

Schooling, Physical Education and the Primary-Secondary Transition

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Declaration

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

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Abstract

Preliminary evidence indicates that although there have been attempts to ensure continuity across the primary-secondary transition (Tobell, 2003), discontinuities remain and that there is a ‘hiatus in progression’ (Galton *et al.*, 2000). For pupils the transition to secondary school is a time of change leaving their small familiar primary school and entering a large unfamiliar secondary school. This thesis presents pupils’ expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition, across the curriculum and specifically with regards to Physical Education (PE). The primary-secondary transition with regards to PE is marked by significant changes in resource provision, and a mode of delivery from (mainly) non-specialist teachers to subject specialists (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000).

As an exploratory case study, an ethnographic approach was adopted with ‘pupil-voice’ a distinctive and central feature. Two phases of fieldwork were conducted. The first phase examined Year 6 (aged 10-11) pupils’ expectations of the primary-secondary transition at Urban Primary and tracked these pupils into City Comprehensive to explore their experiences (June-October 2011). The second phase of fieldwork examined the particularities of the transition concerned with PE. Once more, expectations of Year 6 pupils at Urban Primary were explored and tracked into City Comprehensive (June-October, 2012).

Thematic inductive analysis was conducted and there were four super-ordinate findings which relate to: pupils’ perceptions of the process of transition across the curriculum and with regards to PE; the notion of ‘being good enough’; social implications of transition; concept of ‘growing up’; teachers and teaching. Findings suggest that these factors contribute to a discontinuous experience for pupils during transition. Future research directions point towards a focus on academia across transition and a consideration of the development in physical competence within primary school settings. Throughout this thesis reflexivity and reflection were used to provide an insight into the research journey as part of the doctoral apprenticeship.

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This thesis is dedicated to my father and mother, Bernard and Maria Hodgkin who have always encouraged and supported my enthusiasm for education. I also wish to dedicate it to family members that did not live to see the completion of this thesis but who I know would be very proud of the achievement.

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Abbreviations

afPE - Association for Physical Education
BERA - British Educational Research Association
CRB - Criminal Record Bureau
DSCF - Department for Schools, Children and Families
ECM - Every Child Matters
ERA - Education Reform Act
EEF - Education Endowment Foundation
ESTYN - Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
GCSE - General Certificate of Secondary Education
HMI - Her Majesty's Inspectors
HoY- Head of Year
HoPE - Head of PE
HQPE- High Quality Physical Education
HT- Headteacher
ITT- Initial Teacher Training
KS2 - Key Stage two
KS3 - Key Stage three
KS4 - Key Stage four
LEA - Local Education Authority
OFSTED - Office for Standards in Education
PE - Physical Education
PESS - Physical Education and School Sport
PESSAs - Physical Education and School Sport Assistants
PGCE - Postgraduate Certificate in Education
QTS - Qualified Teacher Status
RE - Religious Education
SPATFG - Schools Physical Activity Task and Finish Group
SSCOs - School Sport Co-ordinators
UK - United Kingdom
USA - United States of America
WAG - Welsh Assembly Government
WG - Welsh Government

Prologue

Throughout this thesis there is a series of reflections which provide the reader with a reflexive insight into the personal journey undertaken. The following paragraphs offer the reader a snapshot of my profile as a researcher and the pathway towards a focus of inquiry.

During a meeting towards the end of my undergraduate study the focus of my PhD fell into place. Throughout compulsory and post-compulsory education I have always balanced academic achievement with my interest in PE, physical activity and sport. At an early age I regularly engaged in sporting activity which comprised mainly of football and cricket. Throughout my school days these commitments supported and at times hindered my enthusiasm for education. I combined my passion for sport and education by undertaking PE at GCSE and A-level. These interests ultimately influenced my decision to embark on an undergraduate course which combined the study of Education with a specific focus on PE and Sport.

I graduated from the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (now Cardiff Metropolitan University) in 2010 with a first class honours in Education Studies and Sport and Physical Activity. I enjoyed the education element of the course but my interest lay in PE and the pedagogic practice associated with the subject, which ultimately contributed to the focus of my undergraduate dissertation.

This piece of qualitative research centred on effective teaching strategies employed by PE teachers in secondary school and provided an introduction to the process of research which was both challenging and rewarding. I enjoyed the negotiation of gaining access, being in the field and exploring the findings. Alongside my

undergraduate studies I undertook various placements in primary and secondary school settings. At this time I became aware of the importance of the transition between these two settings. Moreover, I gained valuable experience working with pupils across various age ranges.

Once I had completed my undergraduate studies the pathway to follow was a complicated one. Many of my peers chose the teacher training route, gaining experience in schools in order to undertake a PGCE. However, I wanted to pursue my interest in research at a postgraduate level. I was granted a scholarship by the School of Education at Cardiff Metropolitan University which granted me the opportunity to embark on a postgraduate research degree.

Having only just completed my undergraduate studies the prospect of undertaking a PhD was somewhat daunting. I understood that embarking on a PhD journey would require a vast culture change to what I had previously experienced as an undergraduate. Adjusting to a life as a PhD student was difficult. It required complete dedication to my research, a thorough approach to writing, a critical stance and routine. After lengthy negotiations with my proposed supervisory team it was decided that the primary-secondary transition would be the focus of my research, with PE a central and distinctive feature.

Chapter One

Introduction

The current research captured pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition in the UK through an ethnographic case study. A two-phase programme of empirical work explored pupils' experiences across the curriculum and then specifically with regards to PE. The justification behind this approach was that it enabled an exploration of all aspects of the transition, before examining the transition in greater depth through a particular subject area. Moreover, this research provided 'voice' to a population which remains marginalised within educational research concerning transition, the pupils (Rice *et al.*, 2011).

The research explored personal accounts of the pupils experiencing transition. Two schools were selected, a secondary school and one of its feeder primary schools. Year 6 pupils were tracked during their final stages of primary school into the initial stages of secondary school. An ethnographic approach was an original element of the research design concerning the primary-secondary transition and enabled full immersion within the setting to observe and report. For the purpose of this thesis 'pupil' is used to describe the participants experiencing transition. However, theoretical debates surrounding the child-centred approach and child development employ the term 'child'.

1.1 Research aim

The aim of this programme of research was, through an ethnographic study, to

- Examine critically pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition across the curriculum, and through a focus on Physical Education (PE).

It was met through the following objectives:

Phase One

- (1) A critical evaluation of literature concerning all aspects of the transition between primary and secondary school.
- (2) The first phase of a two phase period of ethnographic research at a primary and a secondary school.
- (3) A thorough exploration of the expectations and experiences of the transition from primary to secondary school.

Phase Two

- (4) A critical and precise evaluation of literature concerning PE across the primary-secondary transition.
- (5) The second phase of a two-phase period of ethnographic research at the same primary and secondary schools with a focus on PE.
- (6) A detailed examination of PE across the primary-secondary transition through the eyes of the pupils.

1.2 The significance of the Primary-Secondary Transition

The transition from primary to secondary school is one of the most important and significant steps in children's lives (Measor and Fleetham, 2005). There are physical, psychological and emotional maturational developments that are associated with this age (11 years), and significant changes in curricula from Key Stage 2 (KS2) to Key Stage 3 (KS3) (Galton *et al.*, 2003). There are also different pedagogic practices which are embedded within the National Curriculum (Boyd, 2005), as well as new socio-spatial environments and interaction networks (Blatchford *et al.*, 2008). Inevitably, therefore, this transition can be a challenging phase of the educational

experience. At the heart of concerns about transition are that pupils make a smooth change from primary school to secondary school and that their progress is not hampered by the change rather than it is advanced (Farrell, 2005).

Preliminary evidence shows that although there have been attempts to ensure continuity from KS2 to KS3 (Tobell, 2003), there are indications that discontinuities remain (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999) and that there is a 'hiatus in progression' (Galton *et al.*, 2000). A further worry is that pupils who do not adjust to the new challenges of secondary school are at risk of becoming de-motivated and disengaged from school (Rice *et al.*, 2011).

At this point in the educational system (KS2 – KS3) there has been a well-established concern about continuity and progression as a result of the transition from primary to secondary school (Galton *et al.*, 2000; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999).

It dates back to the early 1980s:

All classes and almost all children in the primary schools made progress in the basic skills. However, this was not so in the first year of transfer to secondary education. Not only were average levels of progress a good deal lower in the first year after transfer ... but for the first time substantial numbers of pupils made losses in absolute terms (Croll, 1983, p.81).

Although over 30 years old, Croll's (1983) analysis of transition remains relevant and provides a suitable starting point for this programme of research. The passage introduces some of the issues that surround the transition from primary to secondary education. He not only highlights the halt in progress between these two phases of education, but also suggests that some pupils take a backward step with regards to

progression as a result of the transition to secondary school. The reasons for this phenomenon will be explored in chapter two.

A further consideration of pupils' experiences during the primary-secondary transition also requires attention. The majority of studies to date have focused on a single aspect of the transition (e.g., social development), rather than assessing pupils' concerns (Rice *et al.*, 2011). Hanewald (2013) suggests that whilst it is known that transition can alter the school experience profoundly, less is known about pupils' perceptions of transition. Pupils' expectations and experiences of the transition to secondary school can potentially identify strengths and weaknesses of the primary-secondary transition at present, whilst providing schools with an insight into pupils' perceptions of an important transitional process (Measor and Fleetham, 2005).

In order to investigate the transition between primary and secondary school there needs to be clarity about the way in which transition is conceptualised in the extant literature. An exploration into the transitions which precede and follow the primary-secondary transition is also required to provide an insight into the importance of such a transition.

1.3 Transition: a conceptual review

The term 'transition' is usually taken to mean the time when a pupil moves between schools or enter some form of pre-school provision (i.e., moving from home to nursery) (Rose, 2009). Academics have used the term 'transition' and 'transfer' interchangeably in the past (e.g., Galton *et al.*, 2003; Huggins and Knight, 1997), however the conceptual differences between the two phases are clear. Transition in

an educational context means progression to the next year group. Whereas, transfer is an aspect of transition that involves a change in schools (Measor and Fleetham, 2005). Transition refers to the academic development from year 6 to year 7 (ages 10-11), whereas transfer refers to the geographical/spatial change between schools. For the purpose of this thesis, 'transition' is used to describe the progression from year 6 to year 7. What is clear is that how well these transitions, within and between schools are managed will inevitably influence how well pupils progress (Rose, 2009).

There has been a tendency amongst teachers to think of transition as completed in roughly a week at the end of summer term of year 6 and another week the beginning of year 7 (Measor and Fleetham, 2005). This highlights one of the problems related to transition – a fundamental misunderstanding amongst *some* teachers. In particular, there is ambiguity about when transition begins and ends, or whether it continues throughout secondary school. In support of this, Fabian (2002) emphasises the importance of any transition being a long-term process. This vague perspective of transition does little to provide clarity as to how far transition should go to ensure pupils progress during the preliminary stages of secondary school and beyond.

Prior to and following the primary-secondary transition, pupils experience a number of transitions within education including nursery to primary school, and eventually compulsory or post-compulsory education to employment (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999). The timeline below plots the transitional experiences which a 'typical' pupil encounters throughout their educational life.

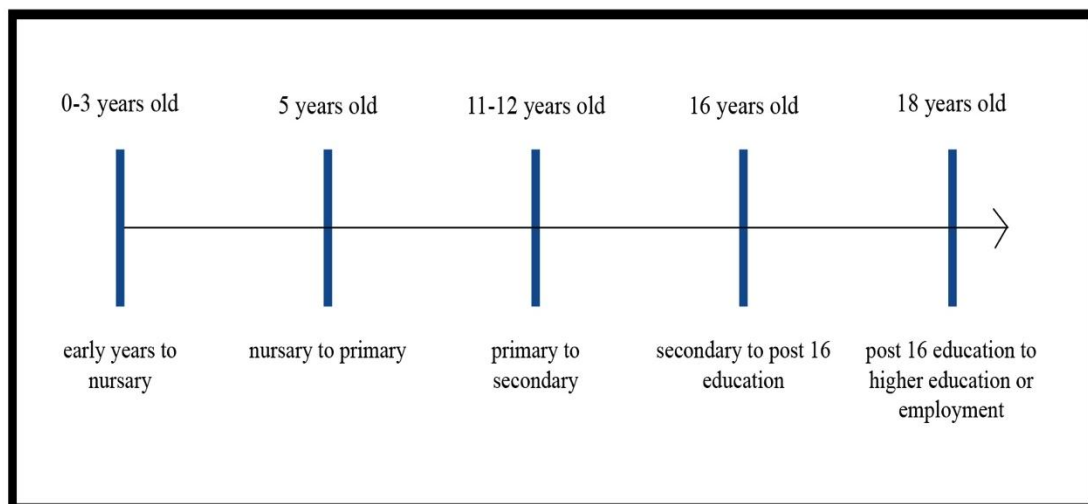


Figure 1. A timeline plotting transitions within the educational journey of a ‘typical’ pupil in Wales

Pupils undertake a number of transitions throughout their educational career. An early transition for some is from nursery school (Early Years provision) to primary school. According to Fabian (2002) the transition from nursery to primary school is a complex and dynamic procedure, during which the pupil moves from one intimate environment, to a new and different environment, resulting in a change of roles and positions within its social status. Earlier transitions have been thought to impact on the primary-secondary transition. For example, Carida (2011) identifies that when pupils move from nursery to primary school, a significant percentage of pupils cannot effectively manage the new requirements and challenges in primary school, resulting in negative experiences and stress. As well as affecting pupils’ move to primary school, a negative experience like this may have a detrimental effect on other transitions in the educational system, such as the transition from primary to secondary school. This is supported by Yeboah (2002) who claims that the importance of a successful transition to [primary] school cannot be overemphasised.

Experiences during this transition may have a long-term impact on the pupil's future development and learning not only at the primary school, but also at subsequent levels of education (i.e., secondary school).

There are a number of similarities between the nursery-primary school and primary-secondary transition. For example, the primary-secondary transition also involves pupils moving from an intimate environment to a new, much larger environment with a number of different roles and positions. There are also a number of dissimilarities between the two transitions. For example, transition to secondary school can coincide with one of the most turbulent times of life that a human will face – the onset of puberty (Measor and Fleetham, 2005). Research has emphasised the importance of transition within the educational 'career' of pupils, but by far the most significant transition is made between primary and secondary school (Measor and Fleetham, 2005). The primary-secondary transition is where there is most upheaval (academically, emotionally, socially) which is reflected in this being the focus of research (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999; Galton *et al.*, 2000).

According to Galton *et al.* (1999) years 6 and 7 of schooling may be exerting a disproportionate and negative influence on pupils' achievements and their subsequent subject and career choices. This might be the decision to continue their studies into post-16 education or whether to elect for employment. However, the study focussed predominately on conducting a literature and best practice review rather than assessing pupils' experiences across transition. Either way, pupils require a successful transition between primary and secondary school to ensure these decisions are not hampered by a negative experience of education.

The present study has been informed by policy, practice and empirical evidence from both Wales (where the study took place) and England. There are some important differences. According to Evans (2013) the journey from England to Wales may be a short one, but in educational terms the two countries are growing further apart every year. The main differences include the structure of the curriculum, schools and qualifications (Evans, 2013). From September 2014 in England, a new National Curriculum will be taught in all maintained primary and secondary schools (DfE, 2013). The curriculum itself will promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life (DfE, 2013). Conversely, the National Curriculum in Wales is flexible, learner-focused and has an emphasis on skills over subject content. One major difference is that in Wales, children between the ages of 3 and 7 follow a Scandinavian-influenced curriculum called the Foundation Phase, which encourages experiential learning over formal instruction (Evans, 2013).

Alongside the differences in the curriculum, the approach to schooling varies between England and Wales. For example, Wales is committed to the community-led comprehensive model of schooling; therefore there are no academies or free schools (Evans, 2013). Whereas, England is made up of community schools, foundation schools, academies and grammar schools (DfE, 2013). Finally, the qualifications within England and Wales are starting to diverge. Wales already has its own national qualification in the Welsh Baccalaureate, a skills-led qualification that includes elements of community participation and work experience (Evans, 2013).

There is a wealth of research which focuses on the transition from primary-secondary school (Ashton, 2008; Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Capel and Piotrowski, 2000; Galton *et al.*, 1999; Graham and Hill, 2003; Marks, 2004; Measor and Fleetham, 2005; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999; Templeton and Hodd, 2002; West *et al.*, 2010). In Wales and therefore particularly pertinent to the present research, a study into arrangements concerning the primary-secondary school transition concluded that “there is a need to examine good practice in ensuring progression in individual subjects” (Powell *et al.*, 2006, p.64). Moreover, during a recent review of the primary curriculum in England, Rose (2009) indicated that there is a lack of evidence regarding how primary-secondary transition affects performance in other subjects. One such subject which has received limited attention in terms of its role during the primary-secondary transition is PE (Dismore and Bailey, 2010).

1.4 The significance of PE and the Primary-Secondary Transition

Physical Education (PE) has been described as a unique element of the educational process (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000). Compulsory until Key Stage 4 (KS4) in the National Curriculum, it is based on the development of children and young people ‘in’, ‘by’ and ‘through’ physical activities of a broad and balanced kind (Macfayden and Bailey, 2002). The concept and varied definition of PE alongside its relationship with sport suggests that further exploration is required into the connection between the two.

According to Kirk (2005), pupils’ early experiences of PE and sport are crucial to the development of high levels of expertise, thus reinforcing the importance of promoting the values of PE and the benefits of lifelong participation. There is

evidence to suggest that positive experiences of PE and sport in early childhood will result in lifelong participation and improved health. If pupils are denied the opportunity of these experiences, their education is incomplete, again emphasising the importance of a smooth transition to secondary school.

Pupils should carry the positive experience with them outside of the school and be motivated to take part in physical activity throughout adult life (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000). A significant aim of PE is to ensure that every pupil gains satisfaction from, and increased self-esteem as a result of, work in the subject. Although it is important to recognise the potential of PE to promote lifelong participation in physical activity, it also has a number of functions. Bailey (2001) encapsulates the true meaning of PE, suggesting that teachers need to realise that PE is more than just a set of strategies to keep pupils fit and healthy. Of course there are powerful extrinsic values in PE, but the ultimate importance of PE lies in its intrinsic worth. In the past, physical educators have rejected the notion that PE and sport are synonymous (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000):

To allow PE to be distilled by sport is to sell our subject short, certainly sport should be part of the PE curriculum, but we must remember that sport is not the most reinforcing movement form for countless individuals (Tinning, 1995, p.20).

According to Capel and Piotrowski (2000):

One of the major reasons for people seeing PE and sport as synonymous is that the PE profession is not sending a clear message about what PE is, what lies at its core and what are the differences between PE and sport (p.132-133).

The long-term dominance of competitive games such as football, hockey and rugby within the National Curricula of England and Wales has led to the perception that

sport and PE are the same. Essentially, PE is the foundation for pupils, an educational process whereas the focus in sport is on the activity (Capel, 2000).

Although PE and sport are differentiated and distinct, they do impact on one another. With a central focus on the primary-secondary transition, the present study employs PE in its broadest sense including the importance of extra curricular school sport. For the purpose of this thesis the definition of PE incorporates the aim of Physical Education and School Sport emphasising the importance that every young person is challenged and supported in PE and school sport. According to afPE (2013), PE centres on a range of movements, whilst school sport broadens the learning experiences within PE:

Physical Education involves both ‘learning to move’ (i.e., becoming more physically competent) and ‘moving to learn’ (i.e., learning through movement, a range of skills and understandings beyond physical activity, such as co-operating with others). The context for the learning is physical activity, with children experiencing a broad range of activities, including sport and dance (afPE, 2013, p.3).

School sport is the structured learning that takes place beyond the curriculum (i.e., in the extended curriculum) within school settings; this is sometimes referred to as out-of-school hours learning. Again, the context for the learning is physical activity. The ‘school sport’ programme has the potential to develop and broaden the foundation learning that takes place in PE. It also forms a vital link with ‘community sport and activity’ (afPE, 2013, p.3).

A central focus of PE centres on the concept that pupils experience opportunities to ‘learn to move’ and ‘move to learn’ in timetabled PE, but importantly too that pupils broaden such experiences through extra curricular school sport. Recently, School Physical Activity and Task Finish Group (SPATFG) (2013) in Wales suggested that:

Every pupil’s entitlement to High Quality Physical Education (HQPE) was the crucial starting point for the group’s deliberations. We felt that this was critical for pupils to develop

the necessary skills to encourage enjoyment, and to underpin lifelong health, active lifestyles and well-being (p.5).

Central to the importance of HQPE was the groups' emphasis on physical literacy, collaboration, specialist primary teachers and initial teacher training (SPATFG, 2013). Physical literacy has been described as "the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for maintaining purposeful physical pursuits throughout the life course" (Whitehead, 2010, p.5). Physical literacy is especially prevalent at present and a number of the key terms associated with physical literacy (i.e., confidence, competence and motivation) can be addressed through the ten outcomes of HQPE. According to DfES (2004) HQPE is evident when pupils:

1. Commit to PE and Sport and make them a central part of their lives
2. Know and understand what they are trying to achieve and how to go about doing it
3. Understand that PE and Sport are part of healthy and active lifestyles
4. Have the confidence to get involved in PE and Sport
5. Have the skills and control that they need to take part in PE and Sport
6. Take part in a range of competitive, creative and challenge type activities
7. Think about what they are doing and make appropriate decisions for themselves
8. Show a desire to improve and achieve in relation to their own abilities
9. Have the stamina, suppleness and strength to keep going
10. Enjoy PE, school and community sport

(DfES, 2004, p.3)

Across the primary-secondary transition especially, it is essential that teachers address each of the ten outcomes of HQPE in order to shape the delivery of PE. Importantly too, the outcomes of HQPE provide an indication as to whether the pupils themselves are experiencing HQPE.

A smooth transition in PE is important for several reasons. It can assist in managing the apparent decline in pupils' motivation and physical activity levels during their secondary school years (Fredricks and Eccles, 2002; Parish and Treasure, 2003). As the main societal institution for the promotion of physical activity among pupils (Cale and Harris 2006), an effective transition between primary and secondary school PE has the potential to ease the social concerns pupils highlight in the extant literature (Pellegrini and Long, 2002). Furthermore, physical activity is associated with improved emotional well-being and self-esteem among young people (Jago *et al.*, 2011), and at a time of social imbalance (Galton *et al.*, 1999; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999) PE has the potential to play a pivotal role. During a survey (in Wales) exploring pupils' experiences of primary and secondary school PE (School Sport Survey, 2011), it was found that enjoyment of PE and school sport declines as pupils move into secondary school, particularly amongst girls, with a resulting drop-off in participation rates (Sport Wales, 2012). Close to 40,000 pupils (years 3-11) completed the questionnaire. Findings from the study suggest that:

Pupils are fairly positive about PE lessons, especially in primary school with 73% of primary pupils say they enjoy PE 'a lot' and only 4% say they don't enjoy it 'at all'. Enjoyment does decrease in secondary school: 50% enjoy it 'a lot', 36% 'a little' and 14% 'not at all' (Sport Wales, 2012)

This finding identifies (across a broad sample) a discontinuity between primary and secondary PE in Wales, which in turn results in disengagement in PE and more broadly sport, and physical activities

The transition to secondary school triggers a vast difference in the size of facilities, the specialism of teachers (i.e., non-specialist to specialists) and a mode of delivery from child-centred to subject centred; PE as a subject incorporates a number of these substantial differences which is another reason why the present study evaluates the particularities of the transition concerned with PE.

Finally, PE has always been a pre-transitional focus for pupils (Galton *et al.*, 2003; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999). In comparison with other subjects in the curriculum, PE has received little attention in terms of its impact on pupils across the primary-secondary transition (Capel *et al.*, 2004; Lawrence, 2006). For example, subjects such as science (Logan and Skamp, 2008), music (Marshall and Hargreaves, 2008), drama (Jindal-Snape *et al.*, 2011) and foreign languages (Hunt, 2008) have received significant focus during the transition to secondary school. One factor frequently mentioned but rarely examined is the transition from KS2 to KS3, when most children move from primary to secondary school (Dismore and Bailey, 2010).

It has been suggested that “PE is regarded as a significant tool to combat the increasingly sedentary lifestyles of young people, facilitating the development of movement skills and encouraging lifelong engagement with physical activity” (Dismore and Bailey, 2010, p.176). Hence, PE represents an effective vehicle through which to manage a continuous and progressive transition to secondary

school whilst having long term benefits (i.e., participation in physical activity and increased self-esteem). Moreover, described as the most influential period in a pupil's education (Shachar, Suss, and Sharon 2002), there is a broad consensus that this transition can influence positive attitudes about school (Anderson *et al.*, 2000). In the context of PE, afPE (2013) highlight the importance of taking account of 'pupil-voice' when designing, delivering and evaluating PE programmes within school and community settings, to increase the opportunities and support for physical activity within the pupils lives.

1.5 The structure of the thesis

Chapter two provides a critical review of the literature surrounding the conceptual/theoretical framework and the central research aim: firstly the child-centred approach (Piaget's developmental theory); secondly, a review of the primary-secondary transition, including an imbalance between social and academic issues, teachers and pupils in transition; and finally, the impact of PE across the primary-secondary transition, including the curriculum, physical educators and gender.

Chapter three is an account of the methodological approach adopted during the study and the methods used to address the programme of research. This chapter is divided into three broad sections: firstly, the design of the two-phase programme of research; secondly, the methodological stance adopted during the study, including the ontological and epistemological viewpoint, adopting a qualitative approach and the use of ethnography in the social sciences; and finally, the operation of data collection, interpretation and analysis in order to address the research aim including an account of ethical procedures.

Chapter four reflects upon negotiating the process of fieldwork within the present study. This chapter is divided thematically into the chronological challenges experienced during the fieldwork process. These challenges include negotiating and re-negotiating access, role selection, establishing trust, developing and re-building relationships and role conflict. The chapter draws upon personal reflections and experiences in the field to provide the reader with an insight into the challenges of employing such an approach in research. The chapter ultimately reveals the centrality and importance of the researcher in the research process.

Chapter five explores provides a discussion of the findings. Centring on four super-ordinate themes this chapter examines pupils' perceptions of the transition across the curriculum and specifically in terms of PE. The four central findings include the notion of 'being good enough', social implications of transition, the concept of growing up and the perception of teachers and teaching. The findings are drawn from interviews, classroom activities, personal reflections, informal discussions with pupils and staff, documents and artefacts over a two-year period of data collection (June 2011- October 2012).

Chapter six provides a summative discussion and conclusion of the overarching findings from the study. The chapter is divided into two broad sections: the first provides a summative discussion, addressing the aim of the research, pupils' expectations and experiences of the transition across the curriculum, and specifically PE; the second, provides a summative conclusion addressing the theoretical/conceptual approach, practical implications and future research directions.

1.6 A reflexive journey

Throughout this thesis reflexivity and reflection were combined to illuminate the key points within the research journey. Reflexivity was used to explore my role within the research journey (i.e., the logistical difficulties of each stage of the process). Reflexivity entails the researcher being aware of his or her effect on the process (Steedman, 1991). It helped to track my journey from undergraduate student to postgraduate researcher and reflect on the methodological challenges associated with this research (see chapter four). The purpose of the reflexive commentary is to provide the reader with an insight into the developmental process that accompanied my doctoral apprenticeship. It began in the prologue about my background as a researcher. After each chapter, I reflect on the challenges associated with the construction of each individual chapter. Finally, there is an epilogue which makes explicit my perceptions of the overall research including managing a supervisory team.

Reflective practice was used to illuminate the observations made during fieldwork process (i.e., social dynamics and teaching approaches). Reflective practice has been used previously to develop practitioner effectiveness in school settings (Copley *et al*, 2007; Knowles *et al*, 2007). Reflections are underpinned by Borton's (1970) reflective framework which centres on reflection-on-action: "the retrospective contemplation of practice undertaken in order to uncover the knowledge used in practical situations, by analysing and interpreting the information recalled" (Fitzgerald, 1994, p.67). Details of the reflective process are highlighted towards the end of chapter three.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter is divided into three broad sections which reflect the three areas of focus for this thesis. The first explores the child-centred approach, the theoretical standpoint which ultimately drives the study, and provides grounding for the prominence of pupil-voice within contemporary educational research. The second is a review of literature concerning the primary-secondary transition with continuity and progression a central and distinctive feature, focusing on the imbalance between social and academic issues, the curriculum and pedagogy and social issues such as friendship and bullying. Finally, this chapter reviews the role of PE in transition, exploring PE in the National Curriculum (in England and Wales), the impact of physical educators and the role of gender in PE.

2.1 A Child-Centred approach

Supported by child-centred and child development literature, this section explores, the notion of placing pupils at the centre of the learning process. Firstly, focusing on child development literature mainly grounded in the work of Piaget. Secondly, the recent involvement of child-centred approaches within education, including the concept of ‘play’ and child-centred teaching strategies. Finally, this section explores the rationale behind ‘pupil-voice’ within educational research.

Children have emerged from the shadows of research that focuses on the family or other social units to occupy centre stage (Bessell, 2011). Research also has the potential to convey children's views, experiences and priorities to a range of audiences, including policy makers (Bessell, 2011). The emergence of child-centeredness has been problematic and can be traced back to the early child development work of Piaget.

It is generally considered that the work of Piaget and his developmental theory has been most influential on the development of child-centredness in education (Demetriou *et al.*, 1992). Piaget's work has had a major impact on how education views 'the child', as highlighted below:

Thanks to his genius, children are not viewed as imperfect adults anymore. Instead they are viewed as constructive cognitive beings that have theories about the world as well as about their own minds...Thus it is now commonly accepted that education should respect children's theories if it is to keep children self-engaged in the construction of understanding, which in our culture is a process that may last for decades. (Demetriou *et al.*, 1992, p.2)

Piaget argued that children actively explore their world, and their thoughts are ultimately derived from their actions in the world (Keenan and Evans, 2009). Piaget's work was prominent during the 20th century, using experiments to explain the cognitive development of children. For example, Piaget and Inhelder's (1956) well known 'three mountains' task was used to study the child's representation of a group of different objects seen from different viewpoints (Cox, 1986).

Criticism of Piaget's work was prominent during the 20th century, suggesting the neglect of motivational factors detracts from the significance of a number of his experiments (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958). During the late 20th Century, several neo-piagetian theories were proposed to preserve the strengths of Piaget's work while eliminating its weaknesses, the theories of Case, Demetriou, Fischer and Halford are probably the most systematic attempts to advance a comprehensive model of cognitive development (Demetriou *et al.*, 1992). Some of the concerns about the piagetian theory were shown in its flexibility to accommodate evidence regarding some important aspects of cognitive development including the involvement of the

social environment and the nature of learning. Piagetian theory has been considered particularly appropriate to direct education in the development of new teaching methods that would capitalise on the exploratory and inventive of the child himself (Demetriou *et al.*, 1992).

Earlier than, and arguably as influential as Piaget, a number of philosophical strands related to child-centredness were developed towards the end of the nineteenth century. As the century came to a close, two opposing educational ideologies were prominent: firstly, schools continued to offer authoritarian methods implemented by teachers; and secondly, was a more child-centred approach to education. Central to this were continental educationalists Pestalozzi and Froebel who implemented child-centred education within kindergartens where play and experimentation, gardening and singing formed a child's day (Doddington and Hilton, 2007).

During the 1920s and 1930s three Hadow Reports confirmed the vital importance of a more liberal and child-centred approach in English primary schools (Doddington and Hilton, 2007). The Hadow Reports were a series of six reports that covered all stages of schooling from the nursery to the school leaving age. The most prominent of these *The Primary School* (1931) aptly named, focused on primary schools and recommended a style which facilitated a more child-centred approach as opposed to the direct approach which was apparent within elementary schools at the time:

In short while there is plenty of teaching which is good in the abstract, there is too little which helps children directly to strengthen and enlarge their instinctive hold on the conditions in life by enriching, illuminating and giving point to their growing experience. (Hadow Report, 1931, p.74-75)

There was a general consensus at this time that the product of teaching was learning, which isn't necessarily so. The trouble was that, as pressure grew in the 1920s to allow more children to progress to secondary school; the process of selection became sharpened. For all primary schools, however child-centred their intentions, the issue of 'scholarship' loomed large (Doddington and Hilton, 2007). This led to a period of relative absence of child-centred education, until the introduction of the 'The Plowden Report' by the Central Advisory Council for Education in 1967. An emphasis was placed on bridging the gap between theory building, on one hand, and contributing to the improvement of educational practice, on the other, within research on learning, development and teaching. Essentially the report was to identify how far the intentions of Henry Hadow and his committee had been carried out and importantly too, had they stood the test of time. The report aimed to examine primary education as a whole, whilst attention was paid to the transition to secondary education. The key findings and message of the report centred, once again, on 'the child' and tied in with the belief held by Piaget:

- 1) At the heart of the educational process lies the child. No advances in policy, no acquisitions of new equipment have their desired effect unless they are in harmony with the nature of the child, unless they are fundamentally acceptable to him.
- 2) Knowledge of the manner in which children develop, therefore, is of prime importance, both in avoiding educationally harmful practices and in introducing effective ones.

(The Plowden Report, 1967, p.7)

This report was the first of its kind to make the connection between a child-centred approach and the educational welfare of children in poorer areas. The report had a major impact on how education was delivered within primary and secondary education, putting the onus on teachers to deliver child-friendly curricula. The report concluded that:

Whatever form of organisation is adopted, teachers will have to adapt their methods to individuals within a class or school. Only in this way can the needs of gifted and slow learning children and all those between the extremes be met (The Plowden Report, 1967, p. 460).

The progression in child-centred education as a result of the Plowden Report soon regressed during the 1990s. Across Europe and America child-centred ideology was in retreat as National Government bowed under market pressure to measure, compare and improve, it was felt by politicians that educational success, measured by tests meant economic success (Doddington and Hilton, 2007). The relative decline in child-centred education during this period meant that, although children may have been ‘passing tests’, questions remained as to whether they were equipped with the skills necessary for secondary school life and beyond.

More recently, according to Pugh and Duffy (2010) the past eight years have been an exciting era. The emphasis on listening to pupils views in matters that affect them has wrought a dramatic shift in thinking and practice in early years. This has included, ‘Every Child Matters’ (ECM) (DfES, 2003, 2004) and ‘Birth to Three Matters’ (DfES/ Sure Start, 2002). They have largely quashed the adage that children should be seen and not heard (Pugh and Duffy, 2010). Similarly, Kay (2004) suggests that it is all too common for adults to assume that they know best in terms of children’s needs. The significance of Early Childhood Matters (ECM) was

that it suggested that every child has the chance to fulfil their potential by reducing levels of educational failure, ill health, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, abuse and neglect, crime and anti-social behaviour among children and young people.

Fulfilling potential is more than just removing barriers or obstacles it centres on empowerment, ensuring that children are an active part of the process of education. Conversely one of the more simple strengths of ECM is its consultation with children to understand their views on the outcomes of the ECM policy. These included being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being. Not only did this government initiative aim to improve the lives of children across the UK it empowered children and used their voices to highlight the most prevalent issues, on reflection an invaluable strategy.

Furthermore the 'Birth to Three Matters' Framework (2002) aimed to provide support, information and guidance for practitioners with responsibility for the care and education of babies and children from birth to three years. It provides information on child development, effective practice, examples of activities which promote play and learning, guidance on planning and resourcing, and ways to meet diverse needs. The document includes a section entitled – 'Finding a voice' emphasising the importance of pupils 'being a confident and competent language user.' Encouraging, 'the impulse to communicate', 'exploring, experimenting, labelling and expressing', 'describing, questioning, representing and predicting' and 'sharing thoughts, feelings and ideas' (DfES/Sure Start, 2002). These two documents brought the welfare of children into sharp focus, whilst highlighting the importance of early year's education in the development of 'the child'. This is a major step

forward in comparison with the attitude towards children during the 1990s. The child-centred approach has evolved and empowered young children, encouraging them to make their voices heard within the educational system.

In addition to the policy documents 'Every Child Matters' and 'Birth to Three Matters', there have been steps taken to improve the delivery of education to conform to concept of the child-centred approach. For example, within PE, Mosston and Ashworth's (2002) spectrum of teaching styles is based around the central importance of decision making in the teaching process, the continuum ranges from, a direct, teacher led approach to an open-ended, pupil-centred style where the teacher acts as a facilitator (Macfadyen and Bailey, 2002). One of the pupil-centred styles proposed by Mosston and Ashworth, divergent discovery involves having multiple solutions to a task and pupils devise their own routes, with guidance, and assess the validity of their final solution (Mosston and Ashworth, 2002). In line with the outcomes of The Plowden Report, this strategy placed the child or young person at the centre of the educational process. In this case, the young person to discover, for themselves the most effective route to the overall outcome. Furthermore, Kay (2006) identifies that within PE, effective provision is that which engages all pupils; it is a humanistic experience which places the child at the centre.

Similarly, in early childhood education, an importance is placed on creative development of the child through play. The Welsh Government (WG - formerly the Welsh Assembly Government) identified that 'the foundation phase places great emphasis on children learning by doing. Young children are given more opportunities to gain first hand experiences through play and active involvement

rather than completing exercises in a book (WG, 2012). Instead of being ‘spoon fed’ information, the child has the opportunity to explore and interpret a variety of learning experiences. In accordance, Wood (2008) suggests that play allows children to be themselves because they can follow their needs and interests through free choice, discovery and exploration. Furthermore, play is progressive, play choices and activities change and children’s play skills develop with age and experience, resulting in more sustained, complex forms of play (Broadhead, 2004).

2.1.1 Pupil-voice

Pupil-voice is now being heard within the educational sector (i.e., schools) as well as becoming part of educational research (Ashton, 2008). In the past five years, ‘pupil-voice’ has joined a growing list of movements that have met with approval from diverse groups across the educational and political spectrum (Moran and Murphy, 2011). Pupil-voice is associated with democracy, change, participation and the raising of educational standards (Moran and Murphy, 2011). A strong part of its attraction lies in its objective of identifying pupils as stakeholders in education, “who shape the implementation of policy and become part of the solution” (Whitehead and Clough, 2004, p.215). As Thompson (2009, p.672) suggests, “listening to pupil-voice is a starting point, but we must also understand how the voices are co-constructed” – especially within schools there tends to be too much focus on adult procedures. However, pupil-voice is not without its limitations. As part of a study surrounding primary-secondary school transition in Scotland, Deuchar (2009, p.35) warned that pupil-voice can too easily be reduced to “isolated pockets of pupil consultation rather than a school-wide democratic practice.” He also suggests that pupils may find it difficult to adjust to the idea of being given more say in what and how they learn

(Deuchar, 2009). Similarly, a study focused on improving pedagogic practice in schools suggested that “it cannot tenably be claimed that schooling is primarily intended to benefit pupils if pupils’ own views about what is beneficial to them are not actively sought and attended to” (McIntyre *et al.*, 2007, p.150). The study concluded that pupils found it motivating to be consulted about how they can best be helped to learn and to be treated as active responsible members of the organisations in which they work.

Pupil-voice features prominently within the Wales education system (where the current research took place). For example, WAG developed a toolkit (i.e., ‘listening to learners’) designed for school practitioners to identify the experiences and views of pupils in both primary and secondary schools in relation to the key aspects of their curriculum experiences (WAG, 2008). Findings suggest that pupils’ primary school experience involves working with one teacher within a common culture in which they form close relationships with their peers. Moreover, in terms of transition the ‘listening to learners’ approach indicated that:

Students said that the work they did in primary school did not prepare them for the transition to secondary school. “It was like a big step.” Initial reactions from the students were that they weren’t prepared for how big secondary school would be. It seemed ‘massive’ to them until they got used to things. The transition from being the oldest in their primary schools to being the youngest in their new secondary school was strange for some students. Having different subjects taught in different classrooms by different teachers is something that the students enjoy (WAG, 2008, p.6).

This passage indicates that on reflection these pupils were insufficiently prepared for secondary school. However, the positive elements of secondary school included having a variety of subject teachers. The strength of this approach is that the pupils’

views were elicited and therefore an accurate account of the strengths and weaknesses of the transition can be explored.

Conversely, academics have tended to speculate on pupils' thoughts and feelings prior to and post-transition rather than 'listening to their voices' during transition. For example, Geen (2005) suggests that once pupils reach secondary school, they are exposed to 15 different teachers, different peer relationships, classrooms and cultures, frequent changes of pupils' groupings, different classrooms, as many as five lessons per day and different expectations from different teachers and subjects. These distinctions can form a negative view of the primary-secondary transition and without engaging the pupils' views these become assumptions (see WAG, 2008).

A further example of the prominence of pupil-voice is the 'Pupil Participation Project' set up by WG which promotes the participation of children and young people in making decisions, planning and reviewing any action that will affect them, in essence 'having a voice, having a choice' (WG, 2010). The initiative works on the premise that pupils have an important part to play in helping their school to improve in every aspect of school life (WG, 2010). The strength of this project was its focus on the pupils, gaining an insight into their experiences in order to improve aspects of school life in Wales.

The views of pupils are essential to good planning and policy development since they can convey the significance of such policy decisions (Templeton and Hodd, 2002). It is timely, therefore, that a study that focuses on such a crucial time with the educational system, such as the primary-secondary transition and PE, is developed

around the pupils who experience the transition. In the case of PE, Biddle *et al.* (2004) suggest that ‘more studies of PE should take into account both the perceived needs of pupils and those expressed by pupils themselves’ (p.692).

The next section examines the two areas of focus which reflect the central research aim. The first is a critical review of literature relating to the primary-secondary transition, the second is a review of PE and its impact across the transition. The review explores the concept of continuity and progression across the transition over the last thirty years, namely the difference between primary and secondary school, the imbalance between social and academic issues, teachers in transition, pedagogy, the curriculum and pupils in transition. Moreover, the review explores PE across the primary-secondary transition, the status of PE in the National Curriculum, ‘physical educators’, and gender.

2.2 The Primary-Secondary Transition

A series of transitions, from class to class, year to year and school to school form an integral part of the education system (Capel *et al.*, 2007). The way in which pupils adapt to these transitions can have an impact on their progression and attainment within the educational system, thus making the primary-secondary transition arguably the most important (Weller, 2007). The significance of the primary-secondary transition has long been an area of focus in both England and Wales (The Plowden Report 1967; Gittins Report, 1967). In Wales, the Gittins Report (1967) suggested that “the first year in secondary school should link, not divide the primary and secondary stages of education” (p.158). There is evidence that this transition is a source of discontinuity within the education system (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000;

West *et al.*, 2010). Continuity and progression are central to a smooth primary-secondary transition. According to Boyd (2005) continuity is described as learning which builds on pupils' previous experience and attainment whereas progression provides pupils with a series of challenging but attainable goals.

Discontinuity during the transition from primary to secondary school is not an issue that has emerged in recent years. Its negative impact on transition has been recognised as problematic since the 1980s across the United Kingdom (UK).

In 1980, Her Majesty's Deputy Senior Chief Inspector of Schools (in Scotland) Andrew Chirnside used the metaphor of the pantomime horse to describe the attempts by primary and secondary schools to achieve progression and continuity in pupils' learning. He argued that, like the pantomime horse primary and secondary schools would like to be moving in the same direction, but that it was difficult to get their legs moving in rhythm, and it was not helped by the fact it was dark inside the costume. Not only that but when they tried to communicate the sounds were muffled and could be drowned out (Boyd, 2005, p. 4).

These apparent failures between primary and secondary education highlight the long-term issue of continuity and progression across the transition which continues to be a problem (Estyn, 2004; OFSTED, 2008). From this, the unsuccessful 10-14 report was introduced in 1986 and abandoned in 1987, leading the way for the introduction of the 5-14 programmes in Scotland (Boyd, 2005). As a result, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) began to take a closer look at primary and secondary schools in the UK. Two reports, *Effective Secondary Schools* (1988) and *Effective Primary Schools* (1989), illustrated more similarities in effective teaching and learning in Scottish primary and secondary schools than differences. In their 1996 report, *Achievement for all*, HMI suggested that there was evidence that pupils did not make the kind of progress in attainment one might have expected of them based on evidence from

primary school. Finally, they noted that some teaching methods did not provide pupils with sufficient time on task, advocating more ‘direct teaching’. One limitation of both reports is that they critique and evaluate primary and secondary schools in isolation rather than their impact on one another and the transition as a whole.

More recently, the Welsh Government set out its commitment to improving continuity and progression for all pupils during the transition from primary to secondary school through a series of reports, including *The Learning Country* (2000) and its successor *The Learning Country: vision into action* (2006). As a result of the Education Act of 2002, the Welsh Government introduced a requirement that maintained secondary schools and their maintained feeder primary schools devise plans for transition in partnership to support pupils during the transition.

Positive steps have been made to improve pastoral support during transition, yet only a few schools in Wales have embedded arrangements to facilitate effective transition from primary to secondary school (Estyn, 2008). Similarly, in England OFSTED (2008) identified that more action was needed to improve the continuity of teaching, learning and assessment at the transition from primary to secondary school. In practice though, little has changed (OFSTED, 2008).

Plans to facilitate continuity during the primary-secondary transition are in place but evidence that it has been achieved remains unclear. A large number of pupils experience a downturn in their performance in the first year post-transition and that for a sizeable minority performance continues to be a problem (Farrell, 2001). Pupils often regress academically when they move from primary to secondary school as a

consequence of not receiving teaching appropriate to their needs and abilities (Estyn, 2008). The current government adviser on pupil behaviour (Charlie Taylor) has called for schools to be more supportive of pupils making the transition from primary to secondary school, in a bid to reduce exclusions (Puffett, 2012). It is possible that the discontinuity experienced by pupils during the primary-secondary transition not only affects their ability to learn in year 7 but might also have a negative impact on pupils' progress throughout secondary school.

Previously, even where pupils settle well, progress is far from assured, with two out of five pupils failing to make as much progress as expected (Galton *et al.*, 1999). With a sizeable number of pupils failing to make sufficient development during transition, it is important to take steps to either adapt teaching/learning methods or to create strategies which ease those anxieties experienced during transition. An important point here is that if pupils fail to make expected progress it could be down to a number of reasons, one of them is that expectations are unreasonable. Yet, findings from around the UK suggest that approximately 40% of pupils experience a 'hiatus in progress' whilst moving from one school to another (Galton *et al.*, 2000).

In support of this finding, Galton *et al.* (1999) identified compelling evidence to suggest that even amongst those who perform well in the educational system, negative feelings associated with the school and learning experience emerge. Although dated, this evidence suggests an improvement in provision to support pupils' academic progress and other aspects of the transition from social to academic issues. More recently, an extensive study (surveying over 1,000 pupils) in England indicated a distinct drop in pupil's happiness and well-being when they move from

primary to secondary school (Marks, 2004). These two studies (Galton *et al.*, 1999; Marks, 2004) underline the discontent amongst pupils, as neither new or an issue which has as yet been resolved.

According to Anderson *et al.* (2000) the problem lies with preparation, they claim, “the less prepared pupils are for systemic transitions, the greater the support they need in making them” (p.33). Whilst preparing pupils is an important facet of transition, the post-transition phase is equally important in ensuring that attainment levels are both maintained and developed. For example, Marks (2004) suggests “this [pupil discontent] seems to go beyond the recognised ‘transition’ effect of changing schools, as well-being does not rise again after the transition period... further work is needed to consider what is going on here” (p.5). Through an exploration of pupils’ pre and post-transition experiences, this is a significant gap, in which the present study aims to address.

All aspects of transition from pre-transition to post-transition issues (i.e., pastoral arrangements, academic continuity) need to be in place for any transition to run smoothly and effectively (Geen, 2005). According to Measor and Fleetham (2005) longer-term programmes that induct pupils into the patterns of secondary school are needed, incorporating transition days earlier in the academic year or strategies, which ensure that pupils have settled well post-transition. Similarly, Templeton and Hodd’s (2002) research has made it clear that this transition is a stage when some pupils seriously disengage from the educational process, which in turn can potentially have a negative impact on later stages of their schooling. Disengagement has been attributed to a number of factors related to transition, including a lack of information

shared between primary and secondary schools (Capel *et al.*, 2004), a discontinuity in teaching practice between these phases (Geen, 2005), poor social/pastoral arrangements and a lack of continuity in the National Curriculum (Boyd, 2005).

In order for pupils to experience a smooth and connected transition, such issues need to be addressed. The transition from primary to secondary school can be eased by a series of steps:

- The Social and Emotional Bridge - friendships and relationships
- Bureaucratic Bridge - liaison between schools
- The Curriculum Bridge - joint projects (i.e., summer schools)
- The Pedagogy Bridge - teaching styles
- The Management of Learning Bridge - learning styles

(Galton *et al.*, 1999, p.28-29)

The identification of these bridges provides an infrastructure to improve aspects of the primary-secondary transition, although effective implementation associated with facets of the primary-secondary transition has proved problematic in the past. For example, whilst most schools and LEAs have good programmes to improve transition, some do not have sufficiently robust plans to advance the process of transition (see Estyn, 2004). A major aspect of improving transition processes involves improving the quality of interaction between the phases and between schools, parents and pupils who are 'in transition' (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999). An example of this is referred to by Estyn (2004) who suggest that one way to improve continuity between KS2 and KS3 would be classroom observations. These

observations would target both primary and secondary school teachers, requiring them to teach in the phase that comes before or after their own. Implications such as cost and time can have an impact on such strategies being implemented effectively.

The best transition policies include well-developed arrangements between primary and secondary schools which establish pastoral links for meeting pupils' personal and social needs (Estyn, 2004). In England, improving the primary-secondary transition has received renewed emphasis. For example, a recent literacy strategy introduced by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) forms part of the Coalition Government's drive to improve standards for all. The project aimed to help disadvantaged pupils make the difficult transition from primary to secondary school effectively in terms of literacy, thus providing necessary support with one of the key stumbling blocks to improving life choices in this country (EEF, 2012). This strategy suggests that whilst there has been an attempt to improve aspects of transition in the past, the process remains problematic. Moreover, it further emphasises the importance of the primary-secondary transition on pupils' long-term education. However, this strategy is only partially pertinent to the present study due to its association with England.

This section has identified a number of issues, contributing to a challenging transition between primary and secondary school with the main problem rooted in continuity and progression. The majority of research surrounding the primary-secondary transition focuses on four sets of issues, which inevitably impact upon continuity and progression. Firstly, the vast structural, philosophical, social and educational differences between primary and secondary school (Boyd, 2005;

Nicholls and Gardner, 1999). Secondly, the emphasis placed on social issues over academic issues during the transition to secondary school (Ashton, 2008; Measor and Fleetham, 2005). Thirdly, teachers and teaching in transition; (Galton *et al.*, 2000; Geen, 2005; Munthe and Thuen, 2009). Finally, an exploration of the centrality of pupils in the transition process (Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Graham and Hill, 2003). The next stage of this review will unpack these factors that affect continuity and progression and, in turn, the primary-secondary transition, focusing initially on the substantial differences between primary and secondary school.

2.2.1 Primary and Secondary School: the differences

One of the many challenges for pupils across transition is adapting to the vast difference between primary and secondary school. According to Nicholls and Gardner (1999), differences between primary and secondary schools are highlighted through a range of contexts: the physical context of the new school; the teaching context of the new school; the learning context of the new school; and the social context of the new school (p.15-17). These differences provide a source of discontinuity for the stakeholders (i.e., pupils, parents and teachers) involved in the primary-secondary transition. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of this phase of the educational process, it is vital that these differences are explored in greater depth. The first of these differences to be explored is the physical changes that occur during transition.

