

School Staff Experiences of an Academic Resilience Approach: a Whole Systems Perspective

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By

Josie Maitland

BA (Royal Holloway, University of London), MA Ed (University of Chichester)

University of Brighton

Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

Dated

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Abbreviations

ARA Academic Resilience Approach: A whole-school resilience building approach with an inequalities focus, developed by Angie Hart and Lisa Williams. The ARA is based on Professor Hart's collaborative resilience work at the University of Brighton, with input from other individuals and organisations, especially YoungMinds, Hove Park School and Eleanor Smith School. It has been adopted by YoungMinds (a national mental health charity) and Local Authorities across the country

CAMHS Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services: an NHS provided service in the UK

CRSJ Centre of Resilience for Social Justice at the University of Brighton: Multi-disciplinary team of researchers and practitioners with a shared aim to tackle disadvantage and build resilience. The centre adopts a co-production model to residence based research and practice in their global projects.

DfE Department for Education (UK): from 2007 the **DfES** was split up into the Department for Children, Schools and Families (**DCSF**) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skill. The **DCSF** was later re-organised as the Department for Education (**DfE**) in 2010.

EBSCO Elton B. Stephens Co: (a digital library resource offering a full text database collection of literature from academic, medical, K–12, public library, law, corporate, and government sectors

EHRC Equality and Human Rights Commission: a non-departmental public body with responsibility for the promotion and enforcement of equality and non-discrimination laws in England, Scotland and Wales.

EMP Enhanced Mainstream Provision: Pupils with additional needs that require enhanced mainstream provision such as Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and so on. Sometimes on adjusted or reduced timetables

ERIC Education Resources Information Centre: online library of education research and information, sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences, US department of Education

FSM Free School Meals: government funding to provide a free school meal for children whose parents or carers receive income support benefits, jobseeker or employment allowance, immigration or asylum support, state pension or child tax credits

GCSE General Certificate of Secondary Education: a formal qualification in England and Wales awarded at the end of Key Stage Four

HPS Health Promoting Schools: WHO's Global School Health Initiative including the development of the Health Promoting Schools Framework (Langford et al., 2014)).

HPS also refers to the Health Promoting Schools Scale developed to measure aspects of a health promoting school (Lemerle, 2005)

IMAGINE The Imagine programme (Imagine, 2017): a five-year programme running from 2013 to 2017, which has brought together different research projects working across universities and their local communities. The Social Work-Package is led by the University of Brighton

KS1/2/3/4 Legal terms combining years of formal schooling in England and Wales: Key Stage 1 (Reception to Year 2 or age 4 to 7) Key Stage 2 (Years 3,4,5,6 or age 7 to 11) Key Stage 3 (Years 7,8,9 or age 11 to 14) Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11 or age 14-16)

LA Local Authority: an organisation that is officially responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area

LFARA Locally Facilitated Academic Resilience Approach: a county-wide adaptation and application of the ARA across schools in the North of England. Research on the LFARA took place between 2015 and 2018. Brighton University collaborated with Public Health as well as the Education Service and the County Council in the area of delivery.

LGBT Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender

MH Mental Health

MHFA A government initiated scheme intended to provide training for staff that will help them to support young people facing constellated disadvantage, in order to prevent future mental health issues

MMIRA Mixed Method International Research Association: promoting development of an international and interdisciplinary mixed methods research community

MRC Medical Research Council: UK body training researchers and carrying out research intended to improve human health

NHS National Health Service: Public national health services UK)

NQT Newly Qualified Teacher: In the first year post qualification, teachers are referred to as NQTs, they have a mentor and a reduced timetable

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development: promoting policies that aim to improve global economic and social wellbeing

OFSTED Office for Standards in Education: an inspection and regulatory service for education providers in Britain

OPAL Outdoor Play and Learning: A programme run by OPAL, a community interest company aiming to educate and train school staff in how to maximise outdoor play and learning opportunities

OT Occupational Therapy: the use of particular activities as an aid to recuperation from physical or mental illness, in this case offered in schools to pupils

PP Pupil Premium: a grant given by the UK government to schools aiming to decrease attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Eligibility includes having been or currently being eligible for free school meals, having been or being currently looked after in the care system or having a parent in the armed forces)

psycINFO Database of abstracts from literature in the field of Psychology, produced by the American Psychological Association

RSA Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce: a body of 29,000 global fellows who aim to enrich society through collective ideas and action

SCS Social Capital Scale (Onyx & Bullen, 2000): questionnaire measuring social capital in terms of participation in networks, reciprocity, trust, social norms, the commons, and social agency

SDP School Development Plan: A formal policy planning document required by inspectors and produced by school staff

SEAL Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (DfE, 2005): a whole-school approach to promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and multiple stakeholder wellbeing

SEBD Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties

SEND Special Educational Need or Disability

SES Socio-Economic Status

SLT Senior Leadership Team: Usually comprising the Head Teacher and the deputy and assistant heads, sometimes also head of faculties

SPSC Staff Perceptions of School Climate (survey scale developed for the purpose of this study)

SPSS Statistical Package for Social Sciences: Microsoft statistics software programme

SOHQ School Organisational Health Questionnaire (Hart et al., 2000): survey for assessing teachers stress, morale and school organisational climate

TA Teaching Assistants: also known as classroom assistants or learning support assistants

T1 First survey data collection (Time one)

T2 Second survey data collection (Time two)

WHO World Health Organisation

WS Whole-School: usually referring to whole-school approaches or their nature

Abstract

Purpose

This thesis explores staff perspectives of the first county-wide application of the Academic Resilience Approach (ARA* ; Hart & Williams, under review), a whole-school approach to building resilience. Whole-school approaches have been highlighted as effective methods of health promotion, social and emotional development and increasing attainment, particularly for the most disadvantaged pupils. The ARA aims to build resilience of the whole-school community in order to improve outcomes for the most disadvantage pupils.

This study had an integrated sequential mixed method design, which aimed to articulate multiple staff perspectives of a locally facilitated ARA process, specifically in relation to the following research questions:

- i)** What key characteristics of the school system (in terms of structure, values, culture and behaviour) enabled or constrained the locally facilitated Academic Resilience Approach?
- ii)** As a result of the locally facilitated Academic Resilience Approach, what changes, if any, have emerged in the school system (in terms of structure, values, culture and behaviour)?
- iii)** To what extent and in what ways have staff perceptions of leadership changed as a result of the locally facilitated Academic Resilience Approach?

Methods

Staff in eighteen schools completed the Staff Perception of School Climate (SPSC) survey pre- and post-intervention (N=109). Semi-structured interviews were carried out by telephone with all facilitators (N=9) and with a subsample of three staff (school leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff) in each of the five sub-sample schools (N=15) to establish experiences of the locally facilitated ARA process including the mutual adaptation of the school system and the intervention.

Findings

* www.boingboing.org.uk/academic-resilience-approach/

Qualitative data findings suggest that the implementation was perceived by staff to be congruent with existing school values and priorities, and to have resulted in increased feedback and communication. When the locally facilitated ARA was prioritised and legitimised by leaders, the approach was perceived to improve aspects of school climate, including a reduction in workload, increased participative decision making, improved communication and increased staff morale. The process was also perceived by staff to have initiated structural and policy change, by increasing feedback from staff (of multiple role types) and pupils. Subsequently, behavioural and cultural change was observed, which staff perceived to increase the momentum of the locally facilitated ARA, leading to further emergent change at multiple system levels.

Repeated measures from the SPSC survey were analysed using SPSS in order to compare changes in staff perceptions of school climate over time and between role and school type. For the total sample ($N=109$) there was an increase in the total SPSC scores ($M_{t1}=3.74$, $SD_{t1}=.53$ / $M_{t2}=3.84$, $SD_{t2}=.51$). Calculation of effect size (Partial $\eta =.20$) indicated a small effect (Cohen, 1988) that was statistically significant ($t(107) =-.283$, $p<.01$). Specifically, these findings highlight improved work balance, increased participative decision making and more supportive leadership as the likely drivers of increased perceptions of school climate. The results are moderated by primary school type.

Conclusions

A synthesis of findings from this thesis conceptualises the locally facilitated ARA as a process of adaptation in a complex social system. Findings from both survey and interview data suggest that the approach has been perceived by staff as a uniquely positioned school improvement process. The focus on existing strengths and values, as well as the capacity of the process to increase distributed leadership, was perceived to tackle adversity for staff. In addition, the locally facilitated ARA process appears to have increased school readiness for change by improving the school climate, which staff anticipated would positively impact pupil outcomes.

As the first research on a county-wide implementation of the ARA, this study articulates the process of context dependent adaptation in which increased feedback initiated emergent change in the school system. In addition, the capacity of the approach to increase school readiness for change by amplifying enabling factors and addressing potential constraints is identified.

Implications

These findings contribute to an understanding of schools as complex systems (Davis & Sumara, 2006; Lemke & Sabelli, 2008; Mason, 2008), and understanding the dynamic process of whole-school change. In addition, findings highlight the need for non-punitive approaches to whole-school evaluation and improvement that are driven by the existing values and needs of staff and pupils.

Key words: Whole-school approach, complex systems, staff perspectives, resilience

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study articulates staff experiences of a county-wide, multiple school intervention in the North of England based on the Academic Resilience Approach (ARA, Hart & Williams, 2014). As the title suggests, this research was underpinned by a mixed method design and complexity perspective. The chosen methodology (explored more fully in **Chapter 4**), aimed to further understanding of the interaction between existing conditions and whole-school approaches in complex school systems.

The aim of this research was to explore how a locally facilitated ARA, as a whole county implementation, has been experienced by school staff (including senior leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff) in multiple school types (primary, secondary and special education). Staff perceptions of existing school climate, and to what extent these factors enabled or constrained the approach, were considered. In addition, the extent to which staff perceived change to have occurred in the school system as a result of implementing the approach was explored.

This chapter begins by outlining the context of the study, beginning with the author's motivations for undertaking the research. The underlying contextual issues of risk and resilience in schools (the focus of the intervention) are discussed, and the need for further research into staff perspectives of whole-school approaches is identified. Research questions and an overview of the thesis document are provided in the light of contextual need for the study.

1.1 Motivations for Undertaking this Research

This thesis as a whole has been written in formal academic style, adopting a third person perspective. However, it is important to note that the preference for this writing style does not exclude the need to explore personal prior experience, which will undoubtedly have contributed to the decision to undertake this study, as well as influenced the interpretations of the findings. An overview is thus provided here, in the interests of reflexivity, of the subjective experiences of the researcher prior to this study. Further reflexive considerations are made in relation to the study design (**Chapter 4**), and the interpretation of findings (**Chapter 8 and 9**). In these chapters, it has been important to continually reflect on my professional experience as a teacher, and the extent to which I have been able to critically

consider staff experiences of the locally facilitated ARA, particularly considering that one of the authors of the approach is my lead supervisor.

My previous professional experience and academic study have both fuelled my interest in whole-school approaches to improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils that also consider staff wellbeing. In my Master's degree dissertation *Lost Boys*, I evaluated a short-term intervention programme that employed creative arts with a group of ten male pupils. The pupils were identified by the school as 'disengaged' and potentially at risk of exclusion. Findings demonstrated multiple positive outcomes, including increases in cognitive, behavioural, and emotional engagement. I had initially anticipated that the arts intervention would engage pupils through the programme content. However, my findings showed that engagement increased as a result of opportunities provided for self-reflection, social learning and personal social and emotional development. The young boys identified opportunities in the project to be encouraged; experience success; explore individual identity; to witness positive role modelling; to feel safe in taking risks; and to cultivate a sense of belonging in school. These opportunities were perceived to be more significant than the curricula content used as a vehicle for these experiences.

I argued that dominant current school practice (especially standardised testing) could be seen as disruptive to holistic development through artificially separating pastoral and learning needs, which are intrinsically linked. Thus, I concluded that short-term interventions to address the socio-emotional and academic issues of those facing adversity were limited. In contrast, whole-school approaches seemed to me to acknowledge the need to address structural barriers to equality that included developing a school culture and embedded and sustainable practice.

Having taught for eight years in mainstream and special education settings, I was also acutely aware of the significant current adversity facing school staff. My experiences suggested that long-term and sustainable change for pupils depended on attending first to the needs of staff, since I perceived the two to be bi-directionally linked.

Congruent with prior research, findings from my Master's degree research indicated that teachers experienced stress and professional disengagement (Curry & O'Brien, 2012; Mansfield, Beltman, Price & McConney, 2012; Smith Crocco & Costigan, 2006) as a result of a 'perceived lack of control and sense of powerlessness' (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005, p. 40). Staff in the study reported that their capacity to build resilience in pupils was limited by the extremes of their own professional adversity. Thus, I argued that increasing staff autonomy, increasing meaningful opportunities for decision making, and improving

professional support for staff was a critical foundation for improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

The opportunity to carry out research on staff perspectives of a whole-school approach to reducing inequality, was therefore ideally suited to both my professional and academic experiences and interests.

1.2 Contextual Background

In the following section of the chapter, risk and resilience in the school system (for pupils and staff) is discussed as a justification for whole-school approaches. Neither contextual need, nor the potential for whole-school approaches to address such complexity, is restricted to UK contexts. References are made both in this chapter as well as **Chapter 2** and **Chapter 3** that highlight international parallels and comparisons. However, the thesis as a whole does focus on the UK school context, since the intervention described in this thesis took place within a Local Authority (LA) in the North of England. In this thesis, the locally facilitated Academic Resilience Approach is abbreviated to LFARA. This is to distinguish the local intervention in practice from the ARA as a conceptual approach. In addition, as will be described in this chapter, there are multiple ways in which schools can engage with the ARA, including using web-based resources with no external facilitation. In the present study, schools engaged with a facilitator (LA staff), who supported them through the ARA, a process henceforth referred to as the LFARA.

1.2.1 Risk and Resilience in the School System. Schools are widely considered to support the health and long-term outcomes of young people. Multiple protective factors are identified in existing literature to buffer against risks to healthy adaptation and development (Masten, Herbers, Cutuli & Lavafor, 2008; Ungar, 2006, 2008;). The term ‘protective factor’ refers to a ‘quality of a person, or context, or their interaction, that predicts better outcomes, particularly in situations of risk or adversity’ (O’Dougherty Wright & Masten, 2005, pp. 19). School-based protective factors include, but are not restricted to:

- Participation in extracurricular activities (Mahoney, Schweder & Stattin, 2002)
- Recognising young people’s strengths (Henderson & Milstein, 2002)
- Peer acceptance (Dodge & Pettit, 2003)

- Individual and school level academic achievement (Erickson et al., 2016; Jackson & Martin, 1998)
- Sense of school community (Battistich & Horn, 1997)
- Increasing access to support services and community links (Weare & Markham, 2005)
- Meaningful participation and relationships with trusting adults (Brooks & Magnusson, 2006)

High levels of protective factors present in the school climate can moderate the relationship between risk factors (such as low socio-economic status, special educational need or family adversity) and pupil outcomes (positive adaptation). The buffering of risk through protective factors is referred to as ‘resilience’, which has been defined as ‘a dynamic process encompassing positive adaption within the context of significant adversity’ (Luthar, Chicchetti & Becker, 2000, pp. 543). Protective factors originate from a number of levels of a child’s ecological system, including individual, peer, family, school and community aspects. As Anne Masten has asserted, resilience cannot, therefore, be considered as quality or trait inherent to individuals, but as emerging from ‘everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children’ interacting with ‘their families and relationships, and in their communities’ (2001, p.235). Such an understanding of resilience emphasises the potentially cumulative effects of protective factors, which can interact to amplify the extent to which risk factors are negated by resilient processes (Durlak, 1998; Minnard, 2002). Thus, schools are not only sites ideally situated to promote particular protective factors (Domitrovich et al., 2010; Masten et al., 2008; Ungar, 2008, Weare, 2010a, 2010b), but can also serve as critical links between multiple domains in the lives of young people, encouraging and developing protective factors beyond school level.

1.2.1.1 Mental Health. A frequently cited statistic is that around 10% of children and young people (aged 5-16) in the UK are currently diagnosed with a mental health condition (Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford & Goodman, 2005). The next UK Child and Adolescent Mental Health Survey is due to be published this year (2018), and some researchers suggest this figure is due to rise. Current figures suggest a ‘striking’ six-fold increase has been observed in the last ten years of the number of young people reporting and being treated for a range of mental health issues (including but not exclusive of anxiety, self-harm, suicide

ideation and eating disorders) (Pitchforth et al., 2018). As demand for specialist services increases (NSPCC, 2016; Page, 2016; Yeung, Weale & Perraudin, 2016), the strain on thinly spread specialist support services, such as CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), has become more apparent. Calls have been made to provide adequate funding, policy initiatives that promote the parity of mental and physical health, and multi-sectoral parallel measures including school-based intervention (Pitchforth et al., 2018).

Schools provide access to a large number of pupils, including many who may not receive health education or intervention elsewhere, providing a fertile context for preventative mental health intervention (Barry, Clark, Jenkins & Patel, 2013; Nielsen, Meilstrup, Nelausen, Koushede & Holstein, 2015; Weare, 2010a). Successful early school-based intervention also has the potential to reduce demand and cost to public health services long term, particularly if these programmes also effect academic outcomes, which have been inextricably linked to long term physical and mental health as well as employment and life expectancy (EHRC, 2010; Ermisch, Del Bono & Trust., 2010). If early prevention, identification or treatment does not occur in childhood, there is a strong likelihood that many children will go on to experience long term mental health issues, be less socially adjusted and require longer term and more expensive interventions later in their adult lives (Fergusson, Horwood, Ridder & Beautrais, 2005; Friedli & Parsonage, 2007).

Increased awareness and intervention around mental health may have contributed to an increase in identification of mental health issues (Collishaw, 2015). In addition, mental health problems are known to be strongly correlated with learning disabilities, parental breakdown, experience of domestic abuse (Murphy & Fonagy, 2012; NHS, 2015), and most significantly, deprivation (Attree, 2004; Feinstein, 2003). However, factors beyond school (such as social media and family adversity (Bentley et al., 2017) also significantly affect mental health. In order for schools to ensure effective and sustainable support, risk factors *within* the school context must also be acknowledged. Of particular significance in relation to school-based risk factors are:

- The pressurised nature of school climate including examinations (Lessof, Ross, Brind, Bell & Newton, 2016)
- Prevalence of bullying (Beardsmore, 2015; Bentley et al., 2017)
- Structural barriers to young people accessing support including increased poverty and inadequate service provision (Abdinasir & Pona, 2015; Barnardo's, 2018: McManus, Bebbington, Jenkins & Brugha, 2016).

In addition, the impact of school staff adversity on pupils, whilst not extensively explored, may present an indirect risk factor. Therefore, it is necessary for schools to address the ways in which not only for pupils, but for staff, parents and carers, *protective* factors in the school environment can be increased, whilst *risk* factors can be addressed and reduced.

1.2.1.2 Health and Educational Inequality. In a strategic review of health inequalities (Marmot et al., 2010), wide gaps were identified in health and wellbeing between social groups, as reflected in educational attainment, employment and income, housing and life expectancy. The report recommended universal action to address the social gradient of health inequalities, since not only do the most ‘disadvantaged’ have poorer outcomes, but inequalities start from the ‘top’ and get wider towards the ‘bottom’. The authors argue that this creates a gradient of disadvantage manifesting in different ways across social sectors. Therefore, it was suggested that action that is both universal and proportionate to the level of disadvantage will reduce inequality overall. Because social disadvantage begins before birth (key antecedents being the socio-economic status, health and housing of parents (Feinstein, 2003; Duncan et al., 2007)) and accumulates through life, education settings present an obvious site of both early health intervention and, importantly, prevention of social inequality.

Schools are ideally situated to challenge existing social inequalities due to the large and diverse intake of children and the significant role that their school experience and relative success will have on their life opportunities. However, it cannot be assumed that schools present opportunities to tackle inequality (as highlighted in relation to mental health above), without addressing the causes of inequality inherent in the education system. Persistent inequality issues in the education system must be tackled as part of systemic and holistic approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of young people, such is the important role that schools play long term emotional, physical and mental health outcomes (Feinstein, Sabates, Anderson, Sorhaindo & Hammond, 2006).

Educational inequality is evident even before children reach formal school age (JRF, 2016a; Duncan et al., 2007). Statistics indicate that there is nearly a one-year gap in ‘school readiness’ for children aged three between mainstream and disadvantaged families, whilst a 15-month gap in vocabulary development at school entry age immediately further disadvantages children from poorer families (Blanden & Machin, 2007, 2013). Socio-economic gaps in reading proficiency are large by the time children leave primary school

(Feinstein, 2003; Jerrim & Vignoles, 2013; Jerrim, Vignoles, Lingam & Friend, 2015). Some research suggests that upward mobility of children from families with lower socio-economic status is restricted in comparison to their peers (Feinstein, 2003). Multiple contributing factors have been proposed including differences in teaching quality, negative environmental influences in poorer neighbourhoods (Lupton, 2004), and genetic differences (Cassen, Feinstein & Graham, 2009). However, research has found that the effect size of both quality of school (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004) and gene correlation (Jerrim et al., 2015) to school outcomes are small in comparison to other ecological factors such as parental involvement. In the home environment, parental responsiveness, acceptance of the child, organisation of the environment, learning stimulation (Caldwell & Bradley, 2003) and parental education (Feinstein, Duckworth & Sabates, 2008) are amongst the strongest predictors of school readiness and academic engagement.

In spite of what we know of these antecedents of academic success, less is understood about the complex interaction between these variables. As a result, the 'gap' not only persists, but widens throughout school (DfE, 2015; Duncan et al., 2007; Machin & Vignoles, 2018). The profound difference between the performance of 'disadvantaged pupils' and their peers across all the Key Stage 4 indicators (standardised testing at the end of Year 11, when pupils are aged 15 or 16) is particularly striking, with 36.5% achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and Mathematics, in comparison to 64% for all other pupils (DfE, 2015). In terms of examination grades at Key Stage 4 (GCSE or equivalent), latest statistics revealed that in the UK, there has been little change in the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers since 2011 (JRF, 2016b; Hutchinson et al., 2018).

The Department for Education defines 'disadvantaged pupils' as those who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) or who have been looked after by the LA (Local Authority) for more than six months. Statistics from the Department for Education support the assertion that educational outcomes may be negatively influenced by placement in LA care (DfE, 2016a). Research also shows that coming from a family with low socio-economic status (Chowdry et al., 2010; Farthing, 2016; Feinstein, 2003; Hirsch, 2007) can negatively influence educational outcomes. However, known risk factors that decrease expected educational outcomes are not restricted to these criteria. For example, having an identified special educational need or disability (DfE, 2015; Shaw, Bernardes, Trethewey & Menzies, 2016), or identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) (Guasp, 2012; Whittle, Turner, Al-Alami, Rundall & Thom, 2007) can also be considered as risk factors. Many young people face multiple adversities, some of which are interrelated, and school itself can

present further adversity rather than buffering existing risk. For example, over half of children who identify as LGBT have experienced bullying relating to their gender or sexuality (Guasp, 2012), which is in turn related to lower attendance and lower academic achievement. This figure rises to two thirds in LGBT youth with special educational needs or difficulties (SEND) (Guasp, 2012).

Some young people and their families facing adversity can feel alienated from support services, experience practical barriers to attending appointments, and can feel victimised by peers and even teachers (Farthing, 2016; Whittle et al., 2007). The impact of such disengagement can be seen in the numbers of children experiencing the aforementioned risk factors who find themselves excluded from mainstream education (DfE, 2016b; DfES, 1998). As a result, in addition to underachieving in school, some young people are more likely to experience bullying and stigmatisation and are less likely to receive support, which compounds the influence of risk factors on future outcomes.

Some inequalities are interrelated, for example, children from a background of low socio-economic status are more likely to be born with inherited SEND (Shaw et al., 2016) and also more likely to develop them in later life. Nearly a third (29%) of children who are eligible for free school meals have a statement of SEND, in comparison to just 13% of children who are not eligible for free school meals (Shaw et al., 2016). The inequalities gap in education is, therefore, much wider for some pupils with multiple disadvantages due to accumulated risk.

A review of inequalities in the UK school system suggested that where pupils face multiple adversities, the extent of the current attainment gap ‘exacerbates these barriers and creates an inequitable system where many children do not yet have the same educational opportunities as their peers’ (Shaw et al., 2016, p.32). Arguably, examination performance is a relatively narrow indicator of inequalities in school, providing a summative snapshot of academic ability, which does not report pupils’ experiences of school or a holistic picture of their development. Statistics regarding inequalities ‘gaps’ in education by exam results do not always reflect the full picture. Many children are not accounted for in these statistics, since they are not eligible for additional funding or support (for example, Free School Meals (FSM), SEND and Pupil Premium), or they may not have applied for it. In addition, the statistics do not account for children not actually entered for formal exams. Amanda Spielman, the Chief Inspector of Schools in England has expressed concern about a ‘corrosive culture’ in schools (Spielman, speaking on BBC Radio 4, March 2017) in which

league tables take precedence over other aspects of education and referred to the practice of schools withdrawing pupils from exams selectively in order to raise school results.

Whilst schools aim to provide equal opportunities for all children, the reality is that minority groups have very different experiences of the system, including higher reported rates of bullying, perceived stigma and limited accessibility and relevance of the school curriculum (Daly & Leonard, 2002; Farthing, 2016), all of which influence academic engagement and progress, making exclusion from mainstream education more likely. Exclusion rates for those eligible for free school meals, for example, are four times higher than the national average, pupils with SEND experience seven times as many exclusions and older statistics suggest that young people in care were ten times as likely to be excluded than their peers (DfES, 1998; DfE & ONS, 2016).

Curriculum content also has a significant influence on young people's experiences of education, in terms of how relevant, useful and accessible they find engaging in the curriculum. The DfE has moved to restore a knowledge-based curriculum that values traditional subjects, pre 20th century texts and the 'learning of facts' in place of collaborative group work in contemporary contexts. A hierarchy of subjects has been established in which school performance is based on outcomes from Maths, Science and English (perceived to be core 'academic' subjects), inevitably leading to the reduction in funding or even exclusion of others (art, music and drama, for example). This could potentially have a ripple effect on young people's academic and vocational opportunities, as well as their cultural and social development. Additional inequality could result from cuts to some subjects. Some young people might be culturally impoverished due to lack of access to the arts for example. An increase in summative testing (DfE, 2010) has been met with concerns that such reforms might widen educational inequality (Association of Teachers and Lecturers, 2013). Summative testing has also been linked to shallow rote learning, and a high stakes testing climate that can be de-motivating and stress provoking for teachers and children (CSFC, 2008).

Such simplistic measures are not only inadequate for individual assessment but also pose problems in relation to profiling school performance both regionally and nationally. This is because the complexity of the relationship between disadvantage and educational inequality has not yet fully been explored, understood, or addressed, and measures of school and pupil performance remain inadequate.

One example of the result of overly simplistic analysis of school performance is the notion of the 'North-South divide' in school performance. Sir Michael Wilshaw identified a

‘divided nation’ in his 2015 annual Ofsted report (Ofsted, 2015) when referring to the difference between the Ofsted ratings for schools in the North and the Midlands, and of those in the South of England. Such distinctions between the North and South have become an accepted part of the discourse surrounding educational inequality largely as a result of media attention and government initiatives, such as the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, which aim to reduce ‘the gap’. This generalised assertion is problematic for multiple reasons (Jopling, 2018). Firstly, the binary divide combines the Midlands and the North into one category, whereas when they are examined at the Local Authority level, two diverse geographical regions with a diverse range of outcomes emerge. In a critique of Wilshaw’s analysis, Jopling (2018) found that by Ofsted measures (2016), the North East was ranked more highly than any other region in the North and the Midlands and was only one per cent behind the South East, suggesting that regional rather than national variations may have warranted further attention. Secondly, distinctions between educational outcomes in the North and South rarely account for wildly differing levels of socio-economic deprivation and school funding. For example, it has been reported that the ‘early years gap’, based on educational development in relation to socio-economic status was almost twice as big in the North of England compared to London (Clifton et al., 2016). Clifton et al. state that in 2016, the year in which Wilshaw lamented the worsening ‘divide’ (Ofsted, 2016), there was a difference in funding that constituted, on average, £1,300 less funding per pupil per year in the North of England in comparison to London schools.

In spite of high levels of social deprivation (Children’s Commissioner, 2018), primary schools in the North East of England, where research for the present study was carried out, performed exceptionally well in terms of the number of pupils reaching the expected standards in combined core assessments (DfE, 2017c). However, based on new Progress 8 measures, this progress was not sustained in secondary schools in the North East, which in 2016 ranked behind all other regions in the North and Midlands. Both the accuracy of assessment measures (Andrews, 2017) and the variation between primary and secondary progress across and within regions therefore warrant further attention (Jopling, 2018).

1.2.1.3 Increasing Priority of Health Promotion in Schools. Failure to tackle existing inequalities in the classroom has a profoundly limiting and damaging effect on individual emotional wellbeing, mental and physical health, and life expectancy (Chowdry et al., 2010; EHRC, 2010). Educational inequality also has major societal implications for crime and health, and, therefore, the economy (Leitch, 2006). As the Department for Education and Skills summarised, ‘disengagement from learning is often just the beginning of a cycle of low expectations and disaffection, with consequences felt not only by individuals, but by local communities and wider society’ (DfES, 2002, p.1), which makes reducing inequalities in our schools an urgent national priority.

