for example Year 10 History and Year 8 Maths) to highly helpful (EAL classes and primary classes). The primary focus of the project was educators, rather than refugee pupils; however, I did consider some potential impacts on refugee pupils and aimed to mitigate them. I avoided, for example, spending time with pupils who were refugees any more than with pupils who were not refugees, or building strong relationships with refugee pupils. This reduced the chance of a refugee pupil feeling upset by my presence or subsequent absence. As described

previously, I did not single out refugee pupils through discussion of the research topic with pupils and in pupil interviews spoke more generally about the experience of being new to a school.

I was also concerned that my presence could cause stress to educators and did my best to mitigate this risk – particularly given the documented stresses already experienced in the profession. Educators may have felt anxious that they had little knowledge about refugee education or felt that their practice was not ideal. To mitigate this, I told educators that I was also an educator, that I understood what it was like to be scrutinised, and that I was just looking for information, not to make an Ofsted-esque judgement. When I noticed that taking notes in a notebook made some educators feel uncomfortable, I either switched to scrap paper, the margins of pupil worksheets or saved the note-taking for once the lesson was finished. Usually these steps helped, and educators who initially seemed nervous seemed to relax after a few lessons with me present. I also made a point of saying the name of the school where I had worked at for the past five years and where I was currently covering one day per week, since it had the reputation of being difficult, unstable, and constantly under scrutiny – so if they thought what just happened in English was bad, don't worry, I had seen worse. This had the effect of positioning me as a relative insider, as discussed above in section 3.5.3, and I hoped put participant educators more at ease. Essentially, I aimed to communicate that the goal of the project was not to make a normative evaluation but rather to understand a phenomenon in depth.

While being a participant observer and interacting with educators and pupils on a daily basis, I needed to consider the balance between gathering rich, meaningful data and maintaining honest, trusting relationships. I was aware of the tension between building rapport and informed consent – that the participants felt comfortable enough to act naturally, but that they remembered that I was a researcher throughout (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Educators seemed to have few issues accepting me as both a classroom

helper and a researcher. Two of the educators with whom I had the strongest rapport, in classes where I was highly involved as an assistant, regularly commented on people they thought I should interview.

Throughout the case studies, pupils who were refugees or asylum seekers were not identified or singled out in any way. Both educators and pupils were assured that they could skip any questions or stop participating at any time without giving me a reason, as per BERA guideline number 31 (BERA, 2018). I assured them that all data was kept confidential and anonymous. The only planned exception to this rule was if a risk of harm to a child were to become apparent; on one occasion I shared a pupils' comment with their educator due to safeguarding concerns. Both the physical and electronic data were kept securely, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). See Appendix G for CUREC approval and Appendix H for relevant information and consent forms.

While approved procedures and guidelines created a strong ethical foundation for the project, a number of ethical issues arose nonetheless. I used information and consent forms, for example, to facilitate participants understanding the aims of the project and what it would involve for them – but discovered it is impossible to gain true informed consent when one is not yet sure what the research outcomes and related consequences may be (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Madison, 2012) and when participants are busy educators who may not be fully listening to an explanation of the project. In one case early on, the educator whose class I was visiting only realised on my last day that I was also an educator, due to a miscommunication. This made me question whether the information sheets about the project were pitched appropriately to their audience and on my next placement I made an effort to cover the information and consent content verbally, alongside written copies.

On a related note, once writing up the results of the study, I realised that it was more difficult to assure the anonymity of some case study educators than I had anticipated. As the BERA guidelines (2018) note, 'anonymity may not be possible... within a small,

close-knit community' (guideline number 41), such as a school. While I could change details about participants that would anonymise them for most external audiences, there was no way to ensure their anonymity within their school communities, given that other members of the school know each other's roles and responsibilities. This dilemma, however, was eased somewhat due to the focus on the case studies as positive examples. Furthermore, throughout the findings, I took particular care when reporting educators' attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers, as this area is heavily value-laden and could cause participants to feel as though they have been betrayed if I reported an attitude or related practice that is socially disapproved of. Madison (2012, p. 161) notes that an 'impasse between being a champion for the same subjects that you must simultaneously critique' is a common research issue and outlines guidelines to consider when deciding whether to include criticism against a participant in published results, which I referred to when unsure what to include.

Finally, the power dynamics between myself and participants deserve specific mention. While I avoided pre-existing power imbalances that can accompany full-insider research, as discussed above in section 3.5.3, and made a concerted effort to present myself as a fellow-educator and non-judgemental observer, the fact remained that I was a researcher, whose job it was to be critical of what I saw and heard. Indeed, Karnieli-Miller et al. (2009) argue that it is precisely researchers' efforts to address power imbalances in research that can cause ethical dilemmas regarding power to arise. There is an inherent tension, for example, between setting an informal, non-judgemental tone during data collection and the formal publication of that data to the wider world (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). I cannot claim to have solved this dilemma over the course of the project. I did, however, aim to be as empathetic as possible with participants – ie. ask myself, how would I feel if I was in their place? – throughout data collection, analysis, and publication. Meanwhile, I also kept in mind that acting to make power relations between researcher and

participants completely symmetrical has been likened to aiming for utopia (Ben-Ari & Enosh, 2013) – admirable but unrealistic – and that it important to acknowledge power imbalances while also working to diminish them.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has given an overview of the methodology of the study, including epistemological assumptions, selection of a research design, data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations along the way. The use of mixed methods allowed for a broad description of the knowledge and attitudes of participant educators – obtained through a self-report questionnaire – and for an in-depth exploration of educators’ practices and how they interact with knowledge and attitudes – explored through case studies of 17 educators at two schools. I have given a detailed description of the methods utilised and procedures followed for data collection and analysis, presenting both the strengths and limitations of the study with the aim of making the scope of its contributions clear. Whilst this study encompasses just one local authority in England, it addresses an important gap in our understanding of how educators perceive and interact with refugee pupils, providing a foundation on which future research can build.

In the following chapter, I present the first of three findings themes: educators’ knowledge about refugee pupils and how they acquire this knowledge.

## **CHAPTER 4: EDUCATORS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT REFUGEE PUPILS**

*RQ1: What is educators' knowledge about refugee pupils and how is this knowledge acquired?*

This chapter examines the first of three sub-research questions, exploring educators' knowledge about refugee pupils and how this knowledge is acquired. Previous studies in the UK find that educators with experience of teaching refugees – or pupils with similar characteristics – feel better prepared than educators without experience, and also have better access to relevant resources (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Ofsted, 2003; Whiteman, 2005). This study's results largely concur. In the following, I argue that educator knowledge is closely related to individual educator's previous experiences and that educators with more experience teaching refugee pupils also have more knowledge relevant to the work. Educators' practices can be seen as a component of their experiences; thus, the multidirectional nature of the KAP model is supported with knowledge shaping practices and practices shaping knowledge. Throughout the chapter, Shulman's (1987, 1986) framework of types of teacher knowledge – e.g. content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge about pupils and educational systems – is used as a reference point, allowing for a broad definition of knowledge that underpins the complex craft of teaching (see section 2.2.1 for further detail).

The chapter is based on survey data from across the county and interview and observation data of case study educators at both case study schools. It is organised into four main areas of enquiry: 1) educators' self-appraisal of their knowledge, 2) topics of

relevant pedagogical knowledge, 3) sources of pedagogical knowledge, and 4) specific knowledge about individual pupils. The survey results are primarily presented as descriptive statistics, addressing the question of what educators know, as well as some exploratory analysis of how educator characteristics correlate with knowledge, which begins to speak to the question of how this knowledge is acquired. The case study results compile data from interviews and observations and are grouped thematically with the survey data throughout the chapter. Both case study schools were also invited to participate in the survey, therefore some educators may have responded via both methods.

## **4.1 Educators' self-appraisal of their knowledge**

### *4.1.1 Survey results*

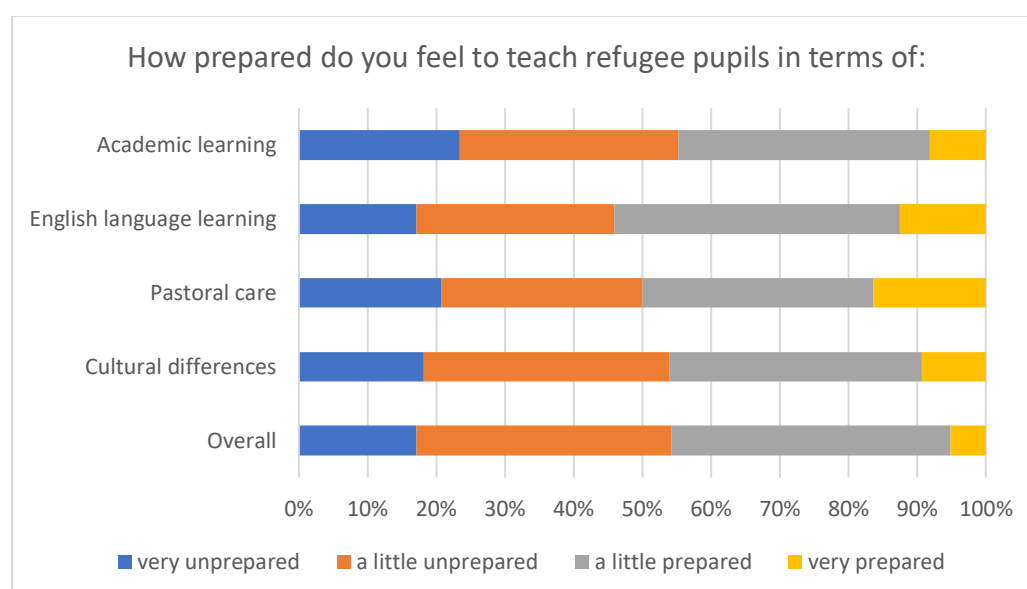
In the survey items related to self-appraisal of their knowledge, educators were asked: 'How prepared do you feel to teach refugee and asylum seeking pupils?' broken down into how prepared they felt in terms of academic learning, English language learning, pastoral care, cultural differences, and their overall feelings of preparedness. Educators' responses covered a range from 'very unprepared' to 'very prepared' (see **Figure 7**, below, and Table 1 in Appendix I). Inter-Quartile Ranges were calculated as a measure of spread across the four responses and were relatively low (IQR=1 for all categories, medians ranging 2-3; see Table 2 in Appendix I), meaning that there was no strong polarisation in the responses – i.e. no strong tendency towards unpreparedness or preparedness. This likely reflects the range of previous knowledge and experiences of the educators across the survey sample, since it included educators with 0 to 30+ years on the job and with a variety of training and professional experiences (see Table 3 in Appendix I).

Across the categories, just over half of educators ranked themselves 'very unprepared' or 'a little unprepared', while just under half chose 'a little prepared' or 'very

prepared'. The exception was for English language learning (n=281), which had 152 (54.1%) educators say they felt prepared to some degree. This could be due to the fact that 93.7% of educators surveyed reported some level of experience teaching EAL (n=268 of 285) whilst the other categories could have been interpreted in different ways and educators were unsure if they had training or experience to base their practice in. For example, 'pastoral care' could be interpreted as being kind and welcoming, or it could be interpreted as dealing with complex mental health issues.

Since an existing survey item could not be found to cover this topic, the questions about preparedness were created based on literature on best practice with refugee pupils. Consequently, there is no way to compare these results with those from other studies or to know whether similar results are to be expected from other populations. The aim, rather, was to describe how prepared some educators in one county felt to teach refugee pupils, providing information on which to base future, more detailed analysis.

**Figure 7: Educators' self-assessment of preparedness to teach refugees**



The results from ‘overall’ preparedness<sup>9</sup> were analysed with respondent characteristics – previous experience, education level, ethnicity, and immigrant status – to see which characteristics were associated with higher levels of overall preparedness (see **Table 5**). Reports on UK and local authority preparedness to teach refugees suggests that previous experience with refugee pupils is a promoting factor (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Ofsted, 2003). The additional educator characteristics were chosen based on the literature on attitudes towards immigrants and immigration in general, which shows an association between education and positive attitudes (see, for example, Dempster & Hargrave, 2017) and an association between contact with outgroups and positive attitudes towards those outgroups (Paluck et al., 2019; Pettigrew et al., 2011). Given a lack of existing studies on factors affecting educators’ preparedness to teach refugee pupils, it was hypothesised that factors contributing to positive attitudes might also contribute to self-assessing as more highly prepared. Correlation analysis was used to test relationships with ordinal variables (experience levels, highest education levels) in order to give an idea of the effect size when a relationship was present. The nominal variables of ethnicity (White British/other ethnicities) and immigrant status (Yes/No) were analysed using Mann-Whitney U tests.

Neither education level ( $r=0.021$ ) nor ethnicity or immigrant status ( $U = 0.265$  and  $U=0.920$  respectively) had significant associations with overall preparedness. This could be due to a variety of factors, most fundamentally the assumption that factors hypothesised to be associated with positive attitudes towards immigration would also be associated with feeling better prepared to teach refugees. The relationship between attitudes towards

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<sup>9</sup> Overall preparedness was measured by educators’ responses to the question ‘How prepared do you feel overall to teach refugee pupils?’, not as a mean of scores for the previous categories (academic learning, English language learning, etc.) Overall preparedness had the lowest score of the five categories, suggesting that educators felt skilled in individual areas but saw themselves as lacking the full range of skills relevant to teaching refugee pupils.

refugees and educator characteristics including education level, ethnicity, and immigrant status will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Previous educator experience levels did have significant associations with self-assessed preparedness. Experience with pupils with EAL and experience with refugee pupils both had moderate positive correlations with feeling more prepared to teach refugee pupils ( $r=0.429$  for EAL,  $r=0.454$  for refugees). Experience with children who are looked after in social care had a small positive correlation with feeling more prepared to teach refugee pupils ( $r=0.183$ ).

**Table 5: Preparedness levels and educator characteristic correlations (n=275)**

	<b>Overall preparation level</b>	<b>Experience with refugees</b>	<b>Experience with EAL</b>	<b>Experience with children in social care</b>
<b>Experience with refugees</b>	0.454**	1		
<b>Experience with EAL</b>	0.429**	0.481**	1	
<b>Experience with children in social care</b>	0.183**	0.264**	0.272**	1
<b>Education level</b>	0.021	0.178**	0.180**	0.172**

**\*\* Significant at .01 level (2-tailed).**

*Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient was used due to data being ordinal.*

These results are perhaps unsurprising. Experience in the past with refugee pupils would seem likely to be related to feeling prepared to teach refugee pupils in the present or future. Likewise, since EAL is one of the main needs that refugee pupils present, it seems likely that EAL experience would also be related to feeling prepared to teach refugees. Experience with children in social care would likely make educators feel more prepared to support pupils who had been through difficult or traumatic experiences,

including refugee pupils. However, whilst these results seem unsurprising, they are not a foregone conclusion. The alternative – that experience with refugee pupils made educators feel less prepared – would suggest that educators’ experiences with refugees were so difficult that they were unable to learn from the experience. The positive relationship between previous experience and current preparedness suggests the opposite – that educators felt able to learn from their experiences, and therefore that the experiences were not so difficult or extreme as to be unproductive.

It is also important to reflect on the concept of ‘preparedness’ versus ‘knowledge’ when considering the implications of these results – and the self-report nature of the questionnaire, since participant educators were asked how prepared they *felt* to educate refugee pupils. Whilst having knowledge certainly seems likely to contribute to preparedness, other characteristics such as an individual’s self-esteem level could also be at play in answering the question. Thus, the results from this survey item should be interpreted as how educators perceived themselves in relation to teaching refugee pupils, with no way of comparing or confirming their self-assessment with other data, such as with classroom observation in the case studies. Moreover, the implications of the Dunning-Kruger effect (Kruger & Dunning, 1999) should be taken into consideration when interpreting survey items related to educators’ knowledge. If the more people know, the less they think they know – and vice versa – then educators with more knowledge could be underreporting their preparedness levels – and vice versa.

Finally, it is worth noting that this analysis shows associations between relevant experience and feeling prepared, but does not show the direction of causality. It is possible that educators could have gained knowledge and felt prepared first, then sought out relevant experience, in addition to the more feasible scenario described above, where educators’ experience caused them to feel more prepared.

#### 4.1.2 *Case studies*

The case studies partially addressed this issue by providing an opportunity to triangulate educator self-report with classroom observations and my knowledge of individual educators' personalities. For example, when educators said in interviews that they felt prepared to teach refugee pupils, I could usually see that this was the case in lessons. The most notable dissonance between interview and observation data was not educators overestimating their preparedness. Rather, there was a highly experienced – and modest – educator who said she did not feel prepared but in my observations showed a great deal of relevant knowledge when teaching new arrivals, for example using visual supports in lessons, scaffolding attempts at speech, and making sure pupils had positive peer interactions.

Across the case studies, nearly all educators – with the exception above – reported feeling confident in their knowledge and skills when teaching refugee pupils. Some were matter-of-factly self-assured, such as the secondary educator who told me, 'I'm confident in my ability as a teacher and I feel when I sit down with any kid and going through it... I can teach them anything'. More commonly, educators modestly qualified their responses: 'Pretty confident. I don't mean that to sound arrogant', or added that they had lots of experience in the area as a justification for claiming expertise: '(I'm) confident in the sense that I've been doing this for nearly 30 years and I've learned a hell of a lot', and 'I would say fairly confident. I mean, I suppose I've had quite a lot of experience'.

Indeed, simply by being employed at one of the case study schools, participant educators already had relevant experience. Altford, the secondary, had a long history of educating refugees, and Belloway, the primary, had had a large EAL population for many years, though less experience with refugees. All participant educators had been at their respective schools for more than two years. Therefore, at the very least, the case study

educators had two years relevant experience at schools that were accustomed to educating newly arrived children with EAL. Furthermore, a handful of the educators had worked with refugee pupils for several decades, and a few educators had extensive experience in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) – both in the UK and abroad.

Besides teaching experience, some educators referred to their own status as immigrants as an integral component of their knowledge with refugee pupils. In my observation, both case study schools had relatively multicultural staff, but at Belloway, the proportion of immigrant-educators chosen to participate was especially high; of eight participant educators, four came from outside the UK. One educator, Kasia, grew up in a self-described ‘academic’ family in Poland, published her Masters dissertation as a book, then moved to England and completed the first half of a PhD before leaving to train as a primary teacher. She reflected that although she did not have training as an EAL specialist, she had an intimate understanding of the processes children go through when adjusting to a new language and culture, primarily through watching her young son go through a ‘silent period’ when they moved to the UK. She acknowledged that her circumstances were profoundly different from the refugee families she now interacts with (‘[We’re] not exactly from a refugee tent in Jordan’), yet noted how the experience of moving countries had helped her understand what refugees might be going through upon resettlement – not only in terms of language learning, but in terms of shifting identity:

I know what it is like to be of certain status in your first country and to come to a new – and you kind of carve a niche for yourself which is a very different niche. And to have all of those old memories of old country where things were easier... So when refugee parents tell me, and when refugee kids tell me – and I’ve heard this three times already, from different mums – we were always saying once we come to England our problems will be over. So I – it’s not that I understand intellectually, I understand emotionally. I know what they’re saying. I can – I empathise with them.

Another class teacher at Belloway, Safiya, grew up in Egypt, lived and studied in the US, and settled with her family in the UK. She regularly translated Arabic-English for refugee

pupils and their families and had also undertaken a postgraduate certificate in TESOL, completing a dissertation on EAL in primary schools. While she acknowledged that her Arabic language skills and TESOL training were relevant and useful, when I asked her how confident she felt in her knowledge when teaching refugee pupils, it was the similarities in her life experience that she emphasised:

As a person from another country, let's put it this way, I think I know their needs. I know [what] their language barriers are, I know their situation, I understand where they come from – their cultural background... I come from a similar country, let's put it this way. Third world country. I know how is the economic situation, the educational situation, so I think this helps me a lot in meeting their needs.

Belloway had access to further in-house Arabic-English translation through Habibah, a TA from Sudan. Unlike Kasia and Safiya, Habibah emphasised her differences with refugee families rather than their similarities as fellow immigrants. She made a point of telling me that she was not a refugee although she was from Sudan and people could make assumptions. Throughout our conversation, whenever she pronounced 'refugee', she did it quietly, almost under her breath, as though it was a bad or secret word. She emphasised her translation abilities, however, explaining that because she spoke Arabic she felt 'fine' in terms of her knowledge when teaching refugee pupils.

On the whole, case study educators expressed high levels of knowledge when teaching refugee pupils. However, case study educators often identified lower levels of knowledge for educators who were new to the profession, or new to the school. At Alford, the EAL team conducted informal learning walks around the school to check on mainstream educators' practices with EAL pupils. Margaret, the EAL head, said that while much practice observed was very good ('I'm out of a job basically, because you're doing everything well'), sometimes – especially with new educators – the team came across lessons where pupils very new to English were not accessing the learning at all. In these cases, information and mentoring around best practice was provided. At Belloway, Safiya

coordinated EAL learning and mentioned a similar issue about new educators. Beyond EAL pedagogy, Safiya said that she had encountered educators new to the school who felt awkward about the life circumstances of refugee families and were unsure what they should say and not say when interacting with them. She attributed this to ‘the media’ and people having a stereotypical image of refugees before interacting with individuals. Safiya said she made a point of speaking with new educators about the EAL resources available to them as well as any uncertainties they felt about cultural or personal differences. In the smaller, primary setting, she said it was possible for her to carry this out as informal conversations rather than a formalised system of support.

In sum, this study found that educators had variable levels of knowledge relevant to teaching refugee pupils and that these variations were linked to experience levels. Educators with more experience of teaching refugee pupils – or pupils with similar characteristics – were more likely to report feeling confident in their knowledge and skills in the area. These findings come with limitations; feeling confident in one’s knowledge is not necessarily the same as having full or correct knowledge, and survey results in particular could have been influenced by the Dunning-Kruger effect and individual personality factors. From the case studies, however, we can gain a fuller picture of educators’ knowledge, which was both self-reported and observed to be sufficient – and was attributed to previous professional and personal experiences. These themes will be further discussed in subsequent sections, first through an exploration of the types of knowledge that case study educators held and then through an examination of how educators acquired knowledge relevant to teaching refugee pupils.

#### **4.2 What types of knowledge do educators have?**

This section utilises data from the case studies to offer a more detailed exploration of *how* or *in what ways* educators were knowledgeable about teaching refugee pupils.

Following Shulman (1987), educator knowledge is broad, encompassing a range of categories from specific subject knowledge to knowledge about the purpose of education more generally. In this section, I reference Shulman's categories of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of educational contexts as guides. Furthermore, the concept of a 'holistic model' of refugee education is used to organise this knowledge by topic, including knowledge about language and academic instruction as well as how to provide a welcoming environment and support socio-emotional well-being (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Block et al., 2014b; McIntyre & Abrams, 2021; Taylor & Kaur Sidhu, 2012). Educators at Altford and Belloway had a range of types of knowledge relevant to teaching refugee pupils that reflected this holistic model – from EAL pedagogy to pastoral care knowledge to information about additional funding sources to help maintain their provisions. Notably, however, educators overwhelmingly focused on the importance of EAL knowledge in interviews, while other areas of knowledge could be observed in their practices.

#### *4.2.1 EAL pedagogy: theory and techniques*

When asked about their knowledge relevant to teaching refugee pupils, case study educators' default was to speak about the techniques they knew for working with EAL learners. Kasia, for example, explained how when new pupils arrived with little English, she created bilingual displays and organised support with the class TA to teach some language. Secondary subject teacher Don noted that it was important to explain concepts in different ways, using pictures and animations along with words 'so they have multiple ways of understanding it, or maybe one of them makes sense or maybe they can put all three together to make a clear picture'. Several educators at Belloway mentioned the electronic resource drive created and maintained by Safiya, where they could access

information and example activities for both beginner and intermediate EAL pupils that she had sourced over the years – from the Bell Foundation, British Council Nexus, National Association for Language Development in the Classroom, Twinkl, and the local authority EAL advisors before they were phased out. This provided class educators with concrete ideas and resources without stretching Safiya too thin in her role as EAL coordinator; she was known for replying to enquiries with, ‘look on The Drive!’

At Altford, the hub of EAL pedagogical knowledge was the EAL department, and particularly its leader, Margaret. Consistent with her three decades of experience, Margaret was seen by other educators as a fountain of EAL knowledge. My observations suggest that she constantly accessed content knowledge about languages and operationalised pedagogical content knowledge about language learning throughout the workday. In lessons with beginners, she frequently deciphered pupils’ attempts to spell that had left me flummoxed. She regularly predicted and pre-empted potential errors – such as using both a proper noun and pronoun in one sentence: ‘Sara she is...’ Furthermore, with me in the room she sometimes reflected on differences between US and British English that I had never noticed – such as phrasing a question as ‘Do you have?’ versus ‘Have you got?’ The breadth of Margaret’s knowledge was particularly helpful given the heterogeneous group of EAL learners attending the school. At the time of my visit, the EAL department was supporting learners ranging from two pupils with no previous schooling or literacy in any language to an A-level pupil who was managing the content of the English curriculum but needed some ‘tidying up’ with the grammar in her essays.

While educators at both case study schools counted on their EAL specialist colleagues for information and support, they also saw it as their responsibility to know about best practice for EAL. At Altford, where 40% of pupils did not have English as a first language, subject teacher Catherine said, ‘It’s an expectation that we all teach EAL students. It’s not English educators, it’s not the EAL department, it’s all of our

responsibility to integrate students and to educate them.’ At Belloway, class educators were EAL educators by default, since there was no separate EAL department or staff. New arrivals were immediately placed in a mainstream class appropriate to their age; thus, it was up to the class educators to meet their learning needs, including basic English language skills. Belloway also had a high proportion (48%) of pupils who did not have English as a first language. Educators there were constantly aware of issues faced by EAL learners and exhibited both content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge related to language learning. In Year 2, for example, Safiya explained to her phonics group that the English ‘ir’ sound might be tricky for a lot of them since in other languages ‘r’ is more clearly pronounced – even rolled. In Year 5, Kasia frequently had the class repeat new vocabulary in different voices – whispering, shouting, like an opera singer, etc – in order to reinforce pronunciation, and act out the words to understand their meaning.

In addition to EAL teaching techniques, a few educators – usually those with additional EAL or TESOL training – also referred to principles of language learning theory and how this affected their practice, reflecting a higher level of content knowledge related to language learning. Fiona, an EAL teacher at Alford, took time in her interview to explain the difference between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), and related these to her expectations for pupils at various levels in both EAL and mainstream classrooms. Similarly, Safiya mentioned BICS and CALP as concepts she knew from a TESOL course, and that she shared this knowledge with other educators through ‘The Drive’ and personal communication. Other educators mentioned a ‘silent period’ or ‘silent phase’ that they knew was important to allow new pupils to experience without forcing them to speak.

For senior leaders, EAL content knowledge played an important role in making decisions about provision for newly arrived refugee pupils. Ruth, the inclusion manager at Belloway, described how the school differentiated between language learning needs and

special educational needs (SEN). She said they provided some children who were new to English, especially those who arrived in the older grades, with small group interventions, ‘to make sure they reach their potential, because we have got children that are very able... but because of their lack of English may not have reached their age appropriate expectations’. In contrast, if a pupil did not make good progress, even with intervention, Ruth and the class teacher would sit down and try to disentangle potential SEN from EAL. Ruth was aware that this was a difficult task, and clear that they wanted to avoid conflating EAL with SEN. Before considering the pupil for SEN assessment, they first compared the pupil’s progress with other children who had spent a similar length of time in the country. Additionally, in some cases they had school staff translate various SEN assessments to ensure the results were not confounded by pupils’ low English language levels. Thus, content knowledge about EAL had tangible effects for refugee and other newly arrived pupils at Belloway in terms of the appropriateness of provision they accessed.

#### 4.2.2 Pastoral care: knowledge about trauma

Although the theme of EAL knowledge was by far most prominent, case study educators also had knowledge regarding pastoral care – but with a clear split in terms of data type. In my observations, educators frequently displayed a high level of care for refugee pupils’ well-being, as described in Chapter 6. Conversely, in interviews they spoke only about EAL pedagogy as being relevant to refugees unless asked if there was anything besides EAL to consider, or specifically asked about trauma pedagogy or interactions with social services. The following will detail knowledge educators did have about issues related to pastoral care with refugee pupils as well as exploring some of the reasons this area of knowledge may not have been as emphasised by educators in conversations and interviews.

When asked if they changed anything about their practice with refugee pupils – as opposed to other pupils with EAL – a few educators said they changed nothing.<sup>10</sup> Most, however, said they monitored the content of lessons and whether it could trigger past trauma in refugee pupils. For a primary educator, this meant considering whether to use a picture book about the Holocaust as a reading activity. For a history educator, this meant keeping tabs on the numerous times that violence occurred in the GCSE curriculum. For an English educator, it meant thinking about how to make the topic ‘War Poetry’ engaging without upsetting some pupils. In most cases, educators continued with the curriculum and resources as usual – the history educator pointed out she had little choice, given how humans have behaved over time. Instead of changing course, educators said they tended to speak with individuals before starting a topic, to make the pupils aware of what the lessons would include and to give them the option to not participate if they preferred.

Educators also reported that pupils rarely opted out of potentially upsetting lessons. Without speaking to the young people involved it is impossible to know why this was the case, for example whether they did not consider the given topic traumatic, or whether they found the act of leaving the classroom more upsetting – by being singled out – than staying. However, several educators gave examples of pupils staying in lessons and enhancing the experience for all involved, at times even sharing stories from their own lives. In the War Poetry lesson, for example, Shauna related how a boy from Syria spontaneously started telling his classmates what it was like to experience bombs exploding around him – at first to their incredulous laughter, then earnestly and sombrely. In this case, Shauna said it was actually a British boy whose father had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) who felt uncomfortable and excused himself. In history lessons, Simone said violence was

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<sup>10</sup> These educators taught subjects like maths and PE where the curriculum was less obviously likely to cover violent or upsetting topics.

unavoidable, but she aimed to regularly check in with vulnerable pupils – whether they were refugee background or not.

I kind of watch what's going on... I talk to the class if it's going to be a difficult topic, and then I'll touch base and say, are you ok? Just sort of touch base. And if I notice anything I will give space. I can't not do it because they've got to know it.

Thus, educators whose subject matter covered potentially upsetting topics were aware that refugee pupils – and others – may have experienced trauma and they made an effort to cushion the content rather than avoid it. However, while most educators mentioned potentially upsetting lesson content as a consideration, few spoke about ways trauma could affect pupils' behaviour more generally, with a notable absence of specificity regarding possible outcomes of trauma. Educators often said that they 'couldn't imagine' what some refugee pupils may have been through, but did not mention related issues such as how trauma can affect relationship formation or emotional regulation. The one exception was Margaret, who had been on a counselling course and said she would love to offer a short course to the whole staff at Alford that provided 'some sort of understanding of what trauma does to your brain and to your behaviour' – thus appearing to recognise this gap in other educators' content knowledge.

Besides Margaret, educators in this study had not received – or did not report receiving – training around trauma, and therefore did not necessarily have the foundation of knowledge required to even consider that pupils may have been struggling. When they explained how they monitored lesson content, they were not referencing any particular theory or evidence, but rather reflecting a 'common sense' desire to avoid upsetting pupils. In other areas of an educator's remit, basing practice in common sense knowledge would be viewed as unprofessional or even irresponsible. This is not a critique of the individual educators who participated in this study; rather, the gaps in their knowledge should be seen as a reflection of the educational system in which they were situated – its strengths, weaknesses, and priorities – a theme which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

#### *4.2.3 Pastoral care: knowledge about safeguarding and children's social care*

Knowledge about safeguarding and the children's social care system falls under Shulman's categories of content knowledge as well as knowledge of educational contexts, since it is related to the larger community in which the school is situated. Educators in this study said that their knowledge of safeguarding and the children's social care system was sometimes applicable – but not limited to – refugee pupils. Subject teacher Michael emphasised that whilst he paid attention to safeguarding concerns for refugees and was aware that they could be vulnerable, this was the same treatment he gave to any pupils in his classes who showed signs of needing extra support. Educators in Altford's EAL department – where several UASC pupils were enrolled in the sixth form programme – said that they were vigilant for potential safeguarding concerns for all their pupils, with perhaps an extra emphasis on UASC. Fiona noted that most of the UASC pupils lived 'alone' (in sheltered accommodation) rather than with foster families. This meant that 'if there was something I was worried about I would be quick to report that on'.