There are two physical changes which present themselves: firstly, the catchment area of the new school; and secondly, the larger size of the secondary school, with many more ordinary classrooms and specialist areas (Tobell, 2003). These changes result in

some pupils having to adapt to longer journeys to school and the vast difference in size compared to their relatively small primary school. Whilst these physical changes can represent a source of anxiety for pupils, identification of these anxieties can instigate the development of strategies to support pupils. For example, the size of the school can be daunting and will inevitably induce anxiety caused by getting lost and arriving late to lessons (Ashton, 2008). Furthermore, the introduction to a variety of classrooms and specialists can also be a source of anxiety since pupils have been accustomed to having one teacher in a single classroom for the majority of time in primary school, a contrast to the variety of specialist teachers they experience in year 7.

Ensuring that pupils experience their new school at an early stage of the process will support them towards feeling comfortable in their surroundings, thus easing their anxiety. This is supported by Ashton (2008) who revealed that pupils “found talking to current students, talking to current staff and spending time in their new school to be most useful” (p.180). Ashton’s (2008) study used three school visits and questionnaires to explore the views of pupils’ experiences of the transition. Although the physical context of the new school can be dealt with through taster days and school visits, the teaching and learning context of a school can prove more difficult to manage and can potentially induce a new set of anxieties for pupils. According to Geen (2007) a number of teaching and learning differences between primary and secondary school are apparent (see table 1).

Table 1. The differences between Primary and Secondary School

Primary School	Secondary School
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Individual attention- One-third of the time in class teaching- A high degree of group work- Infrequent change of teaching style- Opportunities for the teacher to pursue projects, topics and themes based upon children's interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Increase in whole class teaching- Higher proportion of time spent on clearly defined task work- Different expectations from different teachers and subjects- More teaching to meet external needs such as GCSE

Source: Adapted from Geen (2007, p. 291)

Although Table 1 is useful, it is simplistic and lacks clarity as to the impact of these disparities. For example, 'a different expectation from different teachers and subjects' requires transparency, about whom/what is Geen (2007) referring to here. Table 1 highlights generalisations associated with primary and secondary school. It might not be the case that *all* primary schools promote a high degree of group work and more teaching is present in secondary school. Yet, these features have the potential to create disparity between the teaching and learning context in primary and secondary school. One element of this table which serves as a discontinuity for pupils is the so called individual attention pupils experience in primary school as opposed to whole class teaching in secondary school. One of the ways in which this can be improved is the information shared between primary and secondary schools. For example, Estyn (2004) reports that some primary schools are sharing a wider range of information about pupils' achievement and attainment with secondary

schools. Teachers, who receive evidence of what individual pupils know, understand and can do by the end of year 6 have a clearer perspective regarding an appropriate starting point for teaching in year 7.

More recently OFSTED (2008) identified that:

Although data on pupils' attainment and progress are transferred from primary to secondary school, they are not used to inform lesson planning. As a consequence, pupils felt that they were not sufficiently challenged, or in a few cases, were revisiting work already covered in Year 6 (p.17).

The implication of this finding is that rather than progressing in secondary school, development is halted due to repetition of work. This finding places emphasis on what the schools do with the information received rather than the process itself. There is a gap created based on the assumption that exchanging information results in an effective transition. In Wales there is a consensus in schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) that improving continuity and progression in teaching and learning between Key Stage 2 and 3 is a priority in raising standards in Key Stage 3 (Estyn, 2004).

The cosy, almost familial environment of the typical primary school may have accustomed incoming year 7 pupils to a relatively informal relationship with their teacher and an integrated learning environment, which incorporates an element of choice of activity for pupils, conducted at a moderate pace (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999). This view of a 'typical' primary school in comparison with the subject-based and independent nature of the secondary school provides another source of discontinuity. Much of the responsibility for preparing pupils appropriately for the

transition to secondary school lies with primary schools, and the much-publicised downturn in performance that occurs (Capel *et al.*, 2007).

Further discrepancies (in teaching and learning) between primary and secondary school are highlighted by Boyd (2005) who regards:

Primary schools as child-centred while secondary schools are subject-centred, primary schools are caring while secondary schools are academic. Primary teachers are regarded as generalists, while their secondary counterparts are specialists. Advocates of primary school would say that primary teachers are experts in learning whilst secondary teachers are subject-experts (p.1).

These differences present substantial hurdles for improving the primary-secondary transition, thus conveying two distinct stages of schooling which create challenges for primary, and secondary school staff who attempt to facilitate continuity and cohesive progression between the two learning environments.

In order to enable continuity and progression to become fundamental elements of transition, it is vital those views (i.e., Boyd, 2005) on primary and secondary school are challenged and that the strengths and qualities of these stages of education as well as their ability to support the primary-secondary transition are highlighted. For example, a recent OFSTED report (2008) identified effective systems of care for pupils moving from primary to secondary school as well as good procedures that support the transition of vulnerable pupils. With regard to the approaches adopted in primary and secondary school, there is no reason why every subject in the KS3 curriculum cannot incorporate an element of child-centeredness. In terms of specialism, there is scope, assuming that the primary teacher has the confidence and knowledge, for primary school ‘generalists’ to create an effective learning

environment for *every* subject within the KS2 curriculum. For example, Pickup *et al.* (2007) claim that PE enables generalist teachers to create an environment in which learning via the multi-sensory physical domain is promoted.

Achieving an effective learning environment requires collaboration between educators in both primary and secondary school (Gorwood, 1991). Nevertheless, whilst collaboration *per se* might be challenging, Boyd (2005) highlights a general perception amongst those in the teaching profession and the population at large that secondary school is somehow of a higher status than that in primary schools. Furthermore, he states that if both stages of the educational system are not valued equally there might be a direct impact on pupils during transition:

If primary teachers feel that they are valued less highly than their secondary counterparts due to less pay, also the fact that secondary teachers are specialists and that in primary there are a smaller number of subject areas (p.10).

It is likely that two implications will emerge: firstly, communication and collaboration will become weakened; and secondly, pupils might become disengaged due to the vast number of subjects and larger pupil population. Pupils in Boyd's (2005) study reported feeling lost in secondary school, that they are not treated as responsible citizens, and that some teachers do not even know their name, culminating in an unhappy experience.

Further empirical evidence supports the notion of perceived unhappiness (Marks 2004; Measor and Fleetham, 2005). For example, Marks (2004) who surveyed 1,000 pupils (aged 7-19) found their well-being slumped dramatically when they started secondary school and it did not change once they had settled in. The study based in

Nottingham used questionnaires to measure young people's well-being across primary and secondary school and included a sample of 440 primary school pupils and 240 secondary school pupils. On the surface this evidence suggests that in this case secondary schools (Marks, 2004) may not be doing enough to ensure pupils settle in. Yet, this finding might also suggest that some primary schools are failing to prepare pupils for the transition effectively, causing pupils to dislike their secondary school experience. A longitudinal study by Pellegrini and Long (2002) used observations and diaries to explore social issues (i.e., bully and victimisation) across transition. They found that the transition to secondary school instigates changes (i.e., peer interaction) which are likely to have a negative impact upon the pupils. Nevertheless, a successful outcome relies (to some extent) on the coping strategies available to each individual pupil. The fact the study was based in USA makes it only partially pertinent to the present thesis as it reflects a contrasting culture with a different school system to the UK. Nevertheless, it does provide a similar conclusion to the study conducted by Marks (2004) in the UK.

It is natural for pupils to be inclined to favour primary school as most pupils will experience a close bond with their teacher and feel comfortable in the primary school environment (Ashton, 2008). Once in secondary school, the majority of pupils experience a discontinuity of some kind (Galton *et al.*, 1999; Marks, 2004). The most prominent of such discontinuities is the much-publicised imbalance between academic issues and the social contexts of the two schools (primary and secondary).

2.2.2 Social and academic issues during transition: an imbalance

The effects of moving between schools on both social and educational developments have been well documented within national contexts (Dixon and Hayden, 2008). Research surrounding the transition suggests that an imbalance between social and academic arrangements represents a significant problem (Morrison, 2005; Measor and Fleetham, 2005). Empirical research conducted by Measor and Fleetham (2005) identified that 90% of transition initiatives involve social and organizational aspects of transition whereas only 16 % of them address the academic factors.

It has been reported that schools need to improve the balance between academic and social concerns at [the primary-secondary] transition (Morrison, 2005). This perspective of the primary and secondary transition calls for equal attention to be paid to academic and social issues in order to facilitate a progressive and continuous transition. Implications of an imbalance between these social and academic issues during transition might obstruct academic progress during the first year of secondary school and beyond (Galton *et al.*, 2003).

If certain aspects of the transition receive greater attention than others (i.e., social issues) it is possible that pupils will encounter difficulties such as problems with homework, thus preventing a smooth transition from primary to secondary school. According to Farrell (2001), “pupils should feel part of the school community: ensuring that academic and pastoral structures work together” (p.133).

With most research and reported activities focusing on the personal and social effects of transition, academic issues seem to have been overlooked. Only a small number of

studies, including those by LEAs, have considered the impact of these changes on pupils' academic progress (Galton *et al.*, 1999). The next section considers these two issues individually and explores the reasons behind the dominance of social arrangements over academic issues across the primary-secondary transition.

Social/Pastoral issues

Social/pastoral issues take precedence over academic issues in the primary-secondary transition (Measor and Fleetham, 2005). They have a major impact on transition and can lead to a decrease in pupils' attainment and achievement levels. Whilst research suggests that academic issues should receive greater attention across the transition, there is no suggestion that social issues should become less important. Social issues can play a major part in pupils' concerns pre and post-transition, it is therefore imperative that these are not overlooked (Measor and Fleetham, 2005):

Having recently been the seniors in the primary school, they now find themselves cast very much as the juniors in the hurly-burly of a noisy, complex and usually much larger organisation (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999, p.15).

Pupils' sudden change from juniors to seniors highlights the importance of social/pastoral support from both primary and secondary school staff. Similarly, Lucey and Reay (2000) claim that "transitions in individuals lives have always demanded emotional reorganisation, and in this internal landscape, anxiety is for most not only an inevitable consequence of the transition but central to the development of effective coping strategies" (p.192). This perspective suggests that whilst anxiety induces stress on pupils during transition, pupils can have a major role in developing effective strategies to lessen the impact of such anxieties.

Previous research suggests that pupils experience a number of fears during the transition to secondary school (i.e., Galton *et al.*, 1999; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999). The most frequently cited anxieties relate to social/pastoral arrangements are bullying, getting lost or being late for lessons, toilets and showers, initiation ceremonies, being separated from friends, having possessions stolen and losing items. For example, Pellegrini and Long (2002) suggest that:

Youngsters typically come from small, personal primary schools in which social groups are well-established into larger, less supportive secondary schools in which youngsters have to re-establish social relationships at a time when peer relations are particularly important (p.260).

Such issues can prove difficult and strategies, such as transition days and form group meetings, prior to transition are essential to enable pupils to feel more comfortable within the secondary school environment (Estyn, 2008). The benefit of transition days is that they can ease concerns regarding friendship, a factor which features amongst the greatest worries for pupils, although making new friends also represents an aspect which many anticipate with excitement (Pratt and George, 2005).

The anxiety of making new friends is coupled with the worry that pupils may be in different classes to their friends from primary school, introducing the concept of 'sole children'. A recent study by Ashton (2008) revealed that a small number of pupils were making the transition to secondary school as 'sole children' (moving without peers from their primary class). This was a source of some concern, and for those few pupils it was their major worry. The study surveyed over 1,000 pupils about their expectations of secondary school. One limitation of Ashton's (2008) study was that it failed to take into account pupils' post-transition experiences to

provide a holistic account of the process of transition. For example, whether moving to secondary school as a 'sole child' hindered the settling in period or in fact provided an opportunity to develop new friendships.

Alongside concerns over friendship, bullying from older pupils and name-calling from peers can be a worry for pupils pre-transition (Boyd, 2005). This finding suggests that pupils' apprehension towards transition is focused on social and environmental aspects of moving school and that until such issues are resolved they cannot focus on lesson content (Ashton, 2008). Two implications emerge: firstly, social issues, such as bullying, getting lost and forming and/or maintaining friendships are at the forefront of pupils' anxieties prior to transition whereas academic issues seem to be less of a concern; and secondly, provision should address social/pastoral issues, thus allowing more scope for other aspects of the transition such as developing pupils as learners.

The majority of research regarding the primary-secondary transition focuses on the negative impact of the transition on pupils' self-esteem, academic ability and friendships (Ashton, 2008; Boyd, 2005). The transition to secondary school should be an exciting time for pupils as they change schools, make new friends, receive additional responsibility and experience new subjects. The most important view of transition is that held by pupils who are experiencing the transition and in turn will lead to effective strategies to help improve transition. For example, anticipating the prospect of new opportunities positively (Graham and Hill, 2003). This is reinforced by Lucey and Reay (2000) who argue that the prospect of secondary school opens up a space in their imagination that was not filled entirely with negativity usually passed

on by older friends. In addition to the social issues associated with the transition to secondary school, there are a number of academic issues that can have a negative impact on pupils during transition, yet receive less attention during this period.

Academic issues

Whilst social/pastoral issues dominate educational research, pupils have revealed fears relating to academia during the primary-secondary transition (Ashton, 2008; Galton *et al.*, 1999; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999). These include new subjects in the curriculum, the new experience of homework, being faced with different teachers, and examinations.

In contrast, a study by Zeedyk *et al.* (2003) reveals:

While concerns of academic nature did emerge, worries about coping with the new workload, environment and peer group were much more common. This is an important realization for schools to keep in mind when developing transition support programmes; pupil's most pressing concerns appear not to be academic ones (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003, p.73).

The study elicited the views of primary and secondary school pupils alongside teachers and parents in England and Scotland through questionnaires. The strength of the research is that pupils pre-transition expectations alongside their post-transition experiences were explored providing a before and after story. It is questionable whether questionnaires can truly provide an in-depth account of pupils' experiences of the primary-secondary transition, and the academic pressures of moving to secondary school.

Most of the unease among Year 6 pupils concern social and environmental matters rather than academic issues (Dalton, 2009). Nevertheless, it is the very nature of the

anxiety these concerns create that can affect pupil's academic performance and therefore deserves equal attention. According to Langenkamp (2010) the transition to secondary school is a turning point in pupils' academic trajectories and often represents a period of risk both academically and socially. Furthermore, Farrell (2001) suggests that secondary schools may not place sufficient emphasis on attainment at KS3, there is evidence that expectations are too low at year 7 and that there is a loss of pace in Year 8 and a relative lack of 'added value'. In order for teachers in secondary school to manage the transition effectively, pupils' attainment levels must be shared by primary schools and discussed in detail (Evangelou *et al.*, 2008).

It would be easy to blame secondary schools for the dip in academic performance during transition, primary schools should share responsibility and manage their side of the transition more effectively. A pupil's best opportunity to maintain or accelerate his/her progress following transition is via improved collaboration between feeder primary and middle/secondary schools (DCSF, 2008).

According to Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) the academic facet of education can be improved through effective collaboration between all parties involved (delineated in Figure 2):

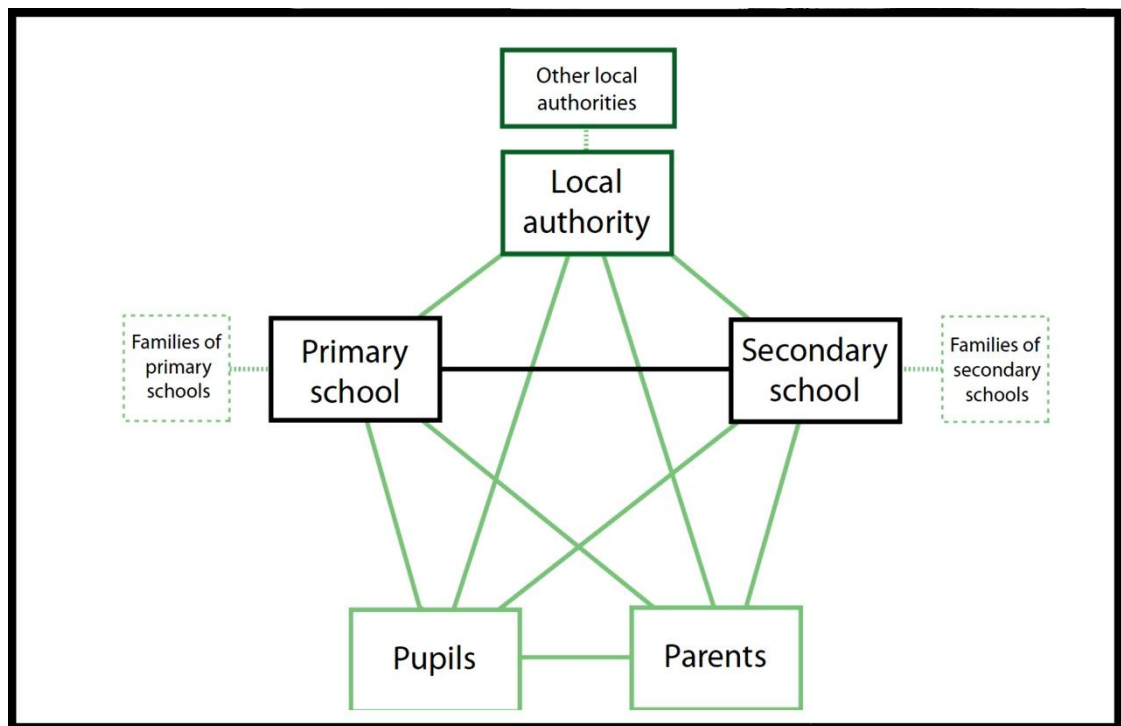


Figure 2. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievements and adjustment

The model places the primary and secondary school as the two most important factors, yet seems to undervalue the importance of the pupils in the process. If collaboration is to work effectively, it is vital that the partner schools work in harmony. Yet the centrality of the pupils must remain the most important facet of academic improvement which this figure fails to recognise.

In terms of academic development, an area of focus for schools has been to maintain and improve the progression of key skills, which has arisen as a consequence of a downturn in pupils' performance in the key curriculum areas (Thompson, 2004). Teachers often employ a 'fresh start' approach, which can be detrimental in terms of achieving a progression and continuity during the primary-secondary transition. The efforts of primary teachers will be in vain if the progress pupils have made is

abandoned at the age of eleven, with an unrelated fresh start (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000).

Implementing a 'fresh start' is problematic because the skills and learning experiences, which pupils acquire in primary school, might be lost or revisited by secondary school teachers. According to Galton and Hargreaves (2002) "fresh start" arrangements can cause able pupils to become bored from repeating work they have mastered already, whilst those who prefer (and might be used to) a slower pace of learning could find the rapid pace of their new classes too much. In both instances, academic progress will be halted. It is up to the teacher to differentiate in their teaching steering away from a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

In addition, Boyd (2005) accepts that as the move from primary to secondary school represents a stage of development for pupils, the nature of the two institutions makes it inevitable that there will be some levelling off in attainment. Accepting an academic plateau during transition and claiming it as 'inevitable' might have a negative effect on pupils during transition. It is about primary and secondary schools promoting consistency in teaching and learning, thus facilitating improvement and attainment throughout secondary school.

This is reinforced in an OFSTED (2008) report which identified three significant improvements needed within the academic side of transition: firstly, there is scope to improve the quality of assessment for learning; secondly, the evaluation of initiatives to assess their impact on pupils' learning and progress also needs to improve; and finally, it is important to provide effective continuity in learning when pupils move

from primary to secondary school. Whilst this evidence might only be partially pertinent in the present study (due to its English focus), it indicates several discontinuities linked to teaching and learning. This discontinuity might be explained in greater depth through a consideration of teachers and teaching during the transition, including the infrastructure of the curriculum and pedagogic approach adopted during both primary and secondary school.

2.2.3 Teachers and teaching in transition

According to Ashton (2008) pupils' experiences of their new teachers impact upon on their feelings regarding moving to secondary school, emphasising the importance of the role of the teacher within the primary-secondary transition. For teachers, the transition requires a great deal of management in terms of administration, social and pastoral issues as well as teaching and learning methods that are appropriate for a diverse pupil population.

Teachers should be aware of the impact of transition on pupils, in order to decrease the risk of negative development (Munthe and Thuen, 2009). Whilst this might seem straightforward, research suggests it is not the case (i.e., Galton *et al.*, 2000; Geen, 2005). For example, in Wales most transition plans identify the need to make teaching and learning more interesting and challenging (Estyn, 2008). In order for the primary-secondary transition to run smoothly, an effective liaison teacher requires: good communication; diplomacy; enthusiasm; and organisational competence (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999, p.70). For example, organisational skills will increase the potential for teachers having planned lessons for pupils in transition, have an idea of how each pupil is progressing and have organised necessary events to

aid transition (i.e., induction days). Furthermore, an enthusiastic teacher will be vital in securing the co-operation of teachers in their own and in partner schools (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999).

Recently, OFSTED (2008) identified that in England:

Continuity in teaching, learning and assessment when pupils move from primary to secondary school continues to be weak. Too few teachers understood clearly the main approaches to learning in the other phase and there was little regular cross-phase contact between teachers of English and Mathematics (p.6).

Both primary and secondary teachers are required to ease the transition for pupils via their pedagogic approach, employing and maintaining a continuous curriculum. Previously, Gorwood (1991) has suggested that in relation to mathematics, secondary school teachers begin work in year 7, which is below the standard pupils have achieved in primary school. Estyn (2001) suggests that “schools should consider developing the role of the year 7 form tutor to mirror, at least to some extent, that of the primary class teacher” (p.16). More frequent contact and one-to-one support might represent a sound investment in terms of preventing underachievement or combating disaffection at later stages (Estyn, 2001). Closely linked to ‘teachers and teaching’ is the adoption of pedagogical approaches during both primary school and secondary school. The next section will examine the pedagogical practices across the primary-secondary transition and its impact on continuity and progression.

Pedagogic continuity

According to Bru *et al.* (2010) there are a range of changes that occur during the transition to secondary school, such as school size, wider variety of teachers and departmentalized teaching which reduce the number of opportunities for teachers to

form close connections with their students. There is controversy over which approaches are the most useful in producing effective academic transition and reducing the drop in academic performance (Measor and Fleetham, 2005).

Whilst most teachers might not adhere consciously to specific theories of learning, there is evidence to suggest that, to some extent, the problem regarding the transition from primary to secondary might be symptomatic of the different ways in which teachers in both sectors conceptualise teaching and learning (Geen, 2005). This problem is likely to create discontinuity within teachers' pedagogical practices. Pupils experiencing a range of teaching approaches which might not be compatible with their individual learning preferences have the potential to amplify to a level of discontinuity that occurs.

For teachers involved in the primary-secondary transition it is important their pedagogical practices cater for pupils' individual needs, building upon their learning experiences in primary school. Nicholls and Gardner (1999) suggest that addressing the learning needs of an individual rather than focusing on whole-class needs represents a central factor. Once known to year 7 teachers, using the levels of achievement to support pupils' progression relies heavily on teachers' competence with regard to differentiation in teaching. Aligning the practices of secondary school teachers with those of primary school teachers will ameliorate the potential for differentiated teaching to meet the needs of all pupils. This notion is reinforced in a study by Martin (2010) in which he advocates matching teaching methods to students' learning styles as a means of maximising pupils' performance and attainment. Such an approach represents an attempt to teach pupils in a way that is

compatible with their learning style (Lane, 2003). Aligning primary and secondary teaching and learning styles might improve pupils' engagement levels in the secondary classroom and embed a sense of continuity between Key Stage 2 and 3.

Although this might seem straightforward, Munthe and Thuen (2009) suggest:

The fact that teachers are also going through a transition phase needs to be recognised. We expect teachers to teach differently than they themselves have been taught, to learn new ways of relating to pupils and learning often without any in-service education or collaboration to assist in this transition (p.565).

The principal focus of this perspective is on the level of support for teachers as well as pupils. The idea that 'teaching in transition' is a particularly challenging expectation of teachers is suggested here. However, Munthe and Thuen (2009) fail to recognise that adaptation of teaching styles is a characteristic of an effective teacher. One might argue that the financial cost to the school and the limited time afforded to teachers in the past represents a challenge which is somewhat difficult to overcome. In this case it is about prioritising the resources available to schools in order to promote a continuous and progressive transition for pupils.

The contrast in culture which exists between professionals at primary and secondary level also represents a barrier to continuity. Pupils become familiar with a style of teaching which allows them to participate actively in the learning process. Upon arrival at secondary school, they are faced with teachers who employ more direct teaching approaches, in which instruction is delivered at a relatively fast pace to facilitate maximum curriculum coverage (Galton *et al.*, 2003). Teachers are expected to gradually endorse a more student-oriented approach to teaching and learning (Meirink *et al.*, 2008) An example of a child/student-centred approach is Problem

Based Learning (PBL), which aims to enhance the development of students' higher-order thinking and foster students' social skills (Azer, 2009). On the face of it, this approach can be implemented across the primary-secondary transition and has the potential to benefit a number of pupils although in practice, this does not seem to be the case (Geen, 2005).

From a pupil's perspective, it is essential they experience continuity and progression in all aspects of the primary-secondary transition. Research conducted by Geen (2005) suggests otherwise, identifying that group work is heavily used in the primary classrooms, with the teacher often regarding herself/himself as a facilitator who guides pupils' learning and makes connections between different aspects of the curriculum. Although some secondary school teachers might adopt a specific transmission model in which they are the expert and the learner is the apprentice, discontinuity is problematic for pupils making the transition to secondary school as they become emotionally attached to their primary school teacher and more *au fait* with his/her approach to teaching and learning. For example, Ashton (2008) found that several pupils felt sad they would be leaving their primary teachers behind, and suggested that they would like to go back and visit their primary school. Moreover, Tobell (2004) reports a concern expressed by pupils that the teachers did not know their names and they did not feel they had a relationship with them.

Secondary school represents a stage in which pupils must learn to cope with a variety of different teachers, methods of teaching and learning and the next phase of the National Curriculum. The application of collaborative and continued professional development (CPD) is crucial, involving a process of sharing and reflecting upon

best practice by primary and secondary teachers (see Boyd, 2005). Doing so would establish learning communities amongst teachers and facilitate on-going progression and continuity as fundamental to the way in which learning and teaching are carried out on a daily basis. This, in turn, reiterates the importance of collaboration between the two phases of schooling (see Boyd, 2005). In order for teachers to employ a continuous and progressive pedagogy, the National Curriculum also needs to be progressive between KS2 and KS3, creating links between primary and secondary school.

Curriculum continuity

The belief that the curriculum should be continuous and progressive is universal (Huggins and Knight, 1997). Pupils require a course of study, which involves activities comprising a series of progressive skills and key concepts introduced at relevant stages of their schooling. For example, the Department for Education and Schools (2012) report that one of the aims of the National Curriculum (in England) is to produce successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve. In the past, continuity and progression have been uncompromisingly entwined in the National Curriculum (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999). The central aim of the curriculum design in England is on-going progression with regard to pupils' learning which facilitates a process of continuous achievement and understanding, led by pupils' own capacity to learn. This might appear promising, but the transition to secondary school has the potential to introduce discontinuity into pupils' experience of the curriculum. Philosophically the primary curriculum is based upon the concept of broad areas whereas secondary school introduces individual subjects and modes dominate (Boyd, 2005).

The first document that reported on the National Curriculum was produced by the Conservative government in 1987 through the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), highlighted concern with regard to the extent of continuity between primary and secondary school in England:

The curriculum offered in all maintained schools has sufficient in common to enable pupils to move from one area of the country [England] to another with minimum disruption to their education. It will also help pupil's progression within and between primary and secondary education and will help to secure the continuity and coherence which is too often lacking in what they are taught (DfES, 1987, p.4).

This statement conveys a commitment to ensure continuity and progression across the transition. The National Curriculum has changed several times since 1987, yet continuity and progression is still reflected and central to the National Curriculum (see DES, 2012). In Wales the National Curriculum focuses on continuity and progression 3-19, by building on the Foundation Phase and linking effectively with the 14-19 Learning Pathways Programme (WAG, 2008).

Whilst continuity and progression are central to the National Curriculum in both England and Wales, reports suggest that continuity and progression remains an issue. In the past, Estyn (1999) identified there were some good initiatives by individual subject departments. Planning to promote continuity and progression in pupils' learning is largely undeveloped in around two-thirds of primary and secondary schools. More recently, primary and secondary teachers have developed a good understanding of the curriculum across both key stages. As a result, many schools have amended schemes of work to make Year 6 work more challenging and to remove repetition in year 7. There is still a lack of challenge in year 7 across subjects in many schools (Estyn, 2008). Conversely, in England, OFSTED (2008)

recommend that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) should promote the importance of continuity and progression; especially between primary and secondary schools, recognising that it is still an issue. There is an important note here that the National Curriculum itself promotes continuity and progression, but it is the way it is interpreted that will differ and cause discontinuity for pupils.

It has been suggested that inconsistent liaising practices between primary and secondary school staff prevent continuity and hinder pupils' progress. Galton *et al.* (1999) suggests that this is a consequence of the information passed on at transition which focuses on administrative or pastoral issues rather than the curriculum and pupils' attainment.

More recently, Geen (2005) identified a number of strategies to facilitate continuity between primary and secondary school, linking pedagogy with the curriculum:

- Establishing curriculum liaison co-ordinators in primary and secondary schools: In both primary and secondary school a member of staff is appointed with specific responsibility for curriculum liaison.
- Organising meeting of primary and secondary school staff on a subject basis.
- Allowing secondary teachers to observe primary teachers in the classroom
- Utilising systems of teacher exchange: secondary school teachers take classes in their linked primary Schools, while primary teachers attend lessons at the secondary school.
- Setting pupils projects which transcend the primary-secondary divide.
- Organising joint in-service.

- Planning common teaching styles.
- Having secondary school teachers set and mark work for primary school pupils.
- Providing summer school activities.
- Modelling the year 7 curriculum on that of the primary school.
- Reducing the number of teachers pupils come into contact with.
- Ensuring that form tutors teach their class and take it for personal and social education.
- Simplifying the timetable and reducing the number of room changes to the minimum.
- Teaching some subjects in half-term units rather than every week or fortnight.

(p.277-278)

Introducing planned, common pedagogies might help improve continuity of learning and teaching across the primary-secondary transition. Whilst identifying types of strategies might be useful, they are time-consuming and difficult to implement.

Curriculum continuity and pedagogy rely on positive steps being undertaken to introduce and maintain an efficient link between primary and secondary schools. In turn, pupils will have an opportunity to experience a continuous and progressive transition to secondary school. Nevertheless, whilst Boyd (2005) highlights evidence of improvement in national standards (measured against 5-14 levels), this cannot be construed as a significant improvement; especially as there are two different systems in England and Wales.

Furthermore, Geen (2005) suggests that the only way to ensure total curriculum continuity would be embed uniformity in terms of delivering a National Curriculum, a process which would require every school to teach the same topic at the same time in the same manner. Implementing a strategy of this nature would not only be unacceptable to most teachers in the UK but also negate the needs of individual pupils.

Therefore, it is in the teachers' interests to ensure that pedagogy matches the individual needs of pupils and prepares them effectively for secondary school. The strategies discussed in this review have one principal aim, namely to facilitate a continuous and progressive transition to secondary school for pupils. Whilst teachers have an impact on pupils' experiences during the transition it is the pupils that have to remain the central focus. Therefore, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the primary-secondary transition forms an integral part of ameliorating pupils' experiences.

2.2.4 Pupils in transition

The majority of pupils express a range of concerns and anxieties with regard to both formal and informal aspects of the transitional process (Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Graham and Hill, 2003). For example, the size of the school and increased workload are examples of concerns in relation to the former; and peer relations and bullying are amongst the concerns for the latter (Ashton, 2008; Thompson, 2004).

An Estyn (2008) report, entitled *The Impact of Transition Plans*, questioned pupils about aspects of the transition they find useful and those, which they would like to

see, improved. The report elicited the views of Headteachers, transition co-ordinators, governors, parents and year 7 pupils in eight primary-secondary school partnerships in Wales. Pupils identified transition activities, induction days, transition projects and planners as useful in the transition process. Pupils also highlighted inconsistent expectations from teachers and repeating units of work as aspects they do not like.

Pupils tend to have strong, but ambivalent, feelings about transition on account of their undergoing more than one transition simultaneously (Measor and Fleetham, 2005). Transition to secondary school is complicated further by adolescence, another form of transition (Measor and Fleetham, 2005). Several factors affect how well an individual copes with transition, such as self-regulatory beliefs regarding control over academic success, self-concept and social anxiety (Gilson *et al.*, 2008).

The two most tangible elements of transition are the pupils and their parents. The engagement of both parties in the process and their feedback is essential (DCSF, 2008). The consideration of pupils' thoughts and feelings towards the primary-secondary transition provides important information to primary and secondary school staff regarding their anxiety and aspects of secondary school to which they are looking forward. Analysing information of this kind provides insight into how teachers and staff can support pupils effectively during the primary-secondary transition.

Whilst there has been less research focused on pupils' perceptions of the transition, Measor and Fleetham (2005) reported that Year 6 pupils feel both excited and scared about the move, saying things such as:

It's like starting a new life going to another school... primary school just prepares you for the upper school, that school prepares you for life... it seems more grown up...you're sort of more important and I know that happens because when I see people from the upper school they kind of look that way (Measor and Fleetham, 2005, p.10).

This perspective suggests that primary school pupils place great importance on the transition to secondary school, the social status that accompanies the move and the impact of the transition on later life. Similarly, in a study by Ashton (2008) exploring pupils' expectations of the transition, pupils concerns included friendships, bullying and getting lost.

Alongside their worries, pupils experience feelings of excitement in anticipation of the change. For example, one of the participants in Ashton's (2008) study conveyed his/her mixed emotions regarding the transition to secondary school claiming, "I am excited, happy, sad to leave my friends and nervous" (p.178). Feelings of apprehension are accompanied by a sense of excitement about moving to secondary school. This reinforces the notion that pupils' main concerns relate to social wellbeing in their new school rather than academic worries. Furthermore, pupils have a range of anxieties pre-transition, but they subside post-transition. For example, a study by Graham and Hill (2003) into pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition in Scotland found that, after only a month in secondary school, two-thirds of their Glasgow sample reported no anxieties, with most stating that their concerns had receded almost immediately.

In contrast, pupils have reported that whilst their experience of secondary school proved to be better than expected, worries regarding peer-relations and the school system were more, rather than less prevalent, than in a comparison group of primary school pupils (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003). This finding reinforces the need for stakeholders (primary and secondary school staff) involved in the primary-secondary transition to ensure that both pre and post-transition anxieties are managed effectively, minimising the stress-experienced by pupils. Furthermore, Graham and Hill (2003) and Zeedyk *et al.* (2003) highlight the importance of seeking pupils' perspectives in order to ascertain an accurate reflection of their expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition.

In her study on the transition to secondary school, Thompson (2004) highlighted that notwithstanding the fact that all pupils had concerns about moving to year 7, they altered following an induction day. Prior to induction, pupils' worries included losing money or having it stolen, receiving detention, not knowing where to eat and being bullied. Following the induction day, pupils were worried about being late for lessons, undertaking homework and not finding new friends (Thompson, 2004). Nevertheless, induction days represent an important strategy to alleviate some of the anxieties pupils might have regarding transition to secondary school.

Strategies highlighted in Thompson's (2004) study included: making a video for Year 6 which conveys a range of aspects of senior school; creating a website or webpage for Year 6 and 7 pupils outlining details regarding transition; setting-up and running 'Induction Club'; and producing leaflets and magazines (Thompson, 2004). Such strategies are created by pupils, for the pupils, another form of reassurance for

pupils moving from primary to secondary school. Furthermore, gaining pupils' perspectives on transition ensures that pupils contribute to the improvement of transitional arrangements.

Similarly, in a study by Ashton (2008), pupils identified a number of ways in which the primary-secondary transition might be improved. Suggested improvements included an induction period of three days or a week; more time spent on PE activities, such as rounders, cricket and football; more information regarding schedule rules; look at timetables; meet secondary school teachers in primary school; visit other secondary schools; and finally, revisit their primary school following the transition to secondary school. Such evidence provided by pupils highlight the importance of their role in improving primary-secondary transition arrangements. The questionable element of these findings is the implementation of such strategies in transitional policy; rendering them more like a wish list, instead they need to become specific aims.

Consultation with pupils regarding the transition provides staff with a clearer idea of how this phase of schooling might be improved. For example, Ashton's (2008) study suggests that pupils favour a longer period of induction and more detailed information about their secondary school (i.e., timetables, teachers etc.) before making the transition. Involving pupils in the decision-making process can benefit pupils, teachers and schools in a range of ways (Flutter and Ruddock, 2004).

Alongside the importance of the *pupil* during the primary-secondary transition, the review has identified concerns about an imbalance between academic and social

issues along with issues surrounding the substantial differences between primary and secondary school. The review has also identified a distinct lack of research on pupils' thoughts and feelings during the transition to secondary school, both prior to, and post-transition, especially in recent times. Furthermore, the review demonstrates that a number of academics seem to hold specific views on the transition, although there is often a significant lack of empirical evidence to support their claims. These factors contribute to the ongoing emphasis placed on continuity and progression across the primary-secondary transition. It has been acknowledged that one area of the primary-secondary transition that requires attention is specific subject areas. For example, in Wales, and therefore particularly pertinent to the present study, research into arrangements concerning the primary-secondary school transition concluded that "there is a need to examine good practice in ensuring progression in individual subjects" (Powell *et al.*, 2006, p.64).

Whilst the review has identified continuity and progression as problematic across the curriculum, PE has long been an area of concern (OFSTED, 2009; Estyn, 2012). For example, the introduction of the National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) in 1992 highlighted a concern for continuity and progression in PE which changed with the pupil's stage of development (i.e., the transition to secondary school). More recently, OFSTED (2009) reported that schools visited did not promote continuity of learning across points of transition effectively in PE, identifying this as an area for improvement. A report into the implementation of these improvements found that very few schools (in England) showed a rationale for introducing new activities and subsequently how they would ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning (OFSTED, 2013). In Wales it is a similar story with Estyn (2012) reporting that since

2006 the improvement in secondary school PE has been less than in the other non-core subjects. Sport Wales (2012) have identified that pupils start to drop out of sporting activities in year 7 and 8 when they get to secondary school. These reports into PE in primary and secondary schools suggest that pupils are experiencing discontinuity between their experience of primary school and secondary school PE, which therefore affects their progression through and beyond secondary school.

The following section therefore is divided into two broad sub sections. The first explores the relationship between PE and the primary-secondary transition through the few studies which have been conducted in this area. The second examines factors which are central to pupils' perceptions of PE and their impact on the transition: the status of PE in the National Curriculum; the importance of the 'physical educator'; and the role of gender.

2.3 The Primary-Secondary Transition in PE

A factor frequently mentioned (although rarely examined) is the transition from KS2 to KS3 in the context of PE (Bailey and Dismore, 2005). A number of studies have identified a range of fears pupils associated with the transition from primary to secondary school (Galton *et al.*, 2003; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999), in which PE has been cited as a particular concern.

As part of the recent School Sport Survey (2013) in Wales, 109,500 pupils from Years 3-11, and 1,060 teachers (generally the Head of PE in secondary school and the PE co-ordinator in primary school) completed a questionnaire (Sport Wales, 2013). Findings suggest that school is regarded the most important place in which

children learn the competence and confidence to participate in physical activity (Sport Wales, 2013). This finding re-emphasises the importance of both primary and secondary schools settings in the development of pupils through PE and especially the significance of confidence and competence. The survey also found that that 92% of pupils enjoy PE and 60% of pupils say they enjoy PE ‘a lot’ (Sport Wales, 2013). A strength of this survey is the large sample of pupils included, it is questionable whether the use of questionnaires accurately describes pupils’ perceptions of PE in enough depth and acts as reliable account.

In terms of empirical research, only a small collection of studies have focused on pupils’ PE experiences during the transition from KS2 to KS3 (Pugsley *et al.*, 1996; Lawrence, 2006; Dismore, 2007; Dismore and Bailey, 2010). These studies have somewhat contrasting conclusions about pupils’ perceptions of PE across the transition, but have similar conclusions as to the potential impact of PE on the primary-secondary transition.

One study conducted by Dismore and Bailey (2010) which was largely informed by Dismore’s (2007) doctoral thesis, examined 10 pupils’ (5 girls, 5 boys) attitudes towards PE, and specifically to their transition from primary to secondary school. The study, in England, and only partially pertinent to the present study highlighted the curriculum and facilities as variables of pupils’ attitude towards PE. The study had two significant conclusions: firstly that participation in PE can act as a powerful medium for social development and the period when most pupils are moving schools can heighten the processes of social inclusion/exclusion (Bailey 2007); and secondly, that “most pupils’ attitudes toward PE either remained the same or improved

following the transition to KS3, whether the pupils moved within or between schools” (Dismore and Bailey, 2010, p.183). This particular finding contrasts the previous outcome of the School Sport Surveys (2011 and 2013) and therefore, the research debate conveys an inconsistency within PE across the transition in the UK.

In accordance with the inconsistency in pupils’ attitudes towards PE, Lawrence’s (2006) doctoral research (in England) suggests that attitudes toward PE declined as the research participants progressed towards secondary school. The purpose of the study was to identify changes in attitudes in PE between the end of year 6 and beginning of year 8. The study explored the views of 221 year 6 pupils, 299 year 7 pupils and 270 year 8 pupils. Results indicated a decrease between the end of Year 6 and the beginning of Year 8 with regard to the percentage of pupils who looked forward to PE, participated in extra curricular activities and would choose to participate in PE. A possible reason for this might be the discontinuity the transition provides. The idea that the pupils might have resented being a ‘little fish in a big pond’, a contrast to their primary school experience of PE. Whilst the study took into account pupils’ attitudes towards PE, the focus was on improving the teaching element of PE, questioning whether the research provided an accurate account of transition from the pupils’ perspective. Hence, the purpose of the study was to gain a ‘bird’s eye view’ (through questionnaires) of pupils’ attitude rather than understanding their experiences, from a critical perspective the research sacrificed depth for scope. This study also revealed gender differences in the way that pupils perceive PE across the transition. For example, boys had significantly higher self-esteem and self-motivation than girls (Lawrence, 2006). Similarly, Dismore’s (2007) doctoral study concluded there were pupils who struggled with the social changes

that took place after moving to secondary school. Furthermore, these changes were compounded by an increase in stereotyping about their genders, their bodies, and the type of people they were seen to be and concerns about bullying.

It has been suggested that PE can provide pupils with a number of problems during the transition from primary to secondary school. For example, a study by Pugsley *et al.* (1996) suggested that pupils have four common concerns surrounding PE in secondary school: cross country; underwear; showers and PE teachers. The study asked sixth-formers and young adults to reflect on their experiences of PE across the transition. The approach brings into question the reliability and validity of the participant responses and whether their accounts are representative of the potential impact of PE on transition. A more recent and arguably more reliable account due to its focus on pupils, suggests that concerns surrounding transition centre on friends, cheating and getting hurt (Dismore, 2007). One way to ease these concerns has been effective communication between primary and secondary schools.

Research on school transition suggests that information regarding PE is not exchanged consistently between primary and secondary schools (Capel *et al.*, 2004). Whilst some schools exchange information, it is not used to inform continuity and progression; information is often exchanged in written format or through discussion at formal meetings (Capel *et al.*, 2004). Herein, lies a significant issue within PE and the primary-secondary transition. If PE is to take a significant role in primary and secondary schools, it is vital that progression and continuity are achieved and that repeating schemes of work and experiencing activities that are beyond their capabilities are practices that should be avoided. Other factors which are recognised

as significant in facilitating a smooth transition for pupils in PE include better communication between teachers, maximising learning potential and increasing levels of motivation and interest making pupils feel more at ease and confident within the secondary school environment (Zwozdiak-Myers 2002).

On the contrary Dismore (2007) suggests that pupils are increasingly more prepared for PE across the transition as they participate in a number of visits to secondary schools and sports festivals, which might also assist in achieving continuity and improving communication between primary and secondary schools. The implications of such sport festivals mean that pupils can experience their new PE surroundings, the larger equipment and what is expected of them in PE. Nevertheless, such strategies do not guarantee a successful transition to secondary school. These sports festivals may not occur in all schools. Similarly, it is as important to provide support during the post-transition phase, an area of research within PE, which has received little attention (Dismore, 2008).

In summary, PE represents an area of the National Curriculum which requires attention during the transition from primary to secondary school in order to prevent Year 7 pupils from being overcome by ‘enormous’ sports halls, ‘real’ cricket bats, ‘proper’ gymnastics equipment, PE kit, showers and subject specialists (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000). Three significant factors have emerged as having an influence on pupils’ attitudes towards PE; these are the curriculum, the teacher, and gender (Subramaniam and Silverman 2002). An exploration of these factors and their impact on pupils’ experiences across the primary-secondary transition will form the basis for

this part of the review, beginning with a review of PE across KS2 and KS3 of the National Curriculum in England and Wales.

2.3.1 PE across Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 of the National Curriculum

Concerns regarding the worldwide position of PE within education have been debated for over thirty years. Challenges faced by the subject include loss of time as other subjects are regarded more highly, lack of equipment and unsatisfactory infrastructure (Hardman and Green, 2011). Recently there has been a substantial push in both England and Wales for increased provision in PE. At present, in England, most primary and secondary schools provide two hours of PE each week (OFSTED, 2013). Similarly, in Wales, Eysn (2012) report in many schools, KS3 pupils also receive two hours of PE each week. More recently, Sport Wales reported that schools in Wales provide on average 101 minutes of curricular PE a week across all year groups. Pupils in KS2 receive an average of 106 minutes a week and 109 in Key Stage 3 compared with 73 minutes at KS4 (Sport Wales, 2013). The extent to which pupils experience high quality PE in these lessons is less clear. For example, in England OFSTED (2013) reported that insufficient time was allocated to PE to enable all pupils to achieve well and meet all National Curriculum PE requirements.

Historically, the most significant starting point in England and Wales was the Education Reform Act (ERA 1988), which introduced, local management of schools and the National Curriculum (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000). Since 1988, the status of PE within the curriculum has improved, which ultimately changed the context of the educational system in England and Wales (Kirk, 2005). During this time ‘core subjects’ such as mathematics and science featured highly on the agenda whereas PE

and music were perceived as less important, and were therefore marginalised within the National Curriculum. The PE curriculum offered in primary schools depended largely on the interests and expertise of the staff employed (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000). This meant that pupils' experience of PE was substantially different depending on which school they attended. Subsequently pupils were moving to secondary school with contrasting knowledge and background in PE.

Prior to the introduction of the NCPE there was no defined view of what pupils should experience through PE either at the primary or secondary phase of the education (Lockwood, 2000). Capel and Piotrowski (2000) have questioned the aims of both the NCPE in 1992 and 1995, claiming that:

The two show a definite focus on the end product, whereas the 2000 NCPE indicates a swing in the pendulum back once more towards viewing PE as a subject contributing to the growth and development of pupils, part of the wider educational process (p.123).

The earlier definition of PE (highlighted in chapter one) recognises the importance of 'balance' and 'breadth'. However, with a focus on the 'end product' it was not until the NCPE 2000 that these became core values of the National Curriculum (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000).

More recently, the aims of the NCPE in both Wales and England have changed to focus on the holistic development of the child; emphasising the importance of PE as an overall process of development. A concern remains that in England the National Curriculum may be merely a vacuous and poorly conceived attempt to make PE look intellectual with relation to its subject partners on the school curriculum (Sellers and Palmer, 2008).

In Wales, PE lessons at KS2 and 3 should provide learners with opportunities to build upon skills they have acquired and started to develop during the Foundation Phase (statutory curriculum for all 3 to 7 years old children in Wales in both maintained and non-maintained settings) (WAG, 2008). The Welsh Government focuses on pupil development, highlighting that they should be encouraged to enjoy physical activity and develop a sense of identity based upon their own self-image, self-esteem and confidence. Furthermore, they should be introduced to the concepts of health, hygiene and safety as well as the importance of diet, rest, sleep and exercise (WAG, 2008). However, the breadth and depth of these aims question whether PE as a subject is claiming to solve or attempting to solve too much.

Conversely, in England, during KS2 of the draft curriculum (planned for September 2014) pupils should enjoy being active, using their creativity and imagination in physical activity. They learn new skills, find out how to use them in different ways, and link them to make actions, phrases and sequences of movement. They enjoy communicating, collaborating and competing with each other. They develop an understanding of how to succeed in different activities and learn how to evaluate and recognise their own success (DFE, 2013). This conveys a focus on the holistic development of the pupil, reinforcing the importance of developing pupils' personal and social skills. It also articulates the notion of success through competition, highlighting the importance of developing pupils towards achieving. An implication is that pupils relate PE to sporting success, which questions the core purpose of PE.

The notion of 'success' is evident in Hardman and Green's (2011) study in which they suggest that 'the concern about the relevance and quality of the PE curriculum is

largely embedded in the widespread practice in PE curriculum to provide experiences which merely serve to reinforce achievement-orientated competition performance sport' (p.24). Such an approach might cause pupils to become disengaged with PE, causing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the principles of PE to diminish.

Instead if PE is to play a valued useful role in the promotion of active lifestyles it must move beyond interpretations of activity based upon performance criteria. The nature and quality of delivery of the school curriculum is fundamental to the future not only of the subject but also the future of active life styles over the full life span for the two are inextricably entwined (Hardman and Green, 2011, p.24).

In order to facilitate a successful individual transition, the PE curriculum needs to be continuous and purposeful. At KS3, in England, pupils develop personally and socially. They work as individuals, in groups and in teams, developing concepts of fairness and of personal and social responsibility. They take on different roles and responsibilities, including leadership, coaching and officiating. Through the range of experiences that PE offers, they learn how to be effective in competitive, creative and challenging situations (DFE, 2013).

Previously, a number of critics have challenged the extent to which the aims of the PE curriculum are achieved. Sellers and Palmer (2008) suggest the NCPE aims are nothing more than a set of wishes or dreams rather more dogmatic in form and sense, than truly educational. This viewpoint suggests that PE becomes detached from the 'educational', rarely moving beyond the physical side of activity. One way to address this is, is via its facilitators, the teachers of PE. The following section considers the importance of the 'physical educator' on pupils' experiences within PE, especially the issue of specialism across the primary-secondary transition.

2.3.2 Physical educators

The way in which PE is taught is as important as the curriculum content (Green and Hardman, 2005). Since the introduction of the National Curriculum, the role of the PE teacher has changed to concentrate on the holistic development of motor, cognitive and behavioural patterns (Hardman and Green, 2011).

Recent research by Ha *et al.* (2008) indicated that (in their study) experienced PE teachers demonstrated a strong commitment to their career whilst novice teachers feel insecure about undertaking their professional role under the circumstances and uncertainties of reform. The consequence of this finding is a discontinuous experience for pupils not only across the primary-secondary transition but depending on the background and knowledge of each individual teacher.

Alongside this, concerns with regard to covering the content of the National Curriculum, administrative expectations and school authorities (i.e., Headteacher and Head of PE) represent further challengers for teachers, making the process of teaching less enticing for all parties (Hardman and Green, 2011). In turn, this lack of time due to administrative responsibilities might lead to more autocratic teaching approaches, which will inevitably affect pupils' experiences (Hardman and Green, 2011). Recently, in Wales there has been a drive to ensure that a variety of teaching approaches are adopted. The NCPE in Wales identifies that "teachers should develop approaches that support all learners and reflect a range of perspectives" (WAG, 2008, p.4).