Current research highlights the role of social, emotional and mental health development in both raising academic attainment and achieving long-term health outcomes (Durlak, Weissbergm Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011; Farrington et al., 2012; January, Casey & Paulson, 2011; Sklad, Diekstra, Ritter, Ben & Gravesteijn 2012). Changes to education policy and practice have reflected this research and this suggests that the landscape is shifting from narrow indicators of academic outcomes, to more holistic notions of what is considered as pupil progress. For example, Ofsted announced (Spielman, 2018) a move away from focusing on exam results, in favour of ‘quality of education’, which is linked to quality of leadership, a broad and diverse curriculum, pupil behaviour and attitudes and personal development. The changes are due to be implemented in school inspections from September 2019 and are likely to shift the focus in schools away from summative assessment and towards whole-school culture as a foundation for quality education. There are also indications that the government intends to better synthesise knowledge, understanding and practice between health and education sectors. A joint enquiry of the Education and Health select committees has been undertaken, and the Care Quality Commission have conducted a review of children’s mental health services including the provision in schools (CSHC, 2016). Theresa May recently set out plans to establish mental health ‘first aid training’ for school staff and described the ways in which schools and the NHS should work more closely together (May, 2017). Theresa May last year announced government plans intended to transform mental health support for young people, saying:

‘I want us to employ the power of government as a force for good to transform the way we deal with mental health problems right across society’
(May, 2017)

Government reforms have gone some way to publicly acknowledge the parity of mental and physical health and also the lifelong impact of inequality faced in childhood. In addition, governmental efforts have been made to strengthen connections between education and public health sectors through offering Mental Health First Aid training (MHFA) to all secondary schools in the UK. MHFA is intended to provide training for staff that will help them to support young people facing constellated disadvantages, thus preventing future mental health issues¹. However, there has been critique of the MHFA model that focuses on the lack of collaboration with people with lived experience of mental health issues in its development (McCartney, 2018) and the limited number of staff who are trained in the approach in each school (Critchley et al., 2018). Therefore, ongoing evaluation of the consistency and efficacy of the proposed changes is necessary. For example, there has already been some suggestion that whole-school approaches to mental health promotion may be more sustainable and effective than the government's proposed MHFA (Critchley, Astle, Ellison & Harrison, 2018). Evidence from nationwide programmes that aim to improve social and emotional wellbeing stress the fact that benefits for learning will not be immediate (DfE, 2005; Hughes & Cline, 2015). Longitudinal evaluation is necessary to identify how other factors (especially support offered to staff) influence the efficacy of the application of whole-school approaches within schools.

1.2.1.4 Adversity for School Staff. It has been widely reported that: increasing numbers of staff are reporting mental health concerns (Leeds Beckett University & Teachwire, 2018); the majority of staff perceive workload to be unmanageable (Higton et al., 2017; DfE, 2018a); and staff recruitment and retention continues to cause concern (Foster, 2018). School leaders and teachers have described feeling as though their work consists mostly of 'crisis management' and suggest that working long hours in spite of increasing work-related stress (Kyriacou, 2011) is the only way to manage what is seen as excessively high workload (Higton et al., 2017; DfE, 2018a). In 2016, a trade union survey of more than 5,000 teachers and head teachers (NASUWT, 2016) found that over three quarters (83%) of staff reported that they had experienced an increase in the last 12 months of work-related anxiety or stress, with 90% of teachers citing workload as the number one cause of concern.

Such extreme volume of workload, which is perceived by staff to restrict, rather than increase the impact they are able to have on the young people they serve, has resulted in

¹ <https://mhfaengland.org>

many staff reporting mental health concerns (Butt & Lance, 2005; Murray, 2012; Smith Crocco & Costigan, 2006). Such issues pose serious threats to both recruitment and retention (Hinds, 2018), with recent statistics showing that in 2017, more teachers left the profession than joined for every subject except Mathematics and Physics (DfE, 2018a). Around 20% of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are lost to the profession after the first year, and this figure rises to around 40% five years after qualifying (DfE, 2018a).

Research findings published this year by the DfE suggest that some tasks expected of teachers are perceived to have no bearing at all on learning, progress or the development of young people. As one participant in the DfE research stated: ‘it is done to tick a box for my performance, it is not doing anything to improve children’s learning’ (DfE, 2018a, p.20). In addition to concerns regarding workload, school-level organisational factors, such as leadership, peer support and strength of communication also influence staff psychological wellbeing (Castro, Gestoso, Gala & Javier, 2002). This highlights the need to address school climate in order to foster staff resilience (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008).

Since schools are nested in much broader systems, adversity beyond school level can adversely affect staff at school level. For example, budget cuts, service reduction and the increasing volume and complexity of pupil needs restricts staff capacity to support pupils, creating a tension between professional ideals and reality (Mansfield et al., 2012; Sanderse, Walker, & Jones, 2015; Smith Crocco & Costigan, 2006). As Pearson and Moomaw state, de-professionalising ‘constraints on autonomy such as perceived lack of control and sense of powerlessness, are related to tension, frustration, and anxiety among teachers’ (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005, p. 40). Such adversity for school staff appears to be worsening, rather than improving. In a book published this year, Allen and Sims refer to conditions for staff as:

‘a cocktail of box-ticking demands, ceaseless curriculum reform, disruptive reorganisations and an audit culture that requires teachers to document their every move...(it has) left the profession deskilled and demoralised’ (p.i, 2018)

In 2016, the vast majority (more than 70%) of teachers reported that ‘constant change’ and a ‘culture of blame or criticism’ had contributed to disempowerment of staff (NASUWT, 2016). A high stakes culture of accountability (Ball, 2003; Costigan, Zumwalt & Crocco, 2004) based on tracking and evidencing pupil progress is likely to detract from relational and pastoral aspects of work for school staff, thus reducing professional agency. Agency, defined as the ability to pursue the goals that one values (Archer, 1996, 2000) is

perceived to be threatened by top down policy, which may result in a ‘lack of congruence between expectations for one’s career and the actual reality of the work’ (Curry & O'Brien, 2012, p. 179).

Sanderse, Walker and Jones (2015), found that most teachers wanted to ‘make a difference’ and ‘prepare children for life’ but felt that current school systems were a hindrance to holistic child development. In other words, the school system had become a risk to both staff and pupils. The resultant ‘disenchantment’ (Day, 2002), cynicism towards change, apathy and exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009, 2010) appears to be a problem of international significance, at least in the Global North; for example, in Australia (Dilkes, Cunningham, & Gray, 2014), China (Lee & Yin, 2011), Hong Kong (Pattie, 2009), and the USA (Smith Crocco & Costigan, 2006). Ironically, increased accountability in the form of widespread scrutiny and criticism of teachers and schools in the public gaze has arguably given birth to practices of performativity (Ball, 2003). For some staff, researchers argue this has led to the ‘distortion and devaluation of the very meaning of the work’ (Murray, 2012, p. 19). For example, some schools might be reluctant to admit pupils with SEN or behavioural needs, or refrain from entering these pupils into exams, if there is a risk that overall school results will be affected. In this way, performativity practices make much of teachers’ valuable ‘pedagogical and pastoral work invisible in audit terms’ (Murray, 2012, p.25), whilst posing additional risks for the most disadvantaged young people.

A growing but under-developed concept of ‘teacher resilience’ (Beltman, Mansfield, & Price, 2011; Day & Gu, 2010; Kirk & Wall, 2010; Kyriacou, 2011; Mansfield et al., 2012) is emerging in the literature. Teacher resilience has been defined by Kyriacou as:

‘the extent to which a teacher is able to maintain a set of positive attributes regarding their work as a teacher in face of dealing with a range of challenges, pressures and demands inherent in their work’ (Kyriacou, 2011, pp. 70-71).

Whilst this is a useful starting point from which to discuss the resilience of school staff, the proposed concept is also underdeveloped. At present, the concept is wholly focused on individual characteristics, and limits the discussion to teachers as opposed to other role types. It is important that definitions of school staff resilience do not exclude non-teaching staff. Furthermore, there is also a danger that, by focusing on individuals rather than risk and protective factors in the school system as a whole, responsibility will be transferred to these individuals as opposed to considering the support they require.

As established above, there are significant structural barriers to the wellbeing of staff, which may be addressed in part with a focus on school climate. This is an important end in its own right and becomes even more vital considering that the bi-directional link between staff wellbeing and pupil outcomes ensures that school staff are the education system's most precious resource. In addition, all school staff (not only teachers) are uniquely positioned to promote mental health and equity in our schools. Thus, *all* school staff must be provided adequate training and support that enables them to play a positive role in the promotion of young people's health and their ability to thrive in school. Where necessary, external services (appropriately funded and resourced) must be enlisted to offer training for school staff and extend the support they are able to provide through professional collaboration and sharing of expertise and information. Adapting aspects of school climate have been shown to reduce staff burnout and improve pupil engagement (Covell, McNeil & Howe, 2009), suggesting that whole-school approaches to resilience can be mutually beneficial for staff and pupils.

1.3 Whole-School Approaches

In defining what is meant by a 'whole-school approach', brief attention is given to ambiguity around this term in the literature. Multiple terms such as 'universal', 'comprehensive' and 'whole-school' are often used interchangeably (Thomas & Aggleton, 2016; Wells, Barlow & Stewart-Brown, 2003). Sometimes, the term 'whole-school approach' is used merely to differentiate between specifically targeted or more broad approaches, but there are key differences between universal and whole-school approaches. For clarity, 'universal approaches' target the whole population of children in a school. As has been evidenced (Wells et al., 2003), universal school health promotion programmes have the potential to operate preventatively as well as intervening to address known problems. This is because universal approaches not only have significant impact in negating current adversity, but increase resilience that may allow children to deal more effectively with future challenges (Membride, 2016; Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, Hibbert & Osborn, 2007). This means that children already identified as 'at-risk' by school can be supported to have a more positive trajectory, but that children who have *not yet* exhibited outward signs of concern but that may *go on* to experience difficulties, may also benefit from early intervention as prevention. Targeted and universal programmes may involve other members of the school community as a tool of implementation rather than as the focus of the approach.

In contrast, ‘whole-school approaches’, whilst essentially universal in nature, *also* extend the scope and focus of intervention programmes to include the meaningful participation of all members of the school community. For the purposes of this thesis, whole-school (WS) approaches are considered to engage children and young people, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents, carers, governors, and professionals working with the school and the wider community, in their aim to change school culture and practice for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Also identified as a benefit of WS approaches is the capacity to tackle the ‘hidden curriculum’, (Stewart-Brown, 2006). The ‘hidden curriculum’ refers to interrelated aspects of the school system beyond individual and classroom levels such as structural aspects of the school as an organisation, communication flow with families and wider community and underlying ethos. WS approaches are, therefore, integrated throughout the overall organisational culture, values and beliefs of the school. They are also embedded in policy and practice to address the needs of all members of the school community.

The aim, or content of the WS programme is likely to influence the extent to which different groups within the system are involved. For example, in a universal programme about puberty, adults may improve their own understanding, but are likely to have more of a collaborative implementation role rather than being the subject of the intervention themselves. In contrast, in a WS approach, parents and staff would be targeted in terms of increasing their own understanding in order to change the ways in which they can support young people in this transition, and also the reciprocal positive outcomes they may experience (improved relationships with young people, greater job satisfaction and so on). In a WS approach to building resilience, the aim would be to improve both the understanding *of* resilience *and* the resilience of *all* members of the school community.

1.3.1 The Benefits of Whole-School Approaches. WS approaches are considered effective and sustainable since they take an integrated approach to addressing pupil needs. WS approaches aim to make changes to school culture, leadership, curriculum, environment and policy as well as maximising collaboration between staff, pupils, parents and the community, and resulting in reciprocal benefit for multiple stakeholder groups. The case for WS approaches in the promotion of health and wellbeing of young people has been especially well made in both empirical research (Brooks & Magnusson, 2006; Cortina et al., 2008; Stewart & Wang, 2012) and government policy (DfE, 2016c; Lavis & Robson, 2015). Multiple systematic reviews (Weare, 2000; Weare & Nind, 2011; Durlak et al., 2011; Wells et al., 2003) suggest that a whole-school approach can lead to sustainable improvements in the school culture, staff wellbeing, pupil behaviour, school attendance and academic attainment (Banerjee, Weare & Farr, 2014; Weare, 2015). As discussed in this introduction, addressing aspects of school climate may also help to increase staff resilience. Sustainability of WS approaches is dependent on addressing and negating adversity for staff, since they are usually tasked with implementation of such approaches. A discussion of the capacity of a WS approach to attend to the complexity of school systems is included in **Chapter 3**, including specific examples of previously evaluated WS approaches.

1.4 Academic Resilience

There is broad acceptance of the definition of academic resilience as a dynamic and multidimensional developmental construct. In most definitions, academic resilience refers both to the personal capacity, as well as the necessary environmental and social conditions, to overcome adversity that is seen as a threat to educational development or achievement (Anagnostaki, Pavlopoulos, Obradovic, Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2016; Hart & Williams, 2014; Mallick & kaur, 2016; Martin & Marsh, 2006; Masten et al., 2008; Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado & Cortes, 2009). The construct is correlated with, but distinct from, other similar models, such as academic buoyancy (Martin & Marsh, 2008, 2009). Academic buoyancy refers to ‘everyday setbacks’ as adversity conditions, whereas academic resilience is concerned with substantial or accumulated adversity conditions that have long-term implications for pupil outcomes in and beyond school.

1.4.1 Theoretical background of the Academic Resilience Approach. The theoretical underpinning of the ARA was heavily influenced by the changing perception of

the concept of resilience itself. Resilience research has seen multiple changes to the way that the concept is defined and explained since its emergence in the 1970s (Lerner et al., 2012). Whilst resilience was once considered as a set of innate individual characteristics that were predictors of positive adaptation, current research places much greater emphasis on the ecological determinants of resilience in factors beyond the individual. From this perspective, resilience can be seen through the paradigm of relational developmental systems theory as a dynamic construct that responds to ecological factors and, as such, is malleable over time and context (Lerner et al., 2012). The ARA's stated aim is to both 'beat' and 'change' the odds (Hart, Gagnon, Aumann & Heaver, 2013, p.31; Hart, et al., 2016, p.3), which refers to challenging and overcoming inequalities. This conceptualisation of resilience has been explored by a recently proposed concept of resilience, which emphasises the roots of adversity in social inequality (Hart et al., 2016). As multiple authors have identified, an individualised understanding of the notion of resilience is a potentially dangerous shifting of blame from structural inequalities to personal inadequacies that distract from the need to redress societal imbalance (Bottrell, 2013; Friedli, 2012; Harrison, 2013). An individualised conceptualisation of resilience can potentially 'depoliticise and shift responsibility for dealing with crisis away from those in power' (Harrison, 2013, p. 99), which may further disempower already marginalised groups. Therefore, the definition of resilience the ARA is based upon is an attempt to integrate the 'potential for marginalised people to challenge and transform aspects of their adversity, without holding them responsible for the barriers they face' (Hart et al., 2016, p. 1).

1.4.2 Aims of the Academic Resilience Approach. The ARA (Hart & Williams, under review) was developed in response to the contextual need identified in this chapter for WS approaches to building resilience. The ARA builds on the resilience promoting approach of Hart and other colleagues (Hart, Blincow & Thomas, 2007), based on their socio-ecological resilience framework (Hart et al., 2012). The ARA aims to offer schools free tools from which they can develop a WS approach to tackling the challenging circumstances that some pupils experience, to remove barriers to educational success and have a long-term positive improvement in terms of health and wellbeing outcomes.

The ARA is a resilience building programme that focuses specifically on ensuring that pupils facing multiple adversities achieve good educational outcomes regardless of the challenges they face, whilst improving outcomes for the WS community. The authors of the ARA have stated that a central aim of the approach is to change school climate, and in doing

so, influence both positive pupil development and teacher retention, a link which has been referred to in other existing literature (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli & Pickeral, 2009). The whole-systems approach of the ARA is based on a conceptualisation of resilience as ‘overcoming adversity, whilst also potentially changing, or even dramatically transforming, (aspects of) that adversity.’ (Hart et al., 2013, p.31; 2016, p. 3), thus resisting individualised definitions, and emphasising the capacity building nature of the approach and its aim to redress educational inequality.

Multiple interventions and schemes have been developed that seek to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. These include government programmes, such as Pupil Premium (DfE, 2014), which was established in 2011 to provide extra funding for state schools to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils as well as intervention programmes offered by local governments, charities and freelancers. Whilst a number of these approaches are based on the concept of resilience, a systematic review of resilience approaches in school (Hart & Heaver, 2013) identified that most school-based interventions are not WS in their approach. The authors highlight the fact that only two out of 84 ‘whole-school’ interventions reviewed were inclusive of all staff and implemented beyond classroom level. Furthermore, Hart and Heaver (2013) found that there was limited sustainable impact of many approaches, due to their cost and high reliance on external support. The findings of Hart and Heaver’s (2013) review are congruent with a number of studies that suggest that the most successful interventions in improving mental health and competence share a strong focus on inclusive and sustainable WS approaches (Barry et al., 2013; Jane-Llopis et al., 2011; O’Mara & Lind, 2013; Weare & Nind, 2011).

Whilst school can be considered to provide many protective factors that help to negate these risks, a WS approach to building resilience can help to maximise these protective aspects of the school system, whilst supporting pupils, staff, parents and carers to overcome existing adversity. WS approaches are universal in their involvement of all pupils, all staff including volunteers, and the wider community of the school (including parents, carers and staff working for collaborating organisations). Thus, WS approaches that seek to address inequality aim to both improve outcomes for all *and* close the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children. The ARA has been designed as a WS primary prevention that aims to equip schools with an approach and the tools to support all members of the school community to improve their resilience. Based on the resilience framework (Hart et al., 2012, adapted from Hart & Blincow with Thomas, 2007), the ARA aims to support

schools to undertake a strengths-based and comprehensively reflective review of current practice, and consider developments that lead to increases in resilience of their stakeholders.

Schools that are successful in promoting resilience are likely to have or to develop a balance of caring and positive relationships between adults, children and their peers in school on the one hand, and strong and active partnerships with families and local communities on the other. However, schools cannot function successfully as resilience-building environments if the staff within the school system are stressed, have unmanageable workloads, feel inadequately trained or are under-resourced. Thus, for the ARA, the focus is on developing the capacity of the WS system to build resilience, targeting school ethos and culture, leadership, policy, pedagogy, curriculum and professional development. A cohesive and collaborative approach is taken to building resilience involving everyone in the school community, including focusing on the basic needs, supportive relationships, recognition of achievements and development of opportunities for both staff and pupils.

1.4.3 The Process of the Academic Resilience Approach. The authors of the ARA have stated that the approach aims to engage every member of the school community and involve every aspect of school life (Hart & Williams, under review).

These aspects include:

- People: students, parents and all staff and volunteers from the Head through to the caterers.
- Strategy and leadership, including governance, policy, and senior leadership.
- Systems and structure, including: information management, behaviour systems, support structures, job roles and responsibilities, and all services provided in school.
- (Hart & Williams, under review, p.11)

There are multiple ways that schools can engage with the ARA. A self-facilitated approach involves existing school staff utilising free web-based resources² to undertake a process of reflection and improvement planning. The tools include information and resources that can be used to improve understanding of resilience, especially increasing awareness of known protective factors. Sample frameworks are available for auditing, action planning and evaluating school practice from the perspective of school staff, pupils, parents and carers. The following list provides an idea of the scope of free resources available:

² (<https://www.boingboing.org.uk/academic-resilience-approach/>)

- Resilience Framework
- A review of empirical evidence supporting the ARA
- Resilience ‘Zap’ presentations (introduction presentations ready to deliver)
- Resilient Classroom (practical classroom strategies)
- Audit guides for leadership teams and other staff
- Pyramid of Need (using pupil data to identify level of need)
- Survey guides as to how to collect pupil and staff data
- Guide to commissioning services
- Safeguarding guide
- Resources focusing on resilience and special needs
- Resources developed for adults by young people in care

Synthesising feedback from multiple stakeholders, the ARA process involves considering strengths and needs of current school practice in relation to the resilience evidence base, as collated in the Resilience Framework (Hart et al., 2012, adapted from Hart & Blincow with Thomas, 2007). The framework (**Figure 1.1**) was developed by Hart and colleagues to identify resilience building protective factors drawn from the evidence base in the field of multiple contexts concerning the healthy development of children and young people. It incorporates basics, belonging, learning, coping and core-self as the key components of resilience.

Figure 1.1 Resilience Framework (Hart et al., 2012, adapted from Hart & Blincow with Thomas, 2007).

Resilience Framework (Children & Young People) Oct 2012 – adapted from Hart & Blincow with Thomas 2007					
	BASICS	BELONGING	LEARNING	COPING	CORE SELF
SPECIFIC APPROACHES	Good enough housing	Find somewhere for the child/YP to belong	Make school/college life work as well as possible	Understanding boundaries and keeping within them	Instil a sense of hope
		Help child/YP understand their place in the world			
	Enough money to live	Tap into good influences	Engage mentors for children/YP	Being brave	Support the child/YP to understand other people's feelings
	Being safe	Keep relationships going		Solving problems	
	Access & transport	The more healthy relationships the better	Map out career or life plan	Putting on rose-tinted glasses	Help the child/YP to know her/himself
		Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope		Fostering their interests	
	Healthy diet	Get together people the child/YP can count on	Help the child/YP to organise her/himself	Calming down & self-soothing	Help the child/YP take responsibility for her/himself
		Responsibilities & obligations			
	Exercise and fresh air	Focus on good times and places	Highlight achievements	Remember tomorrow is another day	Foster their talents
	Enough sleep	Make sense of where child/YP has come from		Lean on others when necessary	
	Play & leisure	Predict a good experience of someone or something new	Develop life skills	Have a laugh	There are tried and tested treatments for specific problems, use them
	Being free from prejudice & discrimination				
NOBLE TRUTHS					
ACCEPTING		CONSERVING		ENLISTING	

WWW.BOINGBOING.ORG.UK

The authors of the ARA distinguish between the self-facilitation of an ARA, and a facilitated version in which schools are supported by an external team or organisation in the process (Hart & Williams, under review). In the facilitated ARA, schools still undertake the school improvement process, but are provided with training and support throughout audit, action plan and evaluation of the approach by a chosen organisation (including Boingboing social enterprise and other mental health charities).

It is challenging to distil the facilitated ARA process to a procedural list, since one of its defining qualities is the adaptation of the resources and ideas to the contextual needs of specific schools, each of which present a complex system. However, whilst the ways in which the ARA is applied in participating schools may vary, the facilitated ARA follows a structured pattern completed within one academic year with the overriding aim to improve WS resilience and, specifically, outcomes for the most disadvantaged pupils. The following steps provide an overview of the facilitated ARA process:

- Initial training (resilience in relation to school contexts)
- Senior leadership team meeting looking at school priorities
- Introduce the Resilience Framework through whole staff workshops and staff training
- Help the WS community to audit the school against the evidence-based framework in relation to strengths and needs of the school, gaining insight from parents (and carers), pupils and staff.
- Make a WS action plan based on feedback
- Support implementation of action plans and review through providing appropriate training, resources and regular evaluation

For both the self-facilitated and facilitated versions of the ARA, a ‘plan, do, review’ process highlights the iterative dynamic of the approach, which involves in-depth profiling of the school context, including its existing culture and values and staff, parent and pupil experiences. Following this audit process, through which school priorities will be identified, the resilience evidence base provides the foundation for action planning and implementation of system-wide strategies to increase resilience in the school. Changes are tracked, and the school regularly completes the audit process to evaluate existing practice and identify new priorities.

1.4.4 Sustainability of the Academic Resilience Approach. The majority of school-based resilience interventions offer limited integration of practices across the school system, and have high reliance on external support (Hart & Heaver, 2013). Despite their high cost, such interventions, consequently, have limited long-term impact. In addition, WS interventions have been identified as highly complex to deliver in practice, which has been shown to reduce sustainability or radically alter programme theory at cost to the integrity of the original approach (Evans, Murphy & Scourfield, 2015; Thomas & Aggleton, 2016). In response to critique of existing resilience and WS approaches, sustainability is a central aim of the ARA. Through the training and support of key stakeholders to deliver the programme, the authors of the approach argue that cost of the intervention is reduced, whilst potentially raising stakeholder commitment and motivation. In the self-facilitated version of the ARA, the use of free, web-based resources arguably enables schools to adapt resources to local needs whilst reducing cost, thus increasing sustainability (Hart & Williams, under review).

Further discussion of the ARA process, especially how it might address school system complexity is provided in **Chapter 3**, including a consideration of recommendations from the Medical Research Council (Craig et al., 2008; Moore et al., 2015), the implications of which help shape the study design presented in **Chapter 4**.

1.4.5 The First Whole-County Locally Facilitated Academic Resilience Approach. The focus of the present study is the first whole-county application of the ARA, which took place in the North of England. The locally adapted approach is referred to in this thesis as the LFARA (Locally Facilitated Academic Resilience Approach).

Initially, LA staff received a full day of training from an external organisation (a national mental health charity). The training introduced the concept of the ARA to LA staff, and aimed to increase their understanding of current research in the field. The LA later decided to proceed without the involvement of an external organisation. The motivation to develop a LA led approach may have partly been influenced by increasing privatisation of Educational Psychology services, and a need to generate sustainable work for the LA team. In addition, LA staff were keen to adapt the ARA to suit local contextual needs, and involve school staff in its development to increase local ownership and ‘buy-in’. The LFARA is referred to in this thesis in multiple ways, including a ‘project’, ‘implementation’ and ‘intervention’. For clarity, these multiple ways of describing the LFARA are used interchangeably to describe the same process. This is a deliberate decision, partly reflecting

the diversity of ways in which participants described the approach as it evolved during the research.

In the LFARA, the LA collaborated with Public Health to adapt the ARA for local needs and design their own implementation strategy. Building on the fundamental principles and structure of the ARA, the project involved a multi-disciplinary team of existing LA staff (including educational psychologists, specialist advisory teachers, support staff and counsellors). These teams of staff engaged with schools to facilitate the approach, delivering resilience training, carrying out an audit of current practice, and developing an action plan that promoted school-wide resilience. Overall, the project aimed to review and develop aspects of school climate, leadership, policy, curriculum and physical environment in terms of protective and risk factors to school community resilience. This specialist team, initially comprised of ten staff, were referred to within the project as programme facilitators, a name carefully selected to reflect the value placed on school staff adapting and driving the approach rather than change being imposed on schools. Acknowledging the variation of school-based need and thus, necessary focus of the project, facilitators were tasked with supporting school staff through a rigorous self-audit in order to adapt the approach to each context. In addition, the steering group for the project (comprised of Public Health and LA staff) were keen to build capacity within school and at county level through sustainable models of resilience building that emphasised distributed leadership, community building and increasing environmental protective factors, rather than relying solely on external specialist support.

Although data has only been collected for a 12-month period (one academic year), schools from the initial cohort are currently evaluating the first phase of the project in a 're-audit' process that is likely to lead to further change. In addition, many new schools are receiving initial training as they prepare for the first audit. All schools in the county were offered the opportunity to engage in the project and although 18 schools were included in data collection for this research, the project is now estimated by LA staff to have now been initiated in 59 schools. This study forms part of a broader evaluation of the LFARA, providing data on staff perspectives that may, at a later stage, be combined with the outcomes of parallel research into outcomes for pupils.

1.5 Unique Contribution of the Current Study

Staff resistance or acceptance is integral to WS change (Fink, 2003; Fullan, 2007; Hynds, 2010) since sustainability of WS approaches is linked to the ‘buy-in’ of key stakeholders (in this case, school staff who were implementing the programme) (Pearson et al., 2015). The success or failure of school-based interventions cannot be determined in isolation. Rather, studies that seek to determine *how* and *why* interventions work in their specific context help us to develop an understanding of how contextual variables can enhance or restrict programme theory, which itself can be developed in the light of these findings.

Considering the overwhelming and continuous changes implemented at policy level (OECD, 2014, p. 1), the danger is that the additional work and time required to implement changes can undermine WS approaches. If initiatives are perceived not to add to existing practice, or are frequently short-lived and replaced with new ideas, staff may be cynical and resistant to change. Ballet and colleagues (2006), for example, found that the majority of changes imposed on teachers can be seen as ‘distractions’ rather than facilitators of the core activity of teaching (Ballet, Kelchtermans & Loughran, p.209), contributing to the ‘intensification’ of work for school staff (Apple, 1986). Since the ARA aims to build on existing school values and priorities (driven by existing staff) as well as addressing adversity for school staff, ‘organisational readiness for change’ (Weiner, 2009) may be increased in comparison to other approaches. Thus, a focus on staff perspectives of the process and how it interacts with existing school systems is vital to furthering understanding both of the ARA and of change in WS approaches in general.

As established in **Chapter 2**, many studies that consider staff perspectives of school-based interventions are restricted (for example, not considering a range of staff perspectives, or being limited to one or two school sites). Both in the articles reviewed, and in the literature more broadly, few empirical research studies have explored the dynamic interaction between enabling and constraining factors within the school system, and between the existing system and the intervention itself (Joseph & Reigeluth, 2010). In order to capture the complexity of the ARA process from staff perspectives, a mixed method study design (see **Chapter 4** for further details) was employed, gathering both breadth and depth of data. This also responds to a need in current research for mixed method designs that, although recommended in the evaluation of complex interventions in complex settings (Craig et al., 2008), are under used.

This study is strongly positioned to provide a unique contribution to research concerning staff perceptions of WS approaches, as well as the complex process of change in programmes of this kind. In the complexity of the educational environment, making and sustaining positive change in the system demands the involvement of a broad range of relevant elements of the system. This includes staff, pupils, parents and carers, partner agencies (for example, alternative education providers, CAMHS), and the education department at county and national level. In-depth structural analysis of the impact of such an approach depends on a sophisticated understanding of relationships amongst subsystems and levels. This includes the distribution of power, status and control, and the influence of values, beliefs and behaviours (Mason, 2014). To this end, multiple perspectives have been gathered that help to form a rich picture of the LFARA as applied in real life context. This study makes a unique contribution as the first study to provide empirical data on multiple staff perspectives of the LFARA across multiple school-based examples.

This research presented in this thesis illuminates the ways in which staff consider that aspects of existing school systems enabled or constrained the LFARA. Furthermore, the extent to which the LFARA was perceived to change aspects of the school system has been considered. Due to the theoretical and methodological underpinning of complexity theory (explored more fully in **Chapters 3 and 4**), it is expected that the research findings of the present study will contribute to a conceptualisation of schools as complex systems, in particular, furthering understanding of the process of change in these complex systems.

