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A Study of Three Child's Voice Initiatives and their impact for the Year 6 Participants and their Junior School

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DECLARATION

"I certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not concurrently being submitted for any degree other that that of Doctorate in Education (EdD) being studied at the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigations except where otherwise identified by references and that I have not plagiarised the work of others."

Student …………………………………. (signature)   Date …………………….

Supervisor ………………………………… (signature)   Date …………………….

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ABSTRACT

This case study carried out during 2007 – 2009 investigates how a Junior School has been able to give primary school children a voice through the provision of decision and democratic power-sharing opportunities in its inherent culture. An inclusive philosophical vision has been created within an educational and broad socio-cultural context where children's contributions are deemed valid and important. A pedagogy has developed which provides experiences that enable children to practice and experiment with critical elements of consultation, participation, responsibility, emotional intelligence and transformational learning. It is proposed that pupils are able to develop confidence in preparing for their next phase of education and a world 'not yet known' (Lodge, 2000: 97).

Data is drawn from three school based initiatives: School Council Initiative; Guardian Angel Initiative and the Master Class Mentor Initiative involving 16 children (15 aged 10 – 11 years and 1 aged 12 years), and 12 adults, and takes the form of individual and group interviews. The data analysis identified 4 emergent themes: confidence, trust, autonomous agency and transformation of self, and showed that there was a positive impact on the pupils through decision-making opportunities both on the school culture and the school community itself characterised by trust and the development of autonomy.

The findings show that there is an ongoing dichotomy that exists between 'giving children a say' and empowering them through taking notice of their viewpoints and insights. If children obtain the trust from adults around them, they frequently rise to the challenge and will accept the responsibility offered to them, and in many cases surpass expectations.

It is proposed that the findings of this study will be of relevance to a variety of professionals looking to refocus 21st century education and improve the contribution of children. A model and toolkit has been devised to support this approach.

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DEFINITION of TERMS

CACE	Central Advisory Council for Education (England)
CRAE	Children's Rights Alliance for England;
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EC	Emotional Competence
ECM	Every Child Matters
EI	Emotional Intelligence
EL	Emotional Literacy
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EWB	Emotional Well Being
GAs	Guardian Angels
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
MCM	Master-class Mentors
NC	National Curriculum
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
OFSTED	Office for Standards In Education, Children's Services and Skills
PFA	Parents and Friends Association
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
SC	School Council
SEAL	Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning
SIP	School Improvement Partner
TLRP	Teaching and Learning Research Programme
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

<u>EPIGRAPH</u>

"Come to the edge," he said,

"We're afraid," they said.

"Come to the edge," he said.

They came. He pushed them.

And they flew …

Guillaume Apolinaire

Chapter 1

Introduction

'At the heart of the education process lies the child' (CACE: Plowden, 1967:7)

1.1 Personal and Professional Context

As a young person in the 1970s, I trained as a teacher during a period in England when the 'child-centred' approach to education was applauded and considered by many to be the most appropriate method for educating primary aged children. On completion of my training I worked for seventeen years for the Inner London Education Authority (I.L.E.A.) which at the time was regarded as 'a pioneering body that had led the way in educational development' (Wrigley, 2003:62). The seminal Plowden Report (CACE 1967) framed my initial teacher training and my working philosophy by highlighting many aspects of education which were child centred and adopted by many successful creative schools at the time. The principles of Plowden were lost in the ensuing political debate where 'progressive' primary teachers were accused of delivering a 'dumbed-down' curriculum (Alexander, 2010), resulting in a loss of the good practice of the 'child-centred' movement.

'The Great Education Debate' which followed Prime Minister James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech (1976) contributed to teachers losing the conviction of their profession and to the creation and implementation of a prescriptive National Curriculum (1988). A weighty complicated curriculum was devised, detailing expectations for pupils and teachers within a national standard of education across the UK. By the 1980s under the stewardship of a conservative government and thanks to

policy makers and politicians, the 'creative and dynamic' aspect of education and the general respect and trust of the teaching workforce had been lost.

I have however never lost my admiration for the ideals of Plowden (1967) identified for me as a young teacher. I have been heartened that the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010), reminds us that:

> 'We now have much more evidence about matters relating to primary-aged children and their education – from both official sources and independent research – than was available to the Plowden Committee' and that now is the time to 'take stock of this material' (Alexander, 2010:15)

On my appointment as Deputy Headteacher at my school in 1997, I had the opportunity to introduce and develop an approach within the curriculum that favours a philosophical child-centred approach to education, central to the social and cultural experience of our children. During this time I have introduced a number of initiatives at the school which have raised the profile of 'Child's Voice' at the school (Soanes, 2006; 2007). It is these initiatives that frame the research undertaken in this study:

- School Council (SC)

- Guardian Angels (GA)

- Master-class Mentors (MCM)

This approach has now been embedded within the school culture and acknowledged by the school community and the impact of which has been noted by both OfSTED and our link university. The school's OfSTED inspections (2006, 2010) cite children's personal development and well-being as 'outstanding', highlighting well developed and 'important personal qualities that prepare them well for the future' (OfSTED, 2006). Pupils:

> 'show strong personal insight and purpose, and understand the school's shared moral and social values' and 'good partnerships with outside bodies enrich pupils' experiences well, for example in the innovative link with the local university' where Year 6 pupils 'lecture' undergraduate students in

education. This strongly contributes to the development of pupils' confidence and workplace skills' (OfSTED, 2010)

Our link university provided positive feedback from their Year 2 education undergraduates, so much so that this event has developed into annual presentations given by the children. In May 2011 children gave a presentation 'Child's Voice: The Impact of Guardian Angels' to an international audience at the link university, in inauguration of their new Centre for the study of Play and Recreation, and were invited to present again in 2012. Furthermore children's attendance at the LEA's annual Article 12 Conferences has enabled them to make constructive and valuable contributions to the wider educational community over a number of years. The school's membership of Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) has led to children working with them and participating in international research.

1.2 Previous Research

This thesis builds upon my earlier MA research project 'An Examination of the Year 6 Guardian Angel Scheme: Developing Emotional Literacy in the Junior School' (2003), which found that when given a responsible role with opportunities to mentor, coach and support their peers within the school, children thrived.

I was inspired to continue my academic journey by enrolling on the Education Doctorate programme. This course has deepened my understanding of the important connection between research and practice. My understanding of Child's Voice and research practice has improved as a result and enabled me to pursue my interest to a higher degree.

A pilot study devised to test the model for the full thesis project: 'Interviewing the Child: There's more to it than just talk!' (Soanes, 2006) investigated the opportunities for children to experience important democratic roles within the school; appreciating their emotional intelligence and social interaction development; listening to and acting upon their voices. It described the progress towards developing a more equal, successful and democratic partnership with our children and sharing teaching and learning roles on the school's journey through 'an imaginative, rich environment which meets all human needs' (Jeffrey and Woods, 2003:32). Findings from the pilot study indicated that in the area of Child's Voice, what the school provided was considered essential by the children, and that opportunities which developed consultation, participation, organisation and responsibility further at the school should be enhanced.

A second paper 'The Impact of the Child's Voice: Opening Pandora's Box?' (Soanes, 2007) was written in order to share findings from my literature review and contributed to this study by highlighting areas of potential research.

I believe that now in education we have reached an important junction. The world is a very different place from when the Plowden report (1967) was first written, however, children continue to face uncertain futures and they need to experience opportunities to experiment and risk-take within a safe environment. Government interest in the concept of Child's Voice came through their published Green paper 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2003), placing it centrally within the five outcomes: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being, though in particular part of their agenda for improving standards. The more recent Cambridge Primary Review (2010) reveals that Child's Voice currently has:

'… modish appeal appearing frequently in policy statements and documents. But this apparent recognition presents dangers as well as opportunities, for in recent years some notable ideas originating outside the arena of policy have been cherry picked for political advantage and so prominently plagiarised that they cannot be recovered in their original form' (Alexander, 2010:155)

These ideas will be explored in the review of literature.

1.3. Research Questions

The overarching research question and supplementary questions that framed the research undertaken were as follows:

Overarching Research Question: What are the features of decision and democratic opportunities within the school that support empowering Child's Voice?

The subsidiary research questions comprised:

1. **What is understood by the 'Child's Voice'?**

2. **How has the school developed 'Child's Voice' principles?**

3. **What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the Year 6 participants?**

4. **What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the case study school?**

5. **What are the implications for the future of the school?**

In order to answer the supplementary research questions above I undertook the following:

1. Deconstructed the concept of 'Child's Voice';

2. Examined the strategies and processes put in place by the school to support the concept of the 'Child's Voice';

3. Identified and analysed the impact and effects of giving children greater autonomy in the social experience within the context of the school;

4. Analysed the children's interpretations and understandings of these roles (both as individuals and as contributing members of the school community)

5. Identified features for future school development and the quality of the child's learning experience.

The thesis explores the three initiatives of: School Council, Guardian Angels and Master-class Mentors to articulate and celebrate Child's Voice and democracy at the school.

1.4 Original Contribution

It is anticipated that the research undertaken will identify the personal, social and cultural factors within the school which promote the 'Child's Voice' and support enhanced learning. Testing the robustness of the model practiced within the school will enable the creation of guidance and sharing of good practice and strategies for other schools within the immediate local authority and to other primary schools nationally. Further, the study will present a conceptual model to exemplify the relationship between the child and the school that will enable teachers to apply key elements of this study to their own school.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter examines literature which considers the potential implications and the effects Child's Voice might have for children as individuals within and beyond the socio-cultural context of their schools.

Structure of Literature Review

The broader literature surrounding the concept of Child's Voice was examined through the use of a range of databases including SwetsWise and ERIC; the examination of government policy documents and inspection reports; research papers and theoretical literature using the following keywords: child, student and pupil voice; sociology of childhood; emotional intelligence. Four key themes emerged from this initial analysis and will be examined within Chapter Two to explore the underlying theory and to identify common interconnecting themes that underpin the Child's Voice:

   2.1   The concept of Child's Voice: international and national perspectives, dominant and contrasting participatory voices, key research;

   2.2   Emotional and socio-cultural dimensions of children's learning;

   2.3   A multi-dimensional approach to the 'Sociology of Childhood';

   2.4   Common underlying themes: consultation, participation, responsibility.

2.1 The concept of 'Child's Voice'

The following section presents a review of literature which first, examines international and national perspectives, identifying where Child's Voice has flourished and as a consequence where dominant and contrasting participatory perspectives exist. Secondly, Child's Voice will be explored through the identification of key research undertaken within the field.

2.1.1 International Perspectives- United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child

The reassessment of the rights of children to be heard, listened and their subjective experiences to be valued, has gained momentum in recent years having received public validation by many international agencies. The key development of Child's Voice was enshrined in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 (ratified in 1992). It is widely agreed that these rights give unprecedented support for children's subjective experiences and for their voices to be heard. In particular Articles 12 and 13 justified and advocated these aims:

- Article 12: States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely, in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

(UNCRC 1989, Article 12:1)

- Article 13: The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds …either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

(UNCRC 1989, Article 13:1)

However, the UNCRC, whilst codifying young people's rights, including their right to participate in decisions which affect them, challenged the distinction between children and adults in political dimensions. States parties who voluntarily committed to undertaking UNCRC aims, subscribed to actively seek, consider and facilitate the opinions of young people. Increasing interest in pupil voice and their involvement in educational practices became evident during the 1990s and early 2000s. However, the UK government's interest and wish to be seen responding, albeit slowly, to the UNCRC (1989), highlighted that the UK lagged well behind other European countries (Davies, 2001), with regard to its acceptance of pupil voice and its effectiveness within decision making.

2.1.2 National Perspectives - Government Initiatives and Policies

National government initiatives and policies have contributed to the increasing validation for consulting pupils. After the 1997 election the following key documents had a significant impact on the principles underpinning children's rights and children's voices:

- National Curriculum Framework: England (1999)

- Children's Fund (2000),

- Every Child Matters (2003)

- Children's Act (2004)

- SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) 2005

2.1.2.i) National Curriculum Framework: England

The National Curriculum Framework for Key Stages 1 and 2 (DfEE, 1999) states in Aim 2, the importance of promoting '… spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' (DfEE, 1999:139). Within the PSHE non-statutory guidelines of the document are listed a breadth of opportunities for children including: taking responsibility, feeling positive about themselves, participating, make real choices and decisions, meet and talk with people, develop relationships through work and play, consider social and moral dilemmas that they come across in life, find information and advice and prepare for change. The struggle for recognition and for rights in education and in society can be located in the citizenship curriculum. The programme of study for Citizenship in the National Curriculum, Key Stages 3 and 4 (DfEE & QCA, 1999) was predominantly based on an input model, which specified what children should be taught. Furthermore, the knowledge element of this model reflected a particular establishment perspective of citizenship, which typically focused on top down views,

proposed as privileging institutions and structures over alternative interpretations (Starkey *et al* 2014). This could be interpreted as a form of 'official knowledge' (Apple, 1993) which would provide tensions between teachers and pupils, positioning children as 'inherently inferior to their teachers' (Fielding, 2001a; Gunther and Thomson, 2012; Starkey *et al*, 2014).

2.1.2.ii) The Children's Fund

The 'Children's Fund' (2000) promoted strategies for local groups to work together to reduce the risk of social exclusion (Alexander, 2010). Children were seen to be at the heart of the act under the three aims of prevention, partnership and participation. It is interesting to note that original outcomes set for the Children's Fund (2000): being healthy, being emotionally secure and confident, succeeding at school, staying out of trouble, living in a safe place and having the opportunity to achieve their dreams, re-appeared in the later DfES publication, 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' (DfES, 2003) and subsequently formalised in the Children's Act (2004).

2.1.2.iii) The Children's Act

The Children's Act (2004) established the right of the child to be listened to, which prompted social agencies to work in partnership with parents, referring to parental responsibility rather than parental rights. Underpinned by this, 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' (DfES, 2003) sets out a national framework identifying the five outcomes for children which ensures that they:

- are healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve

- make a positive contribution

- achieve economic and social well-being

Legislation assumed the principles of children's rights and Sir Al Aynsley Green was appointed the first Children's Commissioner for England (2003), along with three further commissioners representing the remaining UK regions, with the aim of giving 'children and young people a voice in government and in public life' (2004). Children and young people were actively involved in the selection process for this important position. One of the initiatives he instigated has been the annual '11 Million Take-over Day', enabling children to take on adult roles for one day. Our school has participated since its instigation in 2007 with interesting results which are described in detail later in Chapter 4.

2.1.2.iv) Working Together: Giving children and young people a say

The document 'Working Together: Giving children and young people a say' (DfES, 2004) further highlighted the need for pupil participation, ensuring that their views were heard and valued. The 'OfSTED Inspection Framework' (DfES, 2004) went some way to offer a useful set of benchmarks for monitoring the development of pupil voice. In the same year, 2004, a Children's Rights Director was appointed with a specific remit to advise the Chief OfSTED Inspector: to safeguard and promote children's rights and welfare and to listen to children and young people's views on services provided for them. It was the Office of the Children's Rights Director who was responsible for consulting children and young people when compiling a UK response to the UNCRC in 2008, to which my school contributed. The current OfSTED Inspection Framework (DfES, 2012) goes further to focus on teaching, learning, behaviour and the extent to which children have input into their own learning and school curriculum.

2.1.2.v) SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) 2005

The 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' materials provide schools with suitable resources, complimenting and fostering whole school approaches to the development of social and emotional skills. Five social and emotional aspects of learning are identified: self awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills. These are developed through the key themes of: 'New Beginnings'; 'Getting on and falling out'; 'Say no to bullying'; 'Going for Goals' and 'Good to be Me'. The materials enhance whole school initiatives and systems such as 'buddying' (Guardian Angels) and circle time, in addition to incorporating it into their personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum.

2.1.3 Dominant and contrasting participatory voices

Although a body of literature supports the notion of the Child's Voice and its contribution to enhancing children's learning and self-confidence, the literature indicates a possible lack of consensus debated between the interested parties who claim between themselves where potential opportunities for Child's Voice might be identified, debated, promoted and sustained. It is prudent therefore to examine where these dominant and contrasting participatory voices exist through examination of the following four UK educational perspectives: government policy documents, OfSTED, Teaching Standards and Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and academic research, which over the past ten years since 2004 demonstrates a shift away from an increasing focused child-centred perspective to education, incorporating the Child's Voice, to one focused on standards and school improvement.

2.1.3.i) Dominant and contrasting participatory voices: UK Government perspective

The past two decades has seen landmark legislation within UK education, accelerating the growth of pupil voice initiatives and their promotion through government policies for example, Every Child Matters (2003) and the Children's Act (2004). Despite a change in government in 2010, the implementation of these statutory initiatives remains firmly policed through the inspection framework activated by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OfSTED). Therefore it is proposed that an educational climate continues where the degree of central control for schools remains at 'unprecedented levels' and the question of whether there still remains a political and professional intention to hear what children have to say should still be asked (Ball, 2006; Cremin *et al*., 2011; Whitty, 2002;). Furthermore the Education Act of 2005 ensured OfSTED had to take into consideration the eliciting of children's views when undertaking inspections of schools and by local authorities when schools were monitored locally (Cremin *et al*., 2011).

In 2008 the Department for Children, Schools and Families, now the Department for Education (DfE) published an updated version of the government guidance 'Working together: giving children and young people a say' (2004). Jim Knight, Minister for Schools stated in the 2008 update foreword that it was intended to 'promote best practice in pupil participation, reflecting the excellent work already underway in many schools' (DfE 2008:1). The guidance states that pupil voice requires children having a structured opportunity to have a say in decisions which affect them, by taking on a more active role in their education and schooling, and schools expected to be more focused and responsive to pupils' views. However, the guidance acknowledges that whilst there

is 'widespread agreement with the principle of participation, there is no single right way of supporting children's and young people's participation … and the process of developing effective values and structures to this end is not a straightforward one' (DfE 2008:3). The guidance definition of children's and young people's participation relates to 'adults working with children and young people to ensure their views are heard and valued in the taking of decisions which affect them, and that they are supported in making a positive contribution to their school and local community'(DfE 2008:5). Four key categories are listed comprising: children's rights and wellbeing; active citizenship; school improvement and community enhancement. Typical approaches used separately or in combination could be articulated through: young people councils; pupils as associate governors; planned consultations; working groups; lesson observation; young people as researchers; involvement in appointment processes; working with peers: peer-support, peer-mentoring and peer-mediation, use of ICT and formal meetings (DfE 2008: 11-16).

Despite these favourable plaudits, the political discourse remains focused on school improvement and positions student voice within this domain with students as consumers and customers who provide 'quality' feedback on the school. This places student voice at a dichotomy with teacher voice (Fielding, 2001a; Gunther and Thomson, 2012). Professional teaching bodies have for many years argued that a political focus on student voice is linked to, and challenges the voices of teachers. Critics propose teachers' decision-making voices have been muted, consequently undermining their professional autonomy, excluding them from contributing to educational reform and now positioned as implementers of government policies through national standards and national initiatives (May, 2005; Nelson, 2014).

2.1.3.ii) Dominant and contrasting participatory voices: OfSTED perspective

The Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) created by central government in 1992 as one of a number of instruments of school accountability was devised to evaluate and report on the outcomes of education in individual schools and also the quality of the education the school provided. In addition it asserts to comment on interrelationships between processes and outcomes using a variety of evidence, including the inspectors first hand observations. Since its inception, OfSTED has been the subject of controversy. In particular professionals and academics over the past two decades have questioned OfSTED's purpose, independence, expertise and the use made of its education findings.

The OfSTED Evaluation Schedule for Schools (January 2010) required inspectors to evaluate the following 'overall' seven prime judgements indicating the possible potential for a pupil participation profile: how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning; the extent to which pupils feel safe; pupils' behaviour; the extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles; how well pupils contribute to the school and the wider community; how well pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being, and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For many interested in Child's Voice, including The Children's Society (2011), these judgements indicated a welcome, firmer acknowledgement by OfSTED of how it listened to children, heralded an emerging recognition, identification and approach of seeing children as active participants, rather than passive recipients of adult decisions. However, the potential of this approach was short lived as further amendments to OfSTED inspections would be made two years later, where inspectors returned to examining school targets and processes focussing on teaching, leadership

and management strategies. Additionally, schools at the time provided their own assessments of the above through completion of their School Evaluation Form (SEF), which OfSTED would access before any inspection. Prior to the OfSTED 2010 schedule, prompts were provided to help schools complete their SEFs, however post 2010, these were omitted and schools were expected to use the grade descriptors as a guide to help them decide individual gradings and ascertain how they might progress to the next level. Three strands in particular were identified as relevant for this purpose: pupils' feelings about their school community and opportunity to take on responsibilities; consultation of pupils and involvement in their own learning; and pupils' positive relationship with the school community.

The new OfSTED inspection framework introduced in January 2012 repositions accelerated inspection foci on teaching, leadership and management standards. Inspectors have to judge and report on the quality of education provided in the school, its overall effectiveness, and in particular four key areas comprising: the achievement of pupils at the school (through scrutiny of exam results, standards and performance); the quality of teaching in the school (through observation and appraisal of teachers); the quality of leadership and management of the school (through assessment and standards of the leadership team) and the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school (through observations of lessons and playtimes, talking to pupils and parents, exclusion data). In their reports OfSTED are additionally required to evaluate and reflect on: the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development at the school and the extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school, and in particular the needs of disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (OfSTED 2012:4). It is important to note however that inspectors are

not required to provide a grade for pupil voice. This could indicate a shift away from the earlier focus on pupil participation and signal a potential barrier to future Child's Voice principles. It is therefore provident schools realize scope remains for them to provide inspectors with passionate discourses and evidence where genuine pupil participation principles are embedded within their individual schools.

2.1.3.iii) Dominant and contrasting participatory voices: Teachers' Standards and Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) perspective

Scrutiny of the Teachers' Standards (2011), for use in England from September 2012, which define the minimum level of practice expected of trainees working towards and being awarded qualified teacher status (QTS) and within their statutory induction period as newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and teachers in maintained schools, including maintained special schools, who are covered by the new 2012 performance appraisal regulations, identified only four subsections from a total of 40 which potentially provide teachers with scope to develop participation potential of student voice principles: Part 1 Teaching: TS7 – Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment; Part 2 Personal and Professional Conduct: A - Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school by: treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position; having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' wellbeing, in accordance with statutory provisions, and showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others.

2.1.3.iv) Dominant and contrasting participatory voices: Academic research perspective

Findings from the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufacturing and Commerce (RSA) final report inquiry 'Research and the Teaching Profession – Building the capacity for a self-improving education system' (2014) propose teachers and students thrive in 'research rich' schools. These schools provide greater capacity for self-evaluation and self-improvement and opportunities for teachers to become active agents, rather than passive participants, thereby contributing towards educational research from initial teacher education (ITE) to teachers' continual professional development. Additionally, this approach could enable strong, sustainable relationships to be built between teachers and pupils, with the potential to meet and enhance the teaching standards identified above. Research by Demetriou and Wilson (2010) examines the power of pupil voice for teachers at the start of their careers. Their evidence indicates that teacher interaction through consulting, participating and engaging with pupils concerning non-academic issues, could 'enhance the relationships and climate in the classroom' rather than the 'traditional direct student consultation about aspects of learning' (Demetriou and Wilson 2010:63).

The past two decades have heralded significant educational legislation, acts and codes of practice signalling the powerful imperative for teachers to identify and listen to children's voices (Every Child Matters, 2003; Children's Act, 2004). These developments provided academic research in the 'pupil voice' field with an arena to examine how pupil participation and consultation concerning learning and schooling could be enacted in schools, by seeking pupil views and opinions (Bragg, 2007).

Scholars interested in democracy, such as Giroux (1997), argue for the importance of student voice to be understood as the core of agency, whereby schools should exhibit a 'commitment to engaging the views and problems that deeply concern students in their everyday lives' (Giroux 1997:110). Researchers proposed a legitimate, democratic, community voice which values students' experiences outside school and positions 'children as active agents in their own learning, able to make choices and co-construct meanings and identities' (Arthur and Sawyer, 2009; Dahlberg et al, 1999).

During the late 1990s and early 2000s educational research emerged from Australia, Canada, England and the United States indicating increasing use of 'student voice' terminology which was beginning to 'point the way toward, if not start to effect, a cultural shift – a retuning of ears and a rearrangement of players and processes of research and reform' (Cook-Sather 2006:362). Within student voice contexts vocabulary was developing which challenged 'dominant images of students as silent, passive recipients of what others define as education' (Cook-Sather 2003:362). Examples of academic research discourses included increasing usage of terminology such as: rights, respect, opinion, matter, capable, listening actively, participate, and conversation, within democratic contexts of 'voice', 'agency' and 'action' (Holdsworth, 2000:357) and 'presence, power and agency' (Cook-Sather 2006:363). Fielding (2004) warns that 'there are no spaces, physical or metaphorical, where staff and students meet one another as equals, as genuine partners in the shared understanding of making meaning of their work together' (Fielding, 2004:309). Although appearing to challenge student voice principles, Fielding acknowledges positive shifts in the power dynamics between adults and young people, identifying student's rights as active participants and citizens and central issues of power, communication and participation.

The four dominant and contrasting participatory perspectives examined in this section indicate potential remains for advocates to nurture genuine, productive dialogues and partnerships between teachers and pupils within school communities. Government initiatives and OfSTED reports highlighted where many successful practices are evident. The research literature identified opportunities remain for all teachers (initial teacher education to teacher continual professional development) to contribute to research through their ongoing informative, beneficial, participatory partnerships with pupils. These partnerships could provide greater agency not only for the child's voice, but also teacher voice.

2.1.4 Child's Voice: key research

The terms 'pupil voice' and 'student voice' are frequently used synonymously in educational research. In general the former is used with reference to primary aged children, and the latter to secondary aged children, when describing the school context. Throughout this research the terms 'Child's Voice' and 'Children's Voices' have been used in preference to 'Pupil Voice' or 'Student Voice' in agreement with the Cambridge Primary Review:

> '… children denotes that we are talking about people rather than the roles conferred upon them in the context of school …voices removes the temptation to assume that children's views are homogenous' (Alexander, 2010:145)

All three terms will be used when describing the relevant literature in the field to remain truthful to their original intentions.

Interest in Child's Voice research began in earnest during the 1960s and 1970s when educational research became interested in 'eliciting and valuing pupils' accounts of experience' (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007:3). Earlier research by Meighan (1977) and

Woods (1980) demonstrated the importance and value of seeking views of teaching and learning from the children's perspective, however their findings could not guarantee that children would have opportunities to discuss their experiences as learners (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007).

The Economic and Social Research (ESRC) / Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) project 'Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning' (2000 – 2003), yielded many significant publications (Fielding and Bragg, 2003; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; MacBeath *et al.,* 2003; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004) in addition to a number of subsequent academic publications, culminating in Rudduck and McIntyre (2007). Rudduck and Flutter (2004) and Flutter and Rudduck (2004) give testimony to the benefits for not only pupils, but for schools, in consulting pupils. Their project 'Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning', one of four research projects in Phase 1 of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) research 'Children 5 – 16 (2003) with primary and secondary schools in the UK, has provided results that confirm positive benefits to the children involved by way of improved attitudes and behaviour. Different aspects of children's lives were examined and children seen as participators in social and educational processes rather than passive recipients. This exemplifies earlier findings highlighted by Soo Hoo:

> 'Some how educators have forgotten the important connection between teachers and pupils. We listen to outside experts to inform us and consequently overlook the treasure in our very own backyards, the pupils' (Soo Hoo, 1993:386)

Johnson (2004) identifies additional key principles which should underpin pupil activities at school and classroom level:

- mutual respect between adults and pupils;
- pupils and adults have equal value and worth;

- open, honest and valued communication between pupils and teachers;

- investment for the future – pupils are entitled to views which affect and determine their futures;

- meaningful active involved decision making;

- sustainable and responsive teacher-pupil relationships;

- equal opportunities range of pupil voice activities;

- pupil participation, involvement and voice continually evaluated and updated.

Children are in a unique position to give their opinions concerning their feelings and understanding of their experiences at school. By taking their voices seriously, individually and collectively, and giving them opportunities to speak in public to different audiences, children are able to acquire confidence at communication and presentation skills (Bragg and Fielding, 2005). Robinson and Fielding (2007) in their Cambridge Primary Review Interim Report 'Children and their Primary Schools: Pupils Voices' warn that it is important to ensure that staff take 'pupil voice' seriously without misinterpreting the new approach as a 'covert' way of 'trying to control, discipline, or reform teachers' (Robinson and Fielding, 2007:22). Researchers of Child's Voice conclude that the genuine inclusion of children improves their attitudes, skills, values and behaviours as democratic citizens.

2.2 Emotional and socio-cultural dimensions of children's learning

In order to understand how the concept of Child's Voice has progressed within educational fields over recent years, the review of literature will explore key theories of learning, specifically emotional and socio-cultural dimensions and examine how the theory of transformative learning can be brought onto play.

2.2.1. Emotional dimensions of learning

The review of literature identified that the emotional dimension of learning relies on its close conceptual relationship with the social dimension of learning and that there is no single field where the literature is located. An emotional dimension of learning has been described broadly as a process transmitted by feelings, emotions, attitudes and motivations (Gardner, 1993; Goleman, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). A number of descriptive terms within the literature have been identified and found to be used interchangeably within this dimension: Emotional Intelligence (EI), Emotional Literacy (EL), Emotional Well Being (EWB) and Emotional Competence (EC).

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) (Mayer and Salovey, 1997) is defined as a person's ability to monitor their own and others' emotions, to be able to differentiate between positive and negative effects of emotions and to use this knowledge to help develop their own thoughts and actions. Researchers argue that people have varying degrees of understanding relating to expressing emotions, but conclude that these are skills that can be learned (Gardner, 1993; Goleman, 1996; MacGilchrist, Myers and Reed, 2004; Mayer and Salovey, 1997; Soanes, 2006, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978; Weare, 2004).

'Emotional Literacy' (EL), is a popular term adopted in the UK by educational psychologists, schools and local education authorities (LEAs). Weare (2004) advocates the importance of Emotional Literacy not just for individuals but for the school community as a whole, its value being that it fosters the:

> '…ability to understand ourselves and other people, and in particular to be aware of, understand, and use information about the emotional states of ourselves and others with competence. It includes the ability to understand, express and manage our own emotions, and respond to the emotions of others, in ways that are helpful to ourselves and others' (Weare, 2004:2)

This enables pupils to develop positive relationships with other pupils and adults and is especially called for in group or team work. An essential part of this is being a good listener and communicator. According to Goleman, a leading American psychologist, individuals who demonstrate these qualities are identified by others as being a person who can be trusted to:

> 'handle emotions in relationships well and accurately read social situations and networks; to interact smoothly; and to use these skills to persuade and lead, negotiate and settle disputes, for cooperation and team work' (Goleman, 1998:318)

It is the view of a number of researchers (Gardner, 1993; Goleman, 1996, 1998; MacGilchrist, Myers and Reed, 2004; Mayer and Salovey, 1997; Soanes, 2006, 2007), that these fundamental concepts of 'intrapersonal intelligence' (self awareness) and 'interpersonal intelligence' (awareness of others) are both necessary to develop a capacity to empathise and communicate effectively; to sense what others are feeling and understand relationships successfully, are all important social life-skills for both children and adults. In particular, Gardner's (1993) identification and definition of 'Intrapersonal Intelligence' involves the individual being aware of their own feelings, the underlying reasons for their feelings and the recognition of the possible impact these emotions could have on any decisions that they might make. Being 'self aware' involves having a:

> 'realistic assessment of one's own abilities and a well –grounded sense of confidence' (Goleman, 1998:318)

Interpersonal Intelligence in contrast, Goleman (1998) argues is defined by an awareness of others and involves the individual developing a sense of empathy with others, seeing things from a different perspective by:

'sensing what people are feeling, being able to take their perspective, and cultivating a rapport and attunement with a broad diversity of people' (Goleman, 1998:318)

The effective 'management' of emotions and consequently behaviour within an educational context involves the way in which adults and children relate to each other on a day to day basis. Importantly this underpins effective behaviour policies which enable and guide individuals into self-regulating their own behaviour in social contexts such as schools. The 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (SEAL) and Solution Focussed approaches (Rhodes and Ajmal, 1995) have been adopted by many schools, including the case study school, to develop a holistic approach to their behaviour management. MacGilchrist *et al.,* (2004) suggest that managing 'with emotion' involves using both intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences in order to help motivate others. They cite essential elements of 'vision, self belief and determination' of those in leadership positions within schools, who promote the importance amongst others, that 'actions can have as much, if not more impact, than words alone' (MacGilchrist *et al.,* 2004:131). Schools managing 'through emotions' identify that the emotional well being and strength of their staff and pupils is important to promote 'group identity, a collective self belief and mutual trust' (MacGilchrist *et al.,* 2004:131). The emotional dimensions of learning are complex and it appears reasonable to assume that the emotional and social dimensions of learning are closely linked.

2.2.2 Socio-cultural dimensions of learning

The literature suggests that socio-cultural dimensions of learning are influenced by the interaction of the individual with their environment, and are dependent on historical and societal conditions through two connected levels. The first comprises a direct or indirect social, interpersonal level of interaction (Fielding, 2004a, 2004b; Mezirow, 1991, 2003;

Vygotsky, 1978) and the second an underlying societal level, influencing the character of the interaction and contributions of individuals developed in a social and cultural context (Bourdieu, 1986; Bruner, 1996, 2006; Freire, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978; Webb *et al.,* 2002).

2.2.2.i) Social interpersonal level of interaction

The extent to which children are social actors, communicating and making sense of their social worlds through cultural contexts (Vygotsky,1978) has inspired a number of leading developmental psychologists (Bruner, 1996, 2006; Rogoff, 1990, 2003) to examine the contributions of family and peer relationships and schooling to children's development. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that knowledge is socially constructed between people and children, developing significant cognitive competencies through interaction between either adults or peers. Vygotsky (1978) highlighted the importance to which social and cultural origins of thought and the structure language gave to this through his concept of the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD), defined as:

> 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by
> independent problem solving and the level of potential development as
> determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration
> with more able peers' (Vygotsky, 1978:86)

The implication here is that a child's performance of a task whilst working with an adult or more able peer would give a better indication of their cognitive development than their independent performance alone. This principle can be tested through observation of the quality of interactions and scaffolding that children receive and give to each other and to adults, and is indicative of the socio-cultural approach at the school.

2.2.2.ii) Person – centred learning community

Fielding's (2004b) fourfold typology 'The communal/instrumental orientation of organisations' describes the interpersonal, affective, high performance and person-centred dimensions of organisations. He extends Macmurray's (1933) 'person – centred' model which recognises 'human beings are deeply situated, communal beings whose personhood is steeped in mutuality' (Fielding, 2004b: 209). Fielding suggests his 'person-centred' dimension nurtures promising opportunities for dialogue which emerges between teachers and students. I have considered Fielding's 'person centred' aspect of his fourfold typology (Table 2.1) as I believe it illustrates how the 'functional' can be used to support the 'personal'.

Table 2.1 Schools as Person-centred learning communities (Source: Fielding 2004b: 212)

The functional is expressive of/used for the sake of the personal	
Student voice: How and why?	Wide ranging formal and informal mutual engagement to enhance the development of wise persons.
Power / hierarchy:	Joint work partnerships, often exploratory, seldom predictable.
Relationships:	Mutual trust, care and respect.
Ethos:	Enabling ethos encouraging diversity and inclusiveness amongst all learners.
Arrangements for listening:	Reciprocal listening in emergent foci and wide – ranging agendas.
Action:	Shared responsibility for (often joint) action on mutually agreed foci.
Typical student voice activity:	Students and teachers develop more exploratory forms of pedagogy together.

This model outlines a helpful perspective for schools wishing to adopt a more personal approach to education, where children and teachers work and learn together through partnership, in an interpersonal moral context (Fielding and Moss, 2011). Fielding (2004a, 2004b) argues that this has the potential to transform education, moving away from a traditional model of learning where the child is passive. Although interest within

this field and pupils' roles is increasing, there appears to be a lack of research which focuses on the views of children whilst they fulfil roles of responsibility and agency within their school context over a period of time. This is where this study has the potential to provide children's personal perspectives when the insider-researcher aimed to accurately present credible communications of the children's interpretations and experiences of their roles, seeking further clarification when required. Furthermore, working with Year 6 children embedded in the school context, enabled this research to benefit from their insights, usually associated with long term ethnography studies or insider-research.

2.2.2.iii) Social – cultural level of interaction

The contribution to contemporary cultural theory made by Bourdieu (1986) and his concept of 'cultural capital' in an educational context is worth discussing in relation to this study. Bourdieu's research has been helpful in understanding how education can reproduce social divisions, which in turn can challenge teachers and students to bring about change. Bourdieu (1986) proposes a 'social generation' where adults and children share similar experiences which influence their later experiences and relationships. His interdependent theoretical concepts, comprising 'cultural capital' and 'habitus,' frame the following discussion, helping to clarify:

> 'the relationship between objective social structures (institutions, discourses, fields, ideologies) and everyday practices (what people do and, why they do it)'
>
> (Webb *et al.,* 2002:1)

It is appropriate to consider Bourdieu's (1986) theme of 'cultural capital' in an educational context. Webb *et al*., (2002) provides a helpful definition of cultural capital as:

> 'a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conversations, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities' (Webb *et al.,* 2002:21)

Bourdieu (1986) describes the power one generation has to influence the next, especially within the field of education where the amount of power someone has, is dependent on their position and the degree of 'capital' they have within the institution. Bourdieu (1986) suggests that reproduction and transformation are key characteristics of individuals with social capital in contrast with those who have the least social capital and who tend to be less ambitious and are prepared to accept their position.

'Habitus' refers to ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being. This is evident through children improving their own position and capital, showing their understanding and feel for roles undertaken within the cultural field of the school in addition to the value and appreciation of their contributions. I believe it is through children's ongoing, evolving and active day to day interactions which involve their consolidating individual and collective experiences that dispose them to certain shared social actions. This subsequently develops further agentic relationships to yield informed choices. Habitus, in the educational setting of a school shows itself to be:

> 'both durable and oriented towards the practical: dispositions, knowledge and values …….. potentially subject to modification, rather than being passively consumed or re-inscribed' (Webb *et al*., 2002: 41)

2.2.3 A Theory of Transformative Learning

Transformative Learning occurs when an event calls into question what we believe and as a consequence we revise our perspective (Rogoff, 2003). Learning which helps to foster this by developing an ability to solve problems which have 'unknown' and 'unpredictable' elements, have challenged traditional theories of learning. A model

originally by Mezirow (1991), later adapted by Fetherston and Kelly (2007) when researching the effect of transformative learning upon adults undertaking degree courses, has led me to adapt the model for this thesis in order to analyse the impact for children undertaking their roles. It also builds upon the 'positive learning dispositions' children acquire by: 'being 'apprenticed' to a community within which such dispositions are naturally manifested, modelled, recognised, acknowledged and valued by the 'elders' by whom they are 'surrounded' and 'attention to the implicit values and assumptions of the culture' of the school (Claxton, 2002:32).

Research into 'Transformative Learning' has led a number of researchers (Fetherston and Kelly, 2007; Fielding 2001a, 2001b; Mezirow, 1991, 2003; Rogoff, 2003) to explore social learning theories. Rogoff (1990; 2003) offers powerful evidence illustrating how children's emerging competencies are achieved through structured, supported and amplified relationships which encourage the growing competence of 'guided participation'. A view of competence through participation (Rogoff, 2003), rather than children becoming competent to participate (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008) is transformative for both children and adults (Rogoff, 2003). It will be important to embrace these 'transformative' features when examining the data:

> '... as people develop through their shared use of cultural tools and practices they simultaneously contribute to the transformation of cultural tools, practices and institutions' (Rogoff 2003:52)

Hart *et al.* (2004) explored 'transformability' through their 'Learning Without Limits' project, with nine teachers examining the concept of ability, where there is:

> 'the potential for change in current practices of achievement and response, that things can change and be changed for the better, sometimes even dramatically, as a result of what happens and what people do in the present' (Hart *et al.*, 2004:166)

An understanding of how current achievement has the potential to improve future achievement provides this research with some interesting insight. Hart *et al.,* (2004) findings suggest that learning capacity could be improved given time, if children were given expanded learning opportunities whereby conditions and opportunities were created to enable greater empowerment. Furthermore, a significant collective and individual emotional dimension is created when teachers and children work together, offering greater potential for change.

2.3 A multi-dimensional approach to the 'Sociology of Childhood'

This section explores how establishing children as important members of society, making valuable contributions during their childhoods, can be used to deepen understanding and inform methodological and analytical assumptions during this study.

Nearly all research on children has been constructed or conducted by adults in one form or another whether from a clinical, psychological or educational perspective. There is a growing movement which supports a contemporary multi-dimensional approach to a new and influential social discipline namely the 'Sociology of Childhood'. Contributors to this movement, including myself view children as active, constructive and empowered participants, not as passive objects of reform. The analysis of literature reveals a number of different ways young people are perceived. The following two areas will receive further examination in sequence:

    a)   The '**Socially Constructed'** child

    b)   The '**Being**' and '**Becoming**' child

2.3.1 The 'Socially Constructed' child

Children and their education, certainly in the western world, have become a political issue for governments, who have financed burgeoning programmes to improve educational standards; however the expectations and demands put upon children have become 'inappropriate' (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998:196). Seminal research by Alanen (2001); James, Jenks and Prout (1998); Jenks (2005); Mayall (2002) and Qvortrup (1991, 1994) all signal that the empowerment of and participation of children should be 'a central objective' (Mayall, 2002:3). This emergent paradigm concludes that children should be looked upon as social agents and actors with agency. Childhood, within the emergent paradigm should therefore be understood as a social construction and belonging to children:

> 'social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, and not just in respect to their social construction by adults' (James and Prout, 1997:4)

Significant researchers in the 'Sociology of Childhood' field (James and Prout, 1997; Jenks, 2005; Mayall, 2002; Wyness, 2006) describe childhood as a socially constructed phenomenon and agree that many children have their voices constricted, by virtue of their young age. Mayall (2002) argues that it is essential to seek the perspectives of children about childhood as:

> 'Children are moral agents, that they think they should, and do participate in constructing the social order – these emerge in what they say and can be worked up into a standpoint, through setting them within social analysis' (Mayall, 2002: 178)

For example, Jenks (2004) describes a social constructionist view which offers a brighter aspect for the future:

> 'Children are therefore seen as active subjects and a sociology develops, sharing characteristics with action research – a sociology for children!' (Jenks in Kehily: 2004:93)

Furthermore, James and Prout (1997) propose childhood is understood as a social construction, that children's social relationships and cultures are worth studying in their own right and that children should be seen as active social agents (Cook-Sather, 2006), a view that I share.

However, there remains a dilemma between children's dependency and independency which provides a number of issues for discussion, for example, contrasting 'childhood' to 'adulthood' given interesting and challenging suggestions (Archard, 2004; Lee, 2001). The period of 'childhood' has lengthened from that in the past and gives rise to a dilemma in modern society, in as much as it:

> 'underpins our differential attribution of rights and responsibilities to, respectively children and adults' (Archard, 2004:39)

Archard (2004) argues that childhood is both a biological and social construction suggesting that a distinction between 'concepts' and 'conceptions' be made when aiming to understand childhood. He concludes:

> 'to have a concept of 'childhood is to recognise that children differ from adults; to have a conception of childhood is to have a view of what those interesting differences are' (Archard, 2004:27)

The perspectives of childhood discussed by these authors require further analysis, in particular that of the 'being' and the 'becoming' child.

2.3.2 The 'Being' and 'Becoming' Child

Modern societies are frequently seen to separate the world of children from the world of adults (Mayall, 2000), yet sociologists of childhood recognise children as beings and agents who are capable of dealing 'with the here and now of children's voices and agency' (Lee, 2001:137). Notions of 'being' and 'becoming' are intrinsic to research on childhood and in particular to this study. The 'being' child is generally seen as a social

actor in their own right, actively constructing their 'childhood' with opinions and experiences about being a child. The 'becoming' child on the other hand is seen as an 'adult in the making' but who lacks universal skills and features of the 'adult' they will become (James and James, 2004; James and Prout, 1997; Jenks, 2005). Perceiving children as 'beings' or 'becomings' creates an unsatisfactory tension and should be 'used together in complementary ways' (Uprichard, 2008:304).