The implementation of different pedagogical approaches within PE will have an impact on pupils' engagement within PE, suggesting that, the pedagogical approaches adopted by physical educators will have an impact on the quality of PE programmes. Pedagogical approaches within PE are grounded in the work of Muska Mosston (1966). Mosston's spectrum of teaching styles ranges from direct approaches to strategies that promote discovery. *Teaching Physical Education* (Mosston, 1966) remains one the most influential pedagogical texts in PE and there has been a significant shift over the last two decades from curriculum content of PE towards pedagogical practices (Sicilia-Camacho and Brown, 2008).

Mosston's teaching styles were based around a conception of teaching that accorded a pivotal role for promoting independent pupil decision-making about finding and using alternative ways of teaching and learning (Sicilia-Camacho and Brown, 2008). However, criticisms of the spectrum include overemphasis on teacher behaviour, which detracts from student behaviour, thus affecting achievement and instructional effectiveness (Chatoupi, 2010) and ignoring the context of learning (Williams, 1996).

Although the spectrum contains some weaknesses, the implementation of suitable teaching styles within PE remains an integral part of the development of pupils. In the past Penny and Evans (1995) indicated a predominance of teacher-centred teaching in secondary school PE. If teacher-centred teaching is being utilised within PE, pupils will have little opportunity to engage and participate in the subject. Mawer (1999) identifies that direct teaching approaches are more effective for learning

motor skills whereas reciprocal styles are more effective for learning aspects of social development.

In order to provide a pupil-centred approach to teaching PE, Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) was introduced by Bunker and Thorpe (1982). The model has attracted attention from teachers because of its potential to:

Facilitate the development of technical skills and tactical knowledge; empower pupils to learn for themselves and take responsibility; assess the tactical transition across games; to increase the fun and enjoyment in playing games (Wang and Ha, 2012, p.262).

Findings suggest that teachers have a positive attitude towards TGfU due to its pupil focus (Light and Tan, 2006). Randall (2008) reported that teachers using TGfU need to familiarise themselves with game forms, which then places high expectations on teachers' knowledge. This finding highlights the importance of the 'physical educator' in the development of pupils across the primary-secondary transition and engagement in the approaches to teaching PE.

The issue of pedagogy is still contested in contemporary PE. For example, Hardman and Green (2011) suggest that the selection of teaching styles in PE is determined by age. In the upper years of secondary schooling more problem-based learning should occur. Yet, this approach has the potential to introduce inconsistencies within PE teaching and, therefore, could have a negative impact on the pupils' development across the transition. For example, pupils might be used to a direct style of teaching in the early years and might struggle with the onset of more pupil-centred approaches during the latter years of schooling. In contrast, Hellison (2003) created the 'teaching responsibility through PE model' in which the teacher's role is to co-ordinate,

stimulate and encourage through the use of guided discovery (Hardman and Green, 2011). Although the teaching of PE is a crucial part of the National Curriculum, only a small body of literature exists on how classroom teachers effectively implement PE programmes (i.e. Ha *et al.*, 2008; Hellison, 2003).

A recent study by Chen (2006) investigated teachers' knowledge and views of the National Standards for PE and factors influencing teachers' understanding and perception of the standards. Findings indicated that personal commitment has a major impact on the way teachers deliver PE. This finding highlights the impact of the physical educator's beliefs regarding PE, and conveys his/her personal commitment as a significant variable.

In order to understand PE teachers fully and the approaches they adopt, it is necessary to delve into their experiences of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and their confidence in teaching PE. Here, a distinction between primary and secondary schools PE teachers is made. For example, primary school PE can make a unique contribution to the educational experience of pupils and may support physical, cognitive, emotional and social development (Morgan and Bourke, 2008). Recently, it has been identified that in England, "teaching was good or outstanding in more than two thirds of [primary] schools visited. None of the schools visited had inadequate teaching" (OFSTED, 2013, p.5). Equally, the main weaknesses in primary schools included teachers' limited subject knowledge and use of assessment which led to superficial planning and insufficient challenge, particularly for the more able pupils (OFSTED, 2013). Conversely, in secondary schools planning and assessment procedures were systematic and rigorous. Pupils' learning and progress

were accelerated by regular, precise feedback and extended periods of time to practise skills (OSFTED, 2013).

These distinctions are symptomatic of the disparity between pupils' experience of primary and secondary school PE in England. It is evident from these conclusions that weaknesses remain across primary school PE teaching in comparison with their secondary school counterparts. In Wales, and therefore particularly prevalent to the present study:

Teaching is good or better in about three-quarters of secondary school PE lessons observed. Where teaching is excellent, teachers have high expectations and plan learning activities that challenge and engage pupils and provide extensive opportunities for pupils to reflect on, evaluate and improve their work (Estyn, 2012, p. 1).

One of the reasons for this distinction between primary and secondary schools is the issue of specialism; pupils experience non-specialist PE teachers in primary schools and specialists in secondary.

Internationally, a large body of research has focused on non-specialist PE teachers and their ability to teach PE in primary school (e.g., Morgan and Bourke, 2008; Petrie, 2010). These studies highlight one major factor, which prevents or creates difficulties for primary school teachers to teach PE, namely their confidence. It has been suggested that a strong relationship exists between teachers' training in PE and their perceived confidence to teach the subject (Morgan and Bourke, 2005). Teachers felt significantly less confident to teach those PE content areas for which they perceived they had received poorer quality training (Morgan and Bourke, 2005). In 2010, an evaluation of the PE and School Sport (PESS) programme in Wales found that the PESS programme had increased teacher knowledge and confidence within

PE and school sport (Sport Wales, 2010). More specifically, as a result of PESS, schools' own monitoring of the quality of teaching showed significant improvement in the confidence and competence of non-specialist primary teachers once PESS had become fully embedded (Sport Wales, 2010). The aim of the PESS programme is to ensure that:

Every young person is challenged and supported in P.E and school sport. Provision across curricular, extracurricular and community is engaging to all young people, providing them with the skills, confidence and enthusiasm to be hooked on sport for life (Sport Wales, 2001).

However, the issue of teacher specialism remains a significant problem across Wales. For example, as part of the Schools and Physical Activity Task and Finishing Group's (SPATFG) report, they concluded that:

The amount of time given to PE in [primary] Initial Teacher Training programmes is severely limited. This aspect of training needs to be dramatically improved to establish suitable conditions to deliver high-quality PE programmes in all schools (SPATFG, 2013, p.6).

Teaching is embedded with explicit and implicit beliefs, symptomatic of the extent of evaluation, judgement, and choice within teachers' role (Tsangaridou, 2008). If poor quality teacher training causes teachers to have negative beliefs about PE, it is likely to have a negative impact upon their teaching of PE.

Although teacher training might impact on teachers' confidence in teaching PE, researchers have explored early experiences of PE as a source for the low level of confidence in teaching among non-specialists (Keating *et al.*, 2002; Placek *et al.*, 1995). These studies indicated that personal school experiences in PE provide

prospective teachers with a wide range of information about PE, which might affect attitudes, beliefs, and teaching practices (Keating *et al.*, 2002; Placek *et al.*, 1995).

A theory developed by Lawson (1983) considers teacher socialisation in which he/she describes the socialisation of teachers as a lifelong process, which begins at school and continues into their professional years as teachers. This theory highlights the importance of positive PE experiences for pupils within their early years of education. This concurs with Jarrett's (1999) study in which he/she established a link between personal school experiences in science and current interest and confidence in science of elementary teachers. Although cross-curricular the concept is reminiscent of the notion that early experiences impact on teachers' teaching practice thus indicating the way they might eventually teach PE.

Primary schools face a universal shortage of appropriately qualified teachers within PE (Hardman and Green, 2011). The issue of non-specialists versus specialist PE teachers cannot be resolved with a quick-fire solution. For example, separating the primary classroom teacher from his/her pupils would be in line with the 'holistic' approach to primary school in which the 'physical' forms an intrinsic part (Carney and Howells, 2008). A balance between the qualities of the primary school teacher and a teacher with the confidence and knowledge to teach PE is required. Therefore, primary schools would benefit from having at least one PE, music, art specialist in every primary school and would represent a significant step towards ensuring that pupils receive high quality experience of PE along with art and music respectively in primary school (Carney and Howells, 2008). However, the employment of specialist

PE teachers does not necessarily lead to enjoyment in PE. For example, Sport Wales (2012) found:

In secondary schools, a large proportion of pupils report that they do not enjoy school sport or feel involved and listened to, whereas primary school pupils are generally very positive about their experience of PE and sport (No page number).

This finding indicates that whilst there is a large body of knowledge exploring the issue of specialism in primary and secondary schools; for some pupils the ‘non-specialist’ is ideally placed to produce an enjoyable PE experience (Sport Wales, 2012). This finding also reveals that pupils experience discontinuity between primary and secondary school PE.

This section has highlighted the ‘physical educator’ as a significant factor in producing a positive PE experience for pupils. It has dealt with the contemporary issues that are associated with PE, all of which have a direct impact on the transition between primary and secondary school. The next section of the review explores the way in which gender impacts upon the primary-secondary transition. This section draws upon two equally pertinent and related issues: firstly, gender differences in the way pupils perceive PE specifically the disengagement of girls in PE; and secondly, the impact of mixed-gender and single-sex PE lessons on disengagement within PE.

2.3.3 Gender

Gender has long been an issue in PE with a growing body of research pointing towards the continued prevalence of gender inequality and exclusion in often complex ways within the PE curriculum, structures and practices (Rich, 2004). Gender inequality often refers to the non-participation of girls in PE. For example,

Sport Wales have identified that girls are less likely to participate frequently (three or more occasions per week) in school based or community sport, particularly once they are of secondary school age (Sport Wales, 2012). Similarly, in the recent school sport survey, this trend continued with boys (44%) more likely than girls (36%) to regularly participate in sport and physical activity, though the figures for both have increased, the gap remains static (Sport Wales, 2013).

These surveys fail to explore is the reason behind this response. Whether, in line Hay and Macdonald (2010), girls feel that the PE curriculum is directed towards competition which might be dominated by boys. In accordance with this perspective Cairney *et al.* (2012) found that girls reported lower levels of PE enjoyment than boys; these differences increased over time. This finding indicates that boys and girls perception of PE is dissimilar, with boys' enjoyment levels remaining consistent (into secondary school) whilst girls' enjoyment levels and participation decrease. With girls less likely to participate in PE in secondary school, a smooth transition between the two phases is emphasised here, with pupils building upon and developing their experience of primary school.

Whilst research focuses primarily on a negative PE experience for girls, boys too have concerns about participating in PE. For example, in a study by Tischler and McCaughtry (2011) exploring marginalised boys' perceptions of PE, boys concerns included: having the wrong body shape; having less coordination; and being slower, weaker, less athletic, less fit, and more subdued. Moreover, Brooks and Magnusson (2006) found that team sports can also be felt to be highly problematic with direct physical or verbal abuse being perceived as a likely repercussion for those not

displaying masculine physical prowess. For boys their concerns surrounding PE centre on the notion of masculinity but girls cite the domination of boys (activity and control) as factors which prevent participation. One factor associated with gender, PE and participation rates is the employment of mixed-gender or single-sex PE lessons.

In the past PE was one of the few subjects in the curriculum where pupils had been traditionally taught different activities in single-sex groupings, building a long gendered history of curriculum differentiation (Flintoff and Scraton, 2001). The specialised training of male and female PE teachers took place separately with females focusing on health and well-being through dance and gymnastics; whilst male teacher training centred on competitive team games (see Kirk, 1992; Flintoff and Scraton, 2001). The issue of 'separation' within secondary school PE has remained prominent in educational research (see Knowles, Niven and Fawcner, 2011). Many schools have entertained practices comparable to those that would have featured in PE many decades ago, many single-sex departments by male heads of PE, offering a thoroughly unreconstructed sex differentiated curriculum (Evans and Penny, 2002). More recently, it has been suggested that:

Sporting practices, the 'core' of many PE curricula were, and still are, overwhelmingly associated with tough, aggressive, competitive and potentially dangerous practices, the antithesis to stereotypical femininity (i.e., grace, poise, flexibility, balance), causing many girls (and some boys) to perceive themselves incapable of becoming physically educated (Hay and Macdonald, 2010, p.273).

The very nature of these activities have the potential to disengage female pupils during primary school and potentially through to secondary school. It has been suggested that the presence of males in a PE class can have an especially negative impact on female students' enjoyment of PE (Robinson, 2012). Hills and Croston

(2012) introduce the idea of ‘undoing gender’. In their ethnographic study they explored mixed-gender PE lessons in a mixed-gender comprehensive school, findings suggest that whilst some girls expressed a belief that boys were better at PE than girls, others challenged this assumption. A number of girls enjoyed opportunities to interact with boys and, in some cases, felt uneasy about the segregation that occurred when boys and girls had separate lessons (Hills and Croston, 2012). This finding highlights the importance of mixed-gender PE lessons in the social development of pupils and as a result ‘undoing gender’ which in turn might have a positive impact on pupils’ experiences across the transition.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has reviewed three main areas: firstly, the progression of child development and the inclusion of pupil-voice within educational research, the theoretical framework that supports the study; secondly, issues surrounding the primary-secondary transition (the focus of the study) including curriculum and pedagogical continuity and the importance of ‘pupils in transition’; and finally, the importance of PE across the primary-secondary transition. The review has demonstrated a longstanding problem associated with continuity and progression across primary-secondary transition alongside the importance yet neglect of pupils’ experiences of the transition.

In terms of the transition across the curriculum, this review has identified several factors which affect continuity and progression between primary and secondary school. The first of these factors is the significant difference between primary and secondary school including the physical, social, learning and teaching contexts of the

school. All of these features represent a discontinuity in pupils' experience of primary and secondary school.

Alongside the differences between primary and secondary school, there is a considerable imbalance between academic and social issues surrounding the transition. In recent times academic development was seen as less important with social development at the forefront of educational research concerning the transition (Measor and Fleetham, 2005). This, in turn, had a detrimental effect on pupils' progression through a noticeable dip in attainment (Langenkamp, 2010). Moreover, this review has identified the importance of the teacher and their teaching. The teacher's approach and commitment to exchanging information had a significant impact on how well pupils settle into their new school, but importantly too in preparing pupils for their new school.

The most prominent factor which impacts upon continuity and progression across the transition is the pupils themselves. Consultation with pupils regarding their experiences of the transition can impact upon the strategies employed to tackle such a difficult process. However, 'listening to the voice' of pupils during the transition process is conspicuous by its absence (Ashton, 2008). The majority of studies have tended to focus on either the pre-transition or post-transition phase rather than exploring the two comparatively (i.e., Ashton, 2008). Similarly, past studies have used questionnaires or online surveys to examine the experiences of pupils across transition, this approach questions whether these accounts accurately reflect pupils' feelings across the transitional process (i.e., Marks, 2004; Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003).

Whilst the review has identified significant issues across the curriculum, the second part examined PE across the transition continuing the emphasis on continuity and progression. With regard to PE, this review has identified the subject as a vehicle for social and physical competence (Dismore, 2007). The challenge of navigating this transition successfully is one of the key barriers to improving ‘life choices’ in this country (DFE, 2012). As the main societal institution for the promotion of physical activity among pupils (Cale and Harris 2006), the impact of PE across the transition is significantly undervalued and neglected within educational research. The review has explored two main areas: firstly the position of ‘PE and the primary-secondary transition’ within educational research; and secondly the factors which have affected pupils’ perceptions of PE, namely the curriculum, physical educators (teachers) and gender. Whilst PE across the transition has received little attention, what is known points towards an inconsistency in pupils’ experiences of PE. For example, Dismore and Bailey’s (2010) study suggests that pupils convey a positive experience of PE across the transition; whilst Lawrence (2006) reports that pupils hold negative perceptions of the transition to secondary school in terms of PE. This inconsistency suggests that pupils’ attitudes towards PE should be explored in greater depth. To do this factors which affect these attitudes, such as the curriculum, teachers and gender are explored.

This thesis sets out to explore pupils’ expectations and experiences across the curriculum identifying whether continuity and progression remains prevalent, whilst examining the transition through a particular element of the curriculum, PE. In essence this study is about the pupils, for the pupils, exploring their thoughts and

feelings at such a pivotal stage of their education, placing their perceptions at the centre once more.

2.5 Reflections

Writing a literature review was one of the first tasks to be undertaken. During my first few months as a PhD student my supervisory team set me the task of defining Physical Education. The purpose of this assignment was to think and write critically about an aspect of my proposed thesis. I struggled with this particular task, the problem I had was developing a critical stance and a level of engagement not informed by professional practice as a teacher. The following account is drawn from a reflective piece written during the first few months of my doctoral study:

***January 2011** – Today I had a meeting with my supervisory team regarding the construction and execution of my literature review. The feedback I have been receiving lately is that the review lacks criticality and analysis. At present, this is an aspect of my thesis which requires significant improvement. The review remains too descriptive in places, I need to critique empirical evidence which relates to the transition, in order to establish how my research will address previous shortcomings. This represents a major ‘step up’ from my experiences of writing at undergraduate level.*

At this time, I ‘sat on the fence’ too often, struggling to offer a perspective or challenge a particular piece of literature. Academically, this was the most significant challenge during my first year as a PhD student. The problem not only lay in my critical stance, but the significant ‘step up’ in writing style which was evident in the

numerous drafts I attempted. After a challenging initial period, I began to realise that developing a critical stance and being critical were separate. It was important to offer evaluation and analysis of empirical work, highlighting limitations but also strengths. I was too eager to 'put the boot in' without considering the positive elements of research – this was a difficult but important period within my research journey.

Adapting to the significant 'step up' in writing style and gaining a sense of belonging was an issue which followed me throughout my PhD Journey. It is impossible to pinpoint a particular moment where I felt my writing style was of sufficient standard. It was a matter of drafting and re-drafting aspects of the review, using the constructive feedback. It was all part of my doctoral apprenticeship.

On reflection, writing a literature review required weekly targets, a careful consideration of the key arguments and constant reminder of and re-connection with the research aim. The purpose of a literature review is not just to set the scene, but identify gaps in the knowledge base, gaps which ultimately the research will address. The literature review was re-visited on a number of occasions up until the date of submission. During a three-year period empirical research is constantly being updated. Similarly, so is a literature review, ever evolving until finally someone says 'enough is enough'.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter is divided into three broad areas: firstly, the design of the two-phase programme of research; secondly, the methodological stance adopted during the study, including the ontological and epistemological viewpoint, adopting a qualitative approach and use of ethnography in the social sciences; and finally, this chapter details the operation of data collection, interpretation and analysis in order to address the central research aim, including an account of ethical procedures.

The study surrounds the transition from primary to secondary school. In order to address the central research aim the study was divided into two distinctive phases. In order to provide clarity on the logistics of the field work process, figure 3 (p.96) provides a 'fieldwork timeline' illustrating the chronological process of fieldwork. The same schools were selected for both Phase One and Phase Two of the study, to ensure continuity for the researcher and institutions. Phase One of the project was concerned with pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition, across the curriculum. Phase Two shifted focus and critically evaluated the particularities of the primary-secondary transition concerned with PE. Two six-week stages of fieldwork were conducted within each phase, the first in a primary school (pre-transition) and then in a secondary school (post-transition). A variety of methods including interviews, informal discussions, observations, reflections and classroom activities were elicited in stage one to gather pupils' expectations. The main purpose of the second stage of fieldwork was to examine pupils' experiences of the transition to secondary school and whether they matched their expectations. Once again interviews, informal discussions, observations, reflections and classroom activities were used over a six-week period. Ethnography within an exploratory qualitative approach was adopted.

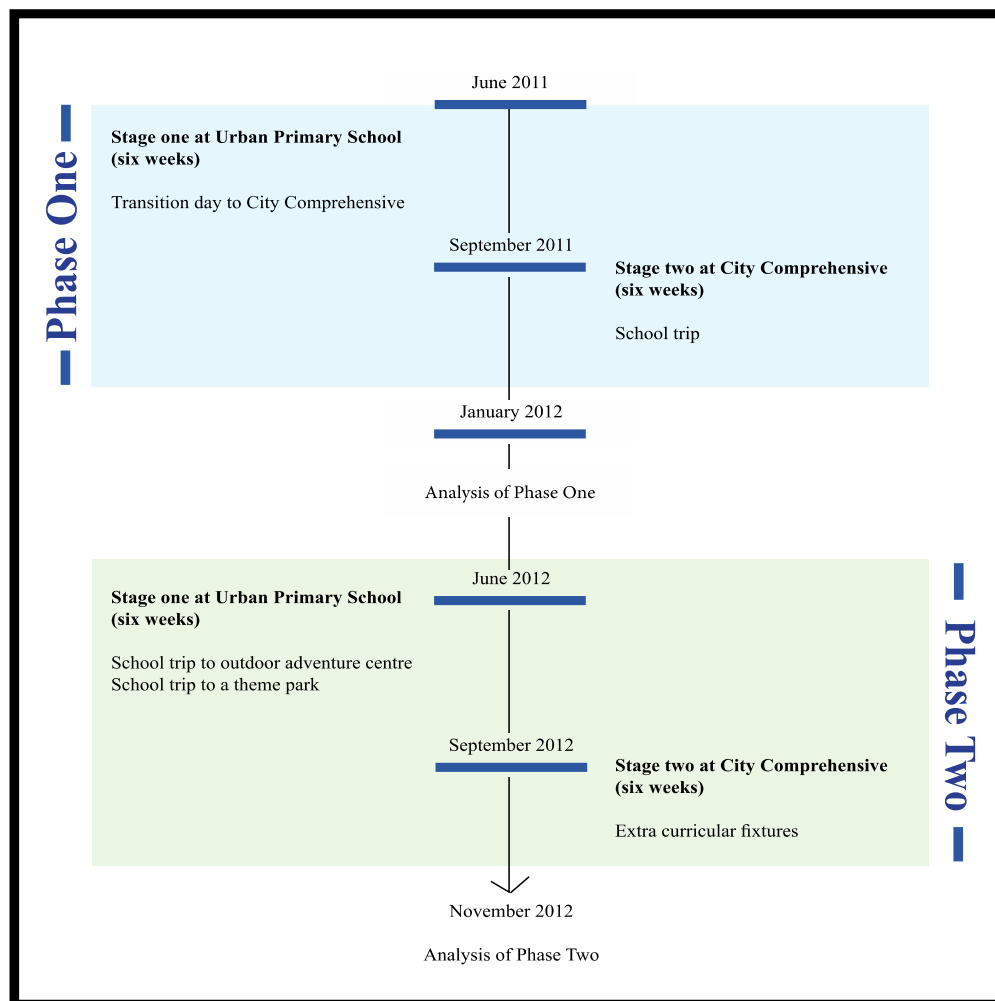


Figure 3. A timeline illustrating the chronological process of fieldwork.

Before the fieldwork could begin it was important to establish my epistemological and ontological viewpoint along with the significance of qualitative research and ethnography.

3.1 Ontology and Epistemology

Prior to discussing the approach taken and the methodological concepts involved in the study, it is necessary to address questions of ontology and epistemology. Every research method is embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world and ways of knowing that world (Usher *et al.*, 1997). Ontology is about conceptions of

our positionality in the world and the effect this has on what is knowable; whereas epistemology is about conceptions of the nature of knowledge and ways of coming to know (Cousin, 2009). In order to address this, Cousin (2009) proposes several questions:

What can we see from where we stand in relation to the research setting? Are we inside the research setting, at a distance from it or somewhere in between? Do we have a transparent view on to reality or will it always be mediated by our subjectivity? (p. 6).

The responses to these questions provide an insight into ones epistemological and ontological stance (Cousin, 2009). The ontological and epistemological approach taken in this study is an interpretive approach, to search for meaning. Researchers using this framework (interpretive), aim for some measure of closeness with participants because rapport building and respondent disclosure are seen to be interdependent. They argue that people will not tell you what is happening unless they trust you and trust cannot be built by keeping one's distance (Cousin, 2009). Researchers in the interpretive framework see themselves as subjective and see objectivity as impossible in human sciences; they freely insert themselves in the research process and report (Cousin, 2009). A degree of objectivity is required. This involves an element of standing back intellectually and reflecting on things, writing them down and thus objectifying them, asking directed questions in order to address research aims (O'Reilly, 2009).

The present study addresses pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition, therefore trust and rapport play an important role (as highlighted in chapter four). To retain the integrity of the phenomena I was studying, an approach had to be adopted that allowed immersion in the pupils' experiences in

order to understand their thoughts and feelings both pre and post-transition. An interpretive approach therefore allowed the participants to be placed at the core of the research, whilst my role as researcher was to understand their interpretations of the world as they emerged. In contrast to the positivist approach, this school of thought recognises the benefit of in-depth rich exploration rather than breadth in research terms (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Cousin, 2009).

3.2 A Qualitative approach

Qualitative methods are specifically suited to studies that examine unfolding events, require natural surroundings, need exploration, description and focus on a broad analysis of a phenomenon or context and have a small sample size (Drew *et al.*, 2008). Rather than controlling variables, qualitative studies are open ended and set up research opportunities designed to lead the researcher into unforeseen areas of discovery within the lives of the people they are investigating (Holliday, 2002). The aim of qualitative studies is to learn about how people behave in their typical setting (i.e., a school). For example, research on African-American children suggests that the pressure not to achieve in school and not to ‘act white’ is at times intense for some inner city children (Bergin and Cooks, 2002). To study these behaviours it was essential that these children were studied in the place where the ‘pressure’ occurred and their perceptions and interpretations recorded.

According to Pollard (2001) in his study concerning adjudicated youth with disabilities “a qualitative research model emphasising in-depth interviews was utilised to access information from the adjudicated youths” (p.476). A crucial point to note here is the importance of depth within qualitative research, which can be

achieved through open-ended questions within interviews and a variety of data collection methods (e.g., interviews, focus groups). Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry (Silverman, 2005).

In selecting a method of research in any study it is important that the method suits the purpose of inquiry. Therefore, a study which focuses on a relatively small selection of pupils, their social interactions, expectations and experiences, requires a detailed and exact analysis in which the participants have more freedom to determine what is relevant for them and to present it in its context (Flick, 2011). Qualitative educational research topics range widely from social relationships, pupils' experiences in school, to community and cultural practices related to classroom learning (Langhout *et al.*, 2002; Foster *et al.*, 2003). The common feature of all qualitative studies is the importance of detail. Qualitative researchers are prepared to sacrifice scope for detail (Silverman 2005). For qualitative researchers this detail is usually found in people's understanding and interactions. An important aspect of qualitative research also lies in its analysis. According to Cousin (2009) "qualitative data analysis explores themes, patterns, stories, narrative structure and language within research texts, (interviews, field notes etc.) in order to interpret meanings and generate rich descriptions of research settings" (p.31).

Previously, concepts of validity and reliability have been challenged within qualitative research, with many investigators using alternative terminology to justify and defend their approach, the idea of trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004). According to

Lincoln and Guba (1986), trustworthiness can be addressed through combined principles of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Within the present study, chapter four describes the rigorous process of fieldwork, essentially providing a 'reflective commentary' (Shenton, 2004). Issues such as school entrée, trust and rapport alongside the role of the researcher are explored addressing the principles of credibility and dependability. Justifying credibility can be achieved through employing tactics to help ensure honesty of informants and peer scrutiny of the research project (Shenton, 2004). The former was addressed through developing initial rapport with the participants before attempting to conduct interviews or classroom activities; whilst the latter was addressed through scrutiny as part of the research publication and conference presentation process.

According to Shenton (2004) as qualitative findings are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate such findings are applicable to other situations and therefore transferable. However, findings from the present study would be useful (and therefore transferable) for anyone working with or in a school comprising of a similar social economic demographic and transition structure. Such findings are particularly relevant to the Welsh Government's emphasis on 'listening to learners' as part the seven core aims for children and young people (WG, 2009). In order to address transferability or generalisability, interview guides and a research report were appended, whilst examples of classroom activities were included as part of the thesis.

Finally, confirmability requires evidence that the findings are that of the participants rather than the researcher (Shenton, 2004). This is achieved through a rigorous

description of fieldwork (see chapter four) and a research report submitted to Urban Primary School as part of the research agreement. Moreover, a detailed methodological description enables the reader to determine how far the data and constructs emerging from it may be accepted (Shenton, 2004).

The next section addresses a key feature of confirmability: firstly, drawing on ethnography to justify the employment of an ethnographic approach; and secondly, detailing the procedural approach to school selection (social setting) and the research methods adopted during the study. Essentially adopting a qualitative approach enabled an exploration of pupils' experiences. In order to gain a first hand, in-depth understanding of the primary-secondary transition, it was necessary to employ an ethnographic qualitative approach.

3.3 Ethnography

In order to address the central research aim, the present study employed a variety of data capture techniques during a series of ethnographic episodes (see figure 3, p.96) to explore pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition. The approach was different from traditional ethnographic studies in the sociology of education (e.g., Ball, 1981; Corrigan, 1979; Lacey, 1970) which involved a sustained period of time spent in the 'field' with the researcher immersed within a group of people, often over the course of a year or more, in order to document and interpret their distinctive way of life, their values and beliefs (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). However, there are certain characteristics of ethnography which were crucial to the study and played an important role (i.e., developing rapport, establishing trust). Moreover, it is important within the context of the research to

avoid misrepresenting the research process. Employing an ‘ethnographic approach’ meant I was able to immerse myself in the environment and report.

A salient consideration within the present study is the use of the term ‘case study’. At a number of levels, the case study has an affinity with the ethnographic approach. A case study can be described as a particular situation, organisation or group intensively researched in order to capture its dynamic, complex and multifaceted nature (Hartas, 2010). The emphasis in a case study is on far fewer instances and more depth of focus; hence the current piece of research can be described as an ethnographic case study.

According to Cousin (2009) ethnography simply means the description of groups of people. However, ethnography is more than just a description of a culture or group, its depth, flexibility, versatility and richness make it one of the most effective methods of social research.

Ethnography usually involves the researcher participating overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions through formal or informal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.3).

This passage highlights one of the major strengths of ethnographic research; its ability to use a number of primary and secondary sources to enable ethnographers to gain an in-depth understanding of the research topic. In order to achieve this, O’Reilly (2009) reveals that ethnography draws primarily, but not exclusively, on a family of methods involving direct and sustained contact with human agents (i.e.,

interviews, participant observation, reflection, focus groups, field notes and informal discussions). The employment of these methods depends on the research topic and the population being researched, therefore, the meaning of ethnography can vary depending on its application within a particular research project. Ethnography can be revealed by the studies that have shaped ethnographic research over the last century. The origins of ethnography lie in nineteenth century Western anthropology, where an ethnography was a descriptive account of a community or culture, usually one located outside the west (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). From here ethnography was seen as a rite of passage for entry into anthropology. As a result ethnography became part of sociological research. The first significant contribution to the development of ethnography was by 'Chicago School', a body of work concerned with documenting the range of different patterns of city life and how these patterns were shaped by the developing urban ecology.

The Chicago sociologists used a combination of methods including statistical analysis, mapping, diaries, case analysis, life histories and documents. Yet overwhelmingly these researchers used face-to-face interaction in everyday settings, and produced descriptive analysis of social worlds (O'Reilly, 2009). Park (1915) signalled the establishment of a distinctive style and content for Chicago Sociology. It set aside the prevailing tradition of abstract philosophising in favour of sharp, researchable questions about institutions and processes that could be immediately observed and investigated (Smith, 1988). From the 1960s onwards forms of sociological research influenced by Chicago Sociology spread across into other disciplines and migrated from the United States to Europe.

One of the earliest ethnographic studies of note in the UK was *Hightown Grammar* (Lacey, 1970). Lacey (1970) attempted to explain the disappointing performance of working-class boys in grammar schools. His belief was that a study of this nature could illuminate similar situations in education. Lacey (1970) highlighted a number of practicalities that required consideration, including access, mutual benefit and ethical considerations. One ethical issue that Lacey (1970) had to deal with during the study was ‘guilty knowledge’. Knowing that teachers held private detentions, Lacey (1970) decided to remain silent when the Headteacher of the school brought up the issue.

This dilemma reveals the rich, yet problematic nature of ethnographic research. During the late 1970s and early 1980s two school-based studies came to prominence. The first, *Schooling the Smash Street Kids* (Corrigan, 1979) like *Hightown Grammar*, dealt with working-class youths and their reactions to society. The second was *Beachside Comprehensive* (Ball, 1981) which provided an account of pupils’ experiences of schooling in a single comprehensive over a three year period. Although dated, these studies remain ‘classics’ and can illuminate issues related to ethnography through the experiences of the ethnographers themselves. For example, in Corrigan’s (1979) study, he identified that the research was ‘both for the kids and about the kids’; therefore an early decision had to be made:

It was impossible to get at the information about the boys if you were seen talking to teachers too often, so I decided in order to learn about the boys’ situation I would remain distant from the teachers... However, it was not sufficiently simply to decide not to be a teacher; it became important to create a role for myself, which was not threatening. (Corrigan, 1979, p.12)

In essence for Corrigan (1979) it was a balancing act, it was crucial for the study to maintain a role that would not threaten the teachers as this could result in them deciding to stop the research. The pupils were the focus of the study and being too close to the teachers would mean that the boys would not trust him (Corrigan, 1979). Furthermore, Fleming (1995) in a study concerned with South Asian male youth and sport suggests that this creates two unavoidable sets of problematic social relations: first, the host-guest relation; and second, the implicit teacher-pupil relation between the researcher and the pupils (the focus of the research). This finding highlights the ethical and methodological delicacy of ethnographic research and the role adopted by the researcher. The concept of 'balance' is an essential part of school-based ethnography, ensuring that both parties (the institution and researcher) mutually benefit from the agreed role adopted by the researcher. For example, Lacey (1970) to ensure that the school benefited from the arrangement, offered to repay the favour by including some teaching as an essential part of the field work.

Along with role adoption, there are a number of challenges that have accompanied ethnographic research. The first of these to be considered is the extent of participation.

3.3.1 The extent of participation

In ethnographic studies the extent of participation ranges from spending some small time in the community in order to obtain access to full immersion in the culture of the group (O'Reilly, 2009). Participation becomes an issue in some ethnographic studies. For example, in order to gather data, ethnography requires immersion in the research setting however, in the field of crime, this can be potentially harmful. Adler

(1985) undertook a covert approach to researching a community of drug dealers. Before taking part in the research Adler (1985) made friends with the drug dealers before deciding to make this her research interest. As part of the covert research, Adler (1985) went to parties, social gatherings and observed business transactions. The success of ethnography can depend on the extent to which one becomes immersed in the research setting, yet in order for analysis to be conducted a certain degree of objectivity is required. In some cases this balance can become confused. For example, in a study by Estroff (1981) when focusing on psychic disorder amongst clinical out patients went as far as taking the medication that most of her participants were taking, she claims:

The decision to take medication was a difficult one, and caused much consternation among my family, friends and colleagues. However, because these medications represented such a substantial and meaning laden part of the clients' world and experience, anthropologically it seemed logical and worthwhile (Estroff, 1981, p.30).

Although this was an effective way of 'getting into the participants shoes' it creates an imbalance. Estroff (1981) effectively became a participant therefore losing her role as a researcher and therefore any degree of objectivity.

According to Gold (1958) there are four positions of fieldwork: the complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant and complete observer. The complete participant is covert and runs the risk of losing any sense of objectivity (i.e., Estroff, 1981), while the complete observer is overt and detached (O'Reilly, 2009). A complete participant cannot be described as an ethnographer. The distinction between 'participant as observer' and 'observer as participant' is more interesting. The two are separated by outcome; if the researcher wishes to completely

immerse themselves in the culture by becoming a part of that culture they adopt the role of participant as observer. If the researcher's main priority is to observe but in order to achieve this they are required to participate they become an 'observer as participant'.

Generally these four positions are dependent upon the context of the research, the culture or group being researched and availability. For example, in a recent study by Smith (2007) involving CCTV control rooms, he adopted the role of complete observer because this was the only available position, watching both the watching and the watched. The extent of participation is very much dependant on roles that are available. Yet, one aspect of ethnography which the researcher has control over is relationships and trust within the field, which can ultimately impact upon the successfulness of ethnography.

3.3.2 Relationships and trust

Previously, Fleming (1995) has suggested that ethnographic research can produce difficult social relations, however, these social relations, can also have a positive impact on the quality and richness of the data. The researcher-pupil relationship is one of the most important factors in school-based ethnographic research. Creating a positive relationship with the pupils is a must, in order to gather the information required for the study. Fieldwork is easier, more enjoyable, and possibly more productive where good social relationships are forged (Coffey, 1999). Similarly, Fleming (1995) suggests that one of the most effective ways of developing rapport was to discuss favourite football teams and television programmes such as *Eastenders* and *Grange Hill*, mainly these were context sensitive to the area in which

the research was taking place, which in this case was London. In some cases developing relationships and trust can be more difficult to develop. For example, Corrigan (1979) was left with a number of problems to confront when building a working relationship with the pupils:

How long should my hair be to persuade the boys I wasn't a student teacher at heart, similarly, with dress, and most importantly behaviour? Over time though, my londonness assisted me in getting through to the kids, since they were interested in such places as West Ham, Millwall and the Kings Road (Corrigan, 1979, p.13).

Here, Corrigan (1979) emphasises the importance of developing trust before attempting to develop rapport; establishing a common ground to enable trust to be developed. An issue associated with building trust and developing relationships with participants is the notion of 'over-rapport' (O'Reilly, 2009). According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), in *Learning to Labour* (Willis, 1977) the researcher becomes too involved, that he identified with the boys in the study so strongly, that he was unable to distance himself from their views in the analysis. By immersing oneself in the research setting, increases the likelihood of the researcher sharing the views of the participants in the study; therefore making it difficult to remain impartial when it comes to analysing the data. This has been referred to in ethnographical research as 'going native', which refers to the danger of ethnographers becoming too involved in the community or culture that they lose their objectivity and distance (O'Reilly, 2009).

The nature of ethnography requires researchers to immerse themselves completely in the research setting. Yet, a degree of objectivity is required for effective analysis. If a researcher loses sight of why they are in the research setting then this could lead to

inaccurate results and bias. Relationships and trust are a major part of ethnography, yet so is the avoidance of ‘going native’, which is dependent on the extent to which the ethnographer decides to participate in the culture or group being studied. Another key debate within ethnographical research is whether to inform the participants of the purpose of the ethnographer’s presence, in other words whether to deceive or not.

3.3.3 Deception

According to O’Reilly (2009) one decision that has to be made is the extent to which one will remain covert. Overt research means openly explaining the research to the participants, whereas covert research is undercover, conducted without the participants’ knowledge. Several ethnographers have used covert methods in order to gain information from their participants. A relatively dated covert study, which is now recognised for transgression and ethical issues, is that of *Tea-room Trade* (Humphreys, 1970). Humphreys (1970) studied anonymous encounters (as a ‘watchman’) in men’s public toilets in Chicago. He abused this role by taking down the car registrations of the participants and following them home to conduct a survey. Humphreys (1970) argues that it is only possible to observe certain things by being covert and ‘in the same boat’ as the participants in the study. In turn, this ensures that the researcher has little effect on the research setting resulting in an honest account from the participants.

This raised some ethical debates surrounding informed consent, misrepresentation and deception. Another, more recent study, which used covert methods, is *Nickel and Dimed* (Enrenreich, 2001). Here, Enrenreich (2001) worked for two years in some of the lowest paid jobs in the United States (US) and tested the experience of living on

solely poverty-level wages. Although, this study did not cover such a personal and sensitive issue as *Tea-room Trade*, Enrenreich (2001) still used deception to gather information on a population that were unaware of her motive. Another example of ethnographic covert research is *Scum Airways* (Sugden, 2002). An inside investigation of the Manchester grafters - touts, black marketers and shady dealers who have come up with remarkably successful money making adventure: *Scum Airways*. Again, in this covert piece of research, the participants were unaware that they were taking part in the study. However, Sugden (2002) defends his approach:

Whether you like it or not some things just have to be done. They are not planned, not looked for, not part of any preconceived schedule or timetable, and often they are not welcome in your already busy life. Something tells you that, like the last bus, there is an important story passing by and if you don't get on board the opportunity will be gone forever (Sugden, 2002, p.9).

Yet, is this a valid reason for deceiving the participants of the study, or is covert research simply the only method that can get an honest account of what is going on in a research setting. For example, if Sugden (2002) had revealed the true motive as to why he was dipping in and out Big Tommy's operation, then inevitably access to football's underground economy would have been problematic. Therefore, is deception a moral choice, is the topic of research worthy of such deception and does deception add to the richness and depth of the information collected in the research.

'Deception' has been a source of fierce debate amongst ethnographers for many years. Some researchers consider any deception within the long-term relationship building process of ethnography as unacceptable (O'Reilly, 2009). Whilst covert research aims to deceive the participants, arguably overt research strives to establish deception in order to ensure that participants act 'normal' in the research setting. For

example, in *Regulating Unruly Bodies* (Monaghan, 2002) many of the participants were informed as to the purpose of his research, however Monaghan (2002) was happy to be treated as a bouncer rather than a researcher:

Most of the time I have been and continue to be successful in using my body to research other bodies. Usual comments from ethnographic contacts, upon learning that I am an academic have been of the type: 'Oh you don't look like a lecturer!' (Monaghan, 2002, p.410)

So is it the case that all ethnographers, whether overt and covert strive to deceive their participants. Is deception part of effective ethnographical research? Although overt research uses informed consent, ethnographers such as Monaghan (2002) preferred to be treated as a member of the group or culture being studied, in this case bouncers, in order to gain the trust of the other bouncers. Therefore, it can be argued that deception occurs in overt research but further down the research process. In summary covert/deceptive research is permissible (most codes of social research allow for it), but a case has to be made to question whether this type of research is avoiding harm and remains valid.

Throughout this passage, the concept of deception, participation and relationships have been discussed in relation to ethnography. However, a decisive factor in a successful ethnography is the researcher themselves.

3.3.4 The ethnographic researcher

Ethnographies can be determined by what ethnographers do in the research setting and how they go about collecting data (O'Reilly, 2009). According to Marshall and Rossman (2011) ethnographers typically study groups, communities, organisations, or perhaps social movements through long-term immersion in the setting and by using a variety of data collection methods.

Although highlighting the strengths of ethnographic research, the long term immersion in the research setting means the actions of the ethnographic researcher is of critical importance and can ultimately have an impact on the overall quality of the ethnography. Fieldwork simply will not generate rich data and interesting analyses without personal investment in the relations of the field (Coffey, 1999). For example, in a study by Christensen and James (2000) they highlight the strategy adopted when conducting pupil-centred research, claiming that “in the first days, part of my aim was to become a familiar figure, for whom the pupils did not behave in special ways during their class work and with whom pupils might confidently talk” (p.123). The advantage of this approach is twofold: firstly, it allows the researcher to become familiar with the research setting; and secondly, the first few weeks of the fieldwork provided the pupils with an opportunity to become familiar with the researcher and the nature of the project.

Similarly, in *Beachside Comprehensive* Ball (1981) emphasised the importance of a period of observation and familiarisation when researching in a school-based setting for a sustained period of time. In summary Christensen (2010) provides an insightful perspective of ethnography and the importance of ‘the researcher’, claiming:

The researcher is the most important tool in any qualitative or ethnographic research. It is the ethnographers conduct in the field, their skills and their craft that is crucial for the production of data (p.148).

Whilst the actions of an ethnographer can have a positive impact on a study, such actions can also have a negative effect. For instance, towards the end of Willis’s (1977) study the boys confessed that they started to tire of his presence. This may have influenced the answers they gave him, and their behaviour towards him. There

is likely to be some kind of ethnographer effect in the field and this will be shaped by the informant's own impression of the ethnographer (Cousin, 2009). Furthermore, Coffey (1999) suggests that the nature of ethnography means we (the researchers) must continue to recognise and demonstrate our commitment to the researched.

This summarises the importance of 'the ethnographer', the qualities and characteristics required for effective ethnographical research and the difficulty of the aspiration that researchers should leave only footprints. However, Toms and Kirk (2006) accept that "whilst the idea that researchers should leave only footprints is laudable, it can be an unrealistic expectation, what is more reasonable is avoiding harm" (p.109). This notion is particularly pertinent when the focus of the research is pupils.

3.3.5 Ethnography with young people

Ethnography has been used in a number of studies concerning young people and the sociology of education (Ball, 1981; Bergin and Cooks, 2002; Corrigan, 1979; Fleming, 1995; Lacey, 1970; Willis, 1997). Implementing an ethnographic approach provides an opportunity to 'explore phenomena within context in the natural setting' (Morse and Richards, 2002, p.48). Within studies that concern young people, ethnography provides a detailed and in-depth account into the research topic through long-term immersion in the pupils 'natural setting', their school or institution. However, what is there to stop young people becoming merely a tool in the adult armoury, with no opportunity for genuine participation (Chistensen and James, 2000).

Research with pupils needs to be handled with ethical care, but importantly too is the pupils' participation and sense of importance. This may involve classroom activities, focus groups or interviews. However, to ensure that the pupils feel that they are not just a 'tool' in the process of research, the researcher is required to ask questions that put young people at the centre of the research. It is important that researchers develop dialogical practices in which pupils wish to take part, and instead of dedicating themselves to developing 'child friendly' methods, engage a pupil's own culture and communication (Christensen, 2010). For example, during the research process, as well as questioning the pupils about the topic of research, it is important to take an interest in their hobbies, whilst communicating with them on a personal level.

Ethnography has a direct impact on research with young people, because it allows the researcher to gain an insider's role (O'Reilly, 2009). When working with young people, the insider's role can be beneficial as the researcher can get to know the participants and learn first-hand their likes and dislikes. It is important that the young people are not just the focus of the research but are actively participating in the research. For example, if the interviews were completed within the first week of field work the pupils' accounts would not have been as detailed due to the absence of trust and a positive working relationship with the pupils. This is supported by Cousin (2009) who claims that most ethnographers place a great deal of emphasis on getting to know the informants in order to secure high levels of disclosure and reliable accounts.

However, conducting ethnographic research with young people can create a number of challenges. Christensen (2010) uses the example of the researcher as a magician in the marketplace, claiming that “they urgently feel the need to entice, entertain and intrigue their audience; they do this by bringing their box of tools and tricks, no audience, no performance, no fun, no children, no research” (p.146). This passage emphasises the importance of maintaining pupils’ interest and concentration during discussions and the interviews process. It makes the assumption that pupils are only interested if the study is fun. Whereas, it is generally the case that if those pupils feel that their voices are being heard, they will actively take part in the research. According to Christensen and James (2000) it is important to demonstrate through one’s research practice that pupils’ views are indeed at the centre of the investigation.

The previous section has outlined the methodological approach adopted during the study, including the epistemological and ontological approach, along with a qualitative stance and an insight into ethnography. The next section deals with the operation of data collection, interpretation and analysis.

3.4 Methods

This section is further divided into two broad areas; firstly, providing an account of the procedures taken to address the central research aim, incorporating issues of school selection, sampling and ethics; and secondly, details of the research methods or tools adopted during the two-phase study, namely ethnographic interviews, observations, classroom activities and reflections. Challenges such as access and

acceptance are reflected upon in chapter four. The justification for this is that these were significant obstacles in the present study and warrant an in-depth exploration.

3.4.1 School selection

The nature of the study meant it was essential that the pupils were familiar with the research setting. Therefore it was decided that primary and secondary schools would be the social setting in which the research took place. After a preliminary meeting with my supervisory team it was agreed that two schools would be selected, one secondary school and a feeder primary school. It was necessary that the two schools were linked (i.e. feeder schools) so the majority of pupils could be tracked into their chosen secondary school. The intended strategy was to ensure that the secondary school was selected first, followed by the selection of a feeder primary school. The reason for this was to ensure that the majority of pupils from the first stage of fieldwork (primary school) could be tracked during the transition process and interviewed during the second stage of fieldwork (secondary school).

Information from the leader of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme along with the experience of the supervisory team had an impact on the decision-making process. A member of my supervisory team and the PGCE leader identified strong links between a primary and secondary school in Wales, which would be suitable for the study. The nature of ethnography meant that it was also important to approach schools that were open to innovative research projects and would be willing to allow research to take place over a prolonged period of time.

Another consideration was the geography of the two schools, it was important to focus on schools in Wales to ensure that the schools were easily accessible and logistically manageable. Two schools were chosen for field work, City Comprehensive School and its 'feeder' Urban Primary School – both names are pseudonyms. Urban Primary School had pupils ranging from ages 3-11 and situated in a metropolitan centre in Wales. It catered for around 400 pupils (including a nursery) from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Most of the pupils who attend the school live in the main catchment area which is considered socially and economically deprived. The school grounds are large and consist of a play area which is used during break and lunch time. The school building is easily accessible from the front. A distinctive feature of the school is the sense of community on which the organisational culture of the school is based.

City Comprehensive School included pupils ranging from the ages of 11-19, and was situated approximately two miles from Urban Primary School. It catered for around 1500 pupils and serves some areas that are socially and economically deprived. Pupils of differing abilities are accepted by the school. The school grounds are large with specific areas of the school dedicated to particular departments. There are added sport facilities towards the rear of the school. The reception area is at the front of the building and easily accessible to visitors.

3.4.2 Sampling

In accordance with the aim of the present study a purposive method of sampling was adopted to gather the population required for the study. According to Silverman (2005) purposive sampling demands that we (the researcher) think critically about

the parameters of the population we are studying and choose our sample case carefully. As this study is concerned with the primary-secondary transition, year 6 pupils were selected that could be tracked into secondary school. As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) reveal, qualitative researchers employ purposive sampling methods; they seek out groups, settings and individuals where the processes being studied are most likely to occur. As there was only one year 6 class there were no further decisions to take following the selection of the school and sample.

During Phase One of the study, 21 year 6 pupils (pre-transition, 10-11 years) were recruited from Urban Primary School. Of those 21 year 6 pupils, 15 were tracked into year 7 (then post-transition, 11-12 years) during their first two months at City Comprehensive School. The sample size for the second stage of Phase One was inevitably smaller than the first, due to pupils opting to attend another secondary school. However, the majority of pupils from the first stage of the study went on to attend the City Comprehensive. This process ensured that a second stage of fieldwork produced a detailed account of pupils' experiences of secondary school in comparison with their expectations at primary school.

Similarly, during Phase Two, a different set of year 6 pupils were selected and tracked across the primary-secondary transition. In accordance with Phase One, the sample size differed between the two stages, with 22 pupils recruited from Urban Primary School, and a smaller sample tracked into City Comprehensive School. In total 14 pupils were tracked into City Comprehensive School and re-interviewed about their experiences of PE across the transition. With the selection of schools and

sample in place, the next step was gaining ethical consent from the schools along with parents and importantly too, assent from the pupils themselves.

3.4.3 Ethics

Ethical approval was sought and granted from the Cardiff School of Education's (CSE) Research Ethics Committee before the fieldwork process began. In any research project, especially one working with young people, ethical procedures have to be handled with care, both to protect the young people participating in the study and the researcher themselves. Ethnographic research can engender feelings of vulnerability and insecurity for all parties (Pole and Morrison, 2003). For the researcher in particular, a number of issues require consideration before entering a school setting. For example, researchers can be party to 'guilty knowledge' (as highlighted previously) and have 'dirty hands' about deviant groups or members of a school (Cohen *et al.*, 2007) which may place the researcher in a difficult position. Furthermore, awareness of risks to the pupils and the responsibilities that come with working in a school environment were required; this included child protection and the whistle blowing policy. According to Campbell and Groundwater-Smith (2007) ethics is not about simplistic solutions. It provides a framework for asking meaningful questions - and this, after all, is at the very heart of good scholarship.

Ethical guidance was taken from the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011) and this source was consulted throughout the fieldwork period. During both Phase One and Phase Two, information sheets along with consent forms were distributed to the Headteacher's describing the details and intentions of the project (see appendix 1). The information sheets were distributed to year 6 pupils and

their parent(s)/guardian(s) along with consent and assent forms (see appendix 3). According to Lindsay (2010) informed consent is at the heart of ethical research practice; it incorporates issues of clarity, purpose, trust, honesty and integrity. As the pupils in the study were below the age of eighteen, informed consent was required from parents/guardians. Assent was sought from the pupils, which included questions to ensure they were comfortable participating in the study.