Knowledge of the children's social care system was variable between individual educators, consistent with their job responsibilities. Mainstream subject educators at Altford had little involvement in Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings for UASC pupils, for example, as this was the responsibility of the EAL educators and the pastoral care team. The EAL educators, consequently, had an intimate knowledge of the PEP process and critiqued its positive and negative aspects in detail – the benefits of setting goals for some pupils versus the futility of setting goals for pupils who lived in fear of imminent deportation, translators who did not turn up, and the variable power balance between educators and social workers. Margaret noted that even though difficulties could arise, 'social services as an organisation knows a lot about us and we know a lot about them.' She had worked with some individual social workers for more than a decade and

said everyone knew what to expect from each other. Subject teachers, on the other hand, had little knowledge about the social care system in relation to UASC and when asked about PEP meetings simply replied that they were not involved. (It is worth noting that most UASC at the school were enrolled in the EAL sixth form rather than mainstream, so it was not likely that they regularly interacted with subject teachers.)

#### 4.2.4 Knowledge about funding opportunities

Finally, in addition to knowledge about EAL pedagogy and pastoral care, an unexpected additional theme emerged from interviews at case study schools: knowledge about funding sources. This type of contextual knowledge – in Shulman’s words, ‘the governance and financing of school districts’ (1987, p. 8) – was seen as an important foundation to good practice. In order to create situations where educators were able to use their knowledge to educate refugee pupils, someone at the school needed knowledge of funding sources. At Alford, this person was Margaret. She explained how the school was able to fund the separate sixth form programme through a combination of Pupil Premium Plus money (£2300 per pupil annum for UASC age 16 and under, as they are in the care of the Local Authority) and a ‘bit of a windfall’ of Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) money (£3000 as a one-off payment) on top of the usual per pupil allotment. For refugee pupils in mainstream classes, the additional EAL provision was ‘basically an investment that the school has to make’ from its overall budget, although Fiona noted that when the first group of Syrian pupils arrived, they were able to temporarily hire a teacher to provide extra English lessons through the VPRS funding. The school also had connections with volunteer organisations that provided everything from counselling to gardening to school outings for pupils in the EAL sixth form, thus also supporting the budget of the EAL provision.

At Belloway, Ruth explained how they used the VPRS funding to send newly arrived children to art therapy classes. She had also applied through the VPRS for additional SEN funding of £1500 for one pupil who was not making progress with the usual provision. She noted, however, that this funding was only for Syrian refugees who came through the official programme and that other refugees and asylum seekers were simply subsumed under the normal school budget. Other school staff had knowledge of charitably funded organisations that allowed refugee pupils – and many others – at Belloway to access free extra-curricular activities. Safiya arranged for a university student volunteer programme to provide every newly arrived refugee pupil with 1:1 English tutoring in their homes as well as fully funded outings in the local area and TA Aaron had connections with an organisation that provided free martial arts lessons to children, and he signed up many of the refugee pupils at the school.

In sum, educators at Altford and Belloway had a range of types of knowledge relevant to teaching refugee pupils – although it was notable that they emphasised knowledge about teaching EAL in interviews. This divergence will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

### **4.3 Where do educators get their knowledge?**

As detailed above, educators had a range of different types of knowledge they could apply to teaching refugee pupils. But where did educators acquire this knowledge? Through formal or informal learning? INSET days or asking a colleague next door? The question of where and how educators obtain pedagogical knowledge is relevant in relation to refugee pupils but also valuable to those interested in educator learning, CPD, and the implementation of educational policy more generally. Educators in this study mainly acquired their knowledge about teaching refugee pupils through on-the-job experience – ranging from ‘just doing it’ in the words of one educator, to formal and informal collegial

support. Training courses played an important, though less emphasised role, as knowledge ‘trickled down’ from experienced staff who had attended sessions in the past.

#### *4.3.1 Survey results*

The survey asked educators, ‘Where do you currently get information that helps you teach refugee pupils?’ and gave a series of choices as well as an ‘other’ category. Participants could select as many options as they wanted, in the likely case that they used more than one source of information. After removing the most common response – ‘I do not currently teach refugee pupils’ (n=185, 62.7%) – the most common source of information selected by far was ‘colleagues and friends’ (n=72, 68.6%). This was followed by ‘online teacher networks’ (n=36, 34.3%), ‘training sessions by staff at school’ (n=28, 26.6%), ‘government guidance’ (n=27, 25.7%), and ‘non-governmental organisations’ (n=19, 18.1%). Outside training and information from professional organisations or unions had fewer responses (12.4% and 6.6% respectively). Furthermore, only one educator selected ‘Virtual school’ as a source of information, perhaps reflecting the fact that most UASC pupils attend a small handful of schools – but also suggesting that the local Virtual School’s document on supporting UASC was not being widely accessed. See **Table 6** below.

**Table 6: How do you currently get information that helps you teach refugee pupils?**

	<b>Knowledge source</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>
1	Colleagues and friends	72	68.6%
2	Online educator networks (e.g. TES, Guardian Educator Network)	36	32.7%
3	Training sessions by staff at school	28	26.6%
4	Government guidance (e.g. Ofsted, Department for Education)	27	25.7%
5	Non-governmental organisations (e.g. Red Cross, Refugee Council)	19	18.1%
6	Training sessions with the Local Authority or other outside organisations	13	12.4%
7	Other	12	11.4%
8	Professional associations or unions	7	6.6%
9	Virtual school	1	1.0%

*Percentages do not total 100 because respondents could select multiple options.*

These findings are consistent with previous literature on educator knowledge acquisition (Cooper et al., 2017) that found that asking a colleague was the most common strategy. It is also noteworthy that educators reported being more likely to receive training from other staff at school than training from the local authority or other outside bodies. Based on the results of this survey, it appears that educators are still receiving training but much of it is provided in-house – a potentially advantageous or disadvantageous situation, depending on the level of expertise a school has within their staff. However, nearly a third of educators reported using online teacher networks for guidance, which means even an educator at a small, rural school with no in-house expertise could potentially access information about good practice with refugee pupils.

#### *4.3.2 Case studies: formal training*

At the case study schools, most educators had received some sort of training in topics relevant to teaching refugee pupils, though it was not necessarily framed in relation

to refugees. Almost all of the training was internally sourced and at its hub had the highly skilled EAL leaders at each school.

At Alford, EAL head Margaret had extensive relevant training over her career including a Teaching English as a Foreign Language certificate, a Master's degree in linguistics, and a counselling course. Several educators named her as the source of in-school training they had received on EAL, including INSET days or EAL-themed staff meetings. The other EAL teachers, Eleanor and Fiona, also had EAL and TESOL training and supported educators across the school. Beyond EAL pedagogy, only a few educators besides Margaret said they had received training in issues specific to refugees. Eleanor, for example, said that since joining the school she had been on 'a couple of really useful courses, actually, about asylum seeking children and their needs and behaviours'. Subject teachers Michael and Syed noted that although the training they received through the school was not necessarily advertised as refugee-specific, much of it was refugee relevant – such as safeguarding, literacy, and mental health. Michael also said that on a school CPD day recently there had been a speaker who discussed the refugee experience locally and what types of issues families could be encountering outside of school. Presumably, other staff at Alford were present for at least some of the training sessions mentioned by Michael and Syed. The fact that they did not mention it could be due to it not being advertised as 'refugee training' and therefore they did not think of it when I asked. It could also reflect the value – or lack thereof – that they placed on training. Catherine, for example, told me, 'somebody somewhere will kill me for saying this – but I can't remember specific training' and then followed up with a detailed description of information sharing between colleagues and how much she had learned over the years through experience rather than training.

At Belloway, training was also mostly through the school and coordinated by the experienced EAL lead. Following the completion of her TESOL diploma, Safiya led staff training on EAL herself as well as bringing in one of the tutors from the university to run

CPD sessions. However, the school had undergone a number of changes recently, including some staff turnover, and Safiya noted that many current educators had not been at the school for these sessions. In one of the only exceptions to educators' emphasis on EAL knowledge, inclusion manager Ruth said that the school had secured government funding for all TAs who were interested to attend a Level 2 children's mental health course in the near future. She noted, however, that training related to refugee pupils was not currently at the top of the priority list:

There isn't a kind of training plan around EAL or our Syrian refugees, because they do very well. So often when you're planning a school's training, you're looking at where are the gaps and what do people need training in, and actually our EAL children do well.

Safiya also brought up the fact that children with EAL, including refugees, at Belloway were doing well but she argued that it was not a natural phenomenon and required plenty of hard work in the background. She listed the numerous programmes that newly arrived EAL children at the school were able to access, from home tutoring, to English lessons for mothers, to classroom activities that educators could access on the EAL resource drive. 'It's all embedded,' she said.

And maybe they don't know I go and check with the educators what's going on. Behind closed doors, let's put it like that. And to them when they look at the data, our EAL are actually better or working in line, so to them it's not a worry.

Thus, at Belloway, knowledge acquisition about EAL appeared to have transitioned from a formal CPD programme to embedded, as-needed support provided by Safiya. In the subsequent section, I will discuss this more informal type of educator learning, often based in collegial support.

#### *4.3.3 Case studies: knowledge acquired informally*

As with the surveyed schools, participant educators at case study schools said they often acquired knowledge relevant to teaching refugee pupils through informal means, most commonly conversations with colleagues. As detailed above, at Belloway, the EAL coordinator Safiya provided ‘embedded’ support to other educators. Aaron, the TA in Safiya’s class as well as the PE teacher across the school, confirmed that whenever he had a query about a pupil who was learning English – including refugees – he simply asked Safiya. Additionally, if it was an issue with a pupil in a different year group than his, for example in a PE lesson, he would ask both Safiya and the class teacher for information and ideas about how to move forward. Several other educators mentioned that when they needed support for EAL or cultural differences, they asked Safiya, who would provide assistance or direct them to the EAL resource drive.

At Altford, the EAL educators regularly supported mainstream educators with language teaching techniques, both in a more formalised ‘learning walk’ format and informally, when educators approached them. Eleanor noted that a limiting factor of this system was that some educators were more open to support than others, and therefore sought it out more than others. The EAL staff were therefore continually ‘try(ing) to get the message out’ that they were there to help. Eleanor had decades of experience teaching English language but had only started teaching refugee pupils a few years previously, when starting at Altford. She said that although this meant she was learning a lot on the job, she could count on Margaret for support: ‘She’s got so much experience of it. And I feel that, you know, I would always default to that’. Similarly, Fiona said that she did not have ‘formal qualifications’ specific to teaching refugees but that she had learned extensively from Margaret and another supervisor who was on leave: ‘I’d say over the last three years I’ve learned huge amounts from them about things that work, things that don’t work, things

to be aware of, assumptions not to make, you know, that kind of way, so I feel relatively confident.’ Several mainstream educators across the school also referenced Margaret’s willingness and helpfulness – and indeed the whole of the EAL department staff – when providing ad-hoc, informal support.

In sum, although formal training played a role in preparing educators to work with refugee pupils, the dissemination of knowledge from this training often occurred in a ‘trickle down’ fashion through interactions with colleagues and through in-house training conducted by school staff. In the two case study schools, systems of informal knowledge transfer appeared to be functioning well, suggesting that it is possible for schools to carry out their own programmes of CPD and support without higher, centralised coordination – if trained, experienced colleagues are present, and if educators feel comfortable asking for support.

#### **4.4 Knowledge about specific pupils**

When I set out to ask educators about their knowledge about the education of refugee pupils, I conceptualised knowledge as only content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. I wanted to know what educators knew about guidelines and strategies for best practice in a general sense, for any refugee pupil. In part, this is the sort of information that educators gave. However, across both the survey and case study data, an unexpected theme arose about the importance of *specific* knowledge about *individual* pupils – or what Shulman categorises as ‘knowledge about learners and their characteristics’ (1987, p.8). Repeatedly, educators emphasised that the knowledge they needed to teach refugee pupils well was information about an individual’s background, such as education history, languages spoken, cultural background, and relevant life experiences. This is consistent with literature calling for recognition of the heterogeneity of refugee pupils – that although they may share some common features, refugee young

people may also have wildly different backgrounds, needs, and strengths (Block et al., 2014b; Naidoo, 2015).

#### *4.4.1 Identification of refugee pupils*

Perhaps the most basic piece of information about a refugee pupil is the fact that they have arrived in the country as a refugee or asylum seeker. Immigration status is not, however, regularly collected or recorded by schools in England. In this study, educators at some schools reported that refugee pupils were clearly identified whilst educators at other schools said that they were not. This suggests that the decision to ask about and record immigration status is the choice of individual schools, and that schools vary in their opinions on the matter, or perhaps simply in the time they feel they can dedicate to the issue.

The questionnaire for this project included two complete-the-sentence questions: 'At our school, refugee and asylum seeking pupils \_\_\_\_\_' and 'In my classes, refugee and asylum seeking pupils \_\_\_\_\_'. Although these questions were intended to measure educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils, a large number of responses dealt with the issue of identification. Two responses dealt with school staff 'being aware' and therefore planning specially for refugee pupils. In contrast, there were 16 responses on the theme of refugee pupils being 'difficult to identify', 'well hidden', 'not indicated', and 'not always highlighted as being so'. It is noteworthy both that educators chose to answer such an open question with information about identification, and that the majority of these responses were regarding non-identification. Since the questions came near the start of the questionnaire, it is possible that educators used the opportunity to say they were not sure who was a refugee because they thought it was important contextual information for their subsequent responses. Alternatively, this could simply be the most obvious thing to say

given the situation; if you do not know who the refugee pupils are, what else are you going to say about them?

At the case study schools, in contrast, educators largely reported knowing who the refugee pupils were due to systems in place at a school level. This is likely due to the fact that Altford and Belloway had larger refugee populations than most schools in the surrounding area, so it had become a phenomenon worth paying attention to and creating systems around. At Altford, educators were particularly aware of UASC because they were also looked after by children's social services and therefore had additional associated planning and recording like PEPs, as well as Pupil Premium Plus funding which needed to be allocated and reported on. The EAL department staff carried out an assessment with all new EAL arrivals and as part of this assessment asked the families or pupils themselves whether they were refugees or asylum seekers. This information was included on a pupil's file on 'The System', a school-wide intranet which several educators referenced as the source of their information about individual pupils. Some mainstream educators said they already knew who was a refugee, whilst others said if they thought it was relevant, and if they had not already heard through word of mouth, they knew they could go look it up.

Educators at both case study schools were aware of pupils who arrived through the VPRS because they came to their first meetings at the schools with a case worker and translator. Additionally, they came with a one-off government payment that could be used as the school saw fit to manage their transition. (Unlike the Pupil Premium funding, this money does not require any form of reporting on how it is used.) At Belloway, many educators said they could easily identify Syrian refugees due to case worker involvement, and that the school informed them anyway. However, Safiya – who spoke Arabic and did a large amount of informal translation and advising for Arabic-speaking parents – said the school had gaps in its identification procedures outside of the VPRS. She pointed out the cases of Iraqi and Sudanese children who no one had realised were refugees or asylum

seekers until she had chatted with the parents at drop-off and pick-up. Because they did not arrive ‘with lots of things happening around them... they are hidden’. This was confirmed by the fact that the other educators at Belloway said the way they knew if a child was a refugee was if they arrived with a caseworker – meaning they were equating ‘refugee’ with ‘Syrian refugee on VPRS’.

In a similar vein, at Altford, Margaret noted that it was crucial not to make assumptions about refugee or asylum seeker status based on a pupil’s country of origin: ‘We have to ask because we get some surprising ones. We get the occasional asylum seeker from countries you wouldn’t expect, like Bangladesh for example.’ She also suspected that even though the school asked families directly whether they were refugees or asylum seekers, there were some families who withheld the information due to perceived stigma, and this would always be a limiting factor in terms of identifying refugee pupils.

#### *4.4.2 Survey responses: different conceptualisations of ‘knowledge’*

In the survey, educators were asked whether they thought they needed more knowledge to teach refugee pupils effectively, followed by an open-box response: ‘Why / why not?’ As the survey results started rolling in, it quickly became clear that many educators had conceptualised knowledge differently than assumed in the questionnaire creation – as knowledge about individual pupils rather than general pedagogical knowledge. When the reasons were sorted into categories, wanting information about individual pupils’ backgrounds (n=44) was second only to wanting training in pastoral care (n=48). These responses came both from educators with experience teaching refugee pupils and educators without experience. For example, one educator critiqued the current situation at their school: ‘It’s a question of knowing what they have studied previously. Usually you aren’t given this information.’ Meanwhile, most responses suggested a

hypothetical future situation: ‘Maybe knowing more about their educational background alongside personal circumstances they have been through’ and ‘Would need to know their individual story to be able to teach / avoid something in class effectively.’ This suggests that for many educators, knowing about *individuals* takes precedence – or at least equal standing with – general pedagogical knowledge. On a practical, day-to-day level, this knowledge also matters, and is knowledge that educators worried they would not have access to if a refugee pupil arrived in their class.

#### *4.4.3 Case studies: getting to know the individual*

At Altford and Belloway, educators also emphasised the importance of knowing individual pupils – their strengths, needs, and relevant personal background information. As a primary school, Belloway had a more overtly straightforward job with fewer overall pupils and groups of pupils in stable classes with only one or two educators across the school week. Indeed, inclusion manager Ruth complimented the school staff on the relationships they built with individual pupils. Especially because it was a very multicultural school, she said, ‘staff are well practised in adapting and personalising and getting to know each child individually.’ My observations and interviews with educators suggest that this was indeed the case. Kasia, for example, reflected on how as more pupils from Syria arrived, she had become aware that ‘every refugee child is different’ and that a child from a small village in Syria had entirely different strengths and needs to a child from a big city in Syria. Spending a few weeks in Kasia’s class made it clear that she knew every pupil well, from their maths level to their self-esteem level to the names and habits of their brothers and sisters. In another example, Habibah, the Arabic-speaking TA, related how she adapted her support depending on the needs and personality of each pupil. Recently, she started two new arrivals on similar levels of support but soon realised that one pupil

was fiercely independent and wanted to work through most tasks himself, so she stepped back.

For Altford, it would seem that getting to know each pupil individually would have been more difficult, since it was a secondary school and pupils changed educators each lesson. However, perhaps precisely because the task was more difficult, educators at Altford were more likely to speak about the importance of knowledge about individuals. Frequently, when I asked about refugee pupils generally, educators responded that the population was so heterogeneous it was impossible to make a definitive statement. As Don put it, ‘I mean, they’re really such a broad category, aren’t they?’ Along with several other educators, he noted that the refugee pupils he had taught had different ‘starting points’ in terms of prior education and experience, and therefore faced different challenges. Simone suggested that language acquisition was key to academic success, and that it was often linked with educational background:

I’ve seen a large number do really well. A lot of it is about how quickly they can assimilate the language. And also, it depends a lot on how much education they’ve had before. Not everyone arrives with much education from home, in their home language. And therefore, you can have multiple problems. But I’ve seen a number of really good successes.

In addition to prior education and experience, Catherine highlighted the role of differing personalities to a refugee, or anyone’s, learning. Just as ‘we have native English speakers who are not as sociable as others,’ some refugee pupils ‘pick up language and culture and conversational skills and social skills’ quickly, due to their outgoing personalities, whilst ‘others don’t’. Overall, educators emphasised that although grouping pupils by different categories – such as EAL or refugee – was useful, it was best to know each pupil as an individual. As Shauna put it, ‘there are so many personal things to do with each child that it [being a refugee] is just another thing.’

Thus, educators at Altford, like Belloway, held the ideal that they should know relevant personal information about each of their pupils. But in practice, how possible was it – say for a subject teacher with dozens of pupils per day and certainly over 100 pupils per week? In my observations, the degree to which educators at Altford knew their pupils varied. Educators in the EAL sixth form, for example, interacted with the same 20-odd pupils several times per day and often referred to their hobbies, interests, and habits during lessons. Some subject teachers appeared to have similar individual knowledge of their pupils despite having up to five different classes per day. One subject teacher, though in the minority, did not necessarily remember all their pupils' names. Thus, it appeared to be possible, if not a foregone conclusion, that secondary educators could know their individual pupils well. Furthermore, educators repeatedly stated that if they wanted to know more about an individual pupil, they looked on 'The System' or asked EAL or pastoral team colleagues and the information was forthcoming.

In sum, educators across both surveyed and case study schools emphasised the importance of having knowledge about individual refugee pupils, in addition to relevant pedagogical knowledge. Educators with experience teaching refugee pupils stressed how helpful it had been for them to know each pupil individually and educators with no experience teaching refugee pupils hypothesised that it would be essential if they did. The case study schools had systems for identifying who was a refugee or asylum seeker – though these systems were capable of missing some individuals. Although it was an ideal that could not always be met, educators aimed to know each of their individual pupils well – refugee and non-refugee. The challenges involved with providing individually tailored provision will be further discussed in subsequent chapters.

## 4.5 Conclusion

Across the survey and case study data, knowledge about the education of refugee pupils was both variable and associated with previous experience. Educators with more experience teaching refugees or pupils with EAL or with experience as immigrants themselves reported feeling more prepared to teach refugees, had knowledge across a wider range of relevant topics, and were observed to use this knowledge in their practices. However, educators who participated in the survey often had less – or no – experience teaching refugees and expressed a clear desire for more training in the area. Furthermore, educators who did teach refugee pupils reported colleagues as their main sources of relevant knowledge, whether through informal conversation or more formal but in-house training. Thus, the main findings of this portion of the study support a multi-directional KAP model of educator learning where educators’ experiences – including their practices – shape their knowledge as much as their knowledge shapes their practices.

While this chapter does succeed in addressing the question of what educators know about refugee pupils and where they get this knowledge, it also succeeds in raising further questions regarding definitions of knowledge and what types of knowledge are most relevant to teaching practice. In defining knowledge as content or pedagogical knowledge – consistent with most education research – this study glossed over the type of knowledge many educators said they found important – specific knowledge about individual pupils. This meant opportunities were lost to explore a type of knowledge educators highlighted and raises larger questions about who should define the content and concepts of education research: the researchers or the educators?

Overall, however, the clear message from this portion of the study was that educators’ knowledge was strongly related to experience. Knowledge shapes practices, but

experiences – including practices – also shape educators’ knowledge. In the following chapter, the critical role of educators’ attitudes will be examined.

## **CHAPTER 5: EDUCATORS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGEE PUPILS**

*RQ2: What are educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils and how are these attitudes formed?*

The preceding chapter illustrates how educators' knowledge interacts with practices in the teaching of refugee pupils. Namely, educators' knowledge was found to be variable across individuals and to be influenced by prior experience. When it comes to effective teaching practices, however, knowledge is necessary but not sufficient. As illustrated in the literature review in Chapter 2, educators' attitudes towards pupils – their perceptions, beliefs, and affective states – are influential contributors to educators' practices and are particularly relevant to refugee pupils in terms of creating a welcoming school environment and supporting socio-emotional well-being. In this chapter, I describe educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils and explore how these attitudes may have been formed in the context of the KAP framework. I argue that educators' attitudes in this study were – though complex – overall more positive than the general population. The main factor associated with these positive attitudes was exposure to refugee pupils, and pupils with similar characteristics.

This chapter once again draws on both survey and case study data, organised broadly into three sections: 1) self-reported magnitude of educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils, 2) thematic content of educators' attitudes, and 3) how these attitudes were formed. In the first section, I present the magnitude of educators' attitudes measured quantitatively by the survey. This is followed by a discussion of the content that comprised educators' attitudes, based on qualitative data from the case studies and survey. In the final

section, I examine educator characteristics associated with more positive attitudes towards refugee pupils, and explore how school-level and individual-level factors may have shaped attitudes.

### **5.1 Educators' attitudes: magnitude**

Educators showed positive attitudes towards refugees through their responses to an attitude thermometer measure on the county-wide survey. Participant educators were asked to appraise their feelings towards refugee pupils at their school – hypothetically if none were present – on a thermometer graphic with a 0-10 scale, with 0 being ‘very unfavourable’ and 10 being ‘very favourable’. A similar thermometer scale (0-100 instead of 0-10) has been used in previous studies to measure participants’ attitudes towards various outgroups, including refugees, but this was the first time, to my knowledge, that it has been used to measure educators’ attitudes towards pupils. In this study, educators’ mean thermometer score for feelings towards refugees at their school was 8.62 (SD=1.73). Previous studies have found lower thermometer scores. Louis et al. (2013), for example, found a mean of 6.86 (SD=1.72)<sup>11</sup> across a sample of Canadian and Australian undergraduate students. Schweitzer et al. (2005) do not report mean thermometer scores, but found that more than half (59.8%) of their sample marked negative ‘temperatures’ about asylum seekers – ie. below 50 on a 0-100 scale.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, by the thermometer measure, educators’ attitudes were found to be more positive than previous studies. Key differences exist in the study samples (educators versus

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<sup>11</sup> Results have been divided by 10 to translate between a 100 point and 10 point scale, so a mean of 68.61 is now 6.86. Scores have also been reversed to reflect a higher number meaning a more positive, rather than more negative, attitude.

<sup>12</sup> Results have again been reversed so that a higher number means a more positive, rather than more negative, attitude.

university students) and study subjects (refugee pupils versus refugees or asylum seekers more generally); the implications of these differences will be discussed in Chapter 7.

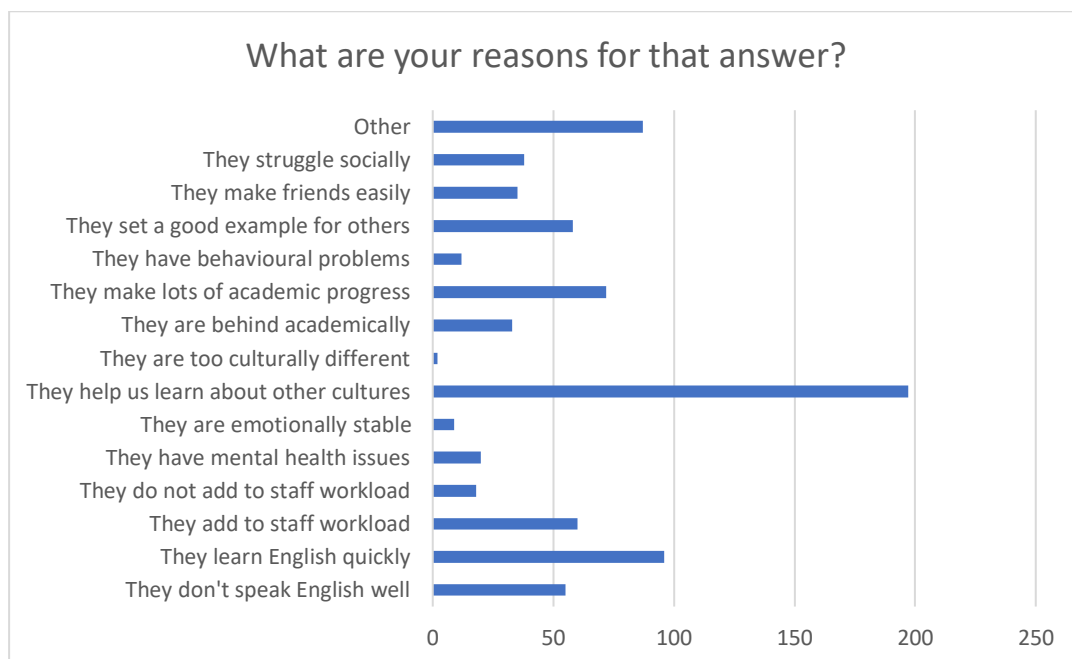
## **5.2 Educators' attitudes: thematic content**

Knowing that educators in this study reported positive attitudes towards refugee pupils on a numeric scale is a useful foundation but lacks the level of detail required to understand their attitudes in a more nuanced manner. The thermometer measure tells us about the valence and magnitude of attitudes on a broad level, creating a frame on which to hang the more complex, specific details of educators' actions and explanations. In the following, I explore *why* or *in what ways* educators held their attitudes towards refugee pupils, drawn from qualitative survey and case study data and organised thematically. Overall, the findings complement the attitude thermometer scores; educators were mainly positive about refugee pupils at their schools, with some exceptions or caveats – conceptually similar, perhaps, to an average of 8.62 on a 0-10 scale. Finally, it is important to note that whilst this section mixes data from the survey and case studies, the survey sample and case study sample had key differences. Surveyed educators had a wide range of experience levels with refugee pupils, with many having no previous experience at all with refugees (n=141, 49.5%) or only a little experience (n=109, 38.2%); therefore, their responses to how they felt about refugees in their classrooms were hypothetical. In contrast, case study educators had between 2 and 30+ years of experience teaching refugees, so their responses were based in relevant experience. Overall, however, there was a convergence of attitudinal content between the two samples, with similar themes arising in both.

### 5.2.1 *Cultural diversity: 'The more we integrate... the better a society we can become'*

Following the thermometer measure, surveyed educators were asked to explain why they had given that score. As illustrated below in **Figure 8** (and in Table 4, Appendix D), by far the most common reason given was 'they help us learn about different cultures'. In open-ended response sections, comments such as 'it really contributes to the richness of the environment' and 'they've got languages and cultures that enrich the experience of students in the classroom' were common, as well as comments referencing the 'nice atmosphere' resulting from a multicultural school. Moreover, when the 87 responses for 'other' were analysed thematically, nine had to do with refugee pupils being good for the school community by exposing it to diversity. 'I believe that it is good for children to meet others who have had a different experience of life than their own (life experiences, culturally),' wrote one educator. 'We live in a market town which is less culturally diverse than other areas of modern UK.'

**Figure 8: Reasons given for attitude thermometer scores**



*Total is more than 295 responses because educators could select multiple options.*

These endorsements of cultural diversity are unsurprising, perhaps, given that multiculturalism has been promoted for many decades – under various banners and with varying levels of government support – as a value within the English education system (Modood & May, 2001; Tomlinson, 2009). But what, precisely, was it about cultural diversity that educators thought contributed to a ‘nice’ or ‘rich’ school environment? Data from the case studies provides a more detailed explanation.

First, at the case study schools, cultural diversity was framed as enjoyable and entertaining. Nearly every educator at Belloway, as well as numerous children, brought their ‘International Evening’ event to my attention in interview or conversation. Once per year, school families originating from outside the UK were invited to bring in food, clothing, music, or other cultural practices to share. The one-off annual nature of this event could be critiqued as an example of superficial, compartmentalised multiculturalism. However, it is also worth noting that according to Belloway educators, International Evening was one of the best-loved and best-attended events of the school year, enjoyed by ‘international’ and British families alike. Photographs on display in the school corridor portrayed a packed school hall full of colourful traditional clothing, tables heaped with food, and children and adults crowded around the presenters to see – and taste – their offerings.

Besides being fun, having diverse cultures at school was frequently framed as educational. Several educators made the case that having a multicultural student body was not just a passive co-existence of different cultures, but an active process of intercultural learning. While this study did not aim to assess the extent to which intercultural education was indeed taking place in schools, the theme of learning from and about people of different cultures was prominent across the qualitative data. One educator at Belloway, for example, told me she always made a point of inviting parents from war-torn countries to

participate in International Evening, to give people the opportunity to develop positive connotations about countries such as Syria, Somalia, and Iraq that were often only associated with violence. At Altford, an English teacher said that having pupils from different cultures write poetry had exposed pupils and staff to ‘different ways of expressing things and an awareness of different cultural expectations and art’. Finally, a TA at Belloway said he found it interesting to learn about his own cultural norms through seeing how British families and immigrant families interacted in different ways when dropping off and picking up their children from school.

Within the theme of cultural diversity being educational, several educators emphasised the particular role of language and the benefits of a multilingual environment. As Safiya noted, ‘it helps us to learn other languages. I’m not joking, it does’. Indeed, in my observations, Safiya – who was herself multilingual – commented to her Year 2s on differences between English and other languages present in the class, encouraged children to share words translated into their home languages, and frequently told them how wonderful it was to know and learn multiple languages. Higher up the school, I found Year 5s spoke proudly about the languages they knew – once to the point that a monolingual English-speaker felt left out and announced that one of her parents was American, which was ‘kind of another language’. In a group interview, other Year 5s said they liked learning words and phrases from each other in different languages. A particular hit was a classmate who taught them that in German ‘father’ was ‘Vater’, which sounded suspiciously like a bodily function. (‘I’m going to be a farter when I grow up!’) On a more fundamental, though perhaps less humorous level, Margaret argued that having a large proportion of EAL learners at Altford benefited everyone because of the attention that had to be paid to language in general: ‘We have such a mixture of people from so many different countries, refugee and non-refugee. And that’s very positive because it makes language at the forefront in a school... and that’s interesting for everybody.’

Finally, cultural diversity was seen as beneficial by making pupils more open and tolerant of people different from themselves in general. Catherine argued that Altford was ‘just a little bit more tolerant of different people’ due to the diversity of the school community. ‘It’s something you can celebrate rather than always angsty about – how are we going to integrate this, or how are we going to do that? It’s just this is who we are and we have to get on with it.’ She thought that the high cultural diversity at the school made it easier to be open and accommodating to other differences, such as the visual impairment of a few pupils. In a similar vein, Simone said that the more diverse a school, the better for the development of all concerned:

For our kids, the more we integrate and have a very diverse – not just refugees and EAL but different religions, etcetera, and different sexual persuasions, everything – that it’s integrated, the more evolved a thinking group we are, and a better society we can become as a school.