The construction of the 'being' child I believe is central to children being viewed as competent social actors within the sociology of childhood (Alanen and Mayall, 2001; Christensen and James, 2008; James and Prout, 1997; Lee, 2001). Findings from these studies have shown that 'becoming' is a future orientated discourse where the important factor is what the child 'will become' rather than what they 'are'. Issues of competency are also raised, that suggest children are incompetent. However it is essential to acknowledge both issues as important as to ignore the future 'becomings' overlooks ideas of past and future.

Childhood is seen by Lee (2001) as a social phenomenon, where children warrant the opportunity for independence, but in addition, where society has decided that they warrant protection. Children would be recognised as:

> 'competent agents active within a range of social worlds' which 'recognised that adults alone do not control or steer the full range of social experiences of children' and that 'young people themselves are active in making sense of the world around them' (Heath *et al.,* 2009:59)

This is in some conflict with the modern aspect of education, in that it embodies the future of society which has led to a developmental view of education. Lee (2001) argues that this was the divergent beginnings of the 'being' from the dependent

'becoming'. Prout and James (1997) championed the arena for childhood studies which would also change the relationship between adults and children, in order to change society: seeing the human being as the social agent, but also to develop a new kind of knowledge which is developed from the child's point of view (Rousseau in Jenks, 2005; Lee, 2001).

The exploration of the 'Sociology of Childhood' literature illustrates an appropriate perspective for this study. It has led me to conclude that seeking the perspectives of children as active and competent social actors, will yield further insights into their lived worlds and contribute to the originality of this research.

2.4: Common underlying themes: Consultation, Participation and Responsibility

The following section examines three important themes which have emerged from the literature, namely, consultation, participation and responsibility. The review of literature confirms that consultation and participation are significant factors in the development of Child's Voice. This has been demonstrated where children have had opportunities to take on a variety of roles of responsibility (Fielding, 2001a, 2001b; Fielding and Bragg, 2003; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007).

There has emerged a new awareness which recognises that children are active participants in their own experiences and interactions (Christensen and James, 2008; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004). Children's views as stakeholders in their education has received little attention until recent times and yet when sought, have yielded many insightful commentaries (Fielding, 2001a, 2001b; Fielding, 2004a, 2004b; MacGilchrist, Myers and Reed, 2004; Robinson and Fielding, 2007; Rudduck and

Flutter, 2004). However there is little evidence in the literature which examines and analyses the perspectives of young children since much of the research is situated within the secondary school sector.

'Consultation' and 'Participation' are considered two of the most important factors in the promotion of pupil voice (Fielding, 2001a; Fielding and Bragg, 2003; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007). Indeed the Education Act (2002) requires schools to 'consult' their pupils and OFSTED inspectors to report on how a school 'seeks, values and acts upon pupils' views' (DfES, 2008). The influential DfES document, 'Every Child Matters' (2003) identified the importance for young people to be able to participate in decision making and to be able to make a positive contribution to their community. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) warn of a possible tension whereby 'consultation' could be viewed as undemocratic and somewhat in conflict with 'participation':

> 'You can, of course, have participation without consultation, but you cannot have consultation without participation: the latter is implicit in the former'
> Rudduck and McIntyre (2007:9)

2.4.1 Pupil Consultation

Pupil 'Consultation' can be defined as 'the action of taking counsel together; deliberation or conference' (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004:5) and 'talking with pupils about things that matter to them in the classroom and school and that affect their learning' (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007:7). Consultation is dependent on the principle that children have been invited to take part in discussions, knowing that what they have to say, is worthwhile and valued (Cheminais, 2006; Fielding, 2001a, 2001b; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007).

It is important for schools to ensure pupil consultation does not take place in a vacuum. Successful pupil consultation occurs when adults show genuine interest in wanting to know the children's perspective, which builds upon positive relationships endorsing aspects of trust, respect and confidence. Hand in hand in line with consultation should go appropriate feedback, which should be planned and sufficient time allocated. Therefore it would be prudent to develop a variety of consultation systems gradually whereby authentic agendas can be determined by individuals, groups, whole classes or the school (Fielding, 2001a; Fielding and Bragg, 2005; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004, Mayall, 2000; Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007). Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) propose that there have been a number of times when the concept of 'participation' has been perceived as 'more accessible' than the 'demanding concept of consultation' and that the relationship between the two merits review.

2.4.2 Pupil Participation

The benefits of participation are well established and a substantial body of research has shown: enhancement of skills, capacity, competence and self-esteem (Alderson, 2000a, 2000b); improved effectiveness of the individual (Greenwood and Levin, 1998; Morrow, 1999); strengthened social, negotiation and judgement skills through trial, error and compromise (Raynor, 2003). This is especially the case when adults and children talk whilst making decisions together (Bruner, 1996; Bragg and Fielding, 2005; Freire, 1996). There is however, an ongoing debate between 'giving children a say' and empowering them by acknowledging their viewpoints and insights (Alderson, 2000b; Fielding and Bragg, 2005; Morrow, 1999) and acting upon these insights. A helpful definition of participation is being:

'given an active and direct involvement in school matters at some level … suggests inclusion, or membership, of a community, in which pupils are valued and respected contributors' (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004:5)

A number of typology models have been developed in recent times that aim to conceptualise the many levels of engagement with children in participatory processes. It is important to consider the models provided by Hart (1992); Fielding (2001a) and Bragg and Fielding (2005). All three models represent a continuum ranging from non-participation to full participation and will be discussed in the following sequence:

- Hart's Ladder of Participation

- Fielding's Conditions of Student Voice

- Bragg and Fielding's Students as Researchers

2.4.2.i) Hart's Ladder of Participation

Hart's (1992) frequently cited 'Ladder of Children's Participation', a modification of an earlier model conceived by Arnstein (1969), caught the interest of many working with children. It was originally meant to help UNICEF interpret the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) elements which involved the participation of children. Hart's ladder identified eight levels of participation (Figure2.1).

The Ladder of Participation

8. Child-initiated shared decisions with adults

7. Child-initiated and directed

6. Adult-initiated shared decisions with children

5. Consulted and informed

4. Assigned but informed

Degrees of participation

3. Tokenism

2. Decoration

1. Manipulation

Non-participation

Eight levels of young people's participation. The ladder metaphor is borrowed from Sherry Arnstein (1969); the categories are from Roger Hart.

Figure 2.1 Hart's Ladder of Participation (1992*)*

The first three rungs identify degrees of non-participation, whilst the remaining five identify different degrees of agency. The model addresses a narrow range of ways that children participate, concentrating more on programmes and projects, rather than their everyday informal experiences within their communities. More recently Hart (2008) has suggested that 'scaffold' is a more suitable metaphor in a social world (Gauvain, 2001), as it 'implies multiple routes to growth' (Hart, 2008:21). This then can be seen to reinforce structures for all, adults and children together to achieve their 'different

climbing goals' (Hart, 2008:21) whilst acknowledging social contexts of their development and interactions with more experienced members of the community, which could be other children, are beneficial (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). Hart requests that there should be greater:

> 'collaboration between academics and those who work directly with children as well as children … we need to find ways of monitoring and evaluating the way we work with children and the quality of the realisation of their participatory rights'(Hart, 2008:29)

This is an important concept which will be developed further as part of this study.

2.4.2.ii) Fielding's Conditions for Student Voice

Fielding's model (2001a) deconstructs the conditions for student voice by identifying nine key elements (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Conditions for Student Voice

Speaking	• <u>Who</u> is allowed to speak? • <u>To whom</u> are they allowed to speak? • <u>What</u> are they allowed to speak about?
Listening	• <u>Who</u> is listening? • <u>Why</u> are they listening? • <u>How</u> are they listening?
Skills	• Are the skills of dialogue <u>encouraged and supported</u> through training or other appropriate means? • Are those skills understood, developed and practiced within the <u>context of democratic values and dispositions</u>?
Attitudes & Dispositions	• How do those involved <u>regard each other?</u> • To what degree are the <u>principle of equal value</u> and the <u>dispositions of care</u> felt reciprocally and demonstrated through the reality of daily encounter?
Systems	• <u>How often</u> does dialogue and encounter in which student voice is centrally important occur? • How do the systems enshrining the value and necessity of student voice mesh with or <u>relate to other organizational arrangements</u> (particularly those involving adults)?
Organisational Culture	• Do the <u>cultural norms and values</u> of the school proclaim the centrality of student voice within the context of education as a shared responsibility and shared achievement? • Do the <u>practices, traditions and routine daily encounters</u> demonstrate values supportive of student voice?

Spaces & the making of meaning	• <u>Where</u> are the public spaces (physical & metaphorical) in which these encounters might take place? • Who <u>controls</u> them? • What <u>values</u> shape their being and their use?
Action	• What <u>action</u> is taken? • Who feels <u>responsible?</u> • <u>What happens</u> if aspirations and good intentions are not realized?
The Future	• Do we need <u>new structure?</u> • Do we need <u>new ways of relating to each other?</u>

Fielding takes nine clusters of questions that 'seek to probe the rhetorics and realities of student voice' (Fielding, 2001a:100). His work builds upon the major ESRC (Economic & Social Research Council) Network Project – Consulting Pupils About Teaching & Learning (2003) that formed part of the wider ESRC Teaching & Learning Research Programme. The research indicates that there is some evidence that there are now more opportunities for children to speak to a wider audience. It also identifies teachers and adults are now not only more willing to listen and understand, but additionally learn about and from their students (MacBeath *et al.,* 2001). Where students are encouraged to develop skills of dialogue, an integral element of 'democracy and democratic citizenship in the lived, day to day context of real schools' is achieved (Fielding, 2001a:104). Student voice should not be viewed as 'peripheral, irrelevant or corrosive of the already diminishing legitimacy of teacher professionalism' (Fielding, 2001a:105). Prominent systems within schools such as school councils have led to the emergence of emotional intelligence and emotional literacy through peer-led buddying systems and circle time. Fielding's (2001a) model however does not include the emotional impact upon children involved. This is an important concept which will be developed as part of this doctoral study.

2.4.2.iii) Students as Researchers

Research conducted by Bragg and Fielding (2005) offers an approach that values children as participants and co-researchers. A central feature to their 'child centred' perspective is that the child is recognised as a person with subjectivity, competency and trustworthiness (Christensen and James, 2008; Corsaro, 2005; Bragg and Fielding, 2005; Prout and James, 1997). Bragg and Fielding (2005) offer a four mode model that supports the concept of 'students as researchers' where children are given central and autonomous status. Their framework is used as a continuum.

Table 2.3: Mode 1: Students as data source

Teacher role	Acknowledge + uses information about student performance
Student role	Receive a better- informed pedagogy
Teacher engagement with students	Dissemination
Classroom e.g.	Data about student past performance
Team, department e.g.	Looking at samples of students' work
School e.g.	Student attitude surveys, cohort-based exam + test scores

Mode 1 indicates that there is genuine teacher commitment in attending to the student's voice, which manifests itself through practical discussion of completed work and agreed targets.

Table 2.4: Mode 2: Students as active respondents

Teacher role	Hear what pupils say
Student role	Discuss their learning + approaches to teaching
Teacher engagement with students	Discussion
Classroom e.g.	Shared lesson objectives/explicit assessment criteria
Team, department e.g.	Students evaluate a unit of work
School e.g.	Traditional school council/peer-led action groups

Mode 2 shows that the teacher actively wants to hear what students have to say about their experiences. Students become 'discussants rather than recipients'.

Table 2.5: Mode 3: Students as co-researchers

Teacher role	Listen in order to learn
Student role	Co-researcher with teacher on agreed issues
Teacher engagement with students	Dialogue (teacher led)
Classroom e.g.	Focus groups conducted by student co-researchers
Team, department e.g.	Students assist in team/dept action research
School e.g.	Transition between primary/secondary

Mode 3 shows that there is greater involvement and partnership between teacher and students. The role of students now takes on a more collaborative phase, although the teacher still negotiates and defines the boundaries of areas for investigation. The teacher heightens their listening in order to learn.

Table 2.6: Mode 4: **Students as researchers**

Teacher role	Listen in order to contribute
Student role	Initiator and director of research with teacher support
Teacher engagement with students	Dialogue (student led)
Classroom e.g.	What makes a good lesson?
Team, department e.g.	Gender issues in technology subjects
School e.g.	Evaluation of e.g. PSHE system, radical school council

Mode 4 displays a deeper partnership and one where the student's voice is predominant. The role is one of leadership and initiator of issues for research. The role of the teacher is that of supporter. Students lead dialogue which gives their 'perceptions and perspectives in the conduct of research' (Bragg and Fielding, 2005:110). Bragg and Fielding's differentiated model establishes a valuable dialogue where it is possible to create a more informed understanding of children, their social interactions and everyday lives, through participation as co-researchers (Robinson and Taylor, 2013).

2.4.2.iv) Participation – conflicting narratives?

There are three key areas that emerge from the literature: restricted participation – agency; restricted participation – privileged voices, and marginalisation. The narratives of participants should be at the forefront of research as they provide insight into the understanding of their lived experiences. Much of the Child's Voice literature is firmly grounded 'in the notion that all children, like adults, are active agents in their own learning and are entitled, wherever possible, to democratic participation in research pertaining to their interests' (Ravet, 2007:234) and primarily illustrates the comprehensive benefits achievable for individuals and schools who participate in initiatives (Cheminais, 2011; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004). By contrast, the literature additionally includes narratives challenging this view, postulating that not all voices are heard and that competing constraints exist which compromise the many ideals of 'participation by all' (Czerniawski, 2012; Fielding and Rudduck, 2002; Lewis, 2010; Rudduck and Fielding, 2006; Thomson, 2011). In particular recent research findings from Chadderton, 2011; Cox 2011; Czerniawski, 2012, and Thomson, 2011, identify certain limitations which contribute towards a restrictive Child's Voice perspective, which complements and builds upon those identified previously by Fielding 2001a, 2001b; Fielding and Rudduck, 2002. I have summarised and adapted these limitations based on Thomson's (2011:25) examples:

Restricted participation - agency:

- Some activities are often tokenistic, with pupils being 'seen' to be involved rather than being 'active' partners in change; some school councils restrict what pupils can discuss, confining them to issues of fund raising, social activities or responding to policies and plans developed elsewhere; children are rarely

involved in substantive, ongoing classroom conversations about pedagogy and knowledge.

- Children are 'active meaning-makers participating in whatever is going on around them' (Cox 2011:94), however, in many schools they continue to be faced with ongoing inconsistencies. The Child's Voice context encourages them to ask for example: To what extent do teachers actively prioritise 'participation' within their classrooms?

Chadderton (2011) proposes that the student voice movement 'which encourages young people to share their own ideas about their educational experiences to bring about transformation … in their claims to capture voice and empower …are contested and challenged' (Chadderton, 2011:74). She concludes that a more complex notion of student voice as 'shifting and fluid' should be adopted and furthermore, the idea of the researcher as narrator should be considered as unreliable 'to try and avoid naïve or even potentially damaging research being conducted in the nature of student voice research' (Cox 2011:73).

- <u>Restricted participation - privileged voices:</u> only a few pupils selected for representative activities, often the 'good' children with 'difficult' pupils not included (Chadderton, 2011; Wisby, 2011); insufficient training offered to many children; often there is little follow-up to student voice activities, which leads to cynicism from the pupils about the democratic processes of democracy.

Advocates of student voice research (Fielding, 2001; Mitra, 2003) claim that children have a 'unique perspective stemming from their experience' (Chadderton, 2011:75), however, what is often thought of as 'authentic' student voice could be seen to ignore 'different and shifting experiences' (Chadderton, 2011:76), which problematizes the

link between experience and knowledge. Indeed, this does not automatically result in an awareness or an ability to locate this experience in the wider context. Cox (2011: 75) proposes that a child 'even though they may be participating in an apparently passive way, is nevertheless an active meaning-maker in those situations and their learning will be shaped by whatever practices prevail'. This is an important concept which will be developed further as part of this doctoral study.

Research should acknowledge that voices are plural, dynamic, contradictory and incomplete (Flores, 2000) and the voices of the marginalised should be heard (Chadderton, 2011; Cox, 2011). Moreover, 'experience does not automatically equal awareness, nor does it equal any kind of wider understanding or an automatic ability to locate the experience in a wider context' (Chadderton, 2011:76). For example, Czerniawski's (2012) study of adolescents involved in three student voice initiatives (teaching and learning; behaviour and the school's physical environment) is relevant here. Findings from the project, revealed a 'fusion' between a student's individual identity (the image of the pupil's own achievements, characteristics and values) and a collective identity (grounded in a belief they were considered 'good', 'trusted' and 'respected'). However, this 'centrality' restricts their ability when identifying reasons why their peers chose not to be involved, other than from their 'lack of interest'. Czerniawski (2012) proposes that although this presents a picture of motivated students, committed to pupil voice initiatives implemented by school structures, it additionally hinders identification of those who 'might feel jaded, alienated and let down by their experience of pupil voice' (Czerniawski, 2012:134).

Importantly, Cox (2011) and Czerniawski (2012) identified that some students expressed feelings of marginalisation, citing more complex reasons for their non-participation:

- More formal procedures that were associated with participation, including attending meetings; canvassing other pupils and feeding back to their class, engendered a sense of insecurity (Czerniawski, 2012); and that shyness, communication difficulties, reticence could directly or indirectly influence or constrain (Cox, 2011);

- Students experienced vulnerability and marginalisation with some of their peers and teachers (Czerniawski, 2012);

- Some teachers preferred some students to be involved in comparison to others (Chadderton, 2011; Thomson, 2011, Wisby, 2011);

- Students' opinions 'are subtle, contradictory and at times subversive, yet they reveal a desire to be more fully involved whilst simultaneously revealing mistrust and frustration with the processes that accompany pupil voice' (Czerniawski 2012: 134).

Wisby (2011:41) notes that 'for most schools, a significant proportion of their students will not be heavily engaged with provision for student voice'. Furthermore, she points out that pupils actively involved in student voice activities are more likely to be from relatively advantaged backgrounds, yet disaffected pupils are 'no more likely to be attracted to student voice activities than to other school activities' (Wisby, 2011:42). Indeed, schools should ask themselves whether their current systems represent the interests of pupils who appear least well represented, reflecting on strategies to enable and support all students to participate should they wish (Bragg, 2007; Fielding, 2004b).

Likewise, Thomson's (2011) analysis provides this research with additional fundamental questions for schools thinking about 'student voice' which build on the questions posed by Fielding's (2001b) with respect to student voice (Who is speaking, about what, who is listening, what happens as a result and in whose interests does this work?); Hart's (1997) ladder of participation (ranging from tokenism to child-initiated decisions with adults) and research processes with children and young people (Christensen and James, 2000; Kellett, 2005; Lewis and Lindsay (1999). Complementing the questions above, Thomson (2011:28) adds that schools should consider the following:

- Who is speaking? Who do they represent? How many points of view will be brought into the conversation? Who and what might be left out? How could they / these be included?

- What counts as speaking in this context? What additional information and support might be needed to help speaking up and out? What happens to those who choose not to speak?

- Who does not want to speak? Where are the silences in conversations and how will we know what these mean?

Although teachers are directly involved in the transformation of children's lives through learning, it is acknowledged that they also work within the broad social context of the school. It is important therefore to explore socio-cultural perspectives of primary education which will focus on participation and collaboration. Official developments during the first decade of the 21st century emerged making provision for the needs of all children, including a focus on 'child's voice' and on seeing the child as a whole person (Every Child Matters DfES 2004). Learning however is centred within social and cultural contexts and it is therefore important for teachers and children to develop clear

insights into their lived school and classroom practices from the point of view of the different participants.

There is in education an emphasis on outcomes and performance for teachers, which can have a marked impact on the way they teach. Cox (2011) suggests this focus instigates a tension for teachers with alternative views of how children learn, and could potentially lead to assumptions concerning 'children being disrespectful of their agency and their rights as thinking people' (Cox, 2011:37). This raises further questions for teachers around what they do; how they value and see children as both initiators and collaborators in contexts where meanings are constructed jointly, and whether learning is seen as more than acquiring skills and knowledge transmitted by the teacher. Cox (2011:75) proposes that a child 'even though they may be participating in an apparently passive way, is nevertheless an active meaning maker in those situations and their learning will be shaped by whatever practices prevail'.

It is of interest to acknowledge the case study school's intention to facilitate children's voice and participation through its shared philosophical approach which is: *'by* participating, children learn *what it is* to participate' (Cox 2011:116), demonstrating a value in children as people, not only as pupils who learn and understand how to be a member of their community. Alternatively, where children's agency is minimally recognised or only partly acknowledged, their participatory experience from a socio-cultural perspective would only be within restricted domains, thereby postponing their full participation until adulthood (Rudduck, 2003; Fielding and Rudduck, 2006). This is an important concept which will be developed as part of this doctoral study.

2.4.3 Pupil Responsibility

The concept of responsibility is important yet controversial (Fielding and Moss, 2011; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Mayall, 2002). Modern constructions of childhood are ambivalent about the role of responsibility for children. Responsibility should be seen as a meaningful, multi-dimensional component which is dynamic and relational, embedded within the 'Sociology of Childhood' paradigm discussed earlier in this chapter. Assuming responsibility for themselves; developing empathy; becoming trusted and developing a greater sense of autonomous responsibility are key factors identified by researchers in the field (Hart *et al.,* 2004; James and Prout, 1997; Mayall, 2002). Rudduck and Flutter (2004) identify in particular the importance for additional responsibility to be given to children, offering opportunities for them to contribute in a more adult way to the school and interact with peers. By contrast, Robinson and Fielding (2007), Lee (2001), and Mayall, (2002) warn that such an approach could be interpreted by teachers as further undermining of their professionalism.

Table 2.7 'What kind of pupil do we want in school?'(Rudduck and Flutter, 2004:127) adapted from Nixon *et al.,* (1996:113) below, describes the essential characteristics that accompany pupil responsibility and identifies four desirable features in the bottom left 'Positive / Active' quadrant.

Table 2.7: What kind of pupil do we want in school?

PASSIVE

Accepting	*Indifferent*
• attends regularly • quite likes school and teachers • does what is required • trusts school to deliver a future	• mistrusts school and teachers • withdraws from sources of support • denies concern about progress • does not look ahead
POSITIVE	**NEGATIVE**
• wants to understand frameworks • wants to talk to teachers about problems and progress in learning *** is ready to organise things and take more responsibility** *** is ready to help other pupils** *Influencing*	• refuses to accept code of conduct • behaviour is anti-social • attendance is irregular • frequently on report • faces prospect of removal to another class or school *Rejecting*

ACTIVE

The two features starred 'taking responsibility' and 'ready to help' are of particular interest to this Child's Voice research. In particular, Rudduck and Flutter (2004) propose the most common structure enabling children to assume a commitment of responsibility is peer tutoring. This it is proposed has many benefits to the mentor and the mentee, in particular self-esteem, which is enhanced as a consequence and a reversal of disengagement by some children 'if significant others in the school are able to see and acknowledge some of their strengths' (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004:70). Research by Mayall (2002) identifies additional important benefits including: greater autonomy, independence and competence. Research by Such and Walker (2004) specifically deconstructs and reveals the concept of responsibility from the perspective of children within their family settings and identifies two core issues of honesty and fairness. Furthermore, children interviewed for The Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010) spoke about the value of education and that schools 'help you to get

along with other people and to be a respectful, responsible member of your community' (Alexander, 2010:147).

In summary, the exploration of consultation, participation and responsibility has led me to conclude that 'consultation' and 'participation' are identified as prominent features of child's voice research. The evidence confirms benefits not only for the child, but also for the school when adults and children work collaboratively. By contrast, children's young age should not be used as a restriction (Lee, 2001) and teachers and adults within the school community should not limit opportunities for children on this basis. In addition, the literature indicates that our young people are well suited to holding responsibility should it be offered to them and quite capable of making well informed decisions and developing aptitudes for the future. These three themes will be explored further within the research.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter presents the research design and methodology chosen to investigate the subsidiary research questions (explored in section 3.2). The sections that follow in this chapter discuss the theoretical perspective for the research undertaken in terms of ontological and epistemological perspective; theoretical perspective; methodology and methods:

3.1   Research Design

3.2   Research Questions

3.3   Description of sample

3.4   Research Instruments

3.5   Data analysis

3.6   Emergent analytical themes

3.7   Ethical considerations for the research

3.8   Concepts of validity, reliability and reflexivity

3.9   Limitations of the study

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Ontological and Epistemological perspective

Crotty (2003) proposes that the terminology applied to theoretical perspectives and methodologies can be inconsistent and appear at times contradictory and 'ontological and epistemological issues tend to emerge together' (Crotty, 2003:10). The definition I have selected for my ontological perspective is 'the study of being … the nature of existence and what constitutes reality' (Gray, 2014:19) and in particular for my

research, I have adopted the ontological dimension which aims to explore and understand: 'What is the nature of being a child?' My epistemological perspective is 'the study of knowledge: How do I know reality?' I believe that we do not have unmediated access to reality, but rather reality is filtered through our mind (Piaget) and our language and culture (Vygotsky and Bruner). Consequently I have adopted the following epistemological perspective: 'What is the reality of a Year 6 child whilst experiencing three initiatives at the school?' Three epistemological positions emerged from the review of literature as follows:

- Objectivist: (reality exists independently of consciousness – research discovers the objective truth)

- Subjectivism: (meaning does not emerge from the interplay from subject and the outside world, but is imposed on the object by the subject)

- Constructivism: (meaning is constructed, not discovered; subjects construct their own meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. Multiple, contradictory but equally valid accounts of the world can exist)

I considered the most appropriate epistemological perspective for my research to be 'constructivism' because the children would be constructing their own meaning, in different ways, even though having similar experiences of the three initiatives under study at the school. Consequently, they would be able to give multiple and potentially contradictory, yet equally valid accounts of their lived reality (Gray, 2014).

3.1.2 Theoretical perspective

Although there are a number of different theoretical perspectives, the two most influential are positivism and a variety of strands of interpretivism (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Gray, 2014). Positivist and interpretive paradigms are primarily

concerned with understanding phenomena from two different perspectives. Positivists view the natural and social worlds within a strict set of rules, which science has to discover by empirical inquiry. I dismissed this theoretical perspective as I was not going to be presenting objective facts and established truths (Gray, 2011) in my research. Conversely, interpretive paradigms aim to understand and interpret the world through the perspective of the people involved. This is not without potential dangers for researchers, who need to be aware of their own values, views and interpretations, which must be acknowledged, as these will affect their research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:31). Researchers of this paradigm need to understand that their research context is additionally one in which others act on their own particular views and interpretations.

An interpretivist theoretical perspective closely linked to the constructivist epistemology was selected for my research, as it would offer me a major anti-positivist lens and help me look for 'culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world' (Crotty, 2003:67). I would be concentrating on understanding the children's subjective perceptions within their natural settings by immersing myself within the research context for a substantial period of time, in this instance one academic year (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

3.1.2.i) Naturalistic and Interpretive Paradigm

The review of the literature of Child's Voice (Fielding 1999, 2001a, 2001b; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004) examined a view which supports the notion that understanding is constructed in social and cultural settings (Bruner, 1996; Lee, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978; Wyness, 2006). This has led me to locate this study of Child's

Voice in the naturalist paradigm focussing on the children's natural daily environment, namely, their school.

A naturalistic interpretive paradigm offers a broad and enriched canvas to research the interplay between the social and psychological relationships within, whilst acknowledging multiple socially constructed realities outside, in lived situations (Mead, 1934; Radnor, 2001). The naturalistic interpretive approach, which rejects the positivistic or scientific hypothesis of objectivity, measurability and causality, attempts to understand and explain human and social reality. I believe instead that we interpret the world through the filters of our current knowledge and belief systems; these beliefs and existing knowledge are developed by ourselves as active subjects constructing meaning (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Silverman, 2005). This would therefore be an appropriate paradigm for exploring the subjective experience, development and interpretations by children about their roles and experiences within the school (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011) and allow me to show respect for the emotions, thoughts and interpretations of the children in their natural setting (Bruner, 1996; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; LeCompte and Preissle, 1993; Radnor, 2001). Researching cultural derivations and historically situated interpretations of a social life-world (Crotty, 2003; Radnor, 2001) and investigating how children communicate, interpret and give meaning to their social experiences (Radnor, 2001) are key to understanding the in-depth analysis of the data. Viewing children as 'social actors in their own right' through a sociology of childhood lens (Alderson, 2000a, 2000b; Christensen and James, 2000; Corsaro, 2005; Hallett and Prout, 2005) whilst keeping mindful of issues of 'power' (Foucault, 1972), have contributed to the research framework for this study.

3.1.2.ii) Critical Theory perspective

In order to understand the children's actions from their perspective I selected a sub-section of interpretive research: **'critical theory'** in order to provide a suitable lens to analyse the research data. Critical theory is prescriptive and normative, and involves a perspective of what behaviour in a social democracy setting should involve (Fay, 1987; Morrison, 1995). Critical theorists aim to give accounts of society based on the premise of equality and democracy for all involved, to understand situations and phenomena and with the intention to change these. It intends to emancipate the disempowered, to redress inequality and to promote individual freedoms within a democratic society (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Freire, 1996).

Critical theory and critical educational research have substantive agenda: examining relationships between school and society, e.g. how schools perpetuate inequality; the social construction of knowledge and how this reproduces inequality; how power is produced and reproduced through education; whose interests are served by education and how legitimate these are. Critical theorists cannot claim neutrality and ideological or political innocence, as they question the legitimacy of power and equality by arguing that one person's or group's freedom, is bought at the price of another's freedom and power (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). However, critical theory's purpose is practical and political, with the intention to be 'transformative', bringing about change to society and individuals (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Gray, 2014). However, a further perspective provided by Thomson and Gunther (2006) contends that student voice practices can be simultaneously 'transformative and oppressive' (Czerniawski, 2012; Fielding 2001a; Robinson and Taylor (2013), and consequently questions

whether student voice initiatives can be 'genuinely transformative' (Robinson and Taylor, 2013:33).

Participatory research is an example of critical theory in research which promotes doing research 'with' people rather than 'to or for' people and communities (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:37). It is a democratic approach which treats all participants as equals, with the intent for a participatory rather than a representative democracy (Giroux, 1983). This research approach has a practical purpose which aims to transform lives and communities by making 'the practical more political and the political more practical' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:37).

A further important benefit of a critical theory perspective is that it questions the legitimacy of what has brought an individual or a group to relative power or powerlessness. This is achieved by investigating issues such as repression, voice, ideology, power, participation, representation, inclusion and interests (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:31). However, advocates of critical theory accuse interpretivists 'of adopting an uncritical stance towards the culture they are exploring, whereas the task of researchers is to call the structures and values of society into question' (Gray, 2014:27). This perspective is relevant for my research as the power differentials between the children, adults and the school context will need to be acknowledged and challenged.

3.1.2.iii) Sociology of Childhood perspective

My own particular fixed perspective described in the earlier literature review is inspired primarily from the Plowden Report, which places the child at the centre of education. This perspective has broadened over time to incorporate the ideas and views of many critical theorists. For example, Freire's (1972) view that many traditions and processes

of education do not lead to the emancipation of all children, but result in the oppression of some voices. A USA perspective from Giroux (1986) provides hierarchical concepts of the dominant power dimensions existing within schools which maintain children's relative powerlessness. A UK perspective is provided by Fielding (2001a, 2001b, 2004a, 2011) who foremost identifies the potential of student voice initiatives to act as a catalyst for change and potentially develop a transformational democratic education (Robinson and Taylor, 2007). I have located this theoretical perspective within the sociology of childhood framework which views children as trustworthy, competent informants and witnesses of their own experience (Alanen and Mayall, 2001; Corsaro, 2005; James *et al.,* 1998; Mayall, 2002; Prout and James, 1997) with the 'potential to contribute to the generation of data and interpretation' (Danby and Farrell, 2005:49). By co-researching with children over a prolonged period of one academic year, I was able to engage and establish with them a different type of social order from one that assumes children to be unknowing participants (Danby and Farrell, 2005). Trusting children's data, building integrity with its analysis, representing faithfully and accurately their social reality through reflexivity and reflection shaped the research (Christensen and James, 2008; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Radnor, 2001) allowing transformational learning of children, adults, including myself and a wider community to take place (Fetherston and Kelly, 2007; Fielding, 2004a, 2004b; Mezirow, 2003; Rogoff, 2003).

3.1. 3 Case Study Research

An interpretive educational bounded case study approach was selected for the research as it was seen as providing a unique example of studying children in their natural everyday 'real world' context, in 'real situations' (Bassey, 1999; Creswell, 1998, 2003,

2007; Crotty, 2003; Gillham, 2000) and provide children's in-depth, thick descriptions and understandings of their 'lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for, a situation' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Gillham, 2000; James and Prout, 1997; Lee, 2001). A bounded case study approach would allow me to:

> 'investigate and report the real-life, complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance'
>
> (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2011:289)

In the research undertaken, this was viewed through three selected initiatives, introduced at the school to develop 'Child's Voice': School Council (SC); Guardian Angels (GA) and Master-class Mentors (MCM). Bassey (1999:93) gives comprehensive accounts of three case studies in educational settings, where there was 'prolonged engagement with data sources and persistent observation of emerging issues', factors which have influenced this research.

3.1.3.i) Strengths and weaknesses of case study

A unique strength of the case study is that it relies on multiple sources of evidence through extensive collection of data (Bassey, 1999; Gillham, 2000; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). This allows scope for a flexible, emergent and empirical, thick descriptive investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in depth, within a real-life context, from a naturalistic interpretive view (Bassey, 1999; Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur, 2006; Gillham, 2000; Simons, 2009).

Case studies in the past have had an ambiguous place within social science (Reinharz, 1992; Simons, 1996). I was aware that there are a range of prejudices towards the selection of case study as a method, such as applicability to other contexts, (Bassey, 1999; Yin, 2009), and not having clear beginnings or endings (Creswell, 2007). The

'too subjective' criticism of case study is in contrast, seen as a strength by many researchers (Bassey, 1999; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995). As I was 'exploring phenomena experienced subjectively' (Simons, 2009:162), I have kept in mind the need to acknowledge when subjectivity contributed to the insight and understanding of the research and when it could have become a potential bias (Simon, 2009).

A case study approach does not just rely on aural modality, being able to listen to interviewees without bias, but should enable the researcher to capture the mood and affective components, understanding the context from which the interviewee perceives the world (Radnor, 2001) and identify potential innovation (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007). It will be essential that I am able to interpret the information as it is collected and know immediately if the sources of information contradict each other. This I believe will be possible due to my role within the school and my relationship with the children. As the Deputy Headteacher of the school I was mindful of the possible power differentials (Foucault, 1972) which could unwillingly introduce bias to the study and a dilemma that I might claim to 'know' in order to effect desirable change (Alldred and Gillies, 2002).

3.2 Research Questions

The overarching research question, **'What are the features of decision and democratic opportunities within the school that support empowering the Child's Voice?'** was answered through the data that emerged from the following five subsidiary questions which framed the research design:

1. **What is understood by the 'Child's Voice'?**

This question is important as it deconstructs the concept of 'Child's Voice' and is examined from a sociological and critical theory perspective grounding the study not only within the school context, but in a national and international setting (Corsaro, 2005; Fielding, 2001a, 2001b; Fielding, 2004a, 2004b; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Kellett, 2005; MacGilchrist *et al.,* 2004).

2. **How has the school developed 'Child's Voice' principles?**

This question examines the strategies and processes put in place by the school in order to support the concept of 'Child's Voice'. It identifies the three school initiatives under study, placing them within an historical context and analysing their place within the whole school community, the current educational climate and the quest for ever increasing standards settings. Data will be drawn from interviews with children and adults associated with the school and documentation (minutes of meetings, school policy, school website, governor reports, SEF, OfSTED reports).

3. **What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the Year 6 participants?**

This question is essential to the study as it identifies and analyses the impact and effect of giving children greater autonomy in the social experience within the context of the school. It is the views of the children that drive the research (Alderson, 2000a, 2000b; John, 2003; Mayall, 2002; Soanes, 2006, 2007). It will be answered by conducting semi-structured individual and group interviews with children and adults, consulting documentary evidence from within the school and within the review of literature.

4. What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the case study school?

This question has been asked in order to analyse the children's interpretations and understandings of their roles, both as individuals and contributing members of the wider school community. It will be answered by conducting both semi-structured individual and group interviews with children and adults; consulting documentary evidence from within the school and drawn from the review of literature. Data from adults involved within the school contribute to a school-wide perspective, whilst that from other adults illuminates the wider community context and a national perspective.

5. What are the implications for the future of the school?

This question identifies the features for future school developments that contribute to the culture, curriculum, pedagogy and the quality of the child's learning experience. It will be answered in Chapter 4 from the analysis derived from the interview data and in Chapter 5 where conclusions and recommendations from the research will be presented.

3.3 Description of sample

The educational interpretive case study was conducted in an Outer London Junior school. It took the form of an in-depth longitudinal study spanning two years from 2007 to 2009. The initiatives where democratic decision-making opportunities currently exist within the school are identified in Table 3.1. The three starred initiatives have been singled out as characterising the opportunities for democratic decision-making and form the focus of the research:

Table 3.1: Democratic decision making opportunities at case study school

Initiatives supporting Democratic decision-making	Details of student involvement
School Council * Year 6 Main Committee members: Chairperson Vice-Chairperson Secretary (x2) Treasurer (x2) All – rounders (x2)	Year 3, 4 and 5 class representatives (2 per class)
Guardian Angels * Year 6 membership (open to all Yr 6)	Numbers of children involved (56 in 2010)
Masterclass * Each Year 6 class (open to all Yr 6)	Working with a Year 3 class
Mentors Reading Mentors (open to all Yr6) Maths Mentors (open to all Yr6)	Year 6 working with Years 3 & 4
Local University Mixed group of responsibilities	Mixed Yr6 group 1 hour lecture to Year 2 education students (x 2 annual visits)
Presentation to Governors	Annual presentations
Healthy Schools	2 representatives
School Travel Plan	2 representatives
Health & Safety representatives	2 representatives
Youth Sports Leaders (2010)	Year 6 representatives trained (0.5 day) by Sports specialist. Working with Infant School and Year 3.

The three initiatives highlighted will be discussed in greater detail to give an historical context when describing the data findings and analysis in Chapter 4. I elected the starred initiatives because they illustrate how children can be less reliant on adults and that they can take on more responsibility for their own affairs (Mayall, 2002). I believed it was important to understand the thinking and personal accounts given by children whom I knew very well, which I acknowledge puts me in a more favourable yet vulnerable position, than many researchers (Alderson, 2000b; Danby and Farrell, 2005; MacNaughton and Smith, 2005; Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008). The three initiatives introduced by the researcher were well established at the school. I believed these would

provide children with opportunities to detail their lived experiences and provide unique exemplars enabling the study of children in their natural everyday 'real world' context, in 'real situations' (Bassey, 1999; Creswell, 2003, 2007; Crotty, 2003; Gillham, 2000) and provide children's in-depth, thick descriptions and understandings of their lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for, a situation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Gillham, 2000; Lee, 2001).

Children were interviewed twice, once in 2008 as Year 6 pupils and a second time in 2009 when they had completed Year 7 at secondary school. One student Ex Pupil (Ex P) was interviewed over a period of three years, spanning Junior Year 6 and Secondary years 7 and 8. He had been involved in the pilot study (2006) and I believed his views would be of interest and add value to this study. The adults selected were members of staff, governors, a representative parent, three local authority figures and a national children's rights representative.

3.3.1 Purposive Sampling - Children

In order to provide contextual information to the membership of the three pupil groups (SC, GA, MCM) in relation to the Year 6 cohort, the following information is presented to support how 'representative' the pupils selected for the study are in terms of the whole student community. Purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011) was used to select the children sample. Table 3.2 identifies the range of roles undertaken by the children. The children chosen were Year 6 (10 – 11 year olds) involved in the initiatives under study: School Councillors (SC), Guardian Angels (GA) and Master–class Mentors (MCM).

For example SC1, a girl, who was not only a School Councillor, but also a Guardian Angel and a Master-class mentor, had been interviewed twice.

Table 3.2: Categories of children's inclusion

Child	M/F	School Councillor	Guardian Angel	Master class mentor	Pilot 2006	Interview Yr1 2008	Interview Yr2 2009
(SC1)	F	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
(SC2)	M	✓				✓	
(SC3)	M	✓	✓			✓	✓
(SC4)	F	✓	✓	✓		✓	
(SC5)	M	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
(SC6)	F	✓	✓	✓		✓	
(SC7)	M	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
(SC8)	F	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
(GA1)	F		✓	✓		✓	✓
(GA2)	F		✓	✓		✓	✓
(GA3)	M		✓			✓	✓
(GA4)	F		✓			✓	
(GA5)	F		✓	✓		✓	✓
(GA6)	F		✓	✓		✓	✓
(GA7)	M		✓	✓		✓	✓
(ExP)	M	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
(MCM 1)				✓		✓	
(MCM 2)				✓		✓	
(MCM 3)				✓		✓	
(MCM4)				✓		✓	

The initiatives studied were open to all children in Year 6 except for the School Council whose membership comprised two children from each class. The Year 6 cohort of 110 children represents 25% of the school community: 59 male and 51 female. Their backgrounds included: White British: 78%; British Asian: 12.5%; Black: 7.0 %; Other: 2.5%. The purposive sample of children interviewed for the study included: White British: 68%; British Asian: 19%; Black: 6.5%; Other: 6.5%, indicating similar characteristics of the wider population of Year 6.

Of the total of eight Year 6 school councillors, all agreed to participate in the study representing 100% of the population. Of this group of eight, seven held the additional

role of Guardian Angel. A further six Guardian Angels participated in the study, five of whom held an additional role of Master Class Mentor. A total of 13 out of 44 Guardian Angels participated in the research (29.5%), providing a sample that was representative of the population.

In order to achieve a further perspective to the study, my planned intention for the Master-class Mentor selection had been to include groups of children who had not experienced either roles of being a School Councillor or a Guardian Angel. This proposal proved to be more challenging than I had anticipated as the children in each of the Year 6 classes had already organised themselves into their own MCM groups within their classes earlier on in the academic year. On reflection, I had overlooked that this had been school practice in previous years due to the popularity of participation in the scheme. Consequently, I adapted my purposive sampling requirements for the MCM groups. I therefore selected groups with a mixed membership, but with the intention of aiming for as high proportion of those pupils without the experience of School Councillor or Guardian Angel as possible. Four Master-class Mentor groups were finally selected for interview, one group from each Year 6 class, involving 15 children in total as follows:

MCM Group 1: This group consisted of 4 boys in total, coded as follows: MCM1:1; MCM1:2 (with GA experience); MCM1:3; MCM1:4 (with GA experience). Their chosen focus for their Master-class session was football.

MCM Group 2: This group consisted of 4 girls in total, coded as follows: MCM2: 1; GA5; MCM2:2; MCM2:3; GA2. Their chosen focus for their Master-class session was basketball.

MCM Group 3: This group consisted of 6 boys in total, coded as follows: MCM3:1; MCM3:2; MCM3:3; MCM3:4; SC5; MCM3:5. Their chosen focus for their Master-class session was rounders.

MCM Group 4: This group consisted of 4 boys and 1 girl in total, coded as follows: MCM4:1 (boy); MCM4:2 (boy); MCM4:3 (boy); MCM4:4 (boy with GA experience); MCM4:5 (girl). Their chosen focus for their Master-class session was football.

One year later in July 2009 the original sixteen children interviewed individually were contacted asking for permission to be interviewed for a second time. Children had earlier been given copies of their initial interview, so therefore had a means of reference to remind themselves of what had been said a year earlier. It was agreed that I would send copies of the interview transcripts to each child participating a second time for further clarification and verification. Twelve of the sixteen original children involved in the 1 to 1 semi-structured interviews in 2008 agreed to be interviewed for a second and final time in 2009, to establish whether their reflections and experience had changed their views and interpretations in the interim period. Four children did not respond to my letter. A second semi-structured interview schedule was constructed in the light of the information required one year later in 2009.