During Phase One of the study, a draft of the parent consent form was sent to the Headteacher of Urban Primary to ensure they could be distributed to the parents. One of the issues that arose was that the consent forms needed to be linked in some way to the school itself. Therefore, the Headteacher suggested that the consent forms were distributed in the school's format to ensure that the parents knew that the school supported the study. The Headteacher also suggested that by highlighting my role as a Classroom Assistant within the school this would increase the likelihood of the parents consenting for their child to take part in the study.

Research that involves pupils in a school-based setting requires additional ethical considerations, including an enhanced Criminal Record Bureau check (CRB) (Now Disclosure and Barring Service check) and a clear explanation of the project in a way that the pupils will understand. However, Christensen (2010) stresses that young people of all age groups most of all like to be treated as partners in research. Therefore it was important when explaining the project to the pupils not to 'dumb it down', rather to highlight the importance of the pupils and the fact this project is about the pupils and for the pupils. This is can be noted from my research reflections, during Phase One, in June 2011:

Today I planned to hand out assent forms to the pupils. I was anxious because I did not know how the pupils would react to the study. If I received a negative reaction and the pupils failed to take an interest in the project then I wouldn't be able to conduct interviews etc and gather the data required for the study. The year 6 teacher introduced the importance of these consent forms and asked for them to be completed as soon as possible and then gave me a chance to explain the project and the pupils' involvement in the project. I was conscious to highlight the importance of the pupils in this study whilst ensuring that the study sounded enjoyable and fun for the pupils. In order to do this, I explained that each pupil would be interviewed in a 'special interviewing room' which seemed to excite the pupils and that we would be talking about moving to secondary school and I would also be visiting them in their secondary school (Personal Reflection, Urban Primary, Day 9).

The pupils responded to the notion that they were the focus of the study and that their voices were an important part of the research process. Furthermore, the idea of going into a 'special recording room' seemed to excite the pupils. This is exemplified by a comment from one of the pupils during the explanation:

"So, sir you are going to interview us, my name is at the top of the register can I be first?" (Alex, Urban Primary)

The following day, 15 pupils returned their consent forms signed and were eager to begin the interview process. Another important part of the ethical process was the teacher's involvement in explaining the study. According to O'Reilly (2009) any attempt to emphasise the value and relevance of the research, we should avoid intimidating the very people we hope to participate in it. This was achieved through a short description of the project, provided by the year 6 teacher in the first instance, which seemed to put the pupils at ease. The year 6 teacher highlighted the importance of the consent forms and ensuring that they were delivered to the pupils'

parents. The enthusiasm displayed by the year 6 teacher was a direct result of the effort and enthusiasm I had exhibited around the classroom, which once again emphasises the two way process that is school-based ethnographic research.

During Phase Two, similar ethical procedures were adopted; permission was sought once again from the Headteachers of the two schools, information sheets and consent forms were distributed to parents along with and assent forms for pupils. These were distributed after an initial meeting to discuss the shift in focus of the project to PE. One of the factors which assisted in this process was the conduct of the researcher in the previous phase of the study. During the meetings with the Headteacher of Urban Primary School, it was noted that this had a major impact on being able to conduct Phase Two of the study, which in turn highlights the importance of the researchers conduct throughout the process – a focus in chapter four.

3.5 Research methods in schools

In order to implement the appropriate methods for the study, guidance was taken from Patton (2002) who suggests that responsible methodological choices need to be made in accordance with the purpose of the inquiry, the question being researched and the resources available. For the purpose of this research and a central focus on pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition, the most appropriate methods for this project centred on interviews, observations, group activities and daily reflections. In child-centred research, such techniques disregard age as synonymous with pupils' abilities and aim to be inclusive, and to build rapport, trust and confidence with participants (Solberg, 1996). However, it is

important to note that it is not to assume that the more methods the better, on the contrary the employment of multiple methods is primarily to help the researcher to investigate their research aim from a number of angles (Hartas, 2010).

Table 2. A visual illustration of data collection

	Phase 1		Phase 2	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Week 1	Observations	Observations	Observations	Observations
Week 2	Observations	Interviews & Observations	Observations	Observations
Week 3	Classroom Activities & Observations	Classroom Activities, Observations & Interviews	Classroom Activities & Observations	Classroom Activities, Observations & Interviews
Week 4	Interviews & Observations	Interviews & Observations	Interviews & Observations	Interviews & Observations
Week 5	Interviews & Observations	Observations	Interviews & Observations	Interviews & Observations
Week 6	Observations	Observations	Observations	Observations

For the preliminary stages of both phases of the study, a period of observation provided an introductory account into the day-to-day experiences of the pupils. After a preliminary phase of observation, becoming familiar with the research setting, ethnographic interviews were conducted to gather an in-depth account of pupils' perceptions and expectations of the forthcoming transition to secondary school. During Phase One the pupils discussed what they were looking forward to, and any concerns they may have (see appendix 6). During Phase Two the interviews centred on similar issues but with a focus on PE (see appendix 7). Throughout the fieldwork period observations were made when the opportunity arose. Towards the end of

Phase One classroom activities were conducted, including a mind mapping activity whereby the pupils worked in groups to decide on the advantages and disadvantages of 'moving to secondary school' which, in turn, prompted detailed discussions between the pupils.

A similar structure was used for the second stage of fieldwork (at City Comprehensive School) with observations being used for the preliminary stages, followed by a second set of interviews and group activities. However, logistically it was more difficult to arrange a suitable time to conduct the interviews. Throughout the school day the pupils moved from class to class, limiting the opportunity to conduct interviews. Whilst I tracked the pupils during the school day, interviews and group activities were conducted during the registration period at the beginning of the day and observations were made on a daily basis and reflected on at the end of the school day. One additional consideration when it came to the interview process at both Urban Primary School and City Comprehensive School was to ensure that the door remained open throughout. The importance of this was emphasised by the Headteacher's in both schools to protect the pupils and the wellbeing of the researcher.

The next section of this chapter outlines the benefits and relative contribution of the selected research methods when working with young people in a school based setting, beginning with the justification and purpose of observations.

3.5.1 Observations

According to Delamont (2002) the central method of ethnography is observation, with the observer immersing himself/herself in the ‘new culture’. Ethnographies involve the presence of an observer for prolonged periods in a single or small number of settings. However, the purpose of observation is not just about studying the participants; it is predominantly about learning from them. Marshall and Rossman (2011) claim that observation captures a variety of activities that range from hanging around in the setting, getting to know people and learning the routines to using strict time sampling to record actions and interactions and using a checklist to tick off pre-established actions. However, O’Reilly (2009) claims that without observation, a participant-observer is no more than a participant. The participant observer is participating in order to observe, notice, record and try to make sense of actions and events. This disparity between participant-observer and observer forms part of the discussion in chapter four. Observations were conducted in the preliminary stages of fieldwork and continued throughout the remainder of time in school.

Observations were made during both Phase One and Phase Two, at Urban Primary and City Comprehensive, on daily basis during the school day. However, adopting the role of a Classroom Assistant meant that at times the role adopted obstructed the opportunity to observe, which is explored further in chapter four. Observations at Urban Primary School were conducted in a variety of situations including in the classroom, on school trips, during lunch, break time, and during assembly. Similarly, at City Comprehensive observations were made in the classroom, between classes, break and lunchtime. Notes were made during observations and expanded on later

that same day, to form my reflective field notes. These reflections are used to support the interview and classroom activity data in chapter five. A pencil and pocket notebook was used throughout the two phases of fieldwork to note down any key words or themes. For example, on a transition day to City Comprehensive observations were used to piece together the social interactions between the pupils. Moreover, at City Comprehensive observations were used to comment on pupils attitudes towards teachers and staff. During the present study, this method caused unease amongst a selection of staff as they were conscious that the notes were directed at their teaching or something that they had done in the classroom. Therefore it was necessary to explain the purpose of these notes and ensure that they were only made during quiet periods or after the lessons had finished.

Observations were used to piece together a picture of the social interactions and connections between the pupils (Christensen and James, 2000). The observations were based on a number of themes (which were noted down in a personal notepad used during the study). These included pupils' conduct and attitude during the two stages of the transitional process, behaviour towards members of staff, social interaction with their peers and persona around the school. Observing pupils' attitudes as the oldest members of the Urban Primary School and the youngest members of City Comprehensive provided an insight into the social effects of the primary-secondary transition. Whereas, observing pupils' actions in both a year 6 and year 7 classrooms highlighted the academic effects of the primary-secondary transition on the pupils' behaviour. Observations were much more frequent in the early stages of fieldwork, but towards the latter stages my role included a number of

additional responsibilities which impacted upon the ability to observe. Needless to say when the opportunity arose, I took it.

Within the present study, observations were used throughout the duration of fieldwork (see table 2, p. 123) contributed significantly in highlighting pupils' social development across transition. For example, during a transition day at City Comprehensive, observations provided an insight into the social dynamics between the pupils. Moreover, being able to observe pupils' attitudes towards teachers prior to, and post-transition supported and enhanced the interview data.

Once an initial period of observation was conducted, interviews were introduced to gain an insight into pupils' thoughts and feelings surrounding the primary-secondary transition.

3.5.2 Ethnographic interview

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011) ethnographic interviewing is an elaborate system of a series of interviews structured to elicit participants' cultural knowledge. During the present study the aim was to create in-depth dialogue with the pupils in order to elicit some of the prominent issues related the primary-secondary transition in general (Phase One), and PE across the transition (Phase Two).

However, creating dialogue with pupils has been problematic in the past:

'I seemed to be an adult conducting myself like other adults at the school. I was therefore an outsider to their social relationships with each other. At the same time I wanted to engage with their lives in a way different from most adults' (Christensen 2010, p.151).

Yet, the issue of the ‘outsider’ was less prominent during the present study due to the importance placed on the initial stages of fieldwork. The temptation to collect data from the outset can and will affect the quality and depth of the data. Therefore, instead of being an ‘outsider’ when it came to the interview process I was very much an ‘insider’ with an in-depth knowledge of each pupil and how they would respond to certain questions within the interviews. A key distinction between ethnographic and other forms of interviewing is that ethnographic interviewing is conducted in the context of an established relationship with a research partner (O’Reilly, 2009). In addition Kvale (1996) uses the ‘traveller’ metaphor to describe the interview. On a journey from which he or she will return with stories to tell, having engaged in conversations with those encountered on the way. Yet, Kvale (1996) in accordance with O’Reilly (2009) identifies the importance of relationships in ethnographic interviews, claiming:

What one receives in new knowledge and experiences is influenced by just how one manages to connect to the people one meets along the way, and how long one stays to talk, learn and build a relationship with them (p.4).

During each phase of the study, two series of interviews were conducted. On average these interviews lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. One set of interviews with the pupils at Urban Primary School (pre-transition) and a second set of interviews at City Comprehensive (post-transition). The timing of these interviews were essential, at Urban Primary the interviews took place after two weeks were completed in the school. This was to ensure that rapport was established and the pupils felt comfortable in my presence. At City Comprehensive the interviews were conducted at a time which suited the school, this was after a ‘settling in’ period of two weeks.

The themes for the semi-structured interview guide were extracted from the reviewed literature surrounding the primary-secondary transition during Phase One (see appendix 6). These dealt with issues such as favourite subjects, personal views of primary and secondary school, social issues, academic issues including academic achievement and the differences between the two phases of education. The first set of interviews aimed to gain an insight into pupils' expectations of primary-secondary transition. This included questions related to their perception of secondary school, the subjects they are looking forward to studying, any concerns they may have, their preparations for secondary school and the workload.

The second set of interviews at City Comprehensive centred on pupils' experiences of the transition (see appendix 7). Incorporating questions that included whether secondary school is what they expected it to be, feelings about being in secondary school and advice for a year 6 about to make the move to secondary school. At the end of both sets of interviews the pupils were asked to describe their feelings (pre and post-transition) in three words, this provided an insight into pupils' general feelings in both primary and secondary school.

Similarly, the first series of interviews during Phase Two aimed to gain an insight into primary school PE including time allocation, favoured activities, facilities, gender and a typical primary school PE lesson along with pupils' perceptions of secondary school PE. Whereas, the second series of interviews (post-transition) considered the pupils' experiences of PE across the transition, including the differences and similarities to primary school, gender, teachers, activities and facilities.

According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) researchers have approached the interview in so many different ways that broad types of interview can be identified. The differences include: the nature of the questions asked; the degree of control over the interview exercised by the interviewer; the number of people involved and the overall position of the interview in the research design itself. As pupil-voice is a central and distinctive feature of the present study, it was appropriate to ask relevant questions but to ensure that the pupils could express themselves and their feelings during the primary-secondary transition. It was imperative to include open-ended questions to avoid one word answers, and at times, prompts were used to give the pupils an opportunity to expand on their answers. For example, during the first stage of interviews when pupils were asked if they had any slight concerns the majority answered 'no', so it was necessary to ask the same question but worded differently, not to deceive the pupils, but to make them feel at ease and able to answer the question.

The majority of pupils felt comfortable discussing their views on transition, which is evident in the detailed responses during the interview process. This once again highlights the advantageous nature of ethnographic approach in the present study. A familiarity with the pupils had already been established and the interviews were conducted in an informal manner as the pupils comfort was of particular importance.

The location of the interviews was a source of consideration. During Phase One interviews took place in one of the reading rooms close to the year 6 class and in the library at City Comprehensive. This was another source of comfort for the pupils as the location and format of the interviews were non-threatening and by using a

familiar, neutral environment ensured that the pupils had a degree of control over the process. On the other hand, during Phase Two, with an emphasis on PE, the interviews took place in a nearby classroom at Urban Primary and in a classroom within the PE department at City Comprehensive.

In addition to interviews, informal conversations highlighted the challenges faced by pupils, both pre and post-transition. The majority of informal conversations involved the views of staff which were included in the daily reflections, adding another dimension to the study. The difficulty of informal conversations is that they can occur at any time, therefore it was important that I noted details of any significant discussion in the pocket notepad, a tool I kept on me at all times. This ensured when it came to reflecting on these informal discussions the details I had were accurate. However, during Phase Two, the views of the teachers provided another interesting insight into the transition process. Although the pupils were the main source for data collection, the staff provided a detailed, alternative account of PE across the primary-secondary transition. At all times staff were made aware that these discussions would be used as informal interviews.

During Phase Two the views of the PE co-ordinator along with the year 6 teacher and PE teacher at City Comprehensive were elicited as informal discussions. The discussions with the PE co-ordinator centred on the structure of primary school PE and his/her views on the current status of PE across the transition. The discussion with the year 6 teacher surrounded the notion of the 'non-specialist' PE teacher, whereas the discussion with the head of PE at City Comprehensive provided another perspective. It was decided that these discussions would be recorded, transcribed and

analysed (with the permission of the school and staff) in accordance with the pupils' expectations and experiences.

Within the present study, the interview data contributed significantly to the four super-ordinate findings highlighted in chapter five. The interviews were used as a basis for the analysis. As part of the interview process, pupils were able to expand on their initial responses and explore the notion of being 'good enough', social implications of transition, growing up and the role of teachers.

3.5.3 Classroom activities

Alongside observations, interviews and informal conversations, classroom activities were conducted to gather additional data for the purpose of the study. In line with previous child-centred research (e.g. Leyshon, 2010) classroom activities have been used to promote a child-centred approach by giving the pupils ownership of the task and to develop rapport. Previously, Punch (2002) using drawing as an example claimed, "for pupils it can be creative, fun and can encourage pupils to be more actively involved in the research" (p.331). Such drawings are rich visual illustrations which directly show how children see their world (Punch, 2002).

During Phase One the format of these classroom activities was mind maps. The pupils were asked to use different colours to note and discuss the general strengths and weaknesses of primary school and secondary school. This exercise allowed for pupils to work in groups, exploring the positive and negative aspects of the transition, put more simply discussing what they were looking forward to, and what they were not looking forward to along with how they found the move to secondary

school. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011) the strengths of these activities is social orientation, studying participants in an atmosphere more natural than artificial experimental circumstances and more relaxed than a one-to-one interview. In a study by Ashton (2008), similar methods were used: firstly, asking the pupils to discuss in pairs what they were most looking forward to; and secondly using a whole class brainstorm. Whereas, in the first phase of the present study, the pupils were split into groups of four or five and asked to discuss their feelings both pre and post-transition whilst producing a mind map highlighting their views.

The purpose of these activities during Phase One was twofold: firstly, they revealed pupils' feelings pre and post-transition; and secondly, more importantly, the pupils had the chance to discuss their thoughts and feelings towards the primary-secondary transition with their peers. One of the problems associated with the transition is that pupils' thoughts and feelings about the transition seem to be overlooked (Ashton, 2008). However, these activities placed pupils' thoughts and feelings at the centre of the process, ensuring their voices were very much heard. At Urban Primary School the class were split into four groups (chosen by the pupils), the materials they were provided with was a large piece of paper, two colours and the title 'Going to Secondary School', one colour (purple) to highlight the positive aspects of moving to secondary school and another colour (green) for negative aspects of secondary school (as highlighted in figure 4).



Figure 4. An example of a classroom activity during Phase One at Urban Primary School

Whereas, at City Comprehensive pupils were asked to note and discuss the positive aspects of secondary school post-transition and the negative aspects of ‘Being in Secondary School’ (as highlighted in figure 5). The colour blue highlighted the positive aspects of being in secondary school and another colour (black) for negative aspects of secondary school. Another consideration during this process was my role in these activities. Guidance was taken from Christensen (2010) who suggests that in a group activity like this the role of the researcher is to facilitate discussion, which is led by the participants, albeit around a focus identified by the researcher. The purpose behind the mind mapping activity was to create discussion between the pupils over the up-coming transition and in terms of City Comprehensive, their experience of the transition. The group activity was led very much by the pupils, they had the majority of control over the discussions but as highlighted by Christensen

(2010) the focus was their expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition.

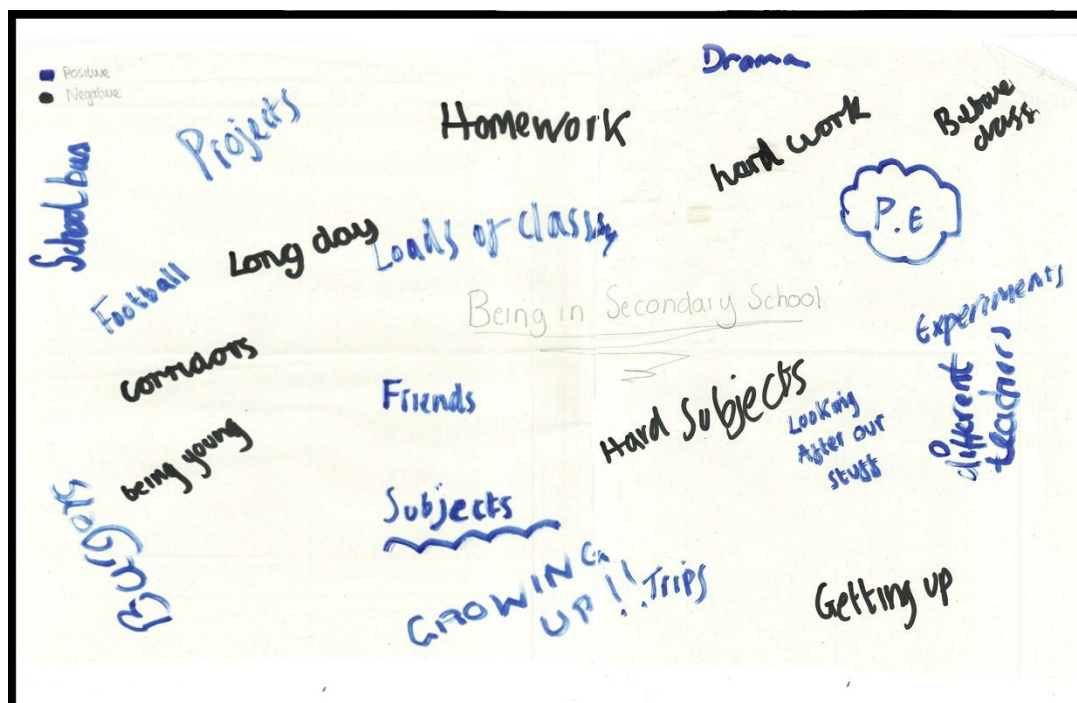


Figure 5. An example of a classroom activity during Phase One at City Comprehensive School

During Phase Two, classroom activities were also used to elicit the issues surrounding PE across the transition and to develop initial rapport. Phase Two incorporated two activities: firstly a task which invited pupils to highlight their 'personal interests', prompting dialogue between the pupils and the researcher (figure 6); and secondly a PE task, in which the pupils were asked to create a mind map, drawing anything that came to mind when they thought of PE (figure 7).

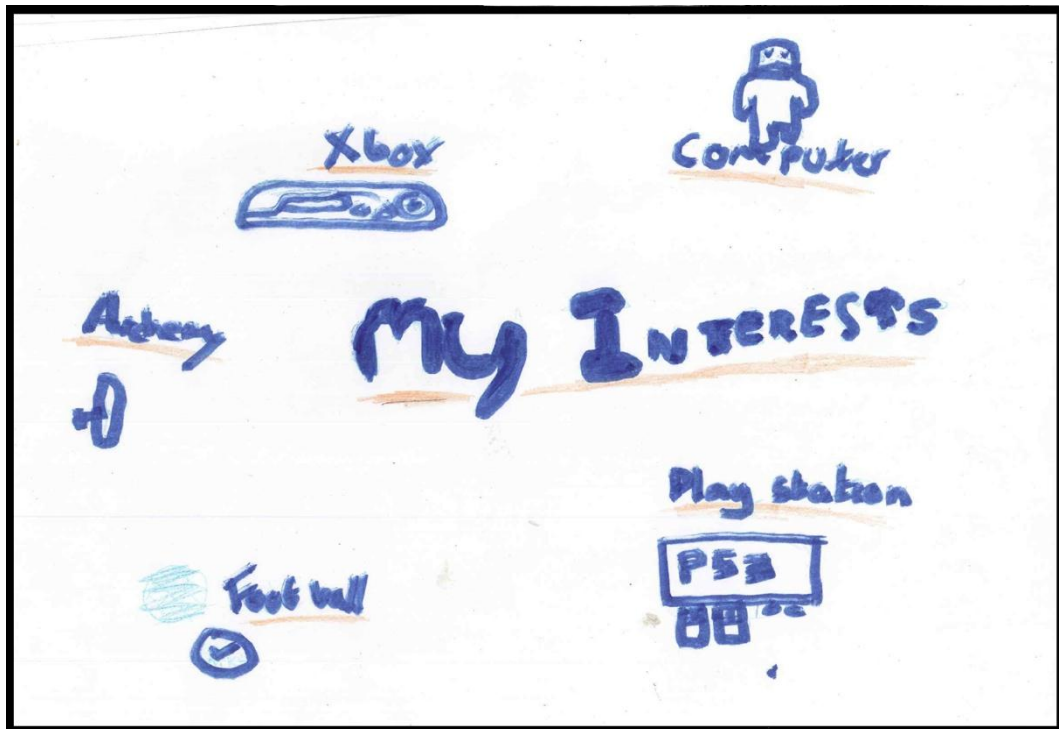


Figure 6. A visual example of the ‘my interests’ task with the pupils during Phase Two at Urban Primary School



Figure 7. An example of a PE task pupils were asked to complete during Phase Two at City Comprehensive

During both activities pupils were given access to crayons, pencils and given freedom over the layout and design of their drawings. The pupils drew a range of aspects related to PE, from designs of different activities to their attitudes towards PE. Moreover, during the ‘my interests’ examples included, ‘Xbox’, ‘football’ and ‘archery’ (as highlighted in figure 6).

Data collected from the classroom activities allowed pupils to provide a visual representation of their expectations and experiences of transition. The activities were used to support the interview data and contributed to building a picture of the prominent findings within the present study. In particular the classroom activities illustrated the disparity in pupils’ expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition both across the curriculum and with regards to PE.

3.5.4 Reflections

A reflexive and reflective log was kept during both Phase One and Phase Two, which detailed my day-to-day experience at Urban Primary and City Comprehensive. Borton’s (1970) reflective framework was used as a guide to inform the reflective aspects of the study and is focused on ‘reflection-on-action’ which can be replicated in a number of situations. For example, this process has been used in others areas of education, including a study by Barnett and O’Mahoney (2006), who used the process of reflection to facilitate school improvement. Borton’s (1970) framework incorporates the key skills that are required in reflection (i.e., critical thinking). Furthermore, it helped me to not only describe the journey of the pupils but my personal journey. For example, as part of my daily reflections which focused on experiences in the field and daily observations, three questions were considered:

what? So what? Now what?

Table 3. Borton's (1970) framework for guiding reflective activities

What?	So What?	Now what?
This is the description and self-awareness level and all questions start with the word what	This is the level of analysis and evaluation when we look deeper at what was behind the experience.	This is the level of synthesis. Here we build on the previous levels these questions to enable us to consider alternative courses of action and choose what we are going to do next.
Examples: What happened? What did I do? What did others do? What was I trying to achieve? What was good or bad about the experiences	Examples: So what is the importance of this? So what more do I need to know about this? So what have I learnt about this	Examples: Now what could I do? Now what do I need to do? Now what might I do? Now what might be the consequences of this action?

This exercise explored issues that had an impact on the primary-secondary transition including pupils' behaviour in primary and secondary school, their attitude towards teachers and their peers. The log also dealt with the challenges and dilemmas associated with conducting school-based research (i.e., the role of Classroom Assistant-researcher), which are included as part of a reflective chapter, 'negotiating the process of fieldwork'.

Reflection is a learning process examining current or past practices, behaviors, or thoughts in order to make conscious choices about future actions (Barnett and O'Mahoney, 2006). As well as 'reflection-on-action', Schön (1983) describes 'reflection-in-action' as a process that allows us to reshape what we are working on, *while* we are working on it. However, by undertaking the role of Classroom

Assistant and the responsibilities undertaken as part of the role, ‘reflection-in-action’ was difficult to implement. Similarly, other reflective models were considered within the present study. One of the most commonly cited is Gibbs’ reflective cycle (1988) which proposes that theory and practice enrich each other in a never-ending circle. However, reflection should move beyond questions about whether or not their practice is working to critically examine values and how practice can lead to change, commitment to quality and respect for difference (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). The series of questions associated with Gibbs’ framework were too rigid and structured for the nature of reflections kept in the present study. Hence Borton’s (1970) reflective framework guided the reflective process. Reflection was used as “the retrospective contemplation of practice undertaken in order to uncover the knowledge used in practical situations, by analysing and interpreting the information recalled” (Fitzgerald, 1994, p.67).

3.5.5 Data analysis

Once all the data had been collected, interviews were transcribed and an inductive, thematic analysis was performed on all the data (i.e., observations, interviews and classroom activities).

Thematic analysis is based around the creation of themes that are described in terms of categories. The category or code is a concept that describes some recurring feature of the data. Importantly this type of work should be thought of as procedural, and as concerning the ways the data can be managed (Hartas, 2010, p.11).

The primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data (Thomas, 2006). The codes in the present study were developed through a thorough examination of what pupils highlighted as key features of the transition to secondary

school (Phase One) and PE across the transition (Phase Two). For example, in the case of the classroom activities, inductive thematic analysis led to the emergence of key themes, such as the importance of academia and emphasis placed on growing up. Reflections which were used to expand on observations were also analysed inductively to allow key themes to emerge, this included social dynamics within the group. These data were collated to form the key findings (see chapter five). Hartas (2010) highlights a note of caution when using thematic analysis, claiming that one should create clear distinct code definitions, keep a code log book, do not create too many codes and make sure that there is a purpose to the code. Similarly, Angrosino (2007) proposes some considerations when analysing ethnographical data: data management; overview reading; and clarification of categories.

In terms of data management, Nvivo 9 software was used to store and manage the interview data. However, Angrosino (2007) highlights a note of caution, claiming computer programs may tempt the researcher to let them do *all* the work. Whilst Nvivo 9 is useful for organising data (transcribed interviews) the themes and codes were created by the researcher through a detailed overview of the findings. The following sequence of events details how the data was collected, managed and analysed:

- Interviews were transcribed after the two phases of fieldwork
- The Interviews were entered into Nvivo 9 where the data was stored and made easily accessible.
- Themes and codes were developed (through inductive analysis) from the interview transcripts detailing in Phase One pupils' expectations

and experiences of the primary-secondary transition (i.e., friendship, academia, and bullying)

- The themes were explored and discussed in detail and relationships were made between themes.
- Interviews were transcribed from Phase Two of the study, detailing pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition with respect to PE and were made easily accessible in Nvivo 9.
- Themes and relationships between themes developed inductively and discussed in relation to transition.

The pupil interviews were represented with a letter, for example 'Pupil A' while the data was stored and pseudonyms were used throughout the discussion of the findings. Reinforcing anonymity has been suggested to enhance the trustworthiness of the data (Patton, 2002). This ensured that the identity of the pupils remained anonymous for ethical reasons. The thematic analysis also included searching for recurring issues and relationships between the themes.

The second phase of analysis, which focused on pupils' experiences of PE across the primary-secondary transition, also discussed common features amongst the two sets of data, examining whether the pupils' experiences of the primary-secondary transition met their expectations or if this was not the case. This analysis signalled the impact of PE on the primary-secondary transition.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has detailed the research design, the methodological stance adopted and the operation of data collection, interpretation and analysis. The present study adopted an interpretive approach, to search for meaning and for this a qualitative approach was adopted but more specifically an ethnographic approach to research. In order to address the research aim, observations, interviews, classroom activities and informal discussions and reflections were used to understand pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition. Preparations for the fieldwork process were explored, including school selection, sampling and ethics. As such the following chapter continues the methodological journey by exploring the process of fieldwork and the challenges associated with ethnographical research.

3.7 Reflections

Depending on the context of the research, the methodology chapter is normally written in two stages. The first task stage was to establish my methodological approach and design the research. Within the present study this required a broad exploration of qualitative research and specifically ethnography. After completing the period of fieldwork, the second stage was to consider the operation of data collection, interpretation and analysis. In comparison with the design of the literature review, the methodology chapter was relatively simple in its structure. I relished the opportunity to study classic ethnographies such as Hightown Grammar (Lacey, 1970) and Schooling the Smash Street Kids (Corrigan, 1979) to develop my understanding. The more I read, the more I appreciated the relevance of ethnography to ethnographic research. I enjoyed debates surrounding ethnographic fieldwork with members of my supervisory team and was excited by the prospect of employing this approach to my research.

I was aware that justifying the use of ethnography would be a key feature of this chapter. Therefore, the approach I adopted was to reveal the issues surrounding ethnography through the studies which had shaped ethnographical research. I regarded this part of the thesis as representing my ethnographic apprenticeship, learning the ropes.

Similarly, through extensive research I began to formulate an argument for each of the research methods and their relevance to the central research aim. Having immersed myself in past ethnographies, I began to understand which methods would be suitable for this particular study. The implementation of a child-centred approach meant the use of child-friendly methods was essential. Previously, I had conducted interviews and observations in school-based settings with the focus on teachers (undergraduate dissertation), so it was necessary to adapt my approach. With pupils taking centre stage it was important I established a rigorous consideration of ethical procedures. Clean ethical practice is not just a matter of gaining consent or assent; it is in the preparation, execution, and dissemination of the research – it is on-going.

The methodology chapter posed an alternative challenge to the design of the literature review. I had mapped out how I wanted the chapter to be presented, but struggled with the execution. Similar to the review, the methodology chapter was formed and re-drafted several times across the period of study. However, the study of ethnography was an aspect of the thesis I enjoyed. These studies provided an insight into the challenges I might face during my time in school. Moreover, once I had completed the period of fieldwork it was rewarding to reflect on the challenges I had overcome, in comparison with others (see chapter four).

Chapter Four

Negotiating the Process of Fieldwork

In this chapter, the reader is taken on a two-phase reflective journey exploring the challenges associated with negotiating the process of fieldwork (June 2011-October 2012). As highlighted by Holliday (2002) qualitative research is like doing a maths problem in school, “one was never allowed just to give the right answer: this was not valid unless the steps taken to get to it were very clearly laid out” (p.8). This chapter provides a justification for the decisions taken during the fieldwork process and in line with Holliday’s (2002) metaphor highlights the steps taken to answer the central research aim. Challenges included negotiating and re-negotiating access, role selection, establishing trust, developing and re-building relationships and role conflict. These challenges are dealt with in chronological order beginning with gaining access to the field, culminating in the increased risk of role conflict. Reflections are used to illuminate the personal experiences of the researcher along the journey of fieldwork. The chapter ultimately reveals the centrality and importance of the researcher in the research process.

One of the earliest considerations when conducting ethnographic research is entering the field, which can provide an immediate challenge. For example, Schensul *et al.* (1999) claims, “in the process of entering the field for the first time, ethnographers must learn the language of the setting, the rules guiding social relationships and the cultural patterns and expectations” (p.70). In accordance with this, the process of entering the field provided a number of challenges.

4.1 Gaining access

It is always emphasised that access is fraught with difficulties and that, within ethnography; it is a continuous process (Walford, 2001). In the present study, gaining

access to Urban Primary School was rather straightforward. This was attributed to a number of factors. The first being the very nature of primary schools, the small layout of 'the primary school' meant that an ethnographic researcher would fit into the school with relative ease. As the present study was concerned with year 6 pupils, access to only one classroom was required, which logistically for the Headteacher was straightforward to arrange. A meeting with the Headteacher of Urban Primary School along with the year 6 teacher was organised. From the outset the Headteacher took an interest in the relevance of the study. This is noted in my research reflections in June 2011:

Today I met with the Headteacher and year 6 teacher of the school. The purpose of the meeting was to explain the aim and objectives of the study but also to emphasise my willingness to assist the year 6 teacher as much as possible around the classroom. After explaining the purpose of the study, I was anxious to hear their thoughts. To my relief they both seemed to value the study and its relevance to both primary and secondary schools. As expected they wanted to ensure that I could be of assistance too. I found this difficult to respond to at first, but I emphasised my previous experience of assisting in a wide range of classrooms and my enjoyment of it. Overall the meeting was successful and I was asked to start the following day to which I responded, 'of course' (Personal Reflection, June 2011, Urban Primary).

A decisive factor in gaining access to Urban Primary was the potential impact of the study on improving transition arrangements within the school. Whilst gaining access to Urban Primary School was achieved with relative ease, access to City Comprehensive School brought with it a new set of challenges; leaving the initial strategy to establish access to the secondary school first, as unsuccessful. According to Dentith *et al.* (2009) schools and other institutions have previously served as excellent research sites, but access is increasingly limited, the potential for participatory work is becoming compromised. Therefore, it was important to gain

access through a relevant gatekeeper, which in itself is not always straightforward (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). After further discussions with the PGCE programme leader alongside my supervisory team I was put in contact with a member of the PE staff at City Comprehensive School. The details of the study were passed onto the Deputy Headteacher. After regular early contact, the process became frustrating and at times contact was sporadic.

The problem lay in the form of contact, emails were the only way to contact the Deputy Headteacher, which added to my frustration as I was not able to effectively communicate my enthusiasm for the topic and commitment to the study. It is widely accepted that the best way to sell (gain access) is on a face-to-face level (Walford, 2001). After several emails, I was offered access to City Comprehensive School for one day a week. It was necessary to then arrange a meeting with the Deputy Headteacher to explain the study in detail and request a more regular arrangement.

This is noted in my research reflections:

Today I went into School to meet the Deputy Headteacher. I was anxious prior to the meeting as the emails I had been exchanging had been frustratingly slow. In the previous email she had emphasised how the school would not be able to accommodate me on a daily basis for a period of six-week. I was anxious this would not be sufficient in order to gather data and immerse myself in the setting. I still wanted to get at least two days a week in the school maybe with the PE department. Although I won't get to see all aspects of the transition just being inside and around the school would be beneficial.

Secondary school timetables are busy and the timing of the study meant that I needed to get into the school as soon after the transition as possible. I arrived at the school for an eleven o'clock meeting and almost immediately recognised the importance of the meeting on the overall project. First I had to ensure that I was able to get into the school and secondly I wanted to secure as many days as I could. My main aim was to emphasise the child-centred nature of the research.

Once in the meeting I explained the study and the progress I had made. Almost immediately I got the feeling the Deputy Headteacher was taking the study seriously and once I explained that this wasn't a critical examination of their transition policy I could see the relief on her face. From that point I was confident I would be granted access to the school (Personal Reflection, September 2011, Meeting at City Comprehensive).

The importance of social interaction in gaining access to school-based settings is exemplified here. Although emails are an effective way to initiate contact with a gatekeeper, the value of meetings such as this one cannot be underestimated. The meeting provided an opportunity to express the worthiness of the study, something which is difficult to convey from an email or phone call. Prior to the meeting, guidance was taken from O'Reilly (2009) who claims that the best approach when gaining access is to appear both naïve and knowledgeable, knowing too much can foreclose in-depth conversations; knowing too little can appear rude and disinterested. The approach adopted was to exhibit a detailed and extensive knowledge base (regarding transition) but to maintain an open approach to the ideas of the Deputy Headteacher. Once access was granted, the next step was to agree on duration and logistics (my movements during the school day).

It was suggested that the best tactic would be for me to track a form group throughout the school day to get a feel for every subject and year 7 life. I realised this was an effective strategy and 2/3 day a week visit would be fine. As my confidence grew, I explained some of the findings, including the emphasis on academia which seemed to intrigue the Deputy Headteacher. After a lengthy discussion about the project, I was asked what the school could gain from my presence. Prior to entering the school I was aware of the importance of what I could offer in return. With this in mind I offered my services for extra curricular activities, assistance in the classroom and a short report of my findings. The Deputy Headteacher seemed to really value this and the meeting was generally a success. It was agreed that the Deputy Headteacher would look at timetables and get back to me with a possible start date (Personal Reflection, September 2011, Meeting at City Comprehensive).

Initially, I was granted access to City Comprehensive School for three days a week, over a six-week period, tracking two different form classes during their school day. However, once I had entered the school I was offered six full weeks of field work. This allowed me to explore pupil's day-to-day experience of City Comprehensive School whilst assisting as much as possible in each classroom I visited. For the Deputy Headteacher this arrangement was difficult to execute as I would be visiting a variety of classes and therefore it was essential that teachers were made aware of my presence. By displaying a professional attitude throughout and assisting wherever possible it was clear that the teachers valued my presence and I was a welcome addition to their classroom.

The two-phase design of the research meant I re-entered the two schools a year later (June 2012). It was anticipated that the 'delicacy' of re-negotiating access would be relatively straightforward. The reason for this was the successfulness of the initial period of field work in the schools along with the establishment of relations with gatekeepers at the two institutions. The final stages of Phase One provided an opportunity to introduce the next phase and begin the process of re-gaining access.

4.4.1 Re-negotiating access

In terms of Urban Primary School, re-gaining access was granted almost immediately. Access was less straightforward when it came to City Comprehensive; a situation that was beyond the control of the researcher. Gaining access to City Comprehensive was put under threat by another research project failing to adhere to the necessary procedures, which seemed to 'muddy the water' for a second phase of field work to be conducted. As a result, towards the end of the previous academic

year (June 2012), I was asked to attend a meeting with the Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher of City Comprehensive. The meeting was to re-negotiate access, with the school questioning the ethical accuracy of the study as a result of their previous experiences. Details of the meeting are highlighted below:

Today I entered City Comprehensive School with the future of the study in the balance. I was asked to attend the meeting to ensure that the ethical procedures I had in place were correct. This was not a reflection on my ethical practice but a result of previous research conducted at the school. Although I was confident I had handled ethical procedures with care, I was anxious to learn the outcome of the meeting. Throughout the meeting the Headteacher questioned my ethical practice and although this was frustrating, I realised the intrusive nature of school-based research and harmful consequences on the reputation of schools. The strong relationship I had built with the Deputy Headteacher and clean ethical practice meant I was granted access to the school for the second phase of the project (Personal Reflections, July 2012, City Comprehensive).

Gaining access to a research setting can be a complicated process, hindered by a number of factors. According to O'Reilly (2009) sometimes a setting or topic can be very sensitive and access has to be negotiated carefully, it is always important to demonstrate empathy and understanding with the group. This approach was applicable here, schools are sensitive research settings due to the vulnerability of its pupils. Therefore, the most valuable skill adopted during this meeting was to listen and explain, in detail the ethical accuracy of the research project. As well as discussing anonymity, it was necessary to highlight how the school would be referenced, this was achieved through a recent draft of a research paper (see appendix 10).

Once access had been granted, it was necessary to select a role which would suit the research focus. The selected roles differed in accordance with the two-phase research design (i.e., the curriculum and PE).

4.2 Role selection

According to Corrigan (1979) research in most areas of society is best carried out where the researcher can fit into the institutions as unobtrusively as possible. Whilst it was essential to select a role that would give me sufficient access to the pupils, I did not want to disrupt the classroom environment. When engaged in ethnographic research that includes participant observation, the role adopted by the researcher takes on critical importance (Fleming, 1995). This is because the adopted role allows access to the population being studied, is a decisive factor in developing relationships and provides an opportunity to observe and report. In a study concerning sport and South Asian male youth, Fleming (1995) adopts the role of a PE teacher/sports coach to be able to interact with the participants. However, without Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) limited roles were available within the present study.

The criterion for role adoption was threefold: firstly, constant access to the pupils was required; secondly, a role had to be adopted that allowed interviews and classroom activities to be conducted; and thirdly, the role had to be beneficial to the school. After lengthy discussions with the Headteacher of Urban Primary, it was decided that a Classroom Assistant-researcher role would best suit the needs of the school and the research project. From the school's perspective the main benefits included unpaid help during a busy period for the year 6 teacher, an opportunity to gain an insight into pupils' feelings during the transition and finally assistance with

extra curricular activities and school trips. O'Reilly (2009) identifies a note of caution, claiming once the role of teacher is established; informal access to student groups may prove problematic. This was one of the major concerns before entering the research setting. Although I did not enter the research setting as a teacher, adopting the role of a Classroom-Assistant and an authority figure may have created a problematic relationship with the pupils. Fleming (1995) summarises the challenges of role adoption in a school-based setting:

The role I adopted was that of a member of the PE department in the school, but this created two unavoidable sets of problematic social relations. First, the host-guest relation that the researcher has with the institution and its gatekeepers. Second, the implicit teacher-pupil relation that the researcher has with the subjects of the research (p.138).

The aim, in terms of my role within the school was to establish rapport with the pupils, but remain an authority figure to ensure a positive working relationship with the staff. This introduces another interesting dilemma, with the pupils being the focus of the research, was I sacrificing establishing rapport to maintain a responsible, professional attitude for the benefit of the staff? Previously academics have stressed the importance of recognising the multiple positions that the researcher holds (Toms and Kirk, 2006). This was a feature of the study, admittedly I struggled with. In accordance with this Fleming (1995) highlights a similar dilemma when conducting ethnography in a school-based setting:

It soon became apparent that my behaviour was gaining the trust of the people who were, at most, only peripheral to the main focus of the study. I was also distancing myself from the young people on whom the research was focused on (p.142).

This dilemma essentially became a balancing act; the main focus of the project was the pupils, so the relationships I had established with them were of significant importance. With the research taking place in a school, maintaining a positive working relationship with staff members was also important. Naturally there were a few occasions where the selected role threatened to jeopardise this balance. An example of this comes from a situation that I had to deal with in Urban Primary:

Before lunchtime there was an argument between two pupils. At the time the teacher was by the door and unaware of what happened. So I took it upon myself to deal with the matter, I felt that I dealt with the situation in a mature manner. The pupils immediately apologised to me and after a discussion shook hands with each other. I felt a duty to remain tight lipped on the situation because of the trust they had placed in me. On the other hand I didn't want to go behind the teacher's back so I decided to mention it to him at the time. In the end this was the correct decision because in terms of my duty to the school I dealt with the matter in accordance with the school's policy and also maintained a positive relationship with the pupils, but ensured that they knew I was an authority figure at the same time. This incident boosted my confidence in being able to cope with difficult situations in school. Although I am not supposed to be left alone with the pupils it would inevitably happen and I coped with this situation well. This incident also made me feel that I was an important member of staff in the school, that I belonged (Personal Reflection, June 2011, Urban Primary).

This episode highlights the fragile nature of school-based research. Dealing with the situation incorrectly might have had severe personal implications whilst placing the study at risk. The fact I had taken time to get to know the pupils and the relations within the classroom, meant I was equipped to deal with the situation.

The role adopted at Urban Primary and City Comprehensive was that of a Classroom Assistant-researcher. The advantage of adopting the role of Classroom Assistant was that I was given constant access to the pupils. However, re-entering the schools (in

Phase Two) meant it was inevitable that the role that I adopted would bring a new set of challenges and dilemmas, especially with a shift in focus to PE.

The first of these challenges occurred when the year 6 teacher asked me to lead some of the PE sessions. Having entered the research setting with a keen interest in PE, I expected my role to be slightly different to the previous phase of fieldwork. Previously, I was solely used as a Classroom Assistant, but with a perceived level of expertise in PE, I was used very much as the ‘go to guy’ when it came to matters surrounding PE. Much of the time at Urban Primary was spent assisting pupils with tasks and generally ‘helping out’ wherever possible. Within PE lessons my involvement was more prominent, taking small groups during football. Furthermore, towards the end of my time at Urban Primary I was asked by the year 5 teacher to referee small sided football matches during lesson time. This suggests that with a shift in focus, my role changed from a Classroom Assistant to a PE assistant within the school.

At City Comprehensive, role selection and application was also brought into sharp focus. As the focal point was PE, the role I adopted was shadowing members of the PE department, assisting as much as possible in the PE lessons. Throughout my time at City Comprehensive it was difficult to define my role within the school. Previously, I moved around the school assisting the teachers wherever possible, but in truth I felt like I was ‘stepping on toes’ during my time with the PE department, as highlighted in my personal reflections:

Adopting a role in a secondary school environment is a lot more difficult than a primary school. This is mainly down to the lack of opportunity to assist in the classroom. Within the PE department, at

times it feels like I am getting in the way and I am constantly being 'organised' throughout the day, with the teachers debating who I should shadow for the upcoming lesson. In secondary school everyone has a well-defined role, busy fulfilling that role, at times I feel lost without direction (Personal Reflection, September 2012, City Comprehensive).

This passage highlights one of the challenges of ethnographic research in a secondary school. Ethnographers are simultaneously members and non-members of the study group and must struggle continuously with framing and re-framing their identity (Schensul *et al.*, 1999). The structure of a primary school is researcher-friendly, pupils remain in the same classroom throughout the day and it is logistically straightforward to conduct research. However, the hustle and bustle of secondary school meant it was difficult to conduct interviews and 'fit in'. Although I had some difficulties identifying my role within the PE department I was able to assist when the opportunity presented itself. During the final stages of fieldwork at City Comprehensive I had a well-defined role within the PE department. My role varied from day to day, but for the majority of the time I assisted in lessons and took small groups for games, whilst taking the opportunity to conduct 14 follow up interviews with the pupils.

Once access was granted and a role was selected, the process of establishing trust and becoming accepted began. Whilst trust is a normal part of human relations, the intrusive nature of ethnographic research meant the initial stages of Urban Primary and City Comprehensive had to be handled with care.

4.3 Establishing trust

According to O'Reilly (2009) we (the researcher) earn trust over time, by being there day-in, day-out empathising with people in their actions, and by demonstrating that we have a genuine interest in them and a commitment to their causes. Gaining the trust of the pupils was rather straightforward. This was achieved through listening to their problems, assisting them in the classroom and having a joke or two when it was appropriate.

Gaining the trust of staff proved a challenge. At both Urban Primary and City Comprehensive, the teachers exhibited caution in the preliminary stages of the fieldwork. Towards the final stages of field work, one teacher revealed, “...*at the start we all thought you were undercover, here to inspect us.*” In addition, teachers would always ask, “...*so why can't you just interview the pupils over a week or so, why do you have to be in school for six weeks?*” My response to these inquiries centred on both depth and commitment. By being in the school day-in, day-out over a period of six weeks I was able to understand pupils' experiences of the transition, something which cannot be learnt from a one off interview. Moreover, it was important to ensure the pupils were comfortable with my presence in the school by building a strong working relationship prior to data collection.

Field researchers are frequently suspected, initially at least, of being spies, inspectors, or belonging to some other group that may be perceived as undesirable (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In my experience gaining trust was exemplified through a number of milestones, firstly it was my introduction into the staffroom:

At the beginning of my time in school I felt very much like an outsider, which was exemplified by signing the visitors' book, whereas now I feel like part of the school community. I do have to remind myself sometimes that that I am only here for a six-week period and that I need to concentrate on gathering data in the form of interviews and classroom activities. A fitting example of this is my introduction into the staffroom. I was apprehensive about going into the staffroom at lunchtime as I wasn't sure if I belonged or whether I would fit in. As time elapses I have built up the courage and confidence to go in and socialise with the staff (Personal Reflection, June, 2011, Urban Primary School).

Gaining the trust of the Headteacher and year 6 teacher was of particular importance.

The Headteacher was the gatekeeper to the school and provided access to the year 6 class. However, gaining the trust of the year 6 teacher would lead to access being granted to the pupils, including interviews, and classroom activities. One way to gain the trust of the year 6 teacher was to enclose in detail the purpose of the study and my academic, personal biography. Yet, the most simple and effective method of gaining the trust of the year 6 teacher was to take an interest in the pupils. One salient consideration was the process of note taking, during the course of the day. From the outset I was aware the teachers at both Urban Primary and City Comprehensive might be reluctant to the idea of note taking. Therefore, it was necessary to convey the reason for note taking and the importance of this process within the study. Notes were taken during 'quiet' periods during the school. The majority of these notes were then expanded on later on in the day to form my personal reflections.

Gaining the trust of the staff at City Comprehensive was a challenging process.

Dissimilar to Urban Primary, I came into contact with a number of teachers on a daily basis, so found myself constantly explaining the nature of the study.

Throughout the second stage of fieldwork (City Comprehensive) it was important to emphasise the purpose of the study and centrality of the pupils. Not to do so would have made it difficult to gain the trust of the staff, this in turn would have had a negative impact on the quality of the data. Trust slowly started to be developed through a number of in-depth discussions regarding the primary-secondary transition. Although trust was a challenging element of my time at Urban Primary and City Comprehensive, the gradual development of trust enabled me to collect a wide variety of data, including documents from the schools.

Establishing trust was a consideration during the initial stages of fieldwork at both Urban Primary and City Comprehensive. Once trust had been established, developing relationships and rapport with pupils and staff was essential. Moreover, re-building relationships was a salient consideration with the implementation of a two-phase research design.

4.4 Developing relationships

Forming positive working relationships with participants is a key ingredient for effective ethnographic research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The advantage of implementing an ethnographic approach in any research project is that the researcher has time to develop relationships with the participants, which will be beneficial when it comes to collecting data. This is supported by O'Reilly (2009) who suggests that time allows us to build rapport with research participants and to gain their trust and confidence. This was particularly important during the present study, as the focus of inquiry (the primary-secondary transition) represented a sensitive issue for pupils (Ashton, 2008).