1.6 Study Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this research is to explore how the LFARA, as a WS and whole-county approach, was experienced by school staff, including senior leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff. This research employs an integrated mixed method design, exploring the process of adaptation and implementation of the LFARA in multiple school systems from staff perspectives in multiple school-based examples.

The research questions for the present study were:

- i)** What key characteristics of the school system (in terms of structure, values, culture and behaviour) enabled or constrained the locally facilitated Academic Resilience Approach?

- ii) As a result of the locally facilitated Academic Resilience Approach, what changes, if any, have emerged in the school system (in terms of structure, values, culture and behaviour)?
- iii) To what extent and in what ways have staff perceptions of leadership changed as a result of the locally facilitated Academic Resilience Approach?

1.7 Thesis Outline

Following this introductory chapter, **Chapter 2** reports on the findings of a systematic review of literature from studies that provide empirical data in relation to staff perspectives of school-based interventions. Commonly identified enabling and constraining factors, as well as the ways in which staff perceived changes to have occurred as a result of WS approaches, will be discussed. The range and types of study designs will also be compared and evaluated from the literature reviewed.

Chapter Three outlines the complexity perspective adopted for this research. Theoretical background and key concepts of Complexity Theory are applied to social systems and, specifically, schools. The challenges and potential critique of applying complexity theory to school contexts is considered, and the strengths and implications for research and practice are suggested. In particular, the implication of complexity theory for our understanding, implementation and evaluation of WS approaches (including the ARA), is explored.

Chapter Four provides a detailed study design, including an explanation of the theoretical underpinning of this study in complex systems theory and the use of a mixed method paradigm. A rationale for the chosen sequential mixed method approach is made, and a comprehensive account of how data from both qualitative and quantitative methods has been gathered (including sampling) and integrated through analysis and interpretation is given. Ethical issues pertaining to the study are explored. Finally, strengths and limitations of the methodological approach are considered.

Chapter Five establishes the existing school context and climate prior to the LFARA intervention. The chapter presents a description of data from the Time 1 staff survey (N=228) and from semi-structured interviews with school staff (N=15) and facilitators (N=9). Key themes are summarised in relation to potential enabling and constraining factors in the existing school climates.

Chapter Six describes how the LFARA process itself has been experienced, and lastly, to what extent (and how) the LFARA has been perceived to have initiated changes in

the school system (**Chapter 6**).

Chapter Seven presents quantitative data analysis that establishes the validity of the Staff Perceptions of School Climate (SPSC) scale and demonstrates the representative nature of the final sample (N=109). Statistical results of a comparison between the SPSC at Time 1 (pre-LFARA) and Time 2 (one academic year after starting the LFARA) are presented. Comparative analysis is provided for the total sample as well as exploring differences of responses based on staff role type and school type (primary and secondary).

Chapter Eight concludes the analysis of data by drawing together the findings from both qualitative and quantitative data in a discussion of key aspects involved in the LFARA/school interaction. Diagrams support written discussion to provide an integration of mixed methods, summarise key findings and propose a conceptualisation of staff perceptions of the LFARA process as it was applied in a range of school contexts. This discussion draws from quantitative and qualitative findings, as well as providing three detailed examples of the key aspects of the LFARA process in WS contexts.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by considering the unique contribution the research makes both in terms of methodological approach, findings and the implications for future research and practice. Limitations of the research are considered, and recommendations are made for further research that was beyond the scope of this thesis. This chapter is followed by appendices which include supplementary information referred to throughout the thesis.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the researcher's aims and intentions for the research presented in this thesis, in the context of her previous work and interests. The context of both the practice-based need for WS approaches to resilience, and the nature of the ARA have been summarised. The complexity of these contexts and their interaction is explored more fully in **Chapter 3**. Specific justification of the aim of this study to articulate multiple staff perspectives of the LFARA has been provided, in the context of gaps that have been identified in existing research. **Chapter Two** explores the literature reviewed for this thesis in more detail. Commonalities and variations in findings will be considered in terms of how under-explored aspects in the field have helped shape the research questions of the present study.

Chapter 2: Staff Perspectives of School-Based Interventions: a review of existing literature

This chapter presents the findings of a systematic literature review undertaken to gather information pertinent to the research questions and study design of this thesis. Literature relevant to understanding staff perspectives of school-based, and in particular, whole-school (WS) interventions is reviewed. Study designs and findings are evaluated to establish current understanding and to identify potential gaps in the field. Implications for the methodological approach and research focus of the present study are considered, concluding with the research questions that guided subsequent data collection.

2.1 Inclusion Criteria

The search strategy used to retrieve the articles discussed in this literature review began with selecting the databases British Education Index, PsycInfo and ERIC. These databases provided access to a broad range of articles focused on school-based interventions with multiple purposes and in vastly contrasting study contexts. All these databases were accessed through the EBSCO server and initial exclusion criteria were that all articles must be from academic peer reviewed journals only, be published in the last ten years with full English text available.

Whilst the majority of studies included in this review are from the Global North, neither the location of the school intervention programme, nationality of the authoring researchers nor place of publication were considered as inclusion criteria. Therefore, the small minority of articles from the global south retrieved from these search sets (Adebayo & Onadeko, 2015; Dongre, Deshmukh & Garg, 2009; Graves, Finsness, Quick, Harris & Daniell, 2014; Van der Geugten, Dijkstra, van Meijel, den Uyl & de Vries, 2015) might reflect limitations on the search strategy relating to differing uses of language or terminology. Alternatively, this imbalance of global distribution might reflect the fact that the concept of school-based intervention, particularly in relation to preventative health intervention, is rapidly developing in some areas of the Global South in practice (Macnab, Stewart & Gagnon, 2014), but is not necessarily reflected across the region in evaluative studies at this stage (Barry et al., 2013).

In addition, it must be noted that the search terms deliberately focused on studies with empirical data as opposed to theoretical grounding literature. This was a deliberate decision in order to determine what was already known in relation to staff perspectives of school-based interventions. Key literature outlining the need for WS approaches, in support of the WS approach, and an explanation of the ARA is included in **Chapter 1**. Literature that explores the complexity of school systems and considers WS approaches from this perspective is outlined in **Chapter 3**.

Search terms were refined and grouped in order to aid understanding of how articles were chosen for discussion in this review. This process is presented below in **Table 2.1**:

Table 2.1. EBSCO Search Terms and Results (25th May 2016).

Databases	Restrictions imposed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ British Education Index ➤ PsycInfo ➤ ERIC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Academic peer reviewed journals only ➤ Articles published 2006-2016 only ➤ English text only
Search set (S)	Articles found
S1= teacher* OR educator* OR profession* OR leader*	1,264,112
S2= perspectives OR opinions OR views OR accounts OR perceptions OR stories	1,268,296
S3= S1 + S2	297,862
S4= (teacher* OR educator* OR profession* OR leader*) N5 (perspectives OR opinions OR views OR accounts OR perceptions OR stories)	72,146
S5=intervention OR program* OR project OR implement* OR scheme	1,540,940
S6= health OR resilience OR wellbeing OR well-being OR behaviour OR whole-school OR whole school	2,080,328
S7=(intervention OR program* OR project OR implement* OR scheme) N5 (health OR resilience OR wellbeing OR well-being OR behaviour OR whole-school OR whole school)	113,662
S8: S4 & S7	518

It can be seen that sets (S) 4 and 7 refer to ‘staff perspectives’ and ‘interventions’ respectively. These searches were combined to produce S8.

The primary search terms in S4 were selected after initial searching suggested that there were multiple ways in which school staff were referred to (for example school professionals or educators) as well as many ways in which authors referred to the accounts of the participants (for example, stories, perceptions and views). Early searches also indicated that, without specifying the proximity of the two search terms together, the content of the articles retrieved would not necessarily refer to the perceptions of staff; for example, they might instead look at pupil or parent perceptions of staff.

The search terms for S7 were selected considering the aim of my literature search to focus on interventions or programmes in specific school contexts rather than school reform in general, such as changes in education policy or prescribed government initiatives in school. Thus, terms associated with time-limited interventions with specific intended outcomes were selected. Search terms helped to focus on interventions with similar aims to the ARA and LFARA (i.e. whole-school, health, resilience and wellbeing interventions). Again, it was important to specify how closely linked these two search terms would be in the retrieved articles in order for the intervention to be related to these aspects. Finally, S4 and S7 were combined to produce S8 as seen below. This search retrieved 518 articles.

All titles, search terms and abstracts were read and then 65 articles were selected. Inclusion criteria for this process were that the article had to report on an intervention (implementation, programme and so on) being carried out in a school setting *and* the gathering or reporting on teacher or staff perspectives of or as part of the intervention. Studies with interventions outside of the school setting or not directly gathering staff perspectives of the intervention were therefore excluded.

On reading the full articles, a further 25 articles were excluded because they met at least one of the following exclusion criteria:

- a)** the intervention did not take place in a school (for example, Chang et al. (2011) conducted a review of the COBES programme, which is a community-based University intervention).
- b)** no specific intervention took place (for example, Ball & Butcher (2014) examined teachers' perceptions of existing support systems to minimise stress and identified potential future strategies).
- c)** staff perspectives were not *about* the intervention although they might have been related to it (for example, Schonert-Reischel, Smith, Zaidman-Zait & Hertzman, (2012) examine the effects of the Roots of Empathy program on children's social-emotional competence,

drawing from staff reports of level of pupil engagement with the program and their perceptions of pre and post-test prosocial or aggressive pupil behaviour).

d) perspectives gathered were not from paid school staff but other professional staff (for example, Hadjstylianos (2014) interviewed professionals such as social workers and counsellors working in school but who were not employed by the school).

Finally, a further three articles (Domitrovich et al., 2015; Domitrovich et al., 2016; Noh, Steed, & Kim, 2016) were excluded due to the full text not being available online or in a library, and failed attempts to retrieve the articles directly from the authors. This left a total of 37 articles remaining, which constitutes the final set of articles reviewed for this chapter.

2.2 Focus of Interventions Evaluated in the Literature

The final 37 articles chosen for review were grouped according to the focus of the intervention evaluated. As the table below indicates, the intervention studies evaluated by articles included in this review have a range of aims, associated primarily with health and or behaviour. Many of the interventions cite multiple outcomes due to the highly interrelated nature of these interventions. For example, it is possible that an intervention that aimed to reduce aggression may have also promoted positive behaviour and increased social and emotional skills. For this reason, some studies appear multiple times. This table was formulated based on explicitly stated aims of the intervention, rather than potential or observed outcomes that were reported in findings. This was in order to create more coherent and distinct groupings for the purposes of this review.

Where studies appear more than once in the same column, they are entered in italic text to highlight their multiple aims in relation to one aspect of pupil or staff outcomes. One paper (Lindo et al., 2014) appears in multiple columns and is entered in bold to indicate the aim of the intervention to address more than one broad aspect of pupil or staff outcomes.

Table 2.2. Interventions grouped by broad area and detailing specific focus.

Intervention stated aim and number (N) of studies with this aim	Mental/physical health promotion (N=16)	Positive behaviour promotion (N=11)	Negative behaviour prevention (N=7)	Improve professional practice (N=4)	Skill/knowledge development for young people (N=1)
	Diet and nutrition: (<i>Bice, Brown & Parry, 2014</i> ; Jørgensen et al., 2014; Riih�, Tossavainen, Enkenberg & Turunen, 2012; <i>Sormunen, Saaranen, Tassavainen & Turunen, 2012</i>)	Self-esteem and self-control: (<i>Lindo et al., 2014</i> ; Mac Cobb, Fitzgerald, & Lanigan-O'Keefe, 2014; <i>Skryabina et al., 2016</i>)	Bullying, aggression and violence: (<i>Colak et al., 2015</i> ; <i>Collier & Henriksen, 2012</i> ; Dijkman, Harting & van der Wal, 2015; Edmondson & Hoover, 2008; <i>Pas, Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015</i>)	Classroom management : (Akalin & Sucuoglu, 2015)	Language comprehension and use: (Donato, Shane & Hemsley, 2014)
	Alcohol, substance and smoking awareness or cessation: (Audrey, Holliday & Campbell, 2008; Deed, 2007; <i>Sormunen et al., 2012</i>)	Self-awareness, building emotional cognitive skills: (Graetz, Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2009; Honess & Hunter, 2014; <i>Lindo et al., 2014</i> ; Ross & Horner, 2007; Snyder, Vuchinich,, Acock, Washburn & Flay, 2012)	Disruption or anti-social conduct: (<i>Colak et al., 2015</i> ; Mac Cobb et al., 2014; McGoey et al., 2014; <i>Pas et al., 2015</i>)	Increased technology: (McGrail, 2006)	
	Physical exercise or activity: (<i>Bice et al., 2014</i> ; Grim, Petosa, Hertz & Hunt, 2013; Howie et al., 2014; Maljak et al., 2014; Martin & Murtagh, 2015)	Co-operative play, patience, turn taking: (Fees, Kaff, Holmberg, Teagarden & Delreal, 2014; <i>Lindo et al., 2014</i>)	High risk behaviour (e.g. drink driving/gambling): (<i>Collier & Henriksen, 2012</i>)	Broadening professional roles: (<i>Lindo et al., 2014</i>)	
	Mental health awareness (depression/ suicide):	Tolerance and empathy:		Working effectively with court involved	

(Holsen, Larsen, Tjomsland & Servan, 2015; Nadeem et al., 2011)	(Yeung, 2012)	pupils: (Crosby et al., 2015)
Puberty, sexual health, reproductive health:	Coping with loss, change, conflict or bullying:	
(Alekseeva, Krasnopolskaya & Skokova, 2015; Sormunen et al., 2012; Van der Geugten et al., 2015)	(Clarke, O'Sullivan, Barry & Marks, 2010; Freeman, Wertheim & Trinder, 2014; Skryabina et al., 2016)	
Hygiene:		
(Dongre et al., 2009; Graves et al., 2014)		

The most common type of school-based intervention as a focus for studying staff perspectives was the promotion of mental and physical health, with sixteen (43%) articles highlighting this aim (see **Table 2.2**). This included diet and nutrition (Bice et al., 2014; Jørgensen et al., 2014; Rähä et al., 2012; Sormunen et al., 2012), alcohol awareness, substance misuse or smoking cessation (Audrey et al., 2008; Deed, 2007; Sormunen et al., 2012), exercise and activity (Bice et al., 2014; Grim et al., 2013; Howie et al., 2014; Maljak et al., 2014; Martin & Murtagh, 2015), mental health awareness and prevention of depression and suicide (Holsen et al., 2015; Nadeem et al., 2011), puberty and sexual/reproductive health (Alekseeva et al., 2015; Sormunen et al., 2012; Van der Geugten et al., 2015), and hygiene (Dongre et al., 2009; Graves et al., 2014).

One possible reason for the concentration of studies concerned with physical and mental health issues is the growing belief that, given their access to children of all ages, schools provide an ideal setting for universal health-based interventions, particularly in areas of heightened disadvantage. Limited success of traditional health education curricula in schools (Bonell et al., 2013) has led to increasing interest in interventions that intend to modify the WS environment so that it supports healthy behaviours by addressing the underlying socioecological determinants of health. Systematic reviews of existing school-based health and wellbeing intervention literature have linked changes at school system level (for example a sense of community) with better health outcomes (Bonell et al., 2013, 2014;

Weare & Nind, 2011). In the context of increasing physical and mental health challenges for young people and resource and capacity issues for specialist services as described in **Chapter 1**, the promotion of health for young people in school settings is of current and urgent importance. Prevention and early intervention have been identified as having long-term benefits for both individuals and society as a whole including public spending on health, employment and crime (Brooks, Magnusson, Spencer & Morgan, 2012; Friedli & Parsonage, 2007; Membride, 2016).

Positive behaviour promotion was also a dominant theme of school-based interventions in the articles retrieved. Eleven studies (30%) discussed staff perspectives of programmes intended to improve aspects of social and emotional development. These included building self-esteem and self-control (Lindo et al., 2014; Mac Cobb et al., 2014; Skryabina et al., 2016), increasing emotional self-awareness and social-emotional cognitive skills (Graetz et al., 2009; Honess & Hunter, 2014; Lindo et al., 2014; Ross & Horner, 2007; Snyder et al., 2012), co-operative play, patience and turn taking (Fees et al., 2014; Lindo et al., 2014), tolerance and empathy (Yeung, 2012), and coping skills in order to manage conflict, bullying, loss or change (Clarke et al., 2010; Freeman et al., 2014; Skryabina et al., 2016).

Of the articles included in this review, seven studies (19%) reported on school-based interventions to prevent or reduce negative behaviour. The targeted behaviours included bullying, aggression or violence (Colak et al., 2015; Collier & Henriksen, 2012; Dijkman et al., 2015; Edmondson & Hoover, 2008; Pas et al., 2015), disruption or anti-social conduct in lessons (Colak et al., 2015; Mac Cobb et al., 2014; McGoey et al., 2014; Pas et al., 2015), and other high risk behaviours, such as drink driving or gambling (Collier & Henriksen, 2012).

Four articles (11%) were concerned with school-based interventions that aimed to improve professional pedagogical practice. This included classroom management (Akalın & Sucuoglu, 2015), encouraging the use of technology (McGrail, 2006), broadening professional roles (Lindo et al., 2014), and working effectively with court-involved pupils (Crosby et al., 2015). There are, perhaps understandably, fewer interventions aimed at improving specific aspects of teaching practice included in this literature review. Most school-based interventions were aimed at improving outcomes for young people. In addition, search terms used may have skewed results to include more studies about interventions for young people (for example, behaviour). Most of the studies examined do discuss staff training and development, but it is not the explicit aim of the intervention, whereas outcomes for young people are the ultimate goal. Had search criteria included alternative terms (such as

‘teacher stress’, or ‘classroom management’), further articles may have been identified that were aimed primarily at staff. However, since the LFARA was a WS approach to improving pupil outcomes, the current search strategy was considered appropriate to the nature of the present study.

Only one study included in this review examined an intervention that focused on increasing knowledge or skills beyond the impact they would have on behaviour and physical and mental wellbeing. In this study, Donato and colleagues (2014) describe the impact of the Visual Language in Autism program, which aimed to improve the ability of children with autism to comprehend and respond to spoken language as well as construct expressive language; visual supports, such as photographs, videos and computer displays were used to facilitate this.

2.3 Methods Identified in the Literature

The chosen study design for each intervention was also explored, including the use of qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods, number of schools targeted, range of perspectives considered and length of study. The majority of studies that aimed to evaluate staff perspectives of school-based interventions employed qualitative methods (see **Table 2. 3**). These methods included mostly semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observations.

Favoured quantitative methods were surveys or questionnaires and statistical data gathered at school level (for example, attendance). A small number of studies established a control group and a ‘treatment group’ as part of conducting a randomised control trial (Sormunen et al., 2012; Snyder et al., 2012; Dijkman et al., 2015; Pas et al., 2015).

Although more researchers elected to use a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods than quantitative methods alone, most of these studies did not explicitly refer to using a ‘mixed method’ paradigm or establish the type of mixed method approach undertaken. Most mixed method studies included in the review are concurrent in design, although this is not explicitly stated in their methodology. Studies included in the review of literature using mixed methods either used one type of data to triangulate the other (concurrent triangulation design) or as a lesser priority than the other (concurrent nested design) (Creswell, 2003). There were very few examples in this review of sequential designs in which data has been used to inform an adaptive methodology in response to findings throughout the process. However, where used, this approach also had potential benefits for contexts in which the intervention was being studied as data can also inform implementation

design (for example, Howie et al., 2014).

Some researchers gathered data from staff only, whilst others combined staff perspectives with other school stakeholders, such as pupils and parents. Of the researchers who only gathered staff perspectives, numbers of staff in the sample were usually higher. This reflects that in the other studies, staff perspectives were usually a smaller part of supporting evaluation of pupil outcomes. Most commonly, studies gathered teacher perspectives, even if they referred to 'school staff'. Very few (N=3) studies included views of teaching assistants, catering staff or other non-teaching or leaders, potentially marginalising these voices when attempting to understand the impact of intervention for the WS.

The numbers of participants reported in these review studies may be misleading without explaining that, where numbers exceeded 50 participants, researchers had typically included data on pupil outcomes and therefore, the figure does not refer solely to staff. In fact, in these cases, higher number of pupil participants were often combined with very low numbers of staff participants. For example, in one study of 90 participants, 85 were pupils, and only 4 were staff, all of whom were teachers (Mac Cobb et al., 2014); in another, 109 sets of pupil data were combined with just three staff contributions (Van der Geugten et al., 2014). These ratios do reflect, to some extent, staff to pupil ratios in the school community. However, there is a risk that in focusing on a small number of staff (mostly teachers), the intention to articulate 'staff perspectives' becomes tokenistic and highly generalised.

The majority of studies were based in elementary, pre-school, primary or junior school setting (grouped together in the table below). To some extent this may reflect the concentration of WS and preventative approaches designed for younger pupils in order to intervene early with maximum long-term benefit. However, this results in a lack of understanding about the enabling and constraining factors of school-based approaches in the secondary context. None of the studies reviewed compared the intervention between different school types (primary or secondary). Therefore, there is limited understanding of how the variable of primary and secondary school type influences staff perspectives of these approaches in context.

Research has concentrated on projects lasting less than or equal to one academic year. This reflects the fact that many school-based interventions, especially WS programmes, were initially evaluated in a one-year cycle. Some studies provided more longitudinal data that showed the extent to which the approach had been modified or adopted after the end of formal support and training. Many studies cited this as an aim for further research.

Table 2.3. Study design analysis for literature reviewed in this thesis.

		Number of studies	
		(total N=37)	
Methods used:	Quantitative only	7	
	Qualitative only	19	
	Mixed Methods	11	
Data gathered from:	Leaders only	1	
	Teachers only	10	
	Teachers and Leaders	2	
	Teaching and pastoral staff	5	
	Teachers and parents	1	
	Teachers and pupils	8	
	Teachers, leaders and pupils	1	
	Teachers, pupils and parents	1	
	Multiple school staff types including leaders, teachers and other staff	3	
	Multiple staff types and parents	3	
	Multiple staff type, parents and pupils	2	
	Study context:	1-2 pre/primary schools	11
		1-2 middle/secondary schools	7
between 3 and 10 pre/primary schools		4	
between 3 and 10 middle/secondary schools		7	
>10 schools pre/primary		1	
>10 schools middle/secondary		1	

	>20 schools pre/primary	6
	>20 schools middle/secondary	
Participants:	N=<10	6
	N=<20	6
	N=<50	9
	N=<100	7
	N=>100	9
Intervention period:	Less than one academic year	15
	One academic year	14
	More than one academic year	8

When type of intervention and study design are considered together, it is interesting to note that research concerning mental or physical health approaches had the largest variation in methods. The use of multiple tools (including interviews, surveys, focus groups and school data), suggests the complexity of measuring the impact of such interventions. The relatively high number of mixed method studies in this category also reflects both the prevalence of quantitative approaches in the field of health research, and the necessity of qualitative methods in order to tackle the complexity of the social context.

Amongst the articles that evaluated interventions intended to promote positive behaviour, the dominant approaches were to gather staff perspectives through either semi-structured interviews, focus groups or surveys. Some (for example, Clarke et al., 2010), combined all three tools of data collection. Multiple authors elected to use qualitative methods alone, indicating that this was a potential limitation of the study. Authors cited social acceptance bias (in that responses may have been given that were thought to be acceptable to the school leadership team) and accuracy of researcher interpretation as particular concerns (for example, Honess & Hunter, 2014). Conversely, some studies that chose quantitative methods alone acknowledged this as a limitation. Some authors used open ended questions on surveys to enable participants to expand on their experiences and to make recommendations for programme development (for example, Mac Cobb et al., 2014).

Most of the negative behaviour prevention evaluations employed quantitative methods, the highest concentration of quantitative studies across all types of interventions. One likely reason for this is the ability to measure and record negative behaviour incidents relatively easily. School behaviour management systems are usually established to record and track negative pupil behaviour. Many schools now use software to aid this process, meaning pre- and post-intervention data is readily available. Though the studies focused on staff perspectives, combining these perspectives with pupil outcome data either in one article or as part of broader projects enriched the findings.

The interventions that focused on professional development or increased knowledge and skills employed mostly qualitative methods. The short-term nature of the implementations of this nature may not have allowed sufficient time such that differences measured reached statistical significance, leading authors to prefer staff reports, which may describe climate changes that have subsequent impact. In addition, it appears that as researchers aim to collect an increasing number of perspectives, the likelihood of mixing qualitative and quantitative methods also increases, in an attempt to capture the complexity of diverse stakeholder experiences and multiple potential outcomes.

2.4 Commonly Identified Enabling and Constraining Factors

Multiple contextual elements may have enabling or constraining effects for school-based implementation (Pas et al., 2015). Beyond the literature reviewed for this chapter, it has been proposed that enabling factors might include:

- Personal perceptions of the programme (Beets et al., 2008; Cothran, Kulinna & Garn, 2010)
- Perceived need for the intervention and belief in its feasibility (Pankratz et al., 2006; Ringwalt et al., 2003)
- Cultural fit between school ethos and programme theory (Rohrbach, Graham & Hansen, 1993)
- Prioritisation of intervention focus both at school and national policy level (for example, in relation to mental health, Patalay et al., 2016)
- Perception of staff capacity (Patalay et al., 2016)
- Links with external support agencies (Wolpert, Humphrey, Belsky & Deighton, 2013)

Findings of the studies reviewed for this thesis have been grouped into the most commonly cited enabling or constraining factors. These are discussed under one heading as opposed to two, since findings were not always in agreement. Whereas staff in one study may find technology to be an enabling factor (for example, Riih  et al., 2012), staff in another may experience it as a constraint (McGrail, 2006), due to multiple contextual variables at play.

2.4.1 Whole-School Approaches.

2.4.1.1 Degree of Whole-Staff Engagement. One significant enabling factor of multiple interventions identified by just over half (N=19, 51%) of the studies reviewed is a ‘whole-school’ design that extends beyond teaching staff to include all school staff, pupils, parents and the wider community in the development a cohesive approach. Involvement in WS implementation that increased opportunities for staff to co-plan, deliver or evaluate parts of the programme was perceived to increase relevance and ownership, in addition to maximising opportunities to support young people. In comparison, in implementations where staff had decreased autonomy and experienced ‘top down’ directed change (for example, McGrail, 2006), sense of ownership was low, and staff perceived less impact for pupils.

Staff interview findings in Freeman and colleagues (2014) refer to the WS nature of the programme as a facilitator of positive change, which echoes other research into social-emotional programmes. For example, Honess and Hunter (2014) who found that the development of a WS ethos as underpinning the understanding and delivery of the programme was a valuable element of programme design. Freeman and colleagues (2014) identified that developing a common purpose and set of practices in the WS (across parents, staff and the broader community) was a key aspect of programme success. However, they provided less information about the processes that led to successful application of the programme. There is some indication that staff motivation levels were part of the eligibility criteria (needing to be 80% or more in participating schools) (p. 852). However, the methods used to determine this across schools was not standardised and may have led to some discrepancy in staff engagement with the process. There was also some variation in multiple studies in the extent to which all staff were involved in ‘whole-school’ approaches. In Freeman and colleagues’ (2014) study, for example, a social-emotional learning programme designed to be implemented at whole-school level is described. During an 18-month

programme, implementation teams of three-five teachers (including leaders) were given both time and training to develop a WS conflict resolution curriculum.

One potential limitation of the WS approach in this case was that no non-teaching staff were involved in the training, yet all staff were asked to deliver aspects of the curriculum (for example, during playground supervision). The results of the study indicate that WS policy adopted as a result of the implementation was highly successful in comparison to control schools. However, only core implementation team members were interviewed, who had a high level of responsibility and ownership of the planning and delivery of the implementation. Therefore, it is possible that a fuller picture of the extent of WS integration of the conflict resolution policy may have been possible had a broader cross section of staff been interviewed. If certain staff were not trained in the approach, a lack of consistency potentially threatening sustainability might be found beyond the sample provided. In addition, use of the ‘significant change story’ approach to interviewing (Dart & Davies, 2003) (in which participants are asked to describe the most significant changes emerging from program implementation), may have skewed the data to focus on successful aspects.

In an evaluation of a school suicide prevention program in the United States of America (Nadeem et al., 2011), gatekeeper models were not extended to all frontline staff. The fact that knowledge imparted during professional development training was not consistent school-wide may have restricted the potential for staff to collaborate in supporting at risk pupils. Staff who were not fully involved in the training reported feeling underprepared and under-skilled in knowing how to respond to ‘warning signs’. The authors also identified a need to develop broader structural changes across the WS that would support a consistent policy approach and reduce ‘burden’ on staff (p.15).

Some studies have indicated that a ‘whole system’ approach that involved a number of participating schools can maximise the enabling effect of a WS approach. The large number of schools involved in Freeman and colleagues’ (2014) study and the longitudinal nature of data collection, has allowed for useful insights into the benefits of cross-school networking and support, collaboration and practice development, which is also a finding echoed in Sormunen et al.’s (2012) reference to ‘study school’ groups.

2.4.1.2 Community Links in the Existing School System. Clarke and colleagues (2010) report on the evaluation of ‘Zippy’s Friends’, (an international emotional wellbeing programme), presenting two case studies in primary schools in Ireland. Whilst the

intervention itself was not a WS intervention (focusing on the classroom-based teaching of coping skills), the study drew from evaluations of staff, pupils and parents to try to understand the whole system impact of the intervention. The authors found that ecological factors impacted programme implementation in both case study schools in different ways. Both schools could be said to be in 'disadvantaged' areas in terms of socio-economic profile. In the larger sized urban school (School A), there was a significant lack of social cohesion in the local community, particularly between schools and families. Clarke and colleagues suggest that this might in part be attributed to the high percentage of lone parent and ethnic minority families who typically had low levels of education, low competency in the English language and very little material support. In conjunction with very few teachers living in the local area, these social demographics isolated families from accessing and collaborating with the school and consequently there was a lack of communication between staff and parents, which presented as a constraint to the intervention. Conversely, the smaller sized rural school in Clarke and colleagues' (2010) study, (School B), although dealing with similar social and economic disadvantage, was seen as a 'close-knit' community with strong support of the school. The authors propose this is in part due to the impact of conflict in Northern Ireland on rural communities in this area. Protestant families are said by the authors to identify closely with their local church and schools. In addition, many teachers lived locally and knew the families personally, sometimes spanning generations of school/community relationships. These findings resonate strongly with previous research on WS interventions and the context that they are applied in. Community cohesion and strength of school and home communication systems, (as exemplified by School B), is acknowledged as an important factor in predicting organisational readiness for change, which has been conceptualised as a psychological (Chilenski, Greenberg, & Feinberg, 2007; Weiner, 2009) or structural concept (Bloom, 2000).