One survey educator extended this concept beyond the school to society more broadly: ‘Come visit our school and meet our refugee / asylum seekers. If the rest of our community spent time with these children they would learn a lot from them and there would be less hate in the world.’ While this last statement in particular may seem hyperbolic, the idea that exposure to people different from ourselves can make us more tolerant of different people in general does have empirical backing in studies of intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew et al., 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008) – a concept that will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

### 5.2.2 *‘Our children are really more conscious citizens’*

In a related vein, educators frequently expressed that having refugee pupils at their schools was a benefit to the whole school’s awareness of global events and the effects these events can have on individuals. At case study schools, several educators gave examples of

how the presence of refugees had enhanced curriculum material, either directly – through comments made by the refugee pupils – or indirectly – by piquing interest in a topic or formerly obscure region of the world. At Belloway, Kasia noted that the influx of pupils from Syria had inspired curiosity among her pupils and that they now knew much more about the country than if it had just been ‘something they heard about on Newsround’. Similarly, Margaret related a story from years past when a geography class took their topic on the Rwandan genocide far more seriously due to their Rwandan classmate’s presence, even though the individual never spoke about his experiences:

The teacher was very scrupulous about not using him in the lessons, like look at him he’s been through this or asking him questions directly. But the students knew where he was from and the teacher said he felt that was very instructive... Instead of just being a situation in a textbook, it was a situation that had brought that boy to their class.

Educators also relayed how encountering refugee pupils made other pupils better citizens on a more local level. As one survey educator related: ‘It is good for us to help people who are in distress. It brings out kindness and caring’. Upon arrival, some refugee pupils behaved in ways contrary to school norms. While this was sometimes framed as a strain on tight resources, several educators also framed it as a learning opportunity for the rest of the class. A Reception class at Belloway, for example, received a new Syrian pupil mid-year who had never been away from his parents. His educator, Palesa, related how the new pupil’s behaviour had intrigued another pupil, Jayden, who had a reputation for ‘nightmare’ behaviour:

When Eisa came in, kicking and screaming and doing what Eisa was doing, Jayden was like, oh can I help him? He really just grew up that day and was like ‘I need to help him’. And he reined himself in, that was the beginning almost of his change, having to see someone else so distressed.

In my observations, a handful of other children in the same class had taken Eisa – who now entered the classroom with a smile – under their wing, in Palesa’s words to

‘basically mother him’. They frequently saved him a seat on the carpet and asked him to join their activities. Once, when Palesa ducked out the door to see if it was raining too much to go outside, Eisa became anxious and the girl next to him patted him on the shoulder and said, ‘Don’t worry, she’s coming back’.

Many educators also commented on how the presence of refugee pupils at their schools made them feel more appreciative of their own life situations and speculated that this could be the case for their non-refugee pupils as well. One case study educator said he thought interacting with newly arrived refugee pupils was ‘helping us appreciate, actually, what we have here’. Similarly, a survey educator at a village school without any refugee pupils thought that refugee pupils enrolling would be a benefit as it would be ‘good for children to know how different life can be when not in [relatively wealthy village]’. However, this study did not investigate pupils’ feelings of gratitude so it is unclear whether these sentiments were simply a projection of educators’ feelings, wishful thinking on the part of educators, or an actual increase in life appreciation among pupils. Simone, an educator at Alford, raised this very issue, commenting that while for her, interacting with refugee pupils ‘brings a great humility’, she did not assume this was the case for pupils and thought the school ‘could harness that more,’ emphasising to pupils that ‘not everyone has it so easy’.

### 5.2.3 *Refugees are resilient*

A prominent tension in the literature on young refugees is the foregrounding of risk versus resilience lenses, that is, should we focus on the needs of refugees or their strengths (Pieloch et al., 2016)? In this study, educators – particularly those with experience teaching refugees at the case study schools – frequently referred to refugee pupils as resilient and as in the process of overcoming adversity. They appeared driven to present refugee pupils

in a positive light and to emphasise the progress they had made rather than any difficulties they still encountered.

At Altford, educators often described the notable progress individual refugee pupils had made since arriving at school. Catherine, for example, noted that decades of teaching newly arrived pupils made her confident they would make progress, whether in a predictable linear fashion or a sudden ‘quantum leap’. Similarly, Shauna said that progress for new arrivals was ‘more noticeable because often they come with very little English, so it’s easier to track their progress because it’s so huge.’ There is a question as to what extent this emphasis on progress could be coloured by the desire to project positive, socially desirable attitudes or to present oneself and one’s school as competent. However, my observations largely concurred with the picture educators presented. Many of the refugee pupils were indeed ‘doing well’ – engaged with lessons and appearing socio-emotionally content – and in some cases where pupils arrived at the school during my time there, I was able to observe ‘quantum leap’ progress over the course of a few weeks. In the eight weeks that I spent at Altford, for example, four new pupils – three of whom were UASC – arrived into the beginner EAL sixth form, growing the cohort from nine to thirteen. Over the course of a few weeks, I watched as the new arrivals became socially integrated into the class, moving from sitting quietly by themselves to smiling and interacting with other pupils, whilst their spoken and written English developed daily. In one striking example, a pupil who a few weeks previously did not know the Latin alphabet – and had no literacy in his spoken languages – was able to listen to me say a series of letter names and print them clearly in order to write words and sentences. In an example of more long-term change, a pupil I knew from my school of employment had previously been silent and withdrawn but now – a year and a half later – eagerly contributed in lessons and was constantly chatting with a table partner.

At Belloway, multiple staff would sometimes describe the same ‘success story’ refugee pupils without me asking, for example over lunch in the staff room. There was Waafa in Year 5, who had only been in the country a little over a year and was becoming one of the more creative, skilled writers in the school. Then there was Eisa in Reception, who had stopped crying at drop-off and Aisha in Year 6, who had become smiley and sociable recently. In many cases, the staff relaying these anecdotes were not directly involved with the pupil in question; it was more as though they were passing along commonly accepted good news that reinforced their image as a welcoming and successful institution. The ‘success story’ children’s own educators emphasised their resilience and progress in more specific detail: how Eisa had spent weeks spitting, kicking, and running away before settling into classroom routines, how Waafa had hardly spoken for months and now invented compound English words like ‘vexacious’ for her stories. In Year 2, both the class teacher and TA repeatedly mentioned the transformation of Shelan, who upon arrival the previous year had spent months crying, not speaking and avoiding other children. At the time of my visit, Shelan cheerfully interacted with her peers and was quickly catching up to age related expectation for the National Curriculum.

Even when a refugee at Belloway clearly did not present as a ‘success story’ poster child, staff often framed their actions in terms of resilience and progress. Another Year 5 pupil from Syria, Nadir, probably had the ‘worst’ behaviour of any refugee pupil I observed across the project, showing a general disinterest in lesson content and school rules that while not overly distracting or dangerous did frustrate staff across the school. Then he was cast as a lead in the school play. Despite some delays in learning his lines, he pulled off the role by all accounts magnificently, and the staff room was abuzz with praise for how hard he had worked, what talent he had, and how much he had overcome. The educators at Belloway wanted even their most difficult refugee pupil to be a success story

and appeared to revel in the progress he had recently made – even though he was still in trouble for lining up sloppily, being unfocused in lessons, and fighting on the playground.

#### *5.2.4 Trauma, behaviour, and mental health*

The preceding sections have detailed the ways in which educators perceived refugees in a positive light. There were, however, exceptions and caveats to positivity. Educators did have concerns about refugee pupils – namely the possible effects of trauma and increased workloads – but tended to frame these concerns in a positive manner. The mix of different attitudes was not split between individuals – for example, a group of educators who expressed purely positive attitudes and a group of educators who expressed more exceptions or caveats – but rather was spread across individuals. Educators often voiced a range of attitudes in the same conversation or even sentence, reflecting the complexity of the topic, the heterogeneity of the refugee pupil population, and the competing demands and priorities present in schools and classrooms.

Whilst case study educators tended to focus on resilience, for example, the possibility that refugee pupils had experienced trauma was also mentioned. However, rather than being a well-developed, prominent theme, trauma was more often a brief reference or assumed background to another point. Trauma was referenced regarding decisions about potentially upsetting curricular content, for example, as detailed in the previous chapter. Similarly, educators referred to trauma when explaining decisions around different provisions for refugee pupils. Belloway was using part of its additional funding from the VPRS to send all newly resettled pupils to a local group art therapy project, with the reasoning that it was likely the pupils had experienced trauma. Many educators said they kept an extra eye out for the emotional well-being of refugee pupils due to the likelihood of previous trauma. In some cases, educators had evidence that pupils had experienced trauma – for example, physical scars or stories relayed by pupils or parents

– but in most cases they were not privy to specific information about individuals and they often referred to presumed trauma with language like ‘one can only imagine’.

In a related vein, pupils’ behaviour is a common concern in the rhetoric around English schools, and increasingly has been linked to trauma that young people have experienced, generating an interest in ‘trauma sensitive’ teaching methods (Thomas et al., 2019). At the case study schools in this study, however, educators rarely mentioned refugee pupils’ behaviour – and when they did so it was because I specifically asked. It is possible that educators did not mention difficult behaviour of refugee pupils in interviews due to social desirability bias, whether they desired to appear supportive of refugees or to be seen as competent professionals. My observations across several weeks at each school, however, did not include a single case of a refugee pupil exhibiting overtly difficult behaviour, whereas there were numerous examples of non-refugee pupils doing so. This concurred with much of the interview data. When I pressed educators specifically about challenging behaviour they overwhelmingly said it was not an issue from refugees, with the few exceptions above. This may have partly been circumstantial and time bound. Margaret noted that in previous years there had been more challenging cohorts including former child soldiers and other young people who were ‘ready to aggress’. Catherine, with her decades’ experience at Alford, remembered that years previously there had been a group of Kosovan pupils who had displayed difficult behaviour, but she framed the situation as an exception, saying that she had not seen anything similar since:

Certainly this group by their nature they were often traumatised, they were not in a place where they wanted to be. There was a kind of group mentality there and that created quite a lot of problems with other groups, either racially or culturally or maybe even in terms of religion. But as I said that was a very specific thing.

Overall, educators placed less emphasis on trauma than expected given the prevalence of refugee children’s mental health in the academic literature. This does not

mean that refugee pupils at the study schools had not experienced trauma or were not experiencing related mental health difficulties. Refugee pupils could have been experiencing significant effects of trauma but their related behaviours were not disruptive and therefore escaped notice by educators. Whether or not refugee pupils in this study were or were not experiencing effects of trauma, it is still of interest to note that educators did not strongly emphasise trauma in their narratives, tending to foreground other themes and situate trauma within a narrative of resilience.

### 5.2.5 *'Drain on resources' or strain on the system?*

Every explicitly negative comment an educator made about refugee pupils referenced increased workload and associated stress. In the survey, educators said they were concerned about 'being able to support and educate effectively, with high class numbers and a greater number of SEND and EAL pupils already effecting teaching and workload', and that they thought they needed further training, which 'inevitably causes higher workload'. At Belloway, TA Samantha expressed similar concerns:

We've still got 29 other children maybe in our class that need our help and support and if we've got that one child who's really struggling, because they don't know the language, and they don't know phonics, they don't – it, it sounds awful but they take up a lot of our time, and then other children are missing out as well.

Beatrice, also a TA at Belloway but with a background as a qualified teacher, conveyed comparable sentiments more subtly, telling me that 'some people might say' newly arrived refugees took time and resources from other children, although she was not sure she agreed.

Intriguingly, and initially somewhat confusingly, the educator who actually used the phrase 'drain on resources' was Kasia, who was an immigrant herself and regularly highlighted 'success story' refugee pupils to me. Given the pressures on educators to

promote progress for numerous other groups – pupils with SEN, ‘quiet middles’, ‘high ables’, ‘white working class’ – Kasia felt that adding refugees increased her workload and stress levels. Yet she framed her concerns as complex and conflicting:

Like everything these days in education, you love your – and you know my class now – and you love these kids to bits ... And you know it’s always these conflicting of emotions. On an individual level you really love them and appreciate them and see them. But they make teaching life so much harder.

Although I was initially surprised by Kasia being an immigrant and expressing some of the most overtly negative views about refugee pupils across the case study sites, she was able to clarify this seeming contradiction for me herself. She noted that while she was often berating troubled Nadir’s father, from Syria, for not being more supportive, she did not do the same for British parents who were just as disengaged from their children’s education. In short, she identified her own double standard for immigrants – that they should work harder, be more supportive, and achieve more highly than British families, specifically the white working-class British families who lived in the school’s catchment area. As a high achieving immigrant herself, Kasia expected immigrant pupils, including refugees, to achieve highly. When they needed extra support, she expected it less and therefore noted – and resented – it more.

At Altford, there was support for newly arrived refugee pupils through the EAL department, which several educators noted was key to pupils’ learning and to keeping educator workloads manageable. An incident part way through my visit emphasised the importance of this support when a group of pupils was transferred into Shauna’s mainstream ‘bottom set’ English class after spending a term in special provision with an EAL educator. The class was already academically far behind and socio-emotionally fragile – some pupils could barely read, others were anxious or aggressive – but Shauna had created a safe, nurturing environment and most lessons passed without major disruption. When the EAL cohort arrived, the entire feel of the class changed, with both

the EAL and non-EAL pupils showing off, disrupting lessons, and generally behaving in a disengaged manner. After they left each day, the normally upbeat Shauna now often looked deflated and said ‘it’s too many’ needs for one class, even a bottom set.

However, Shauna and other educators were quick to point out that as much as refugee pupils sometimes added to their workload, so did many non-refugee pupils. Don noted that ‘a greater chunk of your attention and time is drawn towards pupils who need more support... but that’s true for all sorts of groups of students, not just those from a refugee [background] and it’s not true of all pupils from a refugee background either’. Michael took the argument a step further, noting that while any strain on a system can have negative effects, the education system in Britain was already strained and blaming this on the arrival of refugees ‘is just a scapegoat’. He added that while some media outlets referred to ‘swarms’ of migrants arriving in Britain, ‘we get “swarms” of white British students from the local feeder school’ and it was frequently young people of this demographic who required the highest levels of support.

Similarly, Kasia, who initially referred to refugee pupils as a ‘drain on resources’, ended that section of the interview by reflecting that her negative feelings were a symptom of larger systemic problems: ‘I think all of these things are literally a product of my – of teachers in England being overworked... we just spread ourselves so thinly’. Or, in the words of one surveyed educator, ‘We are not allowed to have time to care, which is heart breaking’. Thus, whilst refugee pupils were seen as depleting resources, educators tended to be critical in their views, laying blame on an under-resourced system rather than the refugee pupils accessing those resources.

### 5.2.6 *'Like any pupil': each one unique*

A major theme to emerge in relation to educators' attitudes, and indeed in relation to the project as a whole, was the heterogeneity of refugee pupils. Throughout conversations at case study schools as well as in survey responses, educators frequently emphasised that they did not see refugee pupils as very different to other pupils, and that like other pupils, refugees were all unique – making it difficult to answer questions about how one felt about refugee pupils in general. At the case study schools, several educators implicitly or explicitly questioned whether the category of 'refugee pupils' was a useful one, given individual differences. Syed noted that he treated pupils according to the needs they presented rather than their labels, giving a range of pupils, including some refugees, extra support. Similarly, Simone said that while she made an extra effort 'to connect' with refugee pupils, she did the same with any pupil who was vulnerable in some way, listing off children from her class with attendance, behaviour, and academic issues. Michael more frankly stated that grouping pupils by whether they were refugees was a 'false dichotomy' that he was uncomfortable employing. He expressed concern that the label of refugee could be used to accentuate differences between people rather than recognising what they had in common: 'if they do misbehave it could be because they are a refugee, or it could be because they are a teenager'. Similarly, a survey educator argued: 'I think each one is an individual. Some present us with problems, some don't. Just like non-asylum-seeking children!'

A common variation on the theme of refugee pupils being like any pupil was the assertion that refugee pupils were like any other pupil *with EAL*. Margaret, with decades of experience teaching EAL and refugees, noted that although the 'scale and nature' of refugees' prior experiences often set them apart, sometimes pupils who were not refugees also had 'patchy education in their own country' or had experienced 'significant trauma'.

Overall, she felt there was a significant overlap between the characteristics and needs of recently arrived refugee pupils and recently arrived non-refugee EAL pupils, with the caveat that pupils who were awaiting an asylum decision were under the unique stress of not knowing whether they would be deported and that this could affect their needs. Other case study educators largely agreed, noting that refugee pupils were more likely to have certain characteristics but that these characteristics were also found in various combinations across the non-refugee EAL population, so it made sense to address the needs of individuals rather than making assumptions about labelled groups. Thus, educators were not saying that one should never group pupils or that vulnerability does not matter; rather, they argued that the label ‘refugee’ was not a particularly useful group for them to identify, given the overlapping features with other groups at their schools.

Finally, rather than focusing on language and other needs, a few educators emphasised how similar refugee pupils were to other pupils in terms of their age-appropriate interests and behaviours. Eleanor, for example, referred to some refugee pupils’ ‘frustrating’ actions as normal adolescent behaviour. With regards to lateness and attendance issues she noted: ‘you’re tired because you’ve been on your phone all night. You’re a teenager, it’s standard.’ Shauna noted that one of her Syrian pupils was both a brilliant writer and unfocused in lessons, but ‘he’s just a child, so he is a 13-year-old boy who wants to be out playing football, so... [laughs]’.

### *5.2.7 ‘Just getting on with it’ or ‘just plugging gaps’?*

Educators’ attitudes towards refugee pupils were often expressed indirectly when they spoke about the range of educational provisions available – or desired to be available – for new arrivals. Notably, and as discussed in further detail in the previous chapter on educator knowledge, when speaking about provision educators’ main emphasis was on

English language acquisition, suggesting that they saw language as the most important task for newly arrived refugee pupils.

Several educators at Altford and Belloway emphasised the benefits of mainstream immersion for newly arrived refugees, noting how quickly children learned English from their peers and suggesting that they saw refugee pupils as capable, independent, and natural learners. At Belloway, Beatrice described how beyond a few ‘hooks’ of initial support, new arrivals ‘just get on with it’. Ruth, the inclusion manager at Belloway, said that most children could ‘cope’ immediately in mainstream, although she added that this arrangement was based in a lack of funding for specialised support as well as the school’s ethos of inclusion. At Altford, Catherine said she thought that the ‘sink or swim’ situation of immediate mainstreaming was beneficial for many pupils as they learned English more quickly. At both schools, the theme of age in relation to language learning was prominent, with children lower down each school seen as learning English more quickly and easily and therefore receiving less – or no – out-of-class support.

However, most educators framed English language learning as difficult and refugee pupils as needing extensive support in this area – including some of the same individuals who noted how easily and naturally language acquisition could occur. Catherine followed her comment about the benefits of ‘sink or swim’ immersion by noting that: ‘whilst I’m sure that’s a really good way of learning a language very quickly I think it must also be emotionally draining and terrifying’ and said she wished there was more specialised support for new arrivals. Beatrice commented that to ‘just get on with it’ must be initially ‘bewildering’. Kasia, who had watched her own child learn English by being immersed in a primary school, was more extreme, arguing that immediate full-time mainstreaming was ‘unnecessarily traumatising’ and even ‘cruel and unusual punishment’. She thought there should be substantially more funding dedicated to new arrivals’ language provision, and that while the school was doing a decent job given its resources, ‘we’re just plugging gaps

for something that does not need to be that stressful, you know. I mean nobody would expect an adult straight away to come to this country and... go and work.’

Additional support for newly arrived pupils was overwhelmingly seen as positive, on a spectrum from it being a welcome help to being absolutely necessary for the functioning of the class and school, with interventions ranging from support in class to timetabled withdrawal to full separate provision for older, newly arrived pupils. Nonetheless, whilst educators thought additional support was beneficial, several mentioned the importance of nestling the support within the mainstream environment in order for refugee pupils to feel included in the school as well as for the mainstream school community to reap the benefits of interacting with refugee pupils. Educators’ attitudes thus reflected the underlying complexity of refugee pupils’ situations – that one individual could need help, be resilient, contribute to the school, and use up resources all at once. Furthermore, it was repeatedly noted that individual pupils required enormously different provisions depending on personality, background and current life situation. These final two themes – of how to balance separate support with mainstream inclusion and the need for bespoke, flexible provision – will be expanded in Chapter 6 on educators’ practices.

### **5.3 Factors shaping educators’ attitudes towards refugee pupils**

Overall, then, educators in this study were found to have largely positive attitudes towards refugee pupils. But how did these positive attitudes come about? The following examines factors that were associated with educators’ positive attitudes towards refugee pupils – both on the level of the individual educator and their school environments. Due to the nature of the data, individual characteristics are explored mainly through the survey data and school level factors mainly through case study data. The number of case study educators (n=17) was not sufficient to comment on the effects of demographic characteristics, so this area was best addressed through survey data. Conversely, the survey

did not ask about school level factors related to educators' attitudes, as the importance of school context emerged through observations at case study schools once the survey was already in process. Thus, the in-depth nature of the case study data provided a more nuanced exploration of how school context affected educators' experiences and attitudes.

Following the KAP model, one would expect to find a multidirectional relationship between educator attitudes and practices, with practices shaping attitudes as well as attitudes shaping practices. In the following, I consider educators' practices to be one component of their professional experiences – and find that experience was associated with more positive attitudes towards refugee pupils. It should be noted that much of the data presented here shows associations and cannot speak to the direction of causality between factors such as experiences, practices, and attitudes. However, there are good reasons based in previous literature to believe that causality runs bidirectionally from attitudes to practices and from practices to attitudes. Issues of causality will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

### *5.3.1 Survey results: education, experience and positive attitudes*

Scores from the attitudes thermometer were examined in the context of various educator characteristics – including teaching experience and demographic information – to see which characteristics were associated with more positive attitudes towards refugee pupils. Prior to data collection, it was hypothesised that educators who were more highly educated would have more positive attitudes towards refugee pupils. However, using regression analysis (see **Table 7**), mean thermometer scores were not found to be significantly associated with highest level of education completed ( $r=0.097$ ). This result could be due to an underpowered sample of less-educated participants (34 out of 295), who were more difficult to recruit due to their absence from staff meetings. It could, however,

also point to a ‘buffering effect’ (Fuochi et al., 2020), with less-educated participants feeling more positive than expected due to their professional remit as educators and to their exposure to different outgroups through their work. Further study of less-educated school staff’s attitudes towards refugee pupils would be necessary to suitably test these hypotheses.

It was also hypothesised that educators’ experience with refugee pupils would be associated with more positive attitudes. This hypothesis was supported ( $r=0.194$ ) but with a small effect. This result points towards the scenario of specific teaching experiences – that is, teaching the population in question – in the formation of positive attitudes towards that population, or in other words, educators’ practices helping to form their attitudes. One critical limitation of the survey results, however, is that association tests cannot determine causality – that is, whether it was educators’ experiences that shaped their attitudes or whether people who already had more positive attitudes towards refugees were more likely to become educators, and to select – and be selected for – jobs at schools where they interact with refugees.

Additional educator characteristics thought to be conceptually linked to the hypotheses were also tested. Experience teaching pupils with EAL and experience teaching pupils looked after by the social care system were not found to be significantly associated with attitudes towards refugee pupils ( $r=0.120$  for EAL and  $r=0.018$  for social care). However, educators’ immigrant status (Yes/No) was significantly associated with positive attitudes (Mann-Whitney  $U=0.048$ ) – with a small effect size (0.016).

**Table 7: Attitude thermometer scores and educator characteristic correlations (n=242)**

	<b>Thermometer score</b>	<b>Experience with refugees</b>	<b>Experience with EAL</b>	<b>Experience with children in social care</b>
<b>Experience with refugees</b>	0.194**	1		
<b>Experience with EAL</b>	0.120	0.481**	1	
<b>Experience with children in social care</b>	0.018	0.264**	0.272**	1
<b>Education level</b>	0.097	0.178**	0.180**	0.172**

**\*\* Significant at .01 level (2-tailed).**

*Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient was used due to data being ordinal.*

### 5.3.2 Case studies: school environments influence attitudes

Interview and observation data from the case studies can help understand some of the survey results, allowing for a more in-depth, nuanced exploration of processes. Data from the case studies suggests that educators' professional experiences and practices may, at least in some cases, have indeed contributed to the formation of their attitudes towards refugee pupils, with school-level factors playing an important role in this process. Both Altford and Belloway had policies and practices that promoted positive attitudes towards refugee pupils through the valuing of multiculturalism in general. At Altford, there were newspaper clippings in the main office and outside classrooms of refugee pupils in the news for their achievements, and Simone's office shelves were full of copies of booklets of writing by pupils – in English and non-English home languages. At Belloway, during my visit whole school assemblies included presentations in Chinese for Chinese New Year, stories about Nelson Mandela and Malala Yusuf to illustrate various British Values, and a

whole school sing-along in British sign language. In one notable example, the head started off the Red Nose Day assembly – which normally has an amusing, costume-adorned jocularity about it – by speaking about the Christchurch, New Zealand mosque shooting that had just occurred and explicitly stating how much the school community valued its Muslim families.

But were these school-level factors *causal* in terms of their relationship with educators' positive attitudes? Several case study educators directly related personal and professional experiences to their attitudes towards refugee pupils, and other outgroups more generally, providing their perspectives on causality. At Alford, Michael said his attitude had been influenced by his professional experiences interacting with refugee pupils. Specifically, he described an assembly where a UASC pupil from the EAL sixth form had shown a film he made about his life, which Michael – who projected a stern, impassive persona – admitted 'choked me up'. At Belloway, Aaron said that he had been raised in a white, working-class community where people often made statements that he now recognised as racist and xenophobic, for example about immigrants from Somalia and Romania being criminals. Based on his experiences at Belloway, however, he said he now understood better why refugees came to England and was impressed by the recently arrived refugee pupils' progress at school. He added that seeing how many of the refugee families supported each other – for example looking after one another's children – had caused him to re-think his own cultural norms and wonder what British society could learn from immigrants. Many of Aaron's comments employed a 'deserving / undeserving immigrant' narrative related to which individuals worked and which were dependent on the state, a theme that was reflected in his framing of refugee pupils as hard-working. Nonetheless, he seemed to be in the midst of a substantial change in attitude that he attributed to his experiences of working at Belloway.

Other case study educators commented on the shaping of their attitudes less directly, mentioning professional experiences related to how refugee pupils were doing in their classes and at their schools. Syed and Don both gave examples of watching newly arrived pupils settle into school, learn English, and excel academically, to back claims that refugee pupils often made quick progress. Similarly, the ‘success stories’ relayed to me by educators at Belloway were examples of how educators’ experiences of refugee pupils shaped their attitudes in a positive manner. These stories were often repeated around the staff room, meaning that individual educators’ experiences and attitudes were amplified into school-level factors that in turn may have shaped the attitudes of other staff.

A key factor facilitating this pathway between educators’ practices and their attitudes was the presence of additional support at the school level. As well as the valuation of multiculturalism, case study schools contributed to educators’ positive attitudes through the availability of specialised provision by specialist staff. This was somewhat the case at Belloway, where there were a few extras like SATs tutoring, and very much the case at Altford, where a range of flexible support was available through the EAL department, tailored to individual pupils and educators. In interviews, nearly every case study educator cited the existence of the EAL department as helpful – for the beginner English groups, for in-class support, for the separate EAL sixth form, and for their own learning and development as practitioners. Furthermore, educators said they frequently asked EAL staff when they had a question about a refugee pupil even if the question did not relate to language learning. Class educator Shauna summed it up by noting that without the EAL department’s support, mainstream educators would be ‘lost’ and that ‘it would be a real shame for those students because I think they’d struggle to meet their potential.’

### 5.3.3 *Virtuous circles of causality*

Overall, a range of factors were associated with educators' positive attitudes towards refugee pupils, including individual characteristics of educators, their previous teaching experiences, and school-level practices. It is important to note, however, that the causality between these factors and educators' attitudes likely flowed in both directions. The association between experience with refugee pupils and positive attitudes, for example, could be a case of school values shaping educators' attitudes, or it could be a case of educators with positive attitudes selecting jobs at supportive, multicultural schools where refugee pupils were present. In interviews educators usually gave practical reasons for working at the case study schools, such as being assigned to student teach there as PGCE students, living nearby, or having children who attended. The only exceptions to this trend were the three EAL educators at Altford, Margaret, Fiona, and Eleanor, who had come to the school specifically due to their interest and expertise in language teaching. Nevertheless, it seems likely that other educators, though they did not explicitly mention it, may have had more positive attitudes towards refugees to begin with – or at least a level of openness to the idea of interacting with pupils of different backgrounds. In this way, a virtuous circle could be created, with educators who value multiculturalism attracted to work at certain schools, thereby contributing further to a school ethos and support structure that shapes the positive attitudes of their colleagues.

## 5.4 Conclusions

The main finding of this chapter was that educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils tended overall towards the positive. Key exceptions and caveats were made to this positivity – namely about workload and resource availability – but these were framed as issues of the education system rather than problematic characteristics of refugees. If these

results were found to be consistent beyond the local authority in this study, there would be national policy implications in terms of how many refugees the UK has the capacity to welcome – at least from an educational perspective – a topic which will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

This chapter also examined the factors that might shape educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils. Across surveyed educators, previous experience teaching refugees was associated with more positive attitudes towards refugee pupils, as was being an immigrant. At case study schools, educators often attributed their positive attitudes towards refugee pupils to the positive experiences they had interacting with them. School practices may also have contributed to the formation of educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils, namely by promoting positive views of multiculturalism through displays, assemblies, and school events, and through the availability of additional support. These school-level actions were, of course, organised and executed by school staff members. Thus, individual educators' attitudes formed school-level practices, which in turn also formed educators' attitudes.

Finally, an emergent finding of this chapter – and indeed across the project – was the emphasis educators placed on the heterogeneity of refugee pupils. Educators who were experienced teaching refugee pupils noted that their attitudes towards refugees were complex – and sometimes contradictory – because of the diversity of individuals included under the umbrella of 'refugee pupil'. They argued that although refugees sometimes had shared characteristics, they were so diverse that it made more sense to treat them as individuals rather than as a group, as they aimed to do for any pupil. The following chapter will explore to what extent this type of bespoke provision was feasible, examining educator practices with refugee pupils and how these practices were shaped by educators' knowledge and attitudes.

## **CHAPTER 6: EDUCATORS' PRACTICES WITH REFUGEE PUPILS**

*RQ3: What are educators' practices with refugee pupils and what shapes these practices?*

The previous two chapters examine educators' knowledge and attitudes about refugee pupils, finding educators' knowledge to be variable across individuals and educators' attitudes to be largely positive. Throughout, educators' previous experiences, including their practices, were identified as an influential factor shaping their knowledge and attitudes. In this chapter, I turn to educators' practices as the main focus, arguing that in the case study schools educators enacted a broad range of practices rooted in a holistic model of refugee education and reflecting the heterogeneity of the refugee pupil population. Practices were shaped by educators' knowledge and attitudes, in concordance with the KAP conceptual model. However, larger, external factors also had an influence on schools' and educators' practices, highlighting the ways in which the national education system affects individuals' actions and experiences.

This chapter utilises data from the case studies only, as the survey did not ask educators about their practices. Case study data includes my observations of lessons and other activities at the case study schools, interviews with the case study educators, and – to a lesser extent – group interviews with Year 5 pupils at Belloway. The chapter is organised into four main sections: 1) educators' practices in relation to a holistic model of refugee education, 2) tension between mainstream and separate provision, 3) how knowledge and attitudes shaped practices, and 4) how exterior factors shaped practices.

## 6.1 Practices enacted by educators

The following section details practices that educators enacted when interacting with refugee pupils and considers in what ways these practices were related to a holistic model of refugee education. As described in Chapters 2 and 4, a holistic model of refugee education focuses not only on supporting academic and language learning, but also creating a welcoming environment and promoting socio-emotional well-being. It is important to note that currently, there are few studies that aim to rigorously evaluate what type of provision leads to best outcomes, on average, for refugee pupils – for example by comparing outcomes of a programme with those of a control group. Nonetheless, numerous studies involving the views of academic experts, practitioners, and young refugees point towards some version of a holistic model as good practice (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Block et al., 2014b; McIntyre et al., 2018; McIntyre & Abrams, 2021; Taylor & Kaur Sidhu, 2012). The following will therefore use a holistic model as a lens through which to examine educators' practices, asking in what ways case study educators' practices met – or in some cases, did not meet – the theorised ideal.