If the pupils felt uncomfortable at any time during the research process, inevitably their responses might have been limited. This notion is supported by Corrigan (1979) who suggests in his study *Schooling the Smash Street Kids* it was better to concentrate on getting to know the social relationships involved in the school before conducting any sort of interviews with pupils. This passage highlights the importance of the initial period of fieldwork. Creating a positive first impression not only conveyed a professional attitude but more importantly helped to establish a positive working relationship with the pupils. Similarly, Christensen (2010) identifies that the basis for developing research relationships is established in the very first encounters with pupils. This was the aim during the first few weeks of Urban Primary, getting to know the pupils, establishing and developing rapport.

The most effective way of developing relationships lay in topical discussion with the pupils. For the boys, this meant discussing topics including football and rugby and with the girls during break time, lunchtime and school trips discussions surrounded *X Factor* and *Big Brother*. The importance of these informal discussions cannot be underestimated. Although these conversations had little to do with transition to secondary school, the benefit was threefold: firstly, they provided an effective method of building rapport with the pupils; secondly, these discussions allowed the pupils to become familiar with me (the researcher) and feel comfortable conversing in an informal manner; and thirdly they helped to minimise social distance. An example of this is highlighted during my very first encounter with the pupils:

Today was my first day in the school and swimming was the first activity. This was a perfect opportunity to get to know the pupils. At first I spoke with the boys, we talked about favourite football teams and the game last night. The girls were more reluctant to participate in these kinds of discussions. So on the way back I made an effort to get

to know the girls by talking about subjects such as *Britain's Got Talent* which led to a heated debate regarding our favourite musicians (Personal Reflection, June 2011, Urban Primary).

This reflection highlights the importance of being able to communicate with the pupils on their level, about their interests. The purpose of these conversations was to learn from the pupils, gain an insight into their hobbies and develop rapport. The passage also emphasises a gender difference in the way I was welcomed. The boys took to me straight away, yet developing initial rapport with the girls provided a challenge. On reflection there were two reasons for this: firstly, the fact I had approached the boys first may have created a negative first impression with the girls; and secondly, the fact I was a male may have meant the girls were reluctant to divulge their thoughts and feelings.

Similarly, a relationship which directly affected the successfulness of the research was between the teacher and the researcher. According to Burgess (1985) the relationship between teachers and researchers are complex, teachers are primarily concerned with practical aspects and believe that research should inform and refine practice. Although slightly dated, Burgess (1985) raises an interesting dilemma when conducting research in a school-based setting. The significance of the teacher-researcher relationship meant it was necessary to emphasise the child-centred nature of the research and its potential impact on policy and practice.

Forming positive working relationships with members of staff at both Urban Primary and City Comprehensive meant creating a positive impression from the outset. This included how I spoke, my enthusiasm, and most importantly the way I presented

myself. Similarly, Hammersely and Atkinson (2007) suggest that there can be no clear prescription for dress other than to command a high degree of awareness about self-presentation. This might be accurate for ethnographies in general, but school-based ethnographies require certain attire to ensure professionalism is maintained. As a Classroom Assistant, displaying a shirt and tie was the necessary dress code to maintain a positive relationship with members of staff. In accordance with this notion, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that even where the research is overt, the researcher's appearance can be an important factor in shaping relationships with people in the field. Moreover, effective working relationships with people (i.e., staff) during the study had a direct impact on subsequent aspects of the research process (i.e., research ethics), as noted in my research reflections in August 2011:

Forming a positive relationship with the year 6 teacher had a direct impact on building rapport with the pupils and the overall quality of ethnography. At first, the year 6 teacher displayed caution towards my presence in the classroom. As the days passed a positive working relationship was struck. In the classroom it was my responsibility to assist wherever possible and when it came to distributing consent forms the year 6 teacher ensured that the importance of returning the forms was communicated effectively to the pupils. Common interests, such as sport and television programmes added to the rapport that I had established with the year 6 teacher (Personal Reflection, June 2011, Urban Primary).

Ethnography provides an opportunity to create positive working relationships with participants, and also actors that may not be the focus of the research but impact upon the study (i.e., the teachers). It is crucial that ethnographers build mutually trusting relationships, both for ethical reasons as well to ensure the quality of the ethnography (O'Reilly, 2009). At Urban Primary, a relationship that had a direct impact on the study was with the year 6 teacher. Fortunately, we shared a number of common interests including football and rugby (as highlighted above), which made

the process of developing rapport relatively simple. Across the study the most effective strategy to develop rapport was to display commitment to the pupils. Urban Primary School brought with it a number of challenges when it came to forming relationships with members of staff, however conducting ethnographical research at City Comprehensive introduced a new set of challenges, as noted in my personal reflection:

The layout of the school meant that, unlike in primary school I was moving around the school constantly, meeting a number of teachers and had little opportunity to develop rapport. I struck an immediate relationship with two members of the PE department and decided this would be my base during lunch times and break times. This allowed me to build rapport with the staff and made me feel that and gain a sense of 'belonging'. Although it was difficult to develop rapport with some members of staff, I found that the more I helped in the classroom, the more interest they showed in my research. One relationship which was crucial to develop was with the pupils' form tutor. She allowed me to take the pupils to the library during registration to conduct interviews. Much like in primary school, I found that building rapport was eased through displaying a professional attitude around the school but more importantly ensuring that I was interacting and helping the pupils wherever possible (Personal Reflection, October 2011, City Comprehensive).

Much like the problems associated with fulfilling my role, there was little time to establish relationships with teachers at City Comprehensive. This was due to the limited time spent with an individual teacher during the school day. Whereas, at Urban Primary there were fewer members of staff and therefore relationships could be developed. The small, familial nature of Urban Primary School meant that developing relationships with pupils and staff was relatively simple. However, City Comprehensive was a much larger community with staff and pupils having individualised timetables which made it more difficult to develop relationships.

A salient consideration in the present study was conducting a second phase of field work in the same schools. As such, the challenge of re-building relationships was brought into sharp focus.

4.4.1 Re-building relationships

The importance of relationships in ethnographic research is well established. According to O'Reilly (2009) the kinds of relationships built in the field can affect the quality and range of access achieved and the data collected. Having already spent a term at both Urban Primary and City Comprehensive, it was a case of re-building relationships with pupils and members of staff, which brought an alternative set of challenges.

Prior to conducting the second stage of data collection, I was asked to visit Urban Primary School to discuss the aim of the second phase of the project. Having already spent time in the school it was a somewhat strange feeling to re-enter. The structure of the school had altered slightly, for example some of the teachers had moved classes and new members of staff had entered the school. Unpredictability is one of the characteristics that define school-based research, which is emphasised here.

During the first period of fieldwork (Phase One) I assisted with some of the year five PE lessons and therefore established a basis for rapport. Now those pupils were in year 6 and very much the focal point of the research. Surprisingly, some of the pupils remembered me from the previous year: *"I know you sir, you did those talks with the year 6's last year"* and *"you're that guy who talks to us about our feelings and you helped us with our football last year."* These remarks were frequent during the initial

stages of field work, which enabled a basic level of rapport to be developed. Moreover, I was asked to attend an outdoor activity excursion which proved crucial in developing a working relationship with the year 6 pupils. This was an ideal opportunity to get to know the pupils and for them to develop an understanding of the research and importantly too, the researcher. However, only half of the year 6 pupils attended the trip, therefore I delayed explaining the project in detail until I was back in the classroom. I did explain that I was interested in pupils' thoughts about PE in primary and secondary school.

The trip also provided an opportunity to gather introductory data whilst developing rapport in the form of 'personal interests' tasks:

After the first set of activities, the pupils had some free time. This was a perfect opportunity to engage with the pupils. Before entering the school I had planned activities to develop rapport. Knowing that I was going on the school trip and that inevitably I would have time with the pupils I decided to plan a 'my interests' activity (figure 7) to get to know the pupils. I discussed with the pupils why I was in the school and that this mind map exploring their interests and hobbies would be an important part of it. After providing paper and pencil crayons I left the year 6 pupils to complete the task. After a while, I returned and to my surprise the pupils were still on task. As well as creating mind maps, the task created discussion between the pupils. For example, the pupils discussed their favourite console games, a discussion I was able to contribute to (Personal Reflection, June 2011, Urban Primary).

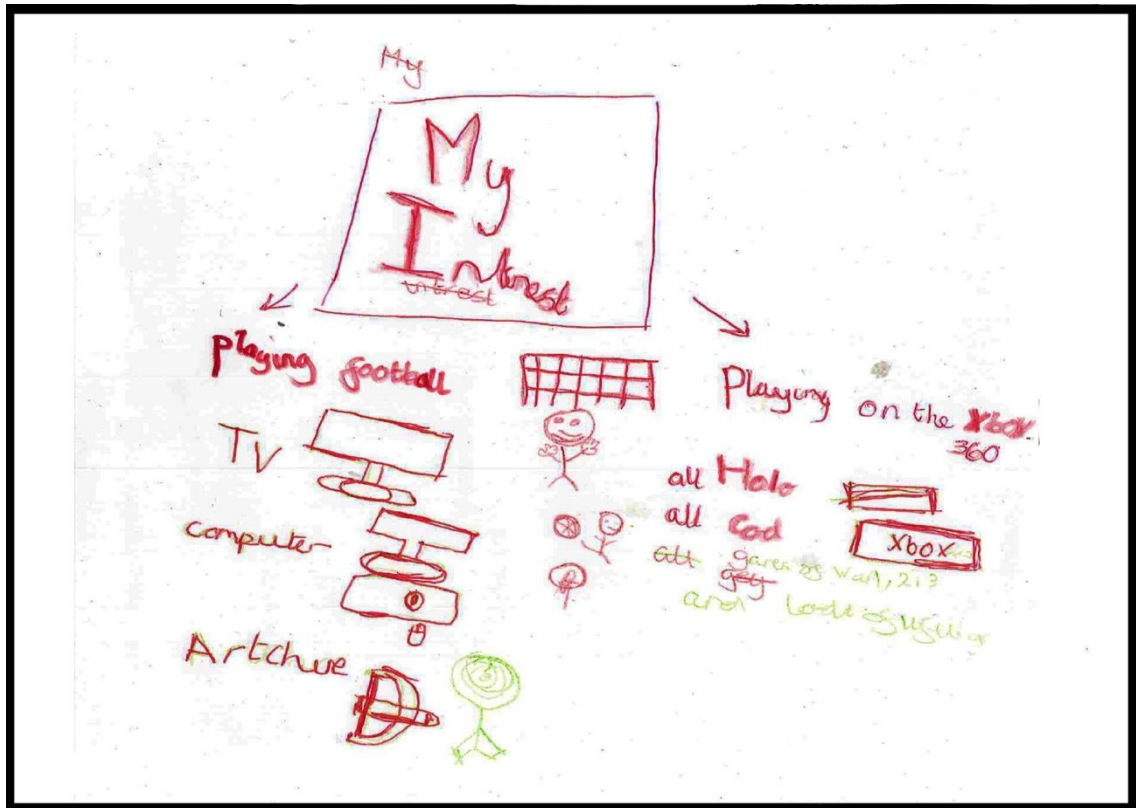


Figure 8. An example of ‘my interests’ task during the school trip

These activities were pivotal in establishing rapport with the pupils. The activity (figure 8) itself prompted discussion between the researcher and the participants. Conducting these activities emphasised the importance of opportunism in ethnographic research. It is the ethnographer’s conduct in the field, their skills and their craft that is crucial for the production of data (Hartas, 2010). The school trip was an opportunity to utilise that craft and capitalise on the pupils’ free time in order to collect some valuable introductory data. The four day trip was invaluable in creating relationships with the pupils, having a shared experience created a bond between the researcher and the pupils that would be beneficial for the remainder of the study.

In terms of staff, a change which had taken place was the year 6 teacher. Previously, I had built a strong working relationship with the year 6 teacher therefore I was anxious that this could not be replicated, as highlighted in my personal reflections:

Approaching the school produced the usual feeling of nervousness. I was aware I would be dealing with a different year 6 teacher and therefore the process of rapport had to start all over again. I had not had much contact with this particular teacher in the first phase of the project so I was anxious. Knowing how important this particular relationship was in the first phase of the study, placed additional pressure on first impressions. Although the Headteacher is the main gatekeeper within the school, the year 6 teacher will ultimately determine how much time I can dedicate to interviews, informal discussion and observations as highlighted in Phase One (Personal Reflection, June 2011, Urban Primary).

According to Gobo (2008) the first few weeks of research should be completely devoted to observation and note taking, while avoiding any commitments unrelated to ethnographic research. This piece of advice (for ethnographers) is questionable as the researcher has little opportunity to develop relationships in the field – a crucial element of the fieldwork process. On the contrary the first two weeks should enable the researcher to develop rapport and familiarisation with the research setting. The school trip ensured there were several opportunities to formulate discussion with the staff. The importance of making the most of ‘down time’ was crucial; it gave me an opportunity to converse with staff, all the time developing rapport. Gradually as the days passed I could sense a strong bond with the year 6 teacher and the other members of staff on the trip. The importance of remaining professional was something I was constantly aware of. In accordance with this Silverman (2000) suggests ‘there is no time out in field relations and that the most apparently informal occasions are sometimes when you will often be judged’ (p.199). Every minute of the school trip was part of ethnographic research from what I was saying to how I

acted. This is not to say that my aim was to deceive the members of staff, but simply to ensure that these four days created a firm basis for a successful period of fieldwork. Similarly, O'Reilly (2009) suggests that ethnography demands an open friendly demeanour, honesty, communicativeness and an open smile. Towards the end of the school trip I reflected on my relationship with the year 6 teacher:

Today was the last day of the school trip. It was a really positive experience both for research purposes and on a personal level. The final activity included games with the leaders on site and a goodbye from the supervisors. On the way home I had a detailed discussion with the year 6 teacher about the process. The contrast with the car journey on the way there was startling. The year 6 teacher felt more comfortable in my presence and admitted having reservations. The trip was a chance to get to know me and vice versa. Once we arrived back in school I was thanked by the Headteacher (Personal Reflection, June 2011, Urban Primary).

This passage highlights the invaluable nature of the school trip in re-building relations with members of staff. Learning that, at first the year 6 teacher had reservations about me and my presence in the school added to the importance of the trip. The long term impact of the school trip meant that back in the classroom the research ran a lot smoother than anticipated. The year 6 teacher assisted in emphasising the importance of the consent forms to the pupils and arranged suitable times for research to be conducted within the school day. Similarly, I committed myself to the role of Classroom Assistant and a strong two way working relationship with the year 6 teacher was formed, which led to a successful period of field work in Urban Primary School.

Re-building relationships at City Comprehensive also required careful consideration. Previously, I had spent some time in the PE department and used it as a base for lunch and break times. A year had passed and the study had now shifted focus to

examine PE. One of my major concerns was the notion of ‘expertise’; by solely focusing on PE I was concerned that the teachers may perceive me to be a critic, entering their department to judge them as teachers. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) key actors in the research setting may view the researcher as expert or critic, and, here again a balancing act may need to be achieved. The adopted approach was to highlight my keen interest in PE, but to once again emphasise that the study was pupil-centred and not a judgement of the department’s policies or methods. This seemed to ease the uncertainty surrounding my arrival in the PE department. Furthermore, ensuring that I assisted wherever possible created a positive working relationship the staff. An opportunity to re-build relations at City Comprehensive came in the form of extra curricular activities, in this instance an after school football match:

During lunch time one of the PE teachers asked me if I could assist with an afterschool football match, of course I agreed. This would give me the opportunity to highlight my dedication to the department. I had opportunities to discuss with the PE teacher topics not necessarily related to my research, for example football which naturally provided an in-depth debate. The experiences provided me as the researcher an opportunity to get to know the staff outside of the school environment, which was beneficial during the school day (Personal Reflection, October 2012, City Comprehensive).

This passage highlights the importance of ‘commitment’ and its impact upon the relationships within the field. Overall, the nature of City Comprehensive meant that developing relationships was a lot more difficult. In Urban Primary I was able to take advantage of the ‘down time’; however these opportunities were scarce in secondary school, which had a direct impact upon re-building relationships with members of staff.

Developing relationships with key actors in the study also had a negative impact upon the study. During the initial and especially the latter stages of fieldwork, role conflict was particularly prevalent.

4.5 Role conflict

During the preliminary stages of field work at Urban Primary, I found myself being used solely as a Classroom Assistant, having little time to actively collect data. This dilemma brought role conflict into sharp focus, as noted in my research reflections:

Although I am glad to be involved in the assembly, the conflict between collecting data and maintaining the role of classroom assistant is apparent. I have spent three weeks in school helping in the classroom I feel that I need to concentrate on conducting interviews. However, I still want to help as much as I can with the class (Personal Reflection, July 2011, Urban Primary).

This was a frustrating period as I felt like my role was taken advantage of by the year 6 teacher. My role in the first two weeks was to simply hand out books, move around the classroom helping the pupils and taking groups in PE lessons. The conflict here was did I mention this issue to the year 6 teacher? Did I emphasise that although I was here as a Classroom Assistant I also wanted to conduct interviews and group activities before it were too late? This introduces a moral dilemma as I wanted to avoid jeopardising the relationship I had established with the year 6 teacher or the Headteacher by voicing my concern. Here, I must admit to a naivety in ethnographical research, I was unaware of the benefit of these initial stages of field work. The commitment to my role as Classroom Assistant at Urban Primary ensured the year 6 teacher valued my presence and had a positive impact the remainder of my time in the school. Moreover, it allowed me to collect more in-depth and rich data.

At City Comprehensive, the issue of role conflict was less prevalent. My role as a Classroom Assistant-researcher was predominantly as a researcher rather than a Classroom Assistant. The structure of secondary school classrooms meant there was less time to interact with the pupils (although when the opportunity arose I took it). This is emphasised in a personal reflection which was made during my time at City Comprehensive:

Today was my second week in school, whilst in primary school it was easy to interact with the pupils due to the seating plan, and the informal activities; in secondary school there are fewer opportunities to interact with the pupils due to a more structured seating plan and style of teaching. In primary school at times I felt like a Classroom Assistant rather than a researcher, however here my identity feels in line with a researcher rather than a Classroom Assistant (Personal Reflection, September 2011, City Comprehensive).

This passage highlights the disparity between the selection of a role and the adoption of that particular role. At Urban Primary the concern was that I was sacrificing research opportunities to assist in the classroom, however at City Comprehensive I was used solely as a researcher assisting at different stages in the school day.

Towards the final stages of field work, I experienced an extreme case of role conflict:

After arriving in school this morning, I was met by the year 6 teacher. After a long discussion, it had been decided that I would be taking the year 6 pupils on a transition morning to their secondary school. This revelation took me by surprise, as I had only been with the class for six weeks, was this enough for me to take a large group of them to their secondary school? I felt angry that I had been put in this position, but at the same time it was a backhanded compliment, that the school would trust me with their pupils. In the past when I thought my role was being confused or disorientated I was hesitant to make my feelings known. I let the year 6 teacher know that I didn't feel comfortable with the situation. This got me thinking is it possible to become too immersed, to close to the teachers that as a researcher you can become too sympathetic? So much so, that you put yourself at risk. I declined in this instance because I felt it was well beyond my

responsibility. Are we as ethnographers so concerned with developing rapport that we will do most things to ‘help out’ to ensure that we can get on well with anyone that has an impact on the research? This dilemma exemplified the importance balance within ethnographic research, and that imbalance can potentially hinder the quality of the research but more importantly has the potential to put the researcher at risk (Personal Reflection, Transition day, Urban Primary).

This passage highlights the sensitive nature of ethnographic research. The fact that I had become so immersed in the culture of Urban Primary meant that I had lost the ability to step back and make a rational decision. In this instance, I must admit to a naivety in ethnographic research. I was concerned with ‘helping out’ that I failed to comprehend the seriousness of the situation, and became part of the community rather a researcher of that community.

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) ethnography is a demanding activity, requiring diverse skills, including the ability to make decisions in conditions of considerable uncertainty. These decisions are what shape the quality of ethnographies. In this instance a decision had to be made as to whether I was placing myself and the research project at risk by solely taking the pupils on a transition day. This dilemma was fuelled by the amount of ‘time’ I had spent in the primary school. At this point I had spent a total of twelve weeks in Urban Primary. This culminated in becoming very much part of the community with added responsibilities and as this example proves an increased risk of over-rapport.

This chapter has reflected upon the process of fieldwork within the present study. A reflective account provides the reader with an insight into the personal journey of the researcher across a two-year period of fieldwork. The essence of ethnography leads

to unique experiences within the field and this chapter has explored these experiences, namely the challenges and dilemmas that have accompanied this approach. Ethnography has influenced the range and depth of data that has been collected, which is evident in chapter five. Moreover, the employment of ethnography meant that I was able to share the pupils' experiences prior to and post-transition. While the focus of the study surrounds the pupils, this chapter ultimately reveals the centrality and importance of the researcher in the research process.

4.6 Reflections

The idea for this chapter came once I had completed the fieldwork period. During my time in school I kept daily reflections which detailed my day-to-day experiences. Prior to entering the schools, having read numerous school-based ethnographies (e.g., Fleming, 1995; Lacey, 1990), I appreciated the richness of a passage summarising the researcher's experience in the field. Moreover, my daily reflections covered some of the personal challenges I had encountered conducting ethnographic fieldwork in schools. I approached my supervisory team with the idea of constructing a chapter based on my experiences in the field. The idea was greeted with enthusiasm, but hinged on the execution.

I began by reliving my experiences, reading over detailed reflections to identify some of the key issues. The purpose of the chapter was to provide the reader with an insight into the fieldwork process. My study differed from previous school-based ethnographies as it incorporated two phases of fieldwork, each in the same schools. This meant I could offer a reflective insight into negotiating and re-negotiating access amongst similarly pertinent issues, including role conflict and trust.

Completing this chapter proved difficult. Having lived the experience in City Comprehensive and Urban Primary School I was anxious to provide the reader with an accurate account of the challenges and rewards of fieldwork. The difficulty was deciding on information which was interesting, important and relevant. For example, comments from teachers regarding school life, although interesting were neither important nor relevant to the thesis. Instead it was the information which described the challenges I encountered which were interesting, important and relevant.

On reflection, this chapter brought the process of fieldwork to life. It catered for issues surrounding trustworthiness including the credibility of data. Whilst the focus of the present study was the pupils and the primary-secondary transition, this chapter highlights the importance of the researcher within the overall outcome of the project.

Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

The main purpose of this chapter is to evaluate pupils' expectations and experiences across the primary-secondary transition, and specifically in relation to their experience of PE. The chapter centres on four super-ordinate themes which address the central research aim:

- The notion of being 'good enough';
- Social implications of transition;
- Growing up and moving on;
- Teachers and teaching.

Within each super-ordinate theme pupils' experiences across the curriculum and through PE are explored. For example, under the super-ordinate theme of 'being good enough', academic inadequacy and physical competence are explored. This chapter draws on observations in the field (reflections), interview data, classroom activities and informal discussions. This enables a more nuanced understanding of pupils' perceptions of the transition in general, and through one particular subject.

In order to assist the reader in further appreciating the context of the research and the characteristics of the participants, a series of personal vignettes are provided throughout the chapter. Moreover, participant descriptions are used to further contextualise the participants within the present study.

5.1 The notion of being 'good enough': academic inadequacy

Transition has been associated with underachievement in this country and internationally (DCSF, 2008). Historically, pupils' pre-transitional concerns were social or non-academic (Graham and Hill, 2003). However, concerns about academic inadequacy represented a recurring theme in the present study. For the purpose of this chapter, the term 'academia' refers to the issues pupils faced in relation to the

academic aspects of the transition. Moreover, results indicate that academia comprised of four areas, namely workload, homework, academic achievement and subjects. The pupils identified a discontinuity between primary and secondary school which contributed to the concern they were not ‘good enough’ for secondary school.

The classroom activities that the pupils were asked to undertake at Urban Primary illustrated this point. Pupils were asked to capture their thoughts on ‘going to secondary school’ on paper. Purple represented the positive aspects of secondary school, while the colour green revealed the negative elements of secondary school, portrayed by a group of six pupils in figure 9:



Figure 9. A group of pupils’ thoughts and feelings about ‘Going to Secondary School’

Most pupils' thoughts and feelings surrounded academia, citing 'harder work', 'maths', 'French', 'Welsh', 'subjects', 'teachers', 'English and 'experiments', and a number of these were regarded as negative aspects of 'going to secondary school'. This classroom activity was indicative of the majority of pupils' feelings prior to transition, which invariably concerned academic progression, highlighted by a further illustration consisting of six pupils in figure 10:

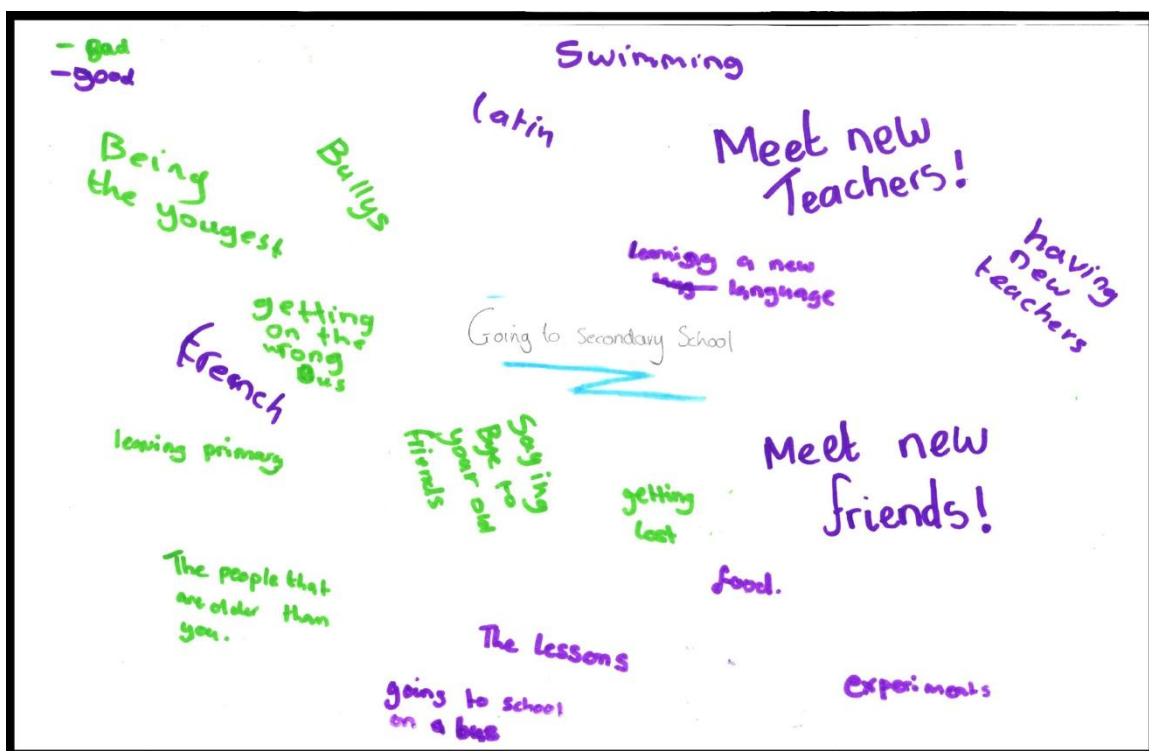


Figure 10. A second example pupils' thoughts and feelings about 'Going to Secondary School'

Once at City Comprehensive, similar to the classroom activity 'going to secondary school' the pupils were asked, in groups, to write down the positive and negative aspects of, this time 'being in secondary school'. This activity provided an opportunity to compare pupils' experiences against their expectations. The positive aspects are highlighted in the colour blue with black used to identify pupils'

concerns, the illustration in figure 11 was a collaborative piece of work between six pupils:

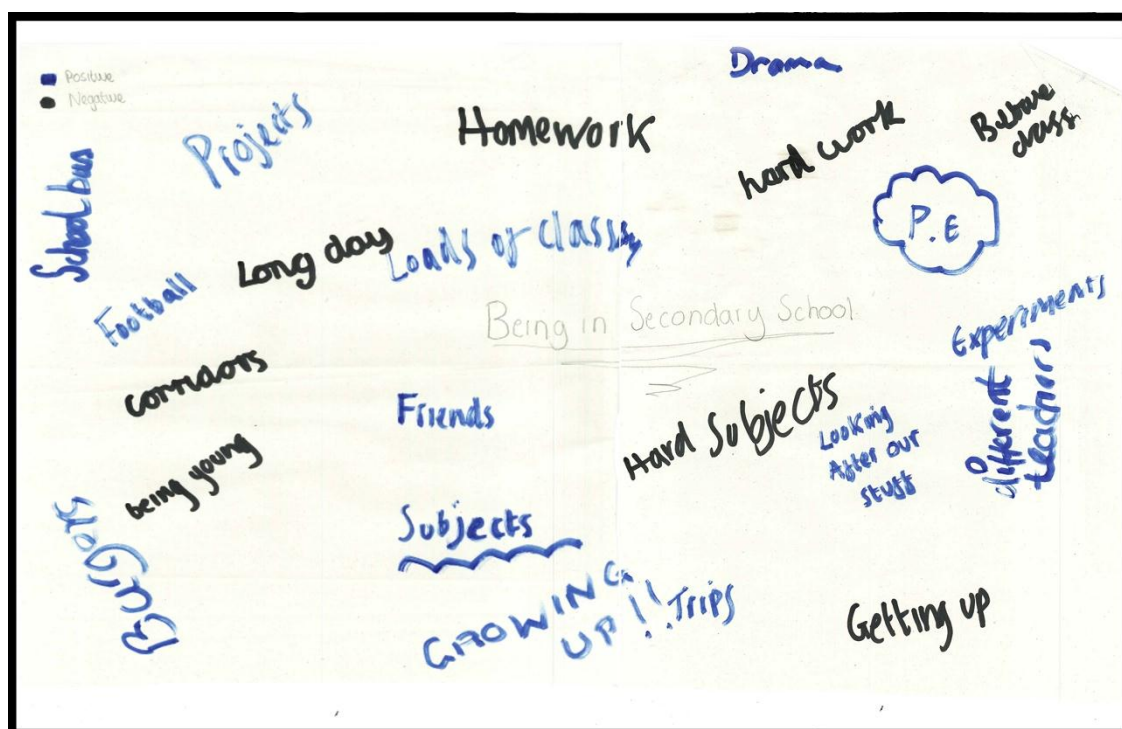


Figure 11. The positive and negative aspects of ‘Being in Secondary School’

The classroom activity (figure 11) highlights pupils’ concerns surrounding ‘hard work’ and ‘hard subjects’ at City Comprehensive. These results are indicative of pupils’ concerns post-transition which are symptomatic of their pre-transitional worries. This unease was attributed to a number of factors: firstly, the work in primary school is relatively easy; secondly, secondary schools may be ‘setting the bar’ too high for pupils post-transition; and finally, Urban Primary and City Comprehensive are failing to provide the continuity and progression, factors which are central to a successful transition (OFSTED, 2008; WAG, 2000; 2006).

Moreover, towards the end of the fieldwork period pupils (now in year 7 at secondary school) were asked whether they had advice for year 6 pupils moving to

secondary school, thus providing pupils with an opportunity to reflect upon the transition process:

Umm I would say get ready and do your work properly so it's not hard and you can do the work and stuff (Liam, City Comprehensive).

Do your work in primary because then when you get here it will be a lot easier and don't let your friends talk to you when you're doing work (Amy, City Comprehensive).

Enjoy primary school and do your work because secondary school will be easier (Luke, City Comprehensive).

The majority of the pupils' responses focused on academia, emphasising the importance of working hard during year 6 in order to alleviate the challenge of secondary school.

5.1.1 Workload

During the present study there was a significant difference between the workload at Urban Primary and City Comprehensive. The workload at City Comprehensive was far greater in both quantity and difficulty. This is inevitable of course, but it represented a source of discontinuity for pupils during transition. Lisa, a conscientious, hard-working pupil explained:

They might give us more work and they learn us different stuff in secondary school, because I think secondary school they try and make the work harder and they give you more homework to do and more umm they learn you more and things (Lisa, Urban Primary).

Prior to the transition, Lisa was already preparing herself for the work to be more difficult than at Urban Primary. However, she recognised the positive impact this would have on her academic progression. On the other hand, pupils were concerned about the extent to which the level of difficulty would increase. For example, Jane noted, "*...it's okay here but in secondary school it will be harder.*"

During the initial period at City Comprehensive, pupils' worries were still evident. In comparison to her feelings pre-transition, Jane explained, "*I am going to have to go up another level, it's nothing like primary school.*" Jane's anxieties remained post-transition with her expectations of the transition coinciding with her experiences. Moreover, Jenny noted, "*It's loads harder in secondary school, you have more work to do and the work is so much harder than primary school, also you don't have as much time to do it in.*" In support of this, West *et al.* (2010) found that how well respondents got on with other pupils following the transition did not seem to matter; how well they coped with school issues like the workload did. Similarly, in a recent study concerning pupils' views surrounding transition, Rice *et al.* (2011) reported pupils' main concerns post-transition were being able to do the work.

Whilst Jenny's concerns were representative of the majority, James who was very much devoted to his academic work claimed, "*...you get more work here and it's harder, but that's good because it tests you and some of the work in primary school was easy.*" Noting that the workload was greater in secondary school, James saw the increase in workload as a positive element of secondary school and relished the idea he was progressing.

One of the reasons why pupils considered workload important was because it would affect their academic achievement and performance across the transition. Pupils in the present study placed emphasis on their academic achievement both prior to and post-transition.

5.1.2 Academic achievement

At Urban Primary, ‘grades’ were a primary concern. The pupils wanted to address their grades and whether these were ‘good enough’ for secondary school. For example, Mark noted, *“I just want to learn and get good grades”*, similarly when asked whether she had any concerns about secondary school, Claire answered *“Oh and also I am worried about my grades and whether they will be good in secondary school, they are good here but secondary school will be much harder!”* The majority of informal discussions also centred on the theme of grades and pupils were constantly requesting information concerning the standard of secondary school and whether their grades were acceptable. When asked what they would like to do in their last few weeks at Urban Primary one pupil even answered *“...umm my levels, I would like to improve on my Welsh.”* This view was shared by the majority of the sample, highlighting that even in the last two weeks of primary school pupils wanted to improve on certain academic aspects, rather than take part in the annual leaving activities such as school trips, assemblies and games.

These responses indicate that pupils felt anxious about their preparation for secondary school. According to Ashton (2008) one way to improve the preliminary stages of secondary school is for schools to consider “what activities could be planned to support the students in making relationships, getting to grips with the daily routine and getting ready for learning of an academic nature” (p.181).

At City Comprehensive, grades remained a salient consideration for the pupils. Yet, in comparison pupils appeared more confident that their grades would improve as they were constantly being challenged in lessons. Mark, who had concerns about his

grades at Urban Primary revealed, “...it’s good because if you don’t do harder work, then you won’t get better and get good grades.” This was common to the majority of pupils at City Comprehensive. For example, George claimed, “...secondary school is going to be harder, but it’s going to be more fun and interesting”; and Jack (regarded as a high-achieving pupil) reported, “It’s going well, like here the work is harder, but it’s a challenge and it’s more interesting than primary school.” In contrast, prior to transition, Jack remarked, “...in primary school at the moment not a lot of things are challenging, it’s boring and I want to do some harder tasks so I’m ready for secondary school.” For Jack, the transition to secondary school represented a challenge, which might have a positive impact on his progress. This evidence suggests that more able and talented (MAT) pupils might be ready for this challenge posed by secondary schools.

The same could not be said for all pupils. For example, Jenny, an anxious character with substantial concerns about the transition, highlighted an issue which was apparent at City Comprehensive, closely linked to the notion of grades:

I would like to be organised, and I would like to have good grades for it because they don’t know me and then they will take me as my grades, they only know me from my grade, they don’t know me and who I am they just know my grades (Jenny, Urban Primary).

Jenny has an older sister who already attends secondary school. Throughout her time in year 6, her teachers have had expectations based her sister’s achievements. Like Paul, Jenny is from a large family with an older sister and two younger brothers. Academically, Jenny finds difficulty with subjects such as Mathematics and Science. However, her ability to draw lends itself well to creative tasks.

Jenny's concern was substantial as she alluded to 'grades' several times in a short passage and she feared a loss of identity as she worried that teachers would only know her for her academic achievement and not other aspects of her personality, her likes/dislikes. This raises an important point, information exchanged between primary and secondary schools needs to be more than pupils' attainment grades. Jenny highlighted here that there is more to her than her grades that she was moving to secondary school with an anonymous identity. According to Ashton (2008) in a study exploring pupils' feelings towards transition relationships were key:

In finding out the details of high school life, and forming realistic expectations of the new school, students need to build relationships with people who are already part of that system (p.180).

It seems plausible that information shared between schools needs to be *personal* regarding interests and hobbies. This will allow the form tutor in secondary school to develop rapport with their pupils. In turn it is likely that this process will improve the settling in period in secondary school.

According to OFSTED (2008) in a report on the primary-secondary transition, in the best examples in England primary schools passed on teacher assessments early in the preceding summer term to identify those pupils needing additional support when they transferred. This in turn gave secondary schools an opportunity to analyse the data, refine groupings and set targets. The advantage of this approach is that secondary schools are afforded time to organise grouping, however, little is mentioned about the personal attributes of the pupils, an issue that needs consideration across the primary-secondary transition.

In order to explore this issue further, Jenny elaborated on her previous response, *“No, like all they will know about me is my grades and like if they are bad then they will think I’m not clever and it will be harder for me.”* Similarly, Alex claimed, *“I’m a bit worried about my grades cus they are not that good and this will make it harder in secondary school, the teachers might think I’m not clever”* In Wales, Estyn (2004) reported that some primary schools were sharing a wider range of information about pupils’ achievement and attainment with secondary schools. As a result, these teachers who received evidence of what individual pupils know, understand and can do by the end of year 6, have a better idea of where to start teaching in year 7. This in turn will ensure that fewer pupils disengage during year 7 and academic progress will continue despite making the transition to secondary school. More recently Estyn (2010) suggest only a few primary schools transfer information about pupils’ achievements in numeracy for example.

In a study focusing on the information shared between primary and secondary school, Capel *et al.* (2004) found that secondary teachers look more closely at curriculum information than information about individual pupils. Information shared between schools is crucial in ensuring that pupils avoid repeating schemes of work and for teachers to set work at a level suitable for the academic ability of the pupil. Equally as important is the ‘wider range of information’, for example, not just the curriculum information. This in turn might lead to Jenny and Alex’s concerns about an anonymous identity easing.

Alongside workload and grades, homework was discussed amongst the pupils. Pupils highlighted an inconsistency between the amounts of homework they received at

City Comprehensive as opposed to Urban Primary.

5.1.3 Homework

According to Geen (2005) one of the differences between primary and secondary school is homework; with a small amount set in the primary school and a greater amount of homework at secondary school level. Going from having homework once a week in primary school to homework from different teachers every day in secondary school was something that the pupils found difficult to adjust to. During the period prior to transition, Emma, who had older siblings already at secondary school noted, “...yeah you will get homework everyday [in secondary school]; our teacher doesn’t give us homework that much so it will be weird to get loads.” Like Emma, the majority of pupils had spoken with older relatives or friends currently at secondary school, which gave them an indication of the amount of homework they would receive. Similarly, in a study concerning pupils’ expectations and experiences of the transition in Scotland, Graham and Hill (2000) found the aspect of school work and the curriculum that worried them most was having more homework.

Prior to transition, Mike’s expectation was that “*You have to do more and homework you have to do every day, that’s going to be a bit annoying and in primary school you only get homework on a Friday.*” Moreover, in line with the theme of ‘workload’, pupils were aware that the difficulty of the homework would increase; therefore the majority agreed with Paula who claimed, “*...I want to improve on stuff like my homework*”. During the interview process at Urban Primary pupils were asked to provide an example of a piece of homework they had received and how it might change at City Comprehensive. Rebecca suggested:

The last bit of homework we did was the healthy eating thing, we had to choose foods and write down how good or bad it was for you. It wasn't that hard like we didn't have to do much writing; like in secondary school it's going to be much harder (Rebecca, Urban Primary).

This highlights a recurring theme when discussing academia. Pupils felt that primary school was easy, the work, the homework, most of the subjects, but they would struggle in secondary school with the increase in difficulty. This finding once again highlights the importance of continuity and progression across the transition, whilst indicating that collaboration between primary schools and secondary schools will ensure that schemes of work are set at a suitable standard to effectively prepare pupils for the transition.

Inevitably at City Comprehensive the pupils expressed their concerns at the amount of homework they were receiving. According to Rice *et al.* (2011) pupils adapt relatively quickly the new setting and structure but that managing homework requirements remained a concern. Similarly, in the present study, homework was an element of secondary school pupils struggled with. Haley explained, “...*we get so much more homework than we did in primary school, we only got homework on Fridays.*” This response was typical of pupils' experiences post-transition and calls for an improvement in the communication between primary and secondary school in ensuring pupils avoid going from small amounts of homework to vast amounts over a small period of time. After learning about the difference in the amount of homework pupils receive in primary and secondary school, the pupils were invited to give an example of a piece of homework at City Comprehensive. Alex explained:

Umm well we had to do something for RE, we had to write stuff about our beliefs and what other people believe and I remember in primary

school we would just have a sheet to fill in. It's a lot harder here and takes more time and if you don't do it you get in trouble and in primary school if you didn't do it you would just have to do it next time or in break time (Alex, City Comprehensive).

This quotation exemplifies the difference, not only in the amount of homework pupils receive at primary and secondary school, but the difficulty of it.

Pupils only receive homework once a week in here, mostly the tasks set are to finish a piece of work or do some preparation for the following week. The tasks are undemanding, which is a cause for concern (Reflective field notes, June 2011, Urban Primary).

If pupils receive small, undemanding pieces of homework in primary school then inevitably they are going to find it difficult to cope with several pieces of homework a week in secondary school. Pupils experienced 'challenge' at City Comprehensive; however the same challenge did not seem to be apparent at Urban Primary. This lack of challenge resulted in pupils finding it difficult to come to terms with the increase in workload and homework at secondary school. In contrast, Boyd and Simpson (2000) reported that pupils were experiencing a lack of challenge and a feeling that teachers did not know what they could achieve during secondary school. During the present study whilst primary school teachers were aware of the capability of each pupil, work was being set that failed to effectively challenge them, which created a discontinuous experience for them.

Along with grades, workload and homework the pupils discussed the range of subjects they would be taking at secondary school (pre-transition), and whether they were enjoying those subjects whilst they were in secondary school (post-transition).

The following section evaluates the impact of ‘subjects’ across the transition and specifically focuses on a particular subject, PE.

5.1.4 Subjects

Generally the pupils were looking forward to a variety of subjects at secondary school. Paul, an academically capable, insightful pupil, who is a popular member of the year 6 class made a general comparison between the subjects at secondary and primary school, *“Well they are both subjects where you are doing stuff and in secondary school they will be more interesting, like here at the moment we don’t do interesting stuff.”* Paul is 10 years old and a high achiever in most areas of the curriculum. He performs particularly well in mathematics and science, and also has very good literacy and language skills. His strong analytical skills means that he is often in a position to take the lead in group work, but he finds it difficult to work with those who grasp theoretical ideas more slowly or have priorities which are different from his. Paul is from a large family, with two sisters and one brother who is also at the school in year 4. Whereas, Amy identified a difference in two particular subjects, Religious Education (RE) and PE:

umm a little different, because in high school they teach RE different and PE is like more mixed up, sometimes you do it outside, sometimes inside and I think there is two PE halls (Amy, Urban Primary).

In general the pupils had positive views regarding the range of subjects at Urban Primary. However, they were concerned about the setting of certain subjects at City Comprehensive. Amy also noted that *“...there are loads more subjects in secondary school, and like in some you have sets, and I don’t want to be in the low set.”* This links back to Jennifer’s concerns about her grades, she was also concerned about being placed in a low set.

During the first few weeks at City Comprehensive, the pupils discussed how they were enjoying the variety of subjects, David noted, “...ummm *I like most of the subjects like because they are different and here you do more interesting stuff.*” This was the general feeling amongst the pupils who were enjoying the unpredictability of the subjects. David elaborated on a subject he was enjoying and his reasons for this, explaining, “*Like in science we used bunsen burners and we get to burn like metals and stuff, it’s a lot more interesting.*” This response was typical of the pupils that preferred the subjects at City Comprehensive due to the increased challenge.

In order to examine the impact of ‘subjects’ on the primary-secondary transition in greater detail, the following section critiques and evaluates the role of PE inside the super ordinate theme of being ‘good enough’. Once more pupils identified a disparity between their experiences of PE at Urban Primary and City Comprehensive, recognising ‘confidence, competence and competition’ as central to their development between the two key stages.

5.2 The impact of PE: competence and confidence

Pupils were moving to secondary school with minimal knowledge and insufficient experience of PE. Whilst, pupils recognised the practical benefits of PE, discussions with staff alongside observations at Urban Primary School identified that the skill development (physical competence) is not fulfilled pre-transition which in turn was problematic post-transition. As illustrated in my personal reflection below:

Games are a central feature of PE lessons, pupils are denied the opportunity to learn specific skill sets, and instead they are left to their own devices to play a game of football. For the boys this was a game of football, for the girls a game of netball (Reflective field notes, June 2012, Urban Primary).

The implication of this approach is highlighted by the Primary PE Co-ordinator:

I think they are prepared with skills such as sharing, communicating and knowing the basic rules for a given sport. However, I don't feel pupils are given long enough to learn one activity before moving onto another. I also feel pupils are limited as to whom they can play such sports with, I think they should be given more opportunities to mix up with other classes when playing a sport. In terms of their technical ability this ultimately has a negative impact on participation and enjoyment further down the line in secondary school (Primary PE Co-ordinator, Urban Primary).

This response is alarming for two reasons: firstly, it appears that there is confusion between the true value of PE and its relationship with sport, whilst the two inevitably impact upon one another the distinction between the two requires clarity; secondly, this critique of primary school PE suggests that both 'learning to move' (physical competence) and 'moving to learn' (learning through movement), remain conspicuous by their absence, which as the PE co-ordinator alludes to has the potential to have a negative impact on participation rates at secondary school. The PE Co-ordinator called for increased attention on physical competence, allowing pupils to grasp particular movements and skills but also focuses on time allocation to each activity.

For those pupils in the present study, competence and confidence were invariably linked. Their competence in PE affected their confidence, to which the majority of pupils displayed concerns about. For example, Martin a capable pupil with a particular interest in football and rugby suggested, "*...you learn there swimming and gymnastics you go on trampolines, in PE there it's bigger and like you don't just play games. Like in football I heard you learn how to pass and dribble.*" Martin is 11 years old and one of the eldest members of the year 6 class. At every opportunity

Martin organises a game of football with his peers. However, at times Martin's enthusiasm for sport distracted from his academic development and engagement within the classroom. This has contributed to Martin being regarded as a low achieving pupil across subjects such as English and Mathematics and Science. Martin uses football as an example of the skill set he will experience in secondary school once again deeming primary school as inadequate in this sense.

In a recent OFSTED (2013) report in England it was found that participation rates were very high but only a few primary schools taught selected activities in sufficient depth. The Primary PE Co-ordinator supported and summarised this point effectively:

Yes, the application of some of the rules and games and things might be inconsistent and delivered differently. I think primary PE has a significant part to play in the development of pupils, however, I don't think pupils go up with an understanding of developing the technical side of PE (Primary PE Co-ordinator, Urban Primary).

In terms of 'learning to move' and 'moving to learn', the transition represented an opportunity to learn new skills, participate in a range of activities and put these skills into practice. However, data collected during interviews suggested that these two aims were not achieved at Urban Primary which had a negative impact on pupils' development at City Comprehensive. For example, Gregg noted "*Here we don't really learn many skills, like most of the time we play games and that, but I think that's going to be hard in secondary school cus there you do.*"

At City Comprehensive pupils' experiences matched their expectations in terms of being 'good enough'. For example, Jemma, a shy pupil who enjoyed playing hockey as well as netball noted:

Well like it is harder you don't just play games, you like learn stuff, skills and that. I find like hockey really hard because there are kids that are good and like we didn't do much in primary school, so it just depends like how much you learn in primary school really (Jemma, City Comprehensive).

Jemma is 10 years old. She is an only child from a small family and lives in the local area. Academically, Jemma performs well in English, but finds difficulty with Science and Mathematics. Jemma is part of a small friendship group within the year 6 class who tend to be disinterested in developing new friendships. Here, Jemma's response reiterates the importance of pupils' primary school experience of PE on future participation in PE and physical activity, which has been a trend in recent empirical research (see Leyshon, 2010). In accordance with this finding, Nick reflected on his primary school experience of PE and the impact this had on the initial stages of secondary school:

Yeah it's ok but like if you mess about you get into trouble so you have to behave really otherwise you get told off by the teachers. Its more challenging than primary school too like there it was easier and here it's like harder (Nick, City Comprehensive).

Both Nick and Jemma highlighted the increased difficulty of secondary school PE and their perceived competence. Nick alludes to the idea of challenge, which throughout the present study tied in with the idea of pupils not being 'good enough' for secondary school. Moreover, the concerns expressed by the year 7 pupils during the preliminary stages of City Comprehensive were echoed by the views of the Head of PE:

Pupils have inevitably got a varied experience of PE due to varying equipment, specialism etc. However, the technical side of PE is unfulfilled, basic skills aren't being developed in primary school which is causing a problem for pupils once they have made the transition to secondary school (Head of PE, City Comprehensive).

This draws comparisons with the view of the PE Co-ordinator at Urban Primary, who also identified an issue with both 'learning to move' and 'moving to learn' across the primary-secondary transition. Claire at City Comprehensive summarised the point effectively, *"Well it's so different in primary school it's really basic and here it's really hard, there's no like in-between so it's hard to get used to."*

Pupils require a high quality PE experience in both primary and secondary school to ensure sufficient progression between key stages. The Department for Education and Skills (2003) suggest that high quality PE should see young people: have the confidence to get involved in PE and Sport; and have the skills and control that they need to take in PE and Sport. For Luke this was not the case at Urban Primary:

I'm looking forward to football and stuff because you play it more in high school. I am just looking forward to learning more skills and getting better at the activities (Luke, Urban Primary).

Luke relished the opportunity to participate in activities at City Comprehensive, such as football in order to improve his skills. Similarly, Lucy recognised the importance of the primary-secondary transition in developing her skills and becoming more competent in hockey:

I want to do more hockey, um we've tried hockey a bit and I think I was quite good but it will be different in secondary school because there will be girls that are really good (Lucy, Urban Primary).

Ultimately, Lucy was concerned that she might not be ‘good enough’ to play hockey in secondary school. A selection of pupils shared Lucy’s concerns: Harry, a pupil with little interest in PE and physical activity noted, *“I am not really that good at like on sport so when I go to secondary school I’m a bit worried like I won’t be good enough”* This concern about not being ‘good enough’ was prominent throughout his response. According to OFSTED (2009) there are increasing opportunities for primary school pupils to participate in sports festivals and competitions in England that increased pupils’ confidence during their transition from primary to secondary school. However, the primary PE co-ordinator stated that organised events represent the exception rather than the norm:

We do get invited to secondary schools to take part in an indoor event and it is part of the transition day activities for year 5 and 6. There is a cluster sporting tournament but that tends to be the more elite sporting pupils competing against other schools. There isn’t really enough going on in terms of, like I don’t think the pupils are prepared really to go to secondary school with the confidence in certain sports. I think events like this would help, but needs to be inclusive for all (Primary PE Co-ordinator).

The importance of effective partnership PE programmes across the primary-secondary transition is highlighted here. Moreover, an OFSTED (2009) report highlights continuity of learning as less secure between schools, especially between KS2 and KS3. In Wales the PE should offer opportunities for *all learners* to achieve their full potential in preparation for further learning and life (WAG, 2012). However, evidence from the PE Co-ordinator suggests the transition tournaments remain elitist offering little opportunity for all learners to fulfil their potential.