3.3.2 Purposive Sampling – Adults

Purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011) was used to select the adults for interview as they represented specific experience within the school community. Table 3.3 shows the categories of adults involved in the semi-structured interviews conducted:

Table 3.3: Categories of adult semi – structured interviews

Category	Face to face	Group	Telephone
Within School			
Headteacher (HT)	✓		
Governors (2: Gov1; Gov2)		✓	
Teachers (2: T1; T2)	✓		
Teaching assistant / Midday supervisor (MDS)	✓		
Learning mentor (LM)	✓		
Parent (P)	✓		
Wider School Community			
School Improvement Partner (SIP)			✓
LEA Healthy School Advisor (HSch)			✓
Ex LEA Advisor (Ex LEA)	✓		
	✓		
National Level			
CRAE representative (CRAE)			✓

- The Headteacher (HT) was interviewed in order to provide a school wide perspective;

- An experienced teacher (T2) who was also Head of Year 6 because it was felt that he would hold an holistic view of the impact of the work on its participants;

- The second teacher interviewed (T1) was the only newly qualified teacher (NQT) appointed that year and was chosen because she could give a newcomer's perspective of the initiatives and their impact;

- The chair of governors (Gov1) and the curriculum committee chairperson (Gov2) were both longstanding members and very familiar with the school. The chair of governors had shown an interest in the school council and how children undertook their roles and the curriculum committee chairperson likewise had supported the initiatives over a period of time. Although I had planned to interview these governors separately, they requested to be interviewed together which I agreed to. I appreciate that this could have

compromised what either of them had to say, introducing a potential for bias. The fact that they are well known to each other is a further limiting factor;

- One teaching assistant / midday supervisor (MDS) was invited to participate to give an overview of the Guardian Angel roles and their impact from a wider perspective;

- The school learning mentor (LM) was selected as she had daily contact with the children, and would be able to comment about all the initiatives, in particular the Guardian Angels;

- The parent of SC1 (P) was invited to take part as she was representative of the parents from the school;

- The School Improvement Partner (SIP), a Headteacher from Kent, representing the Local Education Authority (LEA) visited the school each term to discuss standards;

- The LEA Healthy Schools advisor (HSch), knew the school through the Healthy Schools Award Project;

- One ex LEA advisor (Ex LEA), who had retired gave her own opinions, not necessarily those of the LEA;

- One representative from the Children's Right's Alliance for England (CRAE).

3.4 Research Instruments

3.4.1 Pilot study

A pilot study to test the interview questions to children was undertaken (Soanes, 2006) where questions proposed for inclusion in the final study were trialled. A presentation on the construction of the design of the research questions schedule was given to peers at an Education Doctorate weekend to ascertain appropriate validity for the study. The

pilot study has influenced the design of the research refining both the specific questions and their type making them more open ended.

3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing is a frequently used method in research, comprising of structured and semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews are often referred to as 'questionnaires administered verbally' (Costley et al 2010:93), although there are some subtle differences. One advantage of using interviews over questionnaires as a research technique was that it enabled me to explore areas of ambiguity and ask for clarification from respondents. The objective of this research was to explore, examine and understand the feelings and attitudes of children and adults at the case study school and importantly the meaning that they made of their experiences. Although I believed interviewees would be willing to contribute to the study, I acknowledged that a few might feel anxious or worried when being interviewed. In particular I wanted to offer participants an opportunity to reflect on events without having to commit themselves in writing which could have created anxiety for some children. I therefore selected semi-structured interviews as an appropriate method of data collection in that questions could be posed to pupils in a sensitive way allaying anxiety, and offer the most appropriate way of exploring and understanding the experiences, opinions, attitudes, providing me with opportunities for probing where required. I considered this offered me the opportunity to 'create an atmosphere that encourages the interviewee to talk freely and be clearly understood' (Radnor, 2001:60). A semi-structured schedule also enabled me to ask additional questions which had not been anticipated at the start of the interview and would complement my interpretive perspective. I considered this of importance in order to gather sufficient data especially from the children. However, one disadvantage

of this method is that it is time consuming and the interviewee's identity would not be hidden from the researcher (Costley et al 2010).

A limitation of this research was that only one research tool method was used: a semi-structured interview schedule. However, I would argue that as I was in daily contact with the children I had got to know their opinions very well. I had considered using photographs as a data collection method, which would have embellished the evidence base. Children were familiar using digital cameras and audio technologies in their daily lives at the school to supplement activity profiles of their first hand experiences. However, I decided the inclusion of photographs would have introduced a number of major ethical restrictions concerning children's anonymity and therefore decided against their use for this study.

As a result of the pilot study changes were made to the semi-structured interview schedule. Five open ended questions were created using the Bloom's (1984) taxonomy structure and Fielding's (2001a, 2001b) framework of consulting children. Subsidiary questions were asked to allow interviewees opportunities to elaborate and expand areas they saw as priorities in their own situations, with the benefit to keep the conversation free-flowing. The semi-structured interview schedule undertaken in 2008 is presented in appendix 1 and the semi-structured interview schedule undertaken for 2009 is presented in appendix 2. A semi–structured interview schedule allowed me to actively 'read' and 'listen' to the situation in which I was interviewing (Radnor, 2001) and to have a 'two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of collecting research-relevant information' (Cannell and Kahn, 1968, in Radnor, 2001:59).

Children were interviewed prior to the adults as they were the key source of the data. I undertook four group interviews at the end of the data collection period, with Year 6 children who had only experienced the master-class mentor initiative. I decided to conduct group interviews for this data set as I was aware these children could feel inhibited had I conducted individual face to face interviews. An MP3 player and digital dicta-phone were used to record each interview. I am aware that 'transcription inevitably lose data from the original encounter' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:426), however as I was in day to day contact with the children whilst they were in their roles, I considered this a minor problem. A transcription company was commissioned to undertake the actual presentation in textual form, which eased time for the researcher. Each interview was listened to at least three times in order to obtain a sense of the whole and codes were identified. NVIVO 8 was used to identify additional themes, thus enabling me to fine tune the analysis further. In addition, transcripts were also scrutinised for accuracy to ensure data had not been misinterpreted through the transcription process and were thus checked through the listening process and amended where necessary.

3.4.3 Justification of data use for fine-grained analysis

After the initial analysis of sixteen semi-structured interviews three children in particular have been selected for finer analysis:

- Case Study 1: Autonomous Agency (GA6)

- Case Study 2: Responsibility (SC8)

- Case Study 3: Transformation of Self (GA5)

These children were selected because their responses over the two interviews offer rich descriptions, which will inform the transformation of learning paradigm.

3.5 Data analysis

Due to the focus on a small number of school initiatives, the main aspect of the analysis centred on my interpretation of the interview data collected (Bassey, 1999; Crotty, 2003; Yin, 2009) and the possible relevance to others in similar educational situations. I will refer to the 'uniqueness' of the school and its community, employing multiple uses of evidence from the data: what is said, what I observe people doing, what they make or produce and what documents and records show (Gillham, 2000).

After initial multiple reading of the interview transcripts, the answers to all the questions will be further scrutinised by using the computer package NVIVO 8 in order to identify additional relevant themes. Transcription extracts of the semi-structured interviews (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011) are presented and included:

- Extract interview transcript – child (GA6) 2008 (see appendix 3);

- Extract interview transcript – adult (HT) 2008 (see appendix 4);

- Extract interview transcript – child (SC8) 2009 (see appendix 5).

Transcripts were coded (Radnor, 2001) then refined to identify five main nodes each with sub-sections. Answers to each of the five questions were then collated and analysed.

3.6 Emergent analytical themes

The themes used to interrogate the semi-structured interviews of children were derived from two sources: i. themes from the literature, namely: consultation, participation, responsibility and emotional intelligence, and, ii. themes emerging from the empirical

data. For information, the analysis of the interviews identified four themes, namely: trust, confidence, autonomous agency and transformation of self.

3.7 Ethical considerations

This section will examine the ethical perspectives of: the insider researcher; collaborative research; the power dimensions of the researcher and pupil relationship; the power dimensions of the pupil to pupil relationship and informed consent.

3.7.1 Insider – Researcher

Educational practitioner-led research in the UK since the early 1990s has become one of many acknowledged means of improving professional practice (Bourner et al., 2000). This has in part developed from a humanistic educational tradition which encouraged university students to take 'responsibility for their own learning, choosing and initiating their study' (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs 2010: xv). In particular those who research their own practice, taking a 'critical, reflective and evidence-based approach to change and development at work' focusing on 'real time work practices' have become common place (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs 2010:xvi).

As an 'insider researcher' I acknowledge my position is unique, providing me with an advantage to access and investigate complex situations from an informed perspective, due to in-depth knowledge of the context (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs 2010). It is important to acknowledge that much work based research is often small scale, yielding results which may not transfer easily to another situation, referred to as 'fuzzy generalisations' (Bassey 1999:12). The researcher in this context is often placed in a position where they potentially fail to see the obvious and require external feedback, for verification purposes; therefore minimizing possible power imbalances which presents

a further challenge. As an insider researcher I can provide valuable insights but it is important to demonstrate a critical perspective of my work, along with the subjective nature of the research in order to show impartiality and an awareness of insider bias and validity (Murray and Lawrence 2000:18). This can be achieved for example by following four steps: 'careful attention to feedback from participants, initial evaluation of data, triangulation in the methods of gathering data and an awareness of the issues represented in the project' (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs 2010:6).

3.7.2 Collaborative Research

In order to describe effectively the relationship between myself (the researcher) and the researched (the children), it is important to explore the rationale of the Child's Voice approach undertaken at the school. A beneficial definition of the approach could be described as 'collaborative research': 'often signifying a common or shared values orientation and a deeper level of involvement and engagement in the process and outcomes of the research. It is this richer and, by implication, more significant model of collaborative research that has potentially significant benefits for the quality and impact of work based research' (Costley et al 2010:103). This 'collaborative research' approach which 'elicits data and analysis that are shared, multi-dimensional and grounded in participants' lived experience' (Costley et al 2010:104), I acknowledge by implication, could be interpreted as dependent upon the close relationship between myself as the researcher and the researched, therefore providing potential problems relating to 'ethics, power and authority' (Costley et al 2010:103). However, I propose that this 'collaborative research' approach provides benefits to the research as it provides an important 'reflective' perspective from both adults and children (Schön 1983, 1987). From the perspective of an 'insider researcher' I acknowledge this

approach has potential problems of being highly time consuming, putting a strain on personal relationships and providing inequality derived from the status of the collaborators (Costley et al 2010:112).

3.7.3 Power dimensions: The researcher and pupil relationship

This study aims to respect children and their cultural context, ensuring the promotion of their status as principal stakeholders and to investigate if and how their knowledge and competence grows through participation and trust as 'active' members of school community initiatives, whilst recognizing the inbuilt, indefinite ethical limitations to these ideals (Czerniawski, 2012; Robinson and Taylor, 2007). Inherent 'unequal and problematic' power differentials (Robinson and Taylor, 2007) exist between adults and children and consequently raise important ethical and moral dimensions for this study (Mayall, 2008). As I was in a position of authority as adult, Deputy Head-teacher, researcher and instigator of the initiatives under study, my opinions on the research topic would have been well known, especially to the children involved, therefore this would provide a compromised perspective to my research findings. However, in agreement with Czerniawski (2012) I believe my position 'placed me with a unique opportunity to critically engage and articulate with a knowledgeable and theoretically informed choice of methodology and method which is congruent … while remaining both 'contextually qualified' (Brisard et al., 2007:224) and 'contextually sensitive' (Crossley and Jarvis, 2001:407) to the respondents' (Czerniawski, 2012:133).

Power relationships within research processes have traditionally been weighted in favour of the researcher as the expert, providing analysis and interpretations of children (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008) through the traditional 'adult question and child

answer' models (Mayall, 2008). The case study school had created and developed over a number of years spaces of place and time (Robinson and Taylor, 2007), within a climate marked by trust and openness (Rudduck, 2006) enabling pupils opportunities to provide insight as individuals and voice their opinions without feeling 'anxious about reprisals' (Robinson and Taylor, 2007:12). However, assumptions cannot be made which reinforce these ideals, due to established power structures within schools which pupils recognize. For example, I had informed children at the beginning of the study that I did not want them to respond to questions with answers they thought I wanted to hear. More specifically, I acknowledge a few staff did not necessarily share the principles identified above, despite positive commentaries within OfSTED inspection reports, the wider community and pupils. The firm and positive relationships built between Year 6 cohorts and the school community I considered would not compromise or diminish the richness of relational dimensions within the research. I acknowledge ethical implications should be considered when analysing the data (Robinson and Taylor, 2013) and that the influence of powerful stakeholders in education should not be underestimated (Devine, 2002). It is important to understand that power relations are 'constantly in process, constantly coming-into-presence, never fixed or boundaried but undecidable and unpredictable' (Taylor and Robinson, 2009:170) and there is always work to do as power 'inhabits all social processes, and importantly (is) not of itself a negative force' (Robinson and Taylor, 2007:13).

3.7.4 Power dimensions: Pupil to pupil relationship

It is important to consider how children in this research make sense of their social worlds (Wyness, 2012) and to understand potential power relations between the wider Year 6 cohort, so as to ensure the research does not contribute to possible strengthening

of hierarchies which might shape similarities or differences (O'Kane, 2008). Locating this study within the children's social and cultural domains directs attention to them as competent meaning makers (Wyness, 2012) 'actively contributing to *cultural production and change'* (Corsaro 2005:18; original emphasis). The dominant strand of student voice work can be found within democratic and participatory frameworks which include central principles of 'empowerment, liberation and collaboration' (Robinson and Taylor 2009:164). McIntyre et al. (2005:155) ask if participating in student voice work separates the confident and articulate students from pupils 'whose voices are silenced … because they don't fit the dominant discourse and academic aspirations of their schools'. It would be important to consider possible criticisms of the initiatives to ascertain if these children perceived themselves having more favourable attention from adults and if others felt disempowered or their voices silenced as a result.

Accordingly, I acknowledge caution is required when considering the research children's perceived identities and the possibility of confrontations with other children. On reflection I am aware that I did not ask this question directly during the semi-structured interview schedule which demonstrates an oversight providing a limitation to the research. However, the children could identify factors and opinions indicating their intention to fulfil the school motto of 'Success and care for all' by providing a service to all.

Promoting an inclusive ethos through the three researched initiatives at the case study school has not been without its challenges. Over the years the emotional climate of the school had undergone a change which embraced care and responsibility for the needs and rights of all the pupils in the school. At the time of the research children were recognized by the school community as being part of the solution, not just the problem,

with an emphasis on children as participants, with an 'authentic' voice. During the early development of the School Council it became apparent some children thought that they were members of a small 'elite' of pupils, consequently disempowering others. Every year stronger co-operative relationships developed between the Year 6 School Council members as they gained an increasing, prominent profile within the school. They appreciated not all children could be on the council and that they were representatives, responsible for providing regular feedback to their classes and the whole school community.

The Guardian Angel initiative enabled all Year 6 children the opportunity to play active pastoral roles helping others to have positive playtimes and lunchtimes. In particular these children were not thought of as 'prefects' empowered to 'boss' other children around, bringing them into potential conflict with their peers and seen as given unequal privilege. Children acknowledged anyone in Year 6 could become a Guardian Angel should they show an interest and nobody would be excluded from this role; in particular, children aspired to become members of this initiative.

Additionally, the Master-class Mentors initiative proved popular with Year 6 children. Those involved worked together co-operatively in teams and were encouraged to use their own initiative when planning and executing activities for the Year 3 children.

3.7.5 Ethical approval

For informed assent and consent from adults and children (BERA, 2011) to be gained, ethical approval was sought and obtained from the Headteacher, governors (see appendix 6), teachers (James, 1993; Mayall, 1996; Prendergast, 1994), children (James *et al.,* 1998; Mayall, 2002), their parents/guardians (Alderson, 1993) and significant others for the study. Ethical approval was sought and gained from the University of Greenwich Ethics Committee (see appendix 7).

3.7.6 Informed consent

A sociology of childhood perspective provided an understanding that children are competent in their own right to provide their own consent in addition to that given by their parents (Alderson, 2000a, 2000b; Danby and Farrell, 2005; Mayall, 2002), allowing children to co-generate reliable accounts of their experiences (Danby and Farrell, 2005) and transform relations with adults (Freire, 1996; MacNaughton and Smith, 2005). Children were invited at the beginning of the academic year (2007 – 2008) to become co-participants and undertake the research process with myself. Children first indicated a verbal interest and were then invited officially via a letter to participate (see appendix 8). All children who expressed an interest in the research were included in the study.

It was made clear to the children at this point that there would be no right or wrong answers, since it was their views about their current experiences that I was interested in. Furthermore, if they wished to withdraw from the study at any time, this would not be seen as disapproval, and no adverse affects would be construed (Dockett and Perry, 2007; Hill, 2005). An informal meeting was held with the purposive sampled children in order to explain how the research would develop. Confidentiality, anonymity and

privacy (Morrow and Richards, 1996; Morrow, 2005) were respected and all children and adults assured that information collected would be coded for anonymity, kept in a locked cabinet for my use only and at completion of the study, all recordings would be deleted. All were given copies of their transcripts for affirmation of correctness and also for any further additions which came to mind post interviews. To accord with the school policy on child protection there was always an adult or an invited friend of the child present when the interviews took place (Morrow, 2005). On completion of the Education Doctorate thesis, both children and adult participants will be invited to a presentation at the case study school where the research findings and certificates of participation in the research will be presented to them.

3.8 Concepts of validity, reliability and reflexivity

Validity is the 'touchstone' of all educational research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011) and the researcher has adopted the following principles to guide the study: natural setting; context – boundness and thick description; data socially situated, and socially and culturally saturated; holism; data presented in terms of the respondents rather than researcher; prolonged, repeated engagement in the study; seeing and reporting the situation from the native's point of view; respondent validation (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Geertz, 1973; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In order to achieve validity to the research, Richardson and St Pierre's (2008) proposed central metaphor of the 'crystal' is relevant as it:

> … 'combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose – not triangulation but rather crystallization' (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2008:478)

This deliberately transgressive approach allowed me to interweave the 'multiple layers of meaning …human currents …elements of truth, feeling, connection, processes of the research that "flow" together' (Guba and Lincoln, 2008:276) forming a holistic analysis of the data (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2008) through 'prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis' (Yin, 2009:18). By interviewing children and adults associated with the school and adults with little or no connection to the school, I believe will fulfil a 'crystallised' validity to the study.

I believe that intense personal involvement is evident and that the detailed responses from individuals offer a sufficient level of validity and reliability (Agar, 1986). This is a view challenged by Silverman (2005) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), who argue this is insufficient evidence for validity or reliability, as the individuals involved have no privileged position on interpretation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). However, it is proposed that the descriptive analysis of the study builds a picture of the research subjects, their actions, words and context (Radnor, 2001).

3.8.1 Ecological validity

Ecological validity was ensured for the research as I did not 'manipulate variables or conditions' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:195) as the children undertook their roles in a natural situation without intervention. The intention was to 'give accurate portrayals of the realities of social situations in their own terms, in their natural or conventional settings' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:195), thus representing a faithful interpretation of the children's worlds.

3.9 Limitations of the study

In order to represent researcher reflexivity, I am aware that my personal, social and cultural contexts will have impacted upon the ways I constructed, represented and interpreted the children's worlds (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Etherington, 2004). Furthermore, acknowledging these personal views and beliefs guided my choice of paradigms and methods (Crotty, 2003). As the study focuses on only three initiatives at one school it is acknowledged that findings to the study could lack transferability. In the light of the above, my research might be viewed as having the following limitations:

- Research was conducted at one school (where I was employed as the Deputy Headteacher) and could possibly corrupt the data collection;

- Data collection tools were limited to interview schedules;

- Pupils knew me as their Deputy Headteacher and my position in the school could possibly inhibit the responses from children due to the power differential;

- My perspective of the research subject and paradigm.

General findings and conclusions will therefore be given in the light of this position.

Chapter 4

Data Findings and Analysis

Introduction

The overarching question that framed the research undertaken was: **'What are the features of decision and democratic opportunities within the school that support empowering Child's Voice?'** This question will be addressed following examination of the subsidiary research questions below:

1. What is understood by 'Child's Voice'?

2. How has the school developed 'Child's Voice' principles?

3. What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the Year 6 participants?

4. What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the case study school?

5. What are the implications for the future of the school?

Each of the five subsidiary questions will be examined in turn and the findings used to inform the overarching question which will conclude the chapter.

The interview transcripts were studied holistically and read through repeatedly to capture the global meaning of what the interviewees had said. Analysis was then undertaken using the NVIVO 8 computer software package to identify broad themes. Parts of the interview transcripts were then marked as 'significant quotes' and coded tentatively according to the identified themes derived from the literature. Quotes were grouped together according to the themes to ascertain whether the labels matched the overall meanings and at the same time, compared to other transcripts (Gillham, 2005).

Finally a set of categories that signified children's and adults conceptions of the research questions was formed. Emergent themes were also categorised and coded. In total, 43 semi-structured interviews were conducted totalling 1,064 minutes, (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Semi-structured interview data

	No of children	Interview	No of adults	Interview
2008	20 (individual)	580 mins	12	284 min
2009	12	200 min		
Total	**32**	**780 min**	**12**	**284 min**

Findings from the interviews will be presented and discussed within the context of two models which have been created in order to illustrate these identified themes.

Table 4.2 sets out the range of engagement in the initiatives by the children (identified by the data coding labels) and serves to illustrate the multiplicity of their involvement and the context for the children's responses.

Table 4.2 Multiplicity of roles undertaken by children

	Interview 1 2008	Guardian Angel 2008	School Councillor 2008	Master-class Mentor 2008	Interview 2 2009
SC1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SC2	✓	X	✓	X	X
SC3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SC4	✓	X	✓	X	X
SC5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SC6	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
SC7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SC8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GA1	✓	✓		✓	✓
GA2	✓	✓		✓	✓
GA3	✓	✓		✓	✓
GA4	✓	✓		X	X
GA5	✓	✓		✓	✓
GA6	✓	✓		✓	✓
GA7	✓	✓		✓	✓
MCM1:1 MCM1:2 MCM1:3 MCM1:4	✓			✓	
MCM2:1 MCM2:2 MCM2:3	✓			✓	
MCM3:1 MCM3:2 MCM3:3 MCM3:4 MCM3:5	✓			✓	
MCM4:1 MCM4:2 MCM4:3 MCM4:4 MCM4:5	✓			✓	

The sections that follow will present and analyse each of the five subsidiary questions in turn and the emergent themes used to inform the overarching question which will conclude the chapter.

4.1 Research Question 1 – What is understood by 'Child's Voice'?

In order to answer the subsidiary research question **'What is understood by 'Child's Voice'?'** interview data will be interrogated drawing on the perceptions of children and adults to gain an understanding of the concept of 'Child's Voice'. Table 4.3 identifies the data coding labels originating from interviews in each of the listed categories which have been used in the analysis of subsidiary Research Question 1.

Table 4:3 Research Question 1 Data Analysis Sample

Categories	Data Coding Labels	Totals
School Council	SC2; SC3; SC4; SC5; SC6; SC7; SC8;	**N=7**
Guardian Angels	GA2; GA3; GA4; GA5; GA7;	**N=5**
Master-class Mentors	MCM 4:1;MCM4:2;MCM4:3;MCM4:4;MCM4:5	**N=5**
Ex Pupil	Ex P	**N=1**
Adults	HT; SIP; LM; T1; P; Gov1; Gov2; H Sch; Ex LEA; CRAE	**N=10**

An understanding of what is understood by 'Child's Voice' emerged from data drawn from both children and adults within the school. The children's comments indicated their emerging elementary understanding of the school's cultural and social context, gained in part from their limited individual experience and perspective which I suggest have been shaped and developed whilst undertaking their roles. Adults closest to the case study school context provide credible, rich explanations which I considered have been derived from close relationships built up over time with the children, whilst engaging in dialogue with them as 'active respondents' (Fielding, 2004a; Kellett, 2005). This recognises that in real life situations, our ability to solve problems and deal with new situations often derives from working with others and not necessarily individually.

I acknowledge that the views expressed are personal to them and reflect their experience and are to be taken as representative of the wider year group population. Furthermore, it is important when considering their responses, that I respect their views in order to understand and interpret their subjective detailed narratives, whilst simultaneously acknowledging my own insider-researcher and sociology of childhood perspectives which questions the power differentials which exist between children and adults. The literature and findings concur that in order to build trusting relations with children 'is a time-consuming enterprise' (Spyrou, 2011:156). Optimistic and aspirational descriptions of significant relationships in the literature, made with the children show that contributions from children are valued by adults within the school context (Jackson, 2004).

Analysis of data identified five themes:

    i. Three themes emerged from the children: children having a say; being listened to and taken seriously; and being part of important decision making processes at the school.

    ii. Two themes emerged from the adults: children as team participants in all aspects of improving the school and children's autonomy and agency.

Each theme will be presented in turn.

4.1.1 Theme 1: Having a say (C1)

The first theme identified by the children was the importance for them of 'having a say'. Children responded well when answering this question and there were high levels of agreement with each other. During the semi-structured interviews children were asked to give a definition of what in their view 'Child's Voice' meant to them. This

question had to be rephrased by the researcher at times in order to encourage a relevant response from a few children. For example:

R: 'Are children encouraged to give their views at the school?'

R: 'Based on what you know, how would you explain Child's Voice at the school?'

Children's subjective answers described how they perceived Child's Voice to be within their school. Although a few children were shy and their testimonies brief, a number were able to include an elementary appreciation of this theme as illustrated in the following extracts where children have:

'*a lot of opportunities to say what they think'* (SC7)

'*opportunities to say things*' (GA3)

When asked to identify where these 'opportunities' take place at the school, children gave examples such as the availability of '*problem boxes'* in classes, through the '*school council'* and '*guardian angels'* and '*giving pupils time to explain it themselves'* (GA2).

Although children's responses indicated recognition that their views and experiences are identified as important, valid and meaningful and as such expected to happen at the school (Soanes, 2006), their evidence provided only limited data. Their comments actualised their 'individual' voices as well as their 'collective' voices. For example the following extracts illustrate this perspective:

'*… more children for their opinions on certain things'* and that '*children should always have their, like say'* (SC5)

'*… and they get to say whatever they want to say'* (GA4)

> '... because otherwise the teachers would be deciding what we really need, but they need the kids views ...as teachers, you don't really know what people want...' (GA7)

> '...the children have their say as well as the teachers' (MCM 4)

It was interesting to note that the children had identified 'having a say' as being the central feature within the school and in their commentaries included words and phrases such as: 'always', 'really good', 'more interactive'. For example, SC 8 highlights this theme by saying confidently:

> 'It's like their voice is being heard through the whole school'

It is important to acknowledge at this point that I considered SC8 experienced having been involved in all three of the initiatives under study at the case study school (School Council, Guardian Angels and Master-class Mentors). However, I propose although this answer is relevant supporting the literature by identifying the theme that Child's Voice should be at the centre of the school context, it provides the research with limited data for further analysis. SC8 developed this theme further when interviewed for a second time one year later in 2009, by continuing:

> 'It's really good because children get to really push out their opinions ... and then you can get everybody's points across' (SC8)

This implies an awareness that it is important not only for children to 'have a say', but that 'everybody' should have a say within the school community and appear to challenge the disquiet and doubting but understandable views of some teachers who believe an imbalance exists between the voices of teachers and pupils (Fielding, 2001 a, 2001b; MacBeath *et al.*, 2003). It was pleasing to discover that children considered a number of Child's Voice opportunities were beginning to flourish at the school (Soanes, 2006); however, despite their favourable plaudits, from SC8 in particular, a paradox exists where caution is required as it cannot be assumed these comments alone will

result in more authentic research, due to the associated problems of representation and power imbalances (Kellett, 2005).

In the following section, the Ex Pupil's (Ex P) view of Child's Voice will be examined in further detail in order to appreciate the definitions he supplied. Ex P, now fourteen years of age and older than the Year 6 children, spoke eloquently and with confidence. He readily offered more detailed opinions which captured further insights to the lived experience of children whilst undertaking these roles (Soanes, 2006). In agreement with the younger Year 6 children, Ex P appreciates that in order for Child's Voice principles to be successful at the school, 'having a say' is very important. The following extract below captures his view:

> *'I think Child's Voice is about students getting a say in what they, it's all about them, really. The way to really be promoted is to students link, [pause], I said this last time, I think, this is my issue, but, if there are links between the teacher and child, that is, that is, that link is strong and I think you can build up a good classroom relationship, so there will be a good atmosphere'* (Ex P)

Describing the relationship between the teacher and pupil, which in his own words has to be '*strong*', by building up '*links*' through '*a good classroom relationship*' with a '*good atmosphere',* he was able to develop this concept further believing that:

> '*…the bond between the teacher and the child is really what improves Child's Voice'* (Ex P)

Ex P here is able to offer an 'expert witness' (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Wyness, 2006) definition of Child's Voice by stating confidently and clearly that in his view it is all about 'the child'. This involves children '*having a say'* collectively and individually, building a '*good classroom relationship'* and a '*bond*' between teacher and child, with the '*promotion of social cohesion'* and the development of '*flow'* with '*no barriers'.* With the benefit of hindsight and reflecting on his earlier experiences at the case study

school (Soanes, 2006), in addition with his current experiences at secondary school, Ex P identifies the importance of building positive relationships with teachers, especially the '*bond*' that is created between teacher and child. Ex P's reflections offers the research a child's 'insider' perspective, where children often 'observe with different eyes, ask different questions – they sometimes ask questions that adults do not even think of – have different concerns and immediate access to a peer culture where adults are outsiders' (Spyrou, 2011:155). This principle illustrates the importance from a child's view, that taking time to build positive relationships is central to the spirit of a school (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Soanes, 2006). It would also suggest that we should re-examine the roles of both teachers and pupils (Fielding, 2001a) and build in opportunities for collaboration and collegiality (Bragg and Fielding, 2005). This could possibly be an ongoing challenge for schools, jeopardising further development of the personal and cultural spirit and dynamics of a school, which might be at odds with central government's unrelenting drive for ever increasing curriculum targets and standards (John, 2003; Lee, 2001; Mayall, 2002).

During his time at the case study school it should be noted that Ex P held a variety of important roles: the chairperson of the school council, a Guardian Angel and an ECO warrior. Whilst undertaking these roles he had worked very hard to justify and promote the principles of Child's Voice (Soanes, 2007). His personal interpretation and definition of 'Child's Voice' has developed further since leaving the school. It is interesting to note here however that when he was interviewed as a Year 6 pupil for the pilot study, he identified that he could '*express his views*' and that he did not need to '*hide them from anybody'* (Soanes, 2006:8).

Ex P's observations demonstrate his developing interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence dimensions (Gardner, 1993; Goleman, 1996) which the case study school has worked hard to develop (Alexander: 2010; Soanes, 2006; 2007). He identifies that if opportunities are given to pupils to experience cultural and democratic practices at the school, through being a functioning member of society; understanding themselves and having opportunities for reflection (Bourdieu, 1986; Kolb, 1984); by working closely with others (Fielding, 2001a; 2001b; Vygotsky, 1978) and developing a '*flow*' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) for their learning, that this would '*be a brilliant idea*'. The following extract illustrates this dimension to his philosophical perspective:

> '*I think the whole idea of this Child's Voice is probably, the way to do it is to promote the social cohesion, so things can flow, flow freely throughout, and there are no barriers that will stop or hinder something. And I suppose that anything for that, promoting social cohesion ... would be a brilliant idea*' (Ex P)

The younger children had also identified the importance of the relationship between children and teachers, but Ex P summarised his definition of Child's Voice by describing the importance of '*social cohesion*' and '*flow*' with '*no barriers*'. Ex P's commentary above appears insightful as he implies elements such as: a sense of belonging, sticking together, trust, a holistic outlook, a common identity, participation, morale (an emotional response), co-operation and helping (Chan *et al.*, 2006).

4.1.2 Theme 2: Being listened to and taken seriously (C2)

The second theme identified by the children when answering the question, 'What is understood by Child's Voice?' was the importance they attributed to being '*listened to*' and as a consequence being '*taken seriously*'. The following extracts are typical examples that illustrate these dimensions:

> '*Children's opinions and views are valued*' (SC2)

'...we get to talk to everyone, we get to see their point of views and we're not, say, hiding away from it any more' (SC6)

'I think you should sometimes agree with the child because they know what they're talking about and sometimes listen to the adults because then, they're concerned for the children's safety as well' (SC5)

The extracts above suggest that children believed 'being listened to and taken seriously' were important to them individually and collectively. A significant driver identified by many children was that of being 'valued'. When I asked the children to explain to me what being 'valued' meant to them they identified the importance that their views and ideas were valued, taken as important and acted upon. Being seen as a valued contributor to decision making in the school was important to them and is indicative of their feeling of worth, giving them the freedom to speak openly; not as SC6 said: *'hiding away from it anymore'*. SC5 highlighted this feature further by identifying that the adults appreciated that children knew *'what they're talking about'*. By implication the children had identified the possible tensions which could arise for adults. SC5's commentary illustrates the dichotomy many involved with research with children have, that it is important that 'pupil testimony is not privileged as more "true" than the accounts of teachers and advisors, but it provides a crucial element still too often overlooked' (Nixon *et al.,* 1996:270), to acknowledge and remember the importance of adult voices as well. I realised through reflection that my own adult 'insider-researcher' perspective could compromise the data findings and that I might inadvertently, be acting too quickly in dismissing children's responses, for fear of stereotyping my analysis and downplaying the voices of children. When I started to review the literature more closely, it became clearer that being taken seriously carried important cultural capital for the children, an essential component for successful communication with children and young people.

SC8, whose interview will be detailed further in Case Study 2 (4.3.2.i) recollected her experience as a co-presenter of a lecture on 'The Importance of Child's Voice', given by the children to Year 2 education students at a university in 2008. In agreement with Ex P she cited the importance for adults:

> ' … to get the voice of a child when you're studying to be a teacher, where you're going to be working with children, like, kids; so you've got to know, like, what they think on the matter' (SC8)

This corresponded to the views of the university under-graduate students whose evaluations were sent to the school following the children's presentations. Interviewed one year later in 2009, SC8 reflected on her role as Headteacher during the 11 Million Take-Over Day:

> '…it was still a chance to get children's voices being heard even though it was through us, as children, as well' (SC8)

The data indicates that many children spoke about the importance of giving them appropriate 'time' to think about and activate concepts and activities. The following extract illustrates this:

> 'Giving the actual pupils time to explain it themselves' (GA2)

Children spoke positively when describing 'being listened to':

> 'Some people listen to children and take them seriously' (GA5)

> 'It brings the school together as more of a community fun thing' (GA2)

Their commentaries indicated that they considered that it was important for teachers and other adults to be prepared to listen and learn from the children. Furthermore, children had signalled that not all adults took notice of their views and there remained some adults in their view who could be described as 'non-listeners'. Further critical reflection identified this finding has political significance. I had initially anticipated that my research would seek to destabilise the power differentials between children and

adults. However, I realised that I had relied too much on the 'authenticity' of children's voices, whilst trying to empower children at the school through the initiatives described in this study. This view illustrates an ongoing dilemma for me as the researcher, whereby the school context shapes and constrains children's voices.

4.1.3 Theme 3: Being part of a decision making process within the school (C3)

The third theme identified by the children when answering the question 'What is Child's Voice?' concerned the importance of '*being part of a decision making process within the school*'. In the following extracts, children describe their ideas regarding some decision making opportunities at the school by identifying knowing what's going on; being part of something; getting involved; getting everybody's point across; doing and being trusted to do a lot of important jobs and making decisions for the school:

> '*They like to know what's going on and being part of it*' (SC 3)
>
> '*... getting involved with each other*' (SC 6)
>
> '*... and then you can get everybody's points across*' (SC 8)
>
> '*Children do a lot of jobs that are quite important and that teachers trust them to do these jobs*' (SC3)
>
> '*It was interesting to help out with the school and to make decisions for the school*' (SC4)

Children spoke about the importance of knowing what was going on within the school through identifying opportunities for consultation, participation, communication, inclusion, collaboration and involvement through a number of democratic systems in place at the school. They spoke warmly about relationships, highlighting the importance of 'being part of' collaborative schemes where they are involved in making important decisions for the school and the reciprocity they believed existed between adults and children. As they spoke, they gave examples of everyday interactions where they

considered they worked as part of a team; alongside adults as well as with other children. For example:

> *'Working as a group takes in everybody's ideas and puts them as one, not just somebody who's like the leader'* (GA 2)

It is important to note that the children acknowledged awareness of their agency, both as individuals, in addition through their inclusion as members of a wider decision making system at the school. They believed dimensions had been created within the school environment where adults *'trusted'* them whereby their testimonies could potentially provide credible evidence from albeit a different, limited perspective. I recognise and appreciate that my interpretations of the children's testimonies will have been situated within the cultural and social contexts of the school. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that I could have inadvertently acted as a gatekeeper of the children's voices whilst interpreting their views, despite intending to lessen the inherent power imbalances which exist between children and adults.

4.1.4 Theme 4: Children's involvement as team participants in aspects of improving the school (A1)

One notable feature of Child's Voice cited by adults was the importance of children's involvement as active team participants within the school. Their evidence reveals a promising perspective where children are viewed as valued and respected contributors to the school community:

> *'I think it's about children understanding that they're very important and they make decisions and that they contribute a lot to society and we have a small society here and outside there's a bigger society for them to join later'* (LM)

> *'It's giving the children the opportunity to, well, quite literally, um, have an active role in their learning, in the world around them, allow themselves to be*

heard, um, take an active role, I suppose, teach them at a young age that they are an active role in society, and what they say does count' (T1)

'I would say, um, setting in place practices whereby the children are able to give us their views and opinions, um, listening to them, helping them to develop things and put things in place that are important to them' (Gov 2)

The Headteacher (HT), who at the time had been in post for sixteen years, illustrates the involvement of the children in the following observation:

'It's involving children in all aspects of school life and it's listening to them and their experiences, and trying to improve the quality of school life in all its, its facets, and then receiving feedback from them. So, to see them as part of a team of participants in, in engaged and trying to improve the school ...' (HT)

HT raised important dispositions for involving children in all aspects of school life, for example: listening to them, trying to improve the quality of school life, receiving feedback, involving them as team participants engaged in improving the school, feeling ownership and valuing children's contributions. This viewpoint suggests he recognises the creative and beneficial effects embraced by children who bring 'insights that are genuinely fresh and even challenging to those who are listening' (Bragg and Fielding, 2005:129). He describes opportunities for identifying improved relationships where children are '*part of a team of participants'* in contrast to '*pupils who get things done to them'* which has redefined the traditional boundaries of teachers and pupils. This he proposes has engaged children who have a desire for '*trying to improve the school'* and '*all feel ownership'* and that this has been a '*sort of catalyst if you like for our own creative curriculum'*. I believe that HT here provides evidence which indicates aspects of Child's Voice is taken seriously by the most senior professional of the school, thereby providing a valuable and powerful perspective and not one which is 'tokenistic' (Fielding, 2001a). His comments appear to indicate a genuine willingness to develop a reflexive, collaborative approach with children which could potentially shape a more

active and agentic perspective at the school. Nonetheless, despite the commendable intentions of the Headteacher, there remain power imbalances within the school context where it is not always possible to overcome the differentials which exist between children and adults. Moreover it would suggest one of the benefits of true 'participation' for children within the school is that of a co-researcher and team member.

This view was shared by others, in particular, the School Improvement Partner, (SIP) a Headteacher of a large Junior School himself. He defines Child's Voice as follows:

> *'...represents the children having their input into the, not just the day to day running of the school, how that affects them and what they think about that, but about our vision for the future as well, they've been part of our vision planning for the school as well. So, I suppose in essence it boils down to the children having an input into every aspect of the way the school is moving forward'* (SIP)

This is an interesting feature as both HT and SIP share common perspectives for their schools, confirming Child's Voice as a central feature for both schools. HT described when he first arrived at the school in 1992, observed that it was '*quite a dull school*,' but since children had '*got involved with Child's Voice'* in the following years, he had seen a '*dramatic improvement with the energy level of the children'*. He describes where the status of children had been reinforced:

> *'It's, there's this whole Pupil Voice project, and the children are speaking loud and clear that, you know, they find, you know, they, they want to contribute and they want to get the most out of their, their Junior school, and you know, with excited children, you can't help but want, want to serve them, and to make it even better'* (HT)

By placing an increased emphasis on the Child's Voice dimension of the school, the Headteacher I believe illustrates concisely a successful, vibrant and dynamic ethos, where '*excited children'* '*speak out loud and clear*,' who '*want to contribute'* and as a result '*get the most out of their school'*. The importance of listening to children, acting

on their feedback, taking them seriously and seeing them as team members working in a collegial manner are not only idealistic characteristics identified within the literature (Christensen and James, 2000; Fielding, 1999; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Soanes, 2006, 2007), but also challenge us to acknowledge and consider the limits of children's voices and how we can address them.

4.1.5 Theme 5: Children's Autonomy and Agency (A2)

The theme 'involving children in all aspects of school life' is developed further by empirical evidence from the Learning Mentor (LM), whose views resonate with HTs and SIPs commentaries. An example is as follows:

> *'I think it's probably the most important thing especially here definitely at (case study school). I think it's about children understanding that they're very important and they make decisions and that they contribute a lot to society and we have a small society here and outside there's a bigger society for them to join later. So I do think it's the opportunities are there, it's their perspective and their values as well'* (LM)

Interestingly, the LM makes a connection between her on-going observations of children undertaking their roles and the wider lived experiences of the children within the school context. She describes and sees the school community as a '*small society*', and how this provides an important link with the '*bigger society*' to which the children will be part in the future. Working closely with many of the children in her role as Learning Mentor, provides her with additional insight and evidence of the children's lived worlds, which is not necessarily shared by other adults at the school. The children, she concludes, understand that they can '*make decisions*'**,** '*contribute a lot*' and that their voices are '*important*' by experiencing first hand 'autonomous agency' through action (James and James, 2004; Whitty and Wisby, 2007). A further dimension which develops this theme is illustrated by Teacher 1 (T1):

'It's giving the children the opportunity to, well, quite literally, um, have an active role in their learning, in the world around them, allow themselves to be heard, um, take an active role, I suppose, teach them at a young age that they are an active role in society, and what they say does count. I think too many people, later on in life, don't take an active role, and I think teaching children from a young age to use their voice is going to have a huge knock-on effect later on, in years' (T1)

It is important to note here that T1 studied psychology at university, and was used to presenting her particular personal philosophy, which aligned itself to supporting children's agency. Her comments illustrate her sensitivity to the social conditions within and beyond the classroom. Even though in her first year of teaching, T1's responses reinforce her perception and promotion of Child's Voice, identifies through the everyday interactions with her class. In agreement with LM, T1 identified that it is important for children to have early experiences of active democratic roles within the school community, knowing that what they say is important, which has far reaching consequences in later life (Hart *et al.,* 2004; Watkins, Lodge and Best, 2000; Wrigley, 2003). This view of children being seen as part of a community, focusing on their 'powers, not their weaknesses, their capacity, not their inadequacy, their potential for growth in the future, not their incapacity in the present' (Hart *et al.,* 2004:257), reflects the 'Reggio Emilia' approach to education founded by Louis Malaguzzi (Edwards *et al.,* 1998:87-88). The nursery schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy, promote a belief in the 'rich, strong and competent' child (David, 2000:38) where 'children develop the ability to make decisions for themselves, based on their own assessments of a situation' (David, 2000:38). T1 also highlighted the importance of informing children early on that the power of their voice will have a '*knock on effect'*, which could go beyond school into potential future wider society life-skills (Christensen and Prout, 2005; Mayall, 2000).

Parent (P) described animatedly how her daughter (SC1) had developed '*initiative*' and confidence which she believed came as a result of participation in her roles. When asked why she thought it was important for children to have a voice at the school, she answered in relation to her own child's experience:

> ' *with all the roles she's got and the responsibilities, she's totally come out of herself ... She shows initiative, and, and she carries that on at home as well now. I just think it's great; she feels a part of the school, not just it's somewhere she has to go, she enjoys coming, she, she doesn't miss a day, she loves it*' (P)

This comment from a parent should come as no surprise, as it identifies possible benefits for her own child and as a result therefore can only contribute an anecdotal, biased view of Child's Voice.