### 6.1.1 Welcoming environment

As a visitor to Altford and Belloway, I had the opportunity to experience what it was like to be a newcomer to each environment. I do not claim that being an adult visitor in a position of relative power is comparable to being a newly arrived refugee pupil; however, I do think it is instructive to describe what most people would encounter when entering each case study school, and to consider in what ways the schools tried to be welcoming.

At Altford, visitors and newcomers entered through the reception area. While waiting for one of the busy staff members to be done on the phone, one could read framed

newspaper articles about former pupils or flip through the glossy school prospectus. Both types of publication featured pupils of many ethnicities, with many of the girls wearing hijab. The school itself was a conglomeration of separate buildings of various heights, styles, and ages. For the first couple of days, I found it difficult to remember how they were connected and how to navigate the various pathways, corridors, and staircases between them, a difficulty compounded by the sometimes raucous flow of adolescent bodies between lessons. In my field notes I wrote:

What is Altford like? ... There's a give-one-take-one book exchange on the window ledges in one corridor... and adults and children often hold doors for each other... The attendance officers chew kids out when they arrive late, but they also spend a few minutes discussing a late boy's new coat and scarf, bright yellow both. An adult calls across the courtyard to a boy: Are you behaving yourself? Yes, Miss. All week long? Yes, Miss (sly grin). They both laugh. Subtext: she knows he doesn't always behave, probably hasn't managed all week, but she likes him anyway.

In one of the larger Altford buildings, housing the English and Maths departments, there were trigonometry equations and quotes painted in the common space: “Read in order to live – Gustav Flaubert”, “Today a reader, tomorrow a leader.” – W. Fusselman’. Outside one classroom, the EAL base, a group of pupils congregated between lessons, socialising, asking the EAL educators where to go next, and reporting back on successes – and challenges – encountered in mainstream. Altford offered a range of provisions that newly arrived refugee pupils could access, mainly centred around the EAL base. There was a beginners course that ran for all ages, as needed, three hours per day for six weeks. There were a variety of ‘booster’ groups that met throughout the week, providing removed support to the mainstream curriculum. Then there was the EAL sixth form, providing two years of separate provision for older pupils – in Years 11, 12 and sometimes Year 10 – who arrived with little English, and sometimes little formal education. EAL educators, mainly one EAL teaching assistant, also supported pupils in some mainstream lessons.

At Belloway, I had the advantage of entering a smaller building housing fewer people – and since it was a primary school, I spent all day with only 20-30 of those people at a time. Knowing where to go when was relatively easy, as was learning the names and personality quirks of the people around me. Movement in the corridors was heavily controlled. Children were expected to walk silently in single file lines when moving to assembly and quietly in single file lines when moving to lunch, break, or to access a different room. Silence in general was highly valued: during one assembly, presented by young children, it was difficult to hear the speakers. I expected that the audience would fidget and whisper due to boredom, but silence was maintained, out of habit it seemed, rather than interest. Lessons were a bit louder, often involving quiet chatter, and break times were full-on shrieking and squealing affairs, giving the day the feel of a calm surface regularly punctuated by chaos.

The school building was long, low, and brick, each classroom with doors both to the corridor and to the outdoors. At the front entrance was a large display of the previous year's school play, and another of International Evening. Down the corridor, a sign on one classroom door announced that 'Aslan is on the move!' and at the entrance to the school library someone had cut the back out of an old wooden wardrobe so that you had to walk through the wardrobe to enter the room, à la 'Narnia'. In some classrooms, displayed vocabulary words had been translated into Arabic at some point in the past; now the cards were looking worn around the edges. At Belloway, all newly arrived refugee pupils were immediately placed in mainstream classes. At times, the school created small groups for support with beginner EAL, when the need was seen as high and there was a TA available to facilitate.

At both Altford and Belloway, there were set procedures and practices in place when new refugee pupils arrived. These procedures were the same for any pupil arriving who was new to English, with refugee pupils seen as a category beneath this umbrella. At

Altford, an educator in the EAL department conducted an interview with the new pupil and their family – or social worker – to find out more about the individual’s prior experiences and current situation. At this appointment, the TA normally administered a series of assessments with the new pupil to see what sort of EAL provision would be most appropriate. From the results of this session, the EAL educators created a printed timetable for the pupil showing which hours of the day they should be in the EAL base and various classrooms around the school. In my observations, newly arrived pupils regularly stopped by the EAL base to check in, even if they were mostly in mainstream classes, to ask questions, say hello, or to socialise with other pupils.

At Belloway, pupils who arrived on the VPRS came with a file of information on previous experiences and family situation provided by a case worker. This information often arrived at the school before the refugee family had even arrived in the country. In contrast, refugee pupils who did not arrive on the VPRS were not necessarily identified in admissions procedures and their immigration status was only discovered later in casual conversation with an Arabic-speaking educator, as described in Chapter 4. All pupils who arrived with little English were provided with a fan of picture cards to help communicate (eg. happy face, sad face, toilet, food, drink) and all new pupils were assigned peer ‘buddies’ to guide them through their first days. These practices were widely known and spoken about across the school, from management to educators to children. In group interviews with Year 5 pupils, the children spoke at length about being a buddy and having a buddy when they had first arrived. It was a practice that they valued as newcomers; one child had not had a buddy when he arrived and recounted soberly that he ‘kept going to the wrong toilet’. A child from Syria related with a distinct tone of pride how he had helped another newcomer by being the buddy who translated, while two other children were in charge of the newcomer’s social life and movement around school. Furthermore, Belloway’s efforts to be welcoming were practised by a variety of people across the school

community. One Year 5 pupil who was not a refugee but was new to the school related that he had felt welcomed by the catering staff, who had displayed their sentiments in a particularly child-friendly manner:

A few weeks ago, maybe like 2 or 4, when I was – when it was my first time being school dinners – well first, the teacher saw me and the lunch lady saw me, and they asked, “Are you new?” And I was like, “yes”, and then they were all like shouting, everybody was like “yey!” and then at the end they let me have extra pudding.

Thus, the cases of Altford and Belloway provide examples of welcoming environments for newly arrived refugee pupils, created through a range of official practices as well as more spontaneous actions such as the gifting of extra pudding. However, it is important to note that creating a truly welcoming culture across an entire school body, based in a genuine desire to empathise with and understand others possibly quite different from oneself, is a difficult ideal, and there were some signs that this ideal was not always fully met. The Year 5 children’s narrative of why they enjoyed being a buddy, for example, was slightly different from that of the adults. Both said that children were eager to take part in order to make new friends and take on a role of responsibility, but the children said they also volunteered in response to extrinsic reward systems:

Child 1: When the teacher says somebody put their hand up to choose like to be the friend for the days, to help them out, everybody starts putting their hand up, like tcho tcho tcho.

Caitlin: So everybody wants to do it?

1: Yeah.

C: Why do you think everybody wants to do it?

4: Because they want to be helpful.

2: They want more friends.

3: Well some people just do it for the house points, like literally.

2: The bribery. Change mine to 8. [Score out of 10 on how welcoming they thought the school was.]

A welcoming environment was also created by practices educators enacted to make their classrooms feel like warm, safe places to learn. To that end, some educators were lenient in their implementation of behaviour policies. In the Reception class, Palesa

permitted a newly arrived refugee pupil to sit at her feet and touch her legs for reassurance rather than reprimanding him for sitting improperly. On the other end of the age spectrum, in the EAL sixth form I watched Fiona gently coax adolescents' heads off tables when they looked particularly sleepy and Margaret quietly check-in with pupils to see if they had had enough sleep the previous night, rather than demanding they snap to attention in lessons. Educators also used humour to make their classrooms feel warm and safe; this was particularly notable in mainstream secondary classrooms where overt warmth may have been perceived by adolescent pupils as babyish. Simone could frequently be observed laughing and rolling her eyes at pupils' bad jokes and Catherine often let small behavioural transgressions slide in the name of humour. As recorded in my fieldnotes in Catherine's Year 10 English class:

Ms asks everyone to sit down when they stand up prematurely at the end of the class.

Boy: (almost misses chair when sitting down, under breath) Oh, fuck!

Ms: Did you mean, 'Oh my gosh?'

Boy: (pauses) No, I didn't (knows she'll think it's funny)

Ms: (laughs)

In a related vein, some educators used humour to downplay pupils' mistakes, thereby encouraging participation. This practice was most notable in the EAL sixth form, where lessons were often punctuated by friendly laughter. Educators created this environment through a mix of self-depreciation, running jokes with individual pupils, and appearing genuinely tickled when pupils made mistakes. Margaret, for example, frequently had the sixth form class tripping over each other to speak after making jokes about pupils saying they had two children or bought a tube of appointment. For the class Christmas party, Fiona brought a xylophone to school and clunkily played it in front of pupils, laughing at her own errors. Thus, a situation that could have been difficult and embarrassing – being a beginner to a language as an adolescent – was softened and the environment for learning made more welcoming.

### 6.1.2 Academic learning: focus on EAL

At the case study schools, educators focused strongly on EAL when discussing provision and practices used with refugee pupils. Other academic factors were sometimes mentioned – such as when pupils had no prior schooling, or when a pupil showed a particular talent for a subject – but the main emphasis was on refugee pupils accessing the curriculum, through the medium of English, which tended to foreground EAL strategies. In the following, I use the Bell Foundation’s five principles of effective EAL practice to organise the practices I encountered in case study classrooms (The Bell Foundation, 2021): 1) activate prior learning, 2) provide a rich context, 3) make language explicit, 4) develop independence, and 5) extend vocabulary. These principles were not referenced by participant schools or educators; rather, I found them to be a useful framework on which to organise the wide variety of EAL-relevant practices I observed, and as a guide to which educator practices could be judged ‘good practice’.

Firstly, many educators ‘activated pupils’ prior learning’ by taking into account what they knew about pupils’ prior education, building on pupils’ interests, and being flexible throughout. Educators said they usually did not have detailed information on pupils’ prior education, but in my observations they still made attempts to build on prior learning by asking questions to assess what pupils already knew and being open to the fact that there was likely knowledge pupils could not exhibit due to being new to English. This was most apparent in the EAL sixth form at Altford, where pupils had a wide range of life and educational experiences, but all had very low levels of English language. On one end of the spectrum, Margaret noted that she never made assumptions about what pupils *did* know, and was no longer surprised to encounter new arrivals who did not know that the Earth orbits around the Sun. On the other end of the spectrum, in a science lesson I observed on the Solar System, Fiona realised that a pupil had considerable prior knowledge

in the area and helped him express his knowledge despite his beginner English skills. I recorded in my fieldnotes: ‘Jamal visibly excited for first time since we spoke about hair products – space, gravity, weightlessness. He tries to tell the class about it. Ms helps him fill in the gaps between nouns and miming.’

The EAL sixth form educators also attempted to tailor the curriculum to pupils’ prior knowledge and interests. Rather than cover the same topics – outside of English language – each year, they used a certificate scheme where they could choose the subject content to match the current cohort’s knowledge and interests. As Margaret put it:

We felt very strongly that just learning ESOL all the time was not enough, a) because frankly it gets incredibly dull just to be teaching and learning language but b) because of this issue about prior education experience. You cannot have people leaving secondary school in the UK not knowing that the Earth goes around the Sun, you know, you’ve got to address that. And there’s also, you know, young people are open-minded and curious, and they want to know about the world.

Secondly, most case study educators ‘provided a rich context’ primarily through a range of visual communication techniques. In the EAL sixth form, the norm was for speaking to be accompanied by images and miming, to the extent that lessons sometimes felt like marathon games of charades. In mainstream history class, Simone’s lessons always included a variety of old photos, video footage, timelines, and other diagrams. Other mainstream educators frequently included pre-planned images or their own ad-hoc drawings in response to pupils’ questions. At Belloway, these types of practices appeared to be even more embedded, likely due to the younger age of the children and the need across all pupils for learning to be visual and tactile. In Year 2, for example, Safiya displayed pictures from the class book at the beginning of each literacy lesson, to help the pupils speak about what had already happened in the story. In Foundation Stage, Palesa, Beatrice, and Samantha regularly complemented lessons with objects and artefacts that the children could touch.

Thirdly, some educators ‘made language explicit’ in their teaching. In the EAL sixth form, the main focus was language learning, although this was achieved through a variety of thematic content. Across lessons on states of matter, the royal family, and going shopping, I observed EAL educators discussing the use of ‘is’ versus ‘are’, reviewing vowel letters, and noting rules for making nouns plural. Similarly, at Belloway, I observed Kasia hold an impromptu session on singular and plural first, second, and third person point of view, using these terms and having the children find examples of each in the lesson material. Lower down the school, I observed Safiya taking aside pupils with EAL to work on specific grammar points in their writing.

Next, educators ‘developed independence’ by scaffolding learning and modelling examples. Scaffolding was undertaken by teachers and TAs, as well as pupils who were directed to do so. In the EAL sixth form, educators frequently scaffolded pupil speech and writing by providing a sentence or conversation structure that needed to be completed, before asking the pupils to create their own. In a mainstream maths class at Altford, Syed ensured that a newly arrived Syrian pupil – who had good maths skills but very little English – could keep up with the lessons by seating her next to a Syrian pupil who had more English (but, conveniently, poorer maths skills). In some lessons, an EAL teaching assistant was available to help the new arrival, but when she was unavailable, both girls had the support of each other. At Belloway, Safiya promoted the use of ‘WAGOLL’ or ‘What A Good One Looks Like’, whereby educators were to show a visual example of precisely what pupils should be producing in their independent work before setting them off – a strategy that was frequently employed by Kasia.

Finally, educators ‘extended vocabulary’ of new EAL learners, including refugees. In the EAL sixth form, lessons almost always involved some sort of imagery to accompany spoken or written vocabulary words (rooms in a house, food in a shop, members of the royal family). In a more ad-hoc fashion, educators constantly used the internet to look up

pictures of words that pupils had questions about. Fiona frequently had pupils singing or chanting new vocabulary words, especially words with several syllables that required emphasis on a particular syllable. For weeks after one lesson, I overheard pupils singing ‘*con-den-sa-tion, ev-ap-or-a-tion!*’ to the tune of the Halleluiah chorus, both when they encountered these words and at seemingly random times throughout the day.

Strategies for extending vocabulary were also apparent in mainstream classes, though less prominent and pitched at the entire class rather than only pupils new to English, as several educators pointed out that even native English-speaking pupils at the school often had low vocabularies. In Catherine’s English class, for example, she paused in the middle of a graphic version of *A Christmas Carol* to explain that the object on fire in the middle of the table was called a Christmas pudding. At Belloway, educators used similar strategies to make new words memorable. Safiya regularly spent the beginning of each lesson ensuring that pupils understood words in the learning objective: weight, estimate, summarise. Non-teaching staff also played a role in supporting new arrivals with vocabulary. While supervising Reception pupils in the queue for school dinners, for example, I observed catering staff make an effort to teach a newly arrived Syrian boy various food words, him pointing at what he wanted and them naming each item while placing it on his tray.

On the whole, the norm in these classrooms, and indeed dinner halls, was to see frequent examples of effective EAL practice. There were, however, some caveats and exceptions to this norm, which complicate the findings – and also make them more instructive. As apparent above, EAL strategies were much more utilised by educators in the EAL sixth form and by educators at Belloway than by mainstream educators at Altford. On the one hand, this is appropriate. Pupils in the EAL sixth form were all new to English and pupils at Belloway were primary age, so had less capability for learning through abstract methods like listening to a lecture without visual accompaniment. On the other

hand, many mainstream classes at Alford also had pupils who were new to English and could likely have benefited from more instances of EAL support strategies. Mainstream educators at Alford often spoke about how important knowledge about EAL was when working with refugee pupils but were not observed to enact this knowledge into practice with much frequency. The possible causes and implications of this discrepancy will be discussed in Chapter 7.

### *6.1.3 Socio-emotional support*

One of the main findings of this study, as detailed in Chapter 4, was that educators tended to emphasise knowledge about EAL over other relevant topics of knowledge for teaching refugee pupils. In interviews, educators rarely mentioned socio-emotional considerations – such as the effects of trauma – unless pressed to do so. In terms of educators’ practices, however, the picture was reversed. In my observations, the implementation of EAL strategies appeared to vary by individual educator and job remit, while educators at Alford and Belloway consistently displayed practices that supported pupils’ socio-emotional well-being, with very few exceptions. These practices, as detailed below, included facilitating positive peer relations, making learning fun and relevant, and being respectful of individual needs.

Firstly, educators promoted pupils’ socio-emotional well-being through their engineering of peer relationships. At Alford, Michael, Syed, and Simone all said that they created class seating assignments with particular newly arrived pupils in mind, aiming to seat them next to friendly, helpful peers. Simone added that she was considering moving one refugee pupil’s seat; initially she had sat him next to a boy with similar life experiences but was now thinking of moving him near to pupils with ‘better study skills’ since he was struggling but showed academic promise. At Belloway, Kasia moved pupils’ seats every

day – mostly randomly through the drawing of lolly sticks – and had a strong focus on encouraging all members of the class to be friendly and support each other’s learning, no matter if the partner of the day was an old friend or a newcomer. Lower down the school, Safiya, Palesa, and Samantha were almost constantly checking that pupils were socially happy, particularly pupils who were new to the school, including refugees. In the Reception class, this had the effect of several pupils keeping an eye on one new refugee pupil, frequently holding his hand, engaging him in games, and steering him towards the next activity of the day.

Educators also supported refugee pupils’ well-being by making learning fun and relevant. Most of these practices were directed at the whole class, with some actions specifically focused on individual refugee pupils. Simone turned GCSE content review into team games, Kasia had pupils dramatise main and subordinate clauses, and Michael had the class create ‘Minecraft’ mosques to learn about Islam. In the EAL sixth form, pupils moved around the science room as particles in solids, liquids, and gases and had weekly gardening sessions in the allotments nearby. In Safiya’s Year 2 class, there was a large bar of chocolate that slowly became smaller as the class used it to visualise fractions.

At times, educators tried to make learning fun and relevant specifically for refugee pupils. Kasia chose to have her Year 5s study ‘The Golden Age of Islam’ as a topic because of the Syrian pupils in the class, aiming to support their cultural identities and to shift the focus from violence and war to the region’s achievements. In Simone’s history lessons, immigration sometimes came up as a topic and she would connect it to current events such as Brexit. When two Syrian girls in her class took an interest in the Berlin Wall and related it to the present day, she facilitated a discussion about the US/Mexico border wall and the concept of asylum. Similarly, Margaret’s lessons in the EAL sixth form often involved tangential discussions driven by pupil interest and ranging from global inequality to gun control, as illustrated in the introduction to this thesis. Overall, these practices appeared to

have the effect of engaging pupils in lessons, and making school fun – or more fun than it would otherwise be – and thus promoting the well-being and learning of pupils.

Finally, educators looked out for pupil socio-emotional welfare through the respectful addressing of their needs. They were aware that some lesson content could be upsetting to refugee pupils and gave pupils prior warning of this content, as described in Chapter 4. In mainstream secondary classes, I observed Simone, Syed, Catherine and Michael regularly check-in with refugee pupils during lessons – quietly, without attracting much attention. In the EAL sixth form, Margaret deftly settled late arrivals without fanfare, managing to get them up to speed and ask if they were alright with little interruption to the lesson. These practices also took the form of specific allowances for specific pupils. Margaret allowed one UASC sixth form pupil, Osman, to speak quietly to himself throughout lessons, as it appeared to be a nervous habit that he had difficulty controlling – and he was often repeating phrases in English anyway. Similarly, Simone allowed one refugee pupil to speak constantly with her partner in lessons and Kasia permitted one refugee pupil to continually re-read the same book as his ‘choice book’ since he showed an attachment to it.

There were, of course, exceptions to educators’ positive socio-emotional practices. At the beginning of my observations, it appeared there were a few educators who showed little positive regard towards their pupils. After some time observing, however, I realised that in most of these cases, although the educators displayed gruff exteriors, their pupils liked them and learned very effectively in their classes. In one case, an educator – in my observations – was overwhelmed by the high level of need across the class and did not have positive relationships with their pupils. The refugee pupil present – and indeed most other pupils – were unacknowledged, unsupported, and unengaged. Notably, the educator in question had years of relevant experience but the situation occurred in a ‘bottom set’ class, raising questions about the compatibility of ‘setting’ and providing a quality

education for all pupils. Moreover, in a few cases, particular refugee pupils knew how to push buttons of particular educators, who then occasionally lost their patience. In the two main examples of this phenomenon, the refugee pupils involved had strengths and needs that were not met by the provision provided, which likely exacerbated tensions with educators. One pupil in the EAL sixth form was too advanced, he felt, for the beginner class, but not advanced enough, his educators felt, for the intermediate class; eventually he quit school and enrolled in college. Another pupil, this time in primary school, had difficulty focusing on lesson tasks and was often ‘told off’; his class educator frequently spent breaktime with him supporting his learning and attempting to repair the relationship.

Despite these exceptions, overall educators in this study were observed to enact a variety of practices that were supportive of refugee pupils’ – and indeed all pupils’ – socio-emotional well-being. Across the various practices a common thread emerged regarding the importance of flexibility. In creating warm, safe classroom environments, educators were often flexible in their adherence to behaviour policies. While making learning fun and relevant, educators were flexible in their adherence to the curriculum and lesson plans, encouraging tangents in accordance with pupil interest. In being respectful of individual needs, they showed flexibility in expectations for different pupils, for example allowing some pupils to talk out of turn in lessons.

Finally, to conclude this section, it was notable in the process of categorising these various types of good practice with refugee pupils that there is considerable overlap between categories. Strategies to make learning fun and relevant, for example, such as singing vocabulary or acting out new concepts, are also strategies for effective EAL learning. The steps educators took to promote positive peer relationships, such as assigning seats and partners thoughtfully, also make newcomers feel welcome – and help scaffold their learning of English. Thus, while it is useful to sort various practices into the three

categories of the holistic model of refugee education, it is equally important to remember that the model is *holistic* – that these practices are part of an integrated whole.

## **6.2 Tension between separate and mainstream provision**

In the process of observing and speaking with educators about their practices, a strong theme emerged regarding the tension between separate and mainstream provision. On the one hand, educators were expected to provide tailored teaching to each individual's needs. On the other, there was a strong ethos of inclusion in the mainstream at both schools. As Simone put it:

So challenges is helping a group of people coming from whatever difficulty they've come from feel part of something, without being artificial in how you do that. And providing what you need to do, which often can be something that's bespoke. Do you see what I mean? Which therefore separates... and that will always be a little bit of a tension.

At one end of the spectrum, the EAL sixth form provided a completely separate provision for older newcomer pupils who arrived with very little English – and sometimes very little formal education. Rather than enter GCSE or A-level-focused mainstream classrooms, these pupils were busy learning phonics, vocabulary for shopping, and how to write the date. Pupils who were placed in the programme could stay for two years, or sometimes transitioned into mainstream classes at Alford or to classes at a local college. This separate instruction was seen as highly beneficial by both mainstream and EAL educators at Alford. Several mainstream subject teachers said they would struggle to include older newly arrived pupils in their lessons, and usually referenced exams as the main complicating factor. The EAL educators were similarly concerned about exams and related curricula. Margaret noted that 'good practice and theory always tells EAL teachers mainstream, mainstream... which as a principle I would very much agree with' but that in her experience this was not always realistic: 'If they have none [no English] at all, there's

really no point, because much as we'd want them to be in mainstream, they're not going to survive, they're not going to cope.' Fiona pointed out that without separate provision, pupils who were still learning the Latin alphabet would be in classes that were practising GCSE essay question responses. Besides the mismatch in academic needs, she noted that the mainstream classroom experience for refugee pupils could be inhibiting:

You know my classes are...I don't know the exact mix, I'd say 50% refugees, so I think they feel there's lots of people who are similar to them in that classroom, with similar experiences...The reality is if you're a new beginner at English and you don't want to be laughed at you're not going to talk and make lots and lots of mistakes in another lesson. So I think students... if they were in a mainstream lesson might be quite different in their contributions to the class and their behaviour and their kind of confidence. And just the numbers, I mean the mainstream class has got 30 kids. These classes have got 12, and it's far more intimidating to talk in front of 30 than 10.

As much as educators lauded the separate EAL provision, however, they also worried about its separateness. Syed said that having the separate programme had previously caused social problems between some EAL and mainstream boys. Margaret noted that both pupils and educators felt that the EAL sixth formers were too isolated and needed to be better integrated into the mainstream sixth form. While they had made some improvements in this area – such as assigning EAL pupils to mainstream tutor groups and encouraging EAL pupils to access the sixth form social area – she thought it was still a weakness of the programme.

At the other end of the separate / mainstream spectrum, refugee pupils at Belloway were in full-time mainstream provision. Furthermore, Belloway had a policy that all pupils should complete the same tasks in lessons, rather than having separate groups with separate tasks corresponding to previous achievement. Educators used lolly sticks (i.e. random selection) to call on pupils, so every pupil was expected to be ready to contribute at any point during lessons. Similarly, at Altford, refugee pupils who were younger at arrival (eg. Years 7, 8, 9, and sometimes 10) were also in mainstream classes and were also expected

to complete the same tasks across the class. As Michael put it: ‘They [refugee pupils] get the same as everyone else gets. That’s not meant to sound harsh – it’s the opposite.’

Indeed, the question of ‘harshness’ became relevant to the discussion, especially when refugee pupils were in mainstream provision. In my first visits to Michael’s classroom, I was initially shocked by his consistent, deadpan tone of disapproval – that is, his seeming harshness towards pupils. After a few sessions, however, it became clear that he simply had high expectations for all pupils in the class. He frequently cold-called pupils during lessons and berated them for sloppy thinking and presentation – and this included a boy from Syria who had intermediate English language skills. In response, pupils were highly engaged with tasks, had thoughtful discussions, and appeared proud of their work. Similarly, at Belloway, I walked away from my first day in Safiya’s classroom with the impression that she had a near-Trunchbullian dislike for children. She was loud – very loud – and berated her 6 and 7-year-olds for speaking too quietly at the register, forgetting previous lesson content, and not helping each other pass out materials, again with no exceptions for pupils from Syria, Iraq, or Sudan, or even a pupil with a significant learning disability. But there were shouts of joy when a child did something impressive: ‘Amazing! I love you, Jyla!’ Hugging was frequent, as was insider humour: the class kept their glue sticks in an old tissue box so that other classes wouldn’t ‘borrow’ them. And again, the results were impressive. Besides being utterly devoted to their teacher, the class – including refugee pupils – was notably engaged, eager to participate, and helpful to one another.

Of course, these two ends of the spectrum – completely separate provision and completely mainstream provision – do not cover the full range of possibilities in between. At Alford, there was a TA who specialised in EAL and supported various groups of refugee pupils in their mainstream classes. Groups of pupils were also removed from mainstream for targeted instruction, for example a group of newly arrived Year 7s who had their English lessons with an EAL educator instead of an English subject teacher, and

a group of Year 10s who dropped a GCSE option in order to receive targeted instruction by an EAL educator. At Belloway, there was less scope for removing pupils from mainstream due to staffing constraints, but as detailed previously, the Arabic-speaking TA, Habibah, helped newcomers by translating in an ad-hoc manner. Educators at both schools praised the work of the TAs and EAL educators, and often said they wished there was funding for additional support staff. At Altford, Shauna noted that support was sometimes removed too soon due to competing demands around the school: ‘The annoying thing is that when they start to make really good progress, the teaching assistant usually has to go to a student who needs that support [more].’

In addition to these official support measures, individual educators also took unofficial steps to provide support – or in other words, to treat refugee pupils specially. Several of these instances have been recorded above, in the descriptions of ways that educators looked out for refugee pupils’ socio-emotional well-being, for example by allowing certain individuals to speak out of turn or sit in a particular place. Furthermore, although school policy may have been that all pupils completed the same tasks in lessons, in practice there were numerous exceptions, particularly in classes that were not set. Kasia, for example, was critical of Belloway’s policy of immediate mainstreaming, noting that ‘nobody teaches swimming these days by throwing you into the deep end, and that’s exactly what we’re doing.’ When new Syrian pupils arrived, she had sometimes given them craft activities, like making lanyards, in the first weeks ‘when all they can do is sit and nod’, rather than requiring them to participate in every lesson. In Simone’s history lessons, she managed to present the whole class – a mix of all academic levels preparing for GCSEs – with the same material but differentiated through her questioning and expectations for the work pupils produced. Refugee pupils in the class mostly managed to keep up, with frequent check-ins from Simone, helpful table partners, and the use of phones

for translation. In a more extreme case, Palesa described how when one pupil first arrived, she ended up letting him watch cartoons on a laptop in order to calm him.

These examples highlight the importance, once again, of knowing individual pupils well and responding to their needs in a flexible manner. Treating refugee pupils differently has the potential to pathologise or infantilise (Keddie, 2012), and to set lower expectations for academic achievement. Conversely, though, treating some refugee pupils differently, at some stages of their education, is welcoming and supportive – such as Simone’s differentiated lessons, Kasia’s gentle introduction to school life, and Palesa’s emergency tactics to keep a distressed child in the building. The ideal professed by case study educators in this project was for each child’s strengths and needs to be considered on an individual basis, and for each child to be provided with a bespoke provision that best suited them. While some newly arrived refugees thrived in mainstream and achieved more highly in a ‘sink or swim’ environment, according to Catherine, others would ‘slowly sink’ without additional support, according to Don. But how feasible is it to provide individual pupils with a bespoke provision, exactly matched to their needs? In the second half of this chapter, we turn to how educators’ practices are shaped and how some of the factors shaping these practices impede the ideal of a bespoke provision.

### **6.3 How educators’ knowledge and attitudes shape practices**

The question of how educators’ knowledge and attitudes shape their practices is a common thread running through this project and ties the results together in two important ways. First, since it is educators’ practices – what they do – that most affect outcomes for pupils, the shaping of educators’ practices should be of highest interest to the range of players involved, from educators to policy makers to pupils themselves. The formation of educators’ knowledge and attitudes are also important, but mainly as factors that contribute to educators’ practices. Second, educators’ practices are a common thread because they

have already been touched upon in the previous findings chapters on educators' knowledge and educators' attitudes. In these chapters, educators' practices were often described as examples of educators' knowledge and attitudes, given the abstract, somewhat intangible nature of these concepts. Thus, the following aims to discuss examples of how educators' knowledge and attitudes shaped their practices with reference to Chapters 4 and 5 but without unnecessary repetition. To this end, the multidirectional KAP model will again be employed, but while previous chapters focused on the less assumed flow of influence from practices to knowledge and attitudes, this chapter will focus on the more commonly emphasised flow of influence from knowledge and attitudes to practices. Moreover, the conceptualisation of teaching as improvisation (Holdhus et al., 2016; Sawyer, 2004, 2011) is useful in understanding the different ways in which educators' practices were shaped. While some practices were conscious, planned undertakings, based in explicit knowledge, other practices were unconscious, spontaneous, and based in tacit knowledge or underlying attitudes. Thus, the path between knowledge and practices, or attitudes and practices, can differ – which is important to note particularly if one's goal is to improve educators' practices.

### *6.3.1 How educators' knowledge shapes practices*

Across both case study schools, there were clear examples of educators' pedagogical knowledge shaping their practices. Several of these instances have been described previously, such as Margaret's anticipation of grammatical errors and Safiya's explanations of English phonic sounds. In many cases, these practices appeared to be unconscious in nature, or improvised from a repertoire of well-embedded skills. Notably, many of these practices were actions I observed but that educators did not mention in interviews or conversations, suggesting that they were actions the educators undertook without explicitly, consciously making a decision to do so.

In some cases, however, educators spoke explicitly about how they thought their knowledge influenced their practices. Simone, for example, frequently mentioned the ‘Teaching and Learning Bulletin’, an internal newsletter she produced roughly fortnightly and disseminated among staff at Altford. Simone, who was both a subject teacher and senior leadership team member, had a regular column that discussed research in education and how it could be applied in the classroom, reflecting her interest in research and her experience studying for a Master’s degree. It was clear when speaking with Simone that she was up to date on current research and associated guidance across many topics in education, including best practice for inclusion and EAL teaching. When I asked about the lack of setting in the history department, she gave a quick summary of the evidence for mixed-ability learning, then added that this was of particular relevance for newly arrived refugee pupils: ‘It’s important for people to be part of everything and not too segregated because otherwise you’ll not end up getting the rich cultural and linguistic acquisition that you [the beginner EAL pupil] need.’

Similarly, at Belloway, Kasia had a focus on research and evidence-based practice which she attributed to having been a doctoral student for several years and which she ‘liked to pull out at staff meetings and INSET days’ to share with colleagues. Furthermore, at both case study schools, the EAL specialist staff worked not only to translate their own – considerable – knowledge into practice, but also to support mainstream staff to put this knowledge into practice, as documented in Chapter 4. This knowledge often came from individuals’ higher education, such as Master’s degrees and TESOL certificates, or from other training courses they had completed as CPD, and it was shared with school staff through both formal and informal means.