The view of the primary PE co-ordinator also indicates that some pupils moving from primary to secondary school lack confidence in PE. In accordance with this Amy suggested, *“I’m not really looking forward to PE, I am quite unsure about what it will be like really. I think it will be hard and I am worried I will be laughed at.”* Amy’s response conveys low levels of confidence prior to transition, a common factor amongst pupils in the present study.

For the selection of pupils who exhibited a lack of confidence at Urban Primary, this continued to be a problem post-transition. Nick, who was openly concerned about secondary school PE noted, *“I don’t mind PE, it’s not my best subject and its loads harder than primary school like you do different activities to the ones that you do in primary school.”* Nick’s lack of confidence at Urban Primary continued into City Comprehensive. The increased difficulty and wide range of activities led to him becoming disengaged in PE.

Similarly, Lucy’s expectation that secondary school PE would be increasingly difficult with more able pupils became a reality. Lucy noted, *“...yeah I’m just not that good at some of the activities, like hockey some of the girls are so good and play for teams but I’m not too good, I try but it’s frustrating.”* At Urban Primary, Lucy felt that she would be able to cope with the increased difficulty and competence of her peers. Nevertheless, this response indicates that perceived incompetence, in Lucy’s case, can be difficult to manage across transition. According to OFSTED (2009) secondary staff are starting to use opportunities (i.e., competitions and festivals) to begin informal assessments of pupils’ attainment on entry, particularly of those with additional needs or who were talented. This strategy might ease some

of the concerns exhibited by pupils prior to transition, as work can be set depending upon ability.

In contrast to Lucy's concerns, a number of pupils relished the opportunity to participate in a range of activities with increased levels of difficulty. For example, Jemma suggested, "*...getting better at some activities will be good, also trying new sports and the week at the end of the year where we can do activities that we choose.*" Some pupils viewed the transition to secondary school as an opportunity to increase their confidence in a range of activities. For example, Sam who initially had reservations about participating in PE at secondary school noted:

I wasn't looking forward to doing PE in secondary school, but now I am here and I am doing kind of well in PE I feel more confident like, because the teachers know what they are talking about in PE (Sam, City Comprehensive).

The transition increased Sam's confidence and reinforced his competence in certain areas of PE. Moreover, Sam noted a substantial improvement in PE at City Comprehensive which linked to his increased confidence and competence. The issue of confidence and competence across the primary-secondary transition reinforces the importance of physical literacy. Physical literacy has been described as "the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for maintaining purposeful physical pursuits throughout the life course" (Whitehead, 2010, p.5). However, results from the present study suggest explicitly that two integral elements of physical literacy (confidence and competence) remain problematic for pupils across the transition alongside a lack of knowledge and understanding.

One feature of PE which emerged as having close links with confidence, competence and the notion of being ‘good enough’ was competition. However, once again pupils were divided: some enjoyed the competitive element of primary school PE, whilst resenting competition in secondary school; and others relished the notion of competition at both Urban Primary and City Comprehensive, wanting to be the ‘best’.

5.2.1 Competition

Pupils in the present study regarded competition as a significant factor in the transition between primary and secondary school. In England, therefore only partially pertinent to the present study, Richardson (2013) claims that the government says its draft PE curriculum will put competitive sport back at the heart of school life. Conversely, research in Wales suggests that:

Competition was seen by sporty people as an important and positive aspect of doing sport, and linked with achievement. Non-sporty people reported that they were less keen on competitive aspects of sport as it took the fun and social side of sport out of the experience (Sport Wales, 2012, p.2).

Competition can therefore be regarded as both a positive and negative feature of PE.

This was evident in one of my observations:

It was really interesting to observe the competitive nature of the pupils, especially the boys. I think this will be interesting to look at in the secondary school to see if they get away with cheating and remonstrating with teachers which stems from their desire to win and be the best (Reflective field notes, June 2011, Urban Primary)

Within the present study, the majority of pupils identified competition as a positive element of PE at Urban Primary. For example, Jack reported, “*I enjoy like PE, because it’s competitive and stuff and like I enjoy testing myself against other people.*” Similarly, Claire noted, “*I like working as a team and like competition and*

that so like one week you win and like the next week the other team wins and that.”

For pupils such as Jack, the idea of competition meant that they could compare themselves to others, becoming more competent in the process. Claire’s response highlighted her enjoyment with regard to working as a team, although she also enjoyed having an element of competition.

Creating a competitive environment for boys can lead to an unsupportive environment for physical activity for girls (Knowles, Niven and Fawcner, 2011), but for the girls at Urban Primary, this was not the case. For example, Sian noted,

I like doing PE as a whole group, girls and boys because then it will be a lot more fun and like more competitive with the boys, because we are good and some things and so are the boys (Sian, Urban Primary).

For Sian, the competitive element of mixed PE lessons was something to which she looked forward, a perspective which was shared by the rest of the girls.

The transition to secondary school marked a significant alteration in pupils’ attitudes towards competitive PE. Dismore and Bailey (2010) suggest that a high proportion of KS3 pupils associated PE with more serious preparation for competitions, a trend which they describe as a ‘performative culture’. This culture is reinforced by the extent to which the NCPE is dominated by competitive games.

At City Comprehensive, pupils enjoyed the emphasis on skill development, although in their eyes competition brought a pressure, a factor with which the majority struggled with. For example, Claire, a capable pupil, who enjoyed the competitive element of PE at Urban Primary revealed, “...it’s good doing new skills, but its loads more competitive here and sometimes I find that quite hard like if I am not good at

an activity.” Claire is 11 years old. In particular, Claire enjoys hockey and participates in an after school hockey club. Claire constantly compares herself to others and strives to be the best in everything that she does. Claire is from a large family, with three older sisters. Academically, Claire is regarded as a high achieving pupil with a particular interest in PE and Music.

Nick perceived the increase in pupils as a source of competition, “...*there are so many more kids that are better than you sometimes that stops me like trying to improve, like in football I want to get better but it is all about winning.*” One danger of a competitive approach is that it could lead to the development of exclusively elite groups (Dismore and Bailey, 2010). Moreover, this quotation suggests that some teachers teach in an ego climate rather than a mastery one. An ego-climate involves teachers’ encouraging pupils to be the best, rewarding success and to compete with their peers. A mastery-climate encourages self-improvement and rewards effort (Miulli and Nordin-Bates, 2011).

Whilst the notion of being ‘good enough’ was a salient consideration across the curriculum and within PE respectively; pupils were less concerned about the social implications of the transition which contradicts the extant literature (Galton *et al.*, 1999; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999; Measor and Fleetham, 2005). However, friendship was on their minds pre-transition which inevitably affected their post-transition experiences. Moreover, pupils regarded PE as a platform from which to develop the social skills required at a time of social uncertainty (Dismore, 2008). The following section is therefore divided into two: firstly, exploring the social

implications of the transition as a whole; and secondly, the impact of PE on such implications.

5.3 Social implications of transition

Transitions are at their strongest when the social, emotional, curricular and pedagogical aspects of learning are managed in order to enable pupils to remain engaged with, and have control of, their learning (DCSF, 2008). However, this has not been the case in the past with social/pastoral issues taking precedence over academic issues in the primary-secondary transition (Measor and Fleetham, 2005; Dalton, 2009).

During the present study pupils generally expressed positive feelings towards the social side of transition, with bullying a minor concern prior to transition. For those pupils that discussed bullying, it was discussed as a possibility rather than the norm. For example, Jake suggested *“Yeah, they said it’s good and gives you a good education and um they just said if people bully you in high school yeah you have to go to the teacher straight away or it could get worse.”* Moreover, Luke described the prospect of bullying: *“like older people bully and urrm like, like you know when you play football like I’m worried that they may not pick me because I’m not that good.”* At City Comprehensive those pupils that were concerned about bullying were able to dispel such worries. For example, Jake offered a piece of advice for year 6 pupils prior to transition: *“I would say don’t be afraid of bullying, it’s just something that is in everyone’s head, I was afraid of bullying but it didn’t happen to me.”*

Whilst bullying was discussed by a small selection of pupils, friendship was a more significant feature of pupils' expectations and experiences. Friendship is amongst the greatest worries for pupils even if making new friends is one aspect that many anticipate with excitement (Pratt and George, 2005). Notably, pupils in the present study were anxious to retain friends from Urban Primary rather than forging new friendships. For example, Scott claimed, *"I don't really mind about making new friends, but I definitely want to keep my old friends."* Similarly, Jake noted, *"I want to be in the same class as my friends so I can settle in easier."* This is a crucial point, during the weeks leading up to transition pupils were concerned about being in the same class as their friends, this might be because they felt more secure in the knowledge their friends were around them. In support of this, Peters (2003) revealed that the predominant reason for the importance of friendship was because of the support friends provided during the transition, both in and out of the classroom, and in particular in dealing with the lunch break.

Friendships enable pupils to establish relationships and wider networks of friends with other pupils (Weller, 2007). This was particularly relevant to a group of girls at Urban Primary, it was clear that they had their friends and developing new friendships was a secondary concern. For example, Chloe, a sociable character who was very much part of a close group of friends stated *"I already have all my friends; I can't see me making any new friends because I already have all the girls and they are all going to the same school."*

She added, *"...it doesn't matter they are only lessons at lunch and break time I will see them and after school."* This reply highlights the emphasis placed on maintaining

friendships and also questions the impact and effectiveness of the previous transition day. For example, prior to the interviews taking place, the year 6 pupils went on a transition day to their respective secondary schools to meet pupils that would be in the same year. As illustrated in my personal reflections, this trip provided an opportunity for me to observe the social interactions which took place between the pupils.

The majority of the group socialised with other pupils during lunch time or break time. The group of girls that included Chloe stood in the corner and chatted amongst themselves. For them creating friendships was not a priority today, it was clear they wanted to maintain friendships rather than forging new ones. This does question how they might cope with new friendships at secondary school (Personal Reflection, June 2011, Urban Primary).

Previous research has indicated that a reluctance to form new friendships at secondary school can lead to a peripheral position amongst peers (Demetriou *et al.*, 2000).

At City Comprehensive, the theme of friendship was divided into two sub categories, maintaining and establishing friendships. According to Weller (2007) although pupils anticipate moving with their special friends, they do not automatically ‘stick with’ them. The majority of pupils (especially the girls) expressed an eagerness to maintain their friendships at City Comprehensive. Paula, who was popular with her peers at Urban Primary, claimed “*I still see a lot of my friends from primary school, which is nice too.*” Furthermore, Eric noted that “*I still see my friends from primary school like at break and lunch time and after school and on the weekends.*”

Alongside the notion of ‘maintaining friends’ was the emphasis placed on form group selection. For example, Amy reported *“yeah they are in some of my classes and I speak to them in lunchtime and we do stuff after school, but it’s hard because they’re not in my class.”* This seemed to affect some pupils more than others. Amy who was part of a tight group of five friends at Urban Primary seemed to resent the fact that her friends were in a different class to her and she could not see them during class. This view was shared by Claire, who was in the same friendship group as Amy, she claimed *“I don’t get to see my friends in school anymore, like in primary school I could see them every day but here I only see them at break time and lunch time and not for that long.”* Much like going from the oldest to the youngest, going from seeing friends’ every day to only seeing them during break time was a difficult transition for the five pupils to make.

The majority of pupils discussed friendship in a more positive light. Meeting new friends was important and numerous friendships had already been struck with members of their class. Gregg an outgoing, intelligent pupil claimed, *“Yeah I’ve met loads of new friends in my class and in other classes; everyone in my class is really nice.”* Similarly, Rachel noted, *“Yeah I get on really well with everyone in my class, they are really nice and everyone gets on great.”* This passage highlights the positive impact secondary school can have on pupils’ social skills. Moreover, Weller (2007) reveals that “acquaintances from primary school rarely result in enduring friendships, but they are important instrumentally, as transitional support, as they help pupils to cope and settle in during the initial stages of the transition” (p.346).

The transition to secondary school encourages pupils to interact with other young people of a similar age and this is easier for some pupils than others. However, Max had an alternative view on developing friendships at City Comprehensive, *“Well yes kind of like some of the boys are in my class so it’s hard to talk to other people because it looks like I’ve already got my friends.”* Although Max was the only pupil to discuss this, it provides a source of consideration for both primary and secondary schools. The majority of pupils found comfort in being in the same class as friends, but for Max this was a hindrance, which prevented him from making new friends.

Developing and maintaining friendships was a consideration throughout the present study. One such subject which has been recognised as instrumental in social development is PE (Dismore and Bailey, 2010). Similarly, in the present study pupils recognised the positive impact PE could have on developing friendships in their new schools through co-operative activities and teamwork. For Paula, her aspiration was to remain in contact with her close group of friends from primary school, to which PE was beneficial, *“I like PE because we are with another form class and some of my friends from primary school are in that class so I get to see them, it’s like it used to be.”* The following section explores the role of PE on pupils’ social development across the primary-secondary transition.

5.4 The role of PE in social development

It has been claimed that PE can play a crucial part within transition, “as a subject area it brings to the fore a number of social changes that take place within a pupil’s life at that time” (Dismore, 2008, p.30). Pupils in the present study viewed PE as a

social mechanism which assisted in forming friendships and facilitated team work.

For example, when discussing his recent PE lesson, Luke, a year 6 pupil revealed:

We went inside and we went on the climbing frame and on the bench and we had to jump off, we did it in a team, which is good because you can work with your friends and like if you don't know what to do then your friends can help you (Luke, in Urban Primary).

This is reminiscent of Dismore and Bailey's (2010) study which explored the attitudes of (11-14 year old) pupils towards PE, and specifically the transition. They suggested that there was a sense in which the PE environment was a distinctive setting for peer socialisation. Notably, Dismore (2008) provides a note of caution suggesting that friendship is the most dominant risk to participation in PE.

In contrast, Amy identified that working as part of a group had long-term benefits in terms of schooling:

If you mix, like you communicate with more people and if you are going to the same high school as them then you know them because you have mixed PE, you get the chance to do that but in other subjects you don't (Amy, Urban Primary).

Amy recognised the positive impact of PE on the primary-secondary transition which in her opinion, contrasts with other subjects. Perhaps it is because PE provides greater or distinctive opportunities to socialise, thus allowing wider social issues to come the fore (Dismore and Bailey, 2010). For example Claire noted, "*...most of the activities in PE you have to talk to other people and that it is not like maths where most of the time you work on your own.*"

Realising the importance of effective social skills prior to transition might have a number of benefits. For example, good interpersonal skills are important due to more diversity in their peer group at secondary school in terms of social, economic and

cultural background (Pratt and George 2005). Moreover, at this potentially awkward time (in terms of social imbalance) pupils may also be asked to interact with new peers in their new schools (Dismore, 2008).

Therefore, PE can contribute to social interaction, which is highlighted by Luke, Amy and Claire prior to transition. In support of pupils' perceptions prior to transition, the Primary PE Co-ordinator emphasised the significance of PE in the social development of pupils:

Yeah absolutely, so you have all the social skills that are really important, PE is unique in some respects as it offers opportunities that other subjects do not. So for example, here, in PE pupils work as part of a team in invasion games and we regularly ask them to use apparatus to decide on the most effective way across the sports hall. This task incorporates, teamwork, leadership, cohesion that are all integral parts of PE (Primary PE Co-ordinator, Urban Primary).

The importance of these types of activities is highlighted here. They are claimed to provide pupils with key skills (i.e., social skills, teamwork) required in secondary school and throughout adulthood. This notion is reinforced during a discussion with the year 6 teacher, during which she noted:

I also feel sport helps pupils with other skills such as sharing, communicating, working as a team. PE also encourages pupils to be competitive (which I feel is a positive thing). These are all skills pupils will use in later life (year 6 teacher, Urban Primary).

Once again confusion arises as to the relationship between PE and sport. The year 6 teacher uses the terms interchangeably demonstrating confusion amongst both.

At City Comprehensive most pupils' experiences of PE coincided with their expectations. In terms of the social aspect of PE, pupils anticipated PE to alleviate their social concerns, a prospect which became a reality. Evidence of this can be

found in James's quotation, "...yeah in PE you have to get into groups and like talk to people and you do it with different classes so you meet more people and that." For the pupils, PE became a vehicle for developing new friendship groups and provided an opportunity to socialise during the initial period at City Comprehensive. This is supported by Estyn (2012) who report that pupils develop their personal and social skills particularly well in secondary school PE.

However, Dismore and Bailey (2010) suggest that working collaboratively in PE might be problematic for some pupils. For example, pupils might associate working alongside others with anxiety and confrontation, and that they do not belong in the 'community of learners' (Dismore and Bailey, 2010, p.185). During PE lessons at City Comprehensive pupils were able to work in teams and meet people from different classes. Estyn (2008) regard transition days and form group meetings, prior to transition as essential to pupils feeling more comfortable within the secondary school environment. However, findings from the present study suggest that the majority of pupils (12 out of 14 pupils) enjoyed socialising through PE. Whilst transition days and form group meetings might be beneficial, the natural environment of a PE lesson is more fitting as it incorporates a number of social elements. Paul describes the role of PE on social development, post-transition:

Well like I have met loads of friends in PE, because right we do it with another class so like you can meet some of the other boys from that class, and so you don't just know people that are in your class. Like if someone is on your team you know their name and pass to them and that and then after you are friends (Paul, Urban Primary).

Paul provides an insightful description of the situations in PE which instigate friendships and socialisation. Findings from the present study demonstrate that PE

has the potential to ease the social concerns to which pupils allude to prior to transition and, importantly too, post-transition. Participation in PE represents a powerful medium through which pupils develop socially, especially during the period when most pupils are moving schools can heighten the processes of social inclusion/exclusion (Bailey, 2007).

The role of PE at City Comprehensive was significant for two reasons: firstly, it eased the difficult process of peer socialisation post-transition; and secondly, PE enabled pupils to become familiar with peers outside their immediate form group, which is unique to other subjects (i.e., joint PE lessons with another form group). However, PE served as more than just an opportunity to socialise in a unique way, it provided a source of social support for pupils both prior to and post-transition. One unique element of PE which supported social development especially at City Comprehensive was extra curricular activity.

In a study by Lawrence (2006), pupils were looking forward to participating in better quality and a wider range of extra curricular activities at secondary school. Similarly, in the present study pupils from Urban Primary identified extra curricular activities as a source of excitement which was exemplified by David, *“Yeah I think like there will be more to do in secondary school, like take the after school stuff, there is so many teams to join and you play other schools.”*

In conjunction with David’s view, Hayley noted, *“...in secondary school I want to join the hockey team and maybe netball to, I think it will be fun and exciting.”* Here, Hayley’s rationale for joining an extra curricular team is for enjoyment. This

reinforces findings from a study focusing on adolescent girls in which Jago (2011) concluded that recruitment and retention in after school dance programme could be enhanced if enjoyment and socialisation are highlighted.

Extra curricular activities provided an opportunity for pupils to meet new people in an environment outside of school hours. At City Comprehensive, most of the pupils had joined a team or intended to do so. For example, Becky noted, “...*no not yet but miss said I should join the hockey team, and I think that will be good to make new friends and that.*” Similarly, David highlighted the benefit of joining an extra curricular team saying, “...*like you can play other schools and like you are part of a team and meet new friends and that*” - a statement which highlights the significance of working as part of a team and the impact it can have on developing friendships. In summary, Gary identified the benefit of extra curricular activities, “...*you play against different teams and you can meet people in your year and like people will know you and that.*”

Pupils’ expectations prior to transition centred on a belief that PE would alleviate the social pressures of moving to secondary school, providing an opportunity to interact with new peers and work as part of a team. This point is summarised by Alice:

Yeah because if you are put into a team like in PE and you don’t know anyone then you can make friends like with people you don’t know. Like in PE you have to talk to people so it’s a good way of getting to know people in secondary school (Alice, Urban Primary).

In terms of their experiences, PE and specifically extra curricular activity was a source of social development for the pupils, which was crucial at a time of social uncertainty (Galton *et al.*, 1999; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999).

Moreover, the pupils identified gender as having a significant impact across the transition. The following section explores pupils' positive and negative views on the impact of gender across the transition, particularly with regard to mixed-gender PE lessons and social development.

5.4.1 Gender

Gender has been a significant issue for pupils in PE (Penny, 2002; Hay and Macdonald, 2010) although what is known about the role of gender across the primary-secondary transition is less clear. The pupils were divided on this issue, with a selection of pupils recognising the long-term benefits of mixed-gender PE lessons, while others resented the notion of sharing a PE lesson with the opposite sex. When in Urban Primary, David claimed:

It's good to do it as a whole group because you get to know like a lot of games and it like helps you speak and get on with girls and that because when you are older you have to work with girls and that (David, Urban Primary).

Similarly, Becky noted, *"I like it when we all do it PE together, because some people help you and if you just play with girls you don't get to know the boys as well as you get to know the girls."* Here, both David and Becky identify the social benefits of having mixed PE lessons (in primary school). Moreover, David's response indicates that he has the upcoming transition to secondary school in mind with reference to age and collaboration with girls. A number of pupils identified mixed-gender PE as a vehicle through which friendships developed, thus reinforcing its importance during the initial stages of secondary school. For example, Liam claimed:

We do PE as a whole group, I like that because you get used to working with girls and like in secondary school you have to work with girls more and in jobs and stuff so I think it's good (Liam, Urban Primary).

Here, Liam recognises the social benefit of mixed-gender PE lessons, referring to the chance to work in groups which include boys and girls as beneficial to his experience of secondary school and later life. However, in OFSTED's (2009) report they indicated that:

The inclusion of pupils in PE was a strength in all the schools visited, girls-only activities were introduced to improve their participation and the use of sport to re-engage a group of disaffected boys (p.19).

The PE co-ordinator at Urban Primary had an alternative view:

It becomes clear they can't take part in the same games, because boys tend to take over especially with invasion games scenario they dominate too much. However, here they experience at least one session of PE [a week] with the opposite gender. As much as I think this is important, the majority of secondary schools I know separate the pupils, so they are not experiencing mixed-gender PE lessons (Primary PE co-ordinator).

Whilst the primary PE Co-ordinator suggests that mixed-gender PE lessons are important, he argues that the separation of boys and girls at secondary school PE represents a source of discontinuity. Furthermore, the scope for mixed-gender PE lessons is hindered by the domination by boys. Although the class was evenly divided in terms of numbers between boys and girls, the boys tended to take control, as highlighted in my personal reflection:

Surprisingly a simple game of netball highlighted the dynamics of the group. The boys took a dominate role within this particular PE lesson, which meant the girls took a 'back seat'. It will be interesting to see how these pupils adjust in secondary school, whether they are a dominate figure in a PE lessons or whether a new environment with new faces alters their role (Reflective field notes, June 2012, Urban Primary)

In the past this has been attributed to boys being more inherently motivated in all activities than girls (Gao *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, Carroll and Loudamis' (2001) study suggested that boys (aged 11) perceived PE to be more enjoyable than the

girls; whilst a positive environment can be created by allowing a girls-only environment (Knowles *et al.*, 2011).

Most of the pupils (mostly girls) resented the notion of mixed-gender PE lessons at City Comprehensive, preferring segregated PE. One study which focused on the role of gender during the transition reported gender differences in pupils' responses to transition (Jackson and Warin, 2000). This was also the case in the present study, for example, the girls' views were in line Hannah's perspective at Urban Primary, "*I just feel more comfortable doing it that way [separate] because I get embarrassed sometimes if we do PE with the boys.*" The girls felt more 'comfortable' in single-sex PE lessons. For example, Claire noted, "*...yeah because I have friends that are girls and I'm used to working with girls I feel more comfortable with that.*" This is reminiscent of Hannah's viewpoint inasmuch as Claire found reassurance in the fact that some of her PE lessons were separated from the boys. This perspective reinforces the finding from Knowles, Niven and Fawcner's (2011) study, in which girls aged 11-12 also articulated feelings of being uncomfortable in a physical activity alongside boys, and in particular, they expressed a dislike of swimming in front of boys during secondary school PE.

However, the boys' rationale for single-sex PE lessons (within the present study) centred on the notion of 'getting on' (Jack, Urban Primary). For example, Luke noted, "*I would prefer to do PE with just boys because like they are better at some things. It's a childish thing but it saves you time, and usually you waste time because girls don't want to do some activities.*" Here, Luke resents the notion of being held back by what he recognises as a difference in ability between boys and girls.

Similarly, James suggested at Urban Primary, *“PE is better when it’s just the boys because you can get more done and do the activities you like to do.”* However, the primary PE Co-ordinator had a somewhat contrasting view on the matter.

Well I have got an issue definitely with year 6 with girls and boys participating in the same sorts of games, because year 6 girls are physically stronger than year 6 boys because of their physiological development (Primary PE Co-ordinator).

At Urban Primary, the boys thought participating in mixed-gender PE lessons was affecting their development in PE. However, this did not coincide with the PE Co-ordinator’s perspective, rather that the girls were more competent in PE during the final stages of primary school. This poses an interesting dilemma for co-ordinators of the transition, whether to incorporate mixed-gender PE to facilitate social development prior to transition or to separate boys and girls to promote skill development. In order to gain insight into this issue, pupils were once again asked about their experiences post-transition in terms of gender.

As expected girls and boys were taught PE separately at City Comprehensive. The corollary of this was that, pupils’ feelings towards PE changed post-transition. The majority of pupils expressed positive views regarding the separation of boys and girls PE at City Comprehensive. For example, Colin noted:

Yeah here you do PE with another group but it’s just the boys, I think it’s better because you can get on with PE and you don’t have to wait for the girls and like you don’t get embarrassed and that (Colin, City Comprehensive).

In accordance with Colin’s response, Sian claimed, *“Yeah it’s loads better here because you do it separate and it’s not embarrassing like when you do it in front of boys it is embarrassing, it’s just better here.”* Both Colin and Sian altered their

perception of mixed-gender PE lessons at City Comprehensive. Whilst they both enjoyed participating in mixed-gender PE pre-transition, they preferred being separated from the opposite sex for upon arrival at City Comprehensive. They both identify the need to ‘get on’, emphasising their desire to develop their skill-set (an emphasis on physical competence once again), which, in their eyes, can only be achieved through gender defined PE lessons. Knowles, Niven and Fawcner (2011) conclude:

For young girls at this stage of their lives, personal feelings such as a lack of competence and self-presentational issues make commonly accepted environments for physical activity (i.e., PE lessons with boys) more of a perceived barrier to participation (p.1090).

Separate PE lessons were the preferred method, in order for girls to feel comfortable in PE, thus increasing participation levels across the transition. Nevertheless, it still remained uncertain (in the present study) as to whether single-sex PE lessons minimised opportunities to socialise with the opposite sex.

The transition to secondary school induced feelings surrounding performance and social development for pupils. However, pupils described a strong desire to ‘grow up and move on’ both with regards to the transition as a whole and specifically in terms of PE. The following section explores the notion of ‘growing up and moving on’ in relation to the two areas of focus.

5.5 Growing up and moving on – ‘pupils seek independence’

The primary school in the present study was a small, cosy and familial environment. Naturally as the pupils get older they grow out of what they see as the ‘childish’ nature of primary school. For example, Mark claimed “...*primary school is too small and some of the kids were tiny but in secondary school it’s more grown up.*” The

start of a new school is also the time of new subjects, several new teachers and increased responsibility (Sellman, 2000). Although this can be daunting for some, pupils in the present study expressed an impatience to move to secondary school to grow and achieve. The pupils needed and expected to be treated more like adults towards the end of Urban Primary as well as at City Comprehensive. Carl noted, *"...in secondary school we will get treated like grown-ups so we will get more done."* Towards the end of year 6, it was clear to see that the majority of pupils had out-grown their small primary school and were very much ready for secondary school. However, pupils were provided with responsibilities on a daily basis, as highlighted in my reflections:

The [primary] school places a lot of responsibility on year 6 pupils which prepares them well for secondary school and the additional responsibilities they will experience. One of the examples of this is an initiative they implement. This involves year 6 pupils helping the younger pupils with a number of activities (Reflective field notes, June 2011, Urban Primary).

Whilst, this initiative gave pupils responsibility, for the majority the transition to secondary school represented progression for the pupils, being treated as young adults as opposed to children. Similarly in a study by Lucey and Reay (2000) most pupils also communicated a sense of pleasurable anticipation and 'anxious readiness'. For example, when discussing secondary school, James claimed, *"...it's going to be cool not staying in one classroom and moving around the school more."* Moreover, Andy indicated, *"...yeah it'll be strange but I think I will like moving classes and getting all my books ready each day for my lessons."* In support of this, a recent study by Ashton (2008) revealed that most pupils were looking forward to taking charge of their own equipment and schedules.

Similarly, equipment and facilities were central to pupils' perceptions of secondary school PE and the opportunity to grow up:

The pupils constantly refer to the 'small', 'basic' primary school facilities, in comparison with the more extensive facilities at secondary school. The level of excitement in relation to the equipment and facilities at secondary school is common amongst the majority of pupils (Reflective field notes, September 2012, City Comprehensive).

This is reinforced during Sam's description of secondary school PE:

Well there's a sports hall that's bigger than our one, and there is a big field that they use and an astroturf that they use for like hockey and football, it's a lot more professional, I think it will be like just a lot bigger and better too (Sam, Urban Primary).

The speed of Sam's response indicates a high level of anticipation, citing an enhancement of facilities as the source of his excitement. Furthermore, Sam refers to his experience at Urban Primary School, emphasising the disparity between the two, relishing the opportunity to experience 'professional' PE at secondary school.

Previously, Dismore and Bailey (2010) indicated that the move to a new school signalled a significant change in the seriousness with which PE was taken by the pupils. Furthermore, OFSTED (2013) note:

The variable quality of facilities for PE, in particular the amount and quality of indoor teaching space, restricted the provision of gymnastics and some indoor games...this limited the amount of time for pupils to study indoor activities in sufficient depth (OFSTED, 2013, p.38).

The present study also highlighted that the enhancement of 'equipment and facilities' in secondary school contributed to the 'seriousness' of PE. During the final stages of Urban Primary, the pupils regularly referred to the facilities and equipment at City Comprehensive in terms of being larger and improved. Gary, who enjoyed PE and participated in a number of sport clubs outside of school, summarised this point

effectively, claiming “...it’s going to be different, it’s like bigger than here they have proper basketball places to play basketball there, it’s like proper and real and like more professional.” Gary’s expectation was for City Comprehensive to have superior facilities and equipment. In addition, Gary perceived the enhancement in facilities and equipment as sources of professionalism with which he was not familiar at Urban Primary School. Similarly, Dismore and Bailey (2010) found that pupils made a number of comparisons between equipment and facilities at secondary school and in primary schools.

In terms of pupils’ experiences of secondary school PE, ‘equipment and facilities’ were regarded as positive elements of PE. Gary noted, “*Yeah the halls are loads bigger and you play on a proper football pitch its loads better because you can do more activities in bigger halls.*” Gary’s experiences of secondary school PE matched his expectations. Moreover, the enhancement in equipment and facilities led to pupils’ participating more fully in PE. This is reinforced in Hayley’s response:

This week we did hockey with miss, like we got all the hockey sticks and balls and miss said that we were going to learn like skills that you use for hockey. I wasn’t that sure really cus I didn’t do hockey like in primary school much but it was fun. So then after we did some skills and stuff we went into like small games and played against each other which were fun and miss said I was good for my first time (Hayley, City Comprehensive).

Hayley attributes her participation in Hockey to her enjoyment of PE which was, in part, a consequence of the quality of equipment, facilities. In accordance with this finding, OFSTED (2009) note that equipment and resources for PE were generally of high quality in the vast majority of the schools in England and supported provision well.

At City Comprehensive, the majority of pupils compared their new surroundings to their experience of primary school. For example, Colin revealed, “...*yeah in primary school we didn’t do much like stuff outside and we just played games, here we go outside on proper courts we use proper goals for football too.*” This finding concurs with Lawrence’s (2006) study in which the pupils also preferred PE in secondary school. The findings from the present study suggest that the principal reason for this was pupils’ perception that PE at secondary school was ‘*real*’ and ‘*professional*’ (Max, Urban Primary) an indication they were growing up. However, their primary school represented a ‘childish’ environment which the majority of pupils had outgrown.

Similarly, pupils cited ‘independence’, ‘going on the buses’ and ‘new responsibilities’ as aspects of secondary school life they were looking forward to (see figure 9, p.178). They associated the concept of growing up with preparation which was more apparent at Urban Primary than City Comprehensive. The pupils identified the smaller details that differ between these two phases of education. For example, Will explained that “*I will have to get all my books ready before school, maybe the night before, get all of my clothes ready and my planner signed.*” The prospect of being in charge of their own belongings, knowing that if they did not bring their books there would be consequences, excited them. However, once again *all* pupils identified that this was not the case at Urban Primary. Rachel suggests that “*...in primary school they give you things and in secondary school they won’t give it to you, you have to get it yourself.*” Rachel relished the concept of having responsibility for her work, organising her books and stationary, whereas at Urban Primary she had little opportunity for independence and responsible.

The focus on preparation was also apparent during a critique of PE across the transition; the pupils were excited by the prospect of wearing ‘proper’ PE kit. In a study concerning pupils’ attitudes towards PE across the transition, Dismore and Bailey (2010) reported that few comments were made with reference to changing or clothes worn for PE. Conversely, pupils involved in the present study cited the significance of PE kit regularly as another indication of the professional nature of secondary school PE. For example, Max claimed:

Yeah in secondary school you wear proper PE kit, like a uniform You have to wear shorts for PE or black trousers and that and I think like running trainers, much better than here (Max, Urban Primary).

Again, Max highlights a significant distinction between primary and secondary school PE and indicates an impatience to proceed to City Comprehensive which was representative of the sample. A possible reason for Max’s response might be in line with the notion of independence and responsibility. For example, a recurring theme in Ashton’s (2008) study was the idea that secondary school represented an opportunity to be treated as an older child, something which, in the present study was represented by the chance to organise and wear PE kit. Similarly, Cameron suggested, “*Well like in secondary school we will wear a real PE kit to do PE because you do more activities and well it’s like proper isn’t it.*” Once again, Cameron relishes the opportunity to wear a ‘real’ PE kit and the opportunity to perform in a wide variety of activities in secondary school PE. This finding contravenes the belief that wearing certain clothing has a negative influence on pupils (Flintoff and Scraton, 2001). In the present study, wearing PE kit represented a source of excitement and novelty which was absent from the pupils’ experience of primary school PE.

A number of issues regarding the concept of 'growing up' were brought into sharp focus during Urban Primary. However, at City Comprehensive the pupils thrived on the new responsibilities they were given and becoming independent young adults. This was highlighted by Eric, who suggested "*...it's like more grown up like you carry all your stuff around, you have loads of classes and you have to do your homework or you'll get into trouble.*" When asked the majority of pupils agreed with Harry who explained, "*Not really I miss some of the teachers and stuff but I like secondary school and in primary school all the kids are really small, secondary is more grown up like you have to carry your books and stuff around.*" Pupils' feelings did not change dramatically during the final stages of Urban Primary and the preliminary stages of City Comprehensive.

Towards the end of their time at Urban Primary, the majority of pupils reflected on their time, but were very much looking forward to taking the next step. At this point the pupils already saw themselves as secondary school pupils, this was clear in the way they viewed primary school and their mannerisms around the school. Whilst the pupils' attitude remained constant, there was a discontinuity in the way they were treated and the responsibility they were given by staff. Moreover, during the first few months at City Comprehensive, the pupils exhibited a similar aspiration to take the next step in the educational process. For example, pupils cited 'growing up' and 'looking after our stuff' as positive aspects of 'being in secondary school' (see figure 10, p.179). The pupils' feelings hadn't changed, highlighting aspects of secondary school, which related to their independence. This finding contravenes the general perception that the primary-secondary transition is considered a time when pupils

struggle with the added responsibility (Galton *et al.*, 1999; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999).

Age was also a recurring theme throughout the interview process and group activities. Although the pupils had a strong desire to move to secondary school in order to 'grow up', one concern they did explore was the transition from being the oldest to the youngest (see figure 9, p.178). The pupils failed to recognise this as 'rite of passage' which has been alluded to in the past (Pratt and George, 2005), instead were concerned about their status around the school. The pupils were anxious to move, grow and settle into the pattern of secondary school. However, at the same time resented the concept of being a 'small fish in a big pond', going from being the oldest at Urban Primary to the youngest at City Comprehensive. In support of this notion, Jack revealed, "*I won't be the oldest I'll be the youngest, I will go from being the biggest in primary school to one of the small ones in secondary school, and it's weird.*" An opinion that was shared by Lucy, who claimed, "*It will be weird but it's only for a year*". Going from being the oldest to the youngest is a major transition pupil's face when moving to secondary school, a different mentality, an ever-changing social status.

Similarly, during the initial period at City Comprehensive pupils contradicted their feelings towards 'growing up' by exhibiting negative feelings about being the youngest at City Comprehensive. For example, Michael suggested "*I miss being the oldest and the biggest and some of the teachers.*" Michael enjoyed City Comprehensive, however he disliked the fact he was the youngest and the smallest, he compared it to "*...like being at the bottom of the food chain, like we have got to*

work our way up.” The sudden change in social status was a common concern amongst the majority of pupils. They were so used to being the oldest and biggest therefore the idea of being the youngest and smallest seemed to frustrate and annoy them.

For the pupils the idea of ‘growing up’ was prominent at both Urban Primary and City Comprehensive. Yet, a source of discontinuity was apparent here. To observe pupils completing tasks that were relatively easy, being spoon fed information, able to take their time during tasks and generally treated like infants, weeks before the transition. To following a timetable, being responsible for their books and having strict time limits on their work, just six weeks later. Exploring his expectations of secondary school, Luke, an insightful and mature pupil claimed “...it [secondary school] would be like going to work, getting your work stuff ready, and your briefcase and here [primary school] people get stuff ready for you and its really easy.” The general consensus among the pupils was that secondary school gave them the independence they required, for the majority the transition could not come quick enough.

Moreover, with regards to PE, pupils indicated a similar aspiration to grow up. However, in this instance their desire to move on was represented by the inevitable increase in quality of facilities and equipment in PE. In summary, Alex suggested, “In high school you get treated with more freedom and not little children, and if you get treated older then you are going to turn out like one aren’t you.” Here, Alex seemed to resent the ‘childish’ nature of Urban Primary and was very much looking forward to being treated like an independent, responsible pupil. He also suggested

that pupils respond well to being treated like grown ups as opposed to ‘little’ children.

Previously, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1992) identify how one person’s expectation for another person’s behaviour can quite unwittingly become a more accurate prediction simply for it having been made – the Pygmalion Effect. This concept is applicable across the transition, if teachers’ expectation of ‘little children’ is just that, then this will inevitably have a detrimental on the pupils’ ability to ‘grow up’. Whereas, if teachers view and treat their pupils as young adults the expectation is that pupils will experience independence within the classroom, which, in turn will be beneficial for the transition to secondary school.

This example represents an underlying theme, which has been the importance of the teacher. During both Urban Primary and City Comprehensive, the pupils frequently discussed their teachers and the perceived differences between their primary school teacher and secondary counterparts. The next section is divided into two: firstly exploring pupils’ perceptions of teachers across the transition in general; and secondly, pupils’ perceptions of PE teachers at both Urban Primary and City Comprehensive, examining the notion of specialism.

5.6 Teachers and teaching: help or hindrance?

Primary and secondary school teachers were frequently cited in terms of the transition in general and with reference to PE. There was a general consensus amongst pupils (at Urban Primary) that primary school teachers are friendly and caring whilst secondary school teachers are strict. This assumption was based

predominantly on myths and hearsay mainly from older friends or relatives. For example, at Urban Primary Mark noted “*Well compared to the teachers here I think they will be stricter because there will be more pupils and my brother said they get annoyed quicker.*” The significance of ‘the teacher’ across the primary-secondary transition is highlighted in a recent finding by Evangelou *et al.* (2008):

Pupils who felt they had a lot of help from their secondary school to settle in were more likely to have a successful transition. This included help with getting to know their way around the school, relaxing rules in the early weeks, procedures to help pupils adapt, visits to schools, induction and taster days, and booklets (Evangelou *et al.*, 2008, p.2).

A primary school pupil has a fixed base and a whole year to establish and develop a relationship with his or her teacher. At secondary school s/he has to find her way about ten classrooms every week and somehow create a working relationship with all of those teachers (Measor and Fleetham, 2005). This process can make the task of adapting to a variety of teachers at secondary school a difficult one.

At Urban Primary, pupils had a positive relationship with their teacher and the other teachers around the school. The pupils saw their teacher every day and had the same teacher for each subject, which inevitably created a strong bond between teacher and pupil. Max claimed “*Sir gets on with everyone in the class, he is really kind and he is a fun teacher.*” Max described his teacher as ‘fun’ implying the sense of enjoyment he experiences with his year 6 teacher, indicating the strong relationship between the two.

Towards the final stages at Urban Primary a selection of pupils claimed that they would miss their primary school teachers. For example, whilst discussing his plan for

the last two weeks at Urban Primary Sam noted “*I don’t want to do much really I just want to say bye to some of the teachers.*” Similarly, in response to the same question, Rebecca claimed “*I just want to say goodbye to all the teachers because they are so nice, I’m going to miss them.*” This response highlights the close bond which is created between the pupils and their primary school teacher.

The pupils had a clear idea as to what their secondary school teachers would be like. When asked about their secondary school teachers the common response was “*They will be strict*” and “*we won’t get away with as much.*” These comments not only highlight the pupils’ impression of secondary school teachers but also provide an insight into pupils’ perception of primary school teachers, suggesting a sense of leeway, which (in the pupils’ opinion) was inconsistent with their secondary school counterparts. In support of this, Claire suggested “*...they will be nice but they don’t accept bad behaviour in high school as much as they do here.*” Furthermore, Jack claimed, “*...they won’t let you play around as much as you do in primary school.*”

These opinions were formulated as a result of conversations with older friends and relatives, and impressions from the transition days at City Comprehensive. During a discussion with Jamie regarding his secondary school teachers, he responded, “*I think at the start they will be nice, our teacher is nice and but like later on they will shout a lot more.*” Similarly, Tony claimed, “*...we met our teacher, he was really nice but I don’t think they will be like that all the time.*”

At City Comprehensive, it was important to establish whether pupils’ expectations of their secondary school teachers matched their experiences and pupils’ perceptions of

primary school teachers having made the transition into secondary school. The pupils' perceptions of their secondary school teachers had changed during their first few months in City Comprehensive. During the final weeks of Urban Primary, Michael suggested secondary school teachers would be strict if he misbehaved. However, once at City Comprehensive, Michael had an alternative view, claiming that *"I think its strict kind of here, but if you're nice to the teachers they will be nice to you."* Furthermore, Amy revealed, *"Well the teachers because they are really kind and we have a different teacher for each subject and in primary you have one teacher and it's not interesting it's kind of boring if you have more teachers you know more stuff."* The pupils' perception that secondary school teachers were 'scary and strict' seemed to have diminished and was replaced by a sense of enthusiasm and excitement.

Similarly, the variety of teachers they had at City Comprehensive represented an issue for the pupils, compared to having a single teacher in primary school. In a report by Estyn entitled *The Impact of Transition Plans* (2008) pupils were questioned about aspects of the primary-secondary transition that they would like to see improved. Estyn (2008) reported that pupils suggested that they did not like the varied expectations from teachers. However, during their time at City Comprehensive, pupils in the present study expressed varying expectations towards having a variety of teachers.

During a discussion with Paul about his expectations of secondary school he noted, *"...yeah it is going to be hard like remembering their names and like we will get different work off different teachers, it will be hard to get used to."* Conversely,

during the initial stages of City Comprehensive Paul described a somewhat contrasting view, *“I like the teachers because they are really kind and we have a different teacher for each subject and in primary you have one teacher and it’s not interesting it’s kind of boring if you have more teachers you know more stuff.”* As well as shedding a positive light on transition, Paul highlights that when it comes to pupils’ perceptions of teachers during the transition, their experiences may not match their expectations. For example, Nicola revealed, *“...the teachers are a lot different than I thought they would be. I thought they would be really horrible and most of them are kind, I thought I wouldn’t like having more than one, but it’s better because you learn a lot more.”*

It was reassuring to learn that the pupils had positive feelings towards their secondary school teachers, especially because their expectations were filled with such negativity and anxiety. Furthermore, pupils’ experiences post-transition shed light on the issue of leniency at Urban Primary. The pupils’ perception was that primary school teachers are ‘nice and kind’ and when they entered secondary school the teachers would be ‘strict and scary’, this inevitably will provide a source of discontinuity. However, the approach taken at City Comprehensive allowed pupils to experience continuity and therefore an opportunity to progress. For example, Jack noted *“...the teachers here are stricter but like in a good way because then you do your work and you can get better results like.”*

Alongside the emphasis placed on the perceived difference between primary and secondary school teachers, was the difference in the approach to teaching between these teachers. This issue was not as prominent during the interview process and

classroom activities, but was discussed amongst the pupils. Nicholls and Gardner (1999) identify that:

Despite strides being made in ensuring continuity in the curriculum design, secondary teaching remains very different from primary teaching. The pedagogic techniques themselves maybe experiencing a growing convergence but the structural differences remain large (p.7).

This was very much the theme mainly at City Comprehensive; pupils had time to reflect on the differences between the teaching in primary and secondary school. On the subject of teachers, Mark revealed, “...it’s not harder it’s sort of easier because you get more support from the teachers its way better than primary.” Yet, with secondary school classes larger than most primary school classes, the expectation would be that the amount of individual interaction would be less. In this instance Mark signals a mismatch of his expectations highlighting a discontinuity in the amount of support he received between primary and secondary school. Mark elaborated on his response noting, “Well in English I wasn’t sure what to write about so I asked miss and she said how about my first day in secondary school, so like I write about that like what we did and stuff.” During my observations it was clear to see how much time the secondary teachers devoted to individual interaction over whole group teaching. At Urban Primary the teacher helped individuals, but predominantly whole class teaching was the preferred method, as noted in the following reflection.

With regards to pedagogy, the [secondary school] teacher adopts an approach which centres on the individual. In primary school, the teacher favoured a whole-class approach. This has the potential to have an impact on continuity and progression across these two schools. The two settings are very different which impacts upon the teaching approaches employed (Reflective field notes, September 2012, City Comprehensive).

This provided another substantial difference between primary and secondary school education and another source of discontinuity for pupils. Similarly, in a study conducted by Boyd and Simpson (2000) they found that continuity of learning and teaching was conspicuous by its absence.

Further evidence is highlighted in a report by OFSTED (2008), which claims “continuity in teaching, learning and assessment when pupils move from primary to secondary school continues to be weak. Too few teachers understand the main approaches to learning in the other phase” (p.6). This finding along with evidence from the present study highlights an issue with continuity in teaching across the transition which requires further attention.

An exploration of pupils’ experiences of PE during the transition provided an insight into the contrasting approaches adopted at Urban Primary and City Comprehensive. The pupils perceived secondary school PE teachers as ‘proper PE teachers’ in comparison to their generalist primary teachers. The issue of non-specialism forms part of an on-going debate among physical educators (Morgan and Bourke, 2008; Petrie, 2010; Tsangaridou, 2008). The impact of ‘PE specialism’ across the primary-secondary transition forms the basis of the final part of this chapter, drawing on pupils’ experiences, supported by the views of teachers themselves.

5.7 Teachers and teaching: the impact of PE

The notion of ‘specialism’ is an element of the primary-secondary transition that requires further attention (Dismore and Bailey, 2010). Recently, Burns (2013) suggested that a number of primary schools want to build upon the Olympic legacy,

but feel challenged by the lack of specialist support. In the present study, pupils at Urban Primary regularly cited the professional nature of secondary school, particularly PE teachers as a source of excitement. For example, Liam perceived secondary school PE teachers to be:

Energetic and fun and they will help with the things you don't like and try and make you better at them even if you're not good at it, try your best. Like if you're not too good it's about taking part and if you are good at it it's about being competitive (Luke, Urban Primary).

While, Luke's response was based upon his expectations, it is indicative of his primary PE experience. According to Morgan and Bourke (2008) primary school PE can make a unique contribution to the educational experience of students and may support physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. However, Becky considered PE in secondary school to be, "*...better because they will know more about PE, more than the teachers here.*" Becky's experience of primary school PE, like Luke's, is that of dissatisfaction and her response conveys more confidence in the teaching of PE at secondary school with regard to increasing her knowledge and skills in PE. A perspective which brought light to the issue of specialism was the Primary PE co-ordinator. In contrast with Becky's view, he suggested:

Yeah if I had spoken to you ten years ago when I came into the profession, PE is in a much better state then it was then particularly in regards to non-subject specific teachers teaching dance and gymnastics because they lacked the confidence to do so. But PESS in particular has given them the skills and ability to deliver it and pupils speak positively about those experiences. So gym and dance has really improved and I think games in our school we have got a much more structured approach and a good way of building the skills set into small sided games (Primary PE co-ordinator).

This response indicates a positive outlook on primary school PE in comparison to the views of the pupils. The passage highlights a significant improvement in primary PE teachers' ability to teach PE over the last ten years. However, whilst the primary PE

Co-ordinator identifies that gym and dance has improved, little is mentioned about invasion games such as football, netball or hockey. In addition, the thoughts of the Head of PE at City Comprehensive highlighted a somewhat contrasting view:

I do think 'non-specialists' hinder pupils' progress across the transition. Nonetheless, a keen and informed non-specialist is way better than a disengaged ill-informed expert (Head of PE, City Comprehensive).

The Head of PE accepts that non-specialists might have an impact on pupils' progress in PE. However, he also identifies that the same could be said for an ill-informed expert. Moreover, the Schools and Physical Activity Task Finish Group (2013) recommend that:

In order to support the primary-secondary transition young people should have the opportunities to achieve their full potential and have the motivations and skills to remain physically active, it is critical that all primary teachers need to be confident and competent to deliver this subject. All schools need to have access to well-qualified, specialist teachers, who would continually work with schools to ensure the delivery of high-quality PE programmes and, who could identify and promote best practice (p.5).

However, the Head of PE distances himself from the possibility that non-specialists are solely to blame; instead that the focus is on engagement and a 'non-specialist' has as much potential to promote engagement as their 'specialist' counterparts'. However a recent OFSTED (2013) report into PE in schools between 2008 and 2012 found that:

Teachers' lack of detailed subject knowledge limited the quality of feedback given to pupils about what they needed to do to improve. They were unsure about the step-by-step stages in teaching skills, and were unaware of the standards that pupils should achieve by the end of each key stage (p. 52).

This finding highlights an issue with ‘specialism’ in England and that consequently, pupils’ progress is being hindered. For the Head of PE at City Comprehensive, “...*it is about collaboration, them helping us and vice versa, we need to ensure that pupils’ individual needs are catered for.*” The Head of PE emphasises the need for collaboration between primary and secondary teachers. The significance of ‘specialism’ recurred throughout pupils’ responses, exemplified in a statement made by Nick: “...*secondary teachers will push you a lot more I think, because here they don’t as much.*” Here, Nick reported that primary PE teachers failed to challenge him sufficiently whereas secondary school represents an opportunity to fulfil his potential. Nick’s response concurs with a statement made by the Head of PE at City Comprehensive:

It has improved over the last 6/7 years as 5x60 officers and PE and School Sport Assistants (PESSA’s) have been going into primary schools and expertly delivering sessions. My worry now is that this does not happen to the same extent any more (Head of PE, City Comprehensive).