The importance of Child's Voice was reiterated by two Governors: Governor 1 (Gov1) and Governor 2 (Gov 2). They highlighted the importance for children to give their views, take responsibility and have opportunities to develop their emotional intelligence and social attributes. The following extracts illustrate these points:

> '*I would say, um, setting in place practices whereby the children are able to give us their views and opinions, um, listening to them, helping them to develop things and put things in place that are important to them... I think it's also about, um, helping them to grow in taking in responsibility and, um, really being given opportunity to their emotion intelligence and their social capabilities as well, not just expecting academic and cognitive achievement from them*' (Gov2)

> '*The children, in particular members of the school council, um, have their say and made their views known...*' (Gov1)

Both governors have been in post for a number of years, appointed during the evolving stages of Child's Voice initiatives and are well informed regular visitors to the school. Gov 1 is the Chair of Governors and has an interest in the school council, whereas Gov 2 is an Early Years teacher and Chair of the Curriculum sub-committee. In particular Gov 2 emphasises the importance of developing children's emotional and social

intelligence. Both governors had been appointed during the evolving development of Child's Voice within the school and had observed first hand, how this initiative had expanded over time.

Adults from a wider school context identified similar definitions to Child's Voice, indicating consensus and appreciation of the importance that children should remain at the centre of any school innovation, policy and vision, thus concurring with recent research (Alderson, 2008; Fielding, 2004a, 2004b; Whitty and Wisby, 2007). For example the Healthy School representative agreed that Child's Voice is:

> *'crucial in developing anything to do with policy, resources, schemes, anything like that'* (HSch)

The Ex LEA representative (Ex LEA) warns that 'Child's Voice' is not seen by all schools in the same way and that in many cases it is:

> *'being developed actually in a sort of rather patchy way, some schools are doing some really innovative work, and other schools are still at a fairly low level'* (Ex LEA)

In agreement with the Ex LEA and the findings of Fielding (2001a, 2001b); Bragg and Fielding (2005); Flutter and Rudduck (2004); Wyness (2006), the Children's Rights Alliance for England representative (CRAE) concurs that in some schools:

> *'The children don't get much of the same influence in what decisions they can be involved in making or that they're very, kind of, adult-led or that they're quite tokenistic'* (CRAE)

This view echoes the 'rhetoric' warnings of Fielding (2001a) where some schools 'do' Child's Voice. It is interesting to note that CRAE prefers the terminology 'Child's Voice' avoiding 'student' or 'pupil voice' for the following reasons:

> *'I think it's quite a narrow thing the pupil voice … the child's voice, that would mean to me, kind of, you know, what does a child think, feel, what are their views, experiences'* (CRAE)

'Interestingly it could also cite the voice beyond the school gates as well as within it. So a largely socio-cultural view of things' (CRAE)

Her definition, grounded from her wider national multi-agency perspective, emphasises further the central importance of how the *'mechanism for children expressing their views has been set up in the first place'*. She describes this as *'premier leadership value and something that's very important'* for the school and its culture of children's participation.

4.1.6 Discussion

Analysis of the data for subsidiary Research Question 1 **What is understood by Child's Voice?** has led me to scrutinise the role of power and pupil agency in association with adult authority (Fielding, 2001a; Robinson and Taylor, 2007, 2013). Through further reflection I realised that despite my best intentions as a researcher, I could have inadvertently acted as a gatekeeper to children's voices when interpreting their views. Nevertheless, I hoped my close and trusting relationship with the children, which had been built up over time, would lessen the acknowledged inherent power imbalance between adults and children. This does not make the evidence more authentic or true, but could present a different understanding which could even potentially contradict initial voices (Spyrou, 2011).

The concept of Child's Voice discussed earlier in the review of literature in Chapter Two indicated a close association with the 'sociology of childhood' paradigm. I had anticipated analysis of this first research question would provide me with a suitable frame for the research in order to support understanding the children's and adults informed perspectives and help to draw out the key points. Critical reflection however

indicates that I had overestimated the depth of the findings which emerged from the data. Children's voices so far in this research have been presented as 'speaking for themselves' which are fundamentally social and reflective of each child's particular understanding. However, further analysis of the interviews outlined more clearly the diversity of the term 'Child's Voice'. For example, children and adults affirmed the importance of implementing 'Child's Voice' principles, and a number of ideological intentions were highlighted. My critical reflexive approach to Child's Voice takes into account the actual research contexts in which the children's voices are produced and moreover, the power imbalances which shape them (Spyrou, 2011). Children spoke from a wide spectrum of experience, raising further secondary questions which would be considered for analysis. For example, 7 out of the 16 children interviewed individually were involved in all three initiatives, so would their accounts offer different perspectives? Would the Guardian Angels working within the less adult controlled social setting of the playground provide different definitions and accounts of Child's Voice from those children involved in the School Council? Conversely others, like a number of the Master-Class Mentors had just a limited one-off experience, so how authentic and legitimate would their accounts be? Recognising these complex issues meant that I could not assume that all responses would be completely representative of the research group in the study or indeed those of the whole school community therefore, a cautious approach was advisable with my interpretation of the data (Czerniawski, 2012; Spyrou, 2011; Wilson, 2009).

Overall, the findings to this question demonstrate that similar levels of agreement exist between the children and adults. Data presentation illustrates strong views are held by children and adults, identifying desired outcomes of 'autonomy' and 'agency', for both

as individuals and team participants. Children's self-reports, although simplistic, are insightful in form but were only able to offer limited illustration of where Child's Voice examples could be found. I believe an informed perspective was provided by the Ex Pupil, aged 13 years, who could expand his opinions by elaborating in more detail than the Year 6 children. The data suggests Ex P was able to do this from a position of hindsight with additional reflection, which the Year 6 pupils were not in a position to undertake so easily. In agreement with the findings of Cheminais (2011), Czerniawski (2012) and Rudduck and Flutter (2004) his statements suggest an insightful commentary by including for example words such as: 'social cohesions', 'flow' and 'no barriers'. However, although Ex P's idealised perspective is illuminating, it should be cautioned (Fielding, 2004a; McIntyre *et al,* (2005).

Adults concurred that Child's Voice initiatives should produce institutional contexts that highlight and promote opportunities for children to have their say individually and as team participants in decision making agendas. The Headteacher, SIP, Ex LEA and CRAE identified the potential power imbalances between children and adults which create challenging agendas for Child's Voice. In particular they acknowledge that adult led and controlled social and cultural settings in which Child's Voice initiatives exist, can as a result be consequently tokenistic and rhetorical (Fielding 2001a). Furthermore, it illustrates Fielding's (2004a) examination of the ways children's voices may be subverted in contexts, should they not be in keeping with the agenda of adults. His series of powerful questions attempts to address a concern that 'student voice is turning out to be a dissembling device directed at purposes that have little to do with encouraging the agency and aspirations of young people' (Fielding, 2001a:1). The data indicates this concern remains an ongoing and challenging context for schools.

Empirically, I have worked intensely with this question. The children's narratives identified examples where they considered they had actively participated and contributed to the cultural wellbeing of the school community (Alderson and Morrow, 2004; Bourdieu, 1986; James *et al.,* 1998). The data suggests that interacting with their environment and connecting with others, including the adults, is beginning to nurture a more democratic society within the school community.

The interview data demonstrated common ground and consensus between children's and adults' perceptions how Child's Voice is implemented at the school, evidenced from the identified themes derived from both data sets. The task of raising the profile of Child's Voice within the school has created opportunities and activities for children and adults to engage in practices and structures interdependently, but in addition it acknowledges issues of power differentials must be taken into account. The democratic approach developed at the case study school has not been restricted to a fixed framework, but has seen children as developing, active and important participants within the school community through 'emotional stability and good social relationships' (Fielding, 2014:515). Many of the categories identified from the analysis resonate with the key features highlighted by a number of researchers in the field. These relate particularly to children having a say (Bragg and Fielding, 2005; Fielding 2001a; Mayall, 2002; Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007); being listened to and taken seriously (Goleman, 1996, 1998; Mayall, 2002); being part of important decision making processes (Fielding and Bragg, 2003; Fielding and Moss, 2011; Hart, 1992); children's involvement as team participants in improving the school (Fielding and Moss, 2011; Jackson, 2004; Lee, 2001; MacGilchrist *et al.,* 2004) ; children's autonomy and agency (Fielding 2004b; James and Prout, 1997; Jenks, 2004; Robinson and Fielding, 2007).

The data additionally highlights the importance children themselves attached to 'having a say' and that this they stated was central to the life of the school, supporting the findings of Bragg and Fielding's model (2005). The literature identified that creating opportunities for children to 'have a say' within schools is vital and for this to be seen as a serious matter. Hart's ladder of participation framework (1997) (see figure 2.1) consequently proved helpful ascertaining the degree to which children have a say.

The review of literature identified 'widespread agreement with the principle of participation' for children, in particular from government guidance documents (DCSF, 2004: DfE, 2008) comprising: children's rights and wellbeing; active citizenship; school improvement and community enhancement. The children offered definitions of Child's Voice principles using their personal experiences and observations, and how these were perceived within the school. It is acknowledged that my theoretical perspective, from a 'sociology of childhood' framework, perceives children to be trustworthy, competent informants and witnesses of their own experience. By contrast, this raises ongoing important questions of influence, power and authority of my subjective 'insider-researcher' perspective which will undoubtedly impact upon my findings.

4.1.7 Summary

This question deconstructed the concept of 'Child's Voice' and examined data from a sociological and critical theory perspective, grounding the study not only within the school context, but in a national and international setting (Corsaro, 2005; Fielding, 2001a, 2001b; Fielding, 2004a, 2004b; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Kellett, 2005; MacGilchrist *et al.,* 2004).

Three themes emerged from the children: having a say; being listened to and taken seriously; and being part of important decision making processes at the school. Two themes emerged from the adults: children as team participants in all aspects of improving the school; and children's autonomy and agency. The findings demonstrate common ground and that a consensus exist between children's and adults' perceptions of Child's Voice, but also acknowledges the issues of power differentials which must be taken into account.

4.2 Research Question 2 – How has the school developed 'Child's Voice' principles?

Embedded within this subsidiary research question '**How has the school developed 'Child's Voice' principles?'** is the need for exemplification of the activities and opportunities offered by the school in its claim to 'develop child's voice principles'. Chapter 4.2 examines the critical role played by three specific initiatives in developing these principles. The school offers a total of eight initiatives, but three have been selected for scrutiny (School Council, Guardian Angels and Master Class) to identify whether they as claimed have contributed to the development of Child's Voice principles at the school. Data has been sought from the children involved, from adults in and working with the school and from OfSTED inspection reports over an eight year period. Data analysis identifies the central role played by engagement and collaboration in creating a culture that supports the development of Child's Voice principles.

Table 4.4 identifies documentation and data coding labels originating from interviews used in the analysis of Research Question 2.

Table 4:4 Research Question 2 Data Analysis Sample

Categories	Data Coding Labels	Totals
Documentation	Minutes from meetings, school policy, school website, governor reports, SEF (2007), OfSTED reports (2002, 2006, 2010), Raiseonline data (2007)	
School Council	SC1; SC2; SC4; SC5; SC8	**N=5**
Guardian Angels	GA2; GA3; GA5; GA6	**N=4**
Master-class Mentors	MCM 2:1; MCM2:2; MCM2:3	**N=3**
Adults	CRAE; Gov 2; Ex LEA; HT; T1; T2; LM	**N=7**

Findings and discussion are presented in two sections. The first section will frame the educational context of the case study school by providing a commentary for the school's vision, a description and synoptic grid of the past three OfSTED inspection judgements. The second section will present and analyse the three initiatives from the perspectives of the children and adults involved.

4.2.1 Case Study School: Context, vision and inspection findings

The case study school is a large 4 form entry Junior School with 480 pupils on roll, (ages 7 – 11 years of age) situated in an Outer London borough. The majority of children in this large school are from White British backgrounds and the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than in most schools (34.5% as compared to 26.7% national). A wide range of backgrounds including Black British - African (11.8% as compared to 3% national) and Caribbean (2.1% as compared to 1.4% national), Asian British (7.6% as compared to 2.5% national), is represented and the proportion speaking English as an additional language is higher than in many schools (17.3% as compared to 16.8% national). The proportion of pupils supported at 'school action' is 12.4% as compared to 11.3% national and by 'school action plus' or with a statement of SEN is 5.3% as compared to 8% national (Raiseonline Data Analysis).

In 2002 the school reviewed and revised its vision. The school built on the OfSTED advice that 'children have good working relationships with teachers and get on well together' to create and articulate a more child focused curriculum and learning environment. The data collection period (2007 – 2009) took place approximately half-way between the 2006 and 2010 OfSTED inspection periods. The revised OfSTED inspection framework (2008) requires inspectors to actively seek and report on

children's views about their school and a number of governmental initiatives. For example, 'Every Child Matters' (ECM), as a matter of course now expect schools to consult pupils on a number of matters. Consideration however needs to be given to some teachers and union apprehension concerning 'student voice' initiatives, giving rise to unrest about issues of control, involving classroom observations and teacher appointments, and the perception by some that teacher voice and professionalism is therefore marginalised (Alexander, 2010; Fielding, 2001a, 2001b; Sutherland, 2006) .

It can be seen from Table 4.5 that the separate OfSTED teams identified children's maturity and their sense of responsibility, their confidence, their strong relationships, agency and decision making as positive school characteristics.

The most recent inspection, 2010, also acknowledged the 'innovative link' with the local university, acknowledging that for the past three years children have 'lectured' twice each year to undergraduate students. The school participates in this programme as we feel it is important that students training to be primary school teachers hear first hand from children about their school experience. It can be seen from the table that the children's personal development and well-being has received an Outstanding Grade assessment from OfSTED both in 2006 and 2010.

Table 4.5 OFSTED Reports – Synoptic Grid: 2002; 2006; 2010.

2002	Overall:- Sound with some good features. High level of care – all pupils able to take advantage of wide range of learning opportunities. Personal development – good. Moral development – very good. <u>Pupils' attitudes & values</u>: personal development & relationships. Pupils have good working relationships with teachers & get on well together. Pupils personal development is good, relationships are very good. Relationships between pupils and adults is very good. Positive effect on the life of the school. GAs – take responsibility seriously, enjoy helping pupils SEN. Yr3 – GAs always look after them – playtime. Very positive effect on personal development of pupils & building relationships. PSHE – good. <u>Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social & cultural development:</u> Good. Moral development is very good. Spiritual, social & cultural – good. How well school cares for pupils – good. Very good procedures monitoring & promoting good behaviour – well understood by pupils. Gathering information – what pupils know and can do – satisfactory. Information used more precisely – cater for individual needs. Provision – strong feature of school. Good social skills encouraged. Good opportunities to take responsibility within school. GAs seen giving sensitive advice & other pupils. Given many opportunities to appreciate & contribute to local and wider community.
2006	Overall:- a good school well focussed – working to become outstanding in the future. ECM at sch. Quote parent 'I'm very happy with the whole package, education, the children's personal development'. Pupils have very positive attitudes and acquire a diverse range of skills that prepare them extremely well for their future lives. Notably, pupils' personal development and well being are outstanding. Staff know pupils well, have high expectations for them & relationships are very good. In return pupils work hard, contributing much to the life of the school. Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements and enthusiastic. Inspectors agree with them when they comment that they are well cared for. Pupils also confirm that the school helped them to become more confident. Most importantly, they like their teachers, saying, 'They encourage everyone to do everything,' and 'Learning is fun. It helps you to think about your life and teachers are nice to you.' As a result pupils enjoy learning, make good progress and behave exceptionally well. <u>Personal development & well being</u>: Grade 1 – Outstanding. Very good relationships ensure that most pupils are happy at school and keen to do their best. ECO Club – enables pupils to make a very strong contribution to the community through recycling. Spiritual development through assembly activities is outstanding and pupils are helped to understand and respect different faiths, cultures and feelings. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstanding overall. Pupils develop important personal qualities that prepare them extremely well for the future. Not only do they acquire an impressive range of basic skills but they know how to co-operate, overcome anger, take responsibility, negotiate and care for others. They understand how to be safe in the world around them and behave exceptionally well, showing a strong understanding about how to manage bullying if it should occur…they grow in confidence …show their initiative and work confidently with others. Good community links and promotion of social and emotional education. Outstanding provision personal development enables them to be well prepared for the future. Successful – guiding developing social skills. GAs, senior teachers, MDS help pupils have fun and play well. Pupils comments are taken seriously. School council are proud of their involvement with staff overcoming bullying.
2010	Overall:- Good with some outstanding features. Welcoming and caring atmosphere is underpinned by a drive to ensure pupils achieve well academically, while developing personal skills which equip them well for the next stage of education. Pupils show maturity and sense of responsibility, caring for each other e.g. GAs. Pupils are known as individuals and cared for exceptionally well by adults. Pupils involve themselves very well in the community. Pupils understand the democratic processes through real life' elections for the School Council and value opportunities to take part in decision making e.g. members of the school's H&S team alongside staff and governors. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, helping them to achieve well. Pupils enthusiastically discuss issues and work together well to strengthen and deepen their understanding. Pupils are polite and courteous. They show strong personal insight and purpose. They understand the school's shared moral and social values. They speak with clarity and reflect on experiences, showing curiosity in learning and discussions. The appreciation assembly contributes strongly to the development of pupils personal and social skills. Strong relationships, which enable pupils to be confident about their learning and able to share their ideas within a supportive environment, knowing their views are valued. Pupils appreciate individual attention that receive and recognise its value in promoting their learning, personal development and well being. Confident … always an adult on hand to give support if needed. ECO club – planting flowers. Good partnerships with outside bodies enrich pupils' experiences well. E.g. innovative link with local university where Year 6 pupils 'lecture' undergraduate students in education. This strongly contributes to the development of their confidence and workplace skills. <u>Letter to pupils from OFSTED</u> You are right to be proud of your school. BJS is a good school. You are mature young people who enjoy caring for others when you take on responsibilities such as 'GAs' . Many of you contribute to the school and local area as School Councillors … or when some Year 6 pupils speak to students who are training to be teachers.

It is important to note that the most recent OfSTED report (2010) made particular reference to the contribution from children to the school community, through their roles as School Councillors and Guardian Angels, highlighting their 'strong personal insight and purpose.'

Although the school shares its site with an Infant and Nursery School it is not managed by the case study school's governing body. The case study school holds National Healthy School Status, the Eco-Schools, Quality Mark-Basic Skills, Investors in People and the Active mark awards. In 2010, the local university awarded the school their 'Work in Partnership Award' for successfully supporting initial teacher education in recent years. Although the Outer London borough is relatively affluent, not many children go on to attend higher education (university). The ward that the school is situated in has 12.8% adults in higher education, compared with 19.2% in England, despite the retention of the 11+ selection tests by the LEA. The final point to add to this context is that the Headteacher has been in post at the school for 16 years.

The wider school context should be considered when evaluating dimensions relating to the promotion of Child's Voice principles. Table 3.1 'Democratic decision making opportunities at the case study school' illustrates the opportunities available for children to contribute towards the whole school community. The school motto of 'Success and care for all' encouraged participation from the school community and helped to understand the underlying ethos and commitment of the school. My aspirational intention, during my tenure as Deputy Headteacher, was to attempt to develop greater emotional, social, and cultural dimensions within the school community. These dimensions featured opportunities in particular whereby Year 6 children could develop their emotional, social and cultural skills through contributing individually and as a group member to the general wellbeing of the whole school community.

I had anticipated that over a period of years children and staff would have embraced, developed and embedded many of the central principles of Child's Voice. Commentaries from interviewees and the review of literature reveal a view that in order to embed these principles and values within the school culture, takes time and commitment. This continued to be a useful reference point in order for the children's input to be considered of real value, which would result in changes in the school which were not viewed as simply tokenistic (Fielding, 2001a; 2001b).

The Initiatives

The school has worked on developing and offering Year 6 children the opportunity to be involved in 8 initiatives, either through engagement in individual initiatives or in combination. However three specific initiatives: School Council; Guardian Angels and Master-class Mentors were selected for scrutiny within this study because these initiatives had the greatest number of children involved. All three initiatives were considered well established at the school and offer opportunities to give thick descriptions of their first hand lived experiences in a natural setting. The three initiatives will be examined in the following order: School Council, Guardian Angels and Master-class Mentors.

4.2.2 School Council Initiative

The School Council was originally set up in 1997 and currently has a membership of 32 (comprising one boy and one girl from each class) who meet monthly for one hour. Year 6 children fulfil specific leadership roles of Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer and organise meetings by drawing up agendas, keeping minutes and updates to the school at assemblies. During the research Year 6 members sought council permission to appoint three children to undertake the role of secretary and two children to undertake the

role of treasurer in order to widen the group of children involved in the leadership roles. In 2006, at the request of the School Council, its membership was adapted whereby members had to show real enthusiasm and actively contribute to the well-being of the school council with co-opted members elected and meetings undertaken and run by the children themselves.

The School Council represented the school by participating in a number of national initiatives: LEA Article 12 Conferences since 2004; research on behalf of children's rights: Children's Rights Alliance of England (CRAE), National Children's Bureau (NCB), Save the Children and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) UK (2006); focus groups for research by CRAE and NCB (2009) and the annual '11 Million Take-Over Day' organised through the Children's Commissioner for England: four children shared the positions of Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher (two for each role) for the day. Table 4.6 identifies the specific Year 6 children from the study who assumed these roles on this day:

Table 4.6 '11 Million Take-Over Day': Roles of Responsibility (November 2007)

Children	Role of responsibility
SC8	Headteacher
SC3	Headteacher
SC1	Deputy Headteacher
SC5	Deputy Headteacher

After conducting a whole school assembly in front of 480 pupils, the staff and one governor, the children above attended two meetings, with the School Improvement Partner (SIP), the Headteacher and myself, and then with the Literacy governor. Children have participated in the United Nations 'Day for Change' event, which has become the School Council's main annual international fund raising event. Year 6 children are publically commended annually for their contribution towards the developing aspects of independence, citizenship, collegiality and democracy within the school.

4.2.2.i) School Council Initiative – Perspective from children

All the children interviewed felt strongly that members of their School Council were doing a good job. When asked about attributes School Council members required, the majority of children cited that councillors needed to be *'hard working'* and *'dedicated'* as the following example from GA5 illustrates:

> *'Well they've got be serious, to work hard'* (GA5)

Children felt that the wider school community and adults also respected and appreciated the School Council and the decisions councillors made during the year. In particular, School Councillors themselves spoke with confidence when describing the activities they had been part of. They reflected how they had developed and improved the organisation of their meetings, identifying at the start of the year there had been some difficulties:

> *'We've got to learn to be organised'* (SC1)

> *'You have to do your own job. We've got to do it on our own …You've got to put … lots of effort into it because it's a big job to do and you've got to work with others'* (SC2)

School Councillors had been particularly pleased with:

> *'Deciding how to spend grants'* (SC1)

They showed awareness that it was important to give feedback to their class:

> *'…even though the whole class is not a school councillor, they've got to know about what we do'* (SC2)

School Councillors enjoyed meeting new people and making new friends with fellow councillors from other year groups. They appreciated being able to take responsibility for their meetings although:

> *'... the children sometimes need a bit of support because they don't really understand what we mean and we can't really explain it. So we might need a teacher there, just like one teacher really, to help us out a bit'* (SC4)

'We have to be really, like sort of devoted to the school council to be on the main committee' (SC8)

These comments illustrate elements identified earlier by Fielding's (2004b) 'person-centred' community perspective of schools where he argues that an approach which involves teachers and pupils working together has the potential to transform education. Children indicated through their accounts in this study that they are not passive objects (Cook-Sather, 2006), but recognise from a deeply held personal perspective the importance of being active, communal beings (Macmurray, 1933; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004).

In particular the children gave animated accounts of their visit to the local university, where they had given a comprehensive presentation to second year education undergraduates. They confirmed the importance that adults training to be teachers should hear from children themselves about what they are capable of and what they enjoy. A typical response was:

'Yeah, I think so as well because children have quite a lot of ideas. So that can also help the teachers, a new teacher, to feel confident about themselves being a new teacher' (SC4)

Evidence emerged indicating that the School Council initiative is highly regarded within the school. SC 8 in particular described how the School Council was helping the whole school:

'Obviously the school council helping the whole school … when they feed back and everybody…and you ask for, like, suggestions and stuff, everybody puts up their hand and you ask them questions and they give you a suggestion and you feed that back to the school council and so it's like their voice is being heard through the whole school' (SC8)

Views expressed by the children displayed their emerging knowledge, understanding and skills which relate well to democracy and wider life skills. Children reflected a growing understanding of the humanitarian need for concern for others, on a global scale and appreciated the work put in by the Year 6 councillors in particular when organising the UNICEF Fund raising event 'Day for Change'.

4.2.2.ii) School Council Initiative – Perspective from adults

Adults agreed with the views expressed by children that they should be involved in important

decision making. CRAE gave a national perspective:

> '*I think there has been movement in terms of recognising that children should be involved in decision making and that they do actively, kind of acknowledge the participation and School Councils were really good things ...not enough has been done in terms of children's rights*' (CRAE)

An OfSTED perspective was given by Ex LEA, who specified that the School Council was

working at a '*strategic* level':

> '*The school councils I have seen when I've done OfSTED inspections and things, how they normally start is rather... than the way you are describing ... So what's interesting is that your model where you've got to that point now where the children are working with, you know working with governors and where you know they are working at this time more strategic level with the school council ... I mean some school councils like the one here are doing quite strategic level things. They are finding things out*' (Ex LEA)

Gov 2 acknowledged when children were listened to and had opportunities to discuss

important issues had '*improved how we run the school':*

> '*The children are able to give us their views and opinions, listening to them, helping them to develop things and put things in place that are important to them through the School Council. They come together and they are able to discuss issues, but they are also able to go back to their classrooms and ask their peers and discuss things with their peers, so they can fit in. That has actually improved how we have run the school*' (Gov 2)

HT concluded having the School Council benefitted the school by developing:

> '*...emotional intelligence and pastoral systems, you know linking up with circle time, discussion time, feeding on to the school council*' (HT)

4.2.3 Guardian Angel Initiative

The Guardian Angel initiative was introduced in September 1998 originally to support Year 3

pupils with their 'transition' from the adjoining Infant and Nursery School with the help of

Year 6 children. Numbers have increased from the original eight Year 6 children to 45

children during the 2007–2008 research period. During the summer term, Year 5 children are invited to declare an interest in becoming a 'Guardian Angel' and to 'shadow' a Guardian Angel for one day. Those interested are required to write a letter of application describing why they think they should be considered and to identify the personal attributes they believe that they could bring to this role and to subsequently attend an interview conducted by Year 6 children. The Learning Mentor and I conduct training and give daily support when required. Currently Guardian Angels undertake pastoral roles during playtimes and lunchtimes without direct adult supervision; give individual mentoring support for a few younger children experiencing difficulty in the playground and support other school events involving Year 3 and 4 children such as the Christmas parties; Lower school disco and the Year 3 - World War 2 day. The school shows its appreciation of the invaluable contributions the Guardian Angels make to developing and improving a positive, responsible, reflective community and modelling and promoting good role models that support the well-being and emotional welfare of all, by awarding medals at the end of each year. Guardian Angels have been invited to deliver two presentations to international adult audiences at the local university to describe their roles and responsibilities.

4.2.3.i) Guardian Angel Initiative – Perspective from children

All the children interviewed considered the Guardian Angel initiative to be of considerable value to the school and their responses yielded a number of interesting comments:

> *'I have learned how to deal with certain things and how to stop bad things from happening … I just say, like, how about you start again'* (SC5)

> *'…just the way children are treated and the way that they involve them, and the groups they have … I think that you'll never come into a school and I don't think it'll ever have a bad day; it'll always find a way to work something out or it'll always have a new solution. It'll always have different things going on'*
>
> (GA6)

SC5 thinks that by having a number of Guardian Angels they can work together to solve

problems in the playground:

> *'Well, because if one Guardian Angel gets stuck on a problem they can just go and
> ask another Guardian Angel, and also if some Guardian Angels have, say, like, they
> need more Guardian Angels to back them up, they can just call them'*
>
> <div align="right">(SC5)</div>

SC5 highlights how the role of Guardian Angel is acknowledged as 'responsible' and

'reliable' within the wider school community, including the parents:

> *'You feel almost, quite, like, honoured, because being recognised by parents, like,
> adults as well as children'* (SC5)

Children are considered reliable and trustworthy, being able to work collaboratively, having

'cultural capital' and 'agency' (Bourdieu, 1986; Bruner, 1996; Wyness, 2006). SC8 described

the importance given to how the Guardian Angels fulfil a role which supports Vygotsky's

'zone of proximal development' (1978):

> *'Sometimes children don't like to tell adults stuff, they bottle it up and then they can
> tell older kids, and, if like, sometimes it's better for a Guardian Angel to sort it out
> because sometimes teachers get angry with people and then Guardian Angels
> shouldn't do that and they're not supposed to do shout at us. I sorted a problem out
> yesterday and said, look, I'm not going to shout at you because that's not what I'm
> supposed to do. I'm just going to help you sort out your problem'* (SC8)

GA2 describes why she thinks the role of Guardian Angels is so appealing:

> *'I think to start with, when you started it, like, you said, 11 years ago, people didn't
> quite know the role. They were a bit more selfish and wanted to play on their own but
> with their friends, didn't want to take care of the younger children, but I think as the
> years have gone on there has been, like, there's been more issues with danger for the
> children and them doing the wrong things. So the older children in Year 6, they
> realise it and they want to help them to prevent it happening'* (GA2)

When asked 'How do you think our school benefits from having Guardian Angels?' GA2

continues and highlights how the role has brought *'the school together as more of a*

community fun thing':

> *'Well, I think for all year groups, they now want to be Guardian Angels when they're older and they know that it's fun, well, it's difficult sorting out the problems and it's helped the school but as the children get older through their year groups, they're actually becoming more mature and respect their teachers more and not messing about so much with them because if we didn't have Guardian Angels at all, the upper school would have no communication a lot with the lower school and it brings them together to different age groups what they like. And it brings the school together as more of a community fun thing'* (GA2)

4.2.3.ii) Guardian Angel Initiative – Perspective from adults

Adult responses to the benefits of this initiative were highly positive, in agreement with those of the Year 6 children involved. The benefits for the school were identified as: improved behaviour, attitudes and for the children: negotiation expertise and life-skills. The Headteacher captured these qualities when he explained the scheme had been highly successful in reducing the problem playground behaviour:

> *'The school's improved by the improvement of the children's attitudes, so it's sort of, one feeds into the other. It's so obvious in say the playground. There's like less sort of problems, because you've got the Guardian Angels sort of mediating, instead of always say adult staff, so from that viewpoint, it's the behaviour is much better'* (HT)

Further analysis of the Guardian Angel initiative from adults accentuates the positive ethos of the school's intention to create a caring community, as described in the school motto 'Success and care for all.' The following two examples from Gov 2 and T1 highlight potential benefits for the school from a Guardian Angel's skills to problem solve, mediate and negotiate with others (Vygotsky, 1978):

> *'I'm thinking maybe the Guardian Angels do undertake training which is in a different context, sort of job specific, which is really good. Their negotiation skills really might be in a situation where they negotiate in between two children …There is someone to go to, to talk about the sort of situation they have where they might initially not want to come and see a teacher, or whatever, and they see one of the Guardian Angels as an opportunity'* (Gov 2)

T1 elaborates proposing that these skills, identified as significant by the school, were important life-skills which would have long lasting benefits for the children:

'... allowing them [GAs] to deal with the more critical issues. I think the Guardian Angels are able to assess what is, you know an issue that can be sorted out immediately... By teaching those skills through the inner Guardian Angel, those skills can be taken on later in life. It's hugely important to teach children those skills' (T1)

In addition, the widespread views amongst all the adults confirmed that the Guardian Angel initiative was held in high regard amongst children and adults across the school and considered a successful institutional approach.

4.2.4 Master-class Mentors Initiative

The Master-class Mentors (MCM) initiative was introduced in 2003 and called for volunteers from Year 6 to plan a series of three twenty minute lessons in which they taught Year 3 children during lunchtimes. These lessons ranged from art, ICT, music, sports activities an activity in which they were personally interested. This became increasingly popular with more children wanting to be involved in teaching. This was resolved by allocating a whole afternoon in which Year 6 and Year 3 children could work together, negotiating with staff for resources.

Later the same year, the Master-class initiative developed a further element known as 'mentors': comprising 'reading mentors' and 'maths mentors' which became another feature of the Year 6 contribution to the school community. This entailed reading mentors hearing children read and giving support and maths mentors working with children who had difficulty or needed extension work as they had shown ability beyond their class level in mathematics. This was acknowledged as a positive initiative by teaching staff in Years 3, 4, and 6 and the contribution of the children is acknowledged by giving them certificates at the end of the year to show the school's appreciation of their support and contribution to pupils' learning.

4.2.4.i) Master-class Mentors Initiative– Perspective from children

Master-class Mentors affirmed the value and success of this initiative by providing strong, positive responses. They were convinced of the importance of the initiative and the benefits not only for themselves, in organising and running the programme, but more significantly for the Year 3 children, who gained much enjoyment. Their evidence offers the research valuable insight into their lived experiences providing an important 'reflective' perspective which is contextually sensitive (Crossley and Jarvis, 2001), marked by trust and openness (Rudduck, 2006). I considered their firm and positive comments did not compromise or diminish the richness of relational dimensions within the school; however, I did not underestimate the inhibited power relations which could influence the data analysis.

Master-class Mentors reported they were given plentiful opportunities to take their own initiative which they appreciated. Children organised their own areas of learning. When asked if the Master-class Mentor initiative was a good idea, GA3 answered:

> *'Yeah, I think it's a good scheme, because then, all the Year 3s get to have a wider opportunity to do what they want to. Suppose they want to do dance, I think some people have done dance and football, so they can do those things as well'* (GA3)

Master-class Mentors were able to practice their social skills in meaningful situations, thereby co-constructing their knowledge:

> *'Yes, we've worked it out, like, the area it's going to be in and we're going to teach them. First of all, it's the basics and then it gets harder and harder all the time. Then they'll soon be able to play basketball and that's it'* (GA5)

The following extract from the Master-class Mentors Group 2 interview articulates successful and enjoyable features of the scheme:

> *'And when people in Year 6 they, as they're getting older they want more independence. This is a good way of proving it to them, to show that they, they can be sensible and independent'* (MCM2:1)

'Yes, and I think the teachers, although the children are missing out on a lesson, I think that it's great that it's got more fun and fitness to do with them, and the point of it is enjoying what they're doing. And I think that yes, as long as Year 6 are trustworthy and they get a chance to prove that, then it should go really well' (MCM2:2)

'And the main thing that the teachers should think about is that at the end of the day the whole class is having a lot of fun' (MCM2:3)

4.2.4.ii) Master-class Mentors Initiative – Perspective from adults

The analysis of adult interview data reveals positive support for the Master-class Mentor initiative and general consensus identified improved attitudes towards learning, through greater enthusiasm and excitement shown by children. One example illustrating this was:

'I think these Master-classes are a fantastic idea. Definitely, I think it should improve the academic side of things, children's perception of learning. I think it will all round affect the ethos of the children. I know that if the children are happier learning, then that's going to affect the teacher's teaching' (T1)

It was widely agreed that the MCM initiative is positively associated with enjoyment:

'The Year 3s look sort of open mouthed at the [MCMs] in admiration' (T2)

HT acknowledged the MCM initiative increased opportunities for applications from additional Year 6 children who wanted to participate in the scheme:

'You've got more interest sort of generated in the master classes. And other types of children that have taken some lessons, so that that's given more variety to the curriculum' (HT)

LM spoke animatedly about the Master-class Mentor scheme:

'Master-classes, they're like our little teachers they're our little ones that can kind of who show them [Year3] these extra activities that we do. So they're vital I think' (LM)

Adults believed that the MCM initiative provided Year 6 children with additional opportunities to participate in ways which indicated they were capable of making a valuable

contribution to the school community. The adult commentaries complement those from the children, which together illustrate an enhanced, inclusive dimension to the Year 6 experience, reflecting positive conditions to Child's Voice principles. From these examples it could be concluded that adults recognised the important benefits of this initiative for both children and the school.

4.2.5 Discussion

Subsidiary Research Question 2: **How has the school developed 'Child's Voice' principles?** examined the three Child Voice initiatives established at the case study school. Research suggests that children's voices are constantly being constrained and shaped by numerous factors, including adult influences. It is important that the limits of children's voices within the three initiatives and the wider institutional context where these are practised are explored, in order to become more aware of the assumptions made about children (Komulainen, 2007; Spyrou, 2011). Additionally, I acknowledge that my role in the process of representing children's voices, by destabilizing the power differentials, has political significance (Mayall, 2000) since it claims through the analysis to capture voices and to empower children, will be problematic and contested (Chadderton, 2011).

4.2.5.i) Child's Voice: Problematic and Contested

As an 'insider-researcher' I cannot claim neutrality or consequently, ideological and political innocence through my critical theoretical analysis. Indeed, the research participants' perspectives can only be representative, rather than a reflection of their lived realities which I appreciate creates a dilemma for me as researcher, as participants accounts will have inevitably been filtered through my own subjective beliefs and values:

'…no matter how many methodological guarantees we try to put in place in an attempt to produce objectivity in research, the subjective always intrudes' (Walkerdine *et. al,* 2001:84)

My sociology of childhood lens and analysis could however, offer elementary insights whereby student voice initiatives might act as a catalyst, thereby contributing towards elements of change or transformation (Fielding, 2001a, 2001b, 2004, 2011). Nevertheless, my analysis intends to provide an account of the case study school community by examining the relationships within the school between children, adults and the wider community. The review of literature identified and presented three typology continuum models developed by Hart (1992), Fielding (2001a) and Bragg and Fielding (2005). The models by Hart (1992) and Fielding (2001a) in particular have provided helpful analytical frames in order to conceptualise the varied levels of child participation present within the case study school and furthermore, to place these along a continuum. Table 3.1 (Chapter Three) illustrates the number of the initiatives introduced at the school over a number of years and the data indicates where the case study might be placed within the following models.

Hart's (1992) ladder of participation (Figure 2.1) identifies eight rungs consisting of three levels of non-participation: manipulation; decoration; tokenism and a further five levels of participation: assigned but informed; consulted and informed; adult-initiated; child-initiated and directed; and finally, child-initiated shared decisions with adults. Hart's (2008) more recent metaphor of 'scaffolding' is particularly relevant to the case study school as it reflects the journey made by children and by the adults in particular, through working closely together in reinforced social partnerships over time.

The OfSTED data in Table 4.5 reveals beneficial outcomes for both teachers and pupils at the school through their combined involvement. However, personal experience of the three initiatives has led me to believe that some adults found the implementation of effective

participation models difficult. The literature and elements of the data has therefore led me to place the three initiatives describing Child's Voice at Level 6 'Adult-initiated shared decisions with children' (Hart, 1998).

Fielding's (2001a) 'Conditions for Student Voice' (Table 2.2), identifies nine key elements that 'seek to probe the rhetoric and realities of student voice' (Fielding, 2001a:100). The first element '**speaking**' raises concerns who is allowed to speak, which is a complex and contested issue framed by 'realities of power' (Fielding 2001a:101). Data findings identified in agreement with Fielding (2001a), that there are different voices within the three initiatives which are not the same and that some voices can legitimately speak on behalf of others, for example school councillors (Arnot *et al* 2003). However, children spoke mainly about the well-being of individuals and groups within the school community (the focus of this research), as against that of teaching and learning.

The second element '**listening**' asks what is the likelihood of children speaking face to face with those holding power within their schools, as who children talk to, matters. The data from children and adults revealed examples when and where children had spoken regularly with the Headteacher and Deputy Head, and in addition to governors, particularly the Chair of Governors. Furthermore, teachers were beginning to listen in more constructive ways as evidenced by T1, which I propose could be partly as a result of the gradual development of the initiatives over time, which I consider had impacted on pedagogy.

The third element '**skills**' proposes children need the skills 'to articulate what is important, insightful or relevant to anything other than the more trivial or insignificant of matters' Fielding 2001a:104). Data from children identified occasions where they had made decisions for themselves in the absence of an adult. For example, Year 6 members would discuss informally at their weekly meetings how to develop a collaborative approach as there was a

strong commitment to giving something back to the school. However caution is advisable regarding the development of skills, which in themselves are not sufficient due to their applicability to the practicalities of 'democracy and democratic citizenship in the lived day to day context of real schools as they exist now' (Fielding, 2001a:104).

The fourth element '**attitudes and dispositions**' is central to the success or demise of many student voice initiatives and furthermore, is acknowledged as hard to implement, as student voice is at times perceived by some as in conflict with the diminishing voices of teachers. The Headteacher reported that hearts and minds of teachers had to be won over regarding the authenticity of Child's Voice initiatives and changing the status quo over time at the school. The human relationships which develop between adults and children working together were central to the success of this element.

The fifth element '**systems**' is essential in order to continue incorporating Child's Voice structures, particularly where dialogue features as a central and important component. The Guardian Angel and Master-class Mentor initiatives illustrate Fielding's (2001a) identification that the emergence of emotional literacy and emotional intelligence has generated many informed and prominent practices such as buddying and peer led counselling.

The sixth element '**organisational culture**' highlights the need for schools to develop different and long lasting attitudes and dispositions, beyond the efforts of individuals. The Headteacher in particular provided real examples where the school had made changes with these ideals in mind.

The seventh element '**spaces and the making of meaning**' identifies the importance of constructing new practices by creating new spaces (physical and metaphorical) and making meaning from data. Fielding (2001a) predicts two problems implementing this element. The first, 'how do we support student voice initiatives in the process of making meaning from their work?' is central to the quality of Child's Voice research in order to warrant conviction

with peers and teachers. The second, 'how does the school enable students and teachers to come together in public ways and public spaces to engage in dialogue about issues emerging from their research and/or their deliberations?' has the potential to be transformational, whereby the school incorporates the voices of pupils, teachers and others working together. This would happen in a context which acknowledges these voices are necessary, legitimately different and of equal value (Fielding, 2001a:106).

The eighth element '**action**' identifies that as a result of the earlier six elements, something has to happen, otherwise student voice lacks authenticity. Data from the children in particular identified action where action was taken by the school as a result of their recommendations. Fielding (2001a) ascertains successful examples exist where the Headteacher, senior management team and governors are obliged and required to provide 'proper professional responses' to celebrate student contributions to the school community.

Fielding's ninth element '**future**' proposes that the recent focus on performativity can alter the way we listen to the voices of children (Bragg and Fielding, 2005) due in part to a rapid results culture which exists in schools. The focus on increased performativity remains for all schools, including the case study school since Fielding's (2001a) original conditions. However, Fielding (2001a) proposes a second direction where student voice could flourish and be transformative, whilst still remaining relevant by the exploration of teachers and children working together towards a more 'person-centred learning community' (Fielding 2001a; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). I acknowledge the legitimate and limiting concerns for issues of equality, power, participation and voice within particular dominant groups revealed in the literature, however despite these restrictions the intention for the school community has been its challenging journey towards developing a whole school transformational ideal.

Reflective analysis of the data has led me to explicitly acknowledge that voices are plural, dynamic, contradictory and incomplete (Flores, 2000).

The concept of implementing and establishing these initiatives 'over time' resonates with the findings of Rudduck and Flutter (2004) and others, who agree that authentic and purposeful schemes take time to conduct well, otherwise they are in danger as being seen as 'tokenistic' (Fielding, 2001a). The importance of a suitable time frame confirms what the Headteacher said about the initiatives. He had reflected that when he first came to the school it had appeared *'quite a dull school'* with little child participation opportunities, but in the interim period there had been important developments which had challenged the traditional relationships between children and staff, but had yielded positive outcomes. He surmised this was largely as a result of a strong focus involving children in the school community, which had resulted in the school being perceived as a vibrant place engaging a greater number of children, in particular Year 6, in its wellbeing. They had become more involved in making a difference and contributing to the emotional improvement of the school community. Nonetheless, issues were identified that challenged the principles of the initiatives. The evidence from greater pupil participation and involvement in democratic decision-making opportunities became clearer over time and the staff's reluctance and fear was lessened. The fact that children and adults could list a number of advantages that the initiatives provided, suggests that the case study school was making efforts towards creating a greater participative ethos, comprising:

- an improvement of children's attitudes towards all aspects of school life;

- being able to deal with more critical issues in relation to their active roles;

- a contribution to the school as a community.

When questioned, children reported that other children were not involved in the initiatives as a consequence of personal choice, rather than having been marginalised. Children considered

the initiatives supported opportunities for them to flourish and succeed non-academically and to build empathy, improving the behaviour within the school. However, although the data appears to indicate that the three initiatives have contributed to changing the ethos of the school over time, schools wishing to increase pupil involvement would be well advised to be cautious of potential tensions generated and consider the implementation of appropriate and workable initiatives for their schools.