Besides explicit pedagogical knowledge, several other types of knowledge helped shape educators’ practices, including language skills, knowledge about individual pupils, and knowledge about socio-emotional well-being. The two Arabic-speaking staff at

Belloway, for example, Safiya and Habibah, contributed significantly to the collective practices of the school. As an institution, Belloway was able to enact a range of practices with newly arrived refugees from Syria that would otherwise have been impossible, such as on-demand translation, home-school communication books in Arabic, and an environment that was more likely to feel welcoming. In one telling example, Safiya ascertained through informal chats with Arabic-speaking parents that they had not understood their children's educators at parents' evening and so she spoke with the educators to get the necessary information and to advise using a translator the next time. Of equal interest to how Safiya responded to the situation, however, is the fact that parents felt comfortable approaching her and explaining a problem in the first place, and that they were able to do this in a language they felt confident in.

A major theme emerging from this project's enquiry into educators' knowledge was knowledge about specific, individual pupils, which educators highlighted in addition to pedagogical knowledge. Thus, educators had a foundation of practices built of knowledge about what was good for refugee pupils in general, topped by practices that were shaped by their knowledge of individual refugee pupils. When pupils first arrived at the case study schools, educators used formal and informal assessments to get to know them in terms of academic and language levels. This shaped the type of provision they were placed in, the types of tasks they were given, and the level of support they received. Kasia noted that at Belloway she and other staff had learned that the label 'refugee' encompassed a wide range of individuals with different strengths and needs: 'With every refugee child we get more and more expertise. And I think the expertise we get is the expertise with understanding that every refugee child is different.'

Many educators also got to know individual refugee pupils in terms of their personalities and interests, shaping practices that contributed to a welcoming environment.

At Belloway, Palesa asked after a refugee pupil's baby sibling and Safiya recognised that a pupil's new clothing was from family in Iraq. In the EAL sixth form, given the class sizes of 8-12 pupils, it was feasible for educators to widely differentiate learning tasks, meanwhile maintaining a positive, personalised rapport with pupils. Margaret, Eleanor and Fiona frequently used humour, for example, to lightly reprimand pupils – when Jamal tipped his chair back *again*, when Eduardo avoided speaking English, or when Osman blurted out everything on his mind out of turn. In one illustrative example, I watched as a spelling exercise transformed from an individual to team event, as several pupils stayed up at the whiteboard once their turn was finished, weighing in on vowels and capital letters. Earlier in the lesson, Margaret had facilitated a digression on gun violence, where pupils wanted to confirm that police in the UK are not armed, and the conversation continued at one table. A new visitor to the class may have perceived chaos – half the class crowded around the whiteboard arguing about whether it was Wales or Wals, discussions about the ease of acquiring firearms in various countries carried out mainly in mime – but after visiting awhile, I came to appreciate the lack of bureaucratic norms in these lessons, based mainly in educators knowing each pupil well and being able to treat them as individuals rather than as a crowd to be controlled. This is not to suggest that educators in mainstream classes were less competent or caring. On the whole, they also appeared to know their pupils well, they simply had more pupils to interact with at any given time, and therefore spent less time with individual pupils, including those of a refugee background.

### *6.3.2 How educators' attitudes shape practices*

The main way in which educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils shaped their practices was that their positive attitudes helped form more welcoming classroom and school environments. As a brief review, educators' attitudes in this study were largely

positive towards refugee pupils and this trend likely reflected case study educators' prior experience with refugee pupils and their higher than average levels of education. Educators displayed many practices that aimed to make refugee pupils feel welcome, as described previously in this chapter. In some additional, quite overt examples, the head teacher at Belloway showed a video about a refugee child's journey to Europe as the focal point of the Red Nose Day assembly, when there were numerous other videos to choose from on the website. In Kasia's Year 5 class, she was reading aloud a novel called 'The Unforgotten Coat' about a British girl's friendship with two recent immigrants to her school. This book had been recommended to Kasia by colleagues specifically as a way to help newcomers in the class feel welcome.

Educators' positive attitudes towards refugees, and the related belief that refugees are resilient, contributed to many educators having high expectations for them. Kasia pushed two Syrian pupils to edit and re-write their stories several times, rather than settling for the fact that they had produced legible English sentences. Simone and Michael made a point of asking refugee pupils – and others who did not voluntarily contribute – for their opinions during class discussions. In the EAL sixth form, although the educators were warm, welcoming, and humorous, they had high standards for pupils' engagement with lessons, for example strictly enforcing a no phones rule and cold calling quieter pupils. These types of practices were based in the expectation that refugees did not need 'cotton wool' treatment, as Catherine put it. Rather, although refugee pupils may have faced additional barriers, educators focused on how they overcame those barriers, and saw them as needing to be challenged at school as much as other pupils. In an illustrative example of both challenging refugee pupils with high expectations and creating a welcoming environment, Syed, a maths subject teacher, said he liked to change word problems to 'nonsense words'. This had the double purpose of showing refugee pupils – and others new to English – strategies to access the maths aspects of the problems more easily, as

well as helping the rest of the class understand what it might be like to not understand everything one reads. Thus, Syed recognised that refugee pupils were not low achievers simply because they were learning English and made an effort to help other pupils recognise this as well.

The preceding examples highlight cases where educators made a conscious effort to translate their positive attitudes towards refugees into welcoming, supportive practices. However, there were also numerous cases of more improvised practices stemming from educators' positive attitudes. Actions such as smiling, using a warm tone of voice, and generally projecting positive regard were so common throughout my observations that I hardly realised they were occurring until I occasionally encountered the opposite. Case study educators also did not seem very aware of this phenomenon, or treated it as so natural and normal that they did not think it worth mentioning in interviews. This suggests more of a 'situated understanding' or phronesis definition of teaching practice, where educators act – and act well or correctly – without necessarily being able to articulate why (Winch et al., 2017).

#### **6.4 Structural factors shaping educators' practices**

In the process of interviewing and observing case study educators, it became clear that looking only at individual educator and school level influences on practice was insufficient. Repeatedly, educators spoke about features of the English education system that shaped how they worked, and the more time I spent observing, the more I realised that outside, structural factors – such as funding, curriculum and exams – played an enormous role in the way the schools operated and the practices educators enacted within. McIntyre et al. (2018) noted how schools and individuals within them translate and temper national – and indeed international – policies related to refugee pupils. In the following, I will discuss ways in which outside structural factors influenced educators' practices at Altford

and Belloway, as well as the ways in which the schools mediated the national agenda in their contexts. In my observations, Altford and Belloway enacted a variety of practices to navigate competing remits: on the one hand satisfying national educational priorities and on the other providing bespoke provision to pupils who required it. While educators are tasked, for example, with meeting targets regarding the proportion of pupils who achieve particular exam scores, they also have a remit to provide all pupils with a quality education, no matter their English language skills or prior education.

Indeed, the primary outside structural force influencing educators' practices was the English National Curriculum and associated examinations. This was much less the case in primary school than secondary, but still present across both case study schools. At Belloway, Year 6 SATs were cited as a reason that refugee pupils were sometimes given extra support. Habibah, for example, worked with one Year 6 pupil whenever the class did practice exams, translating the questions into Arabic as needed. In previous years, Safiya and Ruth said the school had organised small booster groups for refugee pupils who were very close to the standard for passing SATs. Year 2 SATs were not mentioned in relation to refugee pupils, although Safiya's whole class was often busy taking practice test papers.

At Altford, the secondary curriculum, and specifically GCSEs, were seen as a major influence on the provision options for refugee pupils and therefore educators' practices with these pupils. Both mainstream and EAL educators cited GCSEs as the main reason that it was essential to have a separate provision for some newly arrived refugee pupils – namely those in Years 10 and 11 leading up to the exams. Margaret said that exam preparation and performance could be difficult for any refugee pupil, but that additional challenges were often present for UASC, via immigration status stressors, and more newly arrived pupils, who had less time to develop English language skills while also learning the curriculum content. She noted that 'even with more settled students, it's a battle to get them to achieve their full potential in exams, in time.' She added that the government's

two year results exclusion window for pupils new to English was rarely enough time to get them ‘up to speed’:

We’ve got a student who is approaching GCSEs this summer, who arrived at the beginning of Year 10, who is very bright, able, incredibly hard-working. In the future, given enough time, that student will be a high flyer. But the GCSE grades she’s going to get won’t reflect that. We might, if we really work hard at it, just get her into the pass range. But really, give her another two years and she will be flying. So that’s an issue. I would hesitate to call that a disadvantage because why would an able student be a disadvantage? But we are somewhat trapped by the exam system and the league tables.

Margaret added that exam and related curriculum pressure also affected how the EAL team supported mainstream educators and thus their practices with refugee pupils. Some subject educators did not take up as much EAL support as they could have because they ‘feel the pressure of the curriculum... and as an EAL team, we have to be realistic. We have to work within the parameters of what mainstream teachers are doing.’

In association with curriculum and exam pressures, the school-level practice of setting classes by academic level shaped educator-level practices with refugee pupils. Altford, like most secondary schools, ‘set’ many classes, especially those higher up the school and related to traditionally academic subject matter. According to several educators, refugee pupils who were in mainstream provision were more likely to be in lower sets, due to their low levels of English language and/or missed education. The case of Shauna’s Year 7 bottom set class has already been discussed in previous chapters; briefly, she said, and I observed, that grouping all the lowest level pupils in one room made it nearly impossible for much teaching and learning to occur. The reasons that pupils were far behind were wide-ranging – from specific learning difficulties to emotional and behavioural problems to simply being new to the English language. All of these reasons, however, tended to cause pupils to need extra support, and to become disengaged when they did not receive it. Similarly, in his interview Syed noted that ‘the types of classes that they [refugee pupils] are put in, every student is kind of high need in some way or form’. In my observations,

Syed spent most of his energy directed at a handful of boys who were inattentive and disruptive without constant input, while checking in periodically with the two refugee pupils in the class – who luckily often had a TA supporting them.

Finally, many of the comments educators made about structural factors had to do with funding, or lack thereof. At the time of my visit, Belloway was undersubscribed – which was attributed mainly to a bad Ofsted report several years previously – and left in the financially and organisationally awkward position of having too few pupils to fill a two-form entry, but too many to be a one-form entry. In contrast, Altford had recently become oversubscribed, which improved its financial stability through a full allotment of the per pupil allowance. Both schools received additional funding for pupils on the VPRS and Altford received additional funding for UASC pupils as part of Pupil Premium Plus. Across both schools, however, educators noted numerous ways that a lack of funds constrained what they knew to be good practice with refugee pupils. At Altford, Don said he thought he could do a better job with smaller classes and more time to prepare lessons – both items that would cost the school more money. Similarly, but at Belloway, Palesa said she wished she had fewer pupils or more staff so that each child could have more individual attention:

‘There’s no time... to really get engrossed in a conversation and doing something with them. We try to do it here to an extent, but we’ve got so many things we’ve got to tick off, that you don’t sit and play, just really get lost in that play for that child.’

Even in the EAL sixth form, where classes were kept small, Margaret thought that the provision was not ideal and could be improved with more staffing:

The two groups we’ve got at the moment, probably most of them are somewhere in a middle ground. So, if we could have three groups, that would be perfect, but we can’t because we haven’t got the teachers, so we just have to split somehow.

Furthermore, some educators noted that the funding landscape had shifted and that this had caused changes to the provision they were able to offer, and thus to the practices of the educators. Ruth, who was a senior manager at Belloway and had taught there for ten years, said that in the past, they had a TESOL trained TA to provide more tailored support for new arrivals with EAL, but that now, with an influx of refugee pupils, they no longer had the funds. Safiya similarly contrasted past support with the current situation, remarking that in addition to funding for a dedicated TA, they ‘used to have the local authority advisor coming in to check on us, give us ideas’ but that all of that had stopped in recent years as local authority services were cut. These reductions in support were felt by several educators to limit the provision offered to refugee pupils.

Some of the detrimental structural influences on educators’ practices with refugee pupils were moderated through the priorities and practices of their schools. Given the wide – and sometimes contradictory – range of educational pressures and policies present in England, it is possible for schools to have some discretion in terms of what is actually followed. For example, inclusion is a strong tenet of the English educational system, but so are high-stakes exams, and the practices schools enact to get pupils to pass exams can also be exclusionary. At Altford, exam pressure and the associated issues with bottom set classes were tempered by some departments who did not group pupils by academic level. The two main examples I observed were Simone’s GCSE level history classes and Michael’s Year 7 humanities class. In both cases, refugee pupils were mixed into mainstream classes with a cross-section of other pupils from across the school, rather than being grouped with other pupils who needed additional support. This resulted in refugee pupils sitting beside, for example, native English speakers, other recent immigrants, pupils who were scraping a pass, pupils who were predicted to get all As, and the class clown who barely completed the date by the time everyone else had written a paragraph. In my observations, both Simone and Michael were highly experienced educators who managed

to skilfully navigate this wide range of levels through differentiated questioning, differentiated outcomes, and a good knowledge of individual pupils' strengths, needs, and personalities. How feasible these types of classes would be across a whole school – or whole school system – remains a question.

In sum, structural factors were found to be important shapers of educators' practices, in addition to their knowledge and attitudes. While the national education system was not the main focus of this study, it is essential to consider the ways in which macro factors such as curricula and funding can affect not only schools but individual educators and their practices. Indeed, perhaps it is useful to conceptualise the case studies as doubly nested – educators within schools, and schools within the wider national context. Furthermore, it is instructive to note the ways in which the case study schools translated national policies and expectations to their own context, and to consider how schools can be most supportive of educators' good practices with refugee pupils.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

While provision for refugee pupils was different between and within the case study schools, ranging from immediate full-time mainstreaming to a separate EAL sixth form, many examples of good practice were found across classrooms in Altford and Belloway. These practices broadly fit within a holistic model of practice, from creating a welcoming environment to meeting language, academic, and socio-emotional needs. However, there was a gap between what educators knew about good practice and what they were observed to actually do in classrooms. Namely, EAL strategy practices were less present in mainstream secondary classrooms than would be expected given how often educators referred to them in interviews. Meanwhile, practices supportive of socio-emotional well-being were highly prevalent, though not frequently mentioned in interviews, suggesting that these practices were less planned or conscious than others. The theme of treating

refugee pupils as individuals was found to be important across the areas of the holistic model, as well as for navigating the tension between inclusion in the mainstream and separate, targeted instruction – and for accurate placement of pupils along this spectrum.

In addition to investigating what practices educators used with refugee pupils, this chapter also explored the ways in which these practices may have been shaped. Educators' knowledge and attitudes were both found to shape practices in a number of ways. Educators had a base of pedagogical and language knowledge relevant to all refugee pupils that they were observed to enact in their classrooms, as well as having specific knowledge about individual pupils that affected their practices with these pupils. Educators' positive attitudes towards refugee pupils contributed to the creation of warm, welcoming learning environments at both case study schools, and educators' focus on refugee pupils' resilience shaped their practices related to high expectations for these pupils. Furthermore, a major emergent finding of this project was that case study educators' practices with refugee pupils were also shaped by external, structural factors such as national funding formulas, curricula, and high stakes exams. This additional, overarching layer to the case studies explained a number of school and educator practices, and was often a barrier to providing the type of bespoke, holistic provision educators idealised. This finding and its implications will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 7.

## **CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION**

The preceding chapters present data in response to the question of how educators interact with refugee pupils, in terms of their knowledge, their attitudes, and their practices. Educators' knowledge was found to be variable, linked to previous experience, and mainly acquired through colleagues. Educators' attitudes were complex, reflecting the heterogeneity of the refugee pupil population and the complex context of the education system, but were overall positive – and more likely to be positive amongst educators with previous relevant experiences. Finally, case study educators' practices were holistic in scope and were shaped by their knowledge and attitudes – but also by structural factors beyond their control. Overall, this project provides a glimpse into the range of knowledge and attitudes about refugee pupils to be found across a diverse local authority. Moreover, it provides detailed examples of how educators at two case study schools practise, showing how they manage – and thrive – despite an absence of broader systemic support.

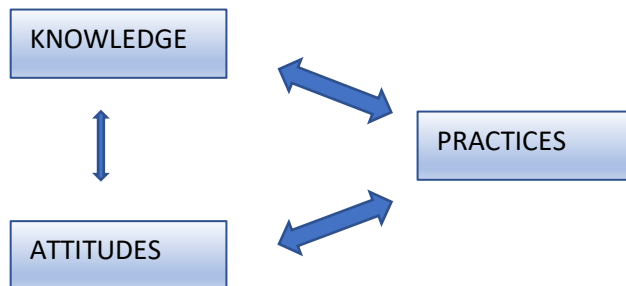
In the following, I situate these findings within the wider academic literature with the goal of addressing the research aims. First, I revisit the KAP conceptual framework as laid out in Chapters 1 and 2 and find it lacking in terms of explaining the results of this project. I propose a new conceptual framework to better illustrate how educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices are formed and how they influence each other – namely by highlighting the circular, multidirectional relationships between the concepts. The new KAP framework provides an overarching structure for the chapter, with subsections corresponding to each concept and thereby each research question. Throughout, I explain how each part of the new framework is grounded in the results of this study as well as the relevant literature. In conclusion, I discuss the 'larger nest' of the national education

context. This study focused on individual educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices situated within their school environments, yet it adds to a growing body of literature identifying the national education system as a constraining factor for enacting positive practices with refugee pupils.

## **7.1 KAP revisited**

In the first chapter of this thesis, I attempted to adapt the KAP conceptual framework used in public health to the needs of this study. It was clear from the literature that the linear, unidirectional relationship between concepts – where better knowledge causes better attitudes and better attitudes cause better practices – was oversimplified (Muleme et al., 2017; Rav-Marathe et al., 2016). Instead, I proposed a version of the model where knowledge and attitudes shape practices independently, and where the influence flows bidirectionally, for example with knowledge shaping practices but with practices also shaping knowledge. These modifications were based on the thinking of Ernest (1989), who outlined how mathematics educators' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs independently shape their practices, and by scholars in the area of educator development. Guskey (1986), for example, argued that CPD programmes work not by altering educators' knowledge, but rather through changing educators' practices first, which changes the outcomes for their pupils, which in turn changes the educators' knowledge and attitudes. Extending this argument, Clarke & Hollingsworth (2002) proposed that a better model of educator learning is non-linear, with educators' knowledge and practices interacting in a web-like relationship. From these foundations, I created a KAP model that was non-linear and multidirectional, as illustrated in **Figure 9** below.

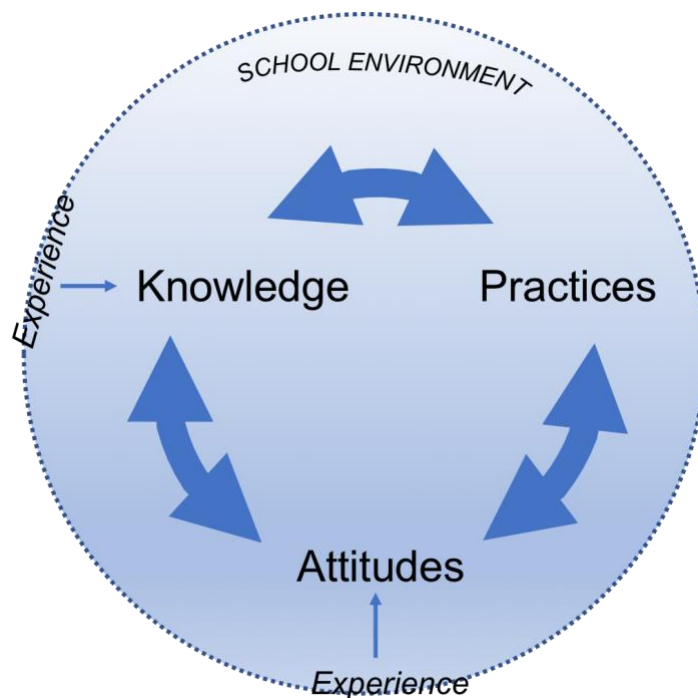
**Figure 9. The initial model for this study**



This modified KAP framework was a useful tool to begin considering the relationships between educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices. As the project progressed, however, I found that it was not sufficient to address the research questions with the data I had collected. First, there was an issue around causality. My sub-research questions ask about how knowledge is *acquired*, how attitudes are *formed*, and how practices are *shaped* – words implying causation. Yet, my data mainly shows associations between phenomena, for example that educators with more experience teaching refugee pupils also had more positive attitudes towards them. Furthermore, there was an issue around oversimplification. The modified KAP framework was missing concepts that were key to understanding the acquisition, formation, and shaping of educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

To address these issues, I made further modifications to create a new KAP framework, dubbed the Integrated Knowledge Attitudes and Practices framework (IKAP). The descriptor ‘integrated’ was chosen to portray the way in which knowledge, attitudes, and practices interact in a circular, multi-directional manner (**Figure 10**).

**Figure 10. The integrated knowledge, attitudes, and practices (IKAP) framework**



*Educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices are represented in a circular format, with arrows indicating the bidirectional influence between concepts. A dotted line is used to delineate the school environment, acknowledging that the boundary between schools and wider society is porous. Educators’ experience is situated on the boundary between school and wider society, reflecting the finding that personal and professional experiences contributed to educators’ knowledge and attitudes.*

The overall shape of the framework has been changed to be more circular, thus emphasising that there is not one set starting point or end point in the relationship between the three main concepts. I have added factors that influenced the development of knowledge, attitudes, and practices, namely ‘school environment’ and ‘experience’ – both professional and personal. Previously, I had tried to work these factors into the original KAP model, for example by lumping ‘experiences’ together with ‘practices’, but found that they were conceptually too distinct.

The bidirectional arrows between the three main concepts remain. My data still cannot establish causality between, for example, attitudes and practices; however, there are good reasons to assume that the causality runs in both directions. First, there is literature

that examines causality between these concepts, including a wealth of empirical and theoretical studies that support a bidirectional relationship. Second, educators sometimes spoke about causality in interviews, for example when Adam told me that working at Belloway had made him more positive about refugees. I understand Adam's statements as his explanation of how his attitudes were formed – his perception of himself rather than a positivist statement about the world. Yet, I also argue that these types of perceptions make a valuable contribution to our overall understanding. Thus, based on previous literature and the perceptions of educators in this study, the IKAP framework assumes that causality between concepts is bidirectional.

The IKAP framework is directly rooted in the findings of the present study and is therefore relevant to educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices specifically related to refugee pupils. Whether it is applicable to other topics within education is unknown but could be an area of future study. It seems likely that the IKAP could be usefully applied to educators' interactions with different groups of pupils – for example, those with SEN – due to a similar foundation in empathy and care. Noddings (1986) argues that this type of 'ethic of care' should underly all interactions between educators and pupils, conceptualising teaching as a relationship-based, morally-driven activity. It seems less likely that the IKAP framework would be applicable to subjects lacking this care-based foundation – such as educators' interactions with a particular curricular area or pedagogical tool. Overall, and particularly given the politically charged rhetoric around immigration and asylum, it is possible that the IKAP framework's use is limited to the study of educators' interactions with refugee pupils.

In the following, I use the IKAP as a guide to discuss the contributions of this project, situated within the relevant literature. It should be noted that the IKAP is the main theoretical framework guiding this study. Other theories related solely to one concept within the IKAP (e.g. intergroup contact theory in relation to attitudes, cultural and

historical activity theory in relation to practices) were useful in terms of understanding these component concepts, but have limited explanatory power in relation to the thesis as a whole.

## **7.2 Knowledge**

I begin by discussing the concept of educators' knowledge – for reasons of convenience and clarity. The IKAP is circular and can be applied in any direction, for example to think about how attitudes affect knowledge or about how knowledge affects practices. In other words, it could be an AKP framework or a KPA framework or a PAK framework as easily as a KAP framework. In this section, I discuss educators' knowledge about teaching refugee pupils in relation to the topics of knowledge held and the factors that influenced knowledge acquisition.

### *7.2.1 Prominence of EAL knowledge*

According to the literature on best practice with refugee pupils, the ideal educator would have a range of knowledge associated with a holistic range of practices. Besides knowing strategies to support language learning, they would also know how to create a welcoming environment and care for refugees' socio-emotional well-being (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Block et al., 2014; McIntyre & Abrams, 2021; Webster et al., 2013). In this project, the case study educators did have a range of knowledge relevant to teaching refugee pupils, including EAL techniques and strategies, pastoral care, and funding information. However, a key question arose about why educators had more knowledge in some refugee-relevant areas than others, and specifically why there was such an emphasis on EAL versus pastoral care topics such as the effects of trauma. Previous studies, though not specifically related to educator knowledge, have found similar results in terms of how

educators perceive refugee pupils. Studies of educators' perceived challenges when working with refugee pupils find language barriers and communication issues to be prominent – in locations around the world, for example Kronick (2013) in Kenya, Rah, Choi, & Nguyễn (2009) in the USA, and Whiteman (2005) in the UK. Furthermore, Dabbous (2019) and Pinson & Arnot (2010) argue that some educators and local authorities in England see refugee pupils mainly through an EAL lens, which can prevent them from acknowledging and addressing pupils' strengths and non-language needs.

One cause of this focus on EAL knowledge could be the conspicuousness of EAL as a presenting feature versus 'quieter' needs such as anxiety. Educators are documented as being more likely to take note of 'loud' or obvious features of pupils than quieter, internalised ones, simply given the pressured nature of the job (Liljequist & Renk, 2007; Papandrea & Winefield, 2011). Being unable to communicate in the lingua franca of the classroom is a need that demands immediate educator attention in that a pupil cannot take part in most curricular or social activities without some sort of educator action. In contrast, a pupil feeling anxious due to the effects of trauma does not necessarily demand immediate action in the form of externalising behaviours. According to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines (NICE, 2018), PTSD can present with a wide range of symptoms, many of which could be difficult to perceive, such as 'emotional numbing' or negative self-perception. Moreover, pupils who have experienced trauma may be at sub-clinical levels for PTSD, making the effects even less noticeable to a busy educator. Depending on how an individual's anxiety presents, educators may never know that a pupil is anxious or has experienced trauma.

Larger structural factors could also be at play in causing educators to emphasise EAL needs. The English National Curriculum and exam regime shape educators' priorities with refugee pupils and thus their knowledge about how to teach them (McIntyre et al., 2018). In England, educators are held accountable for their pupils' academic outcomes as

measured on high-stakes exams for which knowing English is essential. Furthermore, there is a dearth of education policy targeted at refugee pupils, meaning they are subsumed under the umbrella of EAL. As McIntyre et al. (2018; p.8) note in their comparison of England and Sweden's policies and practices with refugee pupils, in England, 'EAL dominates other elements of their [refugee pupils'] identity' due to a lack of refugee-specific policy and high stakes exam pressures. In contrast, Sweden has policies that focus on the strengths refugee pupils bring to the classroom, such as their prior learning in various languages (McIntyre et al., 2018).

There is, however, a major caveat to the present study's finding that educators emphasised EAL knowledge over other topics of knowledge such as well-being. Namely, there was a difference between data sources when it came to the types of knowledge educators said they had in interviews and the types of knowledge they displayed when I observed in their classrooms. While in interviews case study educators privileged EAL knowledge over knowledge about pastoral care and the potential effects of trauma, in practice I observed a high level of consideration for refugee pupils' socio-emotional well-being. As detailed in Chapter 6, educators at Altford and Belloway were frequently observed checking in with refugee pupils, using a gentle or humorous tone, and generally being supportive and caring. This discrepancy between educators' professed knowledge and their observed practices – rather than being a problem to overcome – presents an opportunity to gain a more nuanced understanding of the situation, and is an advantage of employing mixed methods (Greene, 2007, 2012). The lack of emphasis that educators placed on pastoral care in their interviews initially suggested that they did not have much knowledge in the area and/or did not consider this knowledge to be important when teaching refugee pupils. Yet the actions of educators showed the opposite: that they cared about the well-being of their pupils and had sufficient knowledge to show this care in a variety of ways. This raises a key question about tacit versus explicit knowledge, that is,

does it matter what someone *knows* as long as they *do* the right thing? Not all educators may have realised or been able to articulate the knowledge they had that helped them support refugee pupils' socio-emotional well-being, but they appeared to have underlying tacit knowledge or 'practical wisdom' shaping their practices (Winch et al., 2017). This theme has connections to results regarding educators' practices and will be discussed in section 7.4.2 below. Overall, the present study tentatively corroborates previous work finding an educator emphasis on language needs, with the caveat that my observations of case study participants often contradicted this finding.

### 7.2.2 *Experience and knowledge*

The results of the present study update a body of evidence from the early 2000s, now rather dated, regarding educators' experience and knowledge with refugee pupils. Across the present study, educators with previous relevant experience reported having more knowledge and feeling better prepared to teach refugee pupils. Surveyed educators reported a wide range of preparation levels; higher preparation was positively associated with previous teaching of refugee pupils, pupils with EAL, and pupils looked after by children's social care. Case study educators all had a minimum of two years working with refugee pupils or pupils with EAL. They reported feeling knowledgeable and prepared to teach refugee pupils and my observations largely concurred. Previous studies of educators working with refugee pupils also found a link between relevant experience and knowledge. Ofsted (2003) compiled a report following visits to 37 schools in 11 local authorities and found that there was wide variation in educators' knowledge about how to welcome, assess, and effectively teach asylum seeking pupils. Schools in 'dispersal areas', with less experience of asylum seekers, had insufficient knowledge about how to meet asylum seekers' learning and socio-emotional needs (Ofsted, 2003). Similarly, Arnot & Pinson (2005) reported variation in knowledge and practices across 58 English local education

authorities, with LEAs in dispersal areas using policy documents from London LEAs to augment their knowledge.

The present study also highlights the importance of individual, ‘expert’ educators to developing knowledge within their schools. The EAL educators at Altford and Belloway had extensive experience with refugee pupils and frequently passed on knowledge to mainstream educators through training sessions and informal conversations. This resonates with a recent study of Syrian pupils in Glasgow, where Baak (2019) found that practices varied widely between schools – but that good practice often came down to the presence of one knowledgeable individual who acted as an ‘agent of inclusion’. The presence of expert educators or agents of inclusion should be celebrated; their colleagues in the present study reported feeling confident with refugee pupils because they could ask for support. However, this situation does raise questions about the sustainability of knowledge within schools, in terms of what will happen when experts move on or retire. The purpose of this project was not to investigate how staff turnover affects schools’ collective knowledge, however it could be productive to apply the concept of schools as ‘learning organisations’ (Kools et al., 2020; OECD, 2016) to the study, exploring how embedded the experts’ knowledge has become at Altford and Belloway and thereby predicting how the schools might cope in the event of their departure.

### *7.2.3 Practices and knowledge*

In addition to experience, educators’ knowledge was found to be influenced by their practices. In the IKAP framework, experiences and practices are separate concepts. This study defines ‘practices’ as ‘the actions educators do’ (see Chapter 2), whereas ‘experiences’ can be passive and do not necessarily involve action. In this study, there were numerous examples of educators’ practices helping them to acquire knowledge.

First, as detailed above, educators enacted the practice of asking colleagues for knowledge. Survey educators were twice as likely to get knowledge from a colleague as from any other single source (n=72; followed by ‘online teaching networks’, n=36). In the case studies, the theme of asking a colleague for information or support was prominent across interview data, with some educators extensively praising the EAL teams: ‘The EAL department are golden. They’re brilliant’ (Shauna, Altford). There is no specific literature on educator knowledge acquisition and refugee pupils, but studies of educator knowledge acquisition more generally point towards colleagues as a primary source. Cooper et al. (2017), for example, found that educators in Canada sourced knowledge about assessment mainly from their colleagues, because they felt practising educators were most likely to understand how a new idea might be adapted to their classrooms. Dimmock (2016) also noted that educators mainly acquire knowledge through their colleagues, which he juxtaposed against learning from research – a theme that will be taken up in more detail below. The results of this study build on these findings and provide a foundation for future research about educators’ knowledge acquisition specifically when working with refugees.

Case study educators also emphasised that they learned about teaching refugee pupils through personal and professional experience. Some of these experiences would fit into the ‘experiences’ category in the IKAP framework – that is, they were occurrences that *happened to* an educator, such as hearing a UASC pupil describe his experiences in an assembly, or immigrating to the UK themselves. When they said they learned something ‘through experience’ however, educators frequently were referring to their practices. They described a trial and improvement process akin to Kolb’s Cycle of Experiential Learning and other ‘reflective practitioner’ models (Philpott, 2014), noting what worked and what didn’t work and making corresponding adjustments. As Catherine at Altford put it: ‘(I’m) confident in the sense that I’ve been doing this for nearly 30 years, and I’ve learned a hell of a lot.’