The introduction of Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) has played a major role in improving ‘non-specialists’ ability to teach PE according to the Head of PE at City Comprehensive. However, Estyn (2012) have reported in Wales that “only in a minority of schools, has the PESS initiative led to clear improvements in pupils’ standards in creative activities” (p.18). One of the factors attributed to the issue of specialism has been teachers’ lack of confidence in teaching primary school PE. Morgan and Bourke (2005) refer to teachers feeling significantly less confident to teach aspects of PE which they believe they had received poorer quality training in. A perspective which was shared by the year 6 teacher at Urban Primary:

I feel there should be more; I don’t think primary teachers get enough training in PE and sometimes it is dependent on their personal

interests. There is a lot of talk about specialism in PE; it needs to be dealt with at the source, teacher training (year 6 teacher, Urban Primary).

Post-transition, in terms of their PE teachers, the majority of pupils' experiences matched their expectations and enjoyed being taught by a 'specialist'. This is exemplified by Sian, who identified:

PE is really fun here, we have only had a few lessons and it's harder than last year, but it's fun. Here you get teachers that know more about PE cus like that's what they teach and then someone else teaches English and that (Sian, City Comprehensive).

The example illustrates that Sian's experiences of PE match the pre-transitional expectations described earlier by Luke and Becky. Furthermore, Alex reported, "*...it is better because they know more stuff about PE and that. Also like the lessons are more fun in PE.*" These two responses (Sian and Alex) suggest that pupils respond positively to a higher level of expertise within PE, resulting in enjoyment and participation.

In contrast, Jemma suggested "*...what is good is though they are like real PE teachers and they know more about PE which is good but I don't like having loads of teachers that you don't know.*" Here, Jemma seems to want the best of both worlds, she relishes the idea of 'real' PE teachers, although resents the wide variety of teachers, symptomatic of subject specialism. Such dichotomies are evident in the present study with pupils enjoying certain elements of secondary school yet resenting others (i.e., the resentment towards being the youngest in secondary school along with the desire to grow up).

Moreover, Alex regarded primary teachers as ‘teachers of PE’ and secondary teachers were ‘PE teachers’. Herein lies the problem, this perception represents a source of discontinuity for pupils. Although primary PE teachers may have less experience in PE, it is essential that pupils regard the transition to secondary school as a continuation of their PE experience. Teachers are ideally placed to manage the extent to which PE operates in a culture of performance and comparison to avoid alienating those who were already demonstrating negative attitudes towards the subject (Dismore, 2008). However, from a practitioner’s perspective, the information exchanged between schools regarding PE lacks depth and consistency, which impacts upon the issue of specialism.

5.8 Summary

This chapter has explored pupils’ expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition across the curriculum and specifically in terms of PE. With regards to the transition as a whole, pupils’ concerns surrounded the notion of being ‘good enough’ for secondary school academically. Pupils’ academic concerns centred on grades, workload, homework and subjects; however the main concern was the implementation of challenge. In this case the pupils’ experiences matched their expectations, with the majority struggling to meet the academic demands of secondary school. Whilst pupils struggled with the increase in difficulty, the onset of challenge was an element of secondary school which they thrived on.

The notion of being ‘good enough’ also extended to pupils’ expectations and experiences of the transition in terms of PE. In this case pupils were concerned that they were moving to secondary school lacking confidence and competence in PE.

Once again this had a negative influence on their experience of PE in secondary school. The onset of challenge is an important factor here and in terms of the transition in general. If pupils fail to experience challenge in primary school, by the time they enter secondary school and become challenged by the work or the activities, a source of discontinuity may occur, preventing progression.

This chapter has also explored the role of social development, both across the primary-secondary transition in general and specifically the role of PE. In terms of the transition as a whole, the present study has indicated that pupils' concerns surround academic development rather than the social changes that take place across the transition. However, friendship remained a salient consideration. Whilst social development was less important for pupils compared to academic development; the role of PE in the social development of pupils was a constant source of debate. Pupils viewed PE as a social mechanism which assisted in social interaction with peers and facilitated team work at a time of potential social imbalance. In terms of the 'after story' post-transition, the pupils' expectations matched their experiences citing PE as a vehicle for social interaction with specific reference to extra curricular activity and gender.

The third significant finding was the concept of growing up. During an exploration of pupils' perception of the transition in general pupils expressed a desire to grow up, take the next step and achieve. Towards the final stages of Urban Primary the pupils had out-grown their small, familial primary school and were very much ready for their hurly burly secondary school. However, once in secondary school, 'the after story' whilst the pupils enjoyed the grown-up nature of secondary school, they

resented being the youngest in their new school, resulting somewhat in a contradiction. In terms of PE, pupils also expressed a desire to grow up; however this was communicated through the seriousness which they associated with secondary school PE, specifically the equipment and facilities. The equipment and facilities at City Comprehensive were described as sources of professionalism, something the pupils disassociated with Urban Primary.

Finally, teachers and teaching was on the pupils' minds, both in terms of the transition across the curriculum and with regards to PE. With regards to the transition in general pupils' expectations of secondary school teachers were dissimilar to their experiences. During the final stages of Urban Primary pupils' perception of secondary school teachers was that they were strict, favouring the bond they had with their year 6 teacher. However, once in secondary school, 'the after story' the pupils' perception of primary and secondary school teacher altered, favouring the challenge set by and expertise of their new secondary school teachers.

5.9 Reflections

The construction of chapter five was a significant challenge both structurally and in terms of content. After I had completed the fieldwork period it was time to analyse and present the findings. At this stage, the challenge was condensing the findings into a coherent and concise chapter. The structure of the first draft reflected the two phases of the study: pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition; and pupils' experiences related to PE. However, the balance between the curriculum and PE related material posed a significant challenge. This is highlighted in the following account drawn from a reflexive piece, written after a supervisory meeting, towards the end of my doctoral study:

May 2013 – Today was generally a positive meeting with my supervisory team, however the issue of structure was particularly prevalent. I am finding it difficult to find the best way in which to present the data. The two-phase research design inevitably causes repetition in certain areas. The challenge is to recognise ways in which the chapter can be edited to reduce repetition, but to also maintain the interesting, relevant and important information. At first the chapter was structured to reflect the two phases of the study, but the juxtaposition of the PE related material was questioned along with its substance. Therefore, I altered the structure to attempt to integrate the PE material with the results of Phase One. This is the point at which I find myself, ensuring the chapter flows coherently but also the results from both Phase One and Phase Two are equally distributed.

Having struggled with the structure of this chapter, and after lengthy discussions with my supervisory team, I decided to re-draft the chapter. The intention was to integrate the findings from each phase into four super-ordinate findings. This allowed me to present the data in a succinct manner whilst conveying pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition. I began my PhD journey with a perception that the process of writing would be the most significant test. However, the most significant challenge during my PhD journey was constantly adapting, shaping and editing a chapter to fit in with the overall thesis.

Chapter Six

Summative Discussion and Conclusion

To better understand the primary-secondary transition, this research explored the views of pupils experiencing the transition both before and after the move. It was an investigation of the transition across the curriculum, and in relation to one subject area (PE). There is evidence that performance in mathematics, science and languages is affected by the transition to secondary school, but there is a lack of evidence regarding how primary-secondary transition affects performance in other subjects (Rose, 2009). One subject which is thought to be a prominent concern (see Galton *et al.*, 2003; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999) with the potential to create a discontinuous experience for pupils is PE. However, research regarding the significance of PE across the transition has been neglected (Bailey and Dismore, 2005; Capel *et al.*, 2004); especially post-transition (Dismore, 2008).

The purpose of this chapter therefore is to draw together the main findings from the present study and situate such findings in the existing knowledge base. The chapter is divided into two broad sections: the first provides a summative discussion, addressing the central aim of the research through, pupils' expectations and experiences of the transition across the curriculum, and specifically PE; the second provides a summative conclusion addressing the theoretical/conceptual approach, practical implications, limitations and future research directions.

6.1 Pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition across the curriculum

The intention of Phase One was to explore all aspects of the transition from a variety of subject areas, pupils' relationships with teachers, and features of the transition which pupils felt apprehensive or excited about. This approach provided a clear

understanding of the current issues related to the transition across the curriculum. Moreover, it was important to provide ‘voice’ to the population that are at the centre of the transitional process yet remain significantly marginalised within educational research (Rice *et al.*, 2011). The research provided four significant findings which are grounded in a ‘process of transition model’ in figure 12 below reflecting pupils’ expectations of the transition against their actual experiences:

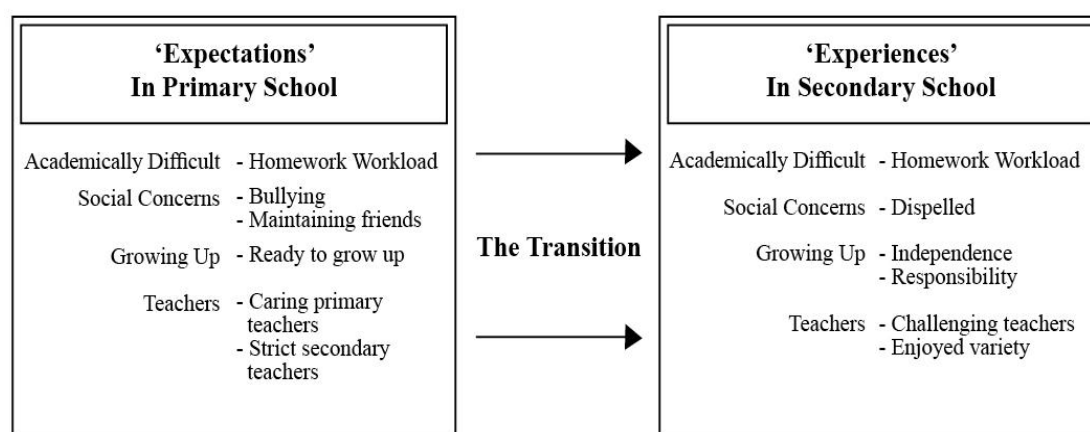


Figure 12. Pupils’ expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition

Throughout the extant literature, concerns emerged about the degree to which the primary-secondary transition promoted continuity and progression (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000), which continues to be a problem (West *et al.*, 2010). There were several factors which contributed to a lack of continuity and progression. These were a significant imbalance between social and academic development (Morrison, 2005; Measor and Fleetham, 2005), the substantial differences between primary and secondary school (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999), the impact of teachers (Ashton, 2008; Galton *et al.*, 2000; Geen, 2005), and most importantly, the recognition of pupils in transition (Flutter and Ruddock, 2004).

The present study has illustrated that pupils' experiences of the transition (at Urban Primary and City Comprehensive) centre on academic and social development, growing up and teachers. The 'process of transition model' (figure 12) indicates that pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition vary between the two settings under these four headings. For example, pupils perceived secondary school to be socially challenging, but in reality they were able to dispel the concerns they had once at secondary school. Moreover, pupils' expectations surrounding teachers were negative, yet post-transition they were able to shed a more positive light on their perception of teachers.

One expectation which remained consistent was the academic complexity of secondary school (i.e., workload and homework). Findings from this research indicate that academic issues are at the forefront of pupils' concerns both prior to and post-transition, suggesting a shift in balance.

The literature conveys a consensus that in the past social issues tend to take precedence over academic concerns during transition (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999; Measor and Fleetham, 2005). Findings from the present study contrast with the recent perception of pupils' thoughts and feelings at this stage of the educational process. Pupils were more concerned about their academic progression which surrounded workload, homework, academic achievement and subjects.

Academic development is central to pupils' progression across the primary-secondary transition. However, with pupils concerns' surrounding the notion of being academically 'good enough' it is time to increase the focus on academic

continuity between primary and secondary school. This approach is especially pertinent with previous findings from around the UK suggesting that approximately 40% of pupils experienced a 'hiatus in progress' whilst transferring from one school to another (Galton *et al.*, 2000). Notably too, Templeton and Hodd's (2002) research has made it clear that this transition is a stage when some pupils disengage significantly from the educational process, which in turn can potentially have a negative impact on later stages of their schooling. In the past one major concern surrounding the transition was that pupils were repeating schemes of work (Estyn, 2008). This research suggests that in the case of Urban Primary and City Comprehensive schemes of work need to be closer to maintain continuity and progression.

Whilst there has been resurgence in recognising the importance of academia across transition (see Ashton, 2008), this research has noted the features of academia pupils struggled with the most (e.g. homework, workload), which led to concerns about academic achievement. Academic progression surrounded the notion of challenge with Urban Primary providing insufficient challenge prior to transition and City Comprehensive too much post-transition. In a recent review of the primary curriculum in England, Rose (2009) suggests there needs to be a curriculum structure in place which is meaningful to learners and monitors their progress to make sure that levels of challenge are appropriate to their different rates of learning.

Previously, a disparity between the amount of homework received in primary and secondary school, alongside workload were seen as natural progressions between primary and secondary school (Geen, 2005), yet these discontinuities were difficult

for pupils to adjust to. Therefore, this research suggests that whilst continuity and progression are seen to be central to a successful transition (as highlighted in chapter two); there is room for significant *academic* improvement (i.e., continuity in workload, homework).

Pupils did not consider that they had been prepared effectively for the transition from primary to secondary school, thus highlighting a need for more effective pre-transitional strategies to facilitate continuity. In order for pupils to experience a continuous transition to secondary school, it is important that the work is relevant and prepares pupils effectively for secondary school. This concurs with a study by Galton *et al.* (1999) which suggested that many schools focus both time and money on smoothing the transfer process rather than ensuring that pupils' commitment to learning is sustained and their progress enhanced. This in turn will address pupils' concerns about academic achievement prior to transition and importantly too allow pupils to adjust to the academic pressures of secondary school life.

As a result of the dominance of academia, social issues surrounding the transition were very much of secondary importance (as highlighted in figure 12). According to Boyd (2005) a concern for pupils prior to transition is bullying and name-calling from older pupils. Whilst bullying was a central finding in Boyd's (2005) study, pupils the current study regarded bullying as a prospect in secondary school rather than a substantial concern. Therefore, one of the challenges for schools (like Urban Primary and City Comprehensive) is to address the misconception/expectation surrounding bullying across the transition.

A salient finding within the present study was friendship. Previously, Ashton (2008) identified that pupils were concerned about moving to secondary school as ‘sole children’, without their peers. Similarly, some pupils reported a concern that it would be difficult to maintain friendships from Urban Primary, which at a time of potential social imbalance (in terms of the impact of transition) was a source of social support. In the past ‘buddying’ schemes were introduced where older pupils befriend and support new entrants to Year 7 during their first years at secondary school (Rose, 2009). Rather than being explicitly concerned about friendship, pupils in the current study emphasised the importance of maintaining friendships and in some cases developing new ones.

In terms of academic and social development, for many pupils there was an ‘appetite’ for the next stage of their lives and the concerns linked to uncertainty eased considerably very quickly. Indeed it may be that previous priorities of personal and social ‘issues’ are now catered for effectively (see OFSTED, 2008) – at least at these two schools.

Throughout this study and supported by empirical evidence (e.g., Ashton, 2008), the importance of ‘growing up’, specifically independence and responsibility was a significant finding (i.e., timetables and equipment). By the time the transition to secondary school was looming, some pupils felt that they had already outgrown what they saw as the ‘childish’ nature of the primary school environment and were ready for the hurly-burly unpredictability of secondary school. It has been suggested that transition to secondary school is complicated further by adolescence, another form of transition (Measor and Fleetham, 2005).

The primary-secondary transition represented an opportunity to develop emotionally and take on increased responsibility. Notably, in her study Ashton (2008) reported 'growing up' to be a recurring theme, particularly in the classroom discussions. Findings from this study suggest an important link between the concept of 'growing up' and pupil's progression. For young people, being a year older matters, pupils want, and expect, to be treated more like adults and to have more autonomy and trust, disappointment (in terms of this expectation) can lead to disengagement (Galton *et al.*, 2003) – highlighting the importance of promoting a sense of responsibility.

Pupils indicated a disparity in the way they were treated at primary and secondary school, which in turn affected their potential to grow up and therefore their overall progression. Whilst primary school was failing to provide the responsibility and independence they required, the pupils themselves recognised the fact that in secondary school they would be treated like grown-ups and therefore get more done. Similarly, in Ashton's (2008) study, while a few students were worried about having to organise themselves, most were looking forward to taking charge of their own equipment and schedules. The pupils' perception of primary school was significant. The implication of this finding is that pupils need to be granted more responsibility at primary school in order to prepare them for the responsibilities of secondary school such as buses and timetables. If this is not the case pupils will struggle during the 'settling in' period at secondary school.

The start of a new school is the time of new subjects, several new teachers and increased responsibility (Sellman, 2000). Having perceived secondary school as an

opportunity to grow up and take the next step, it quickly became clear that the pupils thrived and flourished in their new environment. However, pupils should be effectively prepared for secondary school given the independence and responsibility that becomes a significant element of the daily routine at secondary school. The message (conveyed by the pupils) is one of uncomplicated self-fulfilling expectation: if pupils get treated like grown ups, the likelihood is they will become more grown up. Pupils' experiencing independence and responsibility prior to transition is important for two reasons: firstly, pupils believed this would have a positive impact on the academic progression post-transition; and secondly, it will prepare them for the challenges awaiting them at secondary school.

This finding alongside the importance associated with academic progression illustrates the significant role teachers play in ensuring a successful primary-secondary transition for pupils; which was a salient finding conveyed by the pupils. Nevertheless, there was a disparity between pupils' expectations prior to transition and experiences of teachers at City Comprehensive. Furthermore, pupils' perceptions of their primary school teachers had changed dramatically once at secondary school.

The bond between the primary school teacher and the pupil may not be as beneficial as first thought. For example, Nicholls and Gardner (1999) identify that "inevitably, there will have been a strong bond between the teacher and the class, a bond founded on a complex mixture of teaching style, personality, whole class interaction and individual attention" (p.8). Moreover, there was a sense of leeway at Urban Primary which was inconsistent with City Comprehensive. Instead pupils' perception of their secondary school teachers centred on strictness. This perception was based on the

myths and hearsay surrounding secondary school rather than their experiences which indicate that pupils require more of an in-depth insight into their secondary teachers prior to transition (i.e., effective transition days).

Further importance was placed on the teacher by the pupils, instead of having one teacher for almost everything; they find they have anything up to a dozen or more: perhaps a dozen different teaching styles, a dozen different personalities and even a dozen sets of classroom rules (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999). Findings from this investigation suggest that pupils' changed to favour the *challenge* of several new teachers with contrasting styles, an indication of academic progression.

The present study supports a finding by Evangelou *et al.* (2008) that places significant emphasis on secondary school teachers:

Pupils who felt they had a lot of help from their secondary school to settle in were more likely to have a successful transition. This included help with getting to know their way around the school, relaxing rules in the early weeks, procedures to help pupils adapt (p. 2).

This section emphasises the important role *all* teachers' play in a pupils' transition from primary to secondary school. It is not only academic progression that the teachers hold responsibility for, once in secondary school teachers have a duty to ensure that pupils are settling in, know their way around the school and understand their timetables.

Findings from the present study suggest that pupils have a number of concerns prior to transition (i.e., bullying, friendship, homework) which is supported by the extant

literature (Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Graham and Hill, 2003; Galton *et al.*, 1999; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999). However, it may be incorrect to assume that these concerns are detrimental to a pupil during transition; rather that these concerns are part of a key rite of passage.

The move from a seemingly familiar and safe environment of the primary school, to the unfamiliar and strange surroundings of the secondary school has been described as a 'key rite of passage' for pupils (Pratt and George, 2005). The present study provides evidence that pupils' pre-transition concerns can be perceived as being part of a 'key rite of passage' and that these concerns can usually be dispelled post-transition (see figure 12, p.241). In turn, the ability to dispel these concerns highlights the increasing independence and responsibility associated with the primary-secondary transition. Pupils cited getting lost, bullying and the size of the school as concerns prior to transition. These concerns form a natural part of the transition process and in fact might serve as a beneficial element of the transition. According to Ashton (2008) pupils know that they will be expected to find their own way from room to room several times each day. However, Pratt and George (2005) report that pupils have to learn to adapt to their new school. Part of the adaption process might include dealing with the anxiety of getting lost.

The idea that the transition to secondary school is 'key rite of passage' was brought into sharp focus post-transition. Pupils were able to dispel their concerns about getting lost (see figure 12, p.241), an important element of the transition to secondary school. Similarly, the pupils in the present study displayed concerns about the size of the school in comparison to their relatively small primary school. However, once

more the pupils were able to dispel these worries post-transition. According to Boyd (2005) the move from primary to secondary school represents a stage of development for pupils or a rite of passage for them.

Whilst this research illustrates a number of features of transition that require significant improvement, it also advocates the beneficial affect concerns such as getting lost, size and bullying can have on pupils' post-transition experiences. The message conveyed by the pupils is one of independence: pupils learn to cope with some elements of the transition allowing them to 'grow up' in the process. This in turn will provide them with the confidence to cope with and manage secondary school life. Moreover, enabling pupils to dispel such concerns can have a positive impact on future transitional points such as deciding the appropriate path to take after compulsory education.

The current research captured a number of issues associated with the primary-secondary transition, including academic and social development, growing up and the importance of teachers. In order to gather an alternative understanding of the transition process, this research integrated a second research focus.

6.2 The particularities of the primary-secondary transition through a focus on Physical Education

The intention of Phase Two was to examine the primary-secondary transition through a focus on PE. Empirical evidence surrounding PE and the primary-secondary transition has conveyed an inconsistency both in pupils' perceptions of PE and the potential impact of PE on transition (Lawrence, 2006; Dismore, 2007; Dismore and Bailey, 2010). Research in this area has failed to explore *in detail* pupils' experiences

during the transition. Notably, a recent survey in Wales found that enjoyment of PE and school sport declines as pupils move into secondary school, particularly amongst girls, with a resulting drop-off in participation rates (Sport Wales, 2012). This has been a familiar pattern with researchers noting this since the 1990s (Evans *et al.*, 1996; MacPhail *et al.*, 2003). This research suggests pupils’ expectations and experiences of PE centre on being good enough for secondary school (physical competence), social development, growing up and specialist PE teachers. This is exemplified in the ‘process of transition (PE)’ model below:

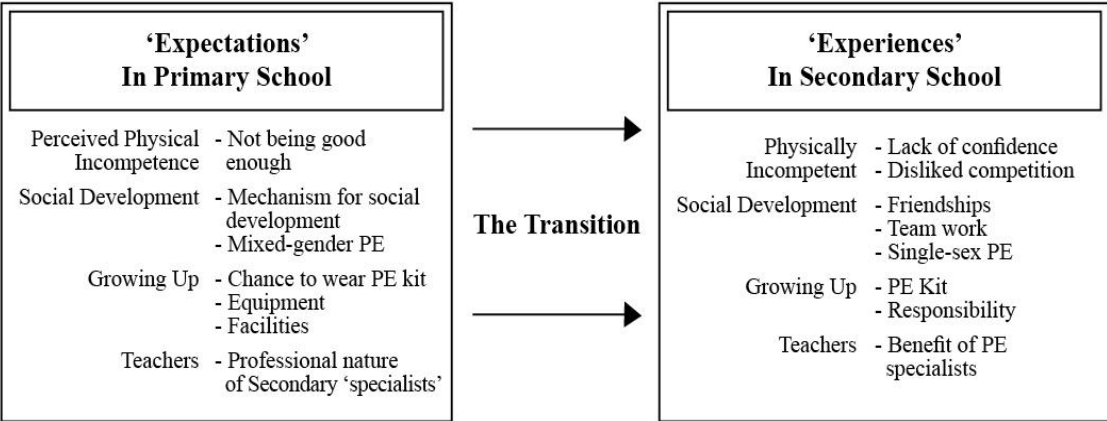


Figure 13. Pupils’ expectations and experiences of PE across the primary-secondary transition

The model above indicates that, with regards to PE, pupils’ experiences of the transition were similar to their expectations. For example, pupils’ perceived themselves as lacking physical competence at Urban Primary, which continued to be a problem at City Comprehensive. Moreover, the pupils recognised the significant role PE would play in social development especially establishing friendships, which became a reality post-transition. Finally, pupils acknowledged the positive impact of PE specialists on their secondary school experiences, which matched their secondary school experiences.

Pupils perceived themselves as not ‘being good enough’ for secondary school in terms of their physical competence. This thesis supports the emphasis placed on both ‘learning to move’ and ‘moving to learn’ in PE (afPE, 2013). The present study suggests that ‘learning to move’ (their physical competence) was significantly undeveloped pre-transition. This was evidenced through the expectation pupils would struggle with the increased difficulty and inability to cope with the demands of secondary school PE.

In the present study the focus on physical competence comprised of pupils’ confidence towards PE and the onset of competition both prior to and post-transition. According to Dismore (2007) pupils are increasingly more prepared for PE across the transition as they participate in a number of visits to secondary schools and sports festivals. Findings from this piece of research suggest that these visits do little to improve pupils’ confidence and competence in PE as it remains a significant issue pre-transition. Whilst the pupils visited City Comprehensive and took part in PE lessons, these visits should occur earlier in the school year to enable pupils to adapt to the focus on physical competence at secondary school.

Both confidence and competence are part of the ten outcomes for HQPE (DfES (2004) yet remain a significant issue for pupils during the primary-secondary transition – at least at these two schools. It is pupils’ pre-transitional experiences in PE lessons which need to be managed to prevent them becoming disillusioned by PE across the transition. For example, there needs to be a significant focus on skill development to enable pupils to develop confidence prior to the move. Moreover, ‘the pedagogy’ employed by teachers across the transition is central to the

development of confidence and competence. Recently, the School Sport Survey (2013) found that school is the most important place in which pupils learn the competence and confidence to participate in physical activity (Sport Wales, 2013). This places emphasis on the importance of a successful transition with regards to PE and the significance of physical literacy in supporting such a transition.

Pupils relished the competitive element of PE at primary school, but competed with relative ease in terms of skill level. Conversely at secondary school they struggled with the onset of competition. The purpose of this research is not to instigate a blame; rather to highlight a significant lack of focus on physical competence prior to transition while the expectation level of pupils, from teachers, is too high post-transition.

This finding demonstrates the significance of communication and collaboration between primary and secondary schools. In the case of Urban Primary and City Comprehensive communication and collaboration remained a problem. In terms of Urban Primary not enough information is exchanged relating to PE and the PE department at City Comprehensive agreed blaming the sparse amount of PE data.

Research on school transition suggests that information regarding PE is not exchanged consistently between secondary and primary schools (Capel *et al.*, 2004). Whilst some schools exchange information, it is not used to inform continuity and progression; information is often exchanged in written format or through discussion at formal meetings (Capel *et al.*, 2004). In Wales, therefore particularly pertinent to the present study, few schools receive detailed information on pupils' PE abilities

from partner primary schools (Estyn, 2012). Moreover, in England, it has been reported that secondary school teachers often express longstanding concerns about the accuracy of information received from primary school (Rose, 2009). Herein, lies a significant issue in terms of PE in Wales, with secondary schools not receiving detailed information regarding pupils' development in PE or what they've done in their lessons.

If PE is to take a significant role in primary and secondary schools (as highlighted by pupils responses), it is vital that progression and continuity are achieved, that repeating schemes of work and experiencing activities that are beyond pupils' capabilities are practices which are avoided. Therefore, it is about the use of the information exchanged between schools rather than concerns over whether information is being exchanged.

Findings suggest that pupils perceived physical incompetence was matched by their post-transition experiences. The implication is that pupils, who have negative perceptions of their competence in PE, may be making conscious decisions not to participate in specific long-term physical activity, as a result of their experiences at school (Carroll and Loumadis, 2001). It is fundamental that pupils are given the confidence and competence to partake in PE to avoid this stage of the development having a negative impact on future participation in physical activity beyond school. Pupils require a challenging PE environment in primary school and a continuous and progressive experience once they have arrived at secondary school.

Physical incompetence was a significant element of PE which had a negative impact upon transition. Findings also suggest that (according to the pupils) PE has a significant role to play in social development across the transition. Previous empirical research has recognised the impact of PE on social development across the transition (Dismore, 2007; Dismore and Bailey, 2010). Whilst findings from the present research supports this evidence, a unique element of this research is that it recognises (through pupils' experiences) the features associated with PE which impact upon social development, these being the role of gender and extra curricular activity. According to Dismore and Bailey (2010) in their study, there was a sense in which the PE environment was a distinctive setting for peer socialisation. Perhaps it is because PE did provide greater or distinctive opportunities to socialise that lessons were also settings in which wider social issues came to the fore.

Social development comprised of maintaining and establishing friendships which pupils regarded as a source of social support. Prior to transition pupils were anxious to retain their friends and saw PE as a vehicle in which to do this. Pupils in the present study recognised the importance of mixed-gender PE lessons in supporting social development. Prior to transition PE lessons were invariably mixed-gender. This provided an opportunity for pupils to work as part of a team with the opposite sex (something which would be beneficial post-transition). However, the staff at both recognised that mixed-gender PE lessons had a negative impact on particularly girls' progression, as boys tended to dominate.

This notion is evidenced in empirical research which suggests a positive environment can be created by allowing a girls-only environment (Knowles, Niven and Fawcner,

2011). Moreover, girls in the present study resented the idea of mixed-gender PE lessons post-transition, preferring separated PE lessons. This was because they felt embarrassed or uncomfortable in mixed-gender PE lessons at secondary school. Similarly, in Knowles, Niven and Fawcner's (2011) study, girls described feelings of being uncomfortable in a physical activity alongside boys, and in particular, they expressed a dislike of swimming in front of boys. These findings suggest that mixed-gender PE lessons can have a positive impact on social development but in terms of supporting an effective environment for progression in PE single-sex PE lessons is the preferred method.

Post-transition pupils participated in single-sex PE lessons. This appears to be a curriculum design issue especially with mixed-gender PE lessons a prominent feature of PE at Urban Primary. The consequence of a discontinuous experience is that pupils may lose sight of the positive impact of mixed-gender PE lessons on social development. This is problematic as single-sex PE lessons prevented pupils socialising in a *unique* way which pupils regarded as an important aspect of the primary-secondary transition. Instead pupils focused on their progression deeming single-sex PE lessons as the most effective way to develop their physical competence. Social development has been recognised as a crucial element of the primary-secondary transition, mixed-gender PE lessons have the potential to ease social concerns (as highlighted in Urban Primary) and can support a wider range of friendship groups. It might be the case that mixed-gender PE lessons at secondary school will provide pupils with opportunities to socialise through activities which promote teamwork and in turn having a long-term, positive impact on pupils' social development.

Extra curricular activity had a significant impact on pupils' experiences across the transition. From the outset this research applied the Physical Education and School Sport definition of PE in which PE is defined in its broadest sense (see chapter one). Ultimately this research illustrates the importance of extra curricular activity and school sport in supporting the learning experiences of pupils during timetabled PE lessons. Extra curricular activity provided pupils with an opportunity to socialise with a wider network of pupils outside of their immediate form group. This acted as a source of social support for pupils in the present study.

This research indicates that pupils considered PE as a way to alleviate the social pressures of moving between schools. In support of this, it has been found that participation in PE can act as a powerful medium for social development and the period when most pupils are moving schools can heighten the processes of social inclusion/exclusion (Bailey 2007). However, this research has indicated that for most pupils PE was an opportunity to maintain and establish friendships in a unique way through mixed-gender PE lessons and extra curricular activity at primary school. Moreover, engagement in mixed-gender PE lessons was an aspect of PE most pupils enjoyed at primary school, yet were deprived of this experience at secondary school, which may have been beneficial in supporting the social side of the transition. This emphasises the importance of a smooth transition in PE, which allows pupils to develop friendships with a wider network of pupils through extra curricular activity. With social development working well across the transition, it is important that PE plays a more integral role in developing pupils social skills post-transition and importantly too prior to transition, namely through extra curricular activity.

A key underlining message throughout the present study has been the importance (conveyed by the pupils) of teachers in the transition process. In terms of PE, the notion of specialist v non-specialist teachers had a significant impact on pupils' expectations and experiences. Prior to transition pupils expected secondary school to be more professional due to the introduction of (in their words) 'PE teachers' as opposed to 'teachers of PE'. In this instance their experiences matched their expectations with pupils responding positively to their secondary school specialists. However, this finding suggests that (in the case of Urban Primary and City Comprehensive) pupils were lacking support prior to transition which contributed to a discontinuous experience between primary and secondary school. Recently in Wales, the Schools Physical Activity Task and Finish Group (SPATFG) (2013) recommended that:

All schools need to have access to well-qualified, specialist teachers, who would continually work with schools to ensure the delivery of high-quality PE programmes and, who could identify and promote best practice. This support would also facilitate the smooth transition between primary and secondary schools (p.6).

This recommendation illustrates the significance of specialism across the primary-secondary transition in Wales (where the research took place). In support of this, discussions with staff in both Urban Primary and City Comprehensive suggested that it is not just a matter of 'specialism', instead that effective links, creating support between primary and secondary school teachers is essential.

Findings from this research, supported by work of the Schools Physical Activity Task Finish Group (2013) suggest that primary school teachers need more support in their teaching of PE which in turn might improve pupils' experiences during the

primary-secondary transition. For example, specialist or well informed teachers are more likely to have the confidence to utilise a range of teaching styles, including those that promote a child-centred approach. Staff views were elicited to reflect the emphasis placed on teachers by the pupils themselves. According to the staff in the present study, Initial Teacher Training is where PE is failing. Similarly, SPATFG (2013) indicate that:

The amount of time given to PE in Initial Teacher Training programmes is severely limited. This aspect of training needs to be dramatically improved to establish suitable conditions to deliver high-quality PE programmes in all schools (p.6).

This is an aspect of PE which requires significant improvement if PE is to take a more prominent role in the primary-secondary transition. Moreover, it is fundamental that teachers can acquire the skills and expertise to deliver consistently high-quality and motivating lessons that engage, challenge and inspire all pupils (SPATFG, 2013).

Specialist PE teachers were responded to positively at secondary school. This contributed to the feeling that they were being challenged in PE lessons and therefore progressing. This finding suggests that teaching and learning should be in line with the previous or next stage of the educational process. Pupils require a course of study which builds upon what they have already learnt and a contributing factor is teachers having sufficient knowledge of PE to provide a suitable basis in primary school.

A recent study by Petrie (2010) found that generalist teachers can feel competent, motivated and confident in their ability to teach PE without extensive opportunities to develop PE content knowledge. However, this might not necessarily provide

pupils with confidence in PE in terms of physical competence. This study instead suggests that opportunities for primary school teachers to work alongside their secondary counterparts needs to be the norm rather than just an ‘opportunity’, this in turn may lead to pupils becoming equipped with the knowledge required for secondary school and a greater chance of participation in PE and sporting activity beyond school life. In England, it has been suggested that secondary school teachers should provide more support for their primary counterparts (OFSTED, 2009). Nevertheless, it is important that collaboration remains a two way process between schools, with primary and secondary school teachers supporting each other. Whilst the present study centred upon the pupils, it is teachers’ pedagogical practice and level of interaction which has a significant impact on pupils’ experience of transition and therefore requires attention.

6.3 The main headlines

The present study has identified a disparity in pupils’ experiences of the transition and the way these experiences have been conveyed in the extant literature. Prior to the move, pupils at Urban Primary tended to have a negative perception of secondary school. They viewed secondary school as academically more difficult, and had been persuaded by some of the myths that surround the transition to secondary school. In short, these anxieties and concerns were fuelled by the unknown. With regards to the transition across the curriculum one such concern for pupils was academic continuity with social development being overshadowed.

The key underlying message to emerge in terms of academia and social development is therefore one of managing more effectively the expectations of pupils prior to

leaving primary school. It is significant that academic issues during transition were more prominent in the thinking of these youngsters than had been found in other studies (Ashton, 2008; Measor and Fleetham, 2005). If Urban Primary School and City Comprehensive School are typical of many schools in metropolitan areas throughout the UK (and there is no reason to think that they are not), then it seems timely to renew emphasis on the academic transition with social/pastoral arrangements seemingly working well.

Closely linked to the importance of academia, this research has highlighted the significant role of teachers in pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition. This thesis supports Galton *et al's* (1999) suggestion that the primary-secondary transition can be made easier by timely and informed intervention by year 6 and 7 teachers. However, it is not only year 6 and 7 teachers that can significantly impact upon the transition but all members of staff in both primary and secondary school. The importance of independence and responsibility, more specifically the readiness to grow up was an overarching theme across the study. Towards the end of year 6 pupils were anxious to move to secondary school to grow and achieve.

Ultimately, there is still discontinuity surrounding the primary-secondary transition and this thesis illustrates that in terms of the transition across the curriculum a number of issues remain. However, by focusing on a particular subject area an alternative understanding of the transition can be revealed. With regards to PE findings suggest that pupils' expectations of the transition are more in line with their

experiences. However, pupils recognised the importance of physical competence, social development, growing up and the impact of PE teachers.

The key message surrounding PE is that pupils held an expectation that they were not 'good enough' for the significant step up at secondary school. Pupils felt their primary school experience was lacking challenge in terms of their physical competence which would have significance post-transition. As expected the pupils struggled with the focus on skill-related activity at City Comprehensive. Moreover, the onset of competition had a significant impact on pupils' confidence in PE. Whilst they competed with relative ease in primary school, the pupils struggled with competitive activities at City Comprehensive.

In terms of social development, pupils regarded PE as a source of support in terms of social development. This emphasises the importance of a smooth transition in PE, it allows pupils to develop friendships with a wider network of pupils through extra curricular activity. With social development seemingly working well across the transition it is important therefore that PE plays a more integral role in developing pupils' social skills both prior to and post-transition.

Teachers played a significant role in pupils' expectations and experiences of PE across the primary-secondary transition. Pupils recognised the benefit of having a secondary school PE specialist as opposed to a generalist primary teacher. They perceived secondary school teachers as having a positive influence on their progression in PE. In this case the pupils' experiences matched their expectations

with the majority responding positively to the challenging environment created by their secondary school PE teachers.

Alongside these main headlines, the present study illustrates the significance of pupil-voice within educational research, especially with regards to the primary-secondary transition. Findings from this research advocate the importance of considering the perceptions of the population experiencing transition, the pupils.

This following section provides a summative conclusion addressing the main headlines drawn from the present study, theoretical and practical implications, limitations and future research directions. This thesis then culminates in a reflective epilogue concluding the personal journey undertaken as part of the doctoral apprenticeship, including the transition in itself from undergraduate to postgraduate study and managing a supervisory team.

6.4 Theoretical implications: providing a voice

In order to better understand the thoughts of the pupils, this research drew on elements of the child-centred approach as its theoretical framework, in order to provide a voice for pupils. The two models (figure 12 and 13) illustrate pupils' expectations and experiences of the transition; yet the main theoretical implication drawn from this research is the centrality of the pupils in the process of transition. As such, pupils' expectations and experiences were at the centre of the process and ultimately drove the study. The research design also lent itself to a child-centred approach with interviews, classroom activities and informal discussion used to gather the views of the pupils.

The influence of pupils has been somewhat neglected in the debate surrounding the primary-secondary transition in spite of them being the most significant factor within the process (Ashton, 2008). The majority of studies to date have focused on a single aspect of the transition, rather than assessing pupils' concerns (Rice *et al.*, 2011). In order to accurately assess the effectiveness of the primary-secondary transition it is the voices of the population that are 'in transition' that need to be heard. Gathering pupils' perceptions of the transition is a crucial element of creating a continuous and progressive experience. However, it is the depth to which these views are explored that can impact on the accuracy of pupil responses. The implementation of an ethnographic approach allowed for relationships and trust to be developed prior to exploring the pupils' views. This meant that pupils were more likely to provide an accurate account of their experiences of the primary-secondary transition.

For pupils, it is vital they take responsibility for their learning, ensuring that they are engaging in classroom activities and completing the work required of them. From a practitioner's perspective, the present study supports the key message from Ashton's (2008) study which identified pupils as an invaluable resource. She concluded:

It should be possible for secondary schools to learn from these experiences and involve students directly on a regular basis in improving their practice around transition. In this way, transition each year can be tailored for the particular school, cohort of pupils and local circumstances (p.181).

Pupils in the present study inevitably had contrasting concerns about transition in comparison with previous empirical research (e.g., Ashton, 2008; Marks, 2004). This is why research of this kind is important and requires regular update. For example, previously child-centred research identified that bullying has played a major role in pupils' thoughts prior to transition (Galton *et al.*, 1999; Nicholls and Gardner, 1999).

However, for pupils nowadays bullying represents a minor concern in comparison with other worries (i.e., academic progression). Moreover, previous research (i.e., Ashton, 2008) has only taken into account pupils' expectations of the transition, whereas the present study highlights the importance of eliciting the views of pupils once in secondary school.

This research has illustrated the transition as a continual process. For this process to become successful four elements of transition require attention (academic development, social development, independence and teaching). However, ultimately it is the pupil, their perceptions which can impact upon the primary-secondary transition becoming a continuous and progressive experience and therefore a successful one.

A significant theoretical implication which has emerged from the present study is that child-centred research should empower and enable pupils to feel comfortable in their surroundings and with the process of research. It is important that the researcher understands the participants before attempting to conduct interviews or classroom activities. Moreover, ethically the pupils responded positively to the use of assent forms, again providing them with a voice.

Alongside the importance of child-centredness, findings from this research have a number of practical implications which can impact upon transitional policy.

6.5 Practical implications

This research has four significant practical implications relevant to both primary and secondary schools, but importantly too, pupils experiencing transition. Findings from the study have the potential to inform both primary and secondary schools including their transition plans, agreements, transition days and future transitional developments. Practical implications include:

- A renewed focus on academia;
- The supportive role of PE;
- Impact of teachers;
- Transition toolkit

This research identified the importance of academia across the transition which for primary and secondary schools (similar to Urban Primary and City Comprehensive) needs to become a priority. Whilst social development was important for the pupils, it was their academic development which was central to their concerns. This places emphasis on communication between primary and secondary schools regarding academic progression, ensuring that pupil don't repeat schemes of work, but equally that the work set is in line with their academic capability.

Moreover, this research illustrates the significance of PE across transition and the supportive role it can play in integrating pupils into secondary school life (i.e., social development). However, insufficient emphasis on physical competence left pupils lacking confidence prior to transition. This research has the potential to inform PE departments about positive and negative aspects of PE across the transition. For example, pupils often struggled with the onset of competition at secondary school, a factor which could potentially increase the likelihood of non-participation in sport

and physical activity through and beyond secondary school. These findings highlight the importance of PE and especially physical literacy within the lives of these pupils in order to support transition.

As such, an implication of the present study is the role of the teacher in supporting pupils across the primary-secondary transition. Teachers have a significant impact on pupils' experiences at primary and secondary school, which can be both positive and negative. Therefore, practitioners should consider the most effective way to assist pupils in making a successful transition to secondary school.

However, the most striking implication from this study was the potential to support pupils experiencing transition (transition toolkit). The strength of this research is that it provides pupils in the latter stages of primary school with crucial information about the transition to secondary. It is important therefore that this information is provided by the voices of pupils experiencing transition rather than inspection agencies such as Estyn or OFSTED. This, in turn, can dispel some of the concerns pupils have regarding transition through the experiences of their predecessors.

As part of the agreement with Urban Primary School, I was asked to produce a short report detailing the findings of the present study (see appendix 9). The report provided an insight into pupils' experiences of the transition. Ultimately, this report (using the experiences of the pupils) aimed to dispel some of the myths and hearsay surrounding the primary-secondary school transition, enabling pupils to focus on other aspects of the transition (i.e., academic progression). For example, alluded to in chapter five, this research suggests that schools need to manage the misconception

about bullying, an element of the transition which pupils should be made aware of. Key findings from the study along with a selection of key quotes which represented *the pupils'* views were chosen to support the report.

The Headteacher believed this to be a valuable resource both for present and future pupils and to inform the school's transition policy. The report was used as part of a year 6 assembly whereby pupils were given an insight into the experiences of a group of 11-12 year olds going through the transition to secondary school. The feedback from the school was positive. The pupils sought comfort in the views of their predecessors, specifically their expectations and experiences of transition, and were especially interested in the increased responsibility associated with the transition to secondary school. The Headteacher also communicated the findings of the report to staff within the school highlighting the potential impact upon transitional arrangements within the school.

Whilst findings from the present study have the potential to support pupils and schools in terms of transition, the report provides a practical example of the contribution research of this kind can have on pupils' pre and post-transitional experiences. Moreover, it provided Urban Primary School with an insight into aspects of transition pupils responded well to and ways to improve the transitional process.

6.6 Limitations of the study

There are two limitations of the present study. The first, due to the ethnographic nature of the study, 'time' prevented the consideration of pupils' experiences later on

in the transition process. For example, pupils' experiences towards the end of year eight might be able to provide an insight into the long-term effects of the transition. This will also enable comparisons to be made between pupils' experiences immediately after transition and a year into secondary school life in year 8. However, a decision had to be made to sacrifice scope for depth, one which has come to fruition.

The second limitation surrounds the number and diversity of schools involved in the study. For example, the inclusion of welsh-medium or faith schools in order to incorporate perceptions of pupils from various religious backgrounds may have introduced a comparative element to the research. However, having one primary and secondary school allowed for an in-depth exploration of the primary-secondary transition and increased the richness of the data. Moreover, these limitations are inevitable due to the vigorous nature of the research design.

6.7 Future research directions

The acknowledged limitations can be addressed in three recommendations for future research. Firstly, the primary-secondary transition has been described as a process which covers year 6, 7 and 8 (Measor and Fleetham, 2005). Therefore, future research should devote 'time' in order to consider these three stages of education and their impact on transition. Secondly, having illustrated the importance of academia across transition, future transitional research should concentrate solely on the academic impact of the primary-secondary transition, supported by findings from the present study. Future research should consider the academic impact of transition on a larger scale (i.e., using more schools). Alongside findings from the present study, a

focus on academia will help to restore balance between social and academic issues across transition. Finally, previous research has illustrated the role of PE in pupils' social development (Dismore and Bailey, 2010), however this research has indicated that 'learning to move' (physical competence) requires significant improvement across transition, another area for future research. Physical competence contributes to the notion of a physically literate pupil, yet remains a problem pre-transition. Future research is required to examine the development of physical competence within primary school settings. Whilst this study has recommended three areas for future research, it is essential that research of this kind is centred on the pupils, their expectations and experiences of the transition.

6.8 Reflections

The purpose of this chapter was clear from the outset. Essentially, I wanted to address the central aim of the research. The main challenge was bringing together and concluding a thesis. I was conscious of providing a strong conclusion in order to do justice to the study. I broke the chapter into two sections: the first addressing the central aim of the study; and the second addressing theoretical and practical implications alongside limitations and future research directions. Designing two models which dealt with the transition across the curriculum and pupils' experiences of PE allowed me to focus my thoughts. I was able to convey to the reader exactly how this research had contributed to the knowledge base surrounding the primary-secondary transition. Moreover, the two models highlighted the significance of pupils' experiences of transition.

The second part of this chapter held a great deal of significance too. It represented the final piece of the jigsaw. From the outset I was aware of the issues that required consideration. The first of these were the theoretical implications drawn from the present study. I wanted to convey the important role pupils have in research related to the primary-secondary transition. For me, this was the most significant 'take home' message which runs throughout the thesis. I began by focusing on what could be learnt from the present study in terms of child-centredness. Here, the main challenge was to present my argument in a succinct and coherent manner avoiding repetition.

The second issue I was anxious to address were the practical implications drawn from the present study. My supervisory team asked me to consider how policy makers, teachers, LEAs, schools, parents and pupils might use the findings. This required an alternative mind-set. Prior to undertaking my PhD, my understanding of schooling and transition was established through relatively limited previous experience in schools. Therefore, this task took time, as it was important to justify each implication. I wanted to convey the way in which schools might adapt their approach, but also the potential of this research to become an invaluable resource for pupils, especially prior to transition.

Finally, this chapter incorporated a discussion surrounding future research directions and limitations of the present study. Although it was important to include limitations, I was conscious to ensure that future research directions addressed such limitations. Moreover, whilst I reflected on the limitations I was aware of the key strengths of the research.

On reflection, the final chapter of this thesis was challenging for several reasons: firstly, the awareness that it should provide a strong ‘take home’ message; secondly, that it is important not to repeat information from the previous chapter; and finally, the chapter should highlight explicitly the original contribution to knowledge – a central feature of any doctoral thesis.

Epilogue

Throughout this thesis reflections have been used to describe key points within the research journey. The final part of this thesis provides a reflexive insight into the personal journey undertaken as part of my doctoral study. It details some of the challenges faced during a three year period between October 2010 and October 2013 including adapting to the significant 'step up', managing my supervisory team and justifying and defending my work. It can be argued that in many cases the PhD journey is as important as the overall outcome. To reflect this, the following epilogue is divided into two sections reflecting the initial stages of study (October 2010 - 2011) and culminating in an insight into the final stages of my PhD Journey (July 2013 – October 2013).

Towards the final stages of this research, I took the time to reflect on the journey from undergraduate to nearing the completion of my doctoral studies. My knowledge and understanding as a researcher and as a person has developed significantly since October 2010. The following account is drawn from a reflection made during my first term as a PhD student as part of my Personal Development Portfolio (PDP):

December 2010 - *Having completed my undergraduate degree only a short time ago I found myself back in university and finding it difficult to adapt to my daily routine. As a third year undergraduate student, contact time is sporadic, some days you have several lectures or seminars and other days are free. However, I soon realised there was nobody checking attendance or whether I was 'on task' it was more about self-motivation, the drive to meet deadlines which ultimately you set for yourself. Initially I found it difficult to get into a productive routine in which I was able to produce work of sufficient*

standard. Some of the questions I regularly asked myself were, how long should I spend in the research house? Should I set myself daily targets? And is the office the most productive place to work? As was the case, the answers to these questions came with time. I found the most beneficial routine was to stick closely to a 9-5 schedule, setting weekly targets, ensuring that I met all deadlines that were set.

On reflection the first year of research was a challenging period. According to Phillips and Pugh (1994), at undergraduate level, a great deal, in academic terms is organised for you, in doctoral education you have to take responsibility for managing your learning and for getting yourself a PhD.

I had to adapt relatively quickly to the 'step up' to PhD level. One of the challenges I faced was to become more critical in my writing. In the early stages of the journey my supervisory team regularly pointed towards my lack of criticality, something which is an integral part of the PhD criteria. At this point, nearing the end of my PhD journey evaluation and analysis has become a more prominent feature of the thesis, but was a skill that needed significant development as part of my doctoral apprenticeship.

Similarly, I had to adapt to people who were once my lecturers during undergraduate study now becoming colleagues. The cultural adjustment associated with doctoral research is vast. At undergraduate level whilst I had a positive relationship with lecturers, I was aware of the significant gap between us. However, during my PhD journey I have experienced a closer working relationship with

academics in the school, working coherently alongside them both as a lecturer in Higher Education and as part of my doctoral study.

Linked to the significant culture change between undergraduate and postgraduate study, I also had to adapt to having a supervisory team. On reflection, one of the crucial elements of doctoral study is having a positive, effective working relationship with your supervisory team. From the outset, my supervisory team were thorough in their approach, constantly challenging and questioning the decisions I had made. It is this approach which enabled me to develop a justification for my stance, their attention to detail meant I knew what was required of each draft chapter. In terms of organisation it was very much my responsibility to plan meetings, suggest deadlines and drive the research. As is with a PhD you are under self-management; no use sitting around waiting to be told what to do next; in the postgraduate world these are opportunities, not deficiencies (Phillips and Pugh, 1994). My approach to writing meant I produced work at a relatively fast pace, therefore it was essential to submit a piece of work which in my eyes was ready to 'drop into the thesis'.