Establishing a School Council has become integral to many schools however, the style and function of these will vary from school to school and challenge power relations (Fielding, 2004b; Robinson and Taylor, 2007). The School Council in this research enabled children to some degree to participate in a number of opportunities to enhance having their voices heard, ranging from the 'tokenistic' to the 'authentic' as evidenced from the data. Although the children spoke enthusiastically about their involvement in this scheme and considered they had contributed for the benefit of the whole school, it should not be assumed theirs is an authentic portrayal. Even though the adults interviewed also confirmed the benefits of the initiatives a wider, more realistic profile is necessary in order to recognise potential power influences. However, it should be noted that positive participation in school life does have the potential to improve children's sense of personal achievement (Cox, 2011) as discussed in the further two initiatives studied.

A further caveat is offered which could compromise the research findings due to my subjective interpretation. The challenge for the case study school is clear. Due to its limited membership, there can only be a few selected children who are able to participate in the School Council initiative, which could potentially become an overactive element of Child's Voice, to the detriment and expense of other voices at the school. However, the members of the School Council acknowledged their position and perspective as representatives of their

class and the school. I am mindful of the potential dangers surrounding the selection of this group and believe that the children also recognised this dilemma.

The Guardian Angel and Master-class Mentor schemes on the other hand had no limitations regarding their membership and were introduced in order that all children could volunteer and contribute to the well-being of the school community through their personal involvement. The data shows that interest from Year 6 children in these two initiatives increased over time. For example, when the Guardian Angel initiative was first introduced the take up was mainly from girls, whereas at the time of this study, the Guardian Angel and Master-class Mentor membership was 97.5% of Year 6 and contained a higher proportion of boys who had volunteered for this role. Children participating in the initiatives did not initially question why other Year 6 children had not become involved. When I asked them about this, their perceptions appear to have been partially grounded within school based structures, procedures and cultural values that obscured a 'gulf in trust' (Leitch and Mitchell, 2007) and reinforced the notion that those who choose to not become involved do so from their own volition from a stance of 'lack of interest' (Czerniawski, 2011).

Interpretation of the data findings for this question indicated that the Child's Voice initiatives at the school were perceived by the children as 'inclusive, offering a representative democracy in miniature' (Czerniawski, 2011:135). An example illustrating this point was provided by the Learning Mentor's reference to the Master-class Mentors as *'our little teachers'* which would appear to suggest that these children were not only trusted by their teachers to behave appropriately in their role, but additionally, to mirror the professional values embedded within the professional teaching body at the school. This I believe creates two conflicting issues: trust and agency. First, it helped their peers to trust them, in addition

to the teachers, who saw them as trustworthy, responsible and good pupils (Czerniawski, 2011) and secondly but perhaps more seriously, these children like others conducting their roles, might have been perceived as 'mini' teachers, seen to behave and act as teachers would. Fielding (2001a) and Arnot *et al* (2003) consider this as a possible status quo, resulting in Child's Voice being 'acceptable', rather than transformational change. The literature and data evidence suggests that however committed Child's Voice initiatives are and which typology model is used, of themselves they will not achieve identified aspirations as there will always be power relations and tensions coming into play within school contexts; consequently, there will always be improvements to be conducted (Fielding, 2004b; Robinson and Taylor, 2007).

Interview transcripts provided this research with important evidence. The methods and approaches to which Child's Voice can be promoted and interpreted are vast, extending beyond the specific remit of this study (Fielding, 2011; Giroux, 1986; Mitra, 2001). Analysis of the data indicates that the three selected approaches adopted within the case study school have established a contextual view of children as social actors, who are personally inspired to contribute towards the wellbeing of their school. The testimonies of both children and adults suggest that membership of these selected initiatives, position children as co-constructors of meaning, who are mutually respected by the school community and not patronised or treated as inferior in their social network (Waller, 2011). Many children for example, at the school have observed and experienced, often on a daily basis, how the Guardian Angels undertook their responsibilities. In addition, the data indicates that children enjoy participating in this particular initiative and that the majority of the Year 6 children involved continue to aspire to taking part in the Master-class Mentors scheme. As a result, there appears to be consensus

that the selected initiatives and the children involved have over time created their own positive, historical perspective within and beyond the school community.

OfSTED data confirmed the school was successful in creating opportunities and activities for the children valued by children and adults alike. The historical documentation demonstrated that the three initiatives were well established at the school. The interview data confirms consensus between children's and adults' perceptions of the three initiatives at the case study school. Analysis revealed the high regard each of the initiatives is held within the school community, their 'socio-cultural capital'. In addition, the school showed a capacity for widening opportunities whereby children participate in developing socially constructed systems. This was of interest to me as I was investigating whether cultural norms and values had been embedded in the school as a result of these initiatives (Bragg and Fielding, 2005; Corsaro, 2005; Mayall, 2002; Soanes, 2006; 2007). The close association which has developed between the three initiatives since their conception reinforces the positive values expressed by children and adults. A consistent finding from the analysis indicated the increased confidence and collaborative professional approach adopted by the children involved. This offers the potential for schools to fully implement children's ideas to better school improvement and more importantly, the benefits to the individual child and groups of children for the development of their own wider life skills.

4.2.6 Summary

This question examined the strategies and processes put in place by the school in order to support the concept of 'Child's Voice'. It identified the three school initiatives under study, placing them within an historical context and analysed their place within the whole school community, the current educational climate and the quest for ever increasing standards

settings. Data was drawn from semi-structured interviews with children and adults associated with the school and documentation (minutes of meetings, school policy, school website, governor reports, SEF, OfSTED reports). The first section framed the educational context of the case study school by providing a commentary for the school's vision, a description and synoptic grid of the past three OfSTED inspection judgements. The three initiatives were discussed in turn: School Council; Guardian Angels and Master-Class Mentors. Findings identified the case study school, despite some initial but legitimate concerns from a few staff, had year by year refined a widening range of meaningful opportunities for Year 6 participation and that certain democratic dimensions of the School Council remained to be developed further at the school.

The data identified that the case study school, despite some initial but legitimate concerns from a few staff, had year by year refined a widening range of meaningful opportunities for greater inclusive Year 6 participation. The school had developed these through a number of collaborative initiatives, including in particular for Year 6 through: the School Council, Guardian Angel and Master-class Mentors projects identified in this study, where children have actively participated, helping to shape the present and future. However despite adopting a number of serious, genuine and powerful reflective perspectives of Child's Voice, there remain further elements of democracy dimensions for the school to develop in the future.

4.3 Research Question 3: What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the Year 6 participants?

This question seeks to identify whether involvement in the three identified initiatives (School Council, Guardian Angels and Master-class Mentors) by Year 6 children has had any impact, and if it has, to identify the nature of that impact on the children themselves as they themselves perceive it. This is framed by the subsidiary research question **'What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the Year 6 participants?'**

<u>**Data sets**</u>

Table 4.7 lists the data coding labels originating from interviews in each of the categories which have been used in the analysis of subsidiary Research Question 3.

Table 4:7 Research Question 3 Data Analysis Sample

Categories	Data Coding Labels	Totals
School Council	SC1; SC3; SC4; SC5; SC6; SC7; SC8 (case study 1);	**N=7**
Guardian Angels	GA1; GA2; GA3; GA7 GA5 (case study 2); GA6 (case study 3);	**N=6**
Master-class Mentors	MCM1:1; MCM1:2; MCM1:3; MCM1:4 MCM2:1; MCM2:2; MCM2:3 MCM3:1; MCM3:2; MCM3:3; MCM3:4; MCM3:5; MCM3:6	**N=13**
Adults	HT; SIP; Ex LEA; LM; Gov2; T2; H Sch	**N=7**

The impact on the children as a consequence of their involvement in the initiatives centred on their reported 'transformation of self', which was framed by confidence, trust and autonomous agency. The elements of consultation and participation, responsibility and emotional engagement were informed by the literature and the seven interconnecting elements combined to create a model (Figure 4.3).

Analysis of themes

An examination of the semi-structured interviews and school data provide a context for the exploration of the emergent themes. Children showed through their comments that they were 'expert witnesses' and could infuse an essential perspective for this study. Data yielded evidence which provided me with enlightened and privileged insights into children's personal lived worlds: from children themselves, reflecting on their own personal perspective (an inner view); and from the adults around the children, in order to give an observer's perspective (an outer view) of the potential impact for the children. The analysis of interviews and case studies identified four themes related to the child's 'self', namely **confidence**, **trust**, **autonomous agency** and **transformation of self.** This analysis was extended through the addition of three key themes that emerged from the review of literature, namely, **consultation and participation, responsibility and emotional engagement**.

Consultation and participation were selected as a combined theme because the literature identified them both to be significant factors in the development of Child's Voice and furthermore would serve to identify where children had experienced these combined factors through the variety of roles of responsibility in which they engaged (Fielding, 2001a, 2001b; Fielding and Bragg, 2003; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007). In particular the added benefits of participation could potentially show, according to the literature: enhancement of skills, capacity, competence and self-esteem (Alderson, 2000a, 2000b); improved effectiveness of the individual (Greenwood and Levin, 1998; Morrow, 1999); strengthened social, negotiation and judgement skills through trial, error and compromise (Raynor, 2003). **Responsibility** was selected as a theme because the literature indicated that children are well suited to holding responsibility should it be offered to them and capable of making well informed decisions and developing aptitudes for the future

(Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Mayall, 2002; Such and Walker, 2004). **Emotional engagement** was selected as a key theme in that according to the literature (Gardner, 1993; Goleman, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978) it has a close relationship with the social dimension of learning broadly whereby learning is influenced by feelings, emotions, attitudes and motivation.

Figure 4.3: 'Interconnecting Themes: Transformation of Self' sets out the relationship between the seven interconnecting themes, namely, **confidence**, **trust**, **autonomous agency** and **transformation of self** which have emerged from the analysis of data and **consultation and participation, responsibility and emotional engagement** which have emerged from the literature. The seven interconnected themes are central to the transformation of self.
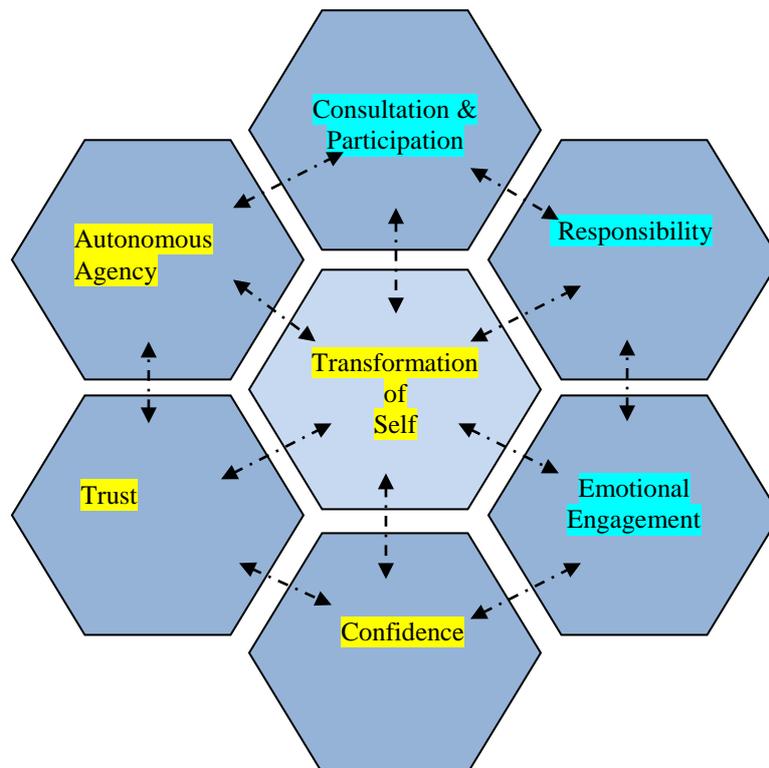
Figure 4.3: Interconnecting Themes: Transformation of Self

The analysis and discussion will be presented in relation to each of themes set out in Figure 4.3, commencing with the themes that have emerged from the analysis of data: **confidence**, **trust**, **autonomous agency**, followed by the themes that have emerged from the review of literature: **consultation and participation, responsibility and emotional engagement**. The final section will examine the contribution to the **transformation of self.**

4.3.1 Confidence

The theme 'confidence' identified children's initial anxiety and nervousness undertaking their roles. Children recognised their confidence increased considerably during the period of their tenure and considered this was a significant development for them. They described occasions where they had worked collaboratively with others and benefitted from this experience (Vygotsky, 1978) and that their confidence had evolved through their ongoing day to day experiences. They identified the potential for more children to be offered opportunities for similar experiences which provide aspects to develop 'confidence'.

Children spoke in terms of gaining confidence, supporting adults and their contribution to creating a happier school with a firm opinion that more children should have opportunities to experience activities such as these, wherever possible. Through their answers, they showed that they had an ability to think issues through and provide reasons for their beliefs and actions. Their answers allowed me to gain a better understanding of their 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) and how they were able to identify the personal experience and background they brought into the educational setting.

> *'My confidence has grown because when you sort out more problems over the year you get used to it and you see the same problems all the time so you get more confident'* (GA7)

Children indicated how gaining confidence manifested itself in a variety of ways for them, for example when they visited the local university in 2008. The children had never been to the local university before or given a presentation to an audience of academics. It was therefore appropriate for them to express feelings of nervousness, one which would be shared by many adults. SC1 recalls how nervous she was:

> *'I felt scared, a bit kind of like shaky, and then we went and we were talking and it was just, basically it was just like you were talking to your friends, so you just say what you felt and then that was the end of it. They wrote it down and then you went and sat down again'* (SC1)

When asked how she felt after this experience, she replied:

> *'Very proud'* (SC1)

This was interesting as SC1 had identified her feelings of anxiety but also recognised her increasing confidence and how this felt as though she were: '*talking to your friends*'. Similarly, it is interesting to consider the impact the role of School Councillor had on one child in particular. SC4 was a very shy and unassuming child. Her quietly spoken commentary provides an insight how her confidence seemed to develop during the year:

> *'It's made me more confident and it's made me happier as well because I like helping out with things …I didn't really like saying things in front of like the school, class, but as I got more involved I actually feel more confident to say things in front of the school, like to announce things'* (SC4)

The confidence gained through her contribution to the school community is summarised effectively by her, with relation to her own personal aspirations for the future:

> *'I've actually always wanted to be an actress because I never thought I could really do it, but as I've been a school councillor, as my confidence has grown I would maybe take it into consideration to actually be an actress'* (SC4)

The examples provided by children illustrate many subtle ways in which their roles have impacted upon them as individuals. This indicates an awareness of the differentiated needs of individuals and how they need to be treated. The role of Guardian Angel specifically brought

children into situations where they had to make decisions, negotiate and problem solve on their own and this was seen by them as '*helping the teachers out*', '*saving them* [teachers] *time as there weren't enough adults to go around*' and '*being trusted to do the job*'. Initially for some children this proved to be quite a difficult experience, but all described how their confidence had improved with experience over time.

4.3.2 Trust

The theme 'trust' identified that children had matured as a result of being trusted by adults. Children discovered that they could transfer their acquired skills to their own relationships with friends and peers. They appreciated the benefits of being trusted and as a result having less supervision. They understood that they could think for themselves and were recognised for having the capacity to make a difference. Being trusted made them feel good and able to undertake important decisions such as organising, planning, teaching and evaluating lessons highlighted by the Master-class mentors. In future it will be important to encourage further collaborative and collegial opportunities between teachers and children to enable trust to flourish.

Examination of the interviews revealed that children appreciated and valued recognition of trust from adults and children within the school context. Their accounts indicate that they understand what the benefits of being trusted are: in their view being trusted to do a job with less supervision is important. This suggests children had been recognised for having the capacity to make a difference, not only to themselves but to others within the culture of the school. There was agreement with School Councillors and Guardian Angels that they had matured as a result of their role and felt they could transfer their acquired skills to their own relationships with their friends and peers. School Councillors agreed that their roles were important and appreciated the seriousness of their responsibilities:

'It made me feel quite good actually that people trusted me to do stuff that they wouldn't trust other people to do as much ... that gives them ...give the children pride in accomplishment' (SC5)

'You're given the trust and that's a really important thing. When you've got given the trust, you think that I'm going to do this right because I don't want to lose trust and it's just a good feeling to have people trusting you, to trust other people and help the school. It's a very good feeling' (SC3)

'Yeah, especially in the school council when we get to organise it by ourselves...I'm trusted and feeling trusted. I like being trusted so I can get on and finish what I'm doing' (SC6)

'I think it's all about trust and ... children have got to be trusted... it's all about trust and opportunities ...' (SC7)

Guardian Angels gave animated and vibrant accounts of their experiences with the younger children which meant a lot to them. A typical example of these views is:

'Because it's a responsibility that teachers can actually trust you' (GA1)

It is important to note that children involved in the Master-class Mentor initiative during the data collection period experienced their role for only one occasion and consequently, their commentaries provided less dense data than the other two initiatives. Despite this, Master-class Mentors acknowledged how much they had benefitted from the experience. In agreement with children in the other initiatives, the four Master-class Mentor groups explained being engaged with this initiative had enabled them to think for themselves. They expressed a view that they felt *'good'* that they were *'trusted'* by adults in the school community to undertake making important decisions for organising, planning, teaching and evaluating their lesson with Year 3 children. This had been a new area of learning for them and one which they had not experienced before. Children spoke enthusiastically recalling their experiences and a desire to repeat these in the future. Master-Class Mentors Group 1 said:

> *'You feel really good actually, because I, I've never done it before. I've never ...'* (MCM1:1)

> *'Yeah, and that the school can actually trust, trust us. It gives you more confidence that the school can actually trust you so you, you feel more capable of doing stuff, other stuff'* (MCM1:2)

The following extract from Master-Class Mentor Group 2 reveals interesting and valuable evidence for justifying the initiative. Children explain how being trusted to do a good job was significant for them, enhancing their independence and agency. Their comments provide rich insights to their experience:

> *'Yes, but you have to think like, if they're sensible enough and you should just be trustful with them'* (MCM2:3)

> *'You need to think about carefully who these people are. Because some people they might seem trustworthy at first, but once they get quick, and then, then they're not as good as you thought they would be'* (MCM2:2)

> *'And when people in Year 6 they, as they're getting older they want more independence. This is a good way of proving it to them, to show that they, they can be sensible and independent'* (MCM2:1)

Adults shared the view it is important to foster collaborative and collegial opportunities between teacher and child for trust to flourish (MacGilchrist *et al.*, 2004). The Headteacher provides a helpful explanation:

> *'I think that it's important, particularly in Year 6, for the children to feel that they're trusted and have, have something to offer ...Whereas now ...children have got an opportunity to offer something to the school, and it's quite interesting that when they sort of, reflect upon (case study school), in their portfolios they're mentioning their contributions in, in these roles'* (HT)

4.3.3 Autonomous Agency

Children's accounts unveiled an important dimension I have termed 'Autonomous Agency'. The theme 'autonomous agency' indicated that children enjoyed undertaking their roles without constant adult supervision. The children within this sample reported feeling proud of their agentic ability to negotiate with both children and adults and that these interactions had helped them to make a difference to a relationship or a decision. They described how

'autonomous agency' for them was like being an adult and appreciated the independence to undertake their roles. GA5 in particular highlighted how being a role model had made a change to her self-perception and that this was an important life skill. These findings I believe suggest children are active and competent social actors in their own right.

Children identified their developing agentic ability to negotiate with others, and that these interactions had helped them to make a difference to a relationship or a decision to which they were party to (Alanen, 2001; Mayall, 2002). Children drew attention to their strongly held opinions of participation in decision making and independence. Their pragmatic views acknowledge a child's perspective and that their first-hand experience is worthy of attention, consideration and to be acted upon. The following extracts illustrate this:

> *'It's really nice to know that you can be left alone to do, and get on without having someone watching over you 24 seven ... I want to be able to get on without teachers walking around me all the time making sure I'm not bad or anything'* (SC6)

> *'I've learned to be more grown up towards children and have actually kind of learned how to deal with problems'* (GA2)

> *'I think it makes me feel proud that I've kind of developed my skills for sorting out problems and actually getting the feel for if I was a teacher dealing with the children'* (GA3)

4.3.3. i) Case Study 1: GA5 Autonomous Agency

In particular the interview conducted with GA5 provides this study with an interesting perspective of 'Autonomous Agency' and will receive further analysis. GA5 experienced the roles of Guardian Angel and Master-Class Mentor. She linked an adult perspective within her role:

> *'I like being a Guardian Angel because it's like being an adult, because there's, like, a lot of problems at the top of the playground with the year three and fours...you're sort of like a role model to some of them ... you have to be confident; you can't be shy. You've got to be quite strict as well because some of the children don't listen. If you're strict with them then they do. And you have to be friendly, and you have to be willing to help all the time'* (GA5)

GA5 concurred with other children identifying the importance of being a role model for the younger children. GA5 continues by describing how she had '*developed that role of responsibility over the year*'. She identified a personal dilemma for herself: that of losing her temper, which had got her into some difficulties in the past:

> '*Well, before I wasn't all of them [referring to being confident, friendly, a role model and willing to help] but being a Guardian Angel has helped me to calm down a bit …because I get angry really quickly …I'm more confident now because I've had the experience here*' (GA5)

This was an important attribute which had been identified by GA5 because it indicated she was aware of the difficulties that she would have to deal with. She continued to describe how she had worked hard and improved her personality. Interviewed one year later in 2009, GA5 repeated the personal benefits of the roles experienced at the case study school and their lasting effect:

> '*I think I've gained becoming a better friend …Because I've seen how other people treat other people, and I think to myself, hold on a minute; do I do that; should I be doing that, now I know what the person actually feels like. So I've been able to stop myself, think about it and make a good change*' (GA5)

GA5 has been able to identify the personal benefits in developing these life-long skills:

> '*Yeah, I think they're useful skills throughout the whole of your life, because problems like these are always going to happen and it's really good to know that you can deal with it and make a change, a good change, to make things better…Yeah, I think I've made a difference because if I didn't take on becoming a Guardian Angel, I would have been the same person I was a few years ago, and I think I've become a better person now. It makes me feel really, really great, actually*' (GA5)

It is interesting to note GA5 describes the benefits gained from her role and how this has changed her, making her into a better person. She identified making a change is a life skill that has improved her perception of herself (intra-personal skills) and the benefits for treating others (inter-personal skills), in addition to making her '*feel really, really great*'.

The Headteacher's evidence supports individual testimonies given by children how their experiences encouraged improved confidence, competency, active decision making and autonomous agency within themselves. These findings parallel the debates in research which 'repositions even young children as competent, active agents who demonstrate considerable insight into, and control over, their daily lives' (Johnson, 2004:7). The Headteacher described giving children *'greater autonomy'* helped them to see *'conflict management resolution as being of high importance, so it gives them an opportunity to sort of show or reciprocate or care that they've being shown over the years'*. It is interesting to note that he confirms:

> *'I think by the fact that they have been involved, and they've, at times you've put them in the deep ends, they've really sort of, have risen to the challenge, and I guess all feel ownership for the school, as opposed to just being, you know, pupils who get things done to them. You know, they, they now feel empowered, but also responsible ... they do take their job seriously ... they're proud of what they're doing, and they do see it as a special, as a privilege to be involved with you know, being part of the success of the school'* (HT)

4.3.4 Consultation and Participation

The theme 'consultation and participation' identified that children considered their opinions were valued and that they appreciated the number of opportunities where this occurred for them as an individual and group member. Their accounts confirmed key principles of Child's Voice research identified in the literature whereby children are expert witnesses, showing competence through their participation in important decision making and feeling they are making a positive contribution to the school community (Rogoff, 2003).

In order to ascertain features of pupil consultation and participation, it is important to reconsider core principles identified earlier in the review of literature. The core principles of consultation are**:** children have been invited to make a contribution; their views are seen as important, relevant, worth sharing with others and that a systematic approach within the

school for listening to the opinions of children and acting appropriately as a result, exists. The core principles of participation are: children undertake active and direct roles in decision making activities which are valued and respected by the school.

Pupil consultation represents the first steps of reflecting the wider democratic structures of society. Pupils responded positively to being asked for their opinions and affirmed a number of occasions when this had taken place. Their commentaries were on the whole 'insightful, reasonable and constructive' (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007:104). Children were appreciative of the number of opportunities they had to give their views as an individual, in addition as a group member. Children considered their opinions mattered and these were perceived as relevant by other members of the school community and beyond. They agreed children at the school had opportunities to 'consult' with each other, sharing views amongst their peers and that these are generally received positively. SC6 made an interesting observation reminding us to be cautious, as there remain some differences for a few staff regarding successful 'consultation':

> *'We get our own views on some stuff in most of our class about what we're going to do...in the School Council we get to discuss what we can do for the day instead of all of the teachers saying, "I want to do that..." and everyone doing that'* (SC6)

She concluded by confirming that during School Council meetings:

> *'... we get to organise it by ourselves'* (SC6)

SC8 appreciates the importance this role has and the value of its impact for the individual by using the word *'devoted':*

> *'We have to be really, like sort of devoted to be on the main committee and, like, before some people were secretaries, thought it was too hard to do for one so they stopped being a secretary ... having three means you can really devote yourself to that one particular job instead of being really busy and having to do all sorts of stuff'* (SC8)

This reflects a subtle understanding synonymous of the children's contributions to the School Council, especially the time required to fulfil their roles successfully. Subsequent School Councillors over the intervening years have decided to continue working with the model described above by SC8, where more than one person shares the role of School Council secretary.

Children continued to describe examples illustrating where they felt they had been 'consulted'. Their responses generally indicate they felt actively involved and had 'participated' in making important decisions about things that mattered to them (Fielding, 2001a, 2001b; Johnson, 2004). Further typical responses from children included:

> *'It's improved how much we talk to each other ... (Year 6) used to talk to Year 3s as Guardian Angels or reading mentors but they didn't talk to anyone else but now when we're all in groups we get to talk to everyone, we get to see their point of views and we're not, say, hiding away from it anymore'* (SC6)

> *'I think they listen to you quite well at our school because we do a lot to try and listen, like problem boxes and the school council, and like, Guardian Angels as well because when children sometimes feel easier talking to another child than to talking to an adult, so, and once they've told the child, the child says he's going to tell the adult and then they can tell the adult instead of the child who was worried about it and then that makes it a whole lot easier'* (SC8)

These examples reveal children consider they are involved and are engaged in partnerships with other children and adults at the school. They identified how and where they have opportunities for 'consultation and participation'. They described how their School Council was an important factor for getting their opinions known. GA2 provides an interesting observation why communication is essential to establish effective consultation and participation across the school:

> *'Just make sure that the Upper School (Yrs 5 & 6) is communicating with the Lower School (Yrs 3 & 4), because if we didn't have reading mentors, Guardian Angels and maybe not even the School Council, it would be left up to the Head-teacher or the Deputy Head or the teachers to come up with everything. And there would be, like, the separate classes wouldn't interact with each other'* (GA2)

GA6's lively description accounts how children in the School Council conduct pupil 'consultation and participation':

> *'They come into class and they say, right have any of you got any ideas, and we have like a little box and you can put any of your ideas in there that you want to…the School Council will tell you, they'll say to you right hang on a minute, don't know if that's right, and they won't give any silly answers. They'll be sensible, and they will act just like adults would and they'll say yeah, not that's not, we haven't got as much money'* (GA6)

The views of children in the Guardian Angel scheme indicate how astute these young people are. Their comments illustrate their enjoyment of the experience and their sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

Data from adults complemented those illustrated by the children. Adults describe how involvement through consultation and participation, *'being involved'* has been the catalyst for children's personal development. The Headteacher provides a succinct example:

> *'I think by the fact that they've been involved and they've, at times you've put them in the deep ends, they've really sort of, have risen to the challenge, and I guess all feel ownership for the school, as opposed to just being, you know, pupils who get things done to them. You know, they now feel empowered, but also responsible'* (HT)

Adults agreed it is imperative to 'consult' children about issues which concern them and that children should 'participate' fully by undertaking active roles in decision making activities which are valued and respected. Their accounts assert key features of 'Child's Voice' principles, which is that children are expert witnesses as key participants. It was also interesting to note that adults did not make any real direct reference to the Children's Rights agenda and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The following salient extracts are presented as illustrative examples of 'consultation and participation'. The first extract from the Headteacher is of particular significance to this research because it is establishes clearly and concisely why 'consultation and participation' with pupils should be central to the ethos of the school. This principle supports findings from the literature which identifies the necessity for a strong position to be taken by the Senior

Leadership team. In the past such assertions had not always been embraced by all members of staff at the school and as a consequence could have potentially provided a barrier to any future developments at the school. As a result, this vexing dilemma had taken the Headteacher and Deputy a number of years, to introduce and embed their speculated perspective which highlighted the importance of pupil 'consultation and participation' within the culture of the staff at the school. The following two extracts from the Headteacher provides a comprehensive account of how 'consultation and participation' is encompassed at the Case Study school:

> *'It's involving children in all aspects of school life, and it's listening to them and their experiences, and trying to improve the quality of school life in all its facets, and then receive feedback from them. So, to see them as part of a team of participants in, in engaged and trying to improve the school'* (HT)

> *'I think there's a will, to want to create this ideal, and because it's so exciting to see what is going on ...It's a question now of just building upon different sort of forums, to allow children to experience a sense of you know, worth, empowerment and stimulation'* (HT)

The HT in these extracts shows an awareness of the different and varying platforms at the school by identifying they have provided opportunities 'a sort of forum' which could be built upon further in the future.

The School Improvement Partner (SIP), also a Headteacher, described how at his school 'consultation and participation' with the children had the benefit:

> *'For some children it makes them feel very much part of the school ...they are part of it and that they can help shape the way the school moves forward'* (SIP)

This was an attribute shared and described by Ex LEA:

> *'I think in a school where the children really have got an opportunity to make choices and things, actually changes staffs' thinking, because the staff start seeing them as voices to listen to respect, who are bringing something to the school that is very, very important ...it is about well I've never thought about it like that before but you are absolutely right you children and we as adults have got to learn from you'* (Ex LEA)

These three extracts complement aspects of 'consultation and participation' identified by the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010:144): offering advice about policy and other initiatives; commenting on experiences of teaching and learning, offering suggestions for improvement and reviewing major initiatives at the school, year group or class room practice. Children and adults confirmed through their commentaries that 'consultation and participation' with children is paramount and based 'on the principle that pupils can bring something worthwhile to discussions about schooling' (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004:5).

4.3.5 Responsibility

The theme 'responsibility' identified that children appreciated being given increasing levels of responsibility and understood how their efforts influenced the wider cultural development of the school. They felt good about their experiences and gained greater sensitivity; understanding themselves; an awareness of others and building empathy with them and appreciating the role of teachers. The literature and data indicate that young people are well suited to holding responsibility and capable of making well informed decisions and developing aptitudes for their future. In children's accounts there is clear evidence that they are very aware of the responsibility and importance of relationships that are made and sustained over time, and that the skills obtained are transferable to other areas of their lived experience. Their views appear to confirm there are benefits for not only the child, but for the school when adults and children work collaboratively. Children's young age should not be used as a restriction by teachers or adults within the school community (Lee, 2001) or limit any opportunities for developing responsibility.

Children spoke enthusiastically recalling aspects of their responsibilities. There was overwhelming agreement that they felt good, and were trusted by the school community to undertake sole responsibility for their roles within the initiatives. These had provided new

areas of learning for them and ones they had not experienced before. They explained being engaged with the initiatives had enabled them to think for themselves and identified the importance of individuals taking personal responsibility, leading to respect from others. In seeking to justify responsibility I propose they indicated that they had opened their minds to their personal experiences and begun to develop their ways of thinking, knowing and understanding.

Submissions from the Guardian Angels in particular revealed that these children appreciated their increasing levels of responsibility and that this was also recognised and acknowledged by a variety of adults, in particular the HT, LM, MDS and T2. Children recalled how they were made to feel good about themselves when teachers and others observed their contributions, commenting on their efforts, acknowledging their agency and capacity to see situations from a variety of perspectives (Kellett, 2005). This encouraged children to reflect upon their actions and begin to understand how their efforts contributed towards a wider cultural influence. For many children what emerged was their strikingly increasing understanding of situations from the teacher's perspective and how difficult teaching actually is. This was clearly described by GA3 who said:

> *'I think it makes me feel proud that I've kind of developed my skills for sorting out problems and actually getting the feel for if I was a teacher dealing with the children'* (GA3)

4.3.5.i) Case study 2: SC8 Responsibility

The following case study is presented in order to provide what I consider a fascinating dimension helping to understand how the theme of 'responsibility' is interpreted by the children. Interview data from SC8 in particular yielded in-depth information, illustrating how the interlocking connections shown in Figure 4.3 had been developed and identified leading

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to what has been termed 'Transformation of Self'. SC8, in addition to her role as a School Councillor, held responsibility as a Guardian Angel and a Master-class Mentor, her experience providing a comprehensive overview which I considered was invaluable for the research undertaken.

During the first interview in 2008, SC8 explained how her confidence had improved by citing a number of examples: the visit to the local university, sharing the role of secretary on the School Council, the emotional impact of her roles and empathy with teachers especially when in the role of Headteacher for the day during the 11 Million Take-Over day project. In particular, she gives an example when this extended into the public domain during her visit to the local university to give a presentation with others to second year education students:

> *'When we went to the local university, I think we achieved a lot, like, speaking to the students and about being teachers and every child matters. I think they understood what we meant and they understand that every child matters ... I felt it was fun and it was a good thing to do and it's helping other people. I was nervous at first but once I started talking I got the hang of it and I wasn't nervous any more'* (SC8)

SC8 describes the reasoning behind the decision made by the children to share the responsibility of secretary with two other school councillors:

> *'The three people makes it a third of the work so it's even better and you still get to be a part of it the main committee, so you can still get to put a lot of it in. We have to be really, like, sort of devoted to the school council to be on the main committee and, like, before some people were secretaries, thought it was too hard to do for one ...having three means you can really devote yourself to that one particular job instead of being really busy and having to do all sorts of stuff'* (SC8)

When asked how she felt having additional responsibilities and making decisions for the school she answered by describing an emotional aspect she had experienced:

> *'I felt happy because every day you get to be in the classroom, you get to make decisions for the school, and it gives you a good feeling, you feel really responsible and that people look up to you and stuff ...it'll also give me more confidence and help me make decisions and help me be even more responsible in my life'* (SC8)

Furthermore, this illustrates positive aspects of responsibility, where an individual might feel '*happy*' and experience a '*good feeling*'. Sharing the role of Headteacher with another School Councillor during the 11 Million Take–Over Day had enabled SC8 to learn:

> '*that the teachers and the headmaster do a lot more than what you thought they did, the role's not as easy as you think it is and that problems are going on in the school every day that children don't know about*' (SC8)

Her sensitive comments appear to consolidate the evidence presented earlier from others who described the difficulties and problems undertaken by those in responsibility. Interviewed for a second time one year later in 2009, SC8 had the opportunity to reflect on her roles and identify possible longer lasting personal features. She described how she had matured:

> '*Just generally it's helped me, like, grow as a person. Like I said before, I'm more confident than I was before, and I can get my opinions across in a good way. And being able to problem-solve just helps you, like … say you have an argument with a friend, you could just look past it and sort it out, and then you can both move on*' (SC8)

Her comments it could be argued confirm earlier identified wide ranging benefits for the individual through these varied experiences. These included improved intra-personal skills of self-development and confidence, how she had '*grown as a person*'. Her confidence and inter-personal skills of improved communication, and ability to problem solve had improved. Further scrutiny of the 2009 interview indicated that SC8 appreciated having had the opportunity to continue developing the theme of responsibility, indicating that as the experience develops:

> '*It shows a lot of trust to give someone that kind of responsibility. Because, okay, it's not the biggest responsibility in the world, but, like, I was ten, eleven at the time, so it helps you, because once you've been given some responsibility you'll grow; like, you'll grow, and you'll be given even more responsibility. And if you know how to handle it, it [pause] everything should be okay, I think*' (SC8)

SC8 continues the theme of responsibility by making further connections with '*being valued*':

> '*You're valued because you're giving the child something to do. Like, obviously you're not giving them the most responsible thing in the world, because that's a bit much to put on a young child, but to give them … it makes them feel like they're doing*

something, and they're doing something right, to help with the school ... working as a team ...making a difference' (SC8)

Interestingly the adults identified multi-perspective aspects of responsibility similar to those given by the children. These included attributes of empowerment, trust, self-esteem, self-confidence, self- awareness, empathy and maturity. The Headteacher described how children had at times been '*put in at the deep end'* and '*… they had risen to the challenge and … they now feel empowered, but also responsible'*. He said he thought that children took their job '*seriously*', were '*proud*' of their contribution and felt it was a '*privilege*' to be involved. By experiencing roles of responsibility children:

'*… have got an opportunity to offer something to the school'* (HT)

Gov 2 described how children were able to '*grow in taking in responsibility'* and that as a result their '*emotional intelligence'* and '*social capabilities'* had developed. Teacher 2 thought:

'*It's like a different type of their personality clicks in, a level of responsibility, trust and maturity'* (T2)

The Healthy School (HSch) representative considered the effect of responsibility:

'*It builds self-confidence and self-esteem, self-awareness. It gives them an opportunity to develop all sorts of fantastic life skills. It equips them for adult life'* (HSch)

4.3.6 Emotional engagement

When examining interview data using the theme of 'Emotional Engagement' it is important to consider how the children sampled describe the experience of their roles in terms of the 'inter-personal' and 'intra-personal' benefits gained. It is important to reconsider the model provided earlier to illustrate the impact of Child's Voice for the individual (Figure 4.3). This

identifies not a linear development, but one which can be described as more cyclical and circular, interlinking with and between all the identified themes.

Emotional engagement interpretations and significance were provided in particular by children with Guardian Angel experience. Their responses yielded subtle interpretations and insights into this theme. This I propose could be in part as a consequence of the frequency of their duties, undertaken on a morning playtime and lunchtime, weekly throughout the year, more than the other two initiatives. In addition, these children had volunteered for their roles and could therefore potentially be considered more motivated. They identified clearly not only the effects and benefits for themselves, but also for others and the wider school community.

The theme 'emotional engagement' identified that children who took on Guardian Angel and Master-class Mentor roles in particular demonstrated an appreciated empathy with other children and additionally were alert to many difficulties encountered by their teachers and an increased sensitivity from this perspective. Children reported that they returned to their classes differently as a result and this aspect was reiterated for example by GA3 who appreciated the teacher's perspective and how difficult teaching actually is and said:

> *'I think it makes me feel proud that I've kind of developed my skills for sorting out problems and actually getting the feel for if I was a teacher dealing with the children'* (GA3)

Another aspect identified was that of being a role model:

> *'I like being a Guardian Angel because it's like being an adult, because there's like a lot of problems at the top of the playground with the year three and four. And being a Guardian Angel like, you're sort of a role model'* (GA5)

Guardian Angels justified their pleasure in being able to work together with other children and adults in order to give pastoral support to younger children at the school. Since the case

study school is very large and the playground area relatively small, for safety reasons the Year 3 and Year 4 children play in one section, known as the 'lower school area' and the Year 5 and Year 6 at the opposite end of the playground, known as the 'upper school area'.

The theme of 'Emotional Engagement' is developed further by GA2 who describes how her problem solving abilities have improved and how this has also contributed to building empathy with teachers. She feels proud that she has:

> *'... kind of developed my skills for sorting out problems and actually kind of getting the feel for if I was actually a teacher dealing with children and I think it has helped me a lot through the last month that I've been doing it'* (GA2)

GA2 continues reflecting on her role by saying when she was younger she didn't really understand about problem solving:

> *'Whereas now we kind of understand this when we are out on the playground so in class I think we're nicer and we respect our teachers more because we know how it feels like ...Yes, because we know, we see things from other points of views of the child who's, like, the victim of the situation or the child who's done it, and so we…it's understandable to see that it's an accident or whether it kind of it can't be an accident and they did actually do it on purpose'* (GA2)

SC5, also a Guardian Angel shows evidence of empathy and developing self-awareness by saying:

> *'Every pupil is different in their own way, and some people need special care and some people don't'* (SC5)

The Learning Mentor similarly confirmed this perspective:

> *'There's a lot of children here who astound me with their empathy. They're so empathic towards one another and you know the younger ones as well as the Year 6. It's not a parent role. It's more. It's more than that. You know and that they do their best. So empathic with each other. And the classes are watching just thinking they're close and I like close classes. The ones that will really not make anyone else stand out. They're all working together and that's very rare that you find that'* (LM)

Master-Class Mentors Group 2 indicated an awareness of empathy and improved relationships with their teachers by commenting:

'Quite a big bond and how to, well like, how to teach' (MCM2:2)

'How complicated it is for teachers as well. Because like, one person was actually quite naughty, they weren't listening, so it was quite frustrating really' (MCM2:1)

This was interesting as the children identified an important influential element for successful teaching: that of building a close 'bond' with students, a sophisticated inter-personal intelligence attribute. I conclude that the experience had opened their minds to the difficulty many teachers have with teaching, especially when faced with uncooperative students. Children explained that this was *'complicated'* for teachers and *'frustrating'*. This was reiterated also by members of the Master-Class Mentors Group 3 who agreed:

'... like we'd know that they've got a hard job to do and they don't want like, no mucking about, they've just come in to have a good lesson' (MCM3:1)

'But just sometimes like, normally, before this we'd just talk a bit while the teacher's talking, but now we like, but now we take responsibility and get on with our work and pay respect' (MCM3:2)

'That we're responsible enough to actually be in charge of Year 3s and people younger than us' (MCM3:3)

Interestingly their comments also confirm empathy with their teachers, whom the children affirmed wanted to have *'a good lesson'*.

When scrutinising the Guardian Angels' interview data, it would appear that their descriptive accounts of collaboration with others draws upon Vygotsky's 'zones of proximal development' (1978), especially when appropriating the examination of emotional scaffolding and development, and 'the gift of confidence' through their lived transformative experiences (Mahn and John-Steiner, 2002).

4.3.7 Transformation of Self

The theme 'transformation of self' was illustrated through children attributing some form of change within themselves as a result of their experiences. Reflection was central to understanding themselves better and developing a new personal insight. They had reflected on their behaviour and attitude towards life, especially the importance of being a role model and where personal change was necessary. They had engaged directly with their roles as active social actors and agents.

An illuminating observation made by all children was that they described some form of 'change' within themselves as a result of their experiences. Children reported that their engagement in the roles described for this study (School Council, Guardian Angels and Master-Class Mentors) had provided opportunities where they had reflected on their behaviour and attitude towards life, the importance of being a role model and realised a personal change was necessary. A number of children reported significant 'transformation' of themselves – an 'epochal transformation of self' (Mezirow, 1991). Their anecdotes reveal strong and deep caring for others and a passion for their roles. The nature of their relationships and its affect for themselves individually, collectively and the school has led me use the term 'transformation of self' as a central descriptor for my interpretations of their views.

The case study school has created opportunities for children to engage in experiences outside of the obvious classroom activities. The three areas under research in this thesis have been developed over a period of time to create opportunities for children to experience a different learning environment where they were actively 'doing' it and were able to reflect on these experiences and that the environment itself would create opportunities for students to experience transformative learning. Although based on Mezirow's (1991) theory, which

refers only to adult clusters, this research suggests where it could potentially be appropriate to children.

4.3.7.i) Case Study 3: GA6 Epochal Transformation of self

In order to present a detailed discussion of the theme 'Epochal Transformative learning - Transformation of Self' the interviews conducted with GA6 are presented as Case Study 3. GA6 described how she experienced a radical personal change whilst undertaking her roles at the case study school. A second interview conducted one year later in 2009 confirms and consolidates the preliminary findings of the research.

GA6 held responsibility as a Guardian Angel and Master-Class Mentor. A comprehensive extract from the first semi-structured interview conducted in 2008 is provided as it illustrates a number of interesting factors. When asked during the first interview (2008) 'What was the impact of the role of Guardian Angel?' she answered:

> *'Like you've realised that not everything goes your way and that some people have had arguments and they've taught you, because you've realised what goes on and you think, hang on, am I doing that? Like am I doing that, am I being like that, and then you've gone away and you've thought about it and you think I am. And then you stop doing it, and it's really helped other children because obviously they follow your role... I've changed my attitude a lot in class and towards other people and I've realised, I've grown up a bit more. Instead of being ...not childish... but I've grown up a lot more and realised my own responsibility and I've got to do things for myself. Realised that not everything relies on other people, you've got to take responsibility and that you've got to do things your own way and you can't always ask people. You've got to take role and you've got to do things for yourself. And it's really changed my whole self, kind of thing'* (GA6)

The GA6 interview indicates that she had reflected on her role, learning a considerable amount not only about herself (intra-personal skills), but her attitude towards others (inter-personal skills). Her reflections provoked a new personal insight concerning her own behaviour prompting an appreciation that individuals are responsible for their own behaviour.