Clarke and colleagues (2010) emphasised that, in order to be successful, it was necessary to 'implement the Zippy's Friends programme throughout all classes in the schools, in all school activities and to involve parents so that lessons learned in school could be reinforced at home' (p.11). Ultimately, the findings indicated that staff perceptions of 'Zippy's Friends' were more positive in School B, with staff observing improvements in children's behavioural and emotional wellbeing. Staff identified the reinforcement and support of the programme in their home contexts as a facilitating factor. However, further research would have to explore whether involvement in the intervention positively increased community links in School A, and the future impact of any increase in communication.

Clarke and colleagues (2010) conducted a relatively small number of interviews (29), including only eight with parents, which may have restricted insight into how the programme could better foster parental involvement. In addition, it is likely that home/school communication is also a significant predictor of programme success in secondary schools (both schools in the study were primary). However, there are arguably more constraints in the secondary context, given the larger numbers of pupils and fewer opportunities for parents to communicate with staff. Thus, further research comparing the enabling and constraining factor of parent engagement in different school contexts (in relation to the adoption of WS approaches) might be warranted.

Sormunen and colleagues (2012) evaluated a health learning programme in Finland that aimed to explicitly promote and improve parental involvement in school-based health promotion. Strategies included homework packages that supported health curriculum delivered in school, newsletters for parents communicating work covered in lessons and inquiring about willingness and ability to support home learning. Parent participatory workshops were also held with school staff to introduce everyday application of school-based learning to home life (for example, nutrition or managing puberty). After consulting parents about their needs, schools provided childcare and encouraged parents to bring younger children to these events. Staff acknowledged this as a major change to school culture and a facilitator of dramatically increased parental involvement. In spite of the array of strategies employed to promote parental involvement, staff reported a sustained imbalance in attendance to parent/carer events. Many working parents (but particularly fathers), cited timings as unpractical due to work commitments, which may have been also partly attributable to culturally perceived gender roles ('mothers participate more in schoolwork' (School B father), p.14).

Some studies have shown that young people acting as 'ambassadors' between the school and home can overcome cultural barriers to involvement in education programmes, such as constraint stemming from lack of parental engagement. For example, Graves and colleagues (2014) reported that staff perceive pupils to 'carry home' what they learn and educate their parents and siblings simultaneously (p.9).

In some studies, staff reported that an absence of external support had led to greater community mobilisation (Dongre et al., 2009; Graves et al., 2014). Staff suggested that since the intervention was deeply rooted in the community, it was seen as a valuable resource and perceived as effective in raising pupil outcomes. The potential pitfalls of community mobilisation were under-explored, including the additional time and resources required from

community members. For example, if school staff volunteered time and money at a cost to their own personal wellbeing, this may result in high staff turnover, meaning that much of the initial training could be lost, reducing sustainability (Dongre et al., 2009; Graves et al., 2014).

Interestingly, in the Global North, very few school-based interventions included an element of community mobilisation or involvement. However, in cases where this was an aspect (Clarke et al., 2010), parental and community involvement was shown to be a highly significant enabler of intervention efficacy. A challenge, therefore, for those generating programme theory, and for schools, will be to utilise and strengthen community support, whilst acknowledging the importance of resources and funding needed from other sources. Internal tensions may emerge due to conflicting priorities of those who are directly and indirectly part of the school community, requiring clear leadership and shared values at the core of the work. These considerations are part of a broader need to balance external support and internal capacity building (including the WS community).

2.4.1.3 Peer Support. Whilst the majority of studies that reported on WS approaches discussed staff and parental involvement, fewer studies refer to the strong influence of peer support. Yeung (1985) asserts that (from both staff perspectives and school data) peer groupings in an inclusive educational project (linking mainstream and special needs schools in Hong Kong) promoted better social and emotional skills and improved participation, acceptance and achievement (p.15).

In the research of Fees and colleagues (2014), teachers reported that peers were effective modelers of social story song techniques. Children used a song they had been taught as part of a music therapy intervention in preschool classes. Whilst some children used the song to self-regulate and wait patiently, some children sang the song to others to remind them to wait. Staff articulated the prosocial element of the programme and acknowledged that children responded better to their peers' reminders of appropriate behaviour than the teacher's (Fees et al., 2014, p.5). Peer relationships were not only powerful motivators for pupils to challenge their preconceptions and build confidence, similar experiences were articulated by staff. Staff found that collaborative professional partnerships increased confidence and ability to handle complex situations and facilitate their own and pupils' positive acceptance of diversity (Fees et al., 2014, p.688). Thus, in the WS approach, peer support was a powerful enabling factor for both pupils and staff.

Audrey and colleagues' (2008) study of teacher perspectives of a peer-led smoking

prevention initiative contrasts the positioning of peer support as an enabling factor. For staff in this project, tensions arising from increased pupil-to-pupil support constrained the intervention. Year-eight pupils were nominated by their peers as ‘influential’ individuals who were then trained by health promotion trainers to reduce smoking uptake, using informal conversations with other pupils in their year group. As the authors report, ‘challenging young people’ (Audrey et al., 2008, p.81) were chosen by their peers, resulting in teacher resistance. It was subsequently agreed that pupils could be withdrawn from the process if they did not ‘deserve the privilege of participating in the intervention’ (Audrey et al., 2008, p.10). Whilst the peer supporters were considered to be highly successful in terms of a reduction on self-reported smoking, much of the data presented in this study indicates that teachers’ commitment to the programme was reduced by their perceptions of the peer support process.

In stark contrast, Holsen et al. (2015) evaluated a positive mental health programme in Norway, in which pupils volunteered to take part and were then selected from a shortlist of volunteers because they were considered by staff to be ‘highly altruistic, and more motivated than other pupils’ (p.12). In this study, the positive impact of peer mentoring for younger pupils as well as the benefit of involvement for the peer leader themselves was highlighted by staff. However, a tension remained between staff and pupils centring on role confusion, lack of collaboration and concerns regarding loss of authority. This suggests that there are more complex reasons for staff perceiving pupil involvement in WS approaches as a constraint than a lack of appropriate role models. For example, staff may feel displaced by pupils’ increased authority. In findings from Audrey and colleagues’ study (2008), one teacher stated: ‘I was unsure how (and whether) I was supposed to be involved’, due to ‘mixed messages about trust and authority’ (both p.9). The authors do not further explore the voracity of these claims by comparing teacher views to parental or pupil reports, which would be an interesting expansion of the study.

Increasing pupil voice and co-production through WS approaches is therefore an aspect of intervention practice that warrants further investigation. Staff concerns would need to be explicitly addressed, so that pupil engagement can be increased on the one hand, without decreasing staff engagement on the other.

2.5 Resources

A number of studies (N=15, 40%) amongst those reviewed identified funding and

resources as significant facilitators of school intervention or, conversely, the lack of funding or resources as barriers to programme success.

2.5.1 Physical Resources and External Support. Over a quarter of the studies (37.5%, N=15) discussed the importance of funding and resources to maximise the impact of school-based approaches. As identified in recent research spanning ten European countries, funding was cited as a current barrier to mental health provision in schools in every country except the Netherlands (Patalay et al., 2016). In the literature reviewed for this chapter, a complex balance is presented in multiple studies between staff desire for external support and internal capacity. Some appraisals of programmes that rely heavily on external support, suggest that such approaches are less sustainable and suited to the school context (Hart & Heaver, 2013). However, from staff perspectives in most of the studies reviewed, external support was also sometimes seen as an enabling factor, through reducing workload and providing additional resources. It is important to position this finding in the context of the absence of longitudinal data that might reveal that external support limits sustainability. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that in a great number of studies, staff identified receiving adequate training, resources and time to carry out tasks as vital to the success of the intervention (Audrey et al., 2008; Bice et al., 2014; Colak et al., 2015; Dongre et al., 2009; Freeman et al., 2014; Jørgensen et al., 2014; Lindo et al., 2014; Martin & Murtagh, 2015; McGoey et al., 2014; Skryabina et al., 2016; Van der Geugten et al., 2015). These findings are also consistent with a review of facilitators and barriers to school-based mental health intervention, which found that across 10 countries in Europe, concerns about staff capacity and limited resources were two of the most frequently cited barriers (Patalay et al., 2016).

Many studies identified the use of detailed, clear and consistently applied resource packs, training cards or instructions as enablers of school interventions (Bice et al., 2014; Colak et al., 2015; Dongre et al., 2009; Freeman et al., 2014; Jørgensen et al., 2014; Lindo et al., 2014; Martin & Murtagh, 2015; Skryabina et al., 2016; Van der Geugten et al., 2015). Staff report the use of these resources to reduce additional strain on school staff and help to consistently apply ideas in practice (for example, Audrey et al., 2008). In addition, the provision of essential equipment not already provided in school (for example, Howie et al., 2014) was seen as an enabling factor. This theme must be considered in the context of a number of articles that identify the bespoke or tailored nature of the programme to be an advantage (Collier & Henriksen, 2012; Crosby et al., 2015; Dijkman et al., 2015; Donato et al., 2014; Dongre et al., 2009; Edmondson & Hoover, 2008; Freeman et al., 2014; Howie et

al., 2014; Jørgensen et al., 2014; Mac Cobb et al., 2014; Nadeem et al., 2011). This suggests that whilst resources present a potential advantage, they must be adaptable to school context. Mc Goey and colleagues (2014) identified that a lack of resources, funding or time to deliver school-based intervention may have a secondary negative impact. Rather than restricting the practical potential of the programme alone, these barriers, being outside of staff control, may also begin to impact staff beliefs, motivation and attitudes towards the intervention. Thus, the authors suggest that a relationship exists between teacher job stress and other barriers to implementation, especially lack of time, resources or support and appropriate training.

Some studies also acknowledged the threat to sustainability if external providers do not collaborate with existing staff effectively, potentially resulting in lack of confidence and preparedness to continue with established policy and practices (Collier & Henriksen, 2012). Where process evaluation has taken place and a lack of resources identified, this issue has been addressed very effectively, resulting in the programme being more sustainable (Edmondson & Hoover, 2008).

It can be concluded that an ideal balance consists of clear information, resources and guidance, that is provided in order to reduce additional workload for staff and make programmes more accessible and acceptable, whilst involving staff in the development of resources and strategies to increase a sense of ownership and motivation. The studies reviewed for this chapter did not discuss support for staff as being necessary beyond or outside of delivering a set intervention. Other literature strongly suggests that models, such as professional supervision, can support staff experiencing emotionally intense work and challenging workload to feel valued, have better wellbeing, and to be more effective in their role (for example in health professions: Edwards et al., 2006; Hawkins & Shohet, 2007; Morrison, 2005; and teaching: Rae, Cowell & Field, 2017).

2.5.1.1 Structural Barriers: policy and funding as constraints. Resource issues do not only impact the adoption of school-based programmes for staff, but also determine which pupils benefit from the intervention, often resulting in issues of inequality. In Maljak and colleagues' (2014) study into the challenges of providing inner city clubs, the lack of existing physical activity infrastructure at schools presented a specific challenge to gaining resources since there was little evidence or experience of the success of these programmes from which to negotiate funding. Transportation and snacks for pupils were not provided (staff having to fund food themselves) and few physical spaces were made available to operate from. This significantly negatively impacted participation, especially excluding those who could not compensate for these shortcomings using their own resources.

The inner-city clubs evaluation (Maljak et al., 2014) presents a clear example of how existing policy in and beyond the individual school can be a barrier to school-based intervention. The authors site a culture of 'high stakes testing' to have created 'mid-stream organisational barriers', such as compulsory after school tutoring, which restricted some pupils from accessing after school clubs. Children from low socio-economic backgrounds, looked after children and those with additional needs were more likely than their peers to require additional academic support. Therefore, access was denied to the pupils who would arguably benefit the most from activities known to build long term resilience.

Amongst other issues, a district-wide 'loitering policy' forced pupils out of the school grounds on school closure as they either waited to be picked up or walked through 'unsafe neighborhoods' for the city bus. Staff were seen in the inner-city clubs project to compensate for such constraints, attempting to arrange transport, for example. This was also reported by staff in a hand washing promotion programme in Western Kenyan primary schools (Graves et al., 2014). In the schools deemed most in need of the education programme, limited financial resources meant that teachers had to make 'personal financial sacrifices' (p.167) in order to maintain the program. The high number of staff (98%) who collaborated with parents to generate fundraising options should be seen as indicative of the success of the educational aspect of the programme. However, the reliance on already disadvantaged families and staff having to contribute their personal money should also indicate that wider systemic change is needed to make the programme sustainable.

A similar issue emerged from Dongre and colleagues' (2009) study, which found that socially taboo topics such as menstrual hygiene restricted the availability of sanitary products. Again, staff and local communities worked together to raise money to reduce the cost of these products and volunteered to hand them out, thus making them readily available

to local girls. Sormunen (2012) found that teachers in one case study school used their own time to ensure that the intervention was delivered thoroughly because they did not have the volunteer staff and substitute teachers afforded in other case study schools.

Beyond reducing the impact of a programme on pupil outcomes and potentially raising issues of inequality, resource and funding issues can also pose an immediate threat to the safety of pupils. For example, in Nadeem and colleagues' (2011) study, teachers reported that schools with limited resources were less likely to communicate with external agencies or refer to external mental health services. If structural constraints (such as a lack of funding, time, resources and support for staff and pupils) throughout the education system are addressed systemically, these factors may not pose such constraints on school level intervention (Patalay et al., 2016). Such attention to broader structural influences on enabling and constraining factors is rare in the literature reviewed for this chapter and warrants further research.

2.5.1.2 Time and Competing Pressures. More than a quarter of studies reviewed in Chapter 2 (27%, N=10) found that a lack of time or competing priorities were perceived by staff as significant barriers to school-based intervention.

Jorgenson and colleagues (2014) interviewed staff involved in a nutritional intervention called 'Boost'. Staff identified the importance of time (in particular, intervention timescale and lack of capacity due to workload) as potential barriers to the success of the programme. In spite of overall positive perceptions of the project, staff felt that a shorter intervention period would reduce additional workload and increase motivation to deliver the programme.

As discussed above, multiple studies refer to external providers as helping to address workload and lack of time concerns through delivering training, or by providing extra resources that actually reduce workload, thus negating this constraining factor to some extent. However, this must also be balanced by the potential for external provisions to be less sustainable and at odds with existing practices and ethos. Findings of Audrey and colleague's study (2008) also indicated that the school staff commitment to the program was undermined by concerns they held about the capability of external trainers to set standards of discipline and fully understand timetable issues and a sense that existing school staff had hoped to be more involved.

Mac Cobb et al. (2014) and Nadeem et al. (2011) present evaluations in which staff reported ways to improve the programme that included teachers being better trained and

made more aware of the language, techniques and procedures that should be used so that the programme could be reinforced and teachers felt able to carry out the intervention fully.

In studies in which staff were well trained and centrally involved, perceptions of the programme tended to be positive. Bice and colleagues' (2014) evaluation of an obesity prevention intervention CATCH (an American obesity prevention programme), for example, relied on existing physical education teachers to implement the programme. The authors asserted that teaching staff were likely to have a positive attitude towards CATCH because the clear framework provided was seen to relieve workload, whilst delivering the programme gave staff a new leadership role. The authors did not explore the possibility that less involvement may have had a negative impact for other staff. For example, non-teaching staff who had a less direct role but were expected to participate in implementation ('cafeteria supervisors' for example) may have found the required changes more stressful and energy consuming due to the departure from perceived role duties and contrast to existing regulations.

Colak et al. (2015) suggested that if staff felt overburdened by programme content and their role in its delivery, their perceptions of the impact of the project for pupils was also more negative. This assertion is supported by Fees and colleagues (2014), who found that staff's positive perceptions of the social stories programme were linked to their confidence in the training.

Time is not an issue for staff alone, but an issue that has a ripple effect across the school system. Lack of time was identified as a barrier for all three focus groups in Donato and colleagues' (2014) study in which parents, educators and health professionals associated with children with special needs expressed their concerns. Additional appointments for parents and carers, increased workload (due to staff and funding cuts), and the time-consuming nature of introducing new concepts and routines to children who find changes to structure difficult were seen to 'drain' energy and increase stress.

Interestingly, whilst a quarter of the studies in the literature review for this thesis found that a lack of time or competing priorities were perceived by staff to constrain school intervention, there was an important distinction between lack of time and competing priorities. Some staff reported that they felt the intervention was constrained by a lack of time, in spite being a school priority (Clarke et al., 2010). Others suggested that time could not be found for the intervention as it was not a significant enough priority (McGrail, 2006). This distinction is indicative of the separate issues of actual time available and cultural support for the project, which may be translated into timetable adaptations, re-prioritisation,

provision of resources or training and so on. In other words, the structural changes required within the school system to facilitate an intervention are more likely to take place if school staff feel that the intervention is useful, necessary and complimentary rather than competitive with existing priorities.

2.5.1.3 Technology. Although referred to by a relatively small number of studies (N=5, 13.5%), the use of technology was highlighted as an important enabling factor to be considered in the development of school-based approaches due to increased exposure to mainstream and social media outside of school (Donato et al., 2014; Van der Geugten et al., 2015). In addition, the potential of technology was cited as a tool to aid the development of a critical learning mindset (Räihä et al., 2012), self-esteem, increasing relevance of curriculum content and improving language and study skills (McGrail, 2006).

Donato and colleagues' (2014) study articulates the use of mobile technologies to support visual resources for a language promotion programme for pupils with autism. The study is a particularly strong support for technology, increasing both parental and educational staff engagement and use of the tools of the intervention due to its accessible and immediate nature. However, the authors rightly warn that access to resources and training in using the resources appropriately are necessary in order to benefit from this aspect of the programme.

Mc Grail (2006) reported that a prescribed use of technology was sometimes seen as at odds with teacher agency. Teachers prioritised covering the content of the curriculum in time for examinations rather than creating new lesson plans that incorporated technology. This lack of prioritisation constrained laptop use. Teachers were frustrated by the top-down implementation of technology by policy makers, which was at odds with their own priorities.

Conversely, Dongre and colleagues (2009) articulated a starkly contrasting experience in their study of a personal hygiene intervention in rural and tribal communities in India. Existing local resources were scarce, and staff reported that the lack of reliance on technology or printed materials was an enabling factor. Instead, handmade flipbooks were developed as a result of needs assessment, which participants reported to be a major facilitator of both sustainability and community/parental support of the programme.

The presence of positive findings in relation to technology are important to highlight, especially in the context of increasing mental health concerns that are frequently linked to social media (Pitchforth et al., 2018). Technology may present both a risk and protective factor for pupils, depending on the context of its use (Bentley et al., 2017). Findings also demonstrate that technology is not an enabling factor in itself, but in the way that it is used to

facilitate other enablers (for example, to improve communication with parents or to extend learning opportunities).

2.5.1.4 Resistance of Staff and Cultural Resistance. Individual and cultural resistance to change was identified as a constraint of many interventions, whereas elements of organisational readiness for change generally contributed to programme success (Bice et al., 2014; Clarke et al., 2010; Yeung, 2012).

Organisational readiness for change is a multi-level, multi-dimensional construct (Weiner, 2009), that draws on a systems theory understanding of the school context. From this perspective, organisational readiness for change is a sum of the extent to which members of the organisation value the change intervention. Individual appraisal of the intervention will stem from the level of task demand, availability of resources, and congruence between the intervention and situational or contextual need (Weiner, 2009).

When organisational readiness is high, commitment to change intervention in terms of level of co-operation and commitment is also likely to be high, placing cultural value on the programme theory. Importantly, considering the multiple system levels involved in WS approaches, in a school, the reasons for commitment to change may or may not stem from individually held beliefs. On the one hand, if an individual feels they are unwillingly having to commit to an intervention in spite of their perceived lack of relevance (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002), they are unlikely to have the same investment in the process as a member of staff who considers the intervention to be necessary and effective. On the other hand, whether ‘top down’ demands are at odds with perceived issues of import within the school or not, staff will perceive that the *expectation* is to direct resources towards this priority regardless (McGrail, 2006).

Research suggests that many school staff report that their personal professional values were in contrast to organisational priorities (Beltman et al., 2011; Mansfield et al., 2012; Olivant, 2015; Sanderse, Walker & Jones, 2015). Therefore, the challenge of a school-based intervention is to gain meaningful participation at every level of the system from individual staff to local and government policy. This will involve challenging dominant beliefs and ideologies across the system, and creating a common language and framework of agreed priorities which school staff help to co-produce rather than receive as a ‘top down’ instruction.

McGrail and colleagues (2006) found that staff articulated frustration in interviews at

the seemingly contradictory priorities being simultaneously promoted in a top down fashion. Participants expressed the feeling that the IT intervention seemed to ‘fly in the face’ of what the school as a whole had been trying to achieve. Tensions between personal professional drivers, school ethos and government or state policy had not been well navigated by programme facilitators, causing much ambivalence and resistance amongst staff. Conversely, where staff concerns were addressed as part of process development (Howie et al., 2014), time requirements for programme implementation were reduced to what was perceived by staff as a more realistic expectation, resulting in more positive evaluations. Howie et al. (2014) provide insight into the *use* of staff perspective data over three years to shape and adapt school-based intervention to reduce the constraining impact of competing priorities.

In some studies, rather than a conflict with school or state ethos, interventions were seen to replicate or mirror content of existing curriculum. Bice and colleagues (2014) found this to be an advantage for school staff with a lack of time, due to the programme materials reducing lesson planning time. Skryabina and colleagues (2016), in contrast, found that the overlap with the existing curriculum resulted in the additional time required being seen as unnecessary by some staff.

Martin & Murtagh (2015) described how staff expressed the importance of retaining classroom control in order for the physical exercise intervention to be fully adopted, which echoes Jorgensen’s (2014) previous study stating that autonomy and ownership were more important to facilitating implementation for teachers than training.

Dongre and colleagues (2009) described how resistance of participants occurred to an element of the data gathering process, linked to a health intervention. School principals were initially unwilling for health evaluations to occur as part of the study in case local media were to report negatively on the findings. Such issues of cultural resistance and competing pressures were in this case overcome by the positive impact of the programme. Rather than fearing local community response, schools began to collaborate with local communities to solve their collective problems. The authors of this study attributed this outcome to the ability of the health educators to recognise and tackle resistance during the assessment phase of the programme.

Some studies identified that previous experiences of school-based interventions can potentially impact staff perceptions, even if the programme content is quite different. Due to institutional factors that may have posed a barrier historically, staff in some studies had less belief that the intervention might have a positive impact, having seen many interventions ‘come and go’ (Honest & Hunter, 2014). However, this can also be a driver for staff

embracing interventions, acknowledging the need for new approaches (Collier & Henriksen, 2012).

Alekseeva and colleagues provided an example of the influence of staff cynicism, not based on prior experience, but due to cultural resistance to programme theory. The authors discussed cultural resistance reported by staff when introducing a sexual education programme in Russian schools, due to a conflict between existing values and programme content. The authors combined staff and parent views in order to demonstrate what they suggest was a significant shift in staff and parent perspectives, reflecting the capacity of the programme to tackle prejudice.

As identified by 30% (N=12) of the studies reviewed in **Chapter 2**, existing cultural values, past experiences and pre-intervention staff perceptions of the programme can act as either a constraint or enabler of WS approaches. Recent research shows that the prioritisation of mental health provision in UK schools is the second highest in Europe (after Poland), in comparison to nine other participating countries (Patalay et al., 2016). Patalay and colleagues found that this prioritisation was related to school staff perception of their own capacity to implement the approach, and its relevance to national policy (Patalay et al., 2016). Policy in the UK strongly supports WS approaches (Public Health England, 2015; Department of Health, 2015), thus potentially increasing staff 'buy-in', yet perceptions of lack of time or resources may act as a constraint if staff perceive they have less capacity to implement the approach.

2.5.1.5 Acceptance and Adaptation of the Intervention. As identified by 33% (N=12) of the studies reviewed in Chapter 2, existing cultural values, past experiences and pre-intervention staff perceptions of the programme can act as either a constraint or enabler of WS approaches. This has been shown to be dependent on the extent to which existing system properties are acknowledged by facilitators and considered in programme adaptation.

Collier & Henriksen (2012) found that establishing compatibility with school culture and beliefs was an important aspect of the success of an intervention attempting to reduce 'high risk' behaviours, this already being a significant aim for the school. Edmondson & Hoover (2008) explained the adaptation of the programme in response to staff feedback to expand the delivery for faculty needs, demonstrating that a programme can be tailored effectively to different contexts.

Lemke and Sabelli (2008) propose that as a result of enough people accepting or

engaging in an intervention, a ‘critical mass of committed practitioners’ (p.126) can be formed, which initiates system change. These ‘tipping’ or ‘leverage points’ (Reigeluth, 2004, p.17) indicate a significant change in the overall state of the system.

Dongre (2009) reported the use of a prototype model of study materials in order to pre-test the tools in the cultural context and help establish a better fit with local customs and traditions. Ultimately this prototype process was seen as a significant strength by those adopting the tools and strategies. Dijkman (2015) cites similar methods of co-production as a significant facilitative factor of the Good Behaviour Game intervention, through collective decision-making processes that shaped the intervention in context.

In many studies, whether motivation for the intervention was initially high or not, perceived evidence such as parental, pupil or staff reports of positive outcomes or visible impact of the programme encouraged staff to persist with structural challenges, such as lack of time (Donato et al., 2014). Where staff perceived that the project was having or had had significant impact, there was increased social validity of the intervention, thus arguably increasing sustainability (Akalin & Sucuoglu, 2015; Alekseeva et al., 2015; Colak et al., 2015; Collier & Henriksen, 2012; Dijkman et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2014; Graves et al., 2014; Van der Geugten et al., 2015).

2.5.1.6 Leadership. Not all of the articles explicitly draw out the theme of ‘leadership’ as an enabling or constraining factor that emerged from the data, yet many authors acknowledged wider existing literature that identifies leadership as a strong determinant of readiness for change.

In one study, the theme was a significant finding of the study. In Clarke et al.’s (2010) study, strong leadership, stability and clarity of communication patterns and shared decision making were identified as organisational factors underpinning the intervention’s success in school.

Consistent leadership messages and actions will generate a greater sense of school ‘readiness for change’ as well as ensure that the practical resources necessary for implementing the programme are available (Weiner, 2009). Existing research highlights the role of leadership in establishing school cultural values and the importance of leaders in accommodating new ideas and practices into an existing school system is also central to an understanding of school intervention as taking place within a complex system (Kershner & McQuillan, 2016). Some authors have suggested that the role of school leaders in

understanding and enacting school change is critical because they occupy a unique position as ‘mediators between classrooms and the external environment’, ‘juggling’ multiple responsibilities (Beabout, 2008, p.36). As such, leaders arguably ‘release the potential’ (Keene, 2000, p.17) of people and resources within the school and its broader system. Other authors (for example, Tourish, 2018) have suggested that ‘mainstream’ perspectives wrongly assume that leaders are immune in some way to complex issues of power, such as control and dissent, and do not experience goal conflict. In pursuit of more complex conceptualisations of ‘leadership’, Hazy & Uhl Bien (2013, see table below) have proposed five functions of leadership that are fluidly assumed by multiple staff at different times and in different contexts.

Table 2.4. Leadership functions and complexity mechanisms (adapted from Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2013, p.3).

Leadership function	Function in practice in the LFARA process
Generative	Catalyse or generate interest, set high aspirations for the LFARA, encourage staff adoption of the LFARA, openness to learning and change
Administrative	Establish role clarity (e.g. school leads) and clear chains of responsibility, review efficiency of performance
Community Building	Legitimise shared beliefs and values, promote identity (‘community’) orientation, trust, strong shared identity
Information Gathering	Exploration and data collection through audit, listening, high levels of discourse, learning culture
Information Using	Convergence (‘process evolution’) orientation, clear responsibilities

Hazy and Uhl Bien (2013)’s notion of leadership may be useful in understanding how whole-staff adoption of interventions may be mediated by those enacting leadership functions. In addition, these descriptors are useful to understand how the distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities may be mediated by the intervention itself. Whilst relatively few articles in this systematic review consider leadership to be a constraining or enabling factor, changes to leadership are reported by staff in multiple interventions. The complex issues surrounding leadership of school systems and the link between leadership and whole-school change warrants further attention. For example,

leadership could significantly mediate the impact of competing priorities on intervention acceptance if sufficient relational trust exists between leadership and other staff. Increased participative decision making is known to strengthen relational trust, meaning that distributed leadership may be an efficient way to increase whole-staff ‘buy-in’ (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Moolenaar & Slegers, 2010; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Increasing interactions across system levels may increase sustainability of an approach, even in the face of ongoing environmental change across system levels. However, there is less empirical research that explores the impact of distributed leadership and relational trust on staff perceptions of school climate.

2.6 Commonly Identified Outcomes

Many studies focused programme efficacy for pupils, using staff data to either triangulate or ‘back up’ pupil data. As such, there was a greater focus on what staff perceived to be enabling and constraining factors of the intervention than the outcomes staff reported. However, some outcomes were identified in multiple studies, indicating a pattern in terms of the broad areas of school climate that staff observed an impact in within the first year of implementation (most studies being around this time frame).