However, 'letting go' of work was a problematic process, having worked on chapters for several months I wanted to ensure the piece of work reflected the effort I had put in. Submitting a draft chapter went 'hand in hand' with a follow up supervisory meeting. The purpose of these meetings was to critique the submitted draft and to defend its content. As these meetings became more frequent I gradually established a standard to which became acceptable both in the process of writing and my justification. Towards the end of my first year of study (MPhil) I was able to defend my work and my overall stance.

The challenges faced in my first year as a postgraduate were vast. However, overcoming the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate meant I was prepared for the process of fieldwork (as alluded to in chapter four) and being able to coherently and concisely communicate the particularities of my research to both internal and external research communities.

During my final year, having completed both the MPhil to PhD transfer and the fieldwork process, I was able to fully concentrate on the crucial 'writing up' period. Ultimately, this period would pose a significant challenge both in terms of meeting numerous deadlines and dealing with the realisation I was now in the final stages of my PhD journey. At this point I became completely immersed in the thesis. In my head I visualised the thesis, how it would appear chapter by chapter. Frustratingly, but inevitably the structure of my thesis changed on several occasions to suit its content. Whilst the writing process was a significant hurdle during the initial stages of my PhD journey, constantly altering structure and layout was a continuous battle.

The route I took to this point (MPhil/PhD) meant I had a number of milestones to work towards. The first was to 'survive' year one and fulfil the expectation that had been placed on me by myself and others. The second was to successfully complete the MPhil to PhD transfer and be able to defend the area of study. Thirdly, I was anxious to have a successful fieldwork period in school and finally the 'writing up' period which would involve complete dedication in order to meet deadlines.

Nearing the end of my PhD journey, I am both excited to finish and anxious to see what lies ahead. Inevitably my PhD has taken centre stage, instead of being

engrossed in social occasions, at times my thoughts have been driven by how I might improve certain aspects of my thesis. I have been referred to as 'daydreamer' by my friendship group, alluding to the somewhat annoying habit of detaching myself from my immediate surroundings to think about my next deadline or feedback.

On reflection, having entered postgraduate study with a particular perception of the challenges associated with a PhD, I failed to comprehend the enormity of the task ahead. At the time I was unsure where this journey would take me, let alone whether I would make it to the end. However, without wanting to make it sound like a cliché I couldn't have envisaged the rollercoaster that has been my PhD journey. At times, after a successful supervisory meeting, a research paper accepted for publication (see appendix 10) or delivery at a conference the feeling of exhilaration is undeniable. However, it is the challenges which are thrust upon you which ultimately contribute to the successfulness of your PhD journey. In my experience a PhD is not just about writing a thesis, what defines you as a PhD candidate are the numerous networking events, the ability to throw yourself into the deep end and finally the expertise developed from the first day until the last. Whilst the central focus of my thesis has been pupils' journey across the primary-secondary transition, I too have been on a personal journey. This has been evidenced in the reflective commentary which has run throughout this thesis. Which is why, as alluded to previously, the PhD journey is as important as the overall outcome.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Examples of information and consent forms for Primary and Secondary School Headteachers (Phase One and Phase Two)

Primary School Headteacher Consent Form

Cardiff School of Education

UWIC, Cyncoed Campus,
Cyncoed Road, Cardiff, CF23 6XD

Tel: +44 (0)29 2041 7092

Fax: +44 (0)29 2041 6163

Dear _____

Project Title: Schooling, Physical Education and the Primary-Secondary Transition – An Ethnographic Study

Principal Investigator: **Kieran Hodgkin**

I am writing to ask your permission to carry out a two-phase PhD project in your institution. The project is concerned with the primary-secondary transition; therefore it will involve year 6 pupils in the process of making the transition to secondary education. Research will take place in June/July 2011 for a 6 week period with the researcher then tracking pupils into their secondary school (_____). Consent will be sought from parents whilst assent will be gained from pupils.

What is the project about?

This two-phase ethnographic PhD project is firstly concerned with pupils' perceptions, expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition. Through observations, classroom activities (including mapping and themed discussions) and interviews, the project will examine all aspects of the primary-secondary transition from a pupil perspective in both a primary and secondary school setting (Phase One). The project will track a number of primary pupils into their secondary school and use a number of research methods to gather data regarding pupils' post-transition experiences compared with their pre-transition expectations.. The research project will then shift focus to evaluate the primary-secondary transition concerning Physical Education (Phase Two-2012). The same structure will be in place with the researcher conducting observations, interviews and classroom activities gathering perspectives of the transition in relation to Physical Education from pupils.

The research is likely to focus on the following areas:

- The transition from primary to secondary education (pupils' perspectives)
- Physical Education across the transition

Your institution's involvement in the project

I would like your consent to conduct research involving members of staff and pupils in your institution. The project is split into two phases, Phase One will involve the researcher entering your school (for 6 weeks, June/July 2011) as classroom assistant, using classroom activities, interviews and observations to gather data regarding pupils' expectations and perceptions of the primary-secondary transition. The second phase of the project will involve the researcher entering your school a year later (June/July 2012) again as a classroom assistant. However, this phase of the project will focus on Physical Education across the primary-secondary transition. For this a teacher perspective as well as a pupil perspective will be required.

Research Focus: objectives

Phase One:

- (1) A critical evaluation of literature concerning all aspects of the transition between primary and secondary school.
- (2) The first phase of a two-phase period of ethnographic research at a primary and a secondary school.
- (3) A thorough exploration of the expectations and perceptions of the transition from primary to secondary school.

Phase Two:

- (4) A critical and precise evaluation of literature concerning pedagogic practice and physical education across the primary-secondary transition.
- (5) The second phase of a two-phase period of ethnographic research at the same primary and secondary schools with a focus on pedagogic practice and physical education.
- (6) A detailed examination of the pedagogical practice within physical education across the primary-secondary transition.

Do I have the right to withdraw from the project when I want?

Yes, your participation is voluntary and you, your member(s) of staff and pupils are free to withdraw from the project at any time without penalty and without giving any reason. If you choose to withdraw after data has been collected, but prior to any possible publication, your data will be destroyed and not included in the study.

Will anonymity be guaranteed?

Yes, the results and any output resulting from this project will be made *anonymous*, making it impossible to determine the identity of a school or individual. Access to the data will be restricted to the researcher and my supervisors.

Once again, thank you for your participation in this project. I look forward to working with you.

Informed consent will be sought separately from members of staff, parents and assent from pupils in addition to this request for your permission to conduct the research.

Yours sincerely
Kieran Hodgkin
kihodgkin@uwic.ac.uk



Project title:

Title of Project: Schooling, Physical Education and the Primary-Secondary Transition – An Ethnographic Study

Principal Investigator: Kieran Hodgkin

Consent

I hereby consent to member of staff at (Name of School)

taking part in this research.

Signature

Date

.....

.....

PRINT NAME

.....

Secondary School Headteacher Consent Form

Cardiff School of Education

UWIC, Cyncoed Campus,
Cyncoed Road, Cardiff, CF23 6XD
Tel: +44 (0)29 2041 7092
Fax: +44 (0)29 2041 6163

Dear, _____

Project Title: Schooling, Physical Education And The Primary-Secondary Transition – An Ethnographic Study.

Principal Investigator: **Kieran Hodgkin**

I am writing to ask your permission to carry out a two-phase PhD project in your institution. The project is concerned with the primary-secondary transition; therefore it will involve year 7 pupils from _____ discussing their experiences of the transition and comparing these with their expectations. Research will take place in October/November 2011 after a settling in period, the field work will last 6 weeks. Consent will be sought from parents whilst assent will be gained from pupils.

What is the project about?

This two-phase ethnographic PhD project is firstly concerned with pupils' perceptions, expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary transition. Through observations, classroom activities (including, mapping, themed discussions) and interviews, the project will examine all aspects of the primary-secondary transition from a pupil perspective in both a primary and secondary school setting (Phase One). The project will track primary pupils into their secondary school and use a number of research methods to gather data regarding pupils pre-transition expectations compared with their post-transition experiences.

The research project will then shift focus to evaluate the primary-secondary transition concerning Physical Education (Phase Two-2012). The same structure will be in place with the researcher conducting observations, interviews and classroom activities, gathering perspectives of the transition in relation to Physical Education.

The research is likely to focus on the following areas:

- The transition from primary to secondary education (pupils' perspectives)
- Physical Education across the transition

Your institution's involvement in the project

I would like your consent to conduct research involving pupils and members of staff in your institution. The project is split into two phases, Phase One will involve the researcher entering your school (for 6 weeks October/November) as a classroom assistant, using observations, interviews and mind mapping activities to gather data from pupils involved in the study regarding their experiences of the primary-secondary transition. The second phase of the project will involve the researcher entering your institution a year later (November/October 2012) for the same period of time (6 weeks). However, this time gaining both teachers and pupils views of the transition in relation to Physical Education.

Research Focus: objectives

Phase One:

- (1) A critical evaluation of literature concerning all aspects of the transition between primary and secondary school.
- (2) The first phase of a two-phase period of ethnographic research at a primary and a secondary school.
- (3) A thorough exploration of the expectations and perceptions of the transition from primary to secondary school.

Phase Two:

- (4) A critical and precise evaluation of literature concerning pedagogic practice and physical education across the primary-secondary transition.
- (5) The second phase of a two-phase period of ethnographic research at the same primary and secondary schools with a focus on pedagogic practice and physical education.
- (6) A detailed examination of the pedagogical practice within physical education across the primary-secondary transition.

Do I have the right to withdraw from the project when I want?

Yes, your participation is voluntary and you, your member(s) of staff and pupils are free to withdraw from the project at any time without penalty and without giving any reason. If you choose to withdraw after data has been collected, but prior to any possible publication, your data will be destroyed and not included in the study.

Will anonymity be guaranteed?

Yes, the results and output resulting from this project will be made *anonymous*, making it impossible to determine the identity of a school or individual. Access to the data will be restricted to the researcher and my supervisors.

Once again, thank you for your participation in this project. I look forward to working with you.

Informed consent will be sought separately from members of staff, parents and assent from pupils in addition to this request for your permission to conduct the research.

Yours sincerely,
Kieran Hodgkin
kihodgkin@uwic.ac.uk



Project title: Schooling, Physical Education and the Primary-Secondary Transition – An Ethnographic Study.

Principal Investigator: Kieran Hodgkin

Consent

I hereby consent to members of staff and pupils at

taking part in this research project.

Signature

Date

.....

.....

PRINT NAME

.....

Appendix 2 – Example of parent information sheet and consent form (Phase One)



Title of Project: Schooling, Physical Education and the Primary-Secondary Transition – An Ethnographic Study.

Parent / Guardian Information Sheet

Background

This PhD project is concerned with pupils' perceptions and expectations of the primary-secondary transition. Through observations, interviews and classroom activities the study will examine all aspects of the transition and provide schools with a useful insight into pupils' thoughts and feelings about the upcoming transition to secondary education. This project also aims to provide pupils with any help they need in the move to secondary school.

Your child's participation in the research project

Why your child has been asked

Your child has been invited to take part in this project because they are about to embark on the transition from primary to secondary school.

What would happen if you agree for your child to join this project?

If you agree for your child to join the study, there are three main things that will happen.

1. Your child will be part of a six month project, with the researcher observing lessons, interviewing pupils and organising a number classroom activities to gain an insight into pupils' expectations of the primary-secondary transition.
2. Your child, along with their peers will be asked to share their expectations of secondary school education. For example the pupils may be asked what they think their teachers will be like, the new subjects that they will be taking and their general thoughts and feelings about the move?
3. Your child will then be visited in their secondary school (after a settling in period). The researcher will repeat the process of interviewing, observing to gain an insight into whether their experience of the primary-secondary transition met their expectations.

At the end of the project the results will be used as part of a PhD project with names of the pupils and school remaining anonymous.

Are there any risks?

We do not think there are any significant risks to your child from taking part in the study. However, if he/she does have any worries then feel free to tell us.

Your rights

In the very unlikely event of something going wrong during the evaluation, UWIC fully indemnifies its staff, and participants are covered by its insurance.

What happens to the results of this study?

The results of this study will be used as part of a PhD thesis. However, the names and any documentation that may reveal the identity of the pupils involved will be thoroughly examined to ensure that anonymity remains. The information will be represented and themes and codes will be drawn from interviews, observations and classroom activities. However there will be no description that would identify individuals. Interview transcripts will also keep the identity of the individual anonymous.

Are there any benefits from taking part?

Yes, your child will be able to learn more about the transition to secondary school through discussing with their peers the aspects of the transition they are looking forward to and any worries they may have. This will help them feel confident and excited about the move to secondary school.

What happens next?

With this letter you'll find an information sheet for your child. There are also two forms to complete. The first is for you to give permission for your child to be involved in the project. The second is a different form for your child to complete to confirm that s/he is willing to take part. If you are willing for your child to participate, and s/he is too, please return them to the school, thank you.

How we protect your privacy:

As you can see, the research project will respect your child's privacy. We have taken very careful steps to make sure that your child cannot be identified from any of the information that we have about them.

All the information about your child will be stored securely away from the consent and assent forms. At the end of the project we will destroy the information we have gathered about your child. We will only keep the consent and assent forms with your name and address. We keep these for ten years because we are required to do so by UWIC.

Further information

If you have any questions about the research or how we intend to conduct the study, please contact us.

Yours Sincerely,

Kieran Hodgkin

✉ kihodgkin@uwic.ac.uk



UWIC PARENT / GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Schooling, Physical Education and the Primary-
Secondary Transition- An Ethnographic Study

Name of Researcher: Kieran Hodgkin

Name of Child _____

Name of Parent / Guardian _____

Signature of Parent / Guardian _____

Date

Appendix 3 – Example of child Information sheet and assent form (Phase One)

Title of Project:

Schooling, Physical Education and the Primary-Secondary Transition- An Ethnographic Study

Child Information Sheet

Welcome

This project is all about finding out what children think about the move to secondary school and leaving their primary school. Some of the things that we maybe talking about are what excites you about the move? What subjects you are looking forward to taking? What your new teachers may be like? What you think there time a secondary school will be like? And what you may miss about your primary school. There are two main parts to this project:

- Firstly, we will talk to you about the move to secondary school and what you think it will be like.
- Secondly, we will visit you in your secondary school and ask you about the move and whether it has been what you thought it would be like.

Why you?

You are being asked because you are about to move to secondary school and we feel that this project may help you talk to us and your friends about the move to your new school.

What will happen?

The project is split into two parts. At the very start we will come into your school, observe some of your lessons and ask some questions about what you think your new school will be like. The second part of the project will involve us visiting you in your new school, again, observing some of your lessons and asking you some questions about your time in secondary school so far.

Do I have to?

No, you don't. No-one is forcing you. And if you start and decide you don't want to carry on, that's fine. There's no problem, just tell us.

What do we do?

When we've got our information we will write up the results of the project. However, this will not include any of your names as we will keep these private.

Have you got any questions?

If you have any questions just ask. You can ask us yourself, or you can get your parent or guardian to ask us.

Kieran Hodgkin
kihodgkin@uwic.ac.uk

CHILD'S ASSENT FORM

:

Title of Project: Schooling, Physical Education and the Primary-Secondary Transition- An Ethnographic Study

Name of Researcher: Kieran Hodgkin

Please fill this form by ticking the face by each question that you think is best for you.

If you agree, tick this face ☺

If you aren't sure, tick this face ☹

If you disagree, tick this face ☹

I understand the study and I know what will happen

☺ ☹ ☹

I have had a chance to ask questions and get them answered

☺ ☹ ☹

I know I can stop at any time and that it will be OK

☺ ☹ ☹

I know that information about me might go into a piece of work, but nobody will ever know that it's me

☺ ☹ ☹

I am happy to be doing the study

☺ ☹ ☹

Your Name _____

Date _____

Your Signature _____

Name of person taking consent _____

Date _____

Signature of person taking consent _____

* When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files.

Appendix 4 – Example of parent information sheet and consent form (Phase Two)

Dear Parents,

Re: Year 6 Research Project - Transition

Kieran Hodgkin is a PhD student from Cardiff Metropolitan University (UWIC). He has been assisting the year 6 class at _____ for a number of weeks and as part of his PhD project would like to speak to year 6 pupils about their move to secondary school.

This PhD project is concerned with pupils' expectations and experiences of PE across the move to Secondary School. Through observations, interviews and classroom activities the study will examine pupils thoughts on PE and provide schools with a useful insight into pupils thoughts and feelings about the upcoming transition in relation to PE. This project also aims to give pupils the opportunity to talk to their friends and myself about the move and what they might be looking forward to.

If you are willing for your child to participate in this project, please complete the permission slip below.

If you have any questions about the research please don't hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher



UWIC PARENT / GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Name of Researcher: Kieran Hodgkin

Name of Child _____

Signature of Parent / Guardian _____

Date: _____

Appendix 5 – Example of child information sheet and assent form (Phase Two)

Title of Project:

Schooling, Physical Education and the Primary-Secondary Transition- An
Ethnographic Study

Child Information Sheet

Welcome

This project is all about PE, finding out what children think about the move to secondary school and leaving their primary school. Some of the things that we might talk about is what you think about PE, your favourite activities, PE teachers, and what you are looking forward to about PE in secondary school. There are two main parts to this project:

- Firstly, we will talk to you about PE in primary school and what you think PE will be like in secondary school.
- Secondly, we will visit you in your secondary school and ask you about PE and the move and whether it has been what you thought it would be like.

Why you?

You are being asked because you are about to move to secondary school and we feel that this project may help you talk about PE with us and your friends.

What will happen?

The project is split into two parts. At the very start we will come into your school, observe some of your lessons and ask some questions about PE. The second part of the project will involve us visiting you in your new school, again, observing some of your lessons and asking you some questions about your PE experiences so far.

Do I have to?

No, you don't. No-one is forcing you. And if you start and decide you don't want to carry on, that's fine. There's no problem, just tell us.

What do we do?

When we've got our information we will write up the results of the project. However, this will not include any of your names as we will keep these private.

Have you got any questions?

If you have any questions just ask. You can ask us yourself, or you can get your parent or guardian to ask us.




Kieran Hodgkin
kihodgkin@uwic.ac.uk




Child Assent Form




Title of Project: Schooling, Physical Education and the Primary-Secondary Transition- An Ethnographic Study




Name of Researcher: Kieran Hodgkin




Please fill this form by ticking the face by each question that you think is best for you.




If you agree, tick this face 
If you aren't sure, tick this face 
If you disagree, tick this face 

I understand the study and I know what will happen
  

I have had a chance to ask questions and get them answered
  

I know I can stop at any time and that it will be OK
  

I know that information about me might go into a piece of work,
but nobody will ever know that it's me
  

I am happy to be doing the study
  

Your Name _____

Date _____

Your Signature _____

Name of person taking consent _____

Date _____

Signature of person taking consent _____

* When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files.

Appendix 6 - Example of interview guide for a) pupils in primary school and b) pupils in secondary school (Phase One)

Interview guide – primary school pupils

What do you know about secondary school? If I say describe the secondary school, what would you say?

As a primary school pupil how would you say secondary school differs from primary school?

Ok if you have a primary school here and a secondary school next to it how would they look?

Ok, what are you looking forward to in your secondary school?

What else?

Ok that's good anything else?

Is there anything you might be slightly concerned about?

Do you think that anything can be done to help ease these worries?

Is there anything that the year 6 teacher could help you with before going to secondary school?

So you think teachers and parents can help with grades?

Ok, brilliant so have you made any preparations for secondary school, so have you done anything to prepare?

Ok, so what about getting to school in the mornings?

So what about your teachers, have you met them? And how do you think they will be different to your primary school teachers?

So what subjects are you looking forward to taking in secondary school?

Ok is there any subjects that you like in primary school but don't think you'll like in secondary school?

Ok I so why is that would you say?

So are there any other subjects you are not looking forward to taking?

So you think the open day should show all subjects?

Do you think there might be any differences in the amount of work?

So do you think the work will be harder in secondary school?

Have you heard anything about secondary school? Either from friends or relatives?

Ok, is there anything you would like to do in preparation?

Ok and finally can you sum up your feelings about the move in three words? Positive or negative?

Thank you

Interview guide – secondary school pupils

Ok so you have completed your first few months in secondary school, run me through what it has been like? And what you've been doing?

Ok, so what subjects do you enjoy in secondary school and why?

Ok so you do different activities, it might be a bit harder but that's a good thing?

Ok so what subjects have you not enjoyed since being in secondary school?

So did you enjoy English in primary school?

Ok so how's the work in your new school? Is it harder, the same or easier?

Ok so in primary school you had time to talk after you finished your work? Whereas here you don't?

Ok so can you give me an example of a piece of work you found difficult maybe a subject you have found more difficult in secondary school?

Ok so you found it difficult?

Ok so how would you say it was different to primary school?

Ok brilliant so have you met any new friends in secondary school?

Ok so you have kept in contact with them?

Ok so are there any pupils from primary school in the same class as you?

Ok and is that a good thing?

That's fair enough

So have you been set any homework yet, and if you have what's it like compared to primary school?

So when you were in primary school we talked about how you thought secondary school would be is it what you expected?

Ok so give me an example, how did you think it would be and how is it different?

Ok so we also talked about the differences between primary and secondary school, since being in secondary what do you think are the differences?

Ok good so how do you think sports day will be different in secondary school?

Ok so if you had to go through the move to secondary school again, would you do anything differently?

Ok so do you miss anything about primary school?

Anything else?

Ok that's fine, so if you had a piece of advice for a pupil about to make the move to secondary school what would you say?

Ok if you had to describe the differences between primary and secondary school in three words what would they be?

Ok can you describe your feelings now that you're in secondary school in three words?

Thank you

Appendix 7 - Example of interview guide for a) pupils in primary school b) pupils in secondary school (Phase Two)

Interview guide – Primary School pupils

Ok, so what are your first thoughts when I say PE?

Ok anything else?

Ok so you said fun activities, what do you mean by that?

Ok so do you enjoy PE as a subject in primary school?

Ok that's what you do every week or do you do different things?

Ok good, so how many lessons of PE you have a week?

Ok so can you run me through a typical primary PE lesson, so pretend it's my first day and explain to me what you usually do?

Ok so the last PE lesson what did you do?

Ok so like group activities, you work together?

Ok good umm so what other types of activities do you do, maybe games?

Ok and do you enjoy all of those games?

Ok so what types of facilities do you have to do PE here?

Ok and do you use and indoor things, like facilities?

Ok so do you do PE separately or do you do it as a whole group?

Ok so what happens?

Ok brilliant so you have given me a good idea of what primary PE is like, so let's move onto secondary school.

So what do you think secondary PE will be like then, do you think it will be different or the same?

Ok so we have talked about differences like activities and the facilities, how else do you think it will be different?

Ok and what about the teachers in PE, will they be different?

Ok so what else come into your head when we talk about secondary school and PE?

Ok so have you got any friends or relatives that have told you anything about PE in secondary school?

Ok and why do you think that's good?

Ok good, so have you experienced PE in secondary school maybe on a visit or a transition day?

Ok so how was it different to primary school when you went to secondary school in PE?

Ok so in general what activities do you think you will be doing in PE?

Ok so what about the facilities are they any different then?

Ok good so what do you think the PE teachers will be like?

Ok so what do you think about doing PE separate girls and boys?

Ok good so is there anything you are especially looking forward to in PE?

Ok so is there any slight concerns you have about secondary school?

So can you summarise your feelings toward PE in secondary school

Thank You

Interview guide – Secondary School pupils

Ok so you have completed your first few weeks in secondary school, what has it been like?

Ok so as you know I spoke to you in primary school about PE so I would like to do the same and ask you about P.E here, in secondary school

So what about PE, what has that been like?

Is PE in secondary school similar to primary school PE or is it different, if so how?

Ok any other ways that it's different?

Ok, so can you run me through one of the PE lessons you have had in your first few weeks?

Ok so one of the major changes you have faced is that you have separate teachers for PE, how have you found that?

Ok so can you run me through some of the activities you do here?

What about having a separate PE class to the boys, do you enjoy that or PE as a whole group which you experienced in primary school?

Do you think it's important to do PE with boys/girls too?

Overall is PE what you thought it would be like? Does it match up to what you heard before moving to secondary school?

Ok, so what is it like?

What about the teachers, what are they like?

Is there anything concerning you about PE during your first few weeks in secondary school?

Do you feel like during your first few weeks of PE you have built upon what you learnt in primary school, if so how?

Like do you do the same stuff as primary school or do you do other things, do you feel like your progressing?

What are you looking forward to about PE this year?

Have you joined any extra curricular teams or groups?

Do you think PE has helped you make friends?

So if you had to advise a year 6 pupil about PE in secondary school, what would you say?

Ok so can you describe your feelings towards secondary school PE in three words?

Thank You

Appendix 8 – Interviews with members of staff a) year 6 teacher b) primary PE co-ordinator c) Head of PE in secondary school (Phase Two)

Interview Guide – Year 6 teacher

What is your experience of PE? Do you think it is a valuable part of the primary Curriculum?

What is your perception of PE?

So how is PE structured in primary school, how many times a week, what is taught?

In your opinion are pupils prepared in primary school for secondary school PE?

In your experiences is there any truth in the notion that primary school teachers tend to lack confidence in teaching PE?

In your experience of teaching do you think there is effective liaison between primary school teachers and secondary PE teachers?

If so, do you share effective teaching methods or strategies?

Is information passed onto secondary schools regarding the ability of pupils within PE? If not, do you think this should be introduced?

Do you think PE is dominated by competitive games? If so do you think it should be?

In your opinion does PE contribute to the development of the child?

Does the content you teach in PE depend on your level of expertise or interests?

Do you think PE in primary school could be improved, if so how?

And finally do you have any additional comments regarding PE across the primary-secondary transition?

Thank You.

Primary PE co-ordinator

Ok so what structure does PE follow in primary school? So like how often, how much?

Ok and are there particular aims, is it preparation for secondary school or to teach the basic of these types of activities?

And I suppose there is a lot of cross curricular aspects, things like teamwork?

Ok and in your experience do you think that primary school PE prepares pupils for secondary school PE?

Ok so is there any policy in place for pupils to experience secondary school PE?

Ok so you think there is an issue with the social side of PE, because they might get changed individually etc

Ok so do you think there is anything that can be improved within primary schools?

Ok so do you think extra curricular stuff really helps?

Ok so final in your opinion do you think PE is in a healthy state in primary and secondary schools?

So do you think that is the key point, the confidence of primary school teachers, because there is a lot out there about specialist and non-specialist PE teachers, do you think the key is the confidence of those teachers

Thank You.

Head of PE in Secondary School

What structure does PE follow in secondary school?

Do you think PE benefits pupils whilst settling into their new school?

Do you think pupils enter secondary school with the necessary PE skills?

Do you think primary schools do enough to prepare pupils for secondary school PE?

In your opinion is collaboration effective between primary and secondary schools, with regard to PE?

Do you think anything can be improved in terms of PE and the transition between primary and secondary school?

Do you find that pupils enter secondary school with a variety of PE experience and therefore find it difficult not to repeat schemes of work?

Do you think that non-specialist primary school teachers hinder development in PE?

And finally, is PE in a healthy position in terms of primary-secondary transition?

Thank You.

Appendix 9 – A research report illustrating pupils’ experiences of the primary-secondary transition.

Research Report Urban Primary School

This is a brief research report highlighting some of the key findings from a research project concerned with pupils’ views on the primary-secondary transition. The report also offers up advice for pupils during the initial stages of the transitional process.

The research explored the expectations and experiences of a group of 11-12 year old pupils before and after the move to secondary school. Findings from the study highlight a difference in how most of the pupils thought secondary school would be like and how it actually was once they were at secondary school. Below are some of the key findings:

- Pupils were more concerned about their marks / grades rather than the social effects of transition.
- Most of the pupils felt differently before and after the move from primary to secondary school, going from “nervous” to “excited”.
- Pupils were anxious to keep their friends from primary school rather than making new ones.
- Pupils discussed frequently the vast difference between primary and secondary, the difference in size, numbers and moving from class to class. However, at secondary school they enjoyed finding their way around.
- Bullying and getting lost were relatively minor concerns, especially after the move.

Finally, below is a selection of quotes from pupils at secondary school providing advice for pupils ready to move to secondary school, the names used are invented to protect the identity of the pupils whose views are provided:

- Yeah I've met loads of new friends in my class and in other classes; everyone in my class is really nice (Liam, Secondary School).
- Do your work in primary because then when you get here it will be a lot easier and don't let your friends talk to you when your doing work (Amy, Secondary School)
- Enjoy primary school and do your work because secondary school will be easier (Luke, Secondary School).
- I would say don't be afraid of bullying, it's just something that is in everyone's head, I was afraid of bullying but it didn't happen to me (Leah, Secondary School).

Once again thank you for your involvement in this research project

Best Wishes,

Kieran Hodgkin

Appendix 10 – Hodgkin, K., Fleming, S., Beauchamp, G. & Bryant, A. (2013) Perception to Reality: Pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary school transition. *Educational futures*, 6(1), 28-40.

Perception to Reality: Pupils' expectations and experiences of the primary-secondary school transition

Kieran Hodgkin, Scott Fleming, Gary Beauchamp & Anna Bryant

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Tel 02920 41 1598

Abstract

Pupils moving from primary to secondary school encounter a number of challenges that can affect their social, academic and personal development. This paper explores the expectations and experiences of a group of 10-11 year old primary school pupils who made the transition to an inner-city secondary school in Wales from one of its 'feeder' primary schools during 2011. As an exploratory study, an ethnographic approach was adopted with 'pupil voice' a distinctive and central feature. Two phases of fieldwork were conducted. The first examined pupils' thoughts and feelings pre-transition; the second examined the extent to which their experiences matched their expectations in a local secondary school. There were four main findings from the study: the importance of academia; the opportunity to 'grow up'; social issues; and pupils' general feelings towards the transitional process (both pre and post-transition).

[137 words]

Keywords: primary-secondary transition; pupil voice; ethnography

Introduction

For most children in the United Kingdom (UK), the end of the school year of their 11th birthday marks the transition as they move from primary to secondary school. The significance of the primary-secondary transition has long been an area of focus in both England and Wales (The Plowden Report 1967; Gittins Report, 1967). It is one of the most important and significant steps in their young lives (Measor and Fleetham, 2005). There are physical, psychological and emotional maturational developments as well as significant changes in curricula (Galton *et al.*, 2003). The changes from Key Stage 2 (KS2) to Key Stage 3 (KS3) are also accompanied by different pedagogic practices which are embedded within the National Curriculum (Boyd, 2005), as well as new socio-spatial environments and interaction networks (Blatchford *et al.*, 2008). Inevitably, therefore, this is a challenging period and there is understandable importance placed on a smooth transition from primary to secondary school to ensure progress is enhanced and not hampered in the process (Farrell, 2001). Existing evidence indicates that although there have been attempts to ensure continuity from KS2 to KS3 (Tobell, 2003), there remains a 'hiatus in progression' (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999). One of the problems associated with the primary-secondary transition, and a properly informed understanding of it, is that

pupils' thoughts and feelings about the transition seem to be overlooked (Ashton, 2008). This study, therefore, focuses on 'pupil voice' to elicit a clear and nuanced appreciation of the complexity of the relationship between the expectations and experiences surrounding the primary-secondary transition. The notion of 'listening to learners' is a politically important policy imperative in Wales (where the research was conducted) and was also crucial to the design of the study. This approach dates back to the work of Piaget, Child Development and more recently the influential 'Plowden Report' by the Central Advisory Council for Education in England in 1967, which identified that 'at the heart of the educational process lies the child' (The Plowden Report, 1967).

This paper continues by providing an overview of the literature surrounding the primary-secondary transition, including social issues and academic issues, and a focus on pupils in transition. There then follows an account of the methodological and procedural approach adopted before outlining the four main findings: the importance of academia; the opportunity to 'grow up'; social issues; and pupils' general feelings towards the transitional process (both pre and post-transition).

Background and context

During the primary-secondary transition pupils move from one class to another, and also from one school to another which can be a daunting experience. This process is a significant part of a child's education, but this transition can be a source of discontinuity within the educational system (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000; West *et al.*, 2010).

As long ago as 1980, Her Majesty's Deputy Senior Chief Inspector of Schools in Scotland, Andrew Chirnside, used the metaphor of the pantomime horse to describe the attempts by primary and secondary schools to achieve progression and continuity in pupils' learning. He argued that, like the pantomime horse, primary and secondary schools would like to be moving in the same direction, but it was difficult to get their legs moving in rhythm, and it was not helped by the fact it was dark inside the costume (Boyd, 2005). In Wales it has been a similar story, the Welsh Government set out its commitment to improving continuity and progression for all pupils during the transition from primary to secondary school through a series of reports including *The Learning Country: Vision into Action* (2006). As a result of the Education Act of 2002 the Welsh Government (formerly the Welsh Assembly Government) introduced a requirement in 2006 that maintained secondary schools and their maintained feeder primary schools draw up transition plans jointly to support the transition of pupils from primary to secondary school. However, in a report entitled *The Impact of Transition Plans* (2008), Estyn confirmed that whilst positive steps have been made to improve pastoral support during transition, only a few schools in Wales have effective arrangements in place to secure an effective overall process.

The majority of the literature surrounding the primary-secondary transition centres on three sets of issues. These are, first, the emphasis placed on social issues over academic issues during the transition to secondary school (Ashton, 2008; Measor and Fleetham, 2005); second, the vast structural, philosophical, social and educational differences between primary and secondary school (Boyd, 2005; Nicholls and

Gardner, 1999); and third, pupils in transition (Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Graham and Hill, 2003).

Social and academic issues during transition

It has been reported that schools need to achieve a better balance between academic and social concerns at various points of transfer and transition (Morrison, 2005). The majority of studies have focused on the social adjustment of pupils to the change of school, rather than the impact of school change on academic performance (Galton *et al.*, 2000). Only a small number of studies, including two by Local Education Authorities, have considered the impact of these changes on pupils' academic progress (Galton *et al.*, 1999). For example, Measor and Fleetham (2005) reported that 90% of transfer initiatives involve social and organizational aspects of transition, but only 16 % of them tackle the academic ones. This imbalance can have a negative impact on pupils' academic progression during the primary-secondary transition. Pupils often slip back when they move from primary to secondary school because they do not receive teaching appropriate to their needs and abilities (Estyn, 2008). Moreover, Farrell (2001) claims that 'pupils should feel part of the school community, by ensuring that academic and pastoral structures work together' (p.133). Yet in spite of this widespread perception, Ashton (2008) found that in general, students' heads were full of the social and environmental aspects of moving school, and until these issues were resolved they were not ready to think about the content of the lessons.

One of the most pressing concerns, therefore, is the social issues that deflect pupils' attention away from academic progression during the primary-secondary transition. Youngsters typically come from small, 'familial' primary schools with well-established social groups into larger, less intimate secondary schools, and have to re-establish social relationships during a time when peer relations are particularly important (Pellegrini and Long, 2002). One of the most prominent of these social concerns is relationship building. Friendship features amongst the greatest worries for children even if making new friends is one aspect that many anticipate with excitement (Pratt and George, 2005), and dealing with these issues can be difficult. Strategies such as transition days and form group meetings prior to transition are thought to be essential to ensure pupils feel comfortable with the secondary school environment (Estyn, 2008). They allow pupils to become familiar with aspects of the school that they are concerned about, begin to form new social relationships with their new peers and experience some of the key differences between primary and secondary schooling.

Primary and secondary school: the differences

There are three important differences that pupils experience as they make the transition from primary to secondary education – they are linked to structure, philosophy and status (Boyd, 2005). Structure refers to the discrepancy in size between the two settings, having one teacher in primary school to having several in secondary school, as well as a wider variety of subjects in the latter. Philosophically, the primary curriculum is based on broad areas, while in secondary school specific subjects dominate. There is also a general perception among the teaching profession as well as the population at large that secondary education is somehow of a higher status than primary education (Boyd, 2005). This final point is an issue that may

seem to have little relation to the transition, but Boyd (2005) argues that if both stages of the educational system are not valued equally, this can have a direct impact on pupils during transition. These challenges are linked with different approaches to learning and teaching (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999), and are summarised succinctly in Table 1.

Table 1

Primary Education	Secondary Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual attention - One-third of the time in class teaching - A high degree of group work - Infrequent change of teaching style - Opportunities for the teacher to pursue projects, topics and themes based upon children's interests <p>(Geen, 2005, p.271)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in whole class teaching - Higher proportion of time spent on clearly defined task work - Different expectations from different teachers and subjects - More teaching to meet external needs such as GCSE

Source: Adapted from Geen (2005, p. 271)

Together, these differences highlight a discontinuity between a primary school environment concerned with individual teaching, and a secondary school class environment concerned with promoting whole class teaching. Coupled with the differences in structure, this has the potential to contribute to a challenging experience for pupils.

Pupils in transition

In order to prepare pupils for the social turbulence of transfer to a new school, social/pastoral approaches require the involvement of pupils, parents and teachers (Capel *et al.*, 2007). There is near universal agreement amongst academics and practitioners that the majority of pupils express some concerns and anxieties about a range of issues associated both with the formal school system (e.g. the size of the

school) and informal system of peer relations (Anderson *et al.*, 2000; Graham and Hill, 2003). Surprisingly the pupil voice has played a relatively small part in understanding transition arrangements, policy, practice and research related to the primary-secondary transition. In a report by Estyn entitled *The Impact of Transition Plans* (2008) pupils were questioned about aspects of transition they find useful and aspects of transition they would like to see improved. Pupils identified transition activities, induction days, transition projects and planners useful during the transition process. Pupils also suggested that they did not like the varied expectations from teachers and doing work they have done before. A study by Ashton (2008) identified, perhaps predictably, that pupils' concerns included, friendships, bullying, getting lost and sole children.

In order to gain a complete overview of pupils' thoughts and feelings during this challenging time, it is important to discuss all aspects of the transition including academic issues, social concerns and, in particular, what the pupils are looking forward to about secondary school. It is for these reasons that an exploratory and flexible research design was chosen for this study – one for which ethnography is ideally suited (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Willis, [1990] 2012), and has provided some of the most significant landmark contributions to the sociology of education (e.g., Ball, 1981; Corrigan, 1979; Lacey, 1970; Willis, 1977).

A brief note on method

Two schools in metropolitan Wales were chosen for the fieldwork, City Comprehensive School (with pupils aged 11 to 18) and its 'feeder' Urban Primary School (with pupils aged 3 to 11) – both names are pseudonyms. Their selection was a combination of purposive sampling (ref) and logistical expediency. The ethnographic approach provided an opportunity to 'explore phenomena within context in the natural setting' (Morse and Richards, 2002, p.48). Eliciting the views of young people has been a feature of past school-based ethnographies (Ball, 1981; Corrigan, 1979; Fleming, 1995; Lacey, 1970; Bergin and Cooks, 2002). The use of 'pupil voice' in the present study meant it was important to develop dialogical practices in which young people wish to take part, and engage in a young person's own culture and communication (Christensen, 2010). For example, as well as questioning the young people about the topic of research (the transition), it was important to take an interest in the pupil's hobbies, whilst communicating on a personal level, which was made possible by the long-term immersion in the school – a characteristic of ethnography (O'Reilly, 2009). In order to manage this process the role of a Classroom Assistant was adopted by the Principal Investigator (first author) during two different seven-week phases of data collection that included daily observations and reflections on the transition process as well as interviews and informal discussions.

The intention was to gain a nuanced insight into pupils' thoughts and feelings during pre-transition at Urban Primary School during June and July 2011, and then explore their actual experiences post-transition having settled into day-to-day life at City Comprehensive School during October and November 2011.

Research that involves young people in a school-based setting requires thorough consideration of its ethical implications. Approval for the project was sought from

and provided by the Cardiff School of Education's Research Ethics Sub-Committee. The Principal Investigator had an enhanced Criminal Record Bureau check and provided a careful explanation of the project to both the members of staff and the pupils. Consistent with established good practice in educational research (BERA, 2011); appropriately different information sheets were prepared and distributed to the Headteachers of both schools, to the teachers, parents and pupils. Consent was provided by parent(s)/guardian(s), and assent was given by the youngsters themselves.

In addition to observations and interviews, classroom activities were also conducted to enable pupils to express themselves through drawings and mind mapping. Whilst still at Urban Primary School pupils were first asked in groups to note positive and negative aspects associated with 'going to secondary school'. Later, at City Comprehensive School, they completed mind maps that focused on positive and negative aspects of 'being in secondary school'. The data were then subjected to an inductive thematic qualitative analysis (Gratton and Jones, 2004).

Discussion of findings

This following section addresses the four substantive findings from the study (see Figure 1). It draws upon data from pupil interviews, informal discussions, observations and mapping activities, and is set within an overall framework that centres on 'perception to reality'.

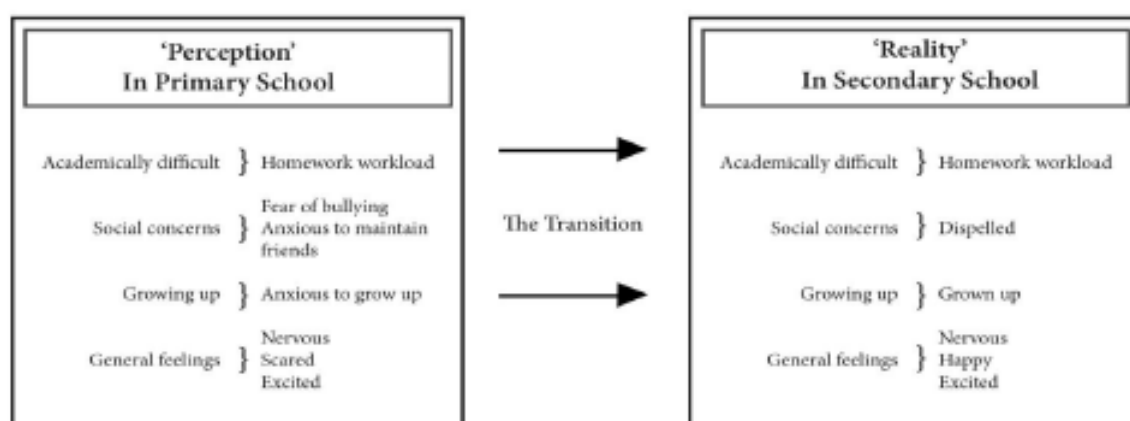


Figure 1. From perception to reality: The process of transition through the eyes of the pupils

The importance of academia

The present study revealed that during transition pupils placed a great deal of emphasis on 'academia' in its broadest sense – that is to say, academic achievement and attainment, workload, and homework. Previous studies have indicated that that only when social issues have been dealt with will academia come to the forefront of pupils' thoughts (Ashton, 2008; Measor and Fleetham, 2005), but for the youngsters

who left Urban Primary School and who went to City Comprehensive School this was not the case.

There were two main reasons for the emphasis the pupils placed on academia. First, for the majority they were concerned that the workload and especially homework when they got to the secondary school would be too difficult for them, and that their work would not be to an acceptable standard. Jane explained: “I am going to have to go up another level; it’s nothing like primary school.” Second, for others the transition to secondary school could not come quickly enough, they were looking forward to the challenge of secondary school and the increase in the difficulty of the work. Jack, one of the higher achieving pupils in the class at Urban Primary School, and seemed to relish the prospect of being challenged: “in primary school at the moment not a lot of things are challenging, it’s boring and I want to do some harder tasks so I’m ready for secondary school.”

By the time the pupils had settled in at City Comprehensive School they discovered that there had indeed been a ‘step up’ academically, as expected, and the reality was that for some it was a struggle with an increased amount of homework and elevated difficulty of work. Alex reflected: “it’s a lot harder, like we don’t get as much time and if we mess around we get detention.” He was not alone, Mark concurred: “here [in secondary school] you don’t get as much time to do your work, so you have to do it quickly and make sure it’s good.” The reality was that the pupils felt that they had gone from one extreme to another, having one piece of homework a week in primary school, to receiving several pieces of homework from a number of subject areas and teachers daily. It was also more demanding.

On a positive note, although some of the pupils found the work difficult, they really did enjoy the new level of expectation. Claire was forthright: “like here [the secondary school] the work is harder, but it’s a challenge and it’s more interesting than primary school.”

Social issues during transition

Alongside the emphasis placed on academia were the social issues involved in the primary-secondary transition. Although they were cited by pupils less frequently than those linked to academia, they were still important and centred on two main issues – bullying and friendship. It was noticeable that myths and hearsay contributed to the expectations of the pupils while still at Urban Primary School. Some thought, as Luke did, that “the kids are more aggressive they might bully you there.”

Perhaps in response to this there was an added emphasis placed on existing friendship patterns amongst the youngsters, and anticipated reliance on them. Luke was clear: “I want to be in the same class as my friends so I can settle in easier.” This view was shared widely and the established social support networks were considered essential, and certainly preferable to forming new friendship groups. In short, evidence from the present study reinforces the suggestion from Pratt and George (2005) that friendship is a source of comfort for the pupils and a shield against fears of bullying.

Bullying by older pupils is a frequently cited concern for pupils pre-transition (Boyd, 2005), as is name-calling from peers. Even for those who claimed to be unconcerned

by the prospect of bullying, Ashton (2008) showed that they were still curious about it. Many of the pupils discussed the importance of talking to a member of staff if they had any concerns about bullying. In a discussion about moving to City Comprehensive School, Nick elaborated: “Yeah, they said it’s good and gives you a good education and um they just said if people bully you in high school yeah you have to go to the teacher straight away or it could get worse.” For some pupils being the youngest and smallest in a large and unfamiliar environment coupled with the myths that surround the transition add up to a vivid picture and an unavoidable fear of bullying. Nathan speculated: “... ummm maybe like bullying, like older people bully and urrm like, like you know when you play football or like at lunch time I’m scared kids might pick on me.”

Reassuringly, however, the reality of secondary school life was different and soon after arriving at City Comprehensive School many of the social concerns (including bullying) had been dispelled. After his initial fears, Nathan described the advice he would offer to pupils in the year below him at Urban Primary School: “I would tell them not to listen to anyone, I got told all the young kids get bullied but it doesn’t happen, people just try and scare you.” Nathan’s insight into bullying is important for two reasons. First, his attitude towards bullying had changed dramatically. From being concerned and anxious in primary school, he had become confident that bullying wasn’t part of secondary school life. Second, his description of the fear of bullying was almost as a ‘rite of passage’ for primary school pupils – a ritual that pupils have to endure during the primary-secondary transition often prompted by hearsay from older friends or relatives. To illustrate, while still at Urban Primary School Alex commented on the counsel he had received from a sibling: “Yeah my brother said that like kids get bullied in [secondary] school and that I need to be careful.”

In contrast, friendship did play a role for post-transition pupils at City Comprehensive. A prominent view had been the anticipated importance of maintaining existing friendships after the move to secondary school. However, the transition brought a new set of circumstances, especially being in different classes from some primary school friends that created opportunities in which new friendships could be developed. Jemma explained enthusiastically: “Yeah I’ve met loads of new friends in my class and in other classes; everyone in my class is really nice.” Rachel confirmed: “Umm yeah I get on really well with everyone in my class, they are really nice and everyone gets on great.” Interestingly though, Paula added: “I still see a lot of my friends from primary school, which is nice too.” This was a common response, maintaining friendships were still a priority, but not as prominent as had been expected when still at primary school.

Growing up

Starting secondary school is a time of new subjects, several new teachers, increased responsibility and the freshness of a new beginning (Sellman, 2000). Urban Primary School is a small, cosy and familial environment. As already explained, by the time the transition to secondary school education was looming, some pupils felt that they had already outgrown what they saw as the ‘childish’ nature of the primary school environment and were ready for the hurly-burly unpredictability of secondary school. While still at Urban Primary School James anticipated the new spatial

arrangements at City Comprehensive School: “It’s going to be cool not staying in one classroom and moving around the school more”; and Alex was keen to explore the prospect of increased autonomy and independence: “In high school you get treated with more freedom and not little children, and if you get treated older then you are going to turn out like one aren’t you.” The message is one of uncomplicated self-fulfilling expectation: if pupils get treated like grown ups, the likelihood is they will become more grown up. Moreover, Rebecca associated life at City Comprehensive School with productive academic work and scholarly performance: “In secondary school we will get treated like grown ups so we will get more done.” A previous empirical study by Galton *et al.* (2003) sheds light. In it, pupils wanted and expected to be treated more like adults and to be granted more autonomy and trust; though they also warned that disappointment can lead to disengagement. What the pupils at Urban Primary School were looking forward to was the opportunity to be more independent and to take on new responsibilities – for example, to travel on buses to get to and from school (see also Ashton, 2008).

Having perceived secondary school as an opportunity to grow up and take the next step, it quickly became clear that the pupils seemed to thrive and flourish in their new environment at City Comprehensive School. Eric responded positively: “It’s like more grown up like you carry all your stuff around, you have loads of classes and you have to do your homework or you’ll get into trouble.” Importantly too, when asked if they missed Urban Primary School the most pupils agreed with Harry, “Not really, I miss some of the teachers and stuff but I like secondary school and in primary school all the kids are really small. Secondary [school] is more grown up like you have to carry your books and stuff around.”

Mixed feelings during transition

In addition to the particular themes associated with the transition from primary school to secondary school (i.e., academic, social, growing up), there were also some general impressions that informed the lived experiences of changed schooling. During the first series of interviews at Urban Primary School pupils were invited to summarise their feelings towards the move to secondary school in three words. The responses were a mixture of excitement, happiness and ‘readiness’ as well as anxiety, nervousness and sadness. That is to say, their feelings were mixed (Ashton, 2008; Measor and Fleetham, 2005), and a consequence of some of the more specific expectations already described.

It is not unusual for anxieties like these to ease or even evaporate altogether very quickly when new arrivals settle in at secondary school (Graham and Hill, 2003), sometimes being replaced by others about, for example, peer relations and the school system (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003). Having spent only a few weeks at City Comprehensive School, the pupils in the present study were generally content. Like Rebecca, many reported feeling “happy, anxious and excited” about being in secondary school and the remainder of the year ahead. This was the general consensus among the pupils, inevitably, towards the end of primary school pupils became nervous, anxious and in some cases scared, however once in secondary school these feelings developed into happiness and excitement with a hint of nervousness about the upcoming challenges of secondary school.

Conclusion

Prior to moving to secondary school, the pupils at Urban Primary School tended to have a negative perception of secondary school. They viewed secondary school as academically more difficult, socially challenging, and had been persuaded by some of the myths that surround the transition to secondary school. In short, these anxieties and concerns were fuelled by the unknown. Academically, the pupils' perception of secondary school matched the reality of it, identifying an increase in workload, homework and range of subjects, which the pupils found difficult to manage. Socially, the pupils' fears of bullying diminished as did the importance of maintaining friendships – the latter being replaced by a desire amongst many to make new friendships. For many pupils there was an 'appetite' for the next stage of their lives and the concerns linked to uncertainty eased considerably very quickly. Indeed it may be that previous priorities of personal and social 'issues' are now catered for effectively (see OFSTED, 2008) – at least at these two schools.

There are two future research directions and limitations of the study. The first is to explore pupils' perceptions of the transition later on in the transition process (i.e. in year 8). This will enable comparisons to be made between pupils' experiences immediately after transition and a year into secondary school. The second surrounds the number of schools involved in the study and how accurate these schools represent the transitional process. A future research direction might be to include welsh-medium or faith schools to incorporate perceptions of pupils from various backgrounds.

The key underlying message to emerge from the present study is therefore one of managing more effectively the expectations of pupils prior to leaving primary school. It is significant that academic issues during transition were more prominent in the thinking of these youngsters than had been found in other studies (Ashton, 2008; Measor and Fleetham, 2005). If Urban Primary School and City Comprehensive School are typical of many schools in metropolitan areas throughout the UK (and there is no reason to think that they are not), then it seems timely to renew emphasis on the academic transition with social/pastoral arrangements seemingly working well.

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