Her vibrant account captures a particularly passionate response to the question. A further striking feature of GA6's account of her increased 'Autonomous Agency' is the extent her comments revealed perceived benefits for other children, should they have opportunities to take on roles of responsibility:

> *'I think they'll be the ones that will get quite far in life, because they're taking opportunities and they're going in for things. Whereas the people that aren't trying anything out, they're not going to, they might get somewhere in life, but they're not going to get as far as the other people, because they're not as confident enough and they're not boosting their confidence up to try new things' (GA6)*

This view appears to reveal a mature response, helping GA6 experience her 'epochal transformation of self'. She identified that being given responsibility helps build individual confidence and strength to try new things out, qualities of resilience and resourcefulness (Claxton, 1999, 2000). This theme is one that acknowledges capabilities of self-awareness, the awareness of others, the management of emotions and being able to develop 'Emotional Literacy' (MacGilchrist *et al.*, 2004; Weare, 2004).

Interviewed for a second time one year later in 2009, reflecting on memories and the influence of her role at the case study school, GA6 said:

> *'I can remember being a Guardian Angel …and the Guardian Angel was really good, because you got to know like little children a bit better, and you could help them out with their problems, and then you found out new ways to help them with their problems …Year 6 was definitely my best year because it was sort of the year where you was leaving and you knew you had to put in a lot of hard work and you was excited about your new school and stuff' (GA6)*

Since leaving the case study school, GA6 had continued improving her confidence and attitude, which she is proud of. She confirmed that staff at her new school also acknowledged her positive attitude. She volunteers, comes up with ideas, knows what she wants to do and makes the most of all the new opportunities at her secondary school:

> *'I just think if I have confidence, and it just keeps growing and growing, I'll get through a lot more' (GA6)*

This process of gaining 'self – confidence' was identified repeatedly by children and adults throughout the interviews with the children, in varying degrees, but for GA6 in particular had been significant. Gaining experience by participating and having an active role as a social actor and agent in the Guardian Angel initiative in particular, would suggest GA6 has been able to sustain developing her self-confidence, therefore securing a competence beyond the role required of Guardian Angel, hence a life-long skill.

4.3.8 Discussion

The themes identified from the data findings and analysis for subsidiary **Research Question 3 'What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the Year 6 participants?'** will be discussed in relation to the literature.

4.3.8.i) Confidence

A significant theme which emerged from the data was the children's increased confidence. Examination of the children's interviews provided valuable and significant reflective evidence which proposed that as a result of their roles, their confidence had improved considerably over time. There are underlying commonalities between the novice learner in their roles and reciprocal emotional scaffolding between participants, from adult to child, highlighted in the Italian Reggio Emilio approach of Malaguzzi (Edwards *et al.,* 1993; Rinaldi, 2006), and child to child by Satre's term 'the gift of confidence' (Mahn and John-Steiner, 2002:48) and Vygotsky's (1987) 'zone of proximal development'. Children identified that their relationships with other children and adults had improved over time. For example, many children described experiences where on reflection they discovered they could empathise with their teachers. Children described their own feelings of frustration and annoyance, when trying to assist another person. A feeling of empathy began to develop

during their experiences along with their improved confidence; they began to sense and relate their shared feelings with those of their teachers and how this could build positive relationships with other people.

The theme of confidence identified from the children's Year 6 experiences continued to be significant when analysing their reflections, provided by a second semi-structured interview schedule undertaken one year later in 2009. This was undertaken after the children had completed their first year at secondary school as Year 7s. It was interesting to discover that the early transition period from Junior to Secondary school had been generally smooth for the children, who self-reported how they had felt and how they had approached new, unfamiliar environments and social settings. Preparing children for a trouble-free journey to the next stage in their educational careers can prove to be a daunting undertaking for some children. Secondary schools aim to reduce the difficulties in transition, however, as is the case for the case study school, endeavouring to work with their twelve feeder schools, this is generally a hurried encounter usually at the end of the summer term, prior to admission as Year 7 students. Experience of the initiatives suggests that children have over time developed skills of confidence and improved communication. The transition from Primary school, where the community generally provides children with a familiar context where they know most others to move to a secondary school where children find themselves in large and unfamiliar surroundings can be a steep learning curve and very unsettling for many children. Children are more vulnerable during these early stages and there are more opportunities where children could potentially become victims of bullying whether verbal, physical or cyber. It is proposed that having developed improved social skills of confidence and communication through the initiatives experience and how to make new friends and get on with others, could potentially help keep children safe during this early transition period. For example, evidence for this was provided by the Ex P, who being older, aged 13 years in Year 8, said that at secondary

school: *'you have to be very organised and confident'* and *'debate very quickly in your head about decisions'*. When asked if there were any experiences from the case study school that had prepared him for secondary school, he responded by saying: *'being confident and making decisions', 'being part of a team'* and *'at secondary school very rarely being on your own, once you've part of a team, one of us has to take control, one of us has to delegate, you see which I did in the School Council at Junior school.'*

4.3.8.ii) Trust

Many children identified benefits from their participation in an initiative. Responses revealed that children described themselves and others within the initiatives as 'trustworthy', 'responsible', 'sensible'. For example SC6 stated clearly that she enjoyed not being 'supervised 24/7'. A picture then emerges of a group of children who are genuinely motivated, enthusiastic and committed to the initiatives that they were involved with. As Czerniawski (2012) notes much has been written about how certain types of embodied cultural capital can legitimate existing power arrangements in schools (Bourdieu, 1983).

Children considered the non-involvement of three children in the year group in the initiatives would be down to their lack of interest, not from a lack of opportunity. This centrality could however have masked their ability to identify reasons why others did not get involved. At times children likened themselves to teachers and adults which reinforced this perception.

4.3.8.iii) Autonomous Agency

The sociology of childhood provides a perspective which views children as 'social agents and actors with agency' (James and Prout, 1997) worth studying in its own right (Cook-Sather, 2006). However an alternative perspective exists which questions the authenticity of Child's Voice, due to the limited agency children ultimately have within the school community.

There are many reasons for considering the limitations for children's agency due to the inherent power differentials which exist within schools. These are acknowledged where they influence the analysis and resonate with the findings of Fielding, 2001a; Giroux, 1983; Robinson and Taylor, 2007, 2013; who suggest that power relations are unequal and problematic and therefore opportunities within schools for agency and the possibility for change and transformation are inevitably limited. Children understood that the roles they undertook were important within the school community, but additionally realised in the wider social context that it could be viewed by others as potentially insignificant. However, they appreciated the benefits to the younger children and ongoing benefits to themselves over time, evidenced from their self-reporting reflections.

4.3.8.iv) Consultation and Participation

When answering this question the children provided many positive and informative discourses. The research data reveals their reflexive and vulnerable stances, indicating their ability and willingness, not only to answer the research question, but in addition to articulate their subjective experiences. Consequently, it is argued that the analysis interpretation is inevitably compromised due to the ongoing issues of power differentials between the researcher and the researched, and to issues of reliability, whereby children provided answers they thought teachers wanted to hear, despite having regularly been reassured that this was not expected. A cautious approach is therefore prudent to the analysis conclusions, acknowledging the dilemmas identified above, but also accepting the children's accounts, which would allow me to respect their truthful thoughts and interpretations.

A number of alternative methods of listening to children embrace approaches which will inform, consult, involve, collaborate with and empower pupils (Czerniawski *et al* 2009). Furthermore, Czerniawski *et al* (2009) identify that in order for Student Voice to be effective there needs to be a community where language is non-threatening, people feel valued, and

comfortable to engage in change, experiment and take risks. These attributes comply with evidence from adults and children in this research.

The literature and data reflect the conclusions of previous studies which encapsulate the ongoing debate for sociology of childhood research which articulates children are capable of developing competencies of agency and commitment, in addition to being able to interpret what they believe in and why (Heath *et al.,* 2009; James and James, 2004; Jenks, 2005; Lee, 2001; Mayall, 2002). Children believed that there were systems within the school which provided opportunities for all children to participate should they wish to participate. Cox (2011:75) proposes that children 'even though they may be participating in an apparently passive way' are nonetheless meaning-making. This would be the case for some of the pupils involved in the three initiatives. Some children felt more able to describe their experiences however, it should not be assumed that a quiet child is necessarily gaining little from their experience. In particular two School Councillors SC4 and SC7 came across as quiet and reserved, whereas the case study children selected for finer analysis: GA5 (Case study 1); SC8 (Case study 2); GA6 (Case study 3) spoke freely about their experiences and what they felt about these whilst undertaking roles.

4.3.8.v) Responsibility

The children's animated reflections describing features of responsibility supported earlier research findings highlighted in the review of literature (Alanen and Mayall, 2001; Christensen and James, 2000; Lee, 2001; Mayall, 2002; Uprichard, 2008). A significant number of children (90%) identified and described in some detail, the personal benefits gained from undertaking their roles. It is interesting to discover from their accounts that there is agreement that they had been given opportunities to show and develop responsibility in what is accepted as a limited variety of ways. SC8's subjective, narrated life world provides

rich descriptive and interpretative evidence which assists the value of examining the meanings of her experience (Prout and James, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978, 1987). Moreover, this interpretation allows children 'to be seen as active, competent beings dealing with complex social worlds' (Christensen and Prout, 2005:48) with a sense of their present value (Christensen and Prout, 2005).

The children's sense of responsibility emerged as one of the predominant themes from the data. Evidence from the research indicates that children identified how taking on roles of responsibility had enhanced their sense of self-esteem; their empathy and helping them develop a positive identity (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004). Their testimonies reflected vibrant and passionate descriptions of '*being valued'* and *'trusted'*. Further influencing factors from adults identified features how they were able to solve difficult problems. This appears to challenge 'traditional images of "childhood" and identifies the importance of what I have termed 'Autonomous Agency'. The evidence has indicated the fundamental characteristics of responsibility, which potentially allowed children opportunities to develop and flourish, by opening their minds to their personal experiences and to begin to develop their ways of thinking, knowing and understanding despite their young age.

4.3.8.vi) Emotional Engagement

Being recognised as valued and reliable partners in the initiatives described within this study, indicated teachers were starting to be able to respond to suggestions made by the children with a sense of 'reciprocity' and social capital (Szreter, 2000). Understanding and reading the emotional dimension of themselves and others with competence was considered a strength by researchers MacGilchrist *et al*., 2004; Soanes, 2006, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978; Weare, 2004). Evidence from the literature review and from data analysis indicates that the ability to be a good listener and communicator are essential qualities in developing positive relationships. Intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence skills were cited by children and adults as

important for developing children's self-confidence. The emotional management of individuals and their social problem-solving experiences consequently impacts on behaviour.

The research findings have established that 'actions can have as much, if not more impact, than words alone' (MacGilchrist *et al.,* 2004:131) through managing with emotional awareness. Furthermore, the school had identified the importance of the emotional wellbeing of their children and staff by promoting 'group identity and a collective self-belief and mutual trust' (MacGilchrist *et al.,* 2004:131). The data from the children and adults identified the benefits to be gained from developing significant cognitive competencies between pupils and adults, through the concept of the 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978), described.

A further influencing factor which I acknowledged is recognising how challenging it must have felt for a young child to take on pastoral roles which hitherto they had not experienced before in a formal setting. For example, GA1 describes how she felt at the beginning of her role:

> '*… sort of nervy, because people go up to you, people you don't really know and they could say anything to you or lie to you…*' (GA1)

She identified her own lack of experience and skills. I believe this indicated she was beginning to appreciate the challenges and demands made upon individuals when trying to problem solve in a social setting. Although later she reflected that she hasn't '*really changed*' she does however contradict herself when she identifies she has become '*more self- aware and confident*'. These attributes it might be argued affirm qualities which can be gained from developing greater intra-personal skills. GA1 goes on to state that prior to this experience she had found difficulty solving problems. By identifying her personal lack of experience and the

skills required for her role in a social setting, her later reflection indicates she had developed additional intra-personal skills.

4.3.8.vii) Transformation of self

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the key theme 'transformation of learning' which emerged through the data, I undertook a further detailed review of the literature within this field. Transformative learning theory is based on the premise that personal meaning is constructed from our experiences and 'validated' through our discussions with others. For many children this occurred through what Mezirow (2003) identified as 'incremental transformative learning' but for a few significant others this was a more dramatic 'epochal' event. The roles undertaken by the children enabled them to adopt a 'more open, permeable, and better justified way of seeing themselves and the world around them' (Cranton and Wright, 2008:34). Critical reflections at the time yielded formative discussions where the children were able to describe how their learning experience had influenced their perceptions. Those who described more profound developments were able to offer their preliminary thoughts. 'Being able to think in complex, critical, self-reflexive ways while organising, engaging, participating, and communicating' (Fetherston and Kelly, 2007: 264) enabled the children to make meaning through reflection which was central to a better understanding of themselves. As a consequence, through individual and collective reflections, their anecdotes yield much to inform professionals in education.

I discovered evidence for my assumptions for 'creating opportunities for students to experience a learning environment where we engaged directly' (Fetherston and Kelly, 2007:263), whereby children would experience 'transformative learning' (Cranton and Wright, 2008; Fetherston and Kelly, 2007). For example, GA6 identified aspects within her own character that she had observed in the behaviour of others, which made her question her

own personal beliefs. This included identifying a need to '*change her attitude'*. She realised she had '*grown up a lot more'* and the importance attributed '*to do things for myself'*. GA6's reflections indicate a developing understanding of personal responsibility, her 'Autonomous Agency'. This suggests constructive understanding of her intra-personal behaviour and that she had '*grown up a bit more'*. This emancipatory experience reflected her increased self-confidence. I believe that GA6 had begun to see herself as being capable of learning and calling into question her previous habits of mind, helping revise her personal perspective and change her self-perception. This is fundamental to the effectiveness of developing emotional literacy, perceived as a learnable skill which GA6 highlights where she made significant changes.

The children in this study particularly the Guardian Angels believed that as a result of their experiences they had developed improved and trusting relationships, not only with other children but additionally with their teachers. This finding reflects the conclusions of previous sociology of childhood studies which provide an alternative perspective to the value of Child's Voice initiatives which question the proposed limited agentic value of children due to the inevitable adult / pupil relations which permeate school communities.

Two key themes emerged from the scrutiny of the data. These two themes: 'emotional and socio-cultural influences' and potentially a contentious 'democratic' theme (opportunities for democratic engagement) will be examined in detail below.

4.3.8.viii) Emotional and Socio-Cultural Influences

The concept of 'Child's Voice' has a long association with the sociology of childhood perspective which aims to represent the perceived silenced voices of children. In order to gain insight into the social and cultural influences of children's voices it was important as a researcher that I became familiar with the discourses that informed their voices and

furthermore, account for my own perspective, analyses and interpretations of children's experiences (Mitchell, 2009:93). It is acknowledged that in locating children's voices within the discursive field of power differentials which exist in schools, the analysis of data and reporting the research findings, irrespective of my intentions and the transformative potential of student voice (Cook-Sather, 2006; Fielding, 2004a, 2004b; Fielding and Rudduck, 2002), will be influenced by my insider-researcher perspective. These elements have contributed to the conclusions I have drawn from the research.

It would appear from the data that children involved with the Guardian Angel and Master-Class Mentor initiatives in particular gave illuminating accounts of fulfilled personal pastoral and socio-cultural dimensions of their roles. Involvement in one or both of these initiatives the children propose had enabled them to hold responsibility, to gain self-confidence and additionally the trust of adults, which they believed contributed towards their increasing agency within these roles. Specifically, it was the Guardian Angels who provided the research with what I considered detailed insights, as they described ways in which they had developed personally during the tenure of their roles, which they had regularly undertaken for a year. I considered the children spoke openly and enthusiastically during the interviews, describing their engagement with this initiative by providing their animated, personal anecdotal evidence. Whilst I believed they appeared at ease during the interview experience and with myself as the interviewer and would speak honestly as they knew me well, I took a cautious approach when interpreting their data. This was for two significant reasons. Firstly, I needed to consider whether the children tended to say positive things in order to 'please me', due to my position of power as the researcher, adult or the Deputy Head of the school (Chadderton, 2011). Secondly, could it be deduced, that was what the children believed I had expected from them? They might have felt 'anxious about reprisals' (Robinson and Taylor,

2013:12), which by implication would further compromise the authenticity of children's voices due to the accepted power differentials, evident within the school. Although this is a reasonable conclusion to deduce, my dilemma was that I had to be careful not to suggest that this should be seen as a contentious example or to compromise the children's accounts. My research aimed to strike a balance between viewing the children's opinions of their contextual, personally lived experiences provided by them as their authentic evidence, alongside an alternative argument, which would present children's responses as de: contextualised quotes, 'which prevent the reader from examining and scrutinising the researcher's role in their production' (Spyrou, 2011:160). My intention had been to include the former so that my questions might be presented together with the children's responses so that the findings could be discussed holistically, to ascertain what the impact of their involvement in the initiatives had been. However, I acknowledge my interpretive position as an insider-researcher would potentially compromise my analysis, indicating for example additional possible hidden agendas, underlying motivations and interests, biases, assumptions, theoretical influences (Alldred and Burman, 2005).

Although these factors could have influenced what the children said to me, nevertheless I am not claiming that the children were manipulated in order to obtain positive accounts of their Guardian Angel experiences. It is the case however that the Guardian Angel and Master-Class Mentor initiatives explicitly intended to empower Year 6 children, from the outset, by providing them with opportunities where they could work more independently and in small groups and contribute to improving the emotional and socio-cultural dimensions of the school. The increasing numbers of children volunteering for the role of Guardian Angel each year resonates with the ongoing popularity of the initiative identified from and within the children's and adults testimonies.

The evidence from adults provided the research with an opportunity to potentially balance out or counter the claimed impact of the initiatives on the children however it was found that they were able to provide supporting evidence. Analysis from the interviews of LM, MDS and HT provided additional data in this respect. For example, the Learning Mentor, a trained behaviour therapist and counsellor enhanced the data findings by having first-hand knowledge of the Guardian Angels at work. Through her observations and regular conversations with the children, who recounted their experiences to her informally whilst she was in the playground and around the school, I considered her recollections provided an objective perspective to the analysis, which did not see the child as less powerful in the adult-child relationship, but as active and contributing co-participants. Further analysis from her interview identified the following:

> *'Having observed them (GAs) in the playground I can see that they conduct themselves almost as potential social workers. I watch them at lunchtimes and they never cease to amaze me. They don't run out of patience … instead of telling them off, they go, "Well perhaps we could do it this way." Then you know and they are great negotiators'*
>
> *'… the Mentors … especially with one particular boy I'm seeing at the moment. He is thoroughly enjoying it'*

She goes on further to speak specifically about some disaffected learners she had been working with and how the Guardian Angels were working:

> *'I've now got two of them, say to me that they want to be Guardian Angels definitely when they get into year 6, because of the problems they've had. And they want to be able to help others when they come up the school. They see them as, they're not teachers, they're not authority figures, but they see them as someone that needs to be listened to and understood. And they do show a lot of respect for them. When I do one to one work there is a lot of respect for the Guardian Angels there … because I use a lot of cognitive behaviour therapy in my kind of work I see a lot of that going on perhaps more with the GAs because I'm working with them, they're taking over on that quite a bit. So it's challenging that behaviour, that thought process and why you're thinking that way, you know, what's going on, let's take this step by step, let's reach this goal before we cross another bridge''*

The MDS who was on duty every lunchtime and additionally for her role as a Teaching Assistant (TA) on playground duty on a daily rota, gave first-hand knowledge of the GAs, by saying:

> *'I think they're working well because with the GAs especially when I've seen them with the younger children and working with children with special needs, it's sort of keeping those children focused at lunchtime. Because we're quite a big school, I think sometimes some of the more vulnerable children can get a bit lost as such in the playground, whereas the GAs can actually focus on those children and play games with them'*

> *'The GAs, they'll come to and tell me about any little incident and how they've dealt with it. They might come to me and say that you know this child is having a problem, and we've done this and what do you think? So, yeah, I definitely think it does give them responsibility and self-esteem'*

> *'We trust them and they actually do help a lot at lunchtimes because without them doing their jobs, you know we'd have a lot more to do. So I think the partnership between the sort of MDS and the children that are doing the jobs, it's kind of really, we bounce off each other'*

The Headteacher added comments for example:

> *'It's the fact that it's not like say the Guardian Angels are prefects and they're bosses: they're not at all. They actually have got the whole message about what it is to contribute, and both you know the boys and girls, so they do see conflict management resolution, as being high importance, so it gives them an opportunity to sort of show or reciprocate or care, that they've being shown over the years'*

4.3.8.ix) Opportunities for Democratic Engagement

My conjecture of the possible impact for the children experiencing the three initiatives had until the time of the research project been gained largely from my subjective daily encounters, discussions with and observations of the children in action during playtimes, lunchtimes, meetings and special events in their various roles. In order to answer subsidiary Research Question 3 appropriately it was important I investigated the children's first-hand accounts, which I had considered thus far to be genuine. However, I acknowledge that a contrasting and more democratic perspective should be reflected within my data analysis, in

particular regarding the School Council initiative in order to ascertain appropriate interpretations.

As the researcher I had underestimated the accounts of the children's engagement with the initiatives. For example, the detailed case studies of SC8, GA5 and GA6 illustrated this point by drawing attention to their varied experiences and the longer lasting effects of these. This was highlighted for me by the children, interviewed one year later when recalling the perceived benefits reflecting as Year 7 secondary pupils. In particular, SC8 who had held additional roles of Guardian Angel and Master-Class Mentor described how she had matured by revealing for example, she had '*grown as a person*', was '*more confident*', and '*could get her opinions across*'. This example indicates that the children perceived there are long lasting benefits for them embodied within the Guardian Angel initiative. The Guardian Angels furthermore described how other children benefitted as a result of their experiences in these roles, for example: the younger children in Year 3 and Year 4 and in some cases, their Year 6 peers. The School Councillors although highlighting personal benefits, such as '*improved confidence*' identified some conflicting perspectives which challenged key objectives to developing the democratic perspective of child's voice. Lodge (2005) identifies a change has developed to the perception of childhood where a 'child should be seen and not heard' to one that is more child centred. However, many schools' expectations continue to centre around an ideology of children's 'immaturity' (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004), which fails to acknowledge their 'capacity for resourcefulness, ingenuity, enterprise and an ability to reflect on issues affecting their education' (Czerniawski *et al.* 2009:30). This has created what Rudduck (2002) has identified as a mismatch in expectations:

> 'Schools in their deep structures and patterns of relationship have changed less in the last fifteen years or so than young people have changed … we know that from an early age young people are capable of insightful and constructive analysis of social situations and if their insights are not harnessed in support of their own learning then they may use them strategically to avoid learning in school and conspire unwittingly in the process of their own underachievement (Rudduck, 2002: 123-124).

I was concerned that my study could potentially be perceived as just another Child's Voice project which had devised school initiatives in order to 'tick the right boxes' and therefore be viewed as 'tokenistic' (Fielding, 2001a). The evidence from the staff, governors, OfSTED inspections and outside agencies did not confirm this perspective and similarly, I considered this had not been the case from the child's perspective as the pupils interviewed had not felt their input to any of the initiatives had been tokenistic. However, this optimistic view masks many hidden dominant modes of power: 'coercion, domination, manipulation, authority and persuasion' (Taylor and Robinson, 2009:166) which are relevant to both students and teachers in schools and should not be underestimated. Furthermore, Robinson and Taylor (2013) identify four core values which underpin student voice work: 'a conception of communication as dialogue; the requirement for participation and democratic inclusivity; the recognition that power relations are unequal and problematic; and the possibility for change and transformation' (Robinson and Taylor, 2007:8).

4.3.8.x) Limitations to the analysis

The process of analysing the data however created a number of dilemmas for myself as researcher. I had to make decisions concerning what to include, what to exclude, how to provide suitable data in direct quotes from the children and adults, and how to summarise the emerging themes, which were often interlinked. As a result I devised Figure 4.3: Interconnecting Themes: Transformation of Self in order to illustrate the research findings and how they were inter-related. Additionally, I was aware that my subjective perspective would influence my analysis conducted from the following perspectives: insider-researcher, adult, Deputy Head gathering data from children from my school.

It is acknowledged that the data sample was limited. Table 3.1 illustrates the Child's Voice initiatives that were available for children to participate in at the time of the study. There were a total of eight of whom three were selected for this project. It is appropriate that the membership of the purposive children sample described earlier in Chapter 3 Methodology, Table 3.2: **'Categories of children's inclusion'** should be reconsidered, in order to outline its relevance to my analysis. Of the total of eight Year 6 School Councillors, all eight were asked and agreed to participate in the study, therefore representing 100% of the Year 6 population in this role. Of this group of eight, seven held the additional role of Guardian Angel. A further six Guardian Angels were invited to participate in the study, five whom held the additional role of Master-Class Mentor. A total of 13 out of the 44 Guardian Angel membership were invited to participate in the research (29.5%). It is acknowledged that the case study only represents three out of the eight Child's Voice initiatives created at the school, so will not provide a comprehensive picture of the school's approach to Child's Voice. Furthermore, the Guardian Angels who were not School Councillors had volunteered to participate in the research, which I acknowledge indicates only the enthusiastic children came forward for interview. A further limitation to the study was that I had not interviewed the only three children in the Year 6 cohort who were not members of any initiatives available at the school.

The analysis of subsidiary Research Question 3 **'What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the Year 6 participants?'** provides insight into the lived worlds of Year 6 children at the case study school whilst they undertook their roles within the three initiatives under study. This was enhanced further one year later when a second semi-structured interview was conducted in order to ascertain if children could identify any ongoing benefits from these experiences. It is acknowledged that the data represents only the views of children who participated in the three initiatives.

Children interviewed reported that there had been significant benefits for them from their experiences, some which they had identified as beneficial and long lasting. The Guardian Angel initiative in particular offered children positive elements to experience an emotional and socio-cultural dimension within a pastoral perspective, which was confirmed by the adults. The School Council initiative offered a small proportion of the Year 6 cohort an opportunity to develop a democratic perspective of Child's Voice. Their accounts although providing the study with affirmative personal accounts, however indicated a less proportional dimension from the wider children's perspective.

Citations from children and adults concerning the benefits and impact of the three initiatives under study have been considered wisely and paradoxically, with some caution. The excitement and passionate testimonies from children are noteworthy and should not be dismissed too readily as 'inauthentic'. However, these have to be located within the confined context of the case study school. Each cohort of Year 6 children is varied each academic year. The success or failure of any Child's Voice initiatives at the school is finely linked with how teachers perceive their own voices to be located at any particular time. The voices of teachers have been marginalised over time and as a result some view any Child's Voice initiatives, with distrust.

It is acknowledged that the findings from subsidiary Research Question 3 would not necessarily be generalizable due to the specific context of the case study school, and the individual children's interpretations of their experiences. In agreement with Fielding (2001a, 2001b), the enthusiasm of the children in this research could possibly act as a catalyst for further change in the school, with potential for improving pupil to pupil, and teacher to pupil relationships. However, analysis of the data reflected that children were animated and

motivated undertaking their roles, in particular the Guardian Angels, indicating their perceived mature capacity for resourcefulness, autonomy, through increasing confidence, trust and for some, a personal transformation. The analysis also suggests that whilst the model of power differentials owned by adults prevails within the school context, there are still opportunities, albeit limited within some of these contexts where children can develop their intrapersonal and interpersonal social skills. The findings in this study indicate that despite these restrictions, pupils are able to articulate their reasoning around their involvement in the initiatives and in addition are positioned to undertake further active roles as they matured. Pupils indicated they wanted to be involved in contributing to the school community, as they suggest, in a shared purpose as active participants, not as passive onlookers. Participation in the three initiatives also enabled children to work in a more generational context, seeing teachers less as authoritative figures and more as facilitators and mentors, building positive, lasting relationships with the wider school community of children and adults. Children generally learnt more about themselves, especially their personal emotional wellbeing. The literature and findings indicate that emotional and socio-cultural skills can be learnt and improved through experiencing the co-operative ethos within the initiatives which are potentially transferable to additional areas, such as secondary school.

4.3.9 Summary

This question was central to the study as it identified and analysed the impact and effect of giving children greater autonomy in the social experience within the context of the school. The views of the children drove the research (Alderson, 2000a, 2000b; John, 2003; Mayall, 2002; Soanes, 2006, 2007). It was answered by conducting semi-structured individual and group interviews with sampled children and adults, consulting documentary evidence from within the school and within the review of literature. Three case studies received finer analysis and contributed to the identification of personal benefits for specific children: Case

Study 1 exemplifying autonomous agency; Case Study 2 exemplifying responsibility; and Case Study 3 exemplifying epochal transformation of self. The analysis of interviews and case studies identified four themes related to the child's 'self', namely confidence, trust, autonomous agency and transformation of self. The analysis was extended through the addition of three key themes that emerged from the review of literature, namely, consultation and participation, responsibility and emotional engagement. The relationship between the seven themes was set out in Figure 4.3 'Interconnecting Themes: Transformation of Self'. The children involved reported significant positive benefits for them from their experiences, in particular accounts from the Guardian Angels, despite ongoing power differentials which prevail within school contexts.

4.4 Research Question 4 – What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the case study school?

This question seeks to identify whether the three identified initiatives (School Council, Guardian Angel and Master-class mentors) for Year 6 children have had an impact on the school and if they have, to identify the nature of that impact. This is framed by the subsidiary research question **'What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the case study school?'**

Data sets:

Table 4.8 identifies documentation and data coding labels originating from interviews used in the analysis of subsidiary Research Question 4.

Table 4:8 Research Question 4 Data Analysis Sample

Categories	Data Coding Labels	Totals
Documentation	Minutes from meetings, school policy, school website, governor reports, SEF (2007), OfSTED reports (2002, 2006, 2010), Raiseonline data (2007), presentation evaluation sheets from university students	
School Council	SC2; SC4; SC8	**N=3**
Guardian Angels	GA6	**N=1**
Ex Pupil	Ex Pupil	**N=1**
Adults	HT; SIP; T1; T2; Ex LEA; H Sch; CRAE; Gov1	**N=8**

The analysis of interviews and school documentation identified three themes related to the case study school, in terms of the impact of the three initiatives on the case study school. The indication is that the changes are far reaching and holistic rather than being restricted to small pockets of the school. The three themes identified were: **changing the pedagogy and culture of the school; children as agentic and competent members of the school and wider community and transformation of the school.**

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The three themes are summarised in Figure 4.4 'Transformation of the school' and have a direct relationship to the themes summarised earlier in Figure 4.3 'Interconnecting Themes: Transformation of the Self'. The two models will merge later to form a final conceptual model Figure 4.5 'Socio-Cultural model for Child's Voice: Transformation of Self and School' exemplifying the relationship between the child and the school and will be discussed in Chapter 5.
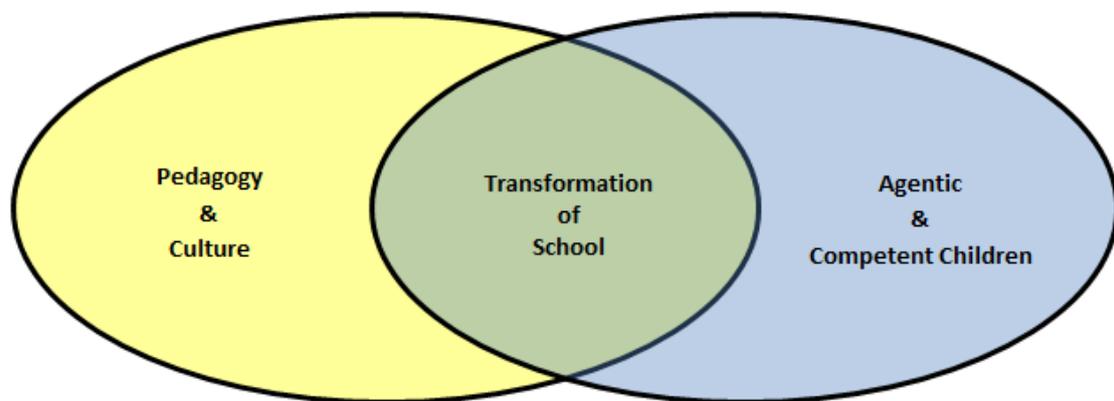
Figure 4.4: Transformation of the school

The analysis and discussion will be presented in relation to each of the themes that have emerged from the analysis of data: **pedagogy and culture, agentic and competent children.** The final section will examine the contribution of these towards **transformation of the school.**

4.4.1 Theme 1: Changing the pedagogy and culture at the school

The first theme identified from the data was 'changing pedagogy and culture at the school'. Children and adults described pedagogical and culturally related concepts of: greater

emphasis on the child; improved listening to children; every child valued; enhanced well-being; greater staff awareness of different strengths of children; development of near equals concepts with improved two-way dialogue and an improved child-centred culture. It was interesting to discover how enthusiastic, reflective and analytical the contributions were. Children described how they felt accepted as active members, capable of making a significant contribution to the well-being and social action of the school community. The following example illustrates for one child how important it is for the child to have their different strengths and social competencies recognised by staff of the school:

> *'I think I got more, like, known to the adults ...For example, I've got to tell them about the school council and things like that and they know who I am'* (SC2)

SC2 had found being '*known to the adults'* rewarding and this had been established through his role as the treasurer on the school council. This suggests gaining the confidence of the staff through greater collaborative approaches working with children being developed at the school, helps to 'underlie the concept of the school as a learning community' (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004:99).

During her second interview in 2009 as a Year 7 student, GA6 revealed how she thought the school promoted the concept of collaboration, children working with adults, illustrating the Vygostskian 'zone of proximal development' concept, children working with children:

> *'I think the school kind of gets to know what older children are capable of, and if some children, you think well, I think they need a bit more help at getting to learn this. And then I think the younger children, maybe where there are adults, maybe they get the benefit of doing it with younger children, so they get to know what their views are and then we get to know what the younger children's views are. And then when we read with them or when we do other things with them, maybe they feel they can express themselves a bit more because we are children ourselves, where adults maybe are a bit more stricter and maybe they're, obviously they're not children anymore, whereas we are. And we're not as strict, so maybe they can express theirselves a bit more in what they do'* (GA6)

A few members of staff prior to the research period had not appreciated the rationale behind developing greater collaboration and collegiality working with children. Child's Voice during this period was viewed by these staff as a potential challenge to their authority. They remained to be convinced that such an approach could enhance and improve the pedagogical and cultural dimension at the school. Although children could identify where and how favourable Child's Voice opportunities were developing at the school, they also highlighted what an emerging issue which could impede their perceived positive agency. This was particularly relevant for the School Councillors, who said that achieving appropriate feedback for their meetings was often a problem, as some teachers did not allow them sufficient time in class to undertake this procedure. SC4 identified that not all teachers listened carefully to what children had to say for a number of reasons:

'... the teachers haven't got any time really'

'... they might need to listen more carefully to children's ideas because they don't sometimes'

'... the school could really listen to children's viewpoints ... and the children need to listen because sometimes the teachers are right'

When considering whether a pedagogical and culture change had taken place at the school, the Headteacher, articulated that it had been important to initiate a '*slower approach*' with the intention that staff be '*taken along*' gradually. He said:

'*It has developed quite a lot of cultural capital within the school. So it has actually given them (children) a sense of being seen as capable and competent members of a school community*' (HT)

His opinion concurs with the view of others who acknowledge that 'it takes time and patient commitment to build open and dependable structures within schools' (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004:104), signifying the possibility of achieving potential change. By working closely with

the children and the three researched initiatives, the researcher aimed to provide a model for staff, which might reshape the culture and pedagogy of the school as, 'a place to help realise human potentiality and a democratic way of life' (Fielding and Moss, 2011:72). By introducing the initiatives slowly, in order to avoid the risk losing the support of adults at the school who were resistant to change, it was hoped would begin to build a community amongst children, teachers, parents and staff who could eventually share a common set of purposes. Fielding (2001a) suggests specific and strategic organisational changes are required for 'cultural norms and values' to improve through the 'practices, traditions and routine daily encounters' at a school. An extended extract is provided from the Headteacher whose testimony resonates with this proposal. HT identified the crucial elements of '*time*' and '*greater pupil involvement*':

> '*Once again, it'll be, it'll be, it is for the better, and as the children have proven to the staff, that when they're given these projects, activities, they do respond well, and we both have noticed that some staff who, a few years ago, who were very reticent about greater pupil involvement, now actually just take it as read, and as a normal part of school life. Now they themselves are actually asking for, for children to come to their class, or to help out. So, it's you know, sort of been a quite, a quite sort of sea of change, and because you've taken it quite sort of, sort steady but surely each year, you've managed to keep staff with you, even though at first you know, some were sort of reserved with aspects of, of Pupil Voice. So, it's also, I think, it's made sort of staff more aware of the different, I don't know, personalities in the school, whereas, once again, before, maybe only the sort of more dominant or charismatic ones would get obviously attention, but by having these various platforms, different teachers throughout the school can see the different sort of strengths and, you know, sort of a, social competencies of many of these children who have taken an active interest in Pupil Voice*' (HT)

The Headteacher in this extract identified wider benefits for the school. Staff had begun to improve their capacity to build positive and meaningful relationships with children (Goleman, 1998; MacGilchrist *et al.,* 2004) and in addition, the school had created a number of meaningful decision making opportunities for children. Consequently staff could observe the increasing numbers of Year 6 children displaying characteristics identified by Rudduck and Flutter (2004) as positive, active pupils, ready to organise things, take on more

responsibility and participate in roles that showed their readiness and desire to help other pupils. These features were particularly evident with the Guardian Angel and Master-class Mentor initiatives, confirmed by the Headteacher who said that now staff '*took it as read*' and '*expected the support from the older pupils*'.

The HSch visited numerous schools in the LEA and was able to offer the research a qualified and independent perspective, generated from her experience. During her many visits to the school she had observed that a change in culture had been taking place:

> '*I think what's really positive about your school is that you start with the child's centre rather than the staff getting together and saying shall we initiate such a such project …you take into account what children's interests are and ideas so it's a real child centred environment and I think that's really important for children to be enthusiastic and motivated*' (HSch)

Her interpretation summarised that children were placed centrally within the case study school and that the staff worked together to create a positive view of children as actors in their own right (Morrow, 1994; James and Prout, 1997), through creating a motivating child friendly environment.

Teacher 1 (T1), a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) in her first year of teaching had strong principles concerning establishing a child-centred culture within the school. Her view complements the evidence from the Headteacher. T1 recognised the potential a collaborative approach with children could yield and it was unsurprising this was the central facet of her pedagogy:

> '*I think it's just an extended version of what I do, hugely, in my classrooms. I really rely on the scaffolding of learning, um, in the, kind of… a lot like Vygotsky's theories on how children learn. I think it's hugely important. Children learn from other children. Not only is it reinforcing, um, some children's knowledge, but it's concreting the existing knowledge of the children that are helping each other. It works fantastically in my classroom, I feel, so far*' (T1)

Gov 1 identified how important it was for staff to work with children towards improving '*the whole culture across the school'*. Gov 2 acknowledged if staff listened to children and their experience, this '*has got to feed in to helping our staff to be better practitioners'*. HSch and Ex LEA concur that changing the pedagogy and culture of a school is:

> '*... a really important tool for moving things forward. Because it means that the members of staff have got a finger on the pulse that they can slot in with the children and young people by giving them opportunities to lead on certain things. It means that the school is moving forward for the needs of the children'* (HSch)

> '*...so I think the big thing that it develops in school is an ethos of mutual respect and mutual understanding, which I think shifts whole cultures of schools'* and that this is achieved through '*winning hearts and minds'* (Ex LEA)

Ex LEA accentuates the Headteacher's view by describing how important it is to work closely with staff so they do not feel undermined by a greater emphasis placed on Child's Voice principles. Two extracts from her interview are provided:

> '*I think again like when you start doing this for some teachers you have got to start in a small way and you know you have got to teach teachers how to develop it and become secure with it, because of course if you do it badly it will go very pear shaped I think. Umm.....if you start giving children choices about everything without some kind of plan of how to do it, and what responsibility you're putting on the child when they make those choices you could end up with chaos'* (Ex LEA)

> '*Well I think the culture of the school shifts considerably because, not that I want it to sound like a political word but actually I think it develops a respect function in the school ...I think in a school where the children really have got an opportunity to make choices and things, actually changes staffs thinking, because the staff start seeing them as voices to listen to respect, who are bringing something to the school that is very, very important ...'* (Ex LEA)

Fielding (2004b) warns that for some schools this insecurity has threatened promoting Child's Voice, but that there is great value to be gained from developing the right culture of a school, but this takes time. This theme provides useful information for schools contemplating making significant changes to their culture and pedagogy. It identifies the importance of careful planning, timing and understanding of all the school community in order for successful implementation.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Agentic and competent children

The second theme identified from the data was 'agentic and competent children'. Children and adults could describe contexts within the school where children had shown agency and competency as an individual or group member. Children additionally identified opportunities where they had been able to contribute to the wider school community. School Councillors in particular spoke animatedly about occasions when they had shown 'competency' organising whole school events including: 11 Million Take-Over Day; UNICEF Day for Change and the annual presentations to governors.

'

It is interesting in this context to consider a view demonstrated by the Ex Pupil. He had been involved with the development of Child's Voice over a number of years, and was in a beneficial position to enhance opinions offered by other children. In particular he emphasised how the school had over time provided increasing opportunities for children to contribute within the school community. He suggested this was explicitly linked to what has been identified as an overarching element of 'trust' developed between the children and the adults at the school:

> *'There was a great deal of trust, but it was trust that could be overseen, trust that could be supervised, trust that could be managed. I think that there was a tendency to, if you like, release the rope slowly but always keeping hold of it because the teachers didn't actually know what we were doing with it. So there was always this oversight there with the teachers, which I think was encouraging because it was very discreet, which was helpful. And it also gave you freedom as well'* (Ex P)

Adults confirmed that the school had increased opportunities for children to develop and implement active and collaborative relationships through their roles. The Headteacher described how the school benefitted by developing the pastoral and emotional intelligence aspects which had created a certain *'spark'* and *'vitality'*:

> *'... I've seen a dramatic improvement with the whole energy level of the children. Particularly the year six, who are sort of, you know, enjoying school far more, and*

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they get a lot more out of it, but then the younger children sort of, are the beneficiaries of all that they're doing in the master class and so on, so I really think it's given a certain spark and vitality to the school, that I never, you know, would have thought that your Child's Voice projects would have done' (HT)

A further extended extract from the Headteacher provides a full description of how he perceived attitudes and behaviour at the school had improved and influenced the pastoral systems:

'Well, I mean the school's improved by the improvement of the children's attitudes, so it's sort of, one feeds into the other. It's so obvious in say, the playground, you, there's like less sort of, problems, because you've got the guardian angel sort of mediating, instead of always, say, adult staff, so from that viewpoint, it's the behaviour as, as much, is much better. You've got more interest sort of generated in the master classes, and other type of children that have also taken some lessons, so that, that's given more variety to the curriculum, and then with the school council, once again, that's just helped us further as a school, to develop you know, emotional intelligence and that pastoral systems, you know, be it this sort of linking up with circle time, discussion time, feeding on to the school council, so it's you know, given sort of much more cohesion to what we're trying to do, bearing in mind we're a large school. You know, it's important to, to work on these systems, otherwise children can get overlooked, so it's just been, enriching your whole pastoral side, not just sort of your Child's Voice project, was in, you know, just for the main, that's the reason why we got outstanding in OFSTED, on the pastoral side. Which is, you know, a real credit to you, and also to the fact that this is a large school. The dangers in a large school, you've now systems in place, but actually, it loses the human touch' (HT)

The Headteacher acknowledged that the three selected initiatives had enhanced the pastoral profile of the school. For example, he reflected that the Guardian Angel initiative had enabled many Year 6 children to take on mediating roles, which had improved and enhanced the emotional profile of the school, in addition to supporting the adults. The Master-class Mentors and School Council initiatives provided further opportunities. This pastoral impact was confirmed by T2, an experienced Year 6 teacher who agreed that Year 6 behaviour at the school had improved due to their increased responsibilities within the school community, which provided a further interesting perspective:

'I think if Year 6 weren't focussed, and hadn't got that sort of responsibility during the year, I think we'd have problems with behaviour and knock-on effects right the way through the school' (T2)

There appears to be beneficial effects for the Year 6 children, however, on further reflection T2 proposed that children who attended the school were generally 'kind':

> *'I think it's the responsibility, it's the self-esteem. A lot of our children are I think, purely, you know, it could be as simple as the fact that we do have kind children in this school. And a lot of them do get a lot of pleasure out of helping the younger ones'* (T2)

These accounts provide an emphasis and insight, seeing children as social and cultural actors demonstrating significant knowledge gains as their 'perspectives, views and feelings are accepted as genuine, valid evidence' (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2000:31) by members of the school community. The data from child and adult responses indicate that children were seen as competent members of the school community making valuable contributions with multifarious consequences.