#### 7.2.4 *The question of formal training*

‘Formal training’ does not have its own place in the IKAP framework. I have included it as a separate section here because it can be seen both as an experience, that happens to an educator, and as a practice, that an educator undertakes through their actions. The category of best fit is dependent on the characteristics of the training – for example, whether it is a lecture that educators attend or a practice-based learning activity that they are actively involved in.

This study found that training played a complex role in forming educators’ knowledge about teaching refugee pupils. It was selected by only 41 (39%) of survey educators (n=28 or 27% in-house training by colleagues and n=13 or 12% training by LA or another outside group). In contrast, 69% of educators said they acquired knowledge through colleagues or friends. Case study educators emphasised the role of formal training slightly more than at the survey schools. This could be because the case study schools had larger refugee pupil populations than most survey schools and therefore sought out relevant training, or it could be that schools with diverse populations attracted staff who had already completed training courses in relevant areas. From a more methodological angle, it could also be due to me asking specifically about training and CPD opportunities in interviews – and thus the theme rose in quantity and significance in the interview data.

The decentralisation of power and funding in some education systems could also contribute to educators having less access to formal training than previously. In England, Chapman & Salokangas (2012) found that academisation did not improve the quality or consistency of educator CPD. Similarly, in the US, Wei et al. (2014) found that educators at Texas charter schools had fewer opportunities for CPD than at regular public schools.

This study did not set out to examine the changing relationship between local authorities and schools, or to assess changes in CPD opportunities over time, but both case study schools were academies and educators reported internal training much more frequently than external. The only mention of the local authority was when Safiya said she had previously received support from their staff but that the service had been discontinued.

In addressing the question of training, however, it is also important to consider that educators often express a distaste for traditional course-style CPD, finding it erratic in trajectory and inapplicable to their particular classroom contexts (Boston Consulting Group, 2014; Kennedy, 2016). While educators in this study did not make overtly negative comments about formal CPD, they did repeatedly emphasise how much they learned from experience as opposed to training. This may have been due to a lack of availability of formal training; however, it could also provide a window into educators' preferences, reflected through what they remembered and what they chose to speak about. At Alford, for example, only one educator mentioned a guest speaker at a staff training who had spoken about challenges local refugee families face. It seems unlikely that all other case study educators would have been absent from this event, yet none of them mentioned it. Instead, they focused on how much they had learned through years of teaching refugee pupils, or of teaching a wide range of pupils more generally. There is substantial evidence that on-the-job CPD programmes (DeMonte, 2013) and CPD that treats participants as colleagues (Cordingley, 2015; Kennedy, 2016) – precisely the type of training that participant educators foregrounded – are more effective in changing educator practices than traditional CPD courses.

### **7.3 Attitudes**

Overall, this study found educators' attitudes to be positive towards refugee pupils. In the following, I explore some reasons why educators' attitudes may have been positive,

discuss tensions that arose regarding how ‘the same’ or ‘different’ to treat refugee pupils, and use the lens of the IKAP framework to examine how educators’ attitudes may have been formed.

### *7.3.1 Positive attitudes: survey results*

There are few studies that quantify educators’ attitudes towards refugee pupils, and none that use similar measures to those employed here. Results from the survey portion of this study therefore contribute a foundation that could be built upon with further research. Moreover, there is not a body of literature to easily use as a comparison with this study’s results. Instead, I draw on a study by Louis et al. (2013) that used the same ‘thermometer’ measure of attitudes but had some differences in terms of sample and subject – namely, that participants were undergraduate students instead of educators and the subject was ‘refugees’ in general rather than ‘refugee pupils’.

In the present study, surveyed educators were more highly positive than in the Louis et al. (2013) study, scoring an average of 8.62 (SD=1.73) on a 0-10 scale in contrast with 6.86 (SD=1.72). One reason for this difference could be the conceptual closeness that educators may feel for pupils versus people out in society more generally. In a review of factors influencing people’s attitudes towards refugees, Esses et al. (2017) identified the dehumanisation of refugees as linked to negative attitudes towards them. Studies of ‘individuation’ have found that getting to know a person from an outgroup can improve attitudes towards other members of that outgroup, precisely through the process of ‘including the other in the self’ (Cameron et al., 2006, p. 1209) – or ‘humanising’ rather than ‘dehumanising’ them. In this study, around half (n=144, 50.3%) of the survey educators had some amount of experience teaching refugee pupils, meaning that when they thought of ‘refugee pupils’, they may have been thinking of real individuals rather than an

abstract concept. Louis et al. (2013) do not report whether their sample, undergraduate students in Canada and Australia, had regular contact with refugees, but it seems unlikely that it would be the case for half of them given the low proportion of the population that is of refugee background and the even lower proportion of refugees who access higher education. Thus, educators in the present study may have had more positive attitudes due to the effects of individuation and humanisation.

Additionally, educators are, on average, well-educated and education is known to be associated with positive attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Cowling et al., 2019; Dempster & Hargrave, 2017; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; NatCen, 2017; Wike et al., 2016). In this study, nearly half of participants (n=135, 48.6%) had both an undergraduate and a postgraduate degree and another nearly 40% (n=106, 38.1%) had only an undergraduate degree, since qualified teachers in England are required to have an undergraduate degree in Education or a Postgraduate Certificate in Education in addition to a degree in another subject area and the vast majority of respondents were qualified teachers rather than teaching assistants. The undergraduate students in the Louis et al. (2013) study were substantially less educated in terms of degrees completed.

The picture is likely more complex, however. The student participants in Louis et al.'s (2013) study were technically less educated than the present study's sample because they had not yet completed their degrees, but given a few years they may have achieved similar levels of education. Moreover, it is unclear from the literature whether it is education itself that causes people to have more positive attitudes towards immigrants and immigration, or whether education is a marker for other traits and experiences that make people feel more positive. Ceobanu & Escandell (2010) note that highly educated people also tend to live in more culturally diverse urban areas, and that this could be the cause of positivity around immigration rather than education itself. Perhaps a more influential factor could be the perception of teaching as a 'caring profession', which would have

implications both in terms of self-selection into the profession and in the development of educators' attitudes once part of the system. These types of questions about causality and the formation of attitudes will be further discussed in section 7.3.4 below.

### *7.3.2 More assets than deficits: case study results*

Qualitative literature on educators' interactions with refugee pupils does not tend to overtly mention educators' attitudes, or to have educators' attitudes as a main focus or research question. One exception is a study by Kronick (2013) of educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils in Kenya. Despite the differences in setting, the findings of the present study and Kronick's study have substantial overlap. Kronick found that educators identified communication and language barriers as their primary challenge but that they also identified benefits to receiving refugee pupils, such as facilitating cultural exchange and increasing tolerance. In the present study, educators similarly focused on language needs and strategies, as discussed above, but also emphasised the benefits of multicultural classrooms.

Other studies allude indirectly to educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils, for example in case studies looking at how schools are managing with refugee pupils or how refugee pupils are managing in schools. Often this takes the form of researchers arguing that educators engage in asset-based or deficit-based approaches with refugee pupils. Dabbous' (2019) study in Glasgow, for example, found that educators saw refugee pupils through a deficit lens via their focus on EAL and lack of recognition of cultural differences, thereby 'inadvertently assimilating' them (p. 224). Several researchers in Australia have argued that educators – and society more generally – overemphasise refugees' pre-migration trauma, thereby missing other important features of individuals (Ingamells & Westoby, 2008; Marlowe, 2010; Matthews, 2008). In a similar vein, Keddie (2012) related

how deficit lenses can have a positive veneer, such as when educators infantilise refugee pupils by calling them ‘cute’.

The present study, in contrast, found that educators had a mainly asset-based approach, while recognising that refugee pupils had additional needs. On the one hand, educators emphasised EAL needs, which could be seen as a deficit lens. On the other, they frequently said that they thought refugee pupils contributed to a positive, multicultural, and globally aware school environment, thus focusing on their strengths. Similarly, educators in this study acknowledged the trauma refugee pupils may have experienced but tended to focus more on resilience – in contrast with studies that find an over-emphasis on trauma. Indeed, the results of this study resonate with literature that describes examples of good practice with refugee pupils. Although these studies about practice do not make educators’ attitudes the main subject of their research, findings regarding educators’ attitudes often are commented upon as side notes or reflected in practices enacted. Some examples include the commitment educators had to their refugee pupils in Madziva & Thondhlana (2017) and the ‘empathy, understanding, and positivity’ they expressed in Bailey (2011, p. 72). School case studies by McIntyre & Abrams (2021) and Peterson (2017) document educators showing concern for how safe and welcomed refugee pupils feel, and promoting positive social relationships and academic progress – much as in the present study. While previous studies did not ask educators directly about their attitudes towards refugee pupils, the educators’ actions seem likely to indicate positive attitudes, as was the case at Altford and Belloway. This theme will be discussed in more detail in the sections on educators’ practices, below.

### 7.3.3 *Same? Different? Individuals*

Dabbous (2019) argued that educators can view refugee pupils through a deficit lens by failing to recognise their diversity, instead ‘homogenising’ them in an effort to treat all pupils equally – or ‘naïve egalitarianism’ (p. 221). The present study’s findings were more nuanced, with educators identifying a tension between sameness and differentness when thinking about refugee pupils. This tension was particularly notable in statements related to whether new arrivals should be in mainstream or separate provision. Several educators at Alford, for example, lauded the EAL sixth form and other EAL department-based groups, with some saying that they would feel incapable of teaching refugee pupils without that support or that the older refugee pupils would not be able to attend their mainstream school without this separate provision. However, educators at both schools also emphasised how quickly refugee pupils learned English when immersed in mainstream classes, and how important it was not to treat refugee pupils as special or different.

In a specific example of the latter sentiment, Michael professed that ‘they [refugee pupils] get the same as everyone else gets. That’s not meant to sound harsh – it’s the opposite.’ This emphasis on the normality or sameness of refugee pupils could be critiqued as ‘homogenising’ as per Dabbous (2019), above, or as a version of racial ‘colour-blindness’: blurring over differences to claim a common ground and thereby ignoring the structural challenges faced by different groups (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Colour-blind attitudes are associated with less awareness of discrimination and have negative effects on intergroup interactions, outcomes for minorities, and inclusive teaching practices (Plaut et al., 2018). However, it could also be argued that educators like Michael were recognising refugee pupils’ assets and respecting their agency by treating them the same as other pupils. As noted previously, refugee young people often identify school as a ‘normalising’ force

in their lives, a place where they can focus on similar goals to other young people rather than dwelling on their pasts (Chase et al., 2008; Hek, 2005b; Wade et al., 2012). Thus, perhaps by emphasising sameness, educators like Michael were creating an inclusive environment where young people felt welcome and could thrive.

At the foundation of this tension between sameness and differentness is a broader debate about the advantages and disadvantages of labelling groups of pupils in general. In the SEN literature, proponents of labelling theory argue that labelling pupils shapes their self-identity and behaviour; that is, by labelling a child as having special needs, one may be creating or augmenting those needs, and thus labels are more harmful than helpful (see, for example, Algraigray & Boyle, 2017; Lauchlan & Boyle, 2007). Others argue that labelling can be useful for practitioners in terms of understanding diagnoses and enacting appropriate practices – as well as for securing additional funding (Draper, 2018). In terms of labelling and refugee pupils, there are good reasons that asylum seeking individuals might not want their status recorded as such at schools, including the fear of schools cooperating with immigration officers if an asylum application is rejected. Conversely, Pinson & Arnot (2010) note that a lack of labelling means refugee pupils become invisible in the system, for purposes of funding as well as tracking academic progress. Without a ‘refugee’ label used consistently across schools in England, there is no way of knowing how these pupils are doing on a larger scale than asking individuals, their families, and their educators what they think.

The answers to many of these questions come down to the characteristics of individual refugee pupils, as was consistently highlighted to me by case study educators. They considered that for some pupils, being treated ‘exactly the same’ is an advantage; for others, it is harmful. For some pupils, being labelled as a refugee, or as having EAL, or as experiencing trauma, brings welcome support; for others, it brings unwanted attention or stigma. As described in Chapter 5, case study educators frequently noted that refugees

were a diverse group and even questioned why I was interested in this as a category of pupils. Indeed, I would argue that educators aimed to ‘heterogenise’ my umbrella term of ‘refugee pupil’ when it came up in interviews, rather than homogenising individuals. As Kasia put it: ‘I think with every refugee child we get more and more expertise. And I think the expertise we get is the expertise with understanding that every refugee child is different.’ Thus, educators in this study professed the aim of tailoring their practices to each individual pupil – though a question remains as to the achievability of this aim. As Demetriou (2020) concluded in a recent review of literature on labelling and SEN, an ideal education system would not require labels because unique individuals would be treated as such; this ideal, however, he argues, remains a utopia.

#### 7.3.4 Attitudes, experience, and practices: virtuous circles

I now return to the IKAP framework to help explain how educators’ attitudes towards refugee pupils may have formed. The survey portion of this study tested associations between individual educators’ characteristics and their attitudes towards refugee pupils. It found significant associations between positive attitudes and the following factors: experience teaching refugee pupils and identifying as an immigrant oneself. The hypothesised association between higher education levels and positive attitudes was not significant, although this was likely due to there being little variation in education levels across the sample. Associations between positive attitudes and experience teaching EAL and children in social care were also not significant, suggesting a possible conceptual distinction between refugees and these groups in educators’ minds. The case study portion of this study found that educators’ attitudes and the practices of their schools were interwoven – although the direction of influence between individual and school was impossible to untangle with the data collected. There is not yet a body of literature

examining how educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils form, so I will consider these results in light of literature in related fields.

First, the literature on intergroup contact theory can contribute to the discussion around the relationship between experience and attitudes – and indeed was the foundation for this project's hypothesis that experience with refugee pupils would cause educators to be more positive about them. Since Allport (1954) first put forth the proposition that contact between different groups reduces prejudice between them, a field of literature has grown to test this hypothesis. With some exceptions, and given that certain conditions are present, a large body of literature has found support for intergroup contact improving intergroup relations (Mousa, 2020; Paluck et al., 2019; Pettigrew et al., 2011). A smaller body of literature looks at intergroup contact in schools, and several studies have found that educators with experience of 'diverse' or 'multicultural' classrooms are more positive about outgroup pupils (Glock et al., 2019; Pit-ten Cate & Glock, 2019; Rissanen et al., 2015). Unlike the general intergroup contact literature, however, the classroom studies tend to find associations without testing causality – presenting the same conundrum as the present study. Thus, the results of this study add to a nascent body of literature that finds an association between educators' experience of outgroups and positive attitudes towards members of these outgroups. Given the literature on intergroup contact more generally, it is likely that there is a causal relationship present, but this would need to be further tested.

Support for the intergroup contact hypothesis can also be found in the case study data, through educators' explanations of how working with refugee pupils affected them. Michael, for example, related how an assembly by a UASC pupil caused him to feel empathy, and Adam explicitly stated that working at Belloway with people different from him had made him more positive about refugees and other immigrants. As noted above, this type of data tells us that some educators attributed changes in their attitudes to their experiences, or at least attributed thus while speaking with me in interviews. One follow-

up study could entail testing educators' attitudes over time, perhaps tracking the changes experienced by newly qualified educators or educators encountering an outgroup such as refugees for the first time.

The case study results also contribute to literature exploring the relationship between individual educators' attitudes and the practices of the schools where they work. This study found that Alford and Belloway enacted a range of practices that aimed to be welcoming towards refugee pupils, such as recognising and celebrating different languages and cultures. It also found that case study educators had relatively positive attitudes towards refugee pupils; however, much as with the survey data, the presence and direction of causality between these phenomena is unclear. Blake & Cutler (2003) studied educators' attitudes towards the use of African American English in classrooms and found that there was an association between positive attitudes and working in schools that were supportive of multilingualism and multidialectism. Similarly, Hallam & Ireson (2003) found an association between educators' attitudes about ability grouping and the relevant practices at their schools. They make one key caveat, however: 'Whether this indicates that educators' views are influenced by their current working environment or whether they search out an environment which is conducive to their philosophy of education cannot be established from the current analysis' (p. 354). Equally, in this study it is impossible to know whether educators' positive attitudes towards refugee pupils were formed by the welcoming practices of their schools, or whether they were attracted to work at such schools – and perhaps schools selected staff based on their positive attitudes. In the words of Hallam & Ireson (2003), 'it is likely that there are complex interactions between the two' (p. 354).

In the context of the IKAP framework, I argue that these interactions between attitudes, experiences, and practices, and between the level of the individual educator and their school, can be seen as a type of positive feedback loop or 'virtuous circle'. Individuals

with positive attitudes towards refugee pupils may be attracted to work at certain schools. They may contribute to the positive practices enacted at those schools. Those practices, in turn, may shape the attitudes of other staff via their experiences of working at the school. Each of these contributing factors has distinct implications for policy and practice. If educators' experiences with refugee pupils are causing them to have more positive attitudes towards refugee pupils, then this type of interaction should be facilitated. If the association is the effect of educators with positive attitudes towards refugees choosing to work in schools that already have refugee pupils, then perhaps the policy of 'dispersing' refugee families should be questioned – or better supported. Given that both of these statements may be true, there are multiple in-points to intervene to improve educators' and schools' attitudes and practices with refugee pupils – an opportunity that will be further discussed in the conclusion to this chapter as well as in Chapter 8.

Finally, one additional finding from the survey was that educators who were immigrants themselves held more positive attitudes towards refugee pupils – although the effect measured was small. This finding is reflected in the wider literature on attitudes and immigration. Immigrants, on average, are more positive in their attitudes towards immigration, although the effect is found to be weaker for immigrants who are more assimilated or who have become citizens (Just & Anderson, 2015; van der Zwan et al., 2017). While collecting data for the case studies, I did not focus on immigrant status and educators' attitudes, having not yet analysed the survey results. Some of the practices of immigrant educators, however, clearly added to the holistic provision that schools were able to provide – for example, the translation abilities of Safiya and Habibah at Belloway. Research and policy implications of these findings will also be discussed in Chapter 8.

## 7.4 Practices

This study found that educators at Altford and Belloway enacted a range of practices that fit within a holistic model of refugee education, from creating a welcoming environment, to EAL support, to socio-emotional considerations. In this section, I will discuss how these findings contribute to existing studies of practice with refugee pupils. This is followed by an exploration of factors that shape educators' practices, including their knowledge and attitudes as well as the 'larger nest' beyond school walls.

### 7.4.1 *Holistic good practice*

The present study adds to a body of literature documenting examples of good practice with refugee pupils. 'Good practice' is defined as holistic in nature, with educators and schools supporting language learning and academics alongside creating a welcoming environment and caring for refugee pupils' socio-emotional well-being. Much of the previous literature in this area uses case studies, but tends to conceptualise 'the case' as a school or local authority rather than individual educators. Most previous studies collect data mainly via interviews rather than extended observation, and some include the perspectives of refugee pupils alongside the perspectives of educators. Despite these differences with previous studies, the present study found many similar results, as outlined below.

In Australia, Wilkinson & Kaukko (2020) described how a primary school enacts a 'pedagogy of love', making an effort to show care for pupils' well-being despite academic pressures. Similarly, educators at Altford undertook practices such as asking about well-being – like sleep – rather than reprimanding seemingly misbehaving pupils. At Belloway, class educator Safiya literally enacted a pedagogy of love, shouting 'I love you!' to pupils who made sudden learning steps, while other case study educators hugged

pupils and asked after their families. In another Australian case study, Pugh et al. (2012) described how a Newly Arrived Pupil base was located centrally within the school building, in an effort to be spatially and socially inclusive of newcomers. This finding is repeated in Alford's EAL base location, also purposefully located in a central area.

In the UK, recent studies showcase examples of holistic practice with refugee pupils and the present study has several parallels with their findings. McIntyre & Abrams (2021) conceptualise holistic practice slightly differently – utilising Kohli's (2011) concepts of 'safety', 'belonging', and 'success' – but find similar results to the present study. At one of McIntyre and Abrams' case study schools, for example, pupils often stopped by the new arrivals base to socialise or share successes, an occurrence I regularly observed at the EAL base at Alford. McIntyre and Abrams noted that this showed pupils felt safe; I noted that it showed educators' efforts to be welcoming. Seen from either perspective, the schools are concerned about more than refugee pupils' language acquisition and academic achievement. Similarly, Peterson et al.'s (2017) study of a provision for UASC pupils found that educators aimed to create a 'welcoming, safe, and hospitable environment' (p. 26), in contrast to sometimes hostile public attitudes. Pupils concurred, saying that educators balanced being welcoming and enforcing discipline, making school feel 'like being in a family' (p. 27). In the present study, participant educators also made 'family like' efforts to care for their pupils, as described above. Finally, Baak's (2019) study of schools in Glasgow found that new arrivals from Syria felt especially welcomed by peer buddies and by non-teaching staff such as receptionists and janitors. The present study had near identical findings in interviews with Year 5 pupils: peer buddies and catering staff were identified as particularly welcoming, in addition to teachers and teaching assistants.

Other literature around practices with refugee pupils finds schools and educators to be lacking. The above study by Baak (2019), for example, found that while some practices

were welcoming, the responses of different schools were ‘ad hoc and piecemeal’ (p. 277) with both educators and parents identifying major difficulties in terms of communication and inclusion. Dabbous (2019) also critiqued educators at schools in Glasgow for failing to enact holistic practices that lived up to Scottish policy, and in Canada Guo et al. (2019) described how educators failed to respond to incidents of bullying and racism experienced by refugee pupils. The results of the present study do not concur. Indeed, as evidenced throughout this thesis, educators at Altford and Belloway regularly enacted practices that can be classed as holistic and therefore positive for refugee pupils. The source of this discrepancy likely lies in the differences between studies’ goals and associated methodologies. The ‘showcase’ studies described in preceding paragraphs focus on schools that are selected in order to document good practice. In contrast, the studies that are critical of educators’ practices tend to include several schools across a geographic area and aim to make a judgement as to whether they are enacting good or bad practice. The present project rests more in the former camp than the latter. Altford was selected for its positive reputation working with refugee pupils, much like the showcase studies. Belloway did not have the same reputation but its educators had years of experience with new arrivals who were not refugees. My goal, therefore, was to observe practices at schools with relevant experience rather than assess practices across many schools in the area. While I did not enter fieldwork with the goal of looking only for examples of positive practices – but rather with a more open, exploratory lens – positive practices were mainly what I encountered, an outcome made more likely by the selection of Altford and Belloway as research sites.

It is also worth noting here that my position as an educator and my use of participant observation may have affected the collection and analysis of data. The study by Dabbous (2019) makes an interesting contrast with the present study and caused me to rethink some of my results with a more critical eye. Both projects involve interviews of

educators at schools with experience of refugees, asking similar questions about educators' perspectives and practices with these pupils. Some of Dabbous' findings are similar – or even identical – to my own, but they are framed as mainly negative. For example, a school in Dabbous' study hosted an International Evening, much like at Belloway. Dabbous saw this as 'tokenistic' and unhelpful to refugee pupils, while I saw it as a supportive, welcoming practice that staff and pupils alike enjoyed. Similarly, a headteacher in Dabbous' study noted that she was aware some asylum seeking pupils had problems with their accommodation – and Dabbous critiqued the fact that the head did not have plans to solve these problems. In the present study, the EAL educators mentioned various issues about the sheltered housing for UASC and I saw it as a positive sign that they knew something about their pupils' lives outside of school.

These differences between Dabbous' interpretations and my own caused me to question whether I had been critical enough of educators at Alford and Belloway, and to consider some of the reasons for our differences. As described in Chapter 3, I found that practising as an educator while collecting data made me feel more empathetic towards participant educators. Furthermore, I noticed that I often felt a growing connection with participant educators, and their pupils, across the period of my visit – as though we were part of the same team. In contrast, Dabbous visited schools only to conduct interviews and brief (20-30 minute) classroom observations, which I would argue made her less likely to feel like an insider. This is not to say that one of us is more correct; rather, it makes a thought-provoking study of insider versus outsider perspectives in research. While I acknowledge that my insider status made me less critical, I also argue that it makes me more realistic about the pressures educators face and what they can and cannot be expected to do for pupils. The benefits of being at least a partial insider researcher have been thoroughly documented elsewhere (see, for example, Beoku-Betts, 1994 and Dwyer & Buckle, 2009); I would argue it gave me a particular advantage when thinking about policy

and practice implications stemming from this project, as addressed in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

#### 7.4.2 *Shaping educators' practices: Knowledge, attitudes, and improvisation*

In this section, we turn our attention back to the IKAP framework, this time examining the shaping of educators' practices. This study found that educators' knowledge about teaching refugee pupils and their positive attitudes towards refugee pupils were associated with enacting holistic, positive practices with refugee pupils. As previously, it is impossible to determine the direction of causality, but educators' explanations and comparisons with existing literature help make a case that knowledge and attitudes do shape practices.

In terms of knowledge and practices, several educators in this study quoted research or cited courses they had taken as reasons for various practices. Simone, for example, told me that the history department did not 'set' classes because of studies that showed this was a disadvantage for many pupils and Safiya explained how the visual techniques she used came from knowledge gained on her TESOL course. It is, of course, possible that Simone did not set classes for other reasons, then went looking for studies to support her decision, and that Safiya used knowledge from her TESOL course to back practices she already enacted. Indeed, as noted previously, Guskey (1986) argues that educators change their practices, which in turn changes their knowledge. Either way, acquiring knowledge was supportive of practices that helped refugee pupils, whether the knowledge sparked a change in practice or was used post-hoc to justify it.

I also observed examples of educators' knowledge reflected in their practices, although educators did not necessarily mention this knowledge in interviews. The opposite was also present – some educators mentioned knowledge they had in interviews but were

not observed to use it in practice. This discrepancy raises questions about the process by which knowledge is translated into practice, and why some knowledge is translated while other knowledge is not. A large body of literature deals precisely with this issue, and the present study supports many pre-existing theoretical and empirical findings. In particular, many educators' practices in this study appeared automatic – for example, the quickness and ease with which they responded to English language misconceptions or brought up images on the board in response to pupils' questions. In a review of studies of professional expertise, Berliner (2001) notes that automaticity is a key feature of being an expert: 'learning to teach is... primarily about learning to codify knowledge in order to draw on it again' (p. 478). Yet, many of the seemingly automatic practices I observed must have been consciously learned at some point – say, in the case of grammar pointers or vowel sounds. Perhaps a useful analogy here is that of improvisation, with experienced educators acting from a learned repertoire of skills (Holdhus et al., 2016) or scripts (Sawyer, 2011), just as an improvising musician falls back onto known phrases. Many of the practices of educators in this study can be understood as spontaneous actions, but actions based in prior knowledge and learning, whether or not the connection between the two is obvious to the individual.

The present study also finds parallels in debates about teaching as a conscious technical skill versus a subconscious 'practical wisdom', as outlined by Winch et al. (2017). Simone and Kasia utilising academic literature as explanations for some of their practices showed a level of technical 'know how' – or in Aristotelian terms, 'techna' – as well as a level of critical reflection in terms of selecting and applying research (Winch et al., 2017). Similarly, the cases of educators speaking about EAL strategies and enacting these strategies in lessons suggests a 'techna' definition of knowledge, or more specifically, following Shulman's (1987) categories of educator knowledge, an example of pedagogical content knowledge being put into practice. However, it is notable that what

educators said they knew and what they practised in classrooms were sometimes disparate, and that they frequently displayed examples of good practice without seeming to be aware of it – for example, in the case of socio-emotionally supportive practices that were not mentioned in interviews. This would suggest the presence of ‘tacit knowledge’ (Polyani, 1966) or Aristotelean ‘phronesis’ – practical wisdom shaping educators’ practices in an intuitive, unplanned manner (Winch et al., 2017). Thus, this study found evidence of both ‘techna’ and ‘phronesis’ pathways of knowledge becoming practice, supporting Winch et al.’s (2017) conclusion that both of these definitions are too narrow on their own and that teaching should be conceptualised in both ways simultaneously. Again, the analogy of improvisation put forth by Holdhus et al. (2016) and Sawyer (2011) is apt. Some knowledge is recently acquired and shapes practices more consciously; other knowledge is a set of well-known phrases that surface in response to different situations.

The analogy of improvisation is also useful in understanding how educators’ attitudes shape their practices. This study found that case study educators’ positive attitudes towards refugee pupils were associated with practices such as creating more welcoming environments for newcomers and having high expectations for refugee pupils’ achievement. However, educators rarely connected their positive attitudes, as expressed in interviews, with their various practices, suggesting that the connection between the two was not necessarily conscious or explicit – or that it was an assumed foundation that did not need to be mentioned. Perhaps if I had pressed them more specifically to do so in interviews, case study educators would have connected their positive attitudes to the practices they enacted, but it is also possible that they had not explicitly thought about what their attitudes towards refugee pupils were. Either way, positive attitudes can be seen as a structure underlying moment-to-moment, improvised practices. When Margaret settled late-comers warmly, or when Fiona made jokes to reprimand chair-rockers, or when

Kasia encouraged a pupil to improve her writing, their practices were spontaneous in nature, but based in a foundation of positivity towards refugee pupils.

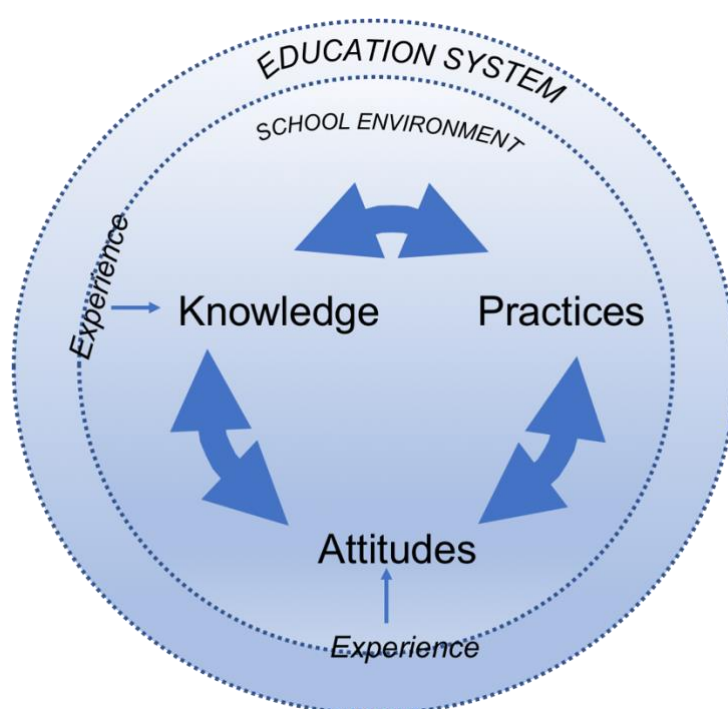
The claim that educators' attitudes shape their practices is supported by literature dealing with educators' attitudes, beliefs, and practices, and pupil outcomes. Reviews by Fang (1996) and Pettit (2011) found links between beliefs and practices. Meanwhile, there is a large body of literature testing the 'Pygmalion effect' that educator expectations predict pupil outcomes; a review of this literature by Jussim & Harber (2005) concluded that the Pygmalion effect exists, and that it is more notable for pupils from a low socio-economic status background and/or with previous low achievement. Notably, however, many of these studies tend to look for associations between educators' attitudes and *academic* outcomes for pupils. In the present study, I found that educators' positive attitudes towards refugee pupils were associated with supportive academic practices, such as in the case of believing refugee pupils to be resilient, but I also found that positive attitudes were associated with practices that promote socio-emotional well-being, such as creating a welcoming environment for newcomers. These types of outcomes are not captured by progress or achievement scores utilised in the studies above.

## **7.5 The larger nest**

This project set out to explore education for refugee pupils at a micro-level, examining individual educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices; in the case studies, it looked at individuals situated within the contexts of their schools. Much of the previous literature focuses on the level of the whole school (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021; Peterson et al., 2017; Wilkinson & Kaukko, 2020), or local authority (Gifford et al., 2009; Vidal de Haymes et al., 2018), or compares national education systems (Crul et al., 2019; Koehler & Schneider, 2019; McIntyre et al., 2018). Thus, one of the main contributions of the present study is its zoomed-in lens on individual educators. However, it became clear while

collecting and analysing data for the project that the larger context could not be ignored. As detailed in Chapter 6, a major finding of this study was that features of the English education system also shaped educators’ practices with refugee pupils – and indeed were often barriers to enacting holistic good practice. While maintaining the focus on individual educators situated within their schools, it is perhaps useful to reconceptualise the case studies with an additional, overarching influence: individuals within schools, yes, but also schools within the larger national context. In the IKAP framework, this could be visualised as a circle encompassing the whole model, as follows (**Figure 11**):

**Figure 11: The IKAP framework situated within the national education system**



*Dotted lines represent the boundaries between school environment, education system, and wider society, acknowledging influences between these spheres.*

As noted previously, the case study schools and educators for this project were in a strong position to provide holistic, bespoke provision for refugee pupils. Alford and Belloway had expert staff on site and histories of being welcoming to newcomers and

valuing multiculturalism. The individual educators were experienced with refugees, or pupils with similar features, and had relatively good knowledge and positive attitudes about refugee pupils. Yet, as also detailed previously, despite this strong starting point, educators at Altford and Belloway were not always able to enact good practice and frequently drew my attention to the ways in which their practices were not ideal. Margaret, for example, noted that with more staff (i.e. funding), the EAL sixth form could be better tailored to pupils by adding a third, mid-level class. Furthermore, several educators said that ideally all refugee pupils would be in mainstream provision, but this was not possible due to systemic features such as the exam-based curriculum.