Staff perceived outcomes for multiple stakeholder groups that can be broadly separated into two camps, although they are interrelated. Structural and policy outcomes included adapting or creating policy, adapting curriculum, changing the school’s physical environment and distributing leadership. Cultural and behavioural outcomes included improved relationships, increased communication, improved knowledge, improved behaviour and increased academic outcomes (the first three being identified for staff as well as pupils).

Some studies (Colak et al., 2015; Lindo et al., 2014) explicitly asked staff about the impact of the intervention on relationships between staff and pupils, whilst others asked staff about the relationship with other schools or parents, thus providing more information about the changes in these specific areas.

In Lindo and colleagues’ study (2014), staff expressed that the intervention had increased their understanding of pupils and developed their professional practice such that the impact of the project had been evident in the pupils themselves in addition to staff-pupil relationships.

In Colak et al.’s (2015) semi-structured interviews with staff, teachers reported both changes *in* pupil behaviour *and* significant changes in the way they as staff perceived and

reported behaviour. In terms of viewing the school as a system, it is surprising that many studies did not explicitly seek to understand the impact of the intervention beyond the individual and microsystem level. For example, school ethos, values, communication, leadership and relationship with community and additional services were under-explored. Graves and colleagues' (2014) study into the efficacy of a hand washing promotion programme in Western Kenyan schools found that there were positive impacts on multiple levels. On a direct individual level there was a reduction in disease and improvement in sport performance. On an indirect individual level, there was lower absenteeism and, therefore, potentially improved academic results. Lastly, on a broader structural level, less money was spent on medical treatments. The analysis was extended to consider how further changes in the wider system might enable sustainability of the programme, tackling high teacher turnover and funding and constructing water supplies. This study is, therefore, a particularly clear example of how change emerging at one level of the school system might have a subsequent effect at other levels, creating a 'knock-on' effect that amplifies the initial efficacy of the intervention.

Nadeem et al. (2011) suggested that the relationship between training providers (Healthy Start personnel) and school staff had led to increased trust, maintaining teacher motivation and improved communication. In addition, the authors assert that absorbing the intervention practices into formal school policy had enabled consistent school wide application and richer communication channels regarding at-risk pupils.

Though as discussed, there is a paucity (amongst the studies reviewed for this chapter) of research that highlights the enabling potential of leadership; many studies consider interventions to have *impacted* leadership. Yeung et al. (2012), for example, found that an inclusivity intervention transformed expectations about leadership roles and processes. By restricting the extent to which the curriculum was prescribed, and adapting leadership style, there was a resultant increase in teachers' professional autonomy. The authors reported that a more collaborative school culture was established including increased participative decision making.

In one study, the authors identified the increase in leadership skills of the participating young people (Alekseeva et al., 2015). This was perceived to have led to a change in the status quo of existing power hierarchies and cultural established mindsets in relation to sexual health behaviour. This was a finding supported by two other studies (Garaigordobil, 2008; Holsen et al., 2015).

2.7 Dominant Themes and Implications

One significant feature of this literature review has been the *extent* of staff engagement and the *ways* in which staff are engaged in the intervention process as highly influential to the success or the failure of the program. A second important aspect has been the important role of staff in identifying aspects of school climate that might enable or constrain school-based intervention, as well as their potential to help address or overcome these barriers.

It has been frequently noted that school interventions cannot be uniform, ‘off the shelf’ recipes for change that do not account for the needs and values of the school system they will be applied in. Nor can they be imposed upon a school, or delivered solely by external providers who then leave, without providing the resources or training for staff to sustain the impact of the initial programme.

Success of school interventions resides firstly in the extent to which school leaders and school staff are able to articulate a clear school ethos that is strongly supported by both good communication within the school but also with wider systems, such as parents, the local community and other organisations. Sustainability is increased by congruence of the intervention with existing school vision, and co-design, co-delivery and co-evaluation of the programme with school staff. A strong sense of ownership and belief in the value of the programme from all community members has the potential to sustain commitment and motivation of staff after the formal end of the intervention. Beyond the culture of individual schools, wider system support for interventions manifest in many ways including funding and resource allocation, staffing or the allowance of time and training. As much of the research reviewed has shown, the support of parents, peers, local government and external agencies alongside the provision of such resources can greatly increase the positive impact of school-based interventions.

Stemming perhaps from a desire to validate the programmes evaluated by this type of research, there is a focus on what elements of the school system are required for the intervention to be successful and less consideration of the ways in which programmes need to adapt to meet the challenges of school complexity. In addition, evaluative research should provide more rigorous exploration of existing staff perceptions of school climate pre-intervention. This would not only demonstrate the extent of any improvement in this

perception, but also aid understanding of the role of the existing climate in the adaption of programme theory in practice.

A limitation of many of the articles reviewed for this chapter is that the complex interaction between existing system conditions and intervention applied is not fully described. The dynamic process of adaptation that occurs as the intervention is applied in context is, therefore, not fully understood. Instead, enabling and constraining factors are presumed to be static elements either of the school system, or the intervention, as opposed to resulting from the interaction between the two. This complex interaction has been identified as central to understanding change in educational contexts (Joseph & Reigeluth, 2010) and therefore warrants increased attention.

Multiple authors have also identified shortcomings of their single method approach, indicating that mixed methods may be a useful tool in future research. For example, those using qualitative methods highlighted the potential influence of social bias for participants and researcher bias in data analysis (for example Honess & Hunter, 2014). Those using quantitative methods sometimes adapted their approach in order to expand on their data, for example, including open ended questions in surveys (for example Mac Cobb et al., 2014).

This literature review has established a need for further mixed method research in the field, and has recommended that the mixed method approach adopted is explicitly stated, and that a synthesis of data types is provided in findings. In addition, exploring differences between staff role type and school types might disrupt currently dominant assumptions that ‘school staff’ and ‘teacher’ perspectives are indistinguishable. This will further understanding about the context specificity of school-based approaches.

The most commonly identified limitation of the studies in this review was a small sample size and lack of generalisability. Schools are nested within highly complex multi-level systems with numerous influencing factors affecting the efficacy of any intervention (Clarke et al., 2010; Lemke & Sabelli, 2008; Mason, 2008; Keshavarz et al., 2010), so the absence of multiple school contexts often undermines the generalisability of research findings. In the following chapter, **Chapter 3**, the nature of school-based complexity in whole-school intervention is discussed. Then, in **Chapter 4**, further consideration is given regarding the importance of an integrated mixed method design that draws from multiple school-based examples to understand how the LFARA is experienced by staff and what accounts for the range and complexity of differing outcomes in ‘real-world’ conditions.

Few studies have discussed the role of the researcher explicitly in terms of the impact their role within the system and how this enables gathering accurate and detailed data about

staff experiences. Where this is the case (for example, Howie et al., 2014), the study tends to be longitudinal and contain an element of process evaluation in which the researcher/staff relationship is critical to the systemic evaluation framework. In the specific example given, there is constant flow between research, practice and participant evaluation. This is a rare but unique example that demonstrates the potential links between implementation and evaluation in complex contexts.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed relevant existing literature in relation to studies that articulate staff experiences and perceptions of school-based intervention programmes. The dominant themes have been synthesised and critically discussed, considering the potential for further exploration. The decision to take a mixed methods approach has been justified in the context of the multiple conceptual structures and study designs encountered in the literature reviewed. The research questions for the current study have also been introduced in the context of collective assertions and questions raised in existing research.

The following chapter will provide theoretical underpinning of the study in complexity theory, positioning schools as complex social systems and considering how WS approaches, and specifically the LFARA, attempted to attend to this inherent complexity.

Chapter 3: Complexity and School Systems

This chapter describes the complex nature of schools as social systems, due to their diverse populations and the dynamic interactions involved in their evolution over time. It is proposed in this chapter that the inherently complex nature of schools renders reductive or linear approaches to planning and evaluating change fundamentally flawed. A critical appraisal of ways in which WS approaches embrace school complexity will be considered, including efforts to increase interactions and communication, increase system feedback, distribute power and leadership and ultimately change school culture. The ARA is proposed as complex in its conceptual approach, due to the authors stated aim to make co-ordinated change at multiple system levels that is intended to build individual resilience and also lead to adaptation of the system as a whole. Key theoretical concepts of complexity theory are outlined and a definition provided for the purposes of this thesis, including: the nested nature of systems, feedback, attractors and emergence.

3.1 Schools as Complex Social Systems

Whilst commonly cited as emerging from the physical sciences in the 20th Century (Bertalanffy, 1968; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984), thinking in terms of complex systems is not a modern invention. Ancient cosmologies (Boulton, Allen & Bowman, 2015; Richardson, 2004;) arrived many years ago at strikingly similar conclusions about the ideas of flow and change, of co-evolution and interdependence (Boulton et al., 2015, p.10, p.55). In this sense, we have always known the inherent complexity of the world, in spite of our ongoing and limited efforts to reduce, control and measure aspects of it. More recently however, researchers have argued that in rejecting dominant rationalist scientific and philosophical discourse (Geyer, 2003), complexity theory could be considered as a ‘new science’ (Cilliers, 2006, p. 606), based on embracing our complex, non-linear and therefore unpredictable reality.

Acknowledging the limitations of reductive and linear approaches to understanding how schools function and change, a growing body of literature has applied concepts from complex systems theory to the school system (Beabout, 2008; Davis & Sumara, 2005, 2006, 2009; Fidan & Balci, 2017; Hawe, Shiell & Riley, 2009; Kearney, Leung, Joyce, Ollis &

Green, 2017; Kershner & McQuillan, 2016; Kozleski & Smith, 2009; Lemke & Sabelli, 2008; Mason, 2008; Osberg & Biesta, 2010).

This body of literature suggests that the school system can be characterised as complex due to multiple non-linear interactions between diverse and varied individuals or agents (Fidan & Balci, 2017) and the ways in which they adapt to their specific contexts (Davis & Sumara, 2006). Multiple interacting stakeholders in the system (staff, pupils, parents and carers) are interdependent and linked by a shared purpose, which determines their collective action, in turn shaping the system across its multiple organisational levels once ‘critical mass’ is reached (Lemke & Sabelli, 2008). Behaviour and adaptation will, therefore, be based on existing knowledge as well as new feedback from both the environment (including local values and rules) and the way in which other individuals behave or respond (Mason, 2008).

The application of complexity theory to the context of schools is not, however, uniform. There are many and varied applications of what is meant by ‘complexity’ in schools. For example, the degree to which school systems can be considered adaptive, and whether this can be considered as part of complexity theory or a separate concept, has been the subject of debate. In the first part of an exchange of articles on the topic, Keshavarz, Nutbeam, Rowling & Khavarpour (2010a) proposed that schools can be considered as complex, adaptive, social systems (CASS). The authors suggested that positioning CASS as a conceptual framework may be beneficial to furthering understanding in the field of school-based interventions, but that it should not constitute a complete theory that dictates research and practice. Haggis (2010) wrote an article in response, which suggested that complexity theory and theories of complex adaptive systems were arguably interchangeable terms.

Such debates reflect broader critique of the use of complexity theory in social sciences. Most critique accepts the complexity of social systems, but states that not enough is yet understood about the application of complexity theory in these contexts, resulting in a lack of consistent and clear application. It has been argued, for example, that complexity theory has limited use in studying social processes since it is not possible to collect adequate data to articulate social complexity (Stewart, 2001). Whilst some claim that social processes are simply too complex to rigorously model (Stewart, 2001, p.323), other researchers have stated that whilst social systems are problematic to articulate due to their nature, this difficulty would not be overcome by formalising our understanding of complexity theory itself, since an understanding of complexity is based on an acceptance of uncertainty (Haggis, 2010). As Cilliers (2005) noted, the vast number of variables within complex systems, in

addition to context dependency in application, makes the development of models or frameworks nearly impossible. Engaging with the complexity of schools does not hinge on the development of a coherent framework to manage this complexity. Rather, in acknowledging complexity, our approaches to planning, teaching and school evaluation could account more for context specificity and be more responsive to the changing needs of those comprising the system. The following list is intended as a guide to call into question current formulaic and restrictive approaches to education policy and planning, and also to aid later discussion in this thesis, when a complexity lens is applied to the findings. The list aims to both define what is meant by these terms for the current thesis, and refer to the range of ways in which they have been used in relation to schools.

Complexity:

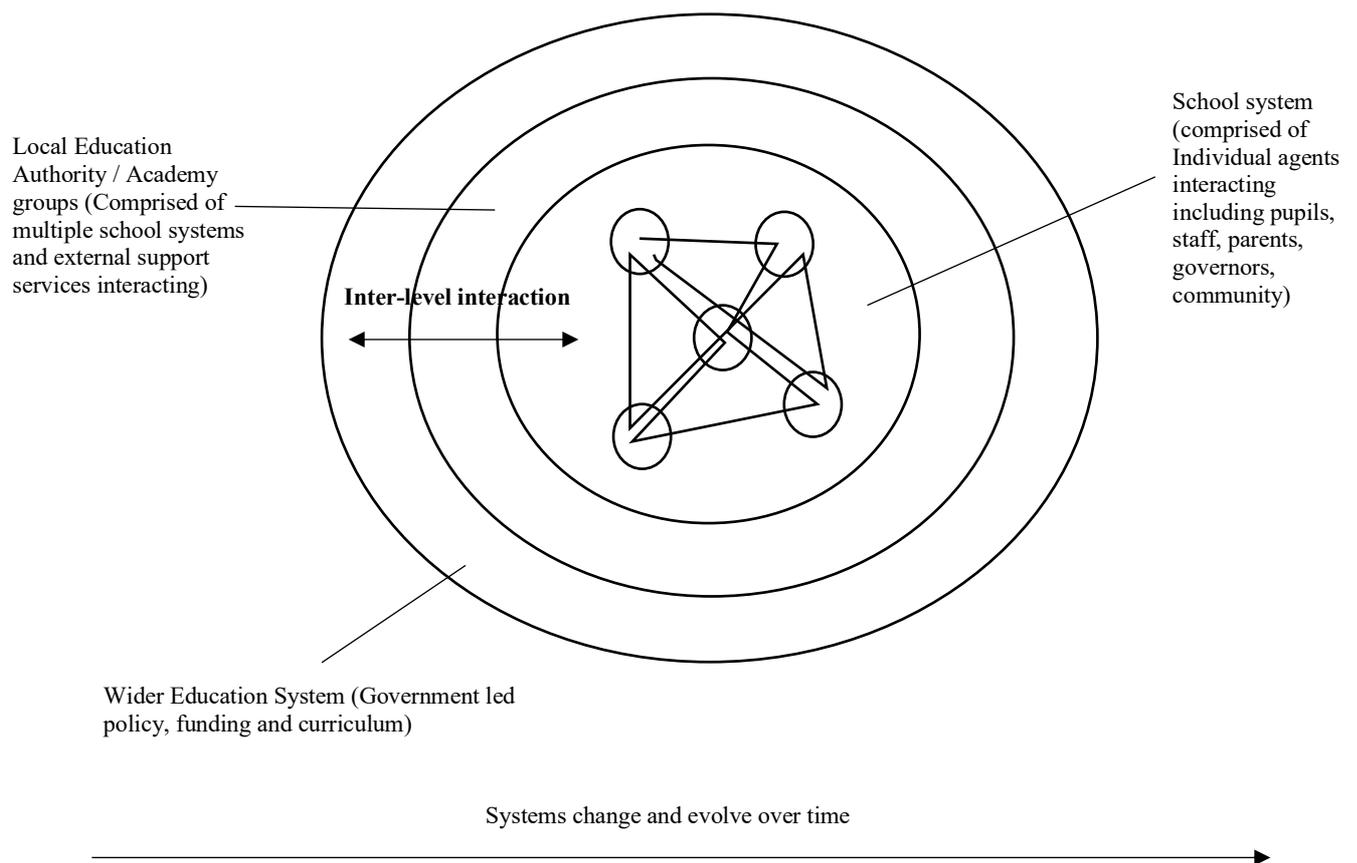
The school system can be considered as complex due to constant flow of interactions between pupils, staff, parents and other members of the school community who are interconnected by a shared purpose and interdependent on each other. Their connectivity and interactions shape the school system as a whole. Most interaction will be local, which is to say, that not all connections between stakeholders (for example, beyond school level) are equally established (Cilliers, 1998). ‘Key connectors’ who make communication across multiple system levels are, therefore, crucial to increase connectivity in order to increase feedback and achieve change (Ormerod, 2012). As Mason (2016) argues, although stakeholders in school systems can often feel as though there is little they can do about some challenges that have complex causes seemingly beyond their control, the complexity of the system provides the potential to affect behavioural and cultural change over time as a result of smaller, but co-ordinated, actions (p.439). Both Mason (2008, 2016) and Kozleski (2009) have asserted that change in complex systems will be ‘ephemeral’ (Kozleski, 2009), unless parallel and congruent changes in practice and policy are made simultaneously.

Change in complex systems can be unpredictable due to the non-linear and multiple connections between stakeholders and the constantly changing conditions. For this reason, the notion of ‘fidelity’ in school-based interventions is problematic and therefore some authors have promoted approaches to evaluation that attend to complexity as opposed to controlling for it ((Braithwaite, Churruca, Long, Ellis & Herkes, 2018; Haynes, 2015).

Nested Systems:

Multiple system levels of the school are dynamically interconnected and interacting. The school system can be considered nested in nature (Keshavarz, 2010), because each agent within the school (comprising pupils, staff, parents, governors and local community members) can be considered a self-contained system in their own right (Axelrod & Cohen, 2000). These sub-systems and their interactions characterise the school system, which is in turn nested in the LA (Local Authority) or Academy system as well as the education system as a whole (**Figure 3.1**). No system level is capable of operating in isolation from the system as a whole and therefore no ‘system event’ (Hawe et al, 2009) occurs in a vacuum, but instead has an influence on multiple other aspects of the system.

Figure 3.1. The nested system structure of schools.



Feedback:

All social systems, which are complex and open, rely on feedback from their environment and constituent elements in order to generate and sustain a functioning system.

Individuals interact at a local level creating feedback loops (Meadows, 2008) that influence the direction and extent of change in the system as a whole. Although these types of feedback are often referred to as ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ respectively, these labels can lead to unhelpful confusion regarding unintended normative assumptions that imply that positive feedback is always ‘good’ or negative feedback is always ‘bad’ for the system. In fact, dynamic, living systems are a synthesis of chaos and order, necessarily depending on both balancing and reinforcing feedback for growth and change over time (Beabout, 2008; Boulton et al., 2015; Davis & Sumara, 2006; Kershner & McQuillan, 2016). Mulford (2005) identified that some stability is required for change to occur in a functioning system. Conversely, White and Levin (2016) described ‘purposeful perturbation’ as a deliberate attempt to unsettle system conditions in order for emergence to take place, since some disruption in existing system conditions could prompt change. This is a similar concept to ‘disruptive surprises’ (Richtner & Löfsten, 2014), and involve disrupting the ‘status quo’ in order to re-imagine the system.

For the purposes of this thesis, stabilising, regulatory feedback is classified as ‘balancing’ and amplifying or multiplying feedback is classified as ‘reinforcing’ (Meadows, 2008). Balancing feedback is akin to a social system’s thermostat (Meadows, 2008), responding to changes in the environment and triggering a response that maintains system conditions. For example, changing grade boundaries in order to control the number of pupils who receive ‘A’ grades in each examination season could be considered an example of balancing feedback. Conversely, reinforcing feedback can be understood as enhancing whatever change is occurring in a system. For example, if a school receives a poor inspection report due to low standards of teaching, highly skilled teachers might then leave, and other highly skilled teachers will be less likely to be interested in being recruited, resulting in a reinforcing feedback loop in which standards of teaching fall further. Kearney and colleagues (2017) have suggested that feedback from collecting data as part of researching or evaluating WS approaches can result in further change to the system than the intervention itself is able to achieve alone, by establishing a positive feedback loop.

Attractors:

The notion of attractors, when considered in relation to social systems, refers to a ‘state space’ (Cilliers, 2000, p.97) or ‘a space in the system at any one point in time’ (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013, p.27). Beyond this general definition, conflicting opinions can be found in the literature regarding the degree to which attractors are considered to exert a force on the

system that dictates its trajectory. For example, one definition states ‘an attractor is not a force...but depicts where the system is heading – like a boat drifting in a slow current, rather than a magnet’ (Davies, 2003, p.28). This is starkly contrasted by another, which asserts that attractors ‘act as magnetic forces that draw complex adaptive systems towards given trajectories’ (Gilstrap, 2005, p.58).

There is variation in relation to how attractors are defined as either outcomes, processes or a combination of both. Some definitions lean towards an attractor as an outcome at a particular moment in time for the system; for example, Wheatley (2011) describes attractors as ‘inherent orderliness’ (p.22) in the ‘self-portrait’ (p.23) or blueprint of the system, as a result of multiple cultural and historical forces. Others indicate that the concept of attractors involve both outcome and process. For example, Byrne & Callaghan (2013) state that:

‘an attractor is something towards which a dynamic system evolves over time. When the system is close to an attractor it tends to remain in that location.’ (p.27)

An example of the concept of an attractor being applied in the school system would be the accumulated values and beliefs that constitute school ethos and values (Kershner & McQuillan, 2016; Reigeluth, 2004, p.16). These cultural values can be considered an attractor since they drive strategic planning and daily routines towards a certain shared goal. This definition of attractors is congruent with Davis and Sumara’s (2006) assertion that ‘the “object” at the centre of a complex social system is ‘never an individual, but an idea, a shared commitment, a common purpose, a collective orientation, an emergent possibility’ (p.146).

For the purposes of this thesis, attractors are defined as something that a complex system is pulled towards over time, altering the system as it changes its trajectory (Reigeluth, 2004, p.16; Kershner & McQuillan, 2016). It is likely that, due to complexity of schools, multiple attractors exist at any one point in time, potentially pulling the school system in multiple directions. Whilst attractors are under-explored in the literature when concerning schools, system conditions dictate the dominance or strength of certain attractors over others. Social inequality might be considered an attractor that the school system moves towards, through rewarding achievement (of those considered advantaged) and penalising failure (of those considered disadvantaged), thus widening social divisions (Davies, 2003). Conversely, a sense of school purpose (generated through the interaction of individual and organisational

values) might act as an attractor that pulls the system in the opposite direction by prioritising ‘closing the gap’.

Emergence:

All social systems can be said to be complex because they have an emergent quality. Emergence can be defined as an evolutionary system process, in which variation and uncertainty give rise to new forms (Prigogine, 1947). Bonabeau’s (2002) analogy of traffic jams illustrated the way in which a separate entity (the traffic jam) to the existing components of a system (the cars and drivers) *emerges* as a result of their interaction and behaviour (following or breaking social or legal rules). In defining emergence for the purposes of this thesis, this social phenomenon is considered to be caused by the behaviour of individuals within a system (Johnson, 2002; Morin, 2007). In addition, a degree of ‘turbulence’ (by which is meant a balance of both stability and instability in the school system (Gross, 1998)) is considered necessary in order for this social phenomenon to occur. In the context of school reform, Gross (1998) noted that extreme changes in system conditions (which he called ‘turbulence’) can constrain or even completely derail efforts to initiate change. Gross suggested that the extent to which schools can embrace reform depends on the level of turbulence the system is experiencing, and the threat it poses to the functional capacity of the system. Gross distinguished between light, moderate, severe and extreme turbulence. Light turbulence is considered to require some attention, but have marginal effect on the normal function of the school system. Moderate turbulence constitutes a significant challenge, requiring attention to retain system function. Severe turbulence is a disruption, requiring immediate attention to prevent system collapse. Lastly, Gross proposed that extreme turbulence could cause reform efforts to be abandoned altogether since normal functioning of the system was not possible.

As a result of school-system turbulence, change is emergent from the people within and their interactions, creating an entirely new quality. For example, a community of practice made up of parents, staff and pupils, develop a new peer mentoring programme in response to bullying issues. In the absence of other, competing priorities and given appropriate time and resources, this new aspect of the system could emerge.

3.2 Implications of Complexity Theory for Schools

The implications of complexity theory for educational policy, planning, pedagogy and evaluation are multiple and far reaching (Biesta, 2010; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Mason, 2008, Osberg & Biesta, 2010; McQuillan, 2008; Trombly, 2014). Current curricula design, for example, has been indicated by some researchers to disallow the naturally complex dynamics of learning. Osberg and Biesta, for example, argue that by creating disciplinary silos that treat knowledge as an end ‘product’ rather than embedded in cultural and historical context, learning is artificially distinguished from its complex context (2010). It could be argued that the current high stakes accountability system, that prioritises short-term targets, is at odds with the emergent nature of learning over time. From a complexity perspective, the complex process of learning cannot be isolated to the confines of the school building. Learning occurs in many settings, in the same way that the school is also a setting for social development. A complexity perspective also places significance on the connection of school to families and local communities in the holistic process of learning and development. Acknowledging the complex links between behaviour, academic performance and social emotional development might also require changes to traditionally behaviourist models of reward and sanction commonplace in most schools. For example, the repeated exclusion of a pupil consistently breaking the school rules may result in a reinforcing feedback loop that maintains poor academic performance.

Multiple authors have also identified a need to reframe approaches to school leadership, in the light of complexity of the school system. For example, it has been argued that the current managerial focus on school leadership, borne out of an increasing demand to evidence academic outcomes (Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2013) could be seen to restrict productivity and sustainability (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Trombly, 2014). It has been suggested that authoritarian management leadership styles are insufficient to deal with the unpredictable and complex conditions of school climate (Fidan & Balci, 2017; Hershock, Mason & Hawkins, 2007). Rather, it is argued that school leaders should aim to cultivate diverse approaches to teaching and learning, encouraging the ‘cross fertilisation’ of ideas to mutually improve practice as it emerges (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004, p.12). This may include distributing leadership, developing shared vision, focusing on long-term outcomes and facilitating information feedback (Fidan & Balci, 2017; McQuillan, 2008).

If the education system is acknowledged as a complex social system, then de-contextualised standardised approaches to planning and assessment can no longer be

considered adequate. Policy planners cannot assume that intended approaches will be adopted with fidelity, for example, since the implementation of any curriculum or approach will be context specific. Similarly, measures of testing pupil progress and attainment appear simplistic and naïve in the context of the complexity of the learning and development process. Even if these measures were accurate, they may not reflect a full picture of pupil progress. In addition, due to the complexity of the school system, we cannot hope to improve the quality of education by only measuring its outcomes. Improving the quality of schools hinges on understanding and embracing their complexity, including the social, value-based interactions that define the system and shape pupil outcomes.

One clearly neglected aspect of school complexity is the link between staff and pupil wellbeing, including the impact of staff adversity on pupil wellbeing and vice versa. Since staff and pupils are interconnected and interdependent aspects of the same system, adversity for one stakeholder group could considerably impact the other. Quality of schooling has been proposed as an emergent quality, resulting in part from the skill, commitment and motivation of school staff (Trombly, 2014). From a complexity perspective, all stakeholders, their shared values, and available resources are integral to the efficacy of the school system, thus necessitating attention to all of these aspects in school reform. A case in point is made by Ravitch (2010), an education historian who although once a supporter of the American *No Child Left Behind* policy, delivered the following critique of standardised approaches:

‘They imagine that the lessons of a successful school are obvious and can be easily transferred to other schools...But a school is successful for many reasons, including the personalities of its leader and teachers; the social interactions among them; the culture of the school; the pupils and their families; the way the school implements policies...the quality of the school’s curriculum...and the resources of the school and community’(p.12-13).

Complex causality was identified in a study examining efforts to improve underperforming schools in the Netherlands (Van der Steen et al., 2013). The authors noted that school responses to inspections varied depending on complex and interacting contextual factors, meaning that even when the same inspection grade was given, outcomes between schools varied widely.

School effectiveness research has shifted in the past 30 years from evaluating whole-schools, to a specific focus on classroom and individual levels (Macbeath & McGlynn,

2004). Critique of current models of school effectiveness and pupil assessment has suggested that they are based on the premise that inputs will result in predictable outcomes (Johnson, 2008, p.5), without fully understanding the complex variables for each individual and beyond the classroom. Macbeath and McGlynn argued for a synthesis of micro and macro approaches to measuring effectiveness. The authors suggest that pupil outcomes should be evaluated in the context of the social process of learning, shaped by school culture, home environment and the local community (2004, p.7).

The need to reform the UK's school inspection body was identified in a recent report (National Audit Office, 2018) that summarised headteacher perspectives of the existing procedure. The National Audit Office report found that, although 71% of headteacher respondents agreed that Ofsted inspectors provided useful feedback during and at the end of a visit, only a much smaller number (44%) said that the inspection process had actually led to improvements. As highlighted by the report, 'Ofsted does not decide what action should be taken after it has inspected a school and does not intervene to improve schools' (National Audit Office, 2018, p.6), perhaps explaining to some extent why many school staff perceive the inspection body as punitive. Current methods of measuring school effectiveness inevitably creates a tension for school leadership (Astle, 2017) between reductive measures against which schools are held accountable, and the complex and messy reality of schools in practice. Astle has suggested that many school leaders 'game' the system in order to fulfil quantifiable targets and performative practices, such as selective exam entry, which leads to further disadvantage to the most vulnerable pupils.

Ofsted's new inspection framework, though it has not been published at the time of writing, is reported to prioritise a broad curriculum that focuses on necessary variation for local context, in place of narrowly defined uniform criteria. In published commentary outlining the proposed changes, Spielman (2018) recently stated that:

'For a long time, our inspections have looked hardest at outcomes, placing too much weight on test and exam results when we consider the overall effectiveness of schools. This has increased the pressure on school leaders, teachers and pupils alike to deliver test scores above all else'

The extent to which the new framework will be able to account for school-based complexity remains unknown at the time of writing, but the widespread acknowledgement

that current measures of school effectiveness are linear and reductive may signal a period of transformation based on the acknowledgement of complexity.

In acknowledging complexity of the school system therefore, importance is placed on the need to provide comprehensive professional development and support for staff, open up political and professional discourse regarding the values and purposes of the education system (Astle, 2017; Trombly, 2014) and to find ways of measuring school effectiveness that account for the complexity of the system.