4.4.3 Transformation of the school

The third theme emerging from the data analysis was the potential contribution to 'Transformation of the School'. This theme identifies a need for the school to widen its cultural capital of children and proposes therefore should be evaluated in relation to the earlier associated findings of **'changing pedagogy and culture'** and **'agentic and competent children'** detailed earlier. The data suggests the school recognises the importance of the social context of child development which promotes the growing participation of children, in particular through the Guardian Angel initiative. The school's association with the local university was highlighted as a further contributory element enabling a representative group of children to contribute to the wider community at the highest possible level reflecting their agency and competency.

These children expressed a distinct sense of excitement and enjoyment when describing their visit to the local university. They recalled how nervous they were and their initial anxiety

about speaking in front of approximately one hundred second year education students in a lecture theatre, a new experience for all of them. Children considered their presentations valuable, believing students at the university, teachers of the future, should learn from children at school about the importance of agency; that every child matters and the learning potential which could be achieved by adults and children working collaboratively. One example from SC8 summarised this view eloquently:

> *'I think we achieved a lot, like, speaking to the students and about being teachers and every child matters. I think they understood what we meant and they understand that every child matters … I felt it was fun and it was a good thing to do and it's helping other people…so that, to get the voice of a child when you're studying to be a teacher, where you're going to be working with children, like, kids; so you've got to know, like, what they think on the matter'* (SC8)

It is acknowledged these children in particular represented their school community. However, they provided feed-back to the whole school community by giving a presentation in assembly of their experiences. Evidence from the second year education student evaluation sheets testifies to the valuable contribution made by the children:

> *'I think it was a really good idea to ask the children from (case study school) to present to us. Gave me an insight into what they do i.e. school council etc'*

> *'Very informative. Children's input valuable'*

> *'Very good idea to invite children in to talk about the Child's Voice'*

Adult interview data confirmed the transformative potential of this partnership. CRAE identifies the importance for children and teachers to work together to:

> *'develop some kind of training for new teachers, or you know, for new students on what participation means within the school. I mean that is important and like you say, that could be, like the next level in a way'* (CRAE)

The School Improvement Partner (SIP) acknowledged this valuable contribution from the children:

'I think you're breaking new ground there, and if those students can just even see what you're doing, I'm sure they'll benefit from that and will take it forward in their careers' (SIP)

'Transformation of the school' involved a mutual commitment to seeing children differently (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007) at the school and through their involvement in the wider community, including the implementation of innovative work with the local university.

4.4.4 Discussion

Analysis of subsidiary **Research Question 4 'What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the case study school?** examined three key themes which emerged from the data: changing the pedagogy and culture of the school; children as agentic and competent members of the school and wider community and transformation of the school. These themes will now be discussed from two important perspectives which underpin Child's Voice research: a sociology of childhood perspective which views children as authentic participants with a voice that should be heard and a critical theoretical perspective of the inherent power differentials which exist and compromises Child's Voice initiatives.

The review of literature identified a number of dominant frameworks which inhibit the potential of schools to develop authentic Child's Voice principles. Over the past ten years there has been a noticeable shift away from what was an increasing child-centred perspective in education incorporating many Child's Voice ideals, to one which mainly focusses on standards and school improvement, discussed earlier in the review of literature.

4.4.4.i) Changing the pedagogy and culture of the school

Each school has its own culture and how it functions is influenced by what the pupils bring to the school in way of their multifarious social, ethnic, religious, academic and class backgrounds (Thrupp, 1997) and how these interact with the values and beliefs held by

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adults. The culture in any school is always in flux, characterised by inherent contradictions and inconsistencies of the lived realities of the school community. As cultural change is a slow process it would be appropriate to question if there is a 'connection between the health or toxicity of a school's culture, as perceived by the pupils' Leitch and Mitchell, (2007: 56). Fielding (2001a:100) asks the pertinent question 'what kinds of organisational culture need to develop to enable student voice to thrive?'

This study has focused on the development of three Child's Voice initiatives at one school and examined the impact of these from the perspective of the children involved. This section examines the impact of the initiatives from the school's perspective, by considering its structures, systems and pedagogical strategies which aim to actively engage students in processes and practices (Taylor and Robinson, 2009). Much student voice research has been located within a democratic and participatory framework which identifies a firm commitment to central ideas such as empowerment, liberation and collaboration (Fielding, 2006; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Swann *et al,* 2012). The difficult but optimistic intention to 'liberate and transform' (Taylor and Robinson (2009:165) the school community and systems by embedding Child's Voice principles at the case study school should not be underestimated.

The HSch observed that schools should give children more opportunities to lead on certain things. She felt from her experience of visits to the school that the school had started with the children at the centre of their ethos and that this had impacted on the pedagogy and culture of the school.

The Headteacher of the case study school confirmed there had been barriers initially to establishing Child's Voice initiatives as some staff had been resistant to change but that over

time they had modified their opinions through observation of the children in action. Staff had become aware of different child personalities. He recollected that prior to the introduction of the initiatives staff had got to know mainly only the dominant and charismatic characters in year 6. This had been remedied by opening up different platforms for children to show their social strengths and competencies. However, it should be noted these systems had taken time to embed due in part to the dominant focus for the school to improve standards and performance targets whilst overcoming increased changes in staffing. It was pleasing to note that this positive development had additionally been identified by the SIP, Ex LEA and the HSch.

Developing a change to pedagogy and culture at a school that is deep-rooted cannot be achieved instantly, as it entails reshaping the school as 'a place to help realise human potentiality and a democratic way of life' (Fielding and Moss, 2011:72) and can only be achieved by everyone working together. This view was shared and encapsulated by the Ex LEA who described it as schools creating 'an ethos of mutual respect and mutual understanding, which I think shifts whole cultures of schools' which is achieved through 'winning hearts and minds'. The school had made changes involving children, who were seen increasingly as active agents of change (Fielding 2011b) and where action followed as a result of improved dialogue.

However, the study unearthed dilemmas for the case study school which need to be considered. Many schools believe that establishing a school council consequently provides the platform for democratic, inclusive practices, and that by providing such an initiative in itself, is sufficient and represents the whole pupil body at the school (Fielding 2001a). Data analysis has indicated this is not always the case, because the school councillors, a representative group of the pupils, need to have appropriate opportunities, including those of

time, to facilitate and participate in giving appropriate feedback to and from their peers. Not all teachers in the case study school had embraced the positive implications of Child's Voice principles seriously. As a result, a number of School Councillors had reported insufficient class time had been allocated by some teachers, resulting in the School Council not being able to achieve as much as they had anticipated. They reported that a number of School Council meetings were often hindered by members having to repeat discussion items from previous agendas, because a number of children, especially younger children had not been allocated adequate time. It is proposed that this could be achieved when teachers appreciate the value of such activities and consequently allocate relevant time. This is challenging for teachers, given the demands made upon them to achieve ever increasing academic test results in a short time scale. It is not surprising therefore that a number of teachers remain to be encouraged to appreciate the contribution made by children and to also recognise where children can make a difference and consequently, enhance the school community. Nevertheless the difficulty this poses for the school community, teachers and pupils alike should not be underestimated. The researcher, HT and SLT having identified the importance of Child's Voice had started to implement what they understood to be good practice by recognising the importance of listening to children. However, even within the limited context of this study, securing Child's Voice principles could be viewed as opening 'Pandora's Box'. This study acknowledges that to change the pedagogy and culture of a school remains challenging and dimensions of power will inevitably come into play.

4.4.4.ii) Children as agentic and competent members of the school and wider community

Evidence from the children and staff indicated that the school was working towards listening to pupils in a more coherent and purposeful way. However, Robinson and Taylor (2007)

argue in agreement with Giroux (2003) that schools need to listen to a wide range of voices so as to address how their practices frame 'the lived experience of empowerment for the vast majority of students *(which)* becomes the defining feature of schooling' (Robinson and Taylor, 2007:11). Furthermore, schools should aim to create opportunities of space and time where children feel able and confident to voice their opinions. The data suggests that this was becoming established, however, there is a danger of rushing too readily to generalise patterns developed at the school. The pupils generally described an ethos of co-operation and mutual respect, where they felt they have a say on matters of relative significance. Children spoke about occasions where they had shown competency through their collaborative approaches: children working with children and children working with adults. Additionally, children were seen as competent and capable members of the school community by outside agencies (OfSTED, SIP, HSch and Ex LEA). Children according to the Headteacher and the children themselves believed they had positively contributed to enhancing the pastoral profile of the school by improving emotional intelligence attitudes; behaviour in the playground and adding to the variety of the curriculum.

4.4.4.iii) Transformation of the school

Many Child Voice projects can act as a catalyst for change in schools (Fielding, 2001a) but there are many ongoing dilemmas which need to be faced, for example: teachers' scepticism; teacher union concerns and provision in schools. New values, beliefs, conceptions and practices need to be built with child participation at its centre (Fullan, 1996). Rudduck and Fielding (2006) identify the tensions which prevent schools wishing to embed core Child's Voice ideals which have transformative potential. Limitations have to be faced that exist in the daily life of the school and the demands made on it by outside agencies. It could be argued that the initiatives introduced at the case study school contributed to only a small

impact for the school; however, the evidence indicates a 'feel good' factor exists with the children which they considered important. For some children this was a significant transformation of themselves as individuals. The children involved in the initiatives were beginning to be seen by the wider school community as creative co-constructors and active agents who had the potential to work collaboratively with other children and adults to build a combined capacity for transformation and change at the school. However, schools have to contend with 'competing commitments, pressures, priorities and values' (Czernaiwski, 2012:136) and so with the best of intentions, many schools cannot sustain efficiency or transformative potential of Child's Voice initiatives. Achieving consensual change in schools is a complex and challenging experience, depending largely on schools' various starting points and necessarily includes the transformation of teacher, community and pupil cultures. The Headteacher at the case study school indicated that he was clear which conditions were required for building the transformative potential for Child's Voice. The case study school had started creating a climate where many children interviewed felt at ease voicing their opinions. Transformation within a school can only develop when the school has a desire to make changes by engaging children as agents of change and where Child's Voice is taken seriously by the whole school community (Fielding 2001b).

In answering subsidiary Research Question 4 **'What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the case study school?'** it is interesting to note that analysis revealed that pupils and adults responded positively and identified that the children showed an awareness of the complex dynamics which existed at the school for not only them, but for their teachers. It became clear in their responses that their relationships with their teachers were important. Being valued, trusted and seen as competent individuals by their teachers and significant adults mattered to the children. The importance of these, in particular trust, was identified as

crucial in building quality social interpersonal ties across the school community and consequently, the impact for the school should not be underestimated.

From the data analysis it became apparent that the children had been able to make sense of the social environment at their school as younger pupils, through observing others in these roles and eventually for themselves, through their own first-hand experiences of these initiatives. I considered that the children were in a valued position to offer what I believed were genuine, reflective accounts of the school and its culture. For example, they were able to identify that the Headteacher and senior leadership team could demonstrate that they were authentic listeners to pupils' concerns, as they took what the children said seriously. This had involved in the early days an element of risk taking on the part of some staff. When pupils were seen to be making a positive contribution, the school culture developed an increasing confidence and was seen to promote greater equality of opportunities, valuing the meaningful contributions that every child mattered.

The views of children are now a crucial component of OfSTED inspection procedures. The quantity and quality of evidence from the children over the research period suggests strongly that pupil perceptions play an important part in the identification of pedagogical and cultural change which had taken place within the school. Caution however needs to be borne in mind when substantiating the claims from the data in this research, which is from a relatively small sample of the Year 6 cohort.

There is evidence from the adult interview data that staff responses from the case study school, identified and recognised the changing pedagogy and culture within the school. In particular longer serving staff reflected and commented on the 'transformational' changes which had taken place over time and the potential impact. The literature and data indicate that

greater pupil agency is beginning to initiate the start of a cultural and pedagogical change at the case study school.

Evidence emerged from both adults and children that many of the teachers were prepared tentatively yet authentically to share authority. By legitimising pupil agency as an essential element of the school culture, this has begun to change the way teachers view children and how children view themselves as members of a community and as learners. Rudduck and Fielding (2006) argue that this view inspires a school to become genuinely democratic. However, they caution that in the quest to provide greater agency for children, the voices of teachers should not be overlooked and a genuine two way dialogue should be continually sought.

4.4.5 Summary

This question sought to identify whether the three identified initiatives for the Year 6 children had impacted on the school, and if so to identify the nature of that impact. The sampled children's interpretations and understandings of their roles, both as individuals and contributing members of the wider school community and the views of the adults were analysed. The analysis of interviews and school documentation identified three themes related to the case study school, namely changing the pedagogy and culture of the school, children as agentic and competent members of the school and wider community and transformation of the school. The three themes were summarised in Figure 4.4 'Transformation of the School' and had a correlation with the themes identified in Figure 4.3 'Interconnecting Themes: Transformation of Self'. Analysis revealed that pupils and adults responded positively and identified that the children showed an awareness of the complex dynamics which existed at the school not only for them but their teachers. The research

proposes that despite the quest to provide greater agency for children, the voice of the teacher

cannot be overlooked if the aim is to enable genuine two way dialogue within the school.

4.5 Research Question 5 - What are the implications for the future of the school?

This question seeks to identify whether there are any implications for the school for the future and if there are, to identify the nature of these implications. This is framed by the subsidiary research question **'What are the implications for the future of the school?'**

Data sets:

Table 4.9 identifies documentation and data coding labels originating from interviews used in the analysis of subsidiary Research Question 5.

Table 4:9 Research Question 5 Data Analysis Sample

Categories	Data Coding Labels	Totals
School Council	SC2; SC3; SC4; SC5; SC6; SC7; SC8	**N=7**
Guardian Angels	GA2; GA3; GA4; GA5; GA6	**N=5**
Ex P	Ex P	**N=1**
Adults	Gov2; T1; T2; HSch; Ex LEA; MDS; HT	**N=7**

The analysis of interviews identified two emergent themes related to the future of the case study school, namely **collaborative communication and cohesion.** It is proposed that these two elements contribute to the development of the social and cultural ethos of the school, articulating the working relationships between children and staff and between the children themselves where opportunities are offered to engage with one another, to be listened to and heard and to navigate the power differentials within the process of creating a learning community.

The analysis and discussion will be presented in relation to each of the themes that have emerged from the analysis of data: **collaborative communication and cohesion**.

4.5.1 Collaborative Communication

The first theme identified from the data was that of 'collaborative communication'. Evidence from the data indicated that children appreciated the case study school nurtured their involvement within its social and cultural context. Throughout this research the children identified and described their personal involvement and engagement in the selected initiatives with enthusiasm, citing many shared, multi-dimensional 'lived experiences' (Costley *et al* (2010). Although their responses only represent a proportion of the entire Year 6 cohort, the data suggests the approaches adopted at the school were considered helpful for teachers and pupils (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004). This 'collaborative' research approach provided the children with an important 'reflective' perspective (Schön 1983, 1987). The underlying theme of children's self-reported reflections has been evident and explored by their accounts in earlier sections when answering Research Question 3 and Research Question 4. Nonetheless, children suggested potential still remained in the school for extending children's participation in the future, by working together more collaboratively with teachers and other children. The responses below illustrate their perspectives:

> *'Children should be even more involved … and be talking to adults a lot more, like to the teachers and putting their views across'* (SC8)

> *'I just think, well, we just need to get together, like, to meet up with each other a bit more'* (SC7)

> *'... because at the moment I don't, like, they don't do that as much as I think they should'* (SC5)

It was interesting to note that children highlighted the potential for future development of the personal and interpersonal dimensions of Child's Voice described by Fielding (2004b) and Macmurray (1933) through the 'functional' and 'personal' interpretations within a sense of community: 'a way of being, not a thing' (Fielding and Moss, 2011:51). Children requested

that adults in future, in particular teachers, should work more closely with them as team members and co-researchers:

> *'I'd like to see children behaving for the teachers, and really getting on and learning, and really listening to their teachers, and the teachers also listening to them. And there shouldn't be any children misbehaving. And they would all get along and it would be a happy school'* (SC4)

> *'... when the teachers or the children, sometimes they forget to tell the children what's going on and so they leave it for about a month and then it's about one week or two weeks to sort it out'* (SC6)

The children indicate in these extracts that there is further scope in the future for pupils and teachers to develop and improve communication opportunities, within the school. The children suggest these channels are not restricted primarily to just adult and child communication. They identify genuine two-way communication, between the whole school community might benefit from enhanced listening (Cox, 2011; Fielding and Moss, 2011). This suggests that the school should review its current structures and procedures, and look for further opportunities to nurture greater staff trust in the children's capacity to make a valuable contribution to the school's culture. The children in these extracts I believe are requesting that teachers 'open up' additional, purposeful channels of communication so that a genuine two way dialogue is developed. For some teachers finding this time could be challenging, due in part to the ongoing drive to achieve high test results.

Children agreed there was a need for them to have additional opportunities to give feedback to each other in the future. For example, SC8 suggested all teachers should allocate regular class feedback time for school council matters and develop additional feedback time during whole school assemblies:

> *'Well I think the school council could do, like, a lot more stuff, like getting out, reaching out to people even more. Like when you feedback, not every school council members feed back to their class and if they don't they should, sort of, like, have an assembly so we could get out to everybody what's been happening with the school*

council. So if some school councillors forget to feedback, everybody still knows what's happening' (SC8)

GA2 identified further opportunities to give feedback to each other could be across year groups:

> *'... just make sure that the upper school is communicating with the lower school because if we didn't have reading mentors, guardian angels and maybe not even the school council, it would be left up to the head-teacher or the deputy head or the teachers to come up with everything. And would be, like, the separate classes wouldn't interact with each other and they'd only be friends in their class'* (GA2)

Children described how working in more collaborative situations with teachers would promote a 'happier school'. When asked what she would like to see at the school in the future GA5 said:

> *'Everyone getting on and working as a team. Some of the teachers be, like, the teachers having a laugh with the children ...if you have a laugh with them then you can also feel confident talking to them when there's a problem'* (GA5)

GA5's testimony requests greater opportunities for collaborative teamwork with teachers, in the future and for teachers to embrace a more relaxed humorous approach more often, which she feels could increase pupils' confidence. Nevertheless, GA5 here I believe identifies what could be an interesting but potentially challenging perspective for some teachers for two reasons. First, as the current political discourse remains focussed on school improvement, by achieving ever increasing higher test results, is it possible that some teachers might feel so intimidated, that they could have possibly overlooked the long lasting benefits from building genuine, positive, worthwhile and sustainable personal relationships with their pupils? Or secondly, could it be that teachers are reluctant or reticent about sharing elements of their personal lives, however enlightening, for fear of the ever possible threat of intrusion by social media systems? Could it possibly be a combination of the two?

Data highlighted a number of recommendations from the adults. Adults were in agreement with the children, identifying where future opportunities could be utilised for teachers and pupils to work together more collaboratively. The Ex LEA predicted that when a school community worked collaboratively, listening seriously to all their stakeholders, this would have an impact not only on teaching, but in addition, would raise the quality of collaborative communication:

> *'Once they've got a really clear idea about their own learning and about what they need to do I think that will impact more on teaching, because teachers will have to start listening more to what they are saying so it will become more of a dialogue than you need to do this. As far as the whole school is concerned, I think teachers, schools, Heads, governors are beginning to listen more and it will be more about hearing their views about important things ...and once children think their views are being taken seriously, I think they will have much more high level things to say'* (Ex LEA)

A key point made here by the Ex LEA is the need for teachers to actively listen to children and consider seriously what their views are, suggesting that this would improve the quality of their collaborative dialogue. Adults from within the school community considered how wider, more collaborative communication systems could be achieved in the future, including increased pupil representation on governing bodies and working parties, scheduled pastoral and curriculum planning meetings with Year Heads:

> *'It's going to come from the kids. So it's a good idea that the adults and teachers put things forward, but then it's the children who'd be doing it'* (Gov 1)

> *'I think we're lucky here, because we've done an awful lot. I think you know, most schools don't do anywhere near as much as we do ...I think the agenda will be to have more like governing bodies and working parties by the children. I think the emphasis again will be more on as individualised or personalised learning comes in'* (T2)

> *'Maybe they could meet with the sort of Year Heads on issues in the classroom, problems in the classroom, and sort of, as you say, maybe some planning, you know different things'* (MDS)

These suggestions illustrate key factors, namely**: speaking, listening, skills, attitudes and dispositions, systems, organisational culture, spaces and the making of meaning, action**

and the future listed earlier by Fielding (2001a) in 'Table 2.2 Conditions for Student Voice' where he deconstructs the conditions for authentic student voice, by identifying and clarifying nine key elements required for authentic student voice to become embedded in a school.

4.5.2 Cohesion

The second theme identified from the data was 'cohesion'. Cohesion is defined as 'the action or fact of forming a united whole'. The definition provides this research with a helpful term serving to encompass the varied interconnected themes identified and discussed throughout this study. The adults acknowledged the importance of developing a comprehensive, united whole school approach to Child's Voice activities in the future. A school working together with an ethos and practice of co-operation was an important principle identified by HSch, who described that a school adopting this dimension is:

> '…*giving them the opportunity to really participate and making the difference, make decisions and make changes. In that way, the school is growing with the pupils rather than just being a building, it's actually part of their whole life education where they can access all sorts of different weird and wonderful skills that they need, in a very safe, comfortable, challenging environment and I think that's the way forward. I think that's the measure of a really good school. That the children feel that they do that. I think that really is the way forward. If schools stop doing that, it will be a step backward*' (HSch)

T1 gave her view how the school in future could empower children even further:

> '*I don't think people give, like I said earlier, children a chance. I think we have these huge misconceptions that children are kids, and they don't understand these things. I think people have got to open their eyes and see children as, you know, that they are essentially little adults in their own right and giving them the opportunity*' (T1)

T1 here distinguishes between the 'being' and 'becoming' child identified by the sociology of childhood perspective (James and James, 2004; Jenks, 2005; Lee, 2001; Mayall, 2000; Uprichard, 2008), which underestimates the potential of young children.

T2 thought that the case study school had '*done an awful lot*' and that '*most schools don't do anywhere near as much as we do…I think we're far more advanced than other schools*'. This was confirmed by SIP, describing how the case study school brought out the skills and talents of children:

> '*I think you have gone a lot further than we have in terms of the way you work with the pupils*'. '*and not learning in terms of developing the individual and bringing out skills and talent particularly where those skills and talents don't lead to a result that the teacher can actually quantify*' (SIP)

The Headteacher identified his future aspirations to develop the creative curriculum, where children would '*have more open ended work, more responsibility*' using the catalyst benefits from the Child's Voice initiatives:

> '*Like a lot of schools who try to develop the creative curriculum, it's just boded well; the Pupil Voice project, actually sort of fits into what we're trying to do as a whole school, is actually get more pupil engagement and excitement across the curriculum …all that sort of innovation, creativity, quality of thinking, care etc you know. I'd like to transfer that actually into the foundation subjects, and you know, have more open-ended work, more responsibility, give the children being involved more group work …I see you know Pupil's Voice as being, being sort of a catalyst, if you like, for our own sort of creative curriculum*' (HT)

Gov 2 in agreement with the Headteacher, identified the potential for using successful ongoing Child's Voice elements in the future, to help develop the creative curriculum:

> '*But now the ball is in motion that they will be able to stress more and more where they see it developing, and come up with more and more ideas. And I think as our curriculum becomes more creative, that will get them more … more voice and more expression*' (Gov2)

Gov 2 provides a further example which at a collective level indicates that members of the school community, including the governors, appreciate how children could contribute to the curriculum by adding creative ideas. Despite the school being large, it would be possible to develop a cohesive dimension to Child's Voice, the Headteacher proposed:

> '*You've got more interest sort of generated in the master-classes, and other types of children that have also taken some lessons, so that, that's given more variety to the curriculum, and then with the school council, once again, that's just helped us further as a school, to develop you know, emotional intelligence and pastoral systems, you*

know, be it this sort of linking up with circle time, discussion time, feeding on to the school council, so it's you know, given sort of much more cohesion to what we're trying to do, bearing in mind we're a large school' (HT)

A further example is provided by the Headteacher illustrating what the school could do to ensure full participation by children:

'The children are speaking loud and clear that, you know, they want to contribute and they want to get the most out of their junior school, and you know, with excited children, you can't but help want, want to serve them, and to make it even better …so it's a question now of just building upon, into different sort of forums, to allow children to experience a sense of, you know, worth, empowerment and stimulation' (HT)

Similarly, what is particularly pertinent at this point is to note that the ExP had also used the term 'cohesion' earlier in this chapter, when speaking candidly, defining Child's Voice:

'I think the whole idea of this Child's Voice is probably, the way to do it is to promote the social cohesion, so things can flow, flow freely throughout and there are no barriers that will stop or hinder something' (ExP)

The data presented in this section indicates there is still potential to develop Child's Voice further at the school in the future. It has been suggested that one way this could be achieved is for children to contribute in a more meaningful way to the curriculum.

4.5.3. Discussion

In order to analyse the data to answer the subsidiary Research Question 5 '**What are the implications for the future of the school?'** it is important to consider the position the school finds itself in the current time. The two themes discussed in this section: **collaborative communication** and **cohesion** provide useful building blocks which contribute towards developing a theory for the transformation of education and should be considered in light of the literature and the challenges posed for schools today. The evidence indicates there is more work to be done and the case study school will face some ongoing challenges in the future. These challenges include acknowledging where the current underestimated power dynamics within the school's community exist, by working more collaboratively as a whole

school, together with children. The children interviewed identified a number of benefits derived from their experiences by showing genuine interest in their own personal and social development participating in the three initiatives, but more work needs to be done. However, the school should review its current approach to Child's Voice by increasing the opportunities for children to rehearse and develop the further skills of citizenship and political participation, identified in particular from the School Council initiative. Nevertheless, there are a number of good reasons to think more positively and widely about the principles of Child's Voice undertaken at the school. It is proposed there is a need to draw on the good practices in place, especially those from the Guardian Angel initiative and to use these in order to develop a greater understanding of the voices across the school, children and adults alike.

The review of literature identified two systems that exemplified innovative approaches to education: the municipal schools of Reggio Emilia in Italy, and the 1950s, St. George-in-the-East secondary modern school in Stepney, London. These schools placed great value on the 'pedagogy of relationships and listening, in which knowledge is the outcome of an educational process of co-construction, and on fostering co-operation and solidarity, between people and (in the case of Reggio Emilia) between schools' (Fielding and Moss, 2011:15). I concur with the findings of Fielding and Moss (2011) that these two examples of small scale schools that cater for early childhood and secondary ages, provide helpful traditions and experiences for educators of today to make connections and engage with practices from other times and places, thereby enhancing pedagogy. Those currently in education are reminded by Giroux to 'combine a discourse of critique and resistance with a discourse of possibility and hope' (Giroux, 2008:5).

4.5.3.i) Collaborative communication

Children identified occasions when they had worked successfully with other children as a team and valued the constructive collaborative conversations experienced with adults. Communication was identified as an important feature 'so that we all know what's going on' (SC6) and it was 'important to work as a team' (GA5), a factor necessary for secondary school identified by Ex P. Children and adults suggested relationships between teachers and pupils would improve in the future if they worked more closely together. Developing the capacity to work together constructively provides wider educational benefits for all schools, but children need to be given time and space to develop their communicative skills, especially in a team. It would be unfortunate therefore if teachers avoided teaching the necessary practical skills required due to an overcrowded curriculum. Effective team-working and collective problem solving in the future could help develop a pedagogy of positive relationships within the school.

A sociology of childhood perspective applied to the analysis highlighted the importance for schools to help children prepare for their unknown futures and the importance of learning how to 'be' as well as what to 'do'. Analysis of the data proposes that where the children were provided with opportunities to practice social and cultural skills within collaborative activities, supported by adults with the necessary cultural tools required, there was evidence that children felt they had exercised agency. Consequently, I propose that teachers do have the power to 'shape' how children see themselves as people and as learners within participatory contexts in their classrooms or schools. This alternative view could not only challenge teachers, but additionally pupils who might sense 'the possible risks involved in making decisions and in sharing or even challenging the teachers decisions (Cox, 2011:123). We cannot predict the future, but teachers with a professional ideal to broaden children's

enquiring minds, who are prepared to develop their own minds within a social practice culture of equal respect, can demonstrate good models. Teachers can help to build a new community of practice, the 'reflective community' (Cox, 2011:184).

It is important to remember that children are participants in contexts other than school: the family, local neighbourhood, cultural group, peer group and many others. In order for true collaborative activities to take place, there needs to be a shift in teachers' understanding. Teachers need to become aware of this and that working collaboratively with children in the school context could compromise established power relations and lead to children's activities potentially being taken over by the adult. The education community includes more than just teachers and children and there needs to be greater communication between all stakeholders: parents and carers, and other educators such as researchers and theorists in colleges and universities.

There are and remain conflicting narratives for the future. Children have spoken out clearly that they want to be involved in school decisions and the sociology of childhood ideals. The government's need to control schools is their 'drive to impose the pedagogical assumption that teaching is about transferring a pre-existing body of knowledge to the learner (*which*) is a limited, linear model that suits the instrumental, performance driven agenda' (Cox, 2015:28) is at odds with Child's Voice principles.

4.5.3.ii) Cohesion

The review of literature identified a number of fundamental questions that should be asked for future aspirations of education (Fielding and Moss (2011): What is education for? What is its purpose? These generate a further question posed by Giroux (2008), who argues if education always assumes a vision for the future, then what is the vision? In part, as

suggested by the literature and the accounts from children and adults at the school, education should be responsible for the condition of democracy in the present and in the future.

Building and improving relationships by being more accountable to each other in the community aims to develop 'an inclusive, creative society through a democracy which benefits everyone' (Fielding and Moss, 2011:153) through a 'range of daily opportunities in which young people can listen and be listened to, make decisions and take a shared responsibility for both the here-and-now of daily encounter and for the creation of a better future' (Fielding and Moss 2011:153). The main intention of this model at an individual level is 'how one lives a good and fulfilling life' and at a collective level is 'how best to co-create a good society and a better world' (Fielding and Moss, 2011:153).

Despite the plaudits from adults and children interviewed for this research, commending the 'transformational' possibilities of the Child's Voice initiatives at the school, caution is recommended by some academics who question whether these activities can be truly transformative (Robinson and Taylor, 2013) or even simultaneously transformative and oppressive (Czerniawski, 2012; Fielding, 2001a; Thomson and Gunter, 2006), thereby querying whether a transformational democratic education can actually be developed. Education cannot be viewed in isolation from social and economic frames, as the one is dependent upon the other.

The HSch recommended that the measure of a good school of the future should encompass the following ideals: 'growing with the pupils', 'being part of their whole life education' 'access all sorts of different weird and wonderful skills that they (*children*) need' 'a very safe, comfortable, challenging environment'. Consequently schools would be well advised to consider a wider perspective of education, rather than a race through the curriculum to

achieve ever higher results. The data also indicates the possible need for schools to develop a more holistic perspective to education and virtually deleted from an educational ideal (Fielding and Moss, 2011).

In answering subsidiary Research Question 5 **'What are the implications for the future of the school?'** this section explored and challenged implications for the school in the future. Children outlined how teachers could improve communication with pupils and adults animatedly described future possibilities. In particular, the Headteacher provides an authentic, positive commitment which promotes Child's Voice and illustrates how its ongoing success provides the foundation for a successful school. This is an important feature, as the key leader is seen here to value the key principles of Child's Voice (Fielding, 2004b; MacGilchrist *et al.,* 2004; Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007; Soanes, 2007).

The impact for the school community so far has seen children's and adult's sense of passionate endeavour strengthened, contributing to the children's increased sense of agency and service to their school. It is acknowledged that their energy and commitment to the selected initiatives has remained sustained over time. Children believed they had in their own way made some small contribution towards the improvement of their school, that what they were doing was worthwhile, and that they could make a difference to the school. It is proposed that the findings of this study might be a source of inspiration to some teachers who are looking to broaden their pedagogical practice.

The approach highlighted in this study illustrates one model undertaken at one school. It is prudent therefore for schools to consider there will be many variations of this model for teachers to subscribe to. A reflexive, reflective and collaborative approach will need to be generated through the core values and principles of 'collaborative communication' and

'cohesion' for the future benefit of the school. This section has examined two themes derived from the data: 'collaborative communication' and 'cohesion'. Analysis has suggested that a possible shift in relationships between teachers and children may be required in order to build a different kind of community within a school, one which allows children to come to school with their voices as members of communities of practice from outside school and to work collaboratively as valued members of the school community.

4.5.4 Summary

This subsidiary research question sought to identify whether there were implications for the future of the school and if so, to identify the nature of these. The analysis of interviews identified two emergent themes namely collaborative communication and cohesion. Children and adults recognised that the school community needed to build on the good practices currently in place at the case study school. Children and adults proposed if children and teachers could work more collaboratively, communication between them could improve thereby contributing towards what might potentially be enhanced 'cohesive' holistic learning dimensions at the school.

4.6 Overarching Research Question: 'What are the features of decision and democratic opportunities within the school that support empowering Child's Voice?'

Having examined the five subsidiary questions individually, I have drawn on findings that emerged from these questions in order to answer the overarching research question **'What are the features of decision and democratic opportunities within the school that support empowering Child's Voice?'**

The key features can be summarised as:

i)   **Provision of opportunities and a culture which supports the empowerment of the child:** specifically that the children are provided with long term opportunities to engage in activities which enable them to experience: having a say; being listened to and taken seriously; and being part of important decision-making processes at the school, and that adults reciprocated by acknowledging the potential of children as team participants in all aspects of improving the school; and children's autonomy and agency.

ii)   **Provision of opportunities for the development of the child's 'self':** namely the development of confidence, trust, autonomous agency and transformation of self through experiences of consultation and participation, responsibility and emotional engagement.

iii)   **Provision of opportunities for the development of transformation of the school:** namely developing Child's Voice principles through developing the pedagogy and culture of the school and developing children as agentic and competent members of the school and wider community.

iv)   **An environment in which the school can claim activities supporting the occurrence of collaborative communication:** the analysis identified two key themes: collaborative communication and cohesion. Children and adults recognised that the school community needed to build on the good practices currently in place at the case study school. Children and adults proposed that if children and teachers could work more collaboratively,

communication between them could improve thereby contributing towards what might potentially be enhanced 'cohesive' holistic learning dimensions at the school.

These key features have been articulated in a model (Figure 4.5) below which draws together the emergent themes arising from the data and places them within the school context. It is proposed that this model captures the features of decision and democratic opportunities within the school that support empowering Child's Voice. It formulates a conceptual model 'Socio-Cultural model for Child's Voice: Transformation of Self and School', articulating the dynamic inter-relationship between the pedagogy and culture; agentic and competent children and the transformation of the school which frame six fundamental elements, namely consultation and participation, responsibility, emotional engagement, confidence, trust and autonomous agency which contribute to transformation of the self (child). The model offers an example of how one primary school implemented an approach over a period of time, through developing three specific Child's Voice initiatives, namely the School Council, Guardian Angels and Master-class Mentors. Having engaged with and explored the richness of relationships developed at the school between children, and children and teachers, the model potentially identifies and opens the way to further opportunities for deeper learning dimensions. The presentation of this model concludes Chapter 4 and is discussed as part of the original contribution of the research within Chapter 5 (5.3).
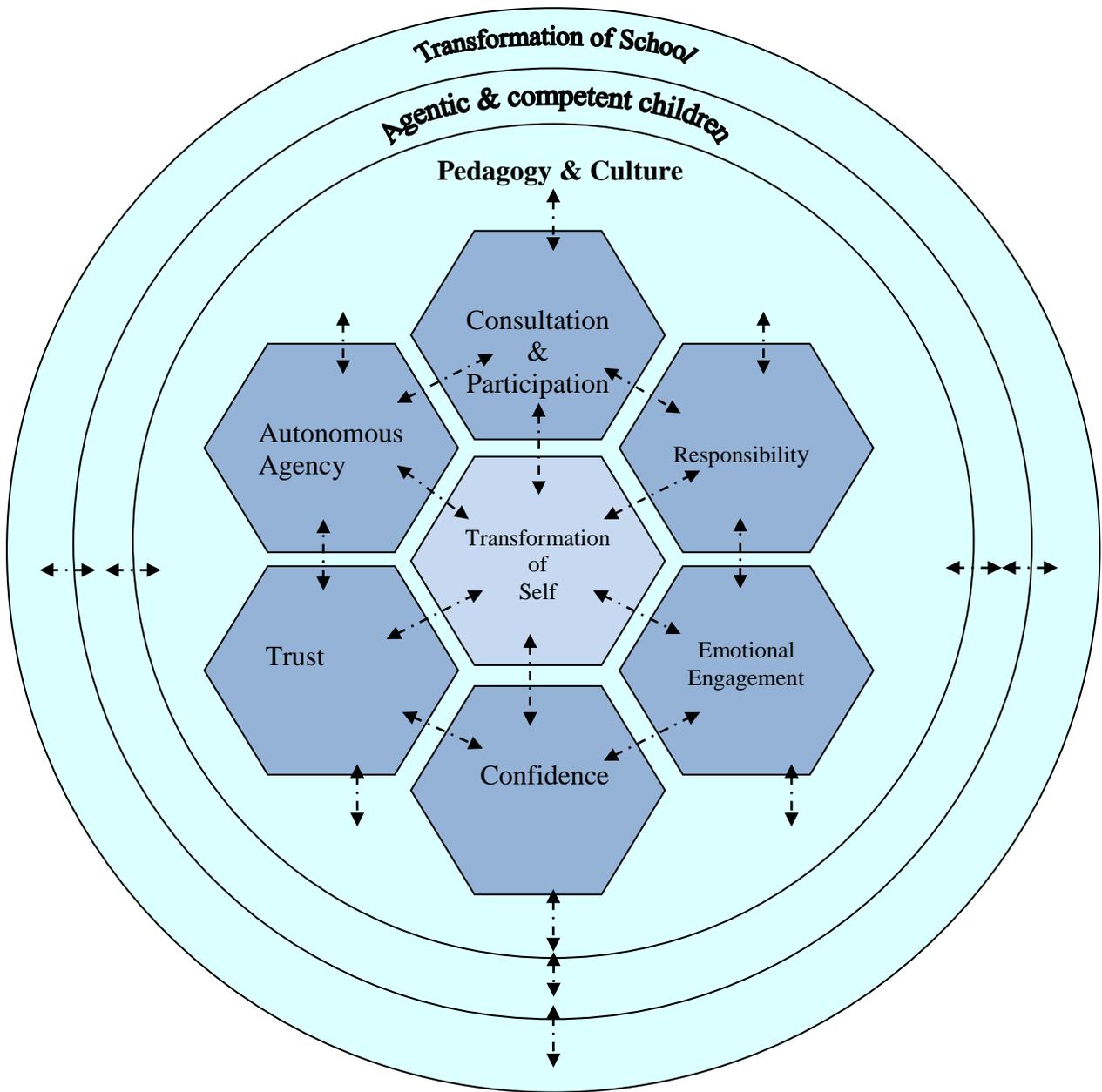
Figure 4.5: Socio-Cultural model for Child's Voice: Transformation of Self and School

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This final chapter is presented in the following sections:

5.1 Ontological and epistemological principles

5.2 Limitations of the study

5.3 Contribution to knowledge

5.4 Summary of recommendations

5.5 Opportunities for further research

5.6 Personal experience of the Education Doctoral programme

5.1 Ontological and epistemological principles

I have evaluated the theoretical perspective of my thesis by investigating if the children involved in the three initiatives under study had been empowered. Children were seen as co-researchers and as 'experts' in the field. This research endorsed that the culture and ethos developed at the school held children 'at the centre of education' (Plowden, 1967). I have described how seeing children as co-researchers with agency and an ability to take on responsibility when trusted by adults empowered them. Evidence from this research highlights rich descriptions given by the children confirming the lasting impact these experiences have had for them. Three in depth case studies contributed to this conclusion. Children's voices were considered important. I have explained how the three initiatives have developed at the case study school. I have examined my personal belief systems and analysed data collected with literature within the field. My findings confirm my belief that these initiatives have had a strong impact on the children and the cultural capital of the school.

5.2 Limitations of the study

There are a number of limitations to this study and the research findings should therefore be considered with the following restrictions in place. Firstly, this research was carried out seeking only the views of children involved with one or more of the three initiatives. Their views provided research findings from a representative group, even though the majority of Year 6 children participated in one or more of the initiatives, however no evidence is provided from the three children who had chosen not to participate in any of the initiatives. Their views would have provided this study with a more representative and balanced perspective.

Secondly, and related to the first limitation, there were no specific questions related to determining pupils' views of how any of the initiatives may have inhibited the voices of some pupils. The planned questions posed to pupils were framed in a positive way and consequently were unlikely to encourage negative responses.

Thirdly, a further ethical limitation of this study was the personal involvement of the researcher, who had introduced and managed the initiatives at the school. The planned questions posed to children were framed in a positive way and as a result were unlikely to encourage negative responses, thereby contributing to the notion of researcher as 'unreliable narrator' (Chadderton, 2011:82. In addition there were no specific questions relating to determining pupils' views of how any of the initiatives may have inhibited the voices of some pupils. It could be argued this provided the research findings with a biased 'rosy' picture thereby introducing a 'response effect' from those interviewed (Costley et al 2010:92). This known limitation has to be acknowledged within the research.

5.3 Contribution to knowledge

The thesis at the outset claimed that it held the potential to make an original contribution to the field through identifying and examining the opportunities and practice offered by the case study school whereby Year 6 children are encouraged to participate in a range of 'initiatives' which promote the 'Child's Voice' through which it claims to support enhanced learning contributing to personal, social and cultural development of the individuals involved and the school itself. Further, it was proposed that the research undertaken would contribute to the literature through its examination of the relationship between the child and the school in the development of the Child's Voice and the potential development of a conceptual model that would enable teachers of other primary schools to apply findings to their own school.