This finding concurs with previous studies, for example the case described in the US by Hanna (2013) where educators separated out newly arrived pupils to prepare them for an English language exam, even though they knew this type of provision was not in the pupils' best interests in the long run. Hanna describes this as 'rational agency in conflict with policy incentives' (p. 146); educators knew what good practice was but were prevented from enacting it by accountability measures. Similarly, McIntyre & Hall (2018) detail how 'the realities of school life' (p.14) can get in the way of carrying out best practice with refugee pupils at schools in England, where there is a 'policy paradox' requiring schools to look out for the welfare and best interests of all pupils, on the one hand, but strong pressure for pupils to perform on exams, on the other.

Indeed, exams deserve special mention here, due to their prominence in the results of this study and in the literature. Despite a non-inclusion period for the exam results of pupils who arrived in the UK within two years, the high stakes nature of exams in England have multiple negative consequences for educators' practices with refugee pupils. First, there are accounts of some schools avoiding taking refugee pupils onto their roll due to concerns about academic performance, thus potentially overburdening more welcoming schools (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021; McIntyre & Hall, 2018; Wade et al., 2012). In this

project, though, both case study schools were willing and welcoming when it came to admitting refugee pupils. Exams tended, instead, to affect educator practices through the ways in which pupils were organised into classes in secondary school, with particular issues surrounding GCSEs. At Altford, the curriculum leading up to GCSEs was the main reason given for needing a separate EAL provision for pupils who arrived in Year 11 – the age at which many UASC arrive – and for pupils in lower grades with less experience of formal education. As Margaret noted, this did not meet the ideal of mainstreaming all pupils, but as several mainstream subject educators noted, a separate provision was what allowed classes to progress through the curriculum and get good exam results. In the mainstream provision, refugee pupils also encountered effects of an exam-based curriculum, namely through the practice of ‘setting’ classes by academic level – a practice that aims to increase achievement but tends to exacerbate existing inequalities (Connolly et al., 2019; Francis et al., 2020; Mazonod et al., 2019) and has been noted to be detrimental specifically to refugee pupils’ outcomes (Koehler & Schneider, 2019). Recently arrived mainstreamed refugee pupils at Altford were often placed in lower ‘sets’; concurrently, in my observations and in the observations of some mainstream educators (eg. Shauna, Syed, David), it was more difficult to teach and learn well in lower sets, meaning that refugee pupils did not necessarily receive the type of experience educators would have liked to provide them with.

The role of the local authority was rarely mentioned by participants in this project – with the exception of Safiya, who noted that she used to receive support from the local authority that was no longer available. It is unclear whether other participants did not mention the local authority because it did not have a presence, because they were unaware of its presence, or whether they did not mention it because I did not directly ask. (Notably, I did not ask about the national education system but it was a prominent theme across interviews and informal conversations.) Two recent studies point towards the possibility

that academisation could play a role in this lack of local authority presence. McIntyre & Hall (2018) interviewed head educators about the barriers to including refugee pupils in their schools and argued that academisation has removed the local authority ‘buffer’ between national policy and schools, leaving heads to mediate policy themselves. Similarly, McIntyre et al. (2018) noted that the limited involvement and power of local authorities in refugee education in England is related to an increase in academisation. Further investigation would be required to confirm whether this was the case in the present study.

Overall, this study provides useful examples of holistic, positive practices with refugee pupils. However, these examples should be seen as occurring despite neoliberal education systems, testing pressures, and a lack of supportive policy rather than because of them. Educators at Altford and Belloway had knowledge and attitudes that supported their good practice with refugee pupils, and provide examples of schools managing in the absence of systemic guidance.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has revisited the results of the study and situated them within the literature, highlighting the main contributions of the project. The study builds on literature that showcases positive practices with refugee pupils and adds the less studied perspectives of mainstream educators. It contributes to evidence that educators who are experienced with refugee pupils also have better knowledge about teaching refugee pupils and more positive attitudes towards these pupils.

This chapter also introduces the IKAP framework to more accurately conceptualise the relationships between educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices. With the data collected for this project it was not always possible to determine the direction of causality between factors in the framework – for example in the relationship between educators’

knowledge about teaching refugee pupils and their experience teaching refugee pupils. On the one hand, this is a disadvantage, in that knowing the direction of causality would be useful in terms of providing precise policy recommendations. On the other hand, given the assumed bidirectionality of the new IKAP framework, and the virtuous circles identified between some concepts, there should be broad and flexible implications in terms of intervening to improve educators' practices with refugee pupils. These implications will be discussed in the subsequent and final chapter of this thesis.

## CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

The introduction to this thesis opened with a vignette from a lesson at Alford, where EAL lead Margaret deftly facilitated a spontaneous discussion about politics in the middle of a lesson about types of houses. The teenagers around me, many of whom were refugees, conversed through a surprisingly effective mix of words, miming, and requests for photos from the internet to be displayed on the whiteboard. Margaret brought up the photos, fielded questions, and maintained an open, warm tone, all the while inserting grammar, spelling, and vocabulary pointers specific to each pupils' needs.

In the introduction, I asked what it was that made Margaret such an effective educator – and indeed, what makes any educator effective when teaching refugee pupils – which the preceding chapters of this thesis have aimed to address. In concluding the thesis, it is instructive to consider what was going on behind the scenes of this lesson, as a summary of some of the factors that helped and hindered educators in this study in their efforts to enact good practice. To start with, Margaret had decades of experience working with refugee pupils and extensive training in relevant areas such as EAL and counselling. Her expertise was regularly sought out by educators across the school. Alford had a high proportion of pupils with EAL, so EAL support was prioritised both in the school budget and through an institutional valuing of multiculturalism. Even given these personal and school-level qualities, however, Margaret's job was clearly not easy. Namely, she was extremely busy, preparing for lessons with a wide range of learners, liaising with social workers and other professionals, providing support and advice to mainstream educators, and responding to pupils who turned up at the EAL base throughout the day to ask questions, get assistance, or share recent achievements. Furthermore, she was constantly making compromises between what she knew to be best practice and what the reality of

school life demanded – for example by separating pupils from mainstream provision due to curriculum pressures.

The example of Margaret and her work at Altford provides an illustrative window into the main findings of this study. This project set out to investigate how educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices interact when working with refugee pupils, with the goal of better understanding the situation from the perspective of educators and considering ways in which support could be provided – if required. The main findings are summarised below, organised by research question.

**Main question:** *How do educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices interact when working with refugee and asylum seeking pupils?*

This study introduces a new framework for conceptualising the interactions between educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices, dubbed the Integrated Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices framework (IKAP). It is based on the KAP models used in public health but has been modified to illustrate non-linear, bidirectional relationships between concepts and to include additional factors like previous experience and school environment. Overall, this study found that educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices influence each other, leading to feedback loops that could be considered virtuous circles when the factors are positive. In the case of Margaret, for example, she had knowledge that shaped her own and other educators' practices, which in turn shaped practices of the whole school. Some of these school practices then influenced other educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils, which in turn shaped their practices.

**Sub-question 1:** *What is educators' knowledge about refugee pupils and how is this knowledge acquired?*

The results of this study showed that previous experience with refugee pupils – or pupils with similar characteristics – was associated with feeling better prepared to teach refugee pupils. This finding was consistent across quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data, with case study educators highlighting the importance of learning through experience. Participants emphasised the importance of knowledge about EAL in interviews, with a lesser emphasis placed on pastoral care topics; however, in my observations, most educators showed a high level of care for refugee pupils, even if they did not speak about it. Finally, this study set out to examine educators' pedagogical knowledge about teaching refugee pupils in general, but participant educators raised the importance of knowledge about individual pupils. This finding linked to a theme across the project of the heterogeneity of refugee pupils and the consequent necessity of tailored provision and practices.

**Sub-question 2:** *What are educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils and how are these attitudes formed?*

Educators in the survey portion of this study were found to have, on average, more positive attitudes towards refugee pupils than in previous studies of people's attitudes towards refugees. Survey and case study educators emphasised positive aspects of having refugee pupils at their schools, such as the benefits of multiculturalism and opportunities to learn about the wider world. When they spoke about potentially negative aspects, they tended to use a positive framing, for example focusing on the resilience of refugees rather than the difficulties they faced. When they spoke about issues like workload pressure, they

blamed the education system rather than refugee pupils themselves. Educators stressed that they saw refugee pupils as unique individuals and that a wide range of pupils could be found beneath the umbrella of ‘refugee’. Finally, in terms of how attitudes were formed, this study found associations between positive attitudes and previous experience with refugee pupils. The direction of causality was not tested but likely was bidirectional, as reflected in the IKAP model.

**Sub-question 3:** *What are educators’ practices with refugee pupils and what shapes these practices?*

Educators at the case study schools were observed to enact a range of practices that fit a holistic model of good practice, including creating a welcoming environment, facilitating language development, and supporting socio-emotional well-being. A prominent theme arose regarding the tension between separate and mainstream provision for refugee pupils, and how to provide bespoke provision while also promoting inclusion. Educators’ practices were shaped by pedagogical knowledge as well as knowledge about individual pupils. Practices such as having high expectations for refugee pupils and making efforts to be welcoming were linked to positive attitudes towards refugee pupils. Finally, aspects of the national education system – particularly the rigid, exam-based curriculum – were found to be a constraining factor in terms of educators’ enactment of holistic good practice.

Overall, this study provides an in-depth look at how educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices interact, and an example of how educators engaged positively with refugee pupils – when they were experienced and in supportive school environments. In the following, I consider the implications of these findings, from an academic perspective and for policy and practice. I review the limitations of the study in order to better

understand what it can and cannot contribute, followed by some recommendations for future directions of study.

## **8.1 Implications for research**

This thesis fills a number of gaps in the academic literature related to refugee education. The general literature on refugee children has an emphasis on mental health and illness; this study adds to a growing body of literature looking at the education of young refugees, whether or not they have mental health problems. Within the category of education for refugees, there is a focus on the perspectives of pupils; this study adds to a smaller body of literature looking at the perspectives and practices of educators. Finally, within the ‘educators of refugees’ literature, many studies investigate the level of the school and the education system over the cases of individual educators – and when individual educators are the focus, they tend to be specialists such as EAL educators. This study considers the cases of individual educators within the contexts of their schools and education system, and includes the perspectives of mainstream classroom teachers and teaching assistants alongside specialists. Furthermore, this study adds to the literature on educators’ perspectives of refugee education through its unique methodology. While most previous studies employ interview and document analysis data, the present study combines interviews with participant observation for its case studies and also includes a survey of educators across the local authority. This allows for comparison of results across the project and also means that findings from previous studies can be corroborated with different types of data.

This study contributes to bodies of literature corresponding to each of its three sub-research questions – to do with educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices. In terms of educators’ knowledge, the results of the study add to a small body of research – mostly from 15 – 20 years ago – suggesting that educators and schools with more experience of

refugee pupils have better knowledge and access to relevant knowledge sources (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Ofsted, 2003; Whiteman, 2005). More generally, this study contributes to a much larger literature on educators' knowledge and knowledge acquisition about any topic, not just teaching refugee pupils. Primarily, this study concurs with previous research on educator learning, in that educators in this study tended to source information through colleagues, and voiced a preference for practice-based, on-the-job training.

There is little previous literature that specifically looks at educators' attitudes towards refugee pupils; thus, this study contributes an important foundation for further study in an under-researched – and arguably undervalued – area. Further research is necessary, but the knowledge that educators in this study held relatively positive attitudes towards refugee pupils has potential implications for education and immigration policy, as discussed below. Moreover, the results of this study add to research about attitudes towards refugees, immigrants, and out-groups more generally, but with the specificity of a particular profession uniting participants. The result that educators with more experience of refugee pupils had more positive attitudes towards them, for example, adds to a considerable body of empirical literature backing the hypothesis, and exploring the promotive conditions, of intergroup contact theory.

In terms of educators' practices with refugee pupils, this study adds to research that describes how educators interact with refugee pupils and considers the factors that shape these practices. As noted above, this study contributes a unique perspective in that it focuses mainly on the level of the individual educator, situated within their school and broader education system, as well as including a majority of 'regular' mainstream educators in its sample. While some other research in this area focuses on how national policy contexts affect schools, this study provides an example of how some schools, and the educators that make them up, provide a good provision for refugee pupils without

support from higher powers – and indeed, despite numerous barriers created by the national education system.

With regards to the interactions between educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices, this study makes a contribution by modifying the traditional KAP framework to more precisely reflect the factors influencing educators' thoughts, feelings, and actions. Researchers in the fields of educators' knowledge, educators' attitudes, and educators' practices tend to focus on the formation, characteristics, and effects of each of these attributes separately. The IKAP framework provides an over-arching map to guide our understanding of how these concepts are related. While the IKAP is based on data related to educators and refugee pupils, it could be relevant to educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to other groups of pupils, policies, or curriculum topics. Further study is necessary.

Finally, this study makes a methodological contribution to the area of education research and specifically to participant observation carried out in classrooms. As noted in Chapter 3, whilst carrying out the fieldwork for this project, I was also teaching one day per week at the primary school where I had been employed for several years prior to beginning my studies. I found that continuing to teach provided several benefits for data collection, from keeping me up to date with local and national education system changes to improving my rapport with case study educators and enriching our interactions and conversations. Essentially, continuing to teach conferred – as anthropologists put it – increased 'insider' status within my role as an 'outsider' at participant schools, making me a fuller participant along the spectrum of participant-observer. My experience teaching while researching was so positive that it raised a question as to why this type of practice is not more common. It is highly recommended for educators to participate in research to improve their practice – for example through lesson study or 'cycles of enquiry' – but I have yet to encounter a call for researchers to participate in teaching to improve their

research. Education researchers are often school educators before entering academia, but it is not as common to continue during a research career. My experiences with this study, however, suggest that some research methods could be improved through concurrent school teaching, especially if this is the relevant area of research.

## **8.2 Implications for policy and practice**

The topic of this thesis stemmed from my experiences as a primary school teacher at a school that regularly receives refugee pupils. As noted in the introduction, I was interested in the contrast between public perception of refugees as threats or social service drains – as portrayed in many newspaper headlines – compared with my own experience of refugee pupils as valued members of our school. I aimed not only to fill a substantial gap in the academic literature when it came to educators’ perspectives on teaching refugee pupils, but also to conduct a study that was relevant to education policy and practice. ‘Do educators need more support and training?’ I wondered. ‘Or are they adequately prepared, and thus the UK could admit more refugees – at least in terms of capacity to provide a good education?’ The answers to these questions, unsurprisingly, became more complex as the project progressed. In the following, I discuss how the findings of the project are relevant to educators and policy makers.

First, however, it is worth highlighting the non-linear, multidirectional nature of the IKAP framework. As previously outlined, the IKAP is laid out in a circular format to illustrate its utility for examining any of the three concepts – knowledge, attitudes, and practices – and how they interact with each other. Rather than seeing practices as the only outcome of interest, one could use the model to explore how educators’ knowledge and attitudes are formed, for example. Furthermore, in the IKAP framework the direction of causality between the main concepts is bidirectional. Thus, in terms of interventions, there should be many points of entry to improve educational experiences for refugee pupils, with

improvements in one area building upon improvements in others, creating virtuous circles or feedback loops. Below, I make some recommendations for starting points.

### 8.2.1 Increase availability of practice-based CPD

One of the clearest findings of this study was that educators acquired most of their knowledge relevant to teaching refugee pupils through on-the-job experience and asking colleagues for advice. As noted previously, this meant that educators' knowledge largely depended on the types of experiences they encountered at work, and who their colleagues were. Colleagues of Margaret and the EAL team, at Altford, and Safiya, at Belloway, frequently commented that they felt lucky to have expert colleagues on hand when considering how to work with refugee pupils. Participant educators at survey schools, however, often said they felt unprepared to teach refugee pupils and asked about training opportunities. This suggests that, at the minimum, training and support should be made available to educators and schools that want it. But what form of training and support?

As discussed in Chapter 7, the reasons for educators in this study emphasising on-the-job training could be rooted in the demise of formal, external training courses with the rise of academisation, and/or in a preference by educators for informal, in-house learning. Given that practice-based CPD also has a good evidence base (Rourke & Demonte, 2013), it seems advisable to facilitate this type of learning. Practice-based need not be equated with unsystematic, however, with educators' knowledge being dependent on who their colleagues happen to be. In many countries around the world, educators carry out CPD that is embedded in their day-to-day classroom experiences, but that is coordinated at a national level (Hairon & Dimmock, 2012; Jensen, 2016). This type of CPD would take advantage of the bidirectional relationship between knowledge and practices found in this study, with educators' practices shaping their knowledge, in addition to the more expected flow of

influence from knowledge to practices. On a related note, given that in this study the second most commonly used source of knowledge about teaching refugee pupils was online platforms and teaching websites, it seems like it would be advisable for an official government outlet to collate and further draw attention to this information. Both of these recommendations would require the Department for Education to acknowledge refugee pupils as a group worthy of attention and to produce associated policies. Refugee-specific policy documents from the early 2000s exist, as do the guidance documents of many local authorities; these documents could be compiled, updated, and made more accessible to schools.

### 8.2.2 *Further develop positive attitudes*

Educators in this study professed, on average, positive attitudes towards refugee pupils. This included educators with little to no experience teaching refugees, as well as experienced educators, who held attitudes that were even more positive. While this study – of selected educators and schools in one local authority – does not purport to be generalisable to all of England, or elsewhere, there are good theoretical reasons to believe that educators’ attitudes beyond the study would also be more positive than the general population, namely educators’ high education levels and selection into a ‘caring profession’. Furthermore, while this study could not determine the direction of causality between educators’ experiences with refugee pupils and their positive attitudes towards them – it is possible that educators with more positive attitudes sought out schools with refugees on roll, or that the schools hired educators with more positive attitudes – there are also good theoretical reasons, such as intergroup contact theory, to believe that educators’ positive attitudes were at least partially caused by their experiences.

These findings have implications for the training and development of educators. Namely, it appears as though educators have a decent foundation on which to build positive, asset-based attitudes regarding refugee pupils, and that this could be capitalised upon through on-the-job support and training. Programmes of support could leverage intergroup contact theory, promoting conditions that encourage improved attitudes by helping educators and pupils to feel they are cooperating to achieve shared goals, and overtly displaying support (Allport, 1954) through whole-school practices.

Furthermore, hiring educators who are immigrants themselves could contribute to more positive attitudes towards refugee pupils across schools, given that this study found an association between educators being immigrants and positive attitudes towards refugee pupils. Previous studies show that pupils have better outcomes in terms of school achievement and attendance when taught by teachers of the same ethnicity or race (Egalite et al., 2015; Gottfried et al., 2022) and in some studies refugee pupils link their positive experiences of school to staff members of their ethnicity, culture, or language group (Hek, 2005; Rutter, 2003). Some school systems have increased numbers of staff from ethnic minority backgrounds by hiring multilingual teaching assistants; indeed, in Australia, ‘Community Learning Support Officers’ are an integral part of refugee pupils’ school experience (see, for example, Marsh, 2012). More research is needed, however, to understand the role such educators play and the ways in which they influence pupils’ experiences and outcomes. Current research on teaching assistants focuses on their interactions with pupils with SEN – and raises questions about the efficacy of TAs more generally (Farrell et al., 2010; Sharma & Salend, 2016).

### *8.2.3 Structural support for holistic good practice*

Educators at Altford and Belloway frequently enacted practices that fit a holistic model of refugee education, including being welcoming and supporting socio-emotional

well-being as well as academic and language development. The case study educators, however, were in the relatively privileged position of having previous experience, sufficient knowledge, and mainly positive attitudes towards refugee pupils. Moreover, they were employed at schools that placed value on welcoming pupils from around the world and had support structures in place via expert colleagues. These positive factors present in the case studies for this project form the basis of recommendations that could support holistic good practice with refugee pupils at a wider range of schools.

First, and with reference to the sections above on making CPD available, educators should be supported to improve their knowledge about teaching refugee pupils and further develop their positive attitudes towards refugee pupils. Given the nature of the IKAP framework, improving knowledge and attitudes should also improve educators' practices, even if the relationship between the concepts is more complex than a unidirectional, linear flow of influence. Indeed, in order for educators' knowledge and attitudes to have the highest impact on their practices, it would be advisable to adjust larger, structural factors, adding supports and removing barriers to good practice with refugee pupils. On a national level, an idealistic recommendation would be to place less emphasis on exams in the curriculum, discourage setting and encourage mixed-level classes, and generally reframe education as the development of the whole child. Policies specific to refugee pupils could be created; in Sweden, a 2016 bill states that educators of refugee pupils should focus on their strengths and prior learning rather than only on language needs, promote translanguaging, and locate any separate language provision centrally within school campuses (McIntyre et al., 2018). These types of changes seem unlikely to occur in the current education climate in England, but I mention them here in the hope that one day they might be considered.

On a more local level, there are numerous practices that individual schools could undertake, with or without national policy changes, to support educators working with

refugee pupils. It would be advisable, for example, for schools to hire – if available – or train, at least one member of staff to support colleagues with welcoming refugees, providing language support, and promoting socio-emotional well-being. Alford and Belloway provide examples of how the expertise of a few individuals can be accessed through in-house training and ad-hoc support. Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that schools with a welcoming, holistic ethos promote positive attitudes and practices with refugees among individual educators. While there is no one way to create a particular school ethos, there are easy first steps that schools could take, such as valuing different cultures and languages at assemblies and creating a ‘buddy system’ for newcomers like at Belloway. Finally, it should be noted that the EAL sixth form available at Alford is a rarity across England, with older refugees – including many UASC – often having trouble accessing a place at a school and instead ending up in less-comprehensive programmes at further education colleges (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021; Reed & Fazel, 2012; Wade et al., 2012). Thus, it would be highly recommendable to make this type of in-school provision more widely available at schools across the country. While national coordination would greatly help in this endeavour, it would be possible for some schools to set up similar provisions themselves using resettlement scheme funding.

#### *8.2.4 Immigration and asylum policy reform?*

One of the questions that instigated this project was whether schools are actually overwhelmed by the arrival of refugee pupils, or whether – in terms of education – the UK could take more refugees. In the course of my training as a researcher, I came to realise that this was quite a large question for one doctoral student to answer. The scope of this thesis is a non-random sample of educators and schools in one local authority. Thus, the finding that participant educators had positive attitudes towards refugee pupils does not

necessarily have implications for UK immigration policy more generally. It does provide evidence that selected schools in one county in England would welcome the arrival of more refugees, and that some schools already have the expertise required to provide an appropriate provision for these pupils. Evidence from a nationally representative sample of educators in a variety of school contexts would be required in order to draw broader conclusions; this theme will be discussed in ‘future directions’, section 8.4, below.

### **8.3 Limitations**

Both the strengths and limitations of this study were discussed in detail throughout the description of the methodology in Chapter 3. In the following, I revisit some of these limitations and consider what they mean for the scope and generalisability of the study. That is, what can the study say, what can it not say, and where does this leave us in terms of its contributions?

First and foremost, this is a study of selected educators and schools in one local authority. The selection process was not random and the participants were not representative of the county as a whole. Furthermore, even if the participants were representative of the county, the county is not representative of England as a whole. Thus, the results of the study are not generalisable simply by scaling up from school to local authority to national education system. Rather, this study provides an example of how some schools and educators, in a particular context, are managing – and even thriving. The results contribute to what we know about education for refugees through ‘replication logic’ rather than ‘sampling logic’ (Yin, 2014), adding case study data to a growing body of evidence. Thus, the results of this study could be applied to educators and schools in similar contexts, rather than to any educators in any context. Altford and Belloway might have lessons for other schools in small cities, for example, but perhaps not for rural schools in the same county. The thoughts of less-experienced educators at surveyed schools might

have lessons for schools that also have no prior experience with refugee pupils, and vice versa.

Social desirability bias likely affected the results of the study, both in the survey and the case studies. Educators' knowledge and attitudes were mainly measured by self-report, and the topic of refugees has the potential to be divisive and politically loaded, particularly in places like the UK where politicians frequently use anti-immigration rhetoric to garner electoral support. The willingness of individuals to openly express negative views about refugees is likely curtailed by the topic's divisiveness; it is easier – and more culturally British, perhaps – to avoid conflict or causing offence. As described in Chapter 3, the methods used to collect data in this study aimed to minimise the effects of social desirability bias by helping participants to feel more comfortable in expressing their views. The survey, for example, was anonymous and participants were assured that there would not be a way of tracing responses to individuals. After feedback from educators at the first school I surveyed, I took to emphasising in my introduction that participants should be as honest as possible and that I would not be judging them as individuals or schools. For the case studies, I also assured participants anonymity; however, I aimed to establish as strong a rapport with them as possible, thereby increasing the chances that they would feel comfortable expressing their views. There is, of course, no way to know whether these strategies 'worked', how comfortable participants actually felt, or how honest they ended up being. This would require some type of comparison of implicit and explicit biases that is well beyond the scope of this study. The best I can offer here is that I was open with participants about who I was and that this positionality can be taken into account when considering their responses.

The group interviews conducted with pupils were not as useful as intended for data generation. First, the gatekeeper at Alford preferred that pupils not be interviewed, so secondary pupils' perspectives on their educators' practices could not be included. Second,

the group interviews of primary pupils at Belloway were not as focused or relevant to the topic of study as was hoped. Pupils frequently spoke about unrelated topics in the interviews – many of which would make for interesting data in a different study, but did not help address my research questions. Overall, the pupil interviews added in a minor way to the study, but ideally would have played a larger role in order to compare educators' perspectives with those of their pupils.

Finally, the data collected for this study does not cover every aspect of the IKAP model. Since it was developed across the course of the project, there is not data to support every relationship between concepts. If I had known from the start of the project that the conceptual model would change to become more circular, with less emphasis on practices as the outcome, I may have asked additional questions when collecting data. The relationship between educators' knowledge and attitudes, for example, has been little discussed throughout this thesis – and would make an apt topic for future study.

#### **8.4 Future directions**

Given these limitations, there is ample opportunity for further study in the area of educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices with refugee pupils. Perhaps the most obvious first step would be to expand the scope of the study to other geographic areas, beyond selected educators and schools in one local authority in England. Administering the survey for this study, or some of its items, to a representative sample of educators across England would provide a more informative set of results, particularly in terms of policy implications. This type of data would provide policy makers with an assessment of educators' knowledge and attitudes nationally, thereby becoming more relevant to the creation of national policy. Conversely, expanding the survey could also allow policy and support to be directed to specific contexts. Some regions may have higher training needs than others, for example, and support could be directed accordingly. On a broader scale,

an international comparison study could have important messages for how the ‘larger nest’ of the national context affects education for refugee pupils. How might the curriculum in Scotland versus England change educators’ practices, for example? How might the exam-lite Finnish model look in relation to mainstreaming newcomers? There are a few recent studies starting to address such questions, but they tend to have a wide focus on whole education systems of different countries (see, for example, Crul et al., 2019), rather than in-depth case studies of educators at specific schools.

Further study could also involve the IKAP model, looking at areas that were underdeveloped in this project and testing causality between concepts more robustly. One example could be to examine the relationship between educators’ knowledge and attitudes, as mentioned above. Another example could be to look more specifically at the process of educators *changing their minds* – i.e. developing relevant knowledge and positive attitudes. Participants could include educators such as Aaron, the TA in Safiya’s Year 2 class, who said he had changed significantly in terms of his attitudes towards refugees and other immigrants since starting to work at Belloway. A detailed analysis of the factors that promote this kind of attitudinal change could be used to inform CPD programmes. Similarly, it would be instructive to engage with educators with little EAL or other relevant experience to gain insight into how they acquire knowledge and change their practices in real time, rather than as recalled at a later date. This could help disentangle issues of causality and determine what educators learn through trial-and-improvement versus asking colleagues versus consulting other sources, thereby providing focal points for schools and education systems that want to improve knowledge about the teaching of refugee pupils. Finally, further in the future, and related to the points above, I would hope that one day there would be an opportunity to evaluate CPD programmes based on this research.

## 8.5 Conclusion

The underlying aim of this project is to help ensure that refugee children have a positive educational experience when they arrive in England and other host countries. Providing a quality education to young refugees is important for their well-being and life outcomes, is their right under national and international law, and is an ethical imperative if we agree to the premise that all human lives have equal value. In order to achieve this goal, it is essential to understand more about educators' current knowledge, attitudes, and practices with refugee pupils, to best direct support and resources where needed.

Bolton (2016) has noted that rather than saying Europe has a refugee problem, perhaps we should say that refugees have a Europe problem. Similarly, rather than seeing refugee pupils as an issue for schools to deal with, perhaps it is worth considering what it is about the education system that causes refugee pupils to be an issue – and whether changing these features would improve the system for the better, not just for refugees but for all pupils. I am not, to be clear, suggesting that the onus for improving the education system should fall on individual schools and educators. There are steps that schools and educators can take, as detailed above, but these constitute a patchwork rather than systemic response, meaning that for refugee pupils, access to a good education is luck-based rather than a given feature of the education system.

In an interview with Simone, the school leader and history teacher at Alford, I asked whether she felt prepared to teach refugee pupils. She responded that she had plenty of knowledge from years of relevant experience and study but added: 'It's just the execution – we're human beings – when you deliver lessons... sometimes you're not your best human being.' In concluding this thesis, I find it instructive to reflect on Simone's words. While this study mainly focused on individual educators, it became clear throughout the data collection and analysis that the broader contexts of schools and

education systems can help or hinder educators in their efforts to be their ‘best human being’. On the one hand, the individual educator is all important; it is their specific interactions with refugee pupils that make a difference in pupils’ lives. But as this thesis has shown, individual actions are inextricably tied to larger institutional and societal factors. Individual educators and schools can have immensely positive impacts on refugee pupils’ lives, but without systemic change there is no guarantee that this will be the case for most refugee pupils.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Questionnaire

# TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKING PUPILS

## TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKING PUPILS

Recently, many children and young people have arrived in the UK as refugees or asylum seekers, either with their families or on their own. Very little is known about how these pupils are getting on at school and how it has been for the teachers who educate them. This questionnaire is part of a study that will help policy makers and schools provide the best outcomes for pupils, teachers, and society in general. Anyone can take the survey. You do not have to have prior experience working with refugee or asylum seeking pupils. The questionnaire takes 5-10 minutes to complete. Your responses will be anonymous and will not be shared with anyone at your place of employment. The results will be used to write a PhD dissertation and other articles, with the aim of better understanding the educational situation for refugee pupils and the professionals they work with. The study has received ethical approval from the University of Oxford. If you have any concerns about the study, please contact the researcher, Caitlin Prentice [caitlin.prentice@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:caitlin.prentice@education.ox.ac.uk) or her supervisor, Nigel Fancourt [nigel.fancourt@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nigel.fancourt@education.ox.ac.uk) or the Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee [ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk).

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I understand the nature of my participation in this study and I give consent to take part.

Yes

No

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Definitions: A migrant is someone who comes to live in the UK from a different country. A refugee is someone who has migrated due to war, violence, or a fear of persecution. An asylum seeker is someone who has arrived in the UK and applied to be a refugee but is waiting to hear the outcome of their application.

Which of the following describes your current role? Please tick any that apply.

- Class teacher
- Teaching assistant
- EAL teacher or coordinator
- Middle management
- EAL teaching assistant
- SEN coordinator or inclusion manager
- Head teacher or depute head
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been a teacher, teaching assistant, or other school staff member?

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-8 years
- 9-11 years
- 12+ years

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To help us understand your work context, what is the name of the school where you currently work? (All your responses will be kept anonymous and will not be shared with your employer.)

---

How much experience do you have teaching:

	No experience	A little experience	Quite a lot of experience	Extensive experience
Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pupils who are looked after (LAC)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pupils who are refugees or asylum seekers?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please complete the sentence in any way you like, If you do not have experience teaching refugee or asylum seeking pupils, you can write N/A.

At our school, refugee and asylum seeking pupils...