3.3 Implications of Complexity Theory for School-Based Research

There are undeniable differences between systems in social, natural and artificial worlds. After all, humans in social systems behave very differently from ants in an ant colony or the coding of computer systems, largely due to the role of individual agency in interactions and system change (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013). Arguably, the capacity of human beings for conscious and creative thought, their ability to interact and interpret these interactions, communicate their experiences and evolve in response to their historical and cultural context, means that human social systems are vastly more complex than natural and artificial systems (Cooper & Geyer, 2008).

Complexity theory has been applied to the social sciences for some time (for example, Byrne, 2005; Davis & Sumara, 2006). However, the relevancy of applying complexity theory to social systems continues to be debated. Contention focuses on uncertainty and variation regarding the use of complexity theory's ideas and terms. For example, complexity theory has been used both to describe and to explain, as an ontological perspective, as a set of metaphors and as a tightly defined conceptual framework (Long, McDermott & Meadows, 2018). As researchers continue to explore complexity theory ideas in social contexts, grappling with the ways in which they are applied and have meaning, education research may help to further this understanding. Davis (2008) argued that the implications of complexity theory for both practitioners and researchers in the field of education overlap. He proposed that educational research has always been transdisciplinary and that those working in education have engaged in multiple discourses about the nature of education, concluding that the field of education is uniquely positioned to further our understanding of applied complexity thinking.

Complexity theory also has implications for the focus of education research and the methodological approach taken. An important implication of complexity theory for education research is the focus that such a perspective places on contextualised and holistic understanding (Mason, 2008). Interventions in complex systems require careful adaptation for local needs in order to be accepted and sustained (Boulton, 2015). Research cannot seek to isolate one aspect of the school system without considering it in the context of the system as a whole, its history and its cultural and political context. Particularly in seeking to understand how school systems change over time, complexity theory suggests that sustainable change will not come about from ‘tinkering’ with one aspect of the system. Rather, in order for change to emerge, intervention would be required at multiple system levels to force the system to adapt its overall trajectory through new interactions that over time result in new behaviour and culture (Mason, 2008, 2016).

From a complexity perspective, a simplistic understanding of cause and effect does not explain the dynamic and changing nature of school systems. There are no overriding causal structures; rather, there are multiple interrelated factors that interact over time resulting in multiple outcomes (Haggis, 2008; Van Der Steen et al., 2013). The limitations of modelling complexity have been well described and many authors have surmised that it is impossible to effectively and accurately model a complex system in its entirety. For example, Richardson (2004) stated that ‘there is no way a member of a complex system can ever know it completely - we will always be in the shadow of the whole... we simply cannot model the world, the Universe and everything’ (p.77). Therefore, complexity theory offers a multi-dimensional understanding of how change in the education system arises, focusing on interactions within a cultural and historical context, which give rise to context specificity. Complexity theory therefore potentially offers a way to overcome the polarisation of singular methodological approaches. Rather than a purely quantitative approach, which focuses on causal explanation, or a qualitative approach that favours ‘rich description’, a complexity perspective demands methodological pluralism, seeking ‘ontological depth that is not at the expense of explanatory power’ (Walby, 2003, p.2). As such, complexity theory provides a vocabulary of concepts (Walby, 2003) that can be used to try to understand and explain the inherent complexity of school systems, using multiple approaches to research.

In addition to the critique of applying complexity theory to social systems (that drawing from mathematics and science associated theory is inappropriate), some researchers have criticised the use of the theory specifically in relation to education research. Kuhn (2008), whilst acknowledging the relevance of complexity theory to school contexts, warns

of a conflict between the descriptive potential of the theory and the normative aspects of educational research. The descriptive potential of complexity theory must, therefore, be engaged with cautiously by researchers. Since education (and research in education) is normative, researchers must be reflexive about how descriptions about the complexity of schools and explanations of emergence within the system are employed in the overall aims and values of the research. This is an especially important point for the present study, since ‘resilience’ as a concept is essentially normative in nature. For example, building resilience involves an understanding of ‘negative’ risk factors and ‘positive’ protective factors, that are identified for ‘good’ or ‘healthy’ adaptation. In this thesis, the normative nature of the education system, of resilience, and of the ARA are embraced and stated, which has been suggested provides a realistic and pragmatic framework for research (Haynes et al., manuscript in preparation). Efforts have been made in this study to reduce unintentional normative assumptions of the researcher, for example, in relation to the way in which system feedback is described (discussed in more depth later in this chapter). However, in this research, complexity theory is considered a useful theoretical underpinning to a discussion of the complexity of the locally facilitated ARA (LFARA) in school context, precisely because of the entanglement of values (Haynes, 2018) at multiple school system levels. Without asserting the normative quality of the systems studied, it would not have been possible, for example, to consider the interaction between staff values, and the conceptualisation of resilience assumed by the ARA.

For clarity, in this thesis a ‘complexity perspective’ is used to describe (as explored in the outline of the ontological perspective of this study in **Chapter 4**) the view that social reality is complex, involving the interaction of values that give rise to social behaviour. All social systems are considered complex in their nature, which has implications for the way we understand and research these areas. A complex system is defined for the purposes of this study as a network of elements (agents or people) that are dynamically interconnected by a shared purpose and defined by their collective interaction (Cohn, Clinch, Bunn & Stronge, 2013). Complexity arises from the interaction between these agents as they exchange information and collectively respond to it, resulting in emergence that changes the system for all its constituent elements (Cilliers, 1998). Whilst some of the key concepts of complexity theory (as outlined in this chapter) are used to offer insight on how staff perceived the process of change in the school system, they are not enforced as a rigid theoretical framework. Whilst for the sake of clarity and consistency these ideas are grouped together and referred to as ‘complexity theory’ throughout the thesis, this really refers to a developing

understanding of thinking and explaining the social world as complex. Ideas emerging from this wave of complexity thinking have been used to describe a dynamic social process (the LFARA intervention) in context. In this way, an attempt is made to further understand the relevancy and meaning of such concepts in school contexts, in contrast to their meaning being already fully assumed (Byrne, 2005; Haggis, 2008).

3.4 Whole-School Approaches and Complexity

Whole-school (WS) approaches have been defined in **Chapter 1** as school-based interventions that involve the meaningful participation of all members of the school community. WS approaches engage children and young people, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents, carers, governors, professionals working with the school and the wider community, as they aim to change school culture for the benefit of all stakeholders. Based on this definition, WS approaches can be seen as both complex in nature and as embracing school-level complexity. Their complex nature is derived from a concurrent emphasis on the interactions, feedback and relationships between members of the school system. In addition, WS approaches intend to bring about value and behaviour change that alters the dynamics of the system. WS approaches target multiple system levels, using a variety of intervention strategies. In pursuit of sustainability in the face of the complex and changing nature of schools, co-ordinated changes are often made to both structural and agency aspects of the system (Mason, 2014).

In summary, the following aspects of WS approaches can be considered as congruent with a complexity perspective of change in school systems:

- WS approaches involve a broad and diverse range of stakeholders from the school community
- WS approaches are usually delivered by existing members of the system who have expertise in the historical and cultural context of the school
- Emphasis is placed on increasing interactions both at local level and beyond in order to increase collaboration and feedback
- WS approaches intend to alter the dynamics of the school system by bringing about change to structure, behaviour, values and school culture

- WS approaches usually target leadership in order to alter power distribution, bringing about distributed networks of control that allow for greater agency and adaptation
- A variety of interventions, at multiple system levels are introduced in order to maximise sustainability, given school level complexity

3.4.1 Examples of Whole-School Approaches in Practice. There are many examples of widely implemented WS approaches in practice, both in the UK and internationally. In Australia, for example, WS approaches are advocated as a positive approach to all curriculum planning and delivery (NSW Government, 2015; WAHPSA, 2015; Wyn, Cahill, Holdsworth, Rowling & Carson, 2000). Similarly, in the USA, the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (ASCD, 2015) approach has been developed by synthesising a previous programme called ‘coordinated school health’ (Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza & Giles, 2015) with a ‘whole child’ approach to learning. The resultant programme aims to align health and education outcomes by co-ordinating services and integrating practices across both systems. In Europe, the World Health Organisation highlights good practice in school-based health promotion through the use of a WS approach (WHO, 2013; Langford et al., 2014). The following section of the chapter briefly examines two prominent examples from the UK, both of which exemplify the necessity of attending to issues of variability in intervention application, which has been echoed globally.

3.4.1.1 Healthy Schools. The Health Promoting Schools programme (WHO, 1998), is a widely implemented example of a WS approach. The programme was developed by the World Health Organization to assist schools to develop policies that promote pupil health by engaging the WS community. However, evaluation of the national HPS programme in the UK has shown variability in terms of school level outcomes and, crucially, no change in health-related pupil outcomes. The suggested barriers to greater potential impact of the HPS were identified as a lack of adaptation of the approach and limited co-production with staff, pupils and parents (Arthur et al., 2011).

3.4.1.2 Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning. Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL, DfE, 2005) is an intervention employing a WS approach with the overall aim of improving the social and emotional skills of pupils. In 2005, 90% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools in England participated in the SEAL programme, whilst other nations in the UK also undertook pilot studies. The programme involved ‘waves’ of intervention to support social and emotional learning, ranging from effecting policy at local authority and school level, to promoting health and wellbeing through individual intervention.

There were many positives to be drawn from SEAL, such as the focus on developing a ‘common language’ across teams and services including appointing school leads for inclusion, mental health and well-being. SEAL was pioneering in that it was a health and wellbeing intervention that could be flexible or bespoke to the needs of the various school contexts it was applied in, providing a loose structural framework rather than prescribed activities (Weare & Nind, 2010). However, evaluation of the SEAL programme also identified this aspect as a potential weakness, since there was no ‘quality guarantee’ or consistency across ‘SEAL schools’ making it difficult to determine how the efficacy of SEAL itself resulted in change, as opposed to other contextual factors.

The number of diverse school settings, differentiated interpretations of the SEAL programme and subsequent reports of widespread variability of impact (Humphrey, Lendrum & Wigelsworth, 2010) reflects the conclusion of Greenberg and colleagues that ‘the science regarding *how* programs are implemented under real world conditions is poorly developed’ (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Graczyk & Zins, 2005, pp. 5-6). The increased longevity of SEAL in primary in comparison to secondary contexts may be explained to some degree by the relative differences in number of pupils and differences in how social and emotional learning is prioritised in different age groups as opposed to academic progress. Programme evaluations widely differed, for example, Smith, O’Donnell, Easton & Rudd’s (2007) evaluation of the programme found that staff perceived that behaviour, emotional wellbeing and learning of pupils were considerably impacted, whilst the DfE national evaluation (Humphrey et al., 2010) reported that there was no significant effect in any of these areas.

Importantly, the flexible and non-prescriptive WS approach adopted in SEAL was found, by multiple evaluations, to place greater importance on ongoing support and training for staff and reliance on staff attitudes and understanding in order to be effective (Hallam, Rhamie & Shaw, 2006; Humphrey et al., 2010). Leadership vision and support for applying

the principles of SEAL in practice was also strongly linked to programme adoption by all staff and to the extent to which policy was impacted (Humphrey et al., 2010).

3.4.2 Evaluating WS Approaches. The challenge of evaluating WS approaches in complex school systems is to define the outcomes by which we measure the ‘success’ of these programmes in ways which are meaningful to the context in which they were applied. In terms of implementation, the challenge faced by programme designers is to make an approach sufficiently complex and yet simultaneously flexible enough to be adapted as necessary in school context.

In a review of globally published evaluations of WS based approaches, Thomas and Aggleton (2016) found that, whilst school-based intervention of this type tend to be advocated in both literature and policy, the empirical evidence base for their efficacy is only partial (p.154). The review found that WS approaches tended to be evidence based, but that in the process of practical application of these large-scale interventions, the subtlety of the original theory was lost. In addition, in many schools, even the basic principle of being ‘whole-school’ in application was not always adhered to. These findings echo earlier concern regarding consistency about the UK based ‘Healthy Schools’ programme (WHO, 1998), that teachers in some schools who had received a ‘Healthy Schools Award’ for good practice knew nothing about the programme (Warwick et al., 2005; Warwick, Mooney & Oliver, 2009). This finding is of particular concern, since evidence suggests that integration and sustainability of interventions is strongly linked to all teachers playing a ‘central role’ (Weare & Nind, 2011).

Evans and colleagues (2015) outlined variation in implementation activity as a possible explanation for the inconsistencies of social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes in practice. The authors suggest that models that capture the multifarious determinants of implementation practices within complex systems are underdeveloped. School-based interventions cannot be artificially separated from their complex contexts. Therefore, an increasing number of empirical studies urge researchers to evaluate programmes as part of a dynamic and constant flux, existing before, during and after the intervention (Spoth et al., 2013). Specifically, the extent to which staff tasked with the delivery of the intervention consider the programme to be relevant, credible, and congruent with existing aims and values will be highly influential to intervention success even before it begins (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Elliott & Mihalic, 2004; Wandersman et al., 2008). On

adoption of the programme, organisational readiness for change (Greenberg, 2010), the depth and breadth of training provided (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase & Friedman, 2005), and capacity in terms of leadership, supportive climate, resources and time (Greenberg, 2010; Greenhalgh, Robert, Macfalane, Bate & Kyriakidou, 2004; Humphrey et al., 2010; Kam, Greenberg, & Walls, 2003) are all significant factors.

Drawing on diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 2003), Evans and colleagues (2015) proposed that there are multiple ‘reinvention points’ that occur during the transformative process of applying programme theory to individual and community needs in context. Whilst the authors express concern that during these reinvention points, schools threaten the theoretical integrity of the original model, there is less consideration of the positive aspects of ‘reinvention’. With less prescriptive interventions that are intended to be adapted in context, reinvention is an integral part of the approach and cannot be separated from the efficacy of the programme.

A critical issue for WS approaches is that, in trying to reach every member of the school community, the impact is universal, which risks maintaining the inequality gap even if every individual benefits. Conversely, focusing solely on targeted interventions for the most disadvantaged will not address the well-established systemic structural barriers that reinforce inequality. As identified by the Marmot report (Marmot et al., 2010), inequality is not two tiered, but a gradual gradient from those facing the most to the least adversity. Therefore, the most efficient way to reduce the steepness of this gradient is to tackle inequality across the whole system, but proportionately, in response to the varying needs of individuals. Such an approach requires sophisticated and dynamic tracking of the vast and changing range of pupil needs in relation to the adversity faced rather than employing a ‘one size fits all’ intervention strategy.

Lastly, sustainability of WS approaches could be hindered in the long term, unless staff wellbeing is factored into the programme theory and additional workload is avoided. As Thomas and Aggleton (2016) state, ‘appropriate and realistic mechanisms for training, support and resourcing (must be) in place to support the health and well-being of teachers themselves’ (p.170).

3.5 The Academic Resilience Approach as a Complex Intervention

The ARA process is described in **Chapter 1** as an intended iterative cycle of school improvement, drawing on the Resilience Framework (Hart et al., 2012) to audit, plan and

evaluate school-based protective factors. This systemic approach to building resilience aims to unite academic progress with social, emotional and mental health as part of holistic development. Small changes to practice (or ‘resilient moves’, Aranda & Hart, 2015) are encouraged since they may have far reaching and large-scale consequences, thus reflecting the cyclical and non-incremental quality change in complex systems.

The authors of the ARA claim that in gathering information about the system (in the form of pupil, parent and staff feedback about strengths and needs), the approach considers the historical and cultural context of application and can be highly adapted to school needs (Hart & Williams, under review). The ARA process could be seen to encourage distributed and non-hierarchical leadership, through tasking every member of the school community to some extent with actualising the ARA action plan. Co-ordinated efforts to make structural and behavioural change occur at individual, classroom, school level and beyond (for example, in the LFARA in which clusters of schools formed a community of practice). These efforts to initiate change depend on community building including establishing resilience as a shared value. In addition, facilitators (if opting for a facilitated rather than web-based approach, see **Chapter 1** for distinction) could be utilised as ‘key connectors’ to other existing services, since the authors state that the approach intends to sustain existing strengths and enlist support where necessary (Hart & Williams, under review).

In summary, the following features of the ARA have been identified, as described in its online tools³ and by its authors (Hart & Williams, under review). These features suggest that the conceptual approach may be well suited to interact with school complexity, as well as exhibiting properties of complexity itself. The ARA is intended to:

- Involve a broad range of multiple stakeholders at multiple system levels
- Acknowledge the holistic nature of both resilience and learning, which are seen as interrelated
- Acknowledge the inherent connections between aspects of the school system, including bi-directional links between multiple stakeholders
- Be highly flexible, allowing for adaptation based on school values and aims
- Create a ‘common language’ through use of evidence-based framework
- Increase system feedback through the audit
- Encourage a co-productive approach to decision making and planning

³ <https://www.boingboing.org.uk/academic-resilience-resources-directory/>

- Connect schools with external services and other schools to build on existing strengths and meet needs
- Co-ordinate sustained efforts at multiple system levels to initiate structural, behavioural and cultural change
- Build a sense of community and common purpose
- Support schools to continually respond to changing needs through iterative school evaluation/audit

3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the origins of complex systems theory and defined what it means in the context of this study, particularly for schools as complex social systems. The relationship between WS approaches (specifically the ARA) and the complex context in which they are applied has also been explored in some depth. In **Chapter 4**, a study design is presented for this thesis, which builds on the foundations of a complex systems perspective.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter is a reflexive account of the chosen methodological approach and study design. Firstly, epistemological assumptions will be outlined from perspective of a complexity ontology. Justification of the mixed method paradigm will be given in the light of this focus on complexity. The integrated, sequential mixed method design will then be detailed, alongside a description of the study context. The data collection strategy, including the chosen research tools, participant selection criteria and ethical considerations will be detailed. Lastly, an overview of the analytical strategy will be given, demonstrating the influence of each phase of data analysis on overall findings.

4.1 A Complex Systems Ontology

As discussed in **Chapter 3**, the education system is a complex social organisation in which intervention must be understood at multiple levels. For example, changes at classroom level will impact school level and county level (distribution of resources, expectations, accountability and so on). In addition, many of the links between one system level and another loop back on themselves in complicated webs of mutual interdependence and self-regulation (Lemke & Sabelli, 2008, p. 124).

It has been suggested that varying success of school-based intervention is due to a lack of consideration of the ‘multifarious determinants of implementation practices within complex systems’ (Evans et al., 2015, p. 754). In other words, there is not adequate understanding of the context dependency of the change process (Haggis, 2010; Maxwell, 2004). Drawing on an emerging understanding of schools as complex systems (Mason, 2014; Keshavarz et al., 2010; White, 2016; Kerhsner & McQuillan, 2016; Lemke & Sabelli, 2008), this study is underpinned by a complexity worldview (Boulton, 2010), in which all things are essentially interconnected and continually adapting. From a complexity perspective, reality is shaped by the interaction of many system elements. These include cultural, environmental, political and economic aspects as well as our personal beliefs, values, abilities and intentions. There is a complex quality to reality that is at times predictable, and at others wholly unpredictable (Boulton, 2015, p.10).

Adopting a complexity perspective has epistemological implications for the study, some of which have already been discussed in **Chapter 3** as part of implications for school-based research in general. Importantly, there are limits to how certain our understanding of a complex social system is, and also to our predictions of such a system's outcomes. This is because what is happening is constantly changing and the system is forming new patterns in response to richly interwoven history, context and dynamic interaction between people (Boulton, 2015, p.1). Such complexity '*underlies* social systems and *undermines* the application of the traditional scientific method, which supposes an objective, external reality' (Allen & Varga, 2007, italics added).

Traditional scientific approaches assume that the world is essentially knowable through intervening, planning, controlling and measuring outcomes. However, a complexity perspective suggests that this is not always the case. Aforementioned tensions reported by school staff (**Chapter 1**) arise from the discrepancy between the complex experience of working in schools in comparison to linear policy thinking, standardised assessment and inspection processes. Asserting standardised rules, monitoring progress and testing 'evidence' or 'outcomes' do not necessarily increase the quality of the school system or even help us to have a fully accurate picture of its efficacy. Rather, from a complexity perspective, increasing our understanding of the school system requires information about how aspects of the system are interrelated. This includes how elements of the system interact, co-evolve and adapt in response to cultural values and historical context. Multiple outcomes (both intentional and unintentional) emerge from these complex dynamics. However, far from being fixed end points in themselves, they represent a sequence of events that needs to be understood in its holistic context. Thus, for this study, a complexity worldview (Boulton, 2010) has necessitated a focus on the synergistic nature of the school system. Multiple parts of the system are accepted as interconnected, and understood to interact to create the dynamics of the system itself.

As the MRC guidance (Craig et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2015) for researchers evaluating complex interventions suggests, some interventions do not only take place *in* a complex system but are also highly complex itself. Complexity theorists argue that interventions can be said to be 'complex' rather than 'complicated' if there exists sufficient unpredictability in terms of outcomes, variation in how the intervention is applied and complex behaviour change that emerges from simple interactions (Keshavarz et al., 2010). Therefore, complex interventions can be seen to attempt to change the dynamics of the school

system by influencing the behaviour of those people who comprise the system itself, through their interactions (Hawe, et al., 2009).

The LFARA aimed to increase interactions between its component parts, required a change in behaviour of those tasked with its implementation, was targeted at multiple levels and groups within the organisation, and was intended to be highly adaptable to application context. Therefore, the LFARA meets definition criteria set out by the Medical Research Council's guidelines (Craig et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2015). The MRC guidelines for evaluating complex interventions suggest that process evaluation is necessary to attend to such complexity, acknowledging that the intervention will be shaped by three interrelated aspects. Firstly, the authors emphasise the importance of understanding the qualities of the intervention programme itself and its necessary resources and training (implementation). Secondly, the authors suggest that the mechanisms that trigger changes must be considered (enablers and constraints). Finally, the guidelines recommend that evaluations of complex approaches seek to understand the interplay between aspects of the existing system, programme delivery and outcomes (interaction) (Moore et al., 2015).

For this study, it was expected not only that the LA adapted the ARA to form the LFARA, but that each school would also adapt the approach, depending on the needs of their own contexts. Equally, it was anticipated that schools who implement the same original strategy could ultimately arrive at different outcomes, due to variation in contextual variables that modifies the impact of the strategy (competing priorities, existing cultural values, available resources and so on). It was not expected that there would be a single outcome of the LFARA across all schools, neither a single way in which staff explained the process and outcomes of the LFARA. Change was expected to be emergent as a result of multiple and interrelated interactions between elements of the system. Therefore, attempts were made to understand changing staff perspectives through this dynamic social process.

The epistemological implication of the complexity perspective is, therefore, that knowledge is contextual (Byrne, 2005; Haggis, 2008). Human participants in social research are seen as systems in themselves (as self-conscious subjective beings). They are also representative of the system they collectively comprise; the system being characterised by their behaviour and interactions. An attempt has been made to articulate detailed experiences of the LFARA, including identifying patterns that describe the way that change emerged as a result of the approach. However, no claim is made that these findings can be generalised for all staff or beyond this local context. Rather, specific variables, at multiple system levels have been considered within the context of a unique sequence of events. Concepts from

complexity theory were used not as a rigid conceptual framework, but as a vocabulary to describe and to some extent explain the inherent complexity of the process. Data from participants has been allowed to shape the data collection and analytical strategy as the research progressed. Such an approach is at odds with many previous school-based intervention evaluations (see **Chapter 2**). Rather than findings asserting the absolute efficacy of the programme, the conclusions instead present an understanding of a multiplicity of interactions within a specific context and over a period of time (Byrne, 2005). Efforts have been made to identify patterns in how staff experienced the process of the LFARA across the system in order to understand the impact at multiple levels.

An issue of importance for complexity researchers is defining the system that is the subject of the research (Long et al., 2018, p.4). Since all systems are embedded in others, research in schools might also involve research in local communities, cities, local authorities, government, the economy, society as a whole and so on. Researchers establish a boundary that does not fully exist in reality, in order to contain the analysis and allow for meaningful interpretation of results. As Donnella Meadows asserted, in truth:

‘There are no separate systems. The world is a continuum. Where to draw a boundary around a system depends on the purpose of the discussion’ (2008, p.97).

It was not possible to capture the extent of the complexity at every system level. For example, since individual staff could be considered sub-systems of the school system, in-depth information could have been gathered at micro level (for example, exploring experiences with previous school-based interventions). This research has attempted to move beyond the micro level, to include school level data (such as audit and action plans) and LA data (facilitation interviews and steering group focus group). Whilst data was not collected beyond LA level, the influence of changes to policy and funding is considered in the analysis of findings. These boundaries were established in order to make sense of school level context specificity, whilst looking for patterns across the system that indicate a shared process of change.

Reflecting on the complexity perspective that directs the ontological and epistemological position of this research, the following considerations were made for the study design:

- The collection of nested data at individual, school and county level

- The use of mixed methodology (in order to attend to existing complexity)
- Multiple examples of the LFARA in whole-school contexts (in acknowledgement of context specificity)
- Semi-longitudinal nature of the study (meaning that the influence of time on the school system was afforded significance)

4.2 Mixed Method Paradigm

Complexity theorists have outlined that quantitative and qualitative methodologies used singularly in educational research may not shed sufficient light on the complexity of school systems (Jacobson & Willensky, 2006). In order to map the ‘contours of complexity’ (Pawson, 2013), it was necessary to gather multiple staff perspectives from multiple school types through mixed methods (MM), that informed one another throughout the research.

In electing a MM paradigm, the study has attempted to articulate the complex interaction between the programme theory of the ARA and the local facilitation and adaptation of the approach in school context (the LFARA). MRC guidelines suggest that where the relationship between quantitative and qualitative data is fully explored, a mixed method approach can enable ‘a gradual accumulation of knowledge of how the intervention is delivered and how it works’ (Moore et al., 2015, p. 15). In particular, the MRC guidelines suggest that capturing the depth of participant responses both during and after the implementation will yield valuable information about short term impact and sustainability. Guidance suggests that evaluations should include a full picture of how the intervention is experienced by those who are tasked with its delivery (Moore et al., 2015, p. 47).

The MM movement initially emerged as a strong critique of the limitations of quantitative research, especially in the field of social science (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). When developing the research approach of the present study, Burrell and Morgan’s descriptions of sociological paradigms (1979) were considered. Both the ‘interpretive’ and ‘functionalist’ approaches seemed to support the epistemological assumptions of the study and intended study design, but only when used together, as a mixed methods approach. Statistical data alone may not have accurately reflected the complexities of human behaviour, interactions, perceptions and experiences, which were central to understanding the impact of the LFARA. Qualitative enquiry, on the other hand, may have been limited by its highly interpretive and context specific nature, which makes identifying patterns within and between

schools more challenging. By combining the approaches to research, drawing on a positivist (or functionalist) approach, data would support an increased understanding of social phenomena, which could be enriched by an interpretivist approach in which perceptions of staff could be explored and questioned more qualitatively. Conducting research from a complexity perspective necessitates such uniting rather than dividing research silos (Dodder & Dare, 2000).

Conceptualising MM research as a distinct paradigm, Creswell asserted that the MM approach is seen not only as an attempt to integrate qualitative and quantitative designs, but an independently valid research design that had ‘come of age’ (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003, p. 4). As Tashakkori and Teddlie described, MM can be said to be ‘a distinct third methodological movement’ (p.24) with its own philosophical assumptions (in Creswell & Clark, 2007). The key assumption for MM researchers is that the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis will result in increased ‘access to insights and understanding beyond those that might have been provided by use of quantitative or qualitative methods alone’ (Bowleg, Fielding, Maxwell & Molina-Azorin, 2016, p. 5).

By acknowledging the interconnectedness of all systems, in spite of their unique properties (Von Bertalanffy, 1968), collaboration and co-production are key to a rich understanding of systems and system change. This might include local stakeholders, policy makers and researchers from multiple disciplines collaborating to meet the complex challenges we face (Lowe, Phillipson & Wilkinson, 2013). The elected integrated MM design, therefore, aimed to gather individual narratives from multiple school-based examples across varying school types, thus helping to understand them in the context of the system as a whole. This relied on both quantitative and qualitative methods to consider the influence of interactions and relationships, existing feedback loops, conflicting values or power distribution at multiple system levels.

As identified in a summary of progress in the field by the MM International Research Association (MMIRA), multiple definitions and lack of clarity of use are unhelpful to furthering the use of MM. MMIRA therefore recommends that authors provide clarity of how terms are used and interpreted in specific research contexts. In pursuit of such clarity, this study employs a sequential mixed method design, combining both an explanatory and exploratory focus (Creswell et al., 2003). Mixed methods have been used sequentially both in order to provide some confirmatory analysis or sequential triangulation, and also to extend understanding (Bazeley, 2018). In this way, analysis from one aspect of the study has been

used to inform the analytical strategy of another aspect, thus ensuring integration throughout the study design (Bazeley, 2018; Burch & Heinrich, 2016). Such an integrated approach to mixed method design strongly reflects the MRC process evaluation guidelines. The guidelines suggest that a MM methodology can ‘facilitate interpretation of one another’s findings, and, where possible, inform how subsequent data are collected or analysed’ (Moore et al., 2015, p. 76).

Throughout the phases of data collection and analysis, an iterative process allowed one type of data to inform the other. This process will be explained in more detail here for clarity regarding the mixed method approach, and an explanation of the specific tools referred to will follow later in this chapter.