The thesis on completion proposes that an original contribution has been made in terms of the following key areas:

i.   The research findings contribute to formulating the conceptual model 'Socio-Cultural model for Child's Voice: transformation of Self and School' (Figure 4.5), deconstructing the dynamic inter-relationship between the pedagogy and culture; agentic and competent children and the transformation of the school which frame six fundamental elements, namely consultation and participation, responsibility, emotional engagement, confidence and trust which contribute to transformation of the self (child). It is proposed that the articulation of the interrelationship of these elements set out in Figure 4.5 makes a contribution to the literature in the field of Child's Voice demonstrating their importance for developing the child whilst building a social and cultural capacity for improvement within the school.
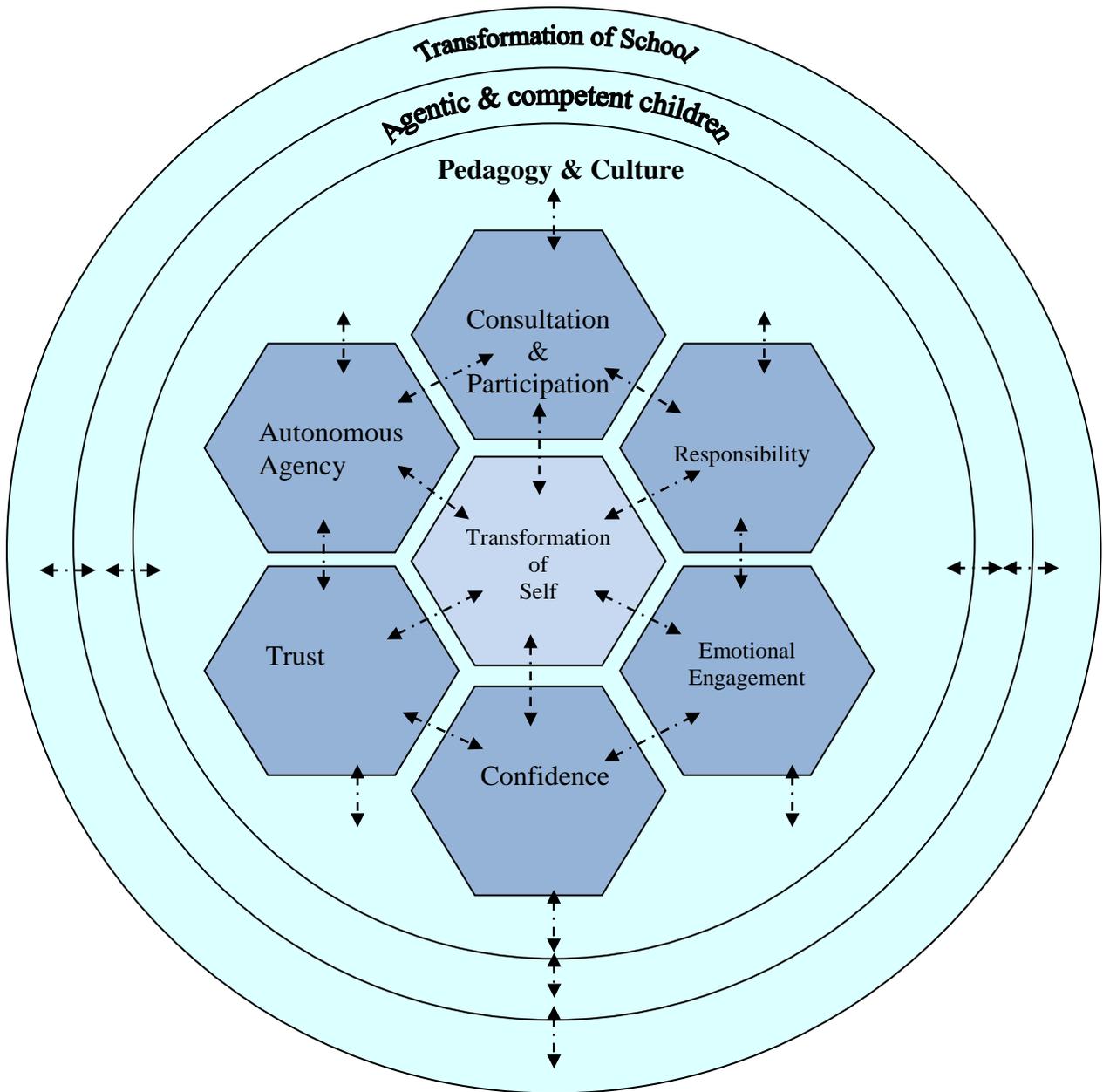
Figure 4.5: Socio-Cultural model for Child's Voice: Transformation of Self and School

ii.   The longitudinal research carried out during the period 2007-2009 contributes a
perspective to the literature in the field presented through a view from an established senior

professional within the case study setting (insider-researcher) working for a sustained period of time within the research setting. Although there are acknowledged limitations with regards to carrying out research within one's setting and the power differential involved in interviewing children by a deputy-head, nevertheless the sustained period of this longitudinal case study enabled the research of children's and adults experiences of initiatives that were embedded within the culture of the school.

iii.   The study uses critical theory to interrogate the impact of three key initiatives offered by the school and makes a claim for their transformational contribution to both the children involved in terms of the transformation of the child's 'self' through offering opportunities for the development of confidence, trust and autonomous agency and to the school culture itself. The school culture is characterised by two key themes of collaborative communication and cohesion. Children and adults proposed that where children and teachers could work more collaboratively, communication between them could improve thereby contributing towards enhanced 'cohesive' holistic learning dimensions at the school. Adults acknowledged the potential of children as team participants in all aspects of improving the school; and children's autonomy and agency.

5.3.1 Impact for future professional practice

The value of this research for future professional practice lies in its practical applications and the valuable contribution made by children. Through their roles in the three initiatives the children have gained a wider personal perspective of themselves (intrapersonal knowledge) and consequently contributing to a wider social and cultural school perspective (interpersonal knowledge). Educators, in particular teachers, at any stage of their professional careers would be well advised to be open to ideas and engage with the everyday, lived worlds of the

children and to work alongside and collaboratively with them. I believe this is where the study might contribute to developing a mutually beneficial Child's Voice perspective for a school.

I acknowledge my own practices are value laden and my professional roles will have developed through my individual perspective of a professional practitioner. The research was designed to support my work as the Deputy Headteacher at a large junior school, having introduced a number of initiatives which supported Child's Voice principles.

5.4 Recommendations

In the light of my research I should like to make the following tentative recommendations:

1. '**Child's Voice' at the centre of education has transformative potentials**: Child's Voice principles should remain at the centre of education. There are many benefits for the individual child: being trusted and developing agency, and for their school: developing a collective and interconnected school community beyond the curriculum. These principles of Child's Voice have transformative potential for the child and their school.

2. **Develop a strategic long term perspective**: Embedding genuine and significant principles of Child's Voice takes time, but these yield long lasting benefits for the individual child and their school. Schools can achieve these principles by developing a wide perspective which acknowledges collaborative and interconnected approaches to be 'lived' by all. Schools should ensure a consistent, collective succession planning approach is developed to enable Child's Voice to continue to flourish.

3. <u>Changing culture and pedagogy</u>: Schools should embrace a culture and pedagogy which identify and nurture children's emotional and social potential, so they can flourish and thrive, experiencing opportunities of responsibility which develop autonomous agency and collaboration. There is potential within teachers' initial training and continuing professional development programmes to promote and improve deeper understanding of the socio-cultural perspectives and impact of Child's Voice.

5.5 Opportunities for further research

I believe there are a number of possibilities which exist for further research related to this thesis:

- Opportunities remain for future research within educational fields of initial teacher training and continuing professional development to explore further the impact of Child's Voice initiatives.

- Opportunities exist for additional research to examine whether the experience of the case study school is transferable to other primary schools. There is potential for Child's Voice to be expressed through a range of other activities; examining these would be of particular interest.

- There is potential in ascertaining a wider school profile by gathering data from additional teachers at the case study school and exploring any long lasting benefits by interviewing the original students for a third time.

5.6 Personal experience of the EdD doctoral experience

I have enjoyed and benefitted greatly from the challenge and experience of the Education Doctorate programme. My understanding of Child's Voice and research practice has deepened and improved as a result. The Education Doctorate degree has taken me longer than

anticipated to complete due to a period when increased demands were made on me in my professional life, which had to take priority. However, I was determined to complete the Education Doctorate and have greatly valued encouragement from my supervisor, family and fellow doctorate students when doubting that I could complete the research.

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Semi-structured Interview Schedule
Interview Questions for Children

There will be 5 main questions and these will be supported by a number of supplementary questions, some of which have been included below. All children will be anonymous and their interview coded for identification.

Proposed Introduction
Thank you very much …….. for agreeing to be part of this research. I really value your contribution to my research through your experience of the school, your ideas and opinions. I know that you have made a good start to the year in your role as School Councillor/ Guardian Angel / Masterclass Mentor… I should like to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions asked during our interview. I am interested in what you think. If at any time you wish to stop just let me know. It will be alright.
Briefly describe the research project.

Research Question 1.

What is understood by 'the Child's Voice'?
Prompts and probes
Can you tell me what do you feel is important about being at school at the moment?
Tell me something about your experiences at school so far.
Have they been enjoyable? In what ways? If not why not? Tell me more.

Are children encouraged to give their views at *** school? How is this achieved? Based on what you know, how would you explain 'Child's Voice' at *** School?
What opportunities do children have at the school to air their views?

- Deconstruct the concept of the 'child's voice'

Research Question 2.

How has the school developed Child's Voice principles?
Prompts and probes

- Examine the strategies and process put in place by the school to support the concept of the 'child's voice'

In what ways are you and have you been able/ encouraged to take responsibility for your own learning? Can you tell me if all children at …Junior School have the opportunity to take up any of the things that you've suggested? Would you say generally that's an important thing for all of the children? If you could include something else what would you include?
If you don't know what to do, how do you know what to do?

How does the school enable children to participate in activities to value their opinions and to give them responsibility?

Are the views of children valued by the school? Could you explain? Could you describe how?

Research Question 3.

What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the Year 6 participants?
Prompts and probes
Has your role so far as a School Councillor/ Guardian Angel / Master-class tutor helped/ changed you in any way? And in any other ways?
- Identify and analyse the impact and effects of giving children greater autonomy in the social experience within the context of the school

Have you learnt much about yourself as you have grown up – as a learner, a person generally, how you can get on with others? What do you think you would need to do to improve these further?
In what ways are you able/ encouraged to take responsibility for your own learning?
If you don't know what to do, how do you know what to do?
Do you feel that you have been involved in important decision making? In what ways? How can this be made available for more children? Who listens to the things children have to say in the school?
What skills would you say you've been able to develop?
What do you think about children being included in the Spring Term Open Evenings with parents and guardians? Why?
What have you learnt about yourself in doing that? How has this helped you with your organisation skills? Do you think this might help you when you go to Secondary school? How?
What do you hope to be and become in the future?

Research Question 4.

What is the impact of three 'Child's Voice' initiatives for the case study school?
Prompts and probes
- Analyse the children's interpretations and understandings of these roles (both as individuals and as contributing members of the wider school community
- Identify and analyse the impact and effects of giving children greater autonomy in the social experience within the context of the school

How do you think this experience has helped you to deal with different people in different ways? Are most children encouraged to take responsibility at … Junior School? Are most children encouraged to do things for themselves? Can you explain please. Are you as a learner encouraged to do things for yourself? Would you like to have an opportunity to say what you were taught at school? What effect does this have at … Junior ?

Tell me more. What do you think should be included? What about the future of schools?
In what ways are you able/ encouraged to take responsibility for your own learning?
If you don't know what to do, how do you know what to do?
What do you think about children being included at Open Evenings with parents and guardians? Why?
Could you tell me if you feel that you have been able to give an opinion on things that happen at school? In what ways?

How do you see the future of schools? How do you think they might change?
Who do you think should decide what happens about education? Why?

How are you involved in these decisions at the moment?

Is it important to include children in this process? Why?

Do the daily routines of the school show that adults support children's views and ideas? Can you describe the ways that the school does this?

Research Question 5.

What are the implications for the future of the school?
Prompts and probes

How could the school increase more involvement of children in decision making?
Should the school look for different ways to include children? Tell me how this could be achieved?
What should schools be teaching children?

- Identify features for future school development that contributes to the culture, curriculum, pedagogy and the quality of the child's learning experience.

Would you like to have an opportunity to say what you were taught at school?
Tell me more. What do you think should be included? What about the future?
What skills do you think will become important to have for the future when you are an adult?
What else do you think is important to learn as well as subject knowledge e.g. maths, literacy etc? What will be on the timetable?

How could schools be better in the future – for yourself, for other pupils?
What do you think about children being included in the Spring Term Open Evenings with parents and guardians? Why?

Do you feel that you have been involved in important decision making? Can you describe in what ways? How can this be made available for more children?

How do you see the future of schools changing?
Who do you think should decide what happens about education? Why?
How are you involved in these decisions at the moment?
Is it important to include children in this process? Why?

(Thank the child for participating in this interview. Assure them of confidentiality of answers and that the recording will be coded and kept locked safely in a filing cabinet and potential further interviews).

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview schedule (2009)

I'm really interested how you're getting on in Year 7.

1. Could you tell me what you remember about your time at (case study school)?

    - Describe your role and your memories of it.

    - Do any of the Yr3s or younger children keep in touch with you?

    - What did you gain from the experience?

2. What has been the long term impact for you personally, having undertaken the role?

3. Cast your mind back to when you were in Yr6 – what were the good bits?

4. Is there anything that you have carried through to Secondary school from the experience:-
    (e.g. examples of: being confident; taking a lead; becoming involved).

5. What are your views now about …

6. Were your views taken seriously in Yr6? Explain.

7. Did the school provide suitable contexts, opportunities for children in Yr6 to take responsibility, trust etc being involved and working together with adults/ co-constructing / working as a team?

8. Do you think that you were able to make a difference? How did this make you feel?

9. Were children's voices, opinions, views listened to and acted upon? Do you feel you had a say?

10. Were children recognised for who they were at the time – not 'wait until you're older' … 'until you're an adult'?

11. How were your views sought when you were at (case study school) – now at Secondary school? What areas of interest were these?

Appendix 3: Extract interview transcript – child (GA6) 2008

IV   INTERVIEWER
GA6   INTERVIEWEE

…

IV   SO HOW DID THEY BENEFIT FROM OUR GUARDIAN ANGEL SCHEME?

GA6   OBVIOUSLY THE YEAR FOURS KNEW, KIND OF LIKE KNEW THAT THE YEARS THREE AND FOURS, WHEN WE WENT UP THERE, THEY WERE KIND OF SHOCKED AND THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WE WAS WEARING, SO WHEN WE WENT UP TO THEM, OBVIOUSLY WITH OUR YELLOW BIBS ON, WE SAID TO THEM, LIKE THEY SAID WHAT IS THAT AND WE SAID LIKE WE ARE YOUR GUARDIAN ANGEL. IF EVER YOU NEED ANY HELP OR YOU'VE GOT AN ARGUMENT OR A PROBLEM WHERE YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO ABOUT HOME OR AT SCHOOL, YOU CAN COME TO US. AND THE VERY FIRST DAY WE HAD SOMEONE WHO DONE THAT FROM AT HOME, I THINK IT WAS A LITTLE GIRL, I CAN'T REMEMBER HER NAME, BUT SHE HAD A PROBLEM AT HOME AND WE LIKE JUST GAVE HER SOME ADVICE AND SAID YOU DON'T HAVE TO TAKE IT IF YOU DON'T WANT TO, BUT IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA AND SHE SAID THANK YOU AND THEN SHE CAME BACK TO US THE NEXT DAY AND SAID IT HELPED.

IV   OH WOW, SO HOW DID YOU FEEL AFTER THAT?

GA6   IT WAS REALLY GOOD BECAUSE LIKE YOU'D HELPED SOMEONE OUT AT HOME AND YOU FELT PLEASED WITH YOURSELF AND PROUD BECAUSE YOU'D GONE IN FOR THE ROLE AND YOU'D SUCCEEDED IN SOMETHING, IT WAS REALLY GOOD.

IV   SO, WHEN I INTRODUCED GUARDIAN ANGELS ABOUT 11 YEARS AGO, I STARTED OFF WITH EIGHT GUARDIAN ANGELS, TWO FOR EACH OF THE YEAR THREE CLASSES, BECAUSE I WAS A YEAR AHEAD IN YEAR THREE IN THOSE DAYS, AND NOW I THINK WE'VE GOT 44. SO WHY DO YOU THINK SO MANY CHILDREN WANT TO BE GUARDIAN ANGELS?

GA6   BECAUSE THEY WANT TO FEEL QUITE GROWN UP AND THEY WANT TO HAVE A ROLE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN AND I THINK THAT AS THEY OVER THE YEARS, WHEN THEY'VE COME IN AS JUNIORS AND THEY'VE GONE ON FROM YEAR THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX THEY'VE GOT TO YEAR SIX AND THEY REALISE THAT LOOKS REALLY GOOD AND I'M GOING TO TRY IT OUT AND THEN OBVIOUSLY IF THEY TRIED IT OUT AND THEY'RE NOT TOO KEEN ON IT THEY CAN OBVIOUSLY TALK TO YOU AND YOU CAN EXPLAIN. BUT I DON'T THINK WE'VE HAD MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD THAT THIS YEAR.

IV   NO, THERE HAVEN'T BEEN, I THINK THERE WERE MAYBE ONE OR TWO, BUT USUALLY THERE AREN'T MANY WHO DROP OUT SO TO SPEAK. AND THERE ARE MORE BOYS TAKING THE ROLE; WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?

GA6   I DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW WHY, BUT I THINK BECAUSE SOME OF THE GIRLS HAVE GONE BACK AND SAID LOOK, IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THOUGHT IT IS, IT'S NOT ABOUT BEING BOSSY AND BEING IN CHARGE OF EVERYTHING, IT'S ABOUT HAVING FUN AND YOU CAN MEET NEW FRIENDS, HELP SOME PEOPLE, SORT OUT PROBLEMS. OCCASIONALLY YOU'LL GET SOME NEW PROBLEMS, BUT THEY'RE MAINLY JUST [UNCLEAR] AND YOU'RE USED TO THEM,

SO I THINK THEY HAVE GIVEN IT A TRY AND THEY'VE LIKED IT AND THEN THEY TOLD THEIR FRIENDS, THEY'VE TOLD THEIR FRIENDS, AND THEN IT'S GONE INTO LIKE A LITTLE LINE [OVERTALKING].

IV   IT HELPS A BIT, YES. SO SINCE HAVING THIS ROLE, WHAT IMPACT HAS THAT HAD ON YOU YOURSELF?

GA6   LIKE YOU'VE REALISED THAT NOT EVERYTHING GOES YOUR WAY AND THAT SOME PEOPLE HAVE HAD ARGUMENTS AND THEY'VE TAUGHT YOU, BECAUSE YOU'VE REALISED WHAT GOES ON AND YOU THINK, HANG ON, AM I DOING THAT? LIKE AM I DOING THAT, AM I BEING LIKE THAT, AND THEN YOU'VE GONE AWAY AND YOU'VE THOUGHT ABOUT IT AND YOU THINK I AM. AND THEN YOU STOP DOING IT, AND IT'S REALLY HELPED OTHER CHILDREN BECAUSE OBVIOUSLY THEY FOLLOW YOUR ROLE...

IV   THAT TRUE.

GA6   KIND OF THING, SO THEY'VE FOLLOWED YOU AND THEN THEY STOP IT THEMSELVES.

IV   HAS THE ROLE HAD AN AFFECT ON YOUR OWN CONFIDENCE, OR HOW YOU VIEW YOURSELF?

GA6   YEAH, SOME PEOPLE, THERE WAS ONE OR TWO BOYS, AND THEY REALLY DIDN'T LIKE THEMSELVES, THE WAY THEY WERE AND LIKE THEY DIDN'T LIKE THE WAY THEY WERE AND DIDN'T LIKE THE WAY THEY LOOKED AND HOW THEY WERE TO PEOPLE, AND I SAYS LIKE, IT'S NOT ONLY YOU, IT'S OTHER PEOPLE AS WELL, SO IT MIGHT NOT JUST BE YOU, IT MIGHT BE OTHER PEOPLE THAT THEY'RE TREATING YOU, SO YOU'RE DOING IT BACK. I SAID, KIND OF THING, ME AND SOME OF MY OTHER FRIENDS LIKE WE'VE JUST SAID, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, YOU'LL GROW UP AND YOU WILL REALISE, AND OTHER PEOPLE WILL AS WELL, AND YOU'LL LOOK BACK AND YOU'LL THINK, I WAS RIGHT, KIND OF THING. SO YOU'VE JUST GOT TO GET ON WITH LIFE KIND OF THING.

IV   SO FOR YOU, YOU [GA6] HOW HAVE YOU CHANGED OVER THIS YEAR?

GA6   I'VE CHANGED MY ATTITUDE A LOT IN CLASS AND TOWARDS OTHER PEOPLE AND I'VE REALISED, I'VE GROWN UP A BIT MORE. INSTEAD OF BEING NOT CHILDISH, BUT I'VE GROWN UP A LOT MORE AND REALISED MY OWN RESPONSIBILITY AND I'VE GOT TO DO THINGS FOR MYSELF. REALISED THAT NOT EVERYTHING RELIES ON OTHER PEOPLE, YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND THAT YOU'VE GOT TO DO THINGS YOUR OWN WAY AND YOU CAN'T ALWAYS ASK PEOPLE. YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE ROLE AND YOU'VE GOT TO DO THINGS FOR YOURSELF. AND IT'S REALLY CHANGED MY WHOLE SELF, KIND OF THING AND IT'S MADE ME REALISE.

IV   THAT'S GOOD. SO, HOW IS THAT GOING TO HELP YOU WHEN YOU MOVE ON TO SECONDARY SCHOOL DO YOU THINK?

GA6   I THINK THAT IT WILL HELP ME A LOT BASICALLY BECAUSE YOU, WHEN YOU GO TO SECONDARY SCHOOL, YOU'RE MOVING FROM A JUNIOR SCHOOL, SO YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE ROLE, LIKE YOU'D BE WALKING ON YOUR OWN, TAKING BUSSES AND YOU CAN'T LIKE RING YOUR MOM AND DAD UP AND SAY WHAT AM I MEANT TO GET? YOU'VE GOT TO THINK FOR YOURSELF, REALISE FOR YOURSELF AND LIKE WITH YOUR SCHOOL HOMEWORK, WE DO IT

NOW, BUT YOU'VE GOT TO REALISE THAT IT'S NOT THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO PUT IT IN YOUR BAG. AS SOON AS YOU'VE DONE IT, YOU PUT IT IN YOUR BAG AND THEN IT'S THERE AND YOU GIVE IT IN THE NEXT DAY OR WHENEVER IT'S DUE IN. YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY KIND OF THING.

IV   SO THAT HAS DEVELOPED AND BEEN HELPED BY YOUR ROLE THAT YOU'VE HAD?

GA6   YEAH, DEFINITELY YEAH.

IV   THAT'S REALLY GOOD. SO HOW DO YOU THINK THE ROLES OF GUARDIAN ANGELS HAVE HAD ON THE SCHOOL ITSELF? HOW HAS THE SCHOOL BENEFITED, WOULD YOU SAY?

GA6   I THINK BECAUSE THE SCHOOL, WHERE THE SCHOOL MIGHT HAVE BEEN A TROUBLESOME PLACE BEFORE, AND IT MIGHT HAVE HAD QUITE A FEW PROBLEMS WITH CHILDREN, I THINK THE GUARDIAN ANGELS, BECAUSE THE CHILDREN HAVE DONE IT THEMSELVES BEFORE, THEY KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE. SO THEY'VE HELPED THEM OUT AND THEY'VE REALISED AS WELL AND THEY'VE KIND OF LIKE SAID, HANG ON A MINUTE, YOU'RE WRONG AND THEN THEY'VE TAUGHT THEM THE RIGHT WAY AND THEN THEY COME TO THEM FOR MORE HELP AND REALISED MORE AND MORE AND MORE ALONG THE LINE, KIND OF THING, AND IT'S HELPED THE SCHOOL BY NOT BEING SO LOUD AND NOISY AND LIKE BAD, KIND OF THING. AND SOME OF THE GUARDIAN ANGELS HAVE REALISED THAT THAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO AND WHAT THEY BAD THINGS ARE THEY SHOULDN'T DO, KIND OF THING.

IV   SO IF WE THINK SORT OF BROADLY NOW WITHIN THE SCHOOL, DO YOU THINK ADULTS TAKE NOTICE OF WHAT CHILDREN SAY?

GA6   YEAH BECAUSE ME AND MY FRIEND HAD THIS BOY ONCE, AND WE TOLD HIM TO STOP IT, AND WE'VE COME TO YOU BEFORE, AND HE'S HAD TO DO SOMETHING, HE'S HAD TO WRITE US AN APOLOGY BECAUSE HE HIT US AND HE SAID THAT HE WAS ANNOYED WITH US AND WE SAID DON'T TAKE IT OUT ON US. SO WE TOLD HIM TO SIT DOWN AND TALK TO US, BUT THEN HE DONE IT AGAIN, SO WE THOUGHT RIGHT WE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT THIS TIME, SO WE CAME TO YOU. AND TEACHERS DO NOTICE, BECAUSE SOMETIMES IF YOU'RE TRYING TO SORT SOMETHING OUT, IT ALL COMES INTO A BIG, BIG CROWD, AND IF YOU TRY AND TELL PEOPLE TO LIKE GO AWAY, MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS, IT'S NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU, DON'T GET INVOLVED, OTHER TEACHERS COME ALONG AND THEY SAY, RIGHT DON'T WORRY, THIS IS, THEY HAVE TO GO TO SIX ONE, AND THEY HAVE TO DO THIS AND OBVIOUSLY WE CAN'T DO THAT, THEY HAVE TO COME ALONG AND THEY HAVE TO DO THAT FOR THEMSELVES, BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO TAKE ROLES THEMSELVES AS WELL.

IV   SO IF WE NOW STEP OUT OF THE GUARDIAN ANGEL ROLE, CAN YOU TELL ME YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE SCHOOL COUNCIL, HOW EFFECTIVE THEY ARE?

GA6   YEAH, I THINK THE SCHOOL COUNCIL, THE PEOPLE IN MY CLASS AND ALL THE OTHER CLASSES IN THE SCHOOL, I THINK THEY'VE DONE A REALLY GOOD ROLE. THEY'VE BROUGHT SOME REALLY GOOD IDEAS INTO THE SCHOOL, THEY BROUGHT US SOME REALLY GOOD THINGS, OBJECTS, LIKE THEY'VE GOT SOME NEW PE EQUIPMENT, AND THEY DON'T DO IT ALL THEMSELVES. THEY COME IN TO CLASS AND THEY SAY, RIGHT HAVE ANY OF YOU GOT ANY IDEAS, AND WE HAVE LIKE A LITTLE BOX AND YOU CAN PUT ANY OF YOUR IDEAS IN THERE THAT YOU WANT TO. AND THE GUARDIAN ANGEL, SORRY, THE SCHOOL COUNCIL

WILL TELL YOU, THEY'LL SAY TO YOU RIGHT HANG ON A MINUTE, I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S RIGHT, AND THEY WON'T GIVE ANY SILLY ANSWERS. THEY'LL BE SENSIBLE, AND THEY WILL ACT JUST LIKE ADULTS WOULD AND THEY'LL SAY YEAH, THAT'S GOOD, NO, THAT'S NOT, WE HAVEN'T GOT AS MUCH MONEY, WE MIGHT WANT TO GET SOMETHING ELSE. SO THEY COME IN AND THEY TAKE AN ADULT'S RESPONSIBILITY, AN ADULT'S ROLE, JUST AS AN ADULT WOULD AND THEY ACT IT OUT AND THEY ARE GOOD AT IT.

HT   Yeah, no, I'd, I'd say that, been in post now for 15 or so years; when I first came to the school, it, it was quite a, a dull school, insofar as it just tended to cater for sports people, and that was about it, but you know, since you've, in the last five, six years, have got involved with Child's Voice, I've seen a dramatic improvement with the whole energy level of the children. Particularly the year six, who are sort of, you know, enjoying school far more, and they get a lot more out of it, but then the younger children sort of, are the beneficiaries of all that they're doing in the master class and so on, so I really think it's given a certain spark and vitality to the school, that I never, you know, would have thought that your Child's Voice projects would have done.

IV   So, bearing in mind I'm looking at three initiatives, being the school council, guardian angels and the master class aspect of things; if we think about those activities, and thinking about the, the culture of the school, and attitudes of adults and children within the, the place; how do you feel that has, or how they have supported this move, movement for change?

HT   [pause]. I think by the fact that they have been involved, and they've, at times you've put them in the deep ends, they've really sort of, have risen to the challenge, and I guess all feel ownership for the school, as opposed to just being, you know, pupils who get things done to them. You know, they, they now feel empowered, but also responsible, so that's been a sort of a major [unclear], for instance, in the playground, the guardian angels, you know, they do take their job seriously, and if any visitors or have an inspector speaking to them, they've, they also sell what they're doing as, and, and then they're proud of what they're doing, and they do see it as a special, as a privilege to be involved with you know, being part of the success of the school.

IV   Mm, I mean, the feedback that I'm getting from them, covers aspects like trust, and responsibility, as you've mentioned, and being part of a wider decision-making part of the school, and that they can contribute as much as many of the adults, so I don't know what your thoughts are on, let's say, aspects for the individual child. What, how do you think these roles, if they choose to participate; how, what benefits do you think that they are for the child?

HT   [pause]. I think that it's important, particularly in year six, for the children to feel that they're trusted and have, have something to offer; so for instance, going, going back to my earlier point about, at one point, actually, the only thing that was going the year six children was to get in the football team. Whereas now, with, with your three projects, children have got an opportunity to offer something to the school, and it's quite interesting that when they sort of, reflect upon, upon (case study school), in their portfolios they're mentioning their contributions in, in these roles. A few cases where this year, we've had children who, who appealed to go to certain secondary schools, or were part of the eleven plus selection process, and they've highlighted their, their contributions, academic contributions at (cases study school). They've also, if they were on the school council, they've cited that, or guardian

angels, so it's actually, has developed quite a lot of sort of, sort of, cultural capital within the school. So it has actually given them a sense of being seen as capable and competent members of a school community, by what they're doing, and [unclear] it has tended to be on, just on the academic side, because academically, or sport, those are the only avenues; whereas now you've opened up, and you've given other avenues for children to show their potential.

IV   So that they now have opportunities for greater autonomy around the place, would you say?

IG   Yes, I mean, yeah, greater autonomy, but also to sort of show sort of care and concern for, for, for others, and I think that's been particularly sort of good, this, and it's the fact that it's not like, I don't know, say, the guardian angels, are prefects and they're bosses; they're not at all. That they actually have got the whole message about what it is to contribute, and both, you know, the boys and the girls, so as a guardian angel, they do see, how do I say, conflict management resolution, as being high importance, so it gives them an opportunity to sort of show or reciprocate or care, that they've being shown over the years.

IV   And what's been quite nice to notice, is if they have been a child in year three, having had contact with guardian angels earlier on in their school career here, they've wanted to be part of that when they've got to year six. And they do cite that the school is special, in that it does promote care for all, and that they are able to contribute as such, with this. So from a social point of view, they certainly think that they're contributing to that. So, you've said about children gaining comfort and some self esteem; what are the benefits of those sides to their character for use in the future?

IG   [pause]. To a certain extent, one of the aims at the school, is obviously to produce sort of, children who want to contribute to society, and who want to make the most of their talents, so often enough, sort of, primary school particularly, now the school is glad they're, you know, a golden period for them, and often at secondary school, as they start again, sort of, they'll, you know as year sevens, I tend to find that they get set back, if you like, and then they have another spurt when they're 15 or 16, so it just gives another opportunity to, to really get excited about their own potential, and to experiment being the top of the school. So, you know, I would, I would see this whole Pupil's Voice project as a way to give children self confidence in their abilities, and to realise that actually, what's exciting is, it is a wider range of abilities, not just purely academic abilities, but, and also, you know, the, you know, even the social abilities and a variety of abilities, so Pupil's Voice helped them to, just to see that. And also, once again, this idea of contributing to others, so I think they'll, you know, make good employees and, and members of the community, by experiencing you know, the, what actually happens here. But also, they, they get recognised and appreciated by the staff for their contributions, so it's a, a reciprocal sort of arrangement there.

IV Right, so I would like to welcome SC8, who's come to help me with my research for a second interview; and for the purposes of the transcript, the code is SCI-8/2. Okay, so once again, SC8, lovely to see you, and thank you very much for coming to help me out. And I'm really interested to find out from you how you've been getting along in Year 7 at (secondary school, and the first thing I'd like to ask you is: can you tell me anything about the good bits that you can remember about being at (case study school)?

SC8 Oh, gosh, there was loads of things good at being, about being at (case study school), like you got lots of opportunities to [pause] clubs and, like, school council; you got to be a guardian angel, and there're all different clubs. They're, like, when using [?], you're free, you've got master classes; and just generally it was nice, good days, here.

IV Hmm-hmm. Oh, good! And could you perhaps remind me about how you felt about some of the roles that you undertook? Because you were quite a busy person, weren't you, when you were here? So you were a school counsellor, weren't you?

SC8 Yes.

IV And what was your role for that?

SC8 I was the secretary, one of the three secretaries on the school council. And obviously, that year we split the role into three, so one person didn't have too much work.

IV Yes. And what did you gain from that?

SC8 Oh, just, like, more confidence to speak to people, voice my opinion in a group of people.

IV And has that been of benefit to you at secondary school?

SC8 Yes, I think so, because I'm not, like, slow, in coming forward – now I can voice my opinions: like, many times I've had debates with my form tutor about [pause] - what's the word? - an issue I feel quite strongly about. And it's just really helped, because it's good to be confident; but not, obviously, not too confident.

IV Hmm-hmm. That's good. And how about your role as a guardian angel?

SC8 I really feel that that helped because, like, I can sort out… if I know I can sort out other people's problems, it helps me to sort out my own problems.

IV Yes. Yes, and so, being able to problem-solve and negotiate - quite important elements, aren't they?

SC8   Yes, they are, because if you can't use, it's going to [pause], it's quite bad, because you need those type of skills for anything you do, really.

IV   And did you take a master class?

MO   Yes.

IV   Yes, what was that…?

SC8   We did an Art master class.

IV   All right. And what sort of skills did you have to use, about?

SC8   You just had to… obviously, they're quite, they were a lot younger than us, so you had to be calm and patient; you had to be creative in showing them what you was doing. And if they didn't understand, you had to be able to help them, and not get, like, flustered.

IV   Hmm. And, I mean, you've said a little bit about the long-term effects on you personally, with confidence and being able to deal with new situations; so is there anything else that the roles from (case study school) have, how they've impacted on you?

SC8   Just generally it's helped me, like, grow as a person. Like, as I said before, I'm more confident than I was before, and I can get my opinions across in a good way. And being able to problem-solve just helps you, like… say you have an argument with a friend, you could just look past it and sort it out, and then you can both move on.

IV   Hmm. So do you think, whilst you were here, you felt as though you were working in a team, or [pause] in a co-constructive way, with adults?

SC8   Yes, because, like, especially being on the school council, you was helping the whole school, which inherently helps the teachers as well. And being a guardian angel you was, like, helping younger children be, like, more happy, and sorting out their problems which, if they wasn't happy, that could affect their work.

IV   And, also, because the guardian angels are so effective, it's helping all the adults who were out on duty as well.

SC8   Yes.

IV   So do you feel that the responsibilities you were given meant that the adults in the school trusted your competency, of being able to undertake the role?

SC8   Yes, definitely. It shows a lot of trust to give someone that kind of responsibility. Because, okay, it's not the biggest responsibility in the world, but, like, I was ten, 11 at the time, so it helps you, because once you've been given some responsibility you'll grow; like, you'll grow, and you'll be given even more responsibility. And if you know how to handle it, it [pause] everything should be okay, I think.

IV   So do you think, at (case study school), children are given enough opportunities to pursue those experiences?

SC8   Yes, I think there is quite a lot of opportunities at (case study school) to, like, gain confidence, responsibility. Yes, I just think it's really good.

IV   So do you feel [pause] that children's views were valued?

SC8   Yes, definitely.

IV   And can you describe how they were, how're they valued?

SC8   Well, because when you, like… how do I put this? [pause] You're valued because you're giving the child something to do. Like, obviously you're not giving them the most responsible thing in the world, because that's a bit much to put on a young child, but to give them… it makes them feel like they're doing something, and they're doing something right, to help with the school.

IV   And that's important, isn't it, I think?

SC8   Yes.

IV   So [pause], if your views were valued and you enjoyed yourself, do you feel that you made a difference when you were here?

SC8   In a way I think we, like, especially as the school council, as a team, made a difference, and obviously I played a part in that. So I think we did make a difference. And being a guardian angel also made a difference, on some of the children's problems. Because that could affect them in anything, if they've still got a problem hanging over their shoulder.

IV   Hmm. And [pause] thinking about working with adults, with the master class situation, you had to plan your lesson, didn't you? And there weren't adults around, if you like, giving you advice - so how did you feel when you sat with those…?

SC8   Well, I did it with some of my friends, and we all made a group effort to try and make it fun and let, help them to learn something, at the same time. So it was good, but we had to put work into it, otherwise it would just all collapse, and it wouldn't go right. And then we would have had the feeling that we'd let the kids down, which isn't good. And it gives you a chance to be creative in what you're doing, whatever master class you want to do, because you didn't have the teachers, adults, telling you what to do. So you had the chance to plan it, and how you wanted it to go.

IV   No, good, good. So during the 11 MILLION Takeover Day you were one of the head teachers, weren't you?

SC8   Yes.

IV   So what memories have you got of that?

SC8   Ah, I just remember that it was really fun, and that we had to take on the responsibilities of the headmaster for the day, and obviously (Head-teacher) - he was still here to help us, which was good - and we had to go through those slips of ideas of whether

they were good or not, although most of them weren't; but it was still a chance to get children's voices being heard even though it was through us, as children, as well. But you got to go around the school, you got to see what all different classes were doing, and you got to, like, as I said last time about the boiler leak, which we wouldn't have learnt about before, so it just made you feel, like, more responsible and confident and just good: it was a general good feeling.

IV   And do you…? I mean, I think what you've been saying, and maybe you can just say whether I'm on the right lines or not, but [pause] even though you are children, and younger than the adults, that whilst being at (case study school) you were treated frequently as team members, or people who could actively work on something?

SC8   Yes. It was like we was part of a big group of people helping the school, like on a team – you all help each other. And adults have to have the children's cooperation and help as well, otherwise you might not know what's going on.

IV   Hmm. And how about communication at the school? Do you think, too [?], [pause] that that was working effectively?

SC8   I think it was working, because children can sometimes get things out of children than an adult might not necessarily be able to. And, like, once you've got that out, you can then forward it on to the adult, who can make a difference in the actual school. So it's a like a chain, basically: you've got a child who's saying whatever they want to say, their views; then the messenger, which would be, like, a member of the school council, or the guardian angel; and then the adult who can actually make the change happen.

IV   Hmm-hmm. So, how about at secondary school? Have you been able to use any of those skills that you've described very clearly, since being at (secondary school)? Have there been opportunities?

SC8   There is opportunities at (secondary school), but obviously, like, there is a school council, but I'm not on it this year - and my fault, because we was, like, in the grammar stream, we got asked, like, two members of our class, a boy and a girl, were asked to make a speech at our Celebration Afternoon, which went very well, as well. And, like, as I say, during PHSE and form-time I've had some debates with my form tutor, because we go on this website which has all the news on it, and there was a news issue about Madeleine McCann; and I had a debate with him about that. And, yes, it's just helped, like, we've had to do presentations in quite a few of our classes, like in Science we had to, we had a case study that we had to do…

IV   Oh, right, yes?

SC8   Yes, and in English we had to [pause] make a presentation, and do a speech on it. And so in some ways, like, before I would have been a bit nervous and I might not have spoken up as much as I did, but, like, now I feel more confident in speaking to people.

IV   So do you think it's important that at primary-junior school, children have opportunities to improve their skills of, I don't know, confidence and self-esteem, and all of these…?

SC8   Yes, because it, it's, like, when you change from primary school to secondary school it's a big difference, and generally it's a much bigger school, so you don't want to be… like you want to be able to talk to people and, about absolutely anything, whether it's a good thing, a bad thing. And it's good, because it sets you up for your, like, life, your school career; and at secondary schools, when you take all your tests like your GCSEs and your A-levels and all that, you've got to be able to [pause], like, be set up for that, with your confidence. Because let's say you do an English GCSE or A-level, you have to give a speech; and, well, it could affect your marks if you're not being set up from [sic] that from the early age.

IV   Hmm-hmm. And have you found, by talking to your friends who would have come from other schools, that they had similar opportunities for doing the things that we do at (case study school)?

SC8   Some of them had similar opportunities; like, this girl in my form they had head girl and head boy, and she was head girl, so there's similar opportunities there, but I haven't actually found anyone who's got exactly the same thing [?] as (case study school).

IV   No. Because we went to (local university) didn't we?

SC8   Yes.

IV   And what memories have you got of that?

SC8   I remember all of it quite clearly, actually. When we was in the lecture hall and I remember us giving the speeches with the guardian angels, all about how every child matters, and they was… Wasn't they studying to be teachers?

IV   Yes, yes.

SC8   Yes, so that, to get the voice of a child when you're studying to be a teacher, where you're going to be working with children, like, kids; so you've got to know, like, what they think on the matter.

IV   And so do you think that was an important thing to do?

SC8   Yes.

IV   No, no, I agree, that's good. So [pause]… I think most of the things you have spoken very eloquently about, I have to say. So perhaps, if we wrap things [pause] up now [pause], thinking ahead, let's say next year and the year after that [pause], what are your feelings about your time spent at (case study school)?

SC8   Well, I think just being at (case study school) has helped me as a person, really, because as I have said, there were so many opportunities, whatever it was, from clubs to a councillor or guardian angel, so it just helps you as a person. As I get older it will help me, because then, as I said, the confidence - when I'm older I want to be a barrister, so I have to have confidence in order to speak about the case that I'm doing.

IV   Hmm-hmm. Oh, right, that's good. I was going to ask you about aspirations, about what [pause], if you had anything in mind, then that would be good. So how, what's made you think about becoming a barrister, which is, you know, a really good ambition?

SC8   Well, I first heard about it when my mom and dad was getting divorced; that's when I heard about it. And I thought, in general, you've got, you're giving this kind of, like, organised arguing, kind of. Yes, but you've got to be prepared in what you want to say, and I think I could give across a good speech for my client, and I think I'd be able to get it… like, get all of the evidence and everything ready. And I know it's going to be a lot of work, but I think I'm willing to put it in.

IV   And so, can you think of what you have described to me about your experience at Bedonwell? What, of those experiences, are going to help you in becoming a barrister?

SC8   Well, especially being on the school council would help, because I've had to - it's like we've all been on a team, and I've had to give across my views and everything - and it's going to kind of be like that. There's going to be the barrister or solicitor for the client, and then there's going to be the opposing team, which is - you're going to have, like, a debate with, where you've got to get all your views across and try and obviously win the case, which I think [pause] doing that, being on the school council, talking as a team, has helped, really. And like, even being a guardian angel…

Appendix 7: Ethics Approval

From:	"Lynne Spencer" <L.T.Spencer@greenwich.ac.uk>
Organization :	the University of Greenwich
To:	S.M.Leathers@gre.ac.uk,
	J.Jameson@gre.ac.uk,
	sh455@gre.ac.uk,
Date sent:	Mon, 18 Feb 2008 10:21:00 GMT
Subject:	ethics
Copies to:	J.Poulton@gre.ac.uk
Priority:	normal

Dear heather

I confirm that I have received further information from yourself and that you have ethical approval to proceed. A letter will come in due course but please accept this email as notice to proceed.

best wishes

Lynne

Lynne Spencer
Campus Head of Student Affairs
Medway
0208 331 8587

Dear Parents / Guardians and Children,

Mrs Soanes' Education Doctorate Research
'A Study of Child's Voice and its Impact on the Child and their Junior School'

I am currently undertaking research with the University of Greenwich towards an Education Doctorate degree, researching 'Child's Voice'. As part of this research, I intend to interview a number of our Year 6 children, who undertake a variety of roles within the school. I shall be asking them for their views regarding the impact these roles are having personally for them, others and the school and their ideas for future improvements.

I have conducted two pilot studies at the school over the past three years and am now ready to begin my research thesis. I have gained permission from both the governors and Mr Gordo to conduct the research and hope that it will be helpful to everyone at the school. I have spoken to a number of children and your child has expressed an interest to be included in this research. The interviews will be semi-structured in nature and last for approximately 20 minutes on each occasion. They will be recorded for my use only and transcribed for data collection purposes only. All recordings will be kept securely locked in a filing cabinet in my office and at the end of the research process these will be destroyed. I would like to reassure you that children will remain anonymous at all times and their interviews identified by the use of codes. I would like to reassure children and parents/guardians that there will be no adverse consequences for children should they choose to withdraw from participation. There are no right or wrong answers to the interview questions, just the opinions of each interview candidate.

I hope to conduct the initial interviews during December. At each interview there will always be another adult or invited friend in attendance, to accord with the school's Child Protection procedures.

I should therefore be grateful if you and your child could complete the reply slip below and return to me. I thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Heather Soanes
Deputy Headteacher

Mrs Soanes' Education Doctorate Research
'A Study of Child's Voice and its Impact on the Child and their Junior School'

I have read the letter or had it read to me describing the above research.

I wish / do not wish to be part of the research programme.

Signed ……………………………………………………. (Child)

Class……………

I / We agree / do not agree for my/ our child …………………………………………………
to be part of the research programme.

Signed …………………………………………………….

(Parent / Guardian) of …………………………………….

Date……………………………….

Please return to Mrs Soanes