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Please complete the sentence in any way you like. If you do not have experience teaching refugee or asylum seeking pupils, you can write N/A.

In my classes, refugee and asylum seeking pupils...

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In 2015, the UK had \_\_\_\_\_ asylum applications in proportion to its population than the EU average. If you don't know, your best guess is fine.

more

fewer

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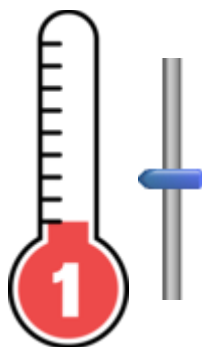
Most of the world's refugees live in \_\_\_\_\_ countries. If you don't know, your best guess is fine.

developed (wealthy)

undeveloped (poor)

---

In general, how do you feel about refugees and asylum seekers? Mark your answer on the thermometer, with 0 being very unfavourable and 10 being very favourable.



For each of the items listed below, indicate what your attitudes are toward refugees and asylum seekers in general.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
No hostility at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme hostility
No admiration at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme admiration
No dislike at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme dislike
No acceptance at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme acceptance
No superiority to them at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very superior to them
No affection at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme affection
No disdain at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme disdain
No approval at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme approval
No hatred at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme hatred
No sympathy at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme sympathy

No rejection at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme rejection
No warmth toward them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme warmth toward them

How prepared do you feel to teach refugee and asylum seeking pupils? If you have no experience teaching refugees or asylum seekers, you can still answer and say how prepared you think you are.

	Very unprepared	A little unprepared	A little prepared	Very prepared
In terms of academic learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In terms of English language learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In terms of pastoral care?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In terms of cultural differences?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you think you need (or would need) further knowledge to teach refugee and asylum seeking pupils effectively?

Yes

No



Why or why not?

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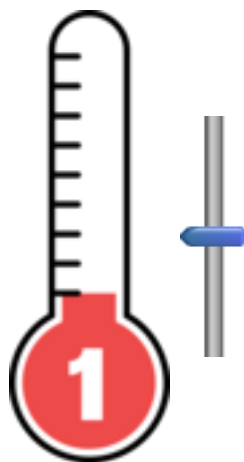
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How do you currently get information that helps you teach refugee and asylum seeking pupils?  
Tick ALL that apply.

- I do not teach refugee or asylum seeking pupils
- Training sessions by staff at school
- Training sessions with the Local Authority or other outside organisations
- Professional associations or unions
- Colleagues and friends
- Virtual school
- Online teacher networks (e.g. TES, Guardian Teacher Network)
- Government guidance (e.g. Ofsted, Department for Education)
- Non-governmental organisations (e.g. Red Cross, Refugee Council)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- No information accessed because \_\_\_\_\_

How do you feel about refugees and asylum seekers at your school? Mark your answer on the thermometer, with 0 being very unfavourable and 10 being very favourable. If you do not have refugee or asylum seeking pupils at your school, how would you feel hypothetically if you did?



What are your reasons for your answer to the previous question? Please read the options carefully and tick ALL that apply.

- They don't speak English well
- They learn English quickly
- They add to staff workload
- They do not add to staff workload
- They have mental health issues
- They are emotionally stable
- They help us learn about other cultures
- They are culturally too different
- They are behind academically
- They make lots of academic progress
- They have behavioural problems
- They set a good example for others
- They make friends easily
- They struggle socially
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

The following questions have been used in international polls about people's attitudes towards refugees. Say how much you agree with the following statements:

	Agree very much	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree very much	Don't know
We must close our borders to refugees entirely – we can't accept any at this time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are terrorists pretending to be refugees who will enter my country to cause violence and destruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most foreigners who want to get into my country as a refugee really aren't refugees. They just want to come here for economic reasons, or to take advantage of our welfare services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm confident that most refugees who come to my country will successfully integrate into their new society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Now say how much you agree with these statements:

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
People should be able to take refuge in other countries to escape from war or persecution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our government should do more to help refugees fleeing war or persecution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

How closely would you personally accept people fleeing war or persecution? Would you let them live...? (Choose ONE)

- in your household
- in your neighbourhood
- in your city, town or village
- in your country
- Or would you refuse them entry to your country

End of Block: Block 6

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Start of Block: Block 7

Is there anything else you would like to add?

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End of Block: Block 7

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Start of Block: Demographic information

Gender identity. Do you identify as:

- Male
- Female
- In some other way

What is your age?

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What is your furthest level of education?

- Some secondary school
- GCSE or equivalent
- A-levels or equivalent
- Undergraduate university degree
- Postgraduate university degree

Do you consider yourself to be an immigrant to the UK?

- Yes
- No

Which category best describes your ethnicity?

- White British, English, Northern Irish, Scottish or Welsh
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish traveller
- Any other white background, please specify  

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- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other mixed or multiple ethnic background, please specify  

---

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian background, please specify

---

Black Caribbean

Black African

Any other black British, African or Caribbean background, please specify

Arab

Any other ethnic group, please specify

---

## **Appendix B: Pilot phase for questionnaire**

I conducted a focus group of educators at a primary school where I had been employed, in order to develop two of the questionnaire items and to pilot a draft of the questionnaire. The school population includes pupils from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia and elsewhere who came to the UK as refugees or asylum seekers. Seven educators were present, including one deputy head, five class teachers, and one student teacher on placement. Four participants were women and three men, and all had undergraduate and/or postgraduate education. After introducing the project, I asked them to imagine that a refugee pupil had just arrived in their class: Where would they seek information about teaching that pupil? Next, I asked the group to work in pairs to think of positive and negative aspects to having refugee pupils in their classes. The responses from these activities contributed to the questionnaire item asking participants to give reasons for their attitude thermometer scores.

To pilot the questionnaire, I asked the same group of teachers to take a draft version, either online or a paper copy, and to give feedback as they responded. The main points raised were that they wanted an 'I don't know' option for questions related to general knowledge about refugees and more explanation accompanying the attitude thermometers. Overall, they said they found the questionnaire to be quick and straightforward to complete; all completed it in under ten minutes. I subsequently asked three teaching assistants to take the questionnaire, and purposefully selected individuals without tertiary education. This group also wanted an 'I don't know' option but did not mention the attitude thermometers. One participant asked for the words 'disdain' and 'hostility' to be defined on the 12-item attitude scale, but this could not be amended due to the item being validated in previous studies. Notably, none of the teaching assistants were aware that they currently work with refugee pupils, which I took into account when

considering the trustworthiness of data. Based on the feedback from teachers and teaching assistants, I made the descriptions accompanying the attitudes thermometers clearer and added definitions of refugee and asylum seeker to the introduction of the questionnaire. Rather than add an 'I don't know' option to questions – which I feared most participants would select – I added the statement, 'If you don't know, your best guess is fine'.

## Appendix C: Observation protocol

- \*To take place in two case study schools
- \*Within schools, aim for access to EAL unit, mainstream lessons, other social spaces
- \*Head teachers or EAL leaders as gatekeepers
- \*Use of observations to inform selection of interview, group interview participants
- \*Assure teachers that nothing will be shared with anyone at school, all anonymised for analysis

### Overt, observer-as-participant

- Pupils and staff will know that I am a researcher and the general topic of my research
- I will ask teachers how much they would like me to participate, from sitting in the corner to acting as a teaching assistant

### Level of structure

- Initially unstructured → gather rich descriptive data, get an overview of situation
- Move towards more focused, more structured observations to challenge and verify conclusions

### Prior to observing consider (Simpson and Tuson, 2003)

- Focus of observation
- Purpose of observation
- Which RQ addressing
- Boundaries (including / excluding)
- What is the unit of observation?
- What problems might be encountered?

### Recording

- Handwritten field notes, based on level of participation in activity
- Taken as action occurs whenever possible
- Taken immediately after the event if participation limits writing ability

### Analysis

- Field notes fleshed-out and transcribed electronically each day
- Transcribed notes uploaded to NVivo for visualisation, coding, and combining with interview data (classify by person, role, theme, RQ)

<u>VALIDITY</u>	<u>RELIABILITY</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Triangulate with pupils' perspectives, teacher interview responses</li> <li>*Participant review: Did I get it right?</li> <li>*Self-review: What would disprove my conclusions and is it present?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Records kept of all procedures of data collection and analysis, including how data is categorised, coded, included / excluded</li> <li>*Have a colleague follow the procedures to see if data is analysed similar</li> </ul>

## Appendix D: Interview schedule

\*Semi-structured

\*For teachers, teaching assistants, school leaders (change “in lessons” to “at school”)

\*Audio recorded if participant gives permission, written notes if not too distracting

### Pre-interview

Introduce myself and the project, if not already done so for observational component, including review of information sheet and consent form, and how the information from the interview will be used.

It is likely that the participant will already be familiar with the project through observation in their classroom. In this case, I will provide a brief reminder of the research, such as:

*Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed. I was hoping to ask you a bit more about what's been happening in lessons. As you already know, I'm interested in how teachers are interacting with pupils who are refugees or asylum seekers, so the questions will mostly be about that. The interview usually lasts about an hour – will that work for you? If you want to skip any questions or if you want to stop the interview at any time, just let me know and that's fine.*

### Background/Warm-up

Goal: to make the participant feel comfortable, gain an understanding of their background and current responsibilities. (Possible follow-up/prompts below each question.)

- 1) *Tell me a bit about yourself. How did you come to be a teacher?*
  - *How long have you been teaching?*
  - *How long have you been at this school?*
  - *Why did you want to become a teacher?*
- 2) *What is an average working day like for you?*
  - *What lessons do you teach? (subjects, year groups)*
  - *What sorts of responsibilities do you have outside lessons?*

### Main Questions

Goal: to explore teachers' practices with refugee pupils, including their knowledge and attitudes about these children and their education, and how their knowledge and attitudes shape their practices.

- 1) *Are you aware of which of your pupils are from a refugee background, or are currently seeking asylum?*
  - *How do you know?*
  - *Do you keep track of these pupils in any way? How?*
  - *About how long have the pupils been in this country?*
- 2) *Are you aware of any pupils who are seeking asylum by themselves / without their families?*

- *How do you know?*
  - *What has your involvement in the PEP process been like?*
- 3) *What sorts of pathways or curriculums do refugee pupils follow?*
- *Are there any special programmes or support structures?*
  - *How are new arrivals placed?*
  - *How well do you feel your school does in terms of its practices with refugee pupils? Why?*
- 4) *What's it like having refugee pupils in lessons?*
- *What are they like?*
  - *How is their learning going? Why do you think this is the case?*
  - *How do you think it has been for the non-refugee pupils?*
  - *What are some of the challenges of having refugee pupils in lessons?*
  - *What are some of the advantages? Can you give some examples?*
- 5) *What do you think it is like for refugee pupils in your lessons?*
- *How do you think they find the pitch, pace of learning?*
  - *How do you think they find it socially and emotionally?*
  - *Why do you think that?*
- 6) *Does your teaching practice change much when you are teaching refugee pupils?*
- *If yes, how / why does it change?*
  - *If not, why not?*
  - *Can you tell me more about what happened in the literacy lesson this morning when...*
  - *What would you do ideally, with all the time / money in the world? Why?*
- 7) *How confident do you feel in terms of your knowledge when teaching refugee pupils?*
- *Where do you get your knowledge about teaching these pupils?*
  - *Have you been on any relevant training courses? Why/not? How were they?*
  - *Have you read any articles or documents on the topic? How were they?*
  - *Where else do you get information that helps you teach refugee pupils? Why?*
  - *How do you think the knowledge of your colleagues is in this area? (Teachers, teaching assistants, management team)*
- 8) *There are lots of debates these days in parliament and the media about how many refugees Britain should allow to live here. What do you think?*
- *Too many already, some alright, open borders?*
  - *How should the government decide who can stay?*
- 9) *On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being very negative and 10 being very positive, how would you rate the contribution of refugee pupils to your lessons? Why?*
- *What about their contribution to the school in general? Why?*
  - *The larger community? Why?*
  - *How do you think your colleagues (other school staff) would respond to this question? Why?*

## **Closing**

Goal: Give the participant the opportunity to emphasise their most important thoughts and/or bring up areas I haven't anticipated. Thank the participant for their help.

- 1) *Now that you know a bit more about the topic of my research, is there anything else you think I should know?*
- 2) *What question should I have asked you but didn't?*
- 3) *Which of the topics we discussed today do you think is the most important? Why?*

<u>VALIDITY</u>	<u>RELIABILITY</u>
<p>*Triangulate with observations, pupil group interview responses</p> <p>*Peer review: guess the RQ from the interview schedule?</p> <p>*Participant review: Did I get it right?</p> <p>*Self-review: What would disprove my conclusions and is it present?</p>	<p>*Records kept of all procedures of data collection and analysis, including how data is categorised, coded, included / excluded</p>

## Appendix E: Pupil group interview plan

\*Groups to contain between 4-8 pupils, of refugee and non-refugee background, selected by teachers based on social dynamics and to generate a range of backgrounds

\*To take place at a time that does not interfere with curriculum learning (ex. lunch or during a lesson with teacher's permission)

\*Emphasise that responses will be anonymous and not passed on to anyone at school, just for a research project

\*Discuss the need for confidentiality *between* participants, also up to them not to repeat what people say around school

\*Audio recording with permission of all participants

### Introduce the topic

- Define refugees, asylum
- It's important to know about what teachers are doing with these pupils so that everyone gets a good education

### Individual thinking time

- *Imagine a new pupil who is seeking asylum arrives at your school. What are some good things that teachers at your school would do?*
- Pupils spend a few minutes writing (or drawing) their responses on post-its or small pieces of paper
- Extension: Think about explaining why you answered that way

### Discussion

- Collate responses where everyone can see, grouping as they are added
- Ask pupils to rank items from most to least important, speaking first to a partner, then discuss as a whole group
- Elicit reasons for a practice being more or less important
- Ask for examples, counter-examples
- (*ex. Why do you say \_\_\_\_\_ is more important? Can you give me an example of when that happens here? Does it always happen that way? If you were the teacher, what would you do? Why?*)
- Ask pupils to score items as to whether teachers at their school do it never (1), a little (2), a lot (3), or always (4).

(\*Focus is on the discussion generated rather than actual rankings or scores)

### Conclusion

- Recap the discussion and the main messages the group has given
- Reminder about confidentiality
- Thanks for giving time and thought

## Appendix F: Code index

<u>Attitudes</u>	Class norms
<p>Towards pupils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'conscious citizens'</li> <li>• 'different cultures, different perspectives'</li> <li>• 'drain on resources'</li> <li>• Empathy for refugees</li> <li>• Fortunate to work</li> <li>• It's our job</li> <li>• Like any student</li> <li>• Age matters</li> <li>• Parents difficult</li> <li>• Potential for difficulty</li> <li>• System is restrictive</li> <li>• Notable progress</li> <li>• Parents helpful</li> <li>• Traumatized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour of kids</li> <li>• Classroom appearance</li> <li>• High expectations</li> <li>• Low expectations</li> <li>• Routines, lesson structure</li> <li>• Task uncoded</li> </ul>
<p>Towards provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional support good</li> <li>• EAL – mainstream responsibility</li> <li>• EAL is difficult</li> <li>• EAL is easy</li> <li>• 'Every refugee child is different'</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Inclusion important</li> <li>• Integration important</li> <li>• Mainstream best</li> <li>• 'hands, less talking'</li> <li>• multicultural school</li> <li>• school is normalising</li> <li>• teachers not counsellors</li> <li>• enjoy about teaching</li> </ul>	<p>Developing English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building vocabulary</li> <li>• Early literacy</li> <li>• Grammar</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Scaffolding speech</li> </ul>
<p>Towards refugees generally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiculturalism good</li> <li>• Qualified entry</li> <li>• Refugee stigma</li> <li>• Right to asylum</li> <li>• Take more</li> </ul>	<p>Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building in interests</li> <li>• Different questions, outcomes</li> <li>• Extending</li> <li>• None - 'equal treatment'</li> <li>• Referral to extras</li> <li>• Special treatment</li> <li>• Teacher support</li> <li>• Use of TA</li> </ul>
	<p>Promoting engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebration, praise</li> <li>• Learning is fun</li> <li>• Learning is relevant</li> <li>• Pastoral care</li> <li>• Safe environment</li> <li>• Warmth</li> </ul>
	<p>Promoting understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dramatics</li> <li>• Explaining</li> <li>• Objects, tactile</li> <li>• Translation</li> <li>• Visuals, displays</li> </ul>

Knowledge

- About funding
- About safeguarding
- About social care
- About specific pupils
- CPD
- EAL pedagogy
- Identifying refugees
- Informal learning
- Knowledge
- More training please
- Previous experience
- Resources
- Teacher confidence
- Teacher education history
- Trauma pedagogy
- Who is a refugee

Practices

General

- Behaviour management negative
- Behaviour management positive
- Class info
- Communication EAL – mainstream
- Curriculum decisions
- Flexibility
- ‘look after them’
- Negative regard
- Non-teaching staff
- Parent engagement
- PEP meetings
- ‘Social engineering’
- Teaching behaviour for learning
- Tracking, assessment
- Welcoming

Interactions

- Attitudes → Knowledge
- Attitudes → Practices
- Knowledge → Attitudes
- Knowledge → Practices
- Practices → Attitudes
- Practices → Knowledge
- School level factors
- External factors

Methodological notes

- Child interruption
- Combating social desirability
- Group dynamics
- High participation
- I want to be liked
- Interview as roleplay
- Low participation
- Missed opportunity
- Negative rapport
- ‘No negativity’
- Positive rapport
- Teacher gratitude
- Teacher wants to be liked
- Understanding my role

Other

- Average school day
- Quotes
- Roles and responsibilities

## Appendix G: CUREC approval

Dear Caitlin,

Title: Teacher interactions with refugee and asylum seeking pupils: knowledge, attitudes and practices

The above application (reference number ED-CIA-18-174) has been considered on behalf of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to DREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly, approval has been granted.

If your research involves participants whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question (this includes those under 18 and vulnerable adults), then it is advisable to read the following NSPCC professional reporting requirements for cases of suspected abuse

[http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/questions/reporting\\_child\\_abuse\\_wda74908.html](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/questions/reporting_child_abuse_wda74908.html)

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project which raise ethical issues not covered in the original application you should submit details to [research.office@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:research.office@education.ox.ac.uk) for consideration.

Good luck with your research study.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Molway

Member of DREC

## **Appendix H: Information and consent forms**

### **Initial email to survey schools**

Dear (Name of head teacher)

### ***Teacher interaction with child refugees***

Your school has been selected to participate in a study of teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to refugee and asylum seeking pupils. This project is being undertaken as doctoral research at the Department of Education, University of Oxford. Your school has been selected to ensure a mix of different types of schools in different areas of Oxfordshire.

With your permission, I will invite relevant staff at your school to participate in a short survey that takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. The survey can be taken online or with paper and pencil. Ideally, I would attend one of your staff meetings to briefly introduce the survey and allow people to decide whether they would like to participate. The results are anonymous so no one will be able to identify individuals or schools.

Taking part in this project will contribute to a better understanding of how refugee and asylum seeking pupils are getting on at school, and what teachers are doing to support their learning and well-being.

I would be grateful to arrange a date for me to come explain the project to your staff and leave a link to the survey. If this is possible, please suggest some dates that work for you.

Thank you for your time.

Best wishes,

Caitlin Prentice

Department of Education

University of Oxford

caitlin.prentice@education.ox.ac.uk

## **Teacher interactions with refugee and asylum seeking pupils**

### **(Questionnaire development focus group)**

May 2018 – July 2019

Thank you for your interest in this project. You have been invited to participate because you are a teacher or other staff member at a primary or secondary school in Oxfordshire. Please read the information below carefully before agreeing to take part.

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

Recently, many children and young people have arrived in the UK as refugees or asylum seekers, either with their families or on their own. Very little is known about how these pupils are getting on at school and how it has been for the teachers who educate them. Information from this study will help policy makers and schools provide the best outcomes for pupils, teachers, and society in general.

#### **What will the project involve?**

The project will include a survey of teachers and other staff at several schools, who will be asked to fill out a brief (about 10 minutes) questionnaire about their attitudes and knowledge in regards to refugee and asylum seeking pupils. A few schools will be selected for interviews and observations to find out more about what teachers think, what pupils think, and what is happening day-to-day in schools. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to help develop the questionnaire for the study by discussing the potential questions in a group of other teachers.

#### **How will the information be used?**

The results from the study may be used in reports, academic articles, and presentations but will not use your name or identify you. All questionnaire forms and audio files will be kept securely, will only be accessed by the researcher, and will be kept for as long as they have academic value.

#### **What are the risks and benefits to taking part?**

There are no known risks to taking part in this project. Your participation will help us better understand the current educational situation for refugee and asylum seeking pupils, including what is going well and what could be improved. If you have any questions or concerns during the project, you can contact the researcher, Caitlin Prentice [caitlin.prentice@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:caitlin.prentice@education.ox.ac.uk), her supervisor, Nigel Fancourt [nigel.fancourt@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nigel.fancourt@education.ox.ac.uk) or the Chair of the Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee [ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk).

**Opt-in consent form for school staff and competent youths**

**Teacher interaction with refugee and asylum seeking pupils**

**May 2018 – July 2019**

**Consent form: to be signed by teachers and competent youth (age 16+)**

	<b>Please initial if you agree</b>
I have read and understood the information sheet and understand what the project is about.	
I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project and have received satisfactory answers.	
I understand that I do not have to take part if I do not want to and that I can withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason.	
I understand that what I say to you is confidential.	
I understand that if you think I, or any individual, might not be safe, you will have to tell others.	
I understand that the information I give you will be kept securely, in accordance with the law.	
I understand that you will write a report that will include the things discussed in the interview.	
I know that you will not use my name and my identity will be kept anonymous throughout the project.	
I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.	
I understand that this project has received ethical approval from the University of Oxford.	
I am happy for you to write down or audio record what is said to you.	

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Initial email to case study schools**

Dear (Name of head teacher)

***Teacher interaction with child refugees***

Your school has been selected to participate in a study of teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to refugee and asylum seeking pupils. This project is being undertaken as doctoral research at the Department of Education, University of Oxford. Your school has been selected because of your significant population of refugee and asylum seeking pupils, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

With your permission, I will visit your school for 2-3 weeks a few times throughout the year and conduct interviews with relevant staff such as class teachers, teaching assistants, EAL coordinators, SEN coordinators, and senior managers. I will also ask to observe in some lessons and to hold interviews with small groups of pupils nominated by their teacher. Before any interviews or observations I will seek informed consent of the people involved. The results are anonymous so no one will be able to identify individuals or schools.

Taking part in this project will contribute to a better understanding of how refugee and asylum seeking pupils are getting on at school, and what teachers are doing to support their learning and well-being.

I would be grateful to schedule a meeting with you to provide a more detailed description of the project, answer any questions you might have, and discuss practical arrangements. If this is possible, please suggest some dates that work for you.

Thank you for your time.

Best wishes,

Caitlin Prentice

Department of Education

University of Oxford

caitlin.prentice@education.ox.ac.uk

## **Teacher interactions with refugee and asylum seeking pupils**

**(School staff) May 2018 – July 2019**

Thank you for your interest in this project. You have been invited to participate because you are a teacher or other staff member at a primary or secondary school in Oxfordshire. Please read the information below carefully before agreeing to take part.

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

Recently, many children and young people have arrived in the UK as refugees or asylum seekers, either with their families or on their own. Very little is known about how these pupils are getting on at school and how it has been for the teachers who educate them. Information from this study will help policy makers and schools provide the best outcomes for pupils, teachers, and society in general.

### **What will the project involve?**

The project will include a survey of teachers and other staff at several schools, who will be asked to fill out a brief (about 10 minutes) questionnaire about their attitudes and knowledge in regards to refugee and asylum seeking pupils. A few schools will be selected for interviews and observations to find out more about what teachers think, what pupils think, and what is happening day-to-day in schools. Teachers will be interviewed individually, at a time convenient for them, and the interviews will take less than one hour. Pupils (both refugee and non-refugee background) will be invited to participate in group interviews that will be scheduled so as not to interfere with lessons, and will also take less than one hour. Interviews may be recorded if all the participants present agree to it.


### **How will the information be used?**

The information will be used alongside observations in schools and other interview and questionnaire responses. The results may be used in reports, academic articles, and presentations but will not use your name or identify you. All questionnaire forms and audio files will be kept securely, will only be accessed by the researcher, and will be kept for as long as they have academic value.

### **What are the risks and benefits to taking part?**

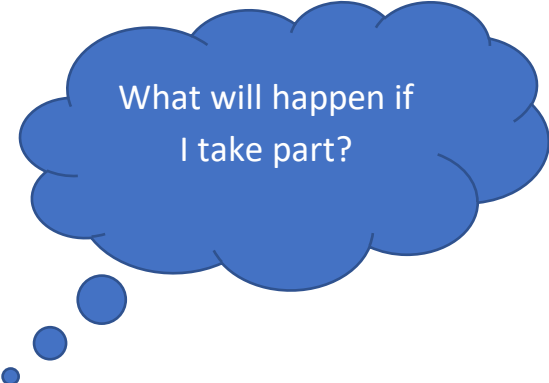
There are no known risks to taking part in this project. Your participation will help us better understand the current educational situation for refugee and asylum seeking pupils, including what is going well and what could be improved. If you have any questions or concerns during the project, you can contact the researcher, Caitlin Prentice [caitlin.prentice@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:caitlin.prentice@education.ox.ac.uk), her supervisor, Nigel Fancourt [nigel.fancourt@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nigel.fancourt@education.ox.ac.uk) or the Chair of the Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee [ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk).

## Teacher interactions with refugee and asylum seeking pupils



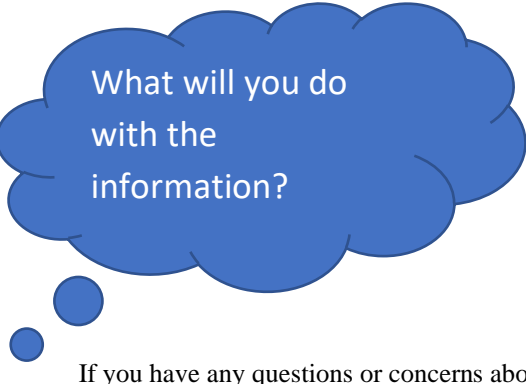
Why are you doing this project?

Many children have been coming to the UK because they are refugees, which means they don't feel safe in their home countries. I want to learn about how these pupils are getting on at Altford and what it has been like for pupils and adults at your school. This will help schools and the government make plans so everyone gets a great education.



What will happen if I take part?

If you decide to take part, you will do a group interview, where I ask you and some of your classmates questions about your school, teachers, and lessons. You can skip questions if you like, and you can stop taking part in the project without giving me a reason. If it is alright with all the people present, I will record the interview using an audio recorder (just your voices, no video).



What will you do with the information?

I will use the information to write reports for people at the university. I might use some of the things you say in the reports, but your name won't be on it so no one will know who said it. I won't share anything you said with your teachers or anyone else at school unless I think you or another child might be at risk of getting badly hurt.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project, you can contact the researcher, Caitlin Prentice [caitlin.prentice@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:caitlin.prentice@education.ox.ac.uk), her supervisor, Nigel Fancourt [nigel.fancourt@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nigel.fancourt@education.ox.ac.uk), or the Oxford Social Sciences Research Ethics committee [ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk)

## **Teacher interactions with refugee and asylum seeking pupils**

### **(Parents or guardians of pupils age 15 and under)**

Your child has been invited to participate in this project because they are a pupil at a primary or secondary school in Oxfordshire. Some pupils participating are refugees and some pupils are not. Please read the information below carefully before agreeing that your child can take part.

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

Recently, many children and young people have arrived in the UK as refugees or asylum seekers, either with their families or on their own. Very little is known about how these pupils are getting on at school and what it has been like for teachers and pupils. Information from this study will help policy makers and schools provide the best outcomes for pupils, teachers, and society in general.

#### **What will the project involve?**

The project will include a survey of teachers and other staff at several schools. Some schools will be selected for interviews and observations to find out more about what teachers think, what pupils think, and what is happening day-to-day in schools. If your child takes part, they will be interviewed as part of a small group during the school day at a time when their teacher says it will not interfere with curriculum learning. The interview will be audio recorded if all the participants present give permission. If you or your child wants to stop being part of the project at any time, you can do so without giving reasons.

#### **How will the information be used?**

The information will be used alongside observations in schools and other interview and questionnaire responses. The results will be reported in a PhD dissertation and may also be used in reports, academic articles, and presentations. Your child's name will not be used in any of the reporting, and it will be written in a way to keep their identity confidential. The data will be kept on a secure server and transferred only using secure encryption. It will be kept for as long as it has academic value.

#### **What are the risks and benefits of taking part?**

There are no known risks to taking part in this project. Your child's participation will help us better understand the current educational situation for refugee and asylum seeking pupils, including what is going well and what could be improved. If you have any questions or concerns during the project, you can contact the researcher, Caitlin Prentice [caitlin.prentice@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:caitlin.prentice@education.ox.ac.uk), her supervisor, Nigel Fancourt [nigel.fancourt@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nigel.fancourt@education.ox.ac.uk) or the Chair of the Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee [ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk).

**Opt-out consent form**



**Teacher interaction with refugee and asylum seeking pupils**

**September 2018 – July 2019**

**Opt-out consent form: to be given to parents or guardians of children younger than 16**

	<b>Please initial if you agree</b>
I have read and understood the information sheet about the project and have had an opportunity to ask questions.	
I do NOT wish for my child to take part in the above study.	

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's school: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your signature


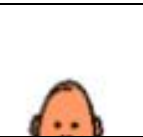

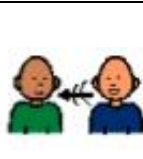





\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of signature

Please complete this form and send it back to school for the researcher, Caitlin Prentice, if you do NOT wish for your child to take part.

## Prompt for verbal consent, pupils younger than 16

### Teacher interaction with refugee and asylum seeking pupils

(Review together immediately prior to group interviews, after parents / guardians have given opt-out consent)

	I know what the study is about.
	I understand what taking part in the interview involves.
	I know that you will not tell use my name in the report and you will not say who said what.
	I know that if you think I or others might not be safe, you will have to tell somebody.
	I understand that as a group, we will not share what is said here with other people afterwards.
	I am happy for you to write down and record what I say to you.
	I know that you will write a report that will include the things I tell you.
	I know that I do not have to answer all of the questions.
	I know that I can stop talking to you at any time.



I know that no one will mind if I want to stop talking to you.

Any questions before we get started?

## Appendix I: Supplementary tables

**Table 1: How prepared do you feel to teach refugee pupils in terms of...**

	Academic learning?		EAL learning?		Pastoral care?		Cultural differences?		Overall?	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Very unprepared	66	23.4%	48	17.1%	58	20.7%	51	18.2%	47	17.1%
A little unprepared	90	31.9%	81	28.8%	82	29.3%	100	35.7%	102	37.1%
A little prepared	103	36.5%	117	41.6%	94	33.6%	103	36.8%	112	40.7%
Very prepared	23	8.2%	35	12.5%	46	16.4%	26	9.3%	14	5.1%

*Surveyed teachers reported variable feelings of preparation to teach refugee pupils across categories. 'Overall' preparation was its own question rather than being the mean across other categories.*

**Table 2: Medians and Inter-Quartile Ranges for 'How prepared do you feel in terms of...'**

	median	Inter-Quartile Range
Academic learning	2	1
English language learning	3	1
Pastoral care	2.5	1
Cultural differences	2	1
Overall	2	1

*The spread across the four options of preparedness was relatively even, without a strong tendency towards unpreparedness or preparedness in any category.*

**Table 3: How much experience do you have teaching pupils who...**

	Have English as an additional language?		Are looked after?		Are refugees or asylum seekers?	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
No experience	18	6.3%	32	11.3%	142	49.7%
A little experience	132	46.0%	162	57.0%	109	38.1%
Quite a lot of experience	109	38.0%	79	27.8%	30	10.5%
Extensive experience	28	9.8%	11	3.9%	5	1.7%

**Table 4: What are your reasons for that answer? (Attitude thermometer score)**

	Item	n	(%)
1	They help us learn about other cultures	197	66.6%
2	They learn English quickly	96	32.4%
3	Other	87	29.4%
4	They make a lot of academic progress	72	24.3%
5	They add to staff workload	60	20.3%
6	They set a good example for others	58	19.6%
7	They don't speak English well	55	18.6%
8	They struggle socially	38	12.8%
9	They make friends easily	35	11.8%
10	They are behind academically	33	11.1%
11	They have mental health issues	20	6.8%
12	They do not add to staff workload	18	6.1%
13	They have behavioural problems	12	4.1%
14	They are emotionally stable	9	3.0%
15	They are too culturally different	2	0.7%