Firstly, an online survey was issued to all participants in all schools measuring staff perceptions of school climate. The results of the survey were then used to profile ‘high’, ‘middle’ and ‘low scoring’ schools based on the mean total score from the survey. Midway through data collection, the two top and two bottom-scoring schools and the middle-scoring school were identified, and three staff from each school formed a sub-sample (N=15) who were invited to participate in telephone interviews to explore the influence of the LFARA on school climate in more depth. These schools included Primary, Secondary and Special Needs school types. Whilst a draft interview schedule was produced based on the research questions (which were developed based on the literature review), further prompts were added that intended to extend understanding from the staff survey. For example, the baseline survey results had shown that most staff perceived a strong sense of team spirit, and the prompts ‘how does it feel to be a member of staff in this school’, ‘how are staff needs met’ and ‘how are staff supported in this school by leadership and each other’, were added with the intention of elucidating qualitative examples that illustrated this sense of team spirit and explored how consistent this perception of school climate was across role and school type. Interview findings were subsequently used to help shape the Time 2 staff survey, by including five questions that explored aspects of school climate that staff in the sub-sample had suggested may have changed as a result of the LFARA (school environment; pedagogical practice; school ethos; leadership; feedback and communication, see **Appendix V**). Including these questions in the Time 2 survey enabled the exploration of these findings across a much larger and more diverse sample. When analysis of quantitative data was conducted that compared the change between Time 1 and Time 2 data, results were integrated with interview findings in order to develop a robust narrative of how, from staff perspectives, the existing school climate had interacted with the LFARA, and what change may have occurred as a result. This

process is illustrated in **Figure 4.1**, which shows the interaction between study design, data collection and analysis in this integrated mixed method design. A more detailed description of the four phases of integration briefly outlined above can be found in section 4.7 of this chapter (Integration Strategy).

In summary, the focus of the research was to disentangle and at least partially explain the complexity of the LFARA in practice using a multi-stage design that integrated sequential mixed methods (Creswell et al., 2003; Guetterman, Fetters, & Creswell, 2015). Current thinking in the MM community is that, using MM that are integrated and synthesised, it possible to develop a ‘holistic, multi-dimensional and robust analysis of social phenomena’ (Bowleg et al., 2016, p. 8).

4.3 Study context

The implementation evaluated for this research is the first facilitated, whole-county application of the ARA. It is referred to in the present study as the LFARA. Public Health and a LA in the North East of England collaborated to adapt the conceptual approach of the ARA to develop a local resilience-building intervention. Schools within the target county were invited to participate in the co-planning, delivery and evaluation of a locally tailored approach to building resilience in schools, based on the ARA. The approach can be seen to constitute a facilitated ARA process, distinct from other versions of the ARA, including the web-based version that schools can implement without additional support (see **Chapter 1**).

4.3.1 Local Contextual Need. It has been reported that children in the North East experience the highest levels of disadvantage in England (Children’s Commissioner’s report, 2018). Latest government statistics show that there was a higher number of ‘children in need’ in the North East in comparison to national averages (DfE, 2018b). The DfE defines a child in need as a child who has been referred to children’s social care services, and who has been assessed to be in need of social care services. There was also a higher number of ‘disadvantaged’ children in the county in comparison to national averages (DfE, 2017c). The DfE defined ‘disadvantaged children’ as those who were eligible for FSM in the last 6 years, or who were ‘looked after children’ in the care system for at least one day, or who were adopted from care.

These complex patterns of socio-economic disadvantage that manifest in gaps between attainment of pupils from wealthy and poorer homes even in Early Years settings (Clifton et al., 2016; NPP, 2017) highlight the importance of developing robust and consistent educational support for young people in this geographical region. Yet as discussed in the introduction, this large region displays wide variation in school performance, particularly between primary and secondary schools. In terms of educational attainment, the county had marginally better attainment of disadvantaged pupils at primary school, in comparison to national averages. A higher percentage of pupils considered ‘disadvantaged’ by the DfE met or exceeded expected standards at the end of primary school. At secondary school, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 was marginally lower than national averages, both for ‘disadvantaged’ and ‘non-disadvantaged’ groups of pupils (DfE, 2017c).

At the time of data collection, teaching assistants in the county in which the research was undertaken were in the middle of a widespread and well publicised series of strikes, which had taken place in protest over pay and working conditions. In addition, a county-wide redundancy process was initiating, which was likely to have affected staff morale. Therefore, the ARA can be considered as especially relevant to local and regional needs, as a WS approach with the aim of improving school climate to increase the resilience of the whole school community whilst ultimately intending to redress social inequality.

The stated aims of the ARA (Hart & Williams, under review) can be seen as congruent with recommendations of government initiatives, such as the Northern Powerhouse Partnership (NPP, 2017), as well as congruent with the aims of national strategy to increase primary prevention for Mental Health (NHS, Five Year Forward View, 2014). Similarities include: adequate support for staff and especially leaders; increasing staff, parent and pupil aspirations; creating a clear school vision; increasing collaboration between local schools and

LAs and a focus on early intervention.

4.3.2 Broader Research Context. Research based on this adaptation of the ARA (the development of the LFARA) aimed to investigate the extent to which long-term and sustainable change occurs in the schools that engaged in the project. Whilst the research for the present thesis was focused solely on staff perspectives, data was also gathered as part of broader research into the LFARA, that explored whether school community resilience can influence pupil attendance, behaviour, emotional wellbeing and mental health, especially for those who are experiencing multiple adversities.

The research team for the overall evaluation comprised of staff at the University of Brighton, and the County Council, Public Health and Education Development Service in the North of England. The overall research project was led by Dr. Suna Eryigit-Madzwamuse, who had extensive experience in the areas of resilience, health and wellbeing in context and program evaluation. The project is part of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded Imagine Programme: Social Work-Package led by Professor Hart at the University of Brighton (Imagine, 2017). The Imagine programme is a five-year programme running from 2013 to 2017, which has brought together different international collaborative research projects between universities and their local communities⁴.

4.3.3 Implementation. The initial phase of the LFARA implementation involved eighteen schools in a County in the North East of England of varying school type (primary and secondary, mainstream and special education). After receiving a full day of initial training on the ARA from a national mental health charity, the LA steering group elected to proceed without the support of an external organisation in order to focus on local sustainability. Reasons for this decision were outlined in **Chapter One (section 1.4.5)**. Facilitation staff for the LFARA were drawn from a team within the local education development services. The facilitation team were funded by schools (for example, using SEN/pupil premium funding), public health commissions and direct schools grant funding (LA).

Staff were selected to facilitate the LFARA based on suitability of previous experience, and their knowledge of local schools. The facilitation team comprised of multi-disciplinary staff already working within the local schools (educational psychologists,

⁴ <http://www.imaginecommunity.org.uk/about/>

specialist advisory teachers, support staff and counsellors). A steering group developed an implementation strategy based on the original ARA concept, strongly focusing on adapting core ideas for local needs and ensuring sustainability. As discussed further in **Chapters 5 and 6**, the LFARA planning process strongly mirrored the change process experienced by staff at school level. Similar shifts in perspective and practice were reported by staff at both school and LA level.

Initially, schools were offered a *training* session, led by a facilitator that introduced the concept of resilience in the context of schools and outlined the idea of a WS approach. Emphasis was placed on staff adapting the evidence-based approach to their school's existing strengths and needs. Facilitators informed school staff that they would act as a support to developing an embedded approach that did not constitute additional work but re-framed, re-vitalised and re-focused existing school values in the context of resilience.

This initial training was followed by a facilitated *audit* of current practice, including pupil and staff surveys (see **Appendix V**), pupil focus groups and a meeting of all staff led by the facilitator. The focus of the audit was to identify strengths and needs in the context of the resilience framework and existing school aims. Findings from the audit process were shared with school staff during a feedback session and formed the basis of *action planning*. Staff considered how to sustain and maximise existing strengths, considering how protective factors could be overlapped and extended in order to amplify their outcomes for multiple stakeholders (for example, increasing parent and carer involvement in school activity). In addition, areas for potential development were highlighted in order to buffer existing adversity (for example, increased communication from leaders).

Standardised action planning forms (see **Appendix VIII**) were used to consider the impact of proposed changes on multiple stakeholders including pupils, staff, parents, carers and the local community. As such, acknowledging the interrelated and interconnected nature of the school system was paramount to the planning process. The facilitator then re-visited and contacted the school regularly (at least once per half term, but more frequently if they had an additional existing role in the school) to reflect on how the action plan was being applied. Further revisions were made in response to both anticipated and unanticipated consequences.

As such, the implementation included the same three phases (training, audit and action planning). However, the diversity of the resultant action plans reflected the fact that schools had based their intended intervention on both the existing programme theory

(resilience building protective factors that buffer risk) *and* increased feedback about their school and the current organisational climate.

4.4 Study Sample

The sampling strategy was intended to enable this research to answer the research questions outlined in **Chapter 1** regarding staff perspectives of the LFARA, by gathering data using mixed method tools from a range of staff role types from multiple school types.

For Time 1 (baseline survey) data collection, the strategy involved whole-population sampling in that all staff in all of the schools (N=21) participating in the LFARA were potential participants. The sole inclusion criterion was direct employment by a participating school and there was no exclusion criterion. Each member of staff in every school actively engaging in the LFARA was sent a survey invitation before the start of the LFARA (N=710). Thus, participants were selected on a voluntary response basis. This sample was originally comprised of staff in 21 schools of varying type (primary, secondary and special education), levels of local deprivation, intake size, and academic performance. Whilst the voluntary response basis of the sampling method could potentially have created a bias towards staff who held strong views about the school climate or those with more time to complete the survey (and therefore differing workloads, for example), efforts were made to negate potential bias by ensuring ease of online survey completion, sending several reminder emails to prompt response and offering alternative formats, such as paper copies of the survey. In addition, receiving the results of the survey was potentially very beneficial to school staff and in particular leaders as a tool to understand and evidence school climate, and therefore staff were actively encouraged to complete the survey to contribute to a more accurate picture.

There were 228 responses to the first (T1) survey (response rate = 32.11%). There was a larger response for staff in primary schools (N=151) in comparison to secondary staff (N= 77). There was a slightly higher number of teachers than other role type (teachers (40.9%), non-teachers (40.4%) leaders (18.7%) although these figures do also reflect staffing ratios. The vast majority of the sample were White British (WB, 93.58%) and female (84.1%), although this lack of diversity is also reflected in overall demographics of school staff in the local county.

Midway through data collection, the two top and two bottom-scoring schools, and also the middle-scoring school were identified as sub-sample schools. These schools included

two primary, two secondary and one special education school, which also fulfilled the preferred criteria that the sub-sample contained a mix of primary, secondary and special schools. By the end of T1 data collection, due to the increased number of surveys received, the variation between overall SPSC scores across all schools decreased, and all five schools were ultimately mid-range-scoring schools. However, because they still represented a range of school sizes and types, no changes were made to the sub-sample. A group of three participants were selected from each of the five sub-sample schools, comprising of one leader, one teacher and one non-teaching staff and invited to participate in an interview. These staff (N=15) were identified randomly from a list of leader, teacher and non-teaching staff contacts provided by the facilitator in each school. If no reply to an email invitation to participate in the interview was received, a reminder was sent. If there was no response to the email reminder, another member of staff was chosen at random from the list and contact was attempted until contact was made. In every case, the first or second member of staff contacted agreed to be interviewed. In accordance with the sequential mixed method design, the interview schedule (**Appendix III**) was developed using the research questions developed based on the literature review, and considering emergent themes of strengths and challenges in school climate from baseline survey data. Lastly, each of the facilitators (N=9) were informally interviewed twice, one post-audit session and one post-action-planning session, in order to expand on process data (see below under Research Tools).

Time 2 (follow up survey) data collection occurred approximately one year after the LFARA process began. Due to some schools delaying the audit and action-planning phase of facilitation because of competing priorities (explained in detail in **Chapter 7**) and some staff being made redundant, the second survey invitation, although following the same sampling strategy as Time 1, was sent to fewer staff (N=18 schools, N=608 participants). There were 145 responses to the second (T2) survey (23.85%). Due to the fact that comparisons could only be made based on survey responses for both T1 and T2, participants who did not respond to both surveys were not included in the final sample. The final sample (N=109, 17.99%) can be considered representative of the overall target sample both in terms of demographics and T1 survey responses, as explored in comparative analysis performed using SPSS. Detailed findings of this analysis and a more detailed description of the data collection procedure for survey data is presented in **Chapter 7**.

In conclusion, the final sample for quantitative data analysis consisted of N=109 staff of mixed role types from multiple school types across 18 LFARA participating schools. The final sub-sample consisted of N=15 staff. This sub-sample included leaders (N=5), teachers

(N=5), and non-teaching staff (N=5) from 5 schools who had represented the two highest, the middle and the two lowest scoring schools (based on the T1 SPSC survey tool) mid-way through data collection.

4.5 Research Tools

In seeking to inform the study design with data as it was collected from participants, findings at each stage were allowed to shape the methods of data collection and analytical strategy. This process is described in detail in phases in the ‘analytical strategy’ section of this chapter. An overview of which data was collected and at what stage, is presented in **Table 4.1**. As can be seen, the initial staff survey preceded interviews. This was in order to inform interview protocol (see **Appendix III**). Interview findings then indicated further questions that were included in the second staff survey. In addition, intermittent opportunities to collect data from facilitators enabled comparisons of their perspective to information gathered from staff using each measure. The final steering group focus group (see **Appendix IX**) enabled a reflection of the LFARA process, from the start of the project to the end of data collection in schools.

4.5.1 Staff Perceptions of School Climate Scale. Quantitative data was collected using the self-reported Staff Perceptions of School Climate scale (SPSC). This scale was developed for the purposes of this study by combining subscales from three existing standardised scales that have been previously tested and found to be highly reliable. Although this scale was not part of the ARA set of resources, the steering group within the local authority who developed the LFARA elected (beyond this thesis) to combine the survey in their offer to schools, such was the perceived usefulness of the tool for practitioners. The three scales were the School Organisational Health Questionnaire, (Hart, Wearing, Conn, Carter & Dingle, 2000), the Social Capital Scale (Onyx & Bullen, 2000) and the Health Promoting School Scale (Lemerle, 2005).

Table 4.2. shows the composition of the overall scale. As can be seen, the majority of subscales originated from the School Organisational Health Questionnaire (7 subscales from SOHQ), whilst the remaining two subscales were each taken from a different scale. The ‘Work Connection’ subscale was derived from the Social Capital scale (SCS) and ‘School Community Relationships’ was derived from the Health Promoting Schools scale (HPS). The full list of items asked in the survey can be found in **Appendix V**.

Table 4.2. SPSC contributing subscale validity analysis.

Original Scale	Subscale used in SPSC for this study	α score taken from original study
SOHQ (Hart et al., 2000)	Morale	.86
	Appraisal & Recognition	.90
	Excessive work demands	.76
	Goal Congruence	.77
	Participative Decision Making	.75
	Professional Interaction	.84
	Supportive Leadership	.84
SCS(Onyx & Bullen, 2000)	Work Connection	.84
HPS (Lemerle, 2005)	School Community Relationship	.80

The decision to combine instruments in order to create a new scale to measure school climate from staff perspectives was based on the broad focus of the LFARA on multiple aspects of the school organisation. These included the physical and social environment, health policy, communications and relationships between individuals within the school community and between the school and its wider community.

The SOHQ assesses school organisational climate from the perspective of school staff. In the original research designed to test the psychometric properties of the survey, the scale was found to be valid and reliable. Internal consistency coefficients suggested that each dimension was measured with sufficient sensitivity (Hart et al., 2000). The Cronbach alpha measures for each of the subscale retained by the present study ranged between .75 and .90, suggesting that internal consistency was sufficiently accurate in each case. Some aspects of the scale were less relevant to the LFARA intervention (curriculum co-ordination for example) than others. For this reason, the seven most relevant subscales were utilised for this study.

A subscale exploring staff workplace connection was drawn from the Social Capital Scale (SCS). The SCS was initially developed by Onyx and Bullen (2000) in order to measure feelings of trust, safety, proactivity and work connection amongst school staff. The 'Work Connection' subscale contains five items (the extent to which staff feel valued, staff satisfaction with participation in school, feeling part of the local community, regarding colleagues as friends and feeling part of a team at work). The scale was found to be highly reliable as a total scale with an alpha score of .84.

Lastly, because of the WS nature of the LFARA, school and community relationships were a necessary focus for the survey. The Health Promoting Schools (HPS) scale was initially tested by Lemerle (2005) in 39 schools in Queensland, Australia. The scale measures staff perceptions of school health policy, social and physical environment and community school relationship. The 'school community relationship' subscale contains four items (covering involvement of community organisations, children's active involvement in their community, participation of parents, caregivers and families, and community awareness about school-based health promotion). The author found that the scale had a high level of reliability with alpha levels of .80 for the whole scale and between .77 and .82 for subscales. In Sun and Stewart's (2007) study in which combining multiple scales in order to measure resilience in the primary school setting was proposed,

the authors found that the SOHQ, SCS and HPS were highly compatible with a strong goodness-of-fit.

Reliability of the Staff Perceptions of School Climate (SPSC) scale, which is used for the first time in this study, is established in quantitative data analysis (see **Chapter 7**). The SPSC survey was implemented as a repeat-measures in each school; once before the LFARA intervention and the second one year after the start of the LFARA. A mean score for each subscale and a mean score for the whole survey were calculated. Higher scores indicated higher levels of morale, appraisal and recognition, goal congruence, participative decision making, professional interaction and supportive leadership, and a lower level of workload demand. The mean total score indicated the overall staff perceptions of school climate.

A valuable strength of the survey tool was the opportunity to examine the school system from the perspective of its multiple and diverse constituent members. Because of the relative efficiency of gathering survey data in terms of time and cost, it is possible to gather a broader range of perspectives from staff using this tool than other methods. Frequent criticism of self-report surveys, however, centre on the potential to introduce unhelpful bias to the collection of this data, due to researchers' assumptions that participants are accurate and honest in their self-report. For example, there is no assurance that participants understand the question in the same way as the researcher intended it or that they understand it in the same way as each other. Efforts to counter these risks were made in providing participants with the reassurance of full anonymity, reasonable length of time to complete the survey, checking the language to reduce ambiguity, and the use of sub-sample interviews to provide some triangulation of findings.

4.5.2 Interviews. The second data collection tool employed by this study was a semi-structured interview, of which three staff in each of five sub-sample schools participated at the end of the project (N=15), providing school-based examples. The full interview protocol can be found in **Appendix III**.

The main purpose of the interviews was to provide greater depth of information about participant experience in light of survey findings. As such, the initial interview protocol was developed based on research questions arising from the literature review, and refined after baseline survey data collection by adding multiple prompts that intended to expand on survey results. The sub-sample of staff who were interviewed (N=15), was

comprised of one member of the senior leadership team, one teacher and one member of non-teaching staff (for example, pastoral care and clerical or supervision staff) from each of five schools. Schools were selected that represented the lowest, middle and top SPSC total scores when compared across all schools, measured half way through data collection. As discussed in **Chapter 2**, a need has been identified for research that articulates staff experiences of various role types. This was of particular significance for this study because the LFARA, as a WS approach, was expected to impact practice at multiple levels. In addition, the LFARA could have been experienced and perceived in *different* ways depending on role type. By interviewing staff from multiple schools, comparability of findings was made possible, furthering an understanding of the influence of the nature of existing school systems on the acceptance and influence of the LFARA.

The interviews were carried out over Skype or by telephone for reasons of practicality, including acknowledgement of the constraints of time and workload for the participants. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour and focused on identifying aspects of the school system that enabled or constrained the implementation, changes that occurred in the school system and perception of leadership, from the perspectives of staff interviewed. Considering the strengths of an interview protocol (increased comprehensiveness of data) in comparison to the potential restrictive nature of a systematic framework, significant flexibility was afforded in the semi-structured interview protocol. This allowed for reasonable comparability between responses but did not overly restrict participants through closed questioning.

Critique of interviewing as a research tool has highlighted the important influence of interpersonal skills (Opie, 2004), such as attentive listening and the ability to quickly establish rapport. It could be argued that relational aspect was threatened by the decision to interview participants by telephone or Skype rather than in person. A potential criticism of conducting interviews at distance by telephone or over Skype reduces several modes of communication (facial expressions or gestures for example) for both parties and, therefore, could potentially restrict the establishment of a positive relationship and the likelihood of gathering full and accurate data. However, this critique is countered by the alternative suggestions that interviewer effects are decreased, these types of interviews are more convenient for busier participants, participants may be more likely to discuss sensitive issues under less pressure (Shuy, 2003). Raento and colleagues (2009) highlighted the benefits of telephone interviewing in the light of modern day devices (which make documentation of audio and video relatively easy) to assist accurate

transcription, as well as increasing access to participants through mobility and accessibility, particularly for busier participants. Furthermore, the aforementioned commonality of professional experience and shared understanding of the language and contemporary issues of schools in the UK between researcher and practitioners arguably aided the relational aspect of the interview process.

4.5.3 Process Data. Audit, pupil focus group and action planning materials were collected for each school. The audit, pupil focus group and action planning materials were not developed for this study and are part of a set of tools freely available online for anyone to download and use in schools. The locally-driven steering group comprised of staff from the County Council education support services elected to include and adapt these tools as part of the LFARA.

Throughout the application of the LFARA in participating schools, facilitators were asked to complete half-termly reports based on audits of whole-school resilience practices and action plans to build whole-school resilience, which were completed with school staff. These process documents provide a summary of the progress of the LFARA in each school and an opportunity to compare the contrasting ways in which the original programme theory was applied in practice. Facilitators were then asked to discuss these half-term reports verbally, in order to provide a contextual understanding of the changing facilitating and constraining factors within each uniquely complex school system. Summary notes of these discussions were recorded and checked with facilitators for accuracy. Lastly, all five members of the original ‘steering group’ who initiated the project at LA Level participated in a focus group discussion (see **Appendix IX**). In this discussion, a semi-structured interview schedule was used to direct the focus group of staff within the steering group to explore their experiences of the parallel process of the LFARA at LA level, including the changes to practice. All of the above process data contributed to an exploration of key themes from qualitative data in **Chapters 5 and 6**, and a discussion of findings in **Chapter 8**.

4.5.3 Focus group. A focus group was conducted with staff from the Local Authority (LA) Steering Group (N=5) at the end of data collection, in order to explore the experiences and perceptions of staff at Local Authority level regarding the LFARA process. Focus groups are a form of group interview involving several participants and a moderator exploring a specific issue or experience in order to develop understanding through discussion

(Bryman, 2012, p.502). In this instance, the focus was the LFARA development and application.

The rationale for using the focus group as a research tool was that the LA Steering Group was comprised of a diverse range of professionals, including educational psychologists, strategic planners and commissioners. These professionals had different responsibilities and levels of involvement in the LFARA, though they had a shared identity and purpose collectively as the Steering Group who planned and reviewed project progress. An aim of this focus group was to enable participants to communicate the diversity and complexity of individual experiences, whilst enriching these perceptions through the interactivity of the group dynamic (Cousin, 2009), leading to a sense of shared understanding about the LFARA process. In addition, the focused but open discussion typical of a focus group was suited to the integrated nature of the study design. Findings from qualitative and quantitative data from school staff had suggested key themes (for example, the importance of leadership), which could be included in the focus group as open questions, alongside more general questions regarding the development and refinement of the LFARA, thus retaining an openness to new themes emerging or contrasting experiences at LA level to school level. Prompts were provided in order to probe for depth and variation of responses within the group.

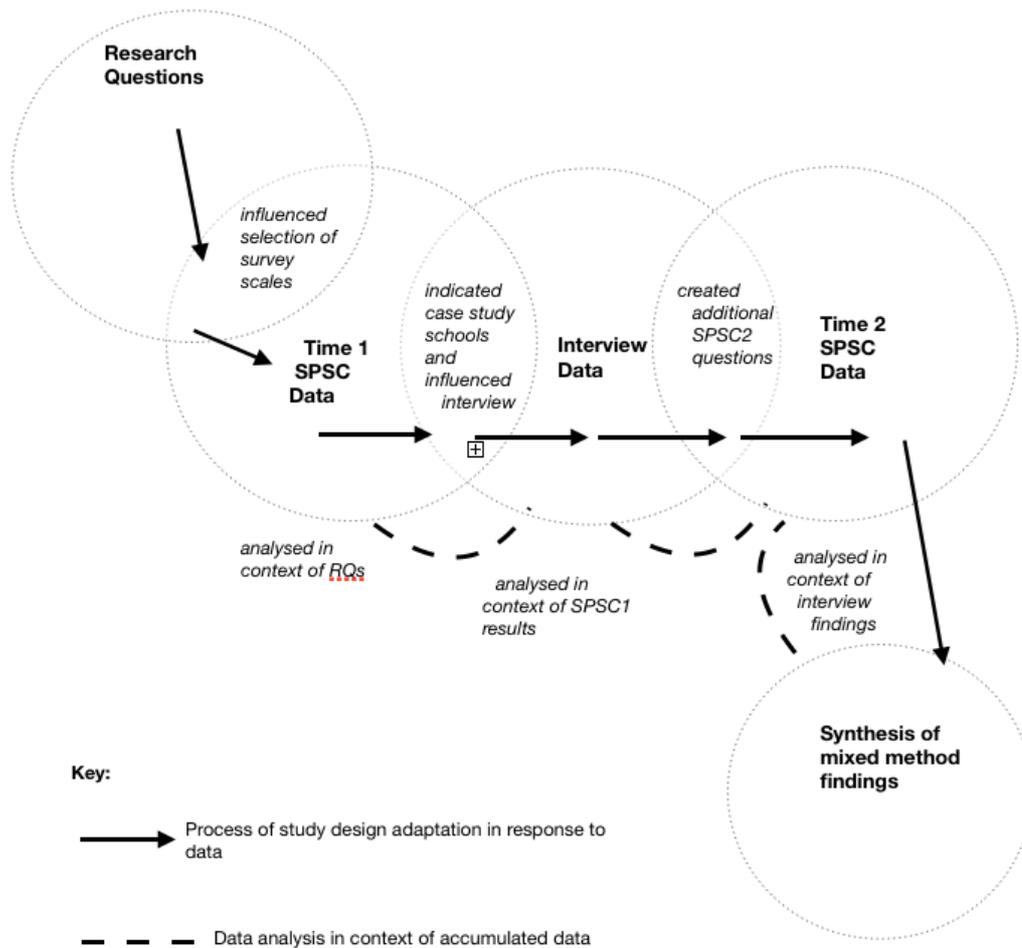
Whilst the possibility of group bias is often discussed in relation to focus groups, for this research, a collective understanding that accounted for ‘the person in context’ was sought (Wilkinson, 1998). Therefore, allowing participants to build their responses through communication with one another was key in order to avoid decontextualisation of individual experiences. Other potential approaches, such as the ‘Nominal Group Technique’ (Varga-Atkins, Bunyan, Fewtrell & McIsaac, 2011) that aims to focus on individual experiences and discourages interaction, but builds group consensus retrospectively, were therefore rejected in favour of encouraging group discussion.

4.6 Procedure

Interview and survey procedures are provided in greater depth in **Chapters 5, 6 and 7**. However, in order to demonstrate the interaction between data collection and study design, the overall process is shown in **Figure 4.1** below. It can be seen that data collection continually informed study design and also to shape LFARA implementation. As such, the

complex interaction between implementation programme, application context, and research evaluation is acknowledged, embraced and actively promoted in this study.

Figure 4.1. Interaction between study design, data collection and analysis throughout the research process.



4.7 Integration Strategy

Because the collective action and interaction of people within the school community shape the future school system, it is not possible to predict with any certainty what the future holds based on data about the present alone. However, this does not de-value an increased understanding of the ways in which we interact, and the collective action we take in accordance with shared values as environmental conditions change. Such understanding can help to determine the direction of system change, and evaluate these changes in the light of

collective intentions. From this perspective, a complexity approach to data integration does not seek to determine singular causative links or generalise from findings. Rather, a complexity perspective seeks to identify patterns of multiple influential factors and articulate their numerous dynamic interactions that may have led to both anticipated and unanticipated consequences. A complex systems approach to integration can, therefore, be characterised as theory-based evaluation, that is not reductionist but holistic in approach. As such, an inductive or formative approach was taken, in the assumption that empirical data can illuminate patterns or trends that contribute to the generation of theory (Roulston, 2010).

Feedback from research findings was provided to participants involved in the LFARA implementation. In this way, contextualised knowledge emerged as a result of research/practice interactions that may have contributed to ongoing organisational evaluation and change (Jokela, Karlsudd, & Östlund, 2008). Integration and analysis of data has, therefore, fulfilled three distinct purposes. Firstly, analysis of each data type informed the study design, by contributing to the design of research tools in response to emerging patterns or themes that required further exploration. Secondly, the use of the integrated sequential mixed method design gathered a range of staff perspectives of the LFARA implementation that articulate the complex dynamics at play when it is applied in context. Thirdly, integrated analysis has influenced the LFARA implementation, through the provision of data that helped to direct the action planning process in each school.

A design for the overall integration strategy is presented below in four phases that combine each of these distinct purposes:

Phase One

Time 1 SPSC results were analysed in order to identify sub-sample schools and inform interview schedule:

- Findings of the Time 1 survey were used to establish top, middle and lowest scoring schools midway through the data collection.
- Analysis of findings from the Time 1 survey (as explored in **Chapter 5**) were used to create an interview schedule that explores staff perceptions of school climate in more contextual depth.

- Analysis of findings from the Time 1 survey were shared with all participating schools, enabling the data to be used as part of the WS audit and inform action planning for the LFARA.

Phase Two (which is presented in **Chapters 5 and 6**):

Qualitative data analysis considered the depth of staff experiences of the LFARA intervention:

- Findings of interviews with sub-sample staff were presented and considered in the light of baseline survey data regarding staff perceptions of school climate.
- Analysis of findings established understanding of existing school systems as a context for the implementation and the ways in which aspects of the system may have enabled or constrained the LFARA.
- Analysis of findings explored staff perspectives of the process, including aspects of the LFARA itself that may have enabled or constrained implementation.
- Analysis of findings summarised staff perceptions of emergent change in the process of the LFARA as school systems and the implementation interact.
- Adjustments to the Time 2 survey data collection strategy were made in the light of interview findings.

Phase Three (which is presented in **Chapter 7**):

Quantitative data analysis compares staff perspectives pre and post LFARA intervention across all schools:

- Data was analysed in order to demonstrate reliability of the SPSC and the representative nature of the final sample.
- Survey findings were presented for the final sample and considered in the light of interview findings.
- Analysis of findings established how staff perceptions of school climate had changed in the process of the LFARA implementation.
- Analysis of findings considered the effect of school type and role type on the extent to which perceptions of school climate have changed during the LFARA.

- Analysis of findings considered the effect of staff experience in education and their current role on the extent to which perceptions of school climate had changed during the LFARA.
- Summary of findings considered how significant results could be explained in the context of qualitative data a conceptual synthesis of findings is proposed.

Phase Four (which is presented in **Chapter 8**):

Conceptualisation of the LFARA process from the perspectives of staff:

- Qualitative and quantitative findings were synthesised in a discussion of the dynamic process of the LFARA, using the MM approach to compare, triangulate and expand on findings in order to provide a robust and detailed account of the process from multiple perspectives.
- A complexity perspective provided a theoretical lens, through which findings were analysed

4.7.1 Analytical Strategy for Quantitative Data. Data was collected online using the SurveyMonkey platform. Data was then exported to an excel spreadsheet. For paper surveys (completed by participants without access to the online version), these responses were manually entered into the excel spreadsheet.

A backup copy of data was created prior to data cleaning. Cleaning the data involved ensuring that the data was in a tabular format of columns and rows with no blank rows. All data was spell-checked and duplicate rows were removed. Spaces, errors and non-printing characters were removed from the text to ensure clarity of the results.

Data was inspected for consistency and completeness, removing or correcting identified outliers. For example, multiple responses from the same participant were examined to determine if one entry was partially completed (in which case a partial entry was deleted) or whether two duplicate entries were submitted (in which case one copy was deleted).

All data was then made quantifiable by converting into numerical form (for example, male = 0, female = 1). The majority of questions on the survey referred to a low number as a low score, however for six items, the scoring system was reversed. Therefore, reverse items were created for these six items to ensure consistency. Data was then exported to SPSS for analysis.

Staff who had not responded to the invitation to complete the survey, as well as those who completed early demographic identifiers but no SPSC survey items, were omitted as missing data cases. It is likely that staff who did not return the survey or did not complete the survey may not have done so due to competing time pressures as discussed in **Chapter 9** under limitations of this study. It is possible, therefore, that these cases are not missing at random, since workload and time to relax were related to the survey measure. However, it is also possible that participants experienced technological access issues, did not prioritise the completion of the survey over other work or chose not to participate in the project. Inclusion of these cases would not contribute to our understanding of staff's perception of school climate. Therefore, a strategy was developed where missing data was omitted assumed MAR (missing at random), but response rates in each case were reported alongside findings in order to remain open to the significance of missing data during analysis.

The central tendency and variations within the sample were explored in order to report on descriptive characteristics, establish the representative nature of the final sample and identify any outliers from existing patterns. Reliability scores were examined to establish internal consistency of the measure's subscales and total scale. The research questions of this study were then used as the basis for further tests. Multiple paired samples t-tests were carried out to establish any change between mean scores of staff perceptions of school climate between T1 and T2 measures. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test the null hypotheses that school type (primary or secondary) and that staff role (leader, teacher or non-teacher) did not influence change in the mean scores of staff perceptions of school climate between T1 and T2 measures. A fuller discussion of this strategy is provided in **Chapter 7**.

4.7.2 Analytical Strategy for Qualitative Data. The intention of the qualitative analysis was to draw out patterns or trends from in-depth data gathered from multiple staff participants that could be understood and presented in the light of a complex systems perspective.

During interviews, handwritten notes were kept as prompts to aid analysis and also to re-shape the interview protocol in line with the conversation with each participant to ensure relevancy. In addition to these notes, audio and video from the interviews were both recorded. After completing the interviews, formal analysis began on each participant's recordings. This process initially involved verbatim digital transcription in order to facilitate

subsequent analysis. As per the requirements of the university ethics guidelines, the transcripts and notes were anonymised. All identifying information, (names of interviewee and any other references, professional role and schools) were edited out and replaced with pseudonyms. Full transcripts were uploaded to NVIVO (a qualitative data analysis software package), to aid coding and thematic analysis.

The methodological approach integrated data-driven codes with theory-driven codes based on the tenets of complex systems theory. Traditional thematic analysis was employed as a method of searching for themes within rich data in order to provide an accurate description of a social phenomenon (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997; Saldaña, 2015), or in this case, the experiences of participants.

The transcripts were initially summarised by outlining significant points made by participants (noting frequency of repeated comments or any apparent similarity of comments) in response to the interview questions. Significance was determined by repeated and attentive reading of the data (Rice & Ezzy, 1999), identifying themes and making these themes categories for analysis. The relationship between themes was then explored in order to link themes and consider whether multiple themes could be subsumed into single ones.

Since this inductive approach (Boyatzis, 1998) was based on responses to the interview questions, which were in turn derived from the research questions, the broadest category of themes reflected the research aims to identify 'enablers of LFARA', 'constraints of LFARA' 'interacting factors', 'changes as a result of LFARA' and 'leadership in relation to LFARA'. The inductive approach was combined with using pre-existing concepts from complex systems theory. In the final stage of coding, key themes were considered through the lens of complexity theory; for example, considering the concept of feedback loops to help explain increasing staff momentum as change was observed as a result of LFARA implementation.

This hybrid approach to thematic analysis avoided a reductionist use of a theoretical framework whilst attempting to make sense of findings using the theoretical perspective of this research study. Whilst concepts from complex systems theory were integral to understanding participant experiences, the process remained open and flexible enough to allow for themes to emerge from the data. Such combined approaches have been recommended for evaluations of complex interventions or in complex settings (Craig et al., 2013; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Moore et al., 2015; Saldaña, 2015). Emergent themes from both inductive and deductive approaches to thematic analysis were therefore combined, in order to enable comparative analysis both between individuals, role type and school type.

A discussion that articulates these findings in written form can be found in **Chapters 5 and 6**.

4.8 Communication and Consent

Participants were sent an information sheet explaining this PhD study and consent form (see **Appendices II and IV** for sample consent and information sheets) at the beginning of the LFARA project. When considering a suitable format for potential participants, care was taken to provide information clearly and in an accessible way, showing appreciation of the competing time constraints and participant workload. All staff were then subsequently sent an invitation to complete the online survey by email or an alternative paper copy, prior to the start of the LFARA in their school (December 2016-March 2017). Information about the nature of the research was attached to the survey invitation and consent was required on the first page of survey completion. This process was repeated with an adapted invitation letter for the second data collection period (November 2017- May 2018).

A further sub-sample of staff chosen to be involved in semi-structured interviews were selected randomly from a database of staff who had direct involvement in the LFARA process. The justification for this decision was that these staff would have a clearer idea of what happened during the LFARA process and what impact it had on the school system. The sub-sample of staff was categorised into groups of senior leaders, teachers and non-teachers to ensure a range of role type within each school. Consent for participation in the qualitative research was requested by email from individual sub-sample staff and confirmed verbally in recorded interviews.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Prior to contacting participants, an ethics application was completed at the University of Brighton, and the LA's Children and Adults Service Research Approval Group. In line with agreed ethics requirements, procedures were undertaken to ensure confidentiality. The University Research Ethics Committee required that all data was kept securely in the University of Brighton electronically in computers locked by a password, ensuring that the lead researcher and her supervisors had sole access. Paper copies of data

were kept securely locked in a filing cabinet in the main supervisor's office at the University of Brighton. All raw data, such as audio and video recording were destroyed on completion of full typed transcripts. In accordance with University guidelines, the files matching names and ID codes were also destroyed post-data collection to reduce the risk of participant identification. The data set with ID codes only, including all paper copies of data, will be retained for 10 years post-PhD viva, and then destroyed.

The nature of the LFARA (which focused on disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, due to the orienting concept of resilience) could have potentially evoked difficult feelings or memories in the participating staff. This risk was considered; however, none of the questions in the interview or survey asked about participant's personal experiences of adversity. Asking staff to express opinions about leadership and their colleagues in the school could potentially place participants in an awkward or vulnerable position. This was, to some extent, counteracted by the anonymous nature of the survey and the use of ID codes attached to both types of data. Interviewees were also asked to refrain from identifying themselves or others in the interview. Finally, in spite of the low risk of causing distress to participants, it was made explicitly clear that it was possible to terminate the interview at any time, without justification and at their request should they wish to.

Participants were not paid for their participation in the project; the incentive for participants to take part in the project was based on voluntarily sharing experiences and opinions, in order to contribute to a critical review of school climate, and furthering understanding about the impact of the LFARA. Mindful of potential conflicting time pressures and commitments, efforts were made to minimise the additional workload that participation might have entailed. The survey was made available online, as well as by paper copy, and interviews were scheduled around teacher timetables and using telephone/Skype.

Whilst I attempted to, in as much as was possible, adopt an objectively neutral stance, potential researcher bias could have originated from my relationship with my supervisory team. Professor Angie Hart, who was my lead supervisor, co-created the ARA. This has enabled valuable insight in terms of comprehending the background and underlying theory of the approach and its application to date. The potential for researcher bias was mitigated by Professor Hart's depth of experience in supervising research linked to implementations to which she has contributed. In this instance, Professor Hart's key interest in the study was how the approach was locally adapted and how staff perceived the interaction of local context

with the approach in practice. Professor Hart was not actively involved in the data collection nor data analysis, at this point stepping back from the supervision process and allowing a larger input from my other two supervisors who were not involved in the creation of the ARA. The breadth of experience and specialism on my supervisory team enabled me to consider the LFARA in-depth in a broader systems context in which the intervention was only part of the whole system continually shifting and changing, making an evaluation of the ARA itself divorced from local contextual variables practically impossible. I therefore established, in agreement with my supervisors, that the research was not an empirical evaluation of the ARA efficacy, rather an exploration of staff experiences of this unique LFARA, which has drawn on the ARA as a conceptual basis.

The ARA is not a licensed programme, rather it is freely available online set of tools to be downloaded and adapted for school use. As such, it is likely to be highly context dependent. Ownership of the process described in this thesis belongs to the county council in the North of England, which adapted the ARA resources to develop their own programme, referred to as the LFARA. At every point of the research, I felt comfortable and supported to fully explore a range of experiences of the approach, including critique. A range of school-based examples were selected based on their variation in the extent to which the LFARA led to change in the school climate, and I do not feel that my understanding or interpretation of staff experiences has in any way been compromised by one of my supervisors being involved in the creation of the ARA as the originating concept.

4.9.1 Confidentiality. A list of school staff names and contacts was provided by the school facilitator, and all staff were provided with an individual ID code. Although the research team were aware of the identities behind the ID codes, this data was kept securely and only accessible to immediate research team, enabling data to be matched pre and post-test. Participants who completed the survey were personally identifiable from the data set in order to enable T1 and T2 comparisons of survey data. However, no participant will be identified in the findings of this thesis, as data has been anonymised during transcription in line with University ethics guidelines.

Sub-sample staff were contacted directly by email and asked to arrange an agreeable time for the recorded interview to take place. Although the researcher was aware of staff identities for the interviews, transcripts were anonymised by replacing participant names with their ID code, as well as replacing accidental identification of

anyone else with 'NAME'. All participants were debriefed post-data collection, given the opportunity to respond, and to suggest changes prior to the final write up of results. The final thesis was also shared with all participants and efforts will be made to respond to any feedback received.

4.9.2 Researcher Reflexivity in Relation to Study Context. As discussed in **Chapter 1**, I, the researcher, cannot claim to assume a value free position in relation to the collection and analysis of staff perspectives. Commonality of experience and shared language were both positive aspects of interaction with participants. On the one hand, it is possible that existing understanding and experience may have facilitated data collection. On the other hand, it is possible that I may have had increased sensitivity to issues commonly identified by teachers (such as workload, decreasing autonomy and increasing performativity). It is possible that I may have less awareness about the how these and other issues are experienced by non-teaching staff. This was partly (along with an identified gap in the WS literature reviewed), the motivation for including staff of diverse role types in data collection, to ensure a balance of role types presented in research findings. In addition, most of my knowledge and experience was linked to classroom and school level, as opposed to LA or policy. Efforts have therefore been made throughout the research to consult LA staff, and engage in discussions with education researchers and practitioners about relevant local, historical and current policy contexts.

One aspect of the research I have found challenging was my geographical distance from the LFARA implementation. I acknowledge that this may have enabled me to have a more objective approach to data collection than if I had previously worked with staff involved, or in the county of application. However, especially due to the complexity perspective adopted, it was important for the research to take account of historical and cultural issues at multiple system levels. This required gathering information from participants regarding system conditions prior and parallel to the LFARA. Scoping questions in interviews, informal conversations and school visits, were combined with other sources of information, such as Ofsted reports and school websites. These were an invaluable addition to the research, helping to form a rich picture of existing system conditions in which the LFARA was introduced. For example, multiple sources gave accounts of a county-wide teaching assistant strike that occurred in all schools at the start of the LFARA. This system event can be seen to have directed the aims of the LFARA in many schools towards staff wellbeing and increasing communication. Multiple staff also identified Ofsted inspectors in

local schools as influencing school priorities (as staff anticipated an inspection imminently), which may have influenced the extent to which the LFARA was seen as a priority.

Limitations of the study design, and the need for further research that was beyond the scope of this study, are both discussed comprehensively in the conclusion, **Chapter 9**.

4.10 Chapter Summary

In order to present a clear and full picture of staff experiences of the LFARA, multiple ‘real life contexts’ including different school types in different areas of the county (Robson, 2016). In addition, this study has aimed to attend to the ‘subtlety and complexity’ of the school as a complex social system, by representing multiple viewpoints of a range of participants through the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013). The overall aim of the methodological approach, has been to draw out the complexities of staff experiences of the LFARA, including diverse and conflicting perspectives that changed over time. The sequential MM approach integrated quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview) methods, employing both an exploratory and explanatory approach. Findings have been synthesised in order to articulate how the LFARA has been experienced by multiple school staff, including senior leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff.

Data has been shared with schools as they implemented the LFARA, and has been allowed to continually shape both the implementation and study design, establishing feedback loops that shape educational understanding and practice (Lemke & Sabelli, 2008).

Chapter 5: Findings Part One: Perceptions of the existing school climate and the implementation process

The Time 1 Staff Perception of School Climate online survey (SPSC) was completed by staff (N=228) in all participating schools (N=21) (procedure outlined in **Chapter 4** and analysis outlined in **Chapter 7**). Semi-structured interviews (N=15) were carried out in five sub-sample schools (procedure outlined in **Chapter 4**), which provided school-based examples of the LFARA in practice. Findings from survey and interview data are presented in relation to the first research questions of the study, in order to articulate the existing school climate prior to the LFARA delivery.

In this chapter, aspects of the existing school system that staff perceived may have enabled or constrained the LFARA process is presented, from the perspective of staff in the whole cohort (survey data) and these themes are explored further using findings from sub-sample schools (interview data). Staff experiences of the LFARA process and subsequent perceived changes in the school system as a result of the LFARA, are presented later in **Chapter 6**.

Quantitative data that is provided in this chapter is intended to aid understanding of the existing school climate and therefore is a simplified descriptive representation of numerical data that establishes the foundation for qualitative findings. Rigorous analysis and comparison between Time 1 and Time 2 survey data including the significance of quantitative findings can be found in **Chapter 7**. In terms of qualitative data, this chapter provides selected examples from a rich data set that help to illustrate staff perceptions of school climate, helping to expand the understanding established by survey results. Efforts have been made to identify any pattern in the findings, including variation by role or school type.

5.1 Time One survey data: Baseline Staff Perceptions of School Climate (SPSC)

All staff (N=710) in all participating schools (N=21) were invited to complete the Staff Perceptions of School Climate (SPSC) prior to the LFARA intervention. Sampling methods are discussed in more detail in **Chapter 4** and in **Chapter 7** and the exclusion of some schools from later data comparison is explained. There were 228 responses to the Time

1 survey. These staff responses to the baseline survey assessing perceptions of existing school climate are referred to in this chapter as Time 1 SPSC data.

The SPSC was created for this study by combining aspects of three existing scales: (i) the School Organisational Health Questionnaire (Hart et al., 2000), (ii) the Social Capital Scale (Onyx & Bullen, 2000), and (iii) the Health Promoting School Scale (Lemerle, 2005). Further information on scale composition is provided in **Chapter 4**.

Cronbach Alpha values for the survey subscales ranged from .750 to .937, suggesting very good internal consistency. Reliability analysis for all subscales is shown in **Table 5.1**, which demonstrates that when used with the Time 1 sample, the SPSC has very good internal consistency.

Table 5.1. Reliability Analysis for the all subscales of the SPSC (Cronbach's Alpha)^a

Subscale	α of subscale T ₁
Morale	.919
Workload	.903
Participative Decision Making	.897
Professional Interaction	.880
Supportive Leadership	.877
Community Relationship	.750
Appraisal and Recognition	.937
Goal Congruence	.877
Work Connection	.812

NOTES. ^a Internal consistency for the total scale: T₁ .969

^bT₁ refers to pre-intervention survey (time one)

5.1.1 Sample Descriptives of Time One Respondents. The sample used for the description provided of Time 1 data in this chapter is comprised of the 228 staff who responded to the Time 1 survey, including those who did not respond to Time 2. This included staff from five

secondary schools ($N_{\text{staff}}=77$) and 16 primary or junior schools ($N_{\text{staff}}=151$). Primary and junior schools were considered the same school type for the purposes of data analysis. The total response rate of those who completed the T1 survey was 32.11% ($N_{\text{staff}}=228$) from a total possible sample of $N_{\text{staff}}=710$.

The sample, as shown in **Table 5.2**, was predominantly comprised of White British (WB) (99.1%) female (81%)⁵ staff. Similar demographics could be found in teaching staff across the county. Considering that there were fewer leaders working in schools than teaching and support staff, there was a representative distribution of role type⁶, with teachers comprising the majority of the sample (40.9%), followed by non-teachers (40.4%) and leaders (18.7%). When asked to report the highest level of qualification respondents had attained, the majority said that they had achieved a graduate qualification or higher (70.1%)⁷. The mean number of years in education (13.09)⁸ and current post⁹ (7.24) reflected the range of experience in the target population, from those nearing retirement to newly qualified staff.

⁵ Valid percentages are provided in cases of missing data. There were two cases of missing data in relation to gender, thus results are provided for $N=226$ remaining responses

⁶ There were three cases of missing data for 'role type', thus percentages are given from $N=225$ remaining responses

⁷ There were seven cases of missing data for 'Educational qualification', thus percentages are given from $N=221$ remaining responses

⁸ There were fourteen cases of missing data for 'years in education', thus the mean is given from $N=212$ remaining responses

⁹ There were three cases of missing data for 'years in current post', thus the mean is given from $N=225$ remaining responses

Table 5.2. Descriptive statistics of total responses to Time One survey (including those who did not respond to Time 2)

		Sample responded to T ₁ in total (N=228)
		N (%)*
Gender (F)		183 (81)
Ethnicity (WB)		226 (99.1)
Role*	Leader	42 (18.7)
	Teacher	92 (40.9)
	Non-Teacher	91 (40.4)
Mean years in current post*		7.24
Mean years working in education *		13.09
Highest level of education *	GCSE, NVQ1, BTEC1, BTEC2	12 (5.4)
	A LEVELS, NVQ3, BTEC3	26 (11.8)
	BTEC dip, NVQ4	5 (2.3)
	Foundation Degree, HND, Advanced BTEC	23 (10.4)
	BA, BA Hons, Grad Cert, Prof dip	60 (27.1)
	BA Hons QTS, NPQH	84 (38.0)
	MA	11 (5.0)

* Valid percentages are provided in cases of missing data.

5.1.2 Total and subscale SPSC scores for Time One Respondents. As can be seen in **Table 5.3**, across the whole sample, the mean (M) score for the total SPSC scale across all participants was 3.66, with a standard deviation (SD) of .58. Mean scores were calculated based on the Likert type responses staff provided for each question. As such, 5.0 would represent the highest possible score and 0.0 the lowest possible score.

Across the whole sample, the highest scoring subscale was ‘Professional Interaction’, which returned a mean score of 3.93 (SD=.61), closely followed by ‘Work Connection’ (M=3.91, SD=.63). Both these subscales are associated with feeling part of a team, and feeling connected to sense of professional purpose. This suggests that peer connection and connection to role were existing strengths of school climate. In addition, the subscales ‘Community Relationship’ and ‘Goal Congruence’ had less variation across responses and were the third and fourth highest mean scores, warranting further exploration of these aspects through interview questions with the sub-sample group.

The lowest subscale score by some way was ‘Workload’, which returned a mean score of 2.71 (SD=.81), followed by ‘Participative Decision Making’ (M=3.45, SD=.84). Since items in the ‘Workload’ subscale had been reversed, this low score suggests that staff were dissatisfied with high levels of workload and unrealistic expectations set for them (as addressed by individual subscale items). These results suggest that there were not frequent opportunities for staff to participate in decision making at the time of T1 survey completion. Additionally, the mean scores for ‘Leadership’, and ‘Appraisal and Recognition’ subscales showed increased variation of responses amongst staff and were the third and fourth lowest subscale scores, therefore items from these subscales influenced interview questions regarding leadership with sub-sample schools.

Table 5.3 Mean scores for the total SPSC and all subscales provided by Time 1 sample and compared across school type.

Total / Subscale	Whole sample (N=228) (M/SD)	Primary (M/SD)	Secondary (M/SD)	Leader (M/SD)	Teacher (M/SD)	Non- Teacher (M/SD)
Total	3.66/.58	3.74/.57	3.49/.55	3.89/.49	3.65/.54	3.55/.63
Morale	3.75/.80	3.84/.83	3.58/.71	3.89/.81	3.80/.71	3.63/.86
Workload	2.71/.81	2.70/.81	2.73/.81	2.97/.85	2.61/.75	2.70/.83
Participative Decision Making	3.45/.84	3.66/.76	3.05/.87	3.99/.65	3.39/.82	3.26/.86
Professional Interaction	3.93/.61	4.02/.59	3.76/.61	4.09/.46	3.96/.58	3.83/.68
Leadership	3.69/.84	3.85/.81	3.38/.81	4.02/.65	3.66/.84	3.56/.89
Community Relationship	3.81/.55	3.90/.53	3.65/.56	3.99/.46	3.73/.52	3.81/.62
Appraisal and Recognition	3.65/.81	3.69/.83	3.56/.78	3.81/.86	3.80/.74	3.42/.83
Goal Congruence	3.85/.66	3.96/.62	3.63/.68	3.99/.51	3.80/.63	3.84/.75
Work Connection	3.91/.63	3.96/.62	3.81/.64	4.01/.49	3.89/.64	3.87/.69

When Primary and Secondary school types were compared, staff in primary schools returned higher scores for the total ($M=3.74$, $SD=.57$) than staff in secondary schools ($M=3.49$, $SD=.55$). Scores for eight of the nine subscales were also higher in primary schools, with the exception of 'Workload', which secondary school staff rated slightly more positively than primary staff. For staff in primary schools, 'Professional Interaction' was the highest mean subscale score ($M=4.02$, $SD=.59$), followed jointly by 'Goal Congruence' and 'Work Connection' ($M=3.96$, $SD=.62$). The similar mean scores provided for these subscales

suggest that staff were similarly satisfied in primary schools, that they felt a personal sense of connection to professional purpose, and had clear and shared goals across the school, constituting a strength of school climate. In comparison, secondary school staff rated 'Work Connection' more highly than any other subscale ($M=3.81$, $SD=.64$), but 'Goal Congruence' was not a similar mean score ($M=3.63$, $SD=.68$). This could suggest that, whilst staff felt personally connected to their professional role, they perceived less sense of shared aims across the secondary schools.

Both types of schools rated 'Workload' as the lowest subscale, suggesting that workload was a challenge for school climate in both settings. There appeared to be a perception amongst staff of higher 'Participative Decision Making' in primary schools ($M=3.66$, $SD=.76$) in comparison to secondary schools ($M=3.05$, $SD=.87$), and primary school staff also rated 'Leadership' notably more highly ($M=3.85$, $SD=.81$) than secondary school staff did ($M=3.38$, $SD=.81$).

These results could be reflective of increased opportunities in schools of a smaller size for participative approaches to leadership and decision making, warranting further exploration of leadership and decision making across school types in sub-sample interviews.

When role type was considered as a potential influence on staff perceptions of school climate, SPSC total mean scores showed that Leaders perceived the school climate the most favourably ($M=3.89$, $SD=.49$), followed by Teachers ($M=3.66$, $SD=.54$), and then Non-Teachers ($M=3.55$, $SD=.63$). Notable differences in subscale mean scores between role types included Non-Teaching staff reporting lower 'Morale' (perhaps due to ongoing Teaching Assistant strike action and redundancy), and Leaders providing higher 'Participative Decision Making' and 'Leadership' subscale scores (perhaps due to the close involvement of these staff in these aspects of school climate).

In summary, across the whole sample, strengths of school climate in the existing school system can be considered to be 'Professional Interaction' and 'Work Connection'. Primary School type and Leader role type seemed to be an indicator of increased staff perception of existing school climate, in particular influencing perceptions of 'Leadership' and 'Participative Decision Making'. 'Workload' appeared to present a significant challenge for school climate irrespective of school type and although Leaders scored this subscale more positively than other staff, 'Workload' was still the lowest subscale recorded by all staff in all schools.

5.2 Sub-Sample Schools

Five sub-sample schools were selected in order to provide in depth qualitative data regarding school-based examples of staff experiences of the LFARA process. These interviews were intended to expand on the data collected in the Time 1 SPSC survey. As discussed in **Chapter 4**, these schools were chosen because at the time of selection they represented the top two, bottom two and middle scoring schools when Time 1 SPSC mean scores were considered.

As seen in **Table 5.4**, within the sub-sample group there was a large variation in school size and the group also included one special education school. There was also variation of recent Ofsted inspection outcome and data relating academic assessment. This information is not provided in the table below in order to avoid identifying schools or their staff. However, in order to consider the important role of context in the differing enabling and constraining factors of the LFARA process, additional information, where relevant, is provided in the discussion of findings, taking care to preserve anonymity.

Table 5.4. School ID matched to school type and SPSC Time 1 mean total score for sub-sample.

School ID	School type (Primary / Secondary)	SPSC ₁ Mean total score (M)	SPSC ₁ Mean total score Standard Deviation (SD)
A	Primary	3.48	.54
B	Primary	3.25	.66
C	Secondary Special	3.17	.33
D	Primary	3.92	.41
E	Secondary	3.91	.40

All schools in the sub-sample group received two hours of training (as part of normal staff CPD) from facilitators in the LA, and all schools completed staff and pupil audits in a further two-hour session. Schools A, B, D and E completed the action plan as part of the LFARA process and each of these four schools have made progress in implementing their action plan. At the time of writing this thesis, School C has recently re-engaged with the LFARA (having previously ceased contact with facilitators) and is now implementing an action plan. Four schools were in regular contact with their nominated facilitator regarding their progress with the LFARA at the end of data collection (Schools A, C, D and E). In school B, staff reported that a combination of increased staff confidence and improved school climate meant that they did not feel ongoing support was necessary once they had completed a re-audit, although they continued to internally evaluate the impact of the LFARA.

In **Chapter 4**, the difficulty of establishing a boundary for the system that is the focus of research is discussed. In **Chapters 5 and 6**, patterns are identified across the sub-sample of five schools as one group. The intention is to highlight aspects of the LFARA's interaction with existing school systems that were shared by multiple participants. Where school or role type appeared to have particularly influenced staff perspectives, attempts have been made to consider how these contextual factors altered staff experiences of the LFARA. The influence of school level context (for example, school culture, past experiences of WS approaches, significant changes of staff and inspection visits) is also discussed.

Data from staff interviews, discussions with school facilitators (referred to in the text as F) and visits to schools (referred to in the text as V), have been considered in the light of the research questions of this study. Data from a focus group with staff from the LA steering group has helped to understand the LFARA process from outside the school system (referred to in the text as SG). In this chapter, in response to the first research question, characteristics of the existing school system that were seen by staff to enable or constrain the LFARA are discussed. Additionally, attention is also given to aspects of the LFARA that were considered by staff to enable or constrain implementation in the school system, since the process was considered to involve mutual adaptation.

Key characteristics of the school system that were perceived to enable or constrain the Locally Facilitated Academic Resilience Approach (RQ1)

5.3 Existing School Ethos and Staff Values

At least one member of staff in each of the sub-sample schools (eight in total including all role types in primary and secondary schools) referred to a strong sense of shared professional values. A recurrent and dominant theme was the desire of staff to make a difference in the lives of pupils, and to support each other as colleagues, as part of a caring or nurturing school ethos:

‘To be a loving, caring school that nurtures children to reach their full potential, you have to have a whole staff that believes that...I can't think of a member of staff in school that isn't here because of those reasons’

(SB:P3)

‘We are like a little family...the children feel like they’re in part of a family as well, because we nurture and care for them just like we would our own.’

(SD:P3)

The strength of these shared values seemed to increase in response to local social deprivation. The majority of staff (11 of 15) suggested that deprivation in the local community shaped staff values and school purpose. This was more apparent in primary school type, possibly due to the increased contact with parents and carers, but was discussed by staff of all role types:

‘Levels of deprivation here are through the roof. There are high levels of domestic abuse incidents, like one in three families here. There are lots of issues with adult mental health and child mental health, drug and alcohol addictions, lots of families where there is no extended support and we are the only family that they have’

(SB:P3)

‘I think it’s just an unsaid thing that we all understand is the importance of the children’s mental wellbeing...because they have so many barriers, so, so many issues outside of school that they’re dealing with’

(SD: P2)

One school was described by the facilitator as having less widespread issues of social deprivation:

‘It’s a very mixed demographic in a small area, a big range from middle class professionals to high areas of criminality and drug use’

(SE: F)

However, the facilitator of this school argued that limited community cohesion and social isolation had resulted from the wide variation in social economic status.

At least one member of staff in four schools (mixed primary and secondary) perceived high levels of staff agency and commitment to shared values or school ethos. Staff considered that ‘school’ offered collective protective factors against the challenges that pupils faced. In

addition, ‘making a difference’ was considered by staff to be a source of personal professional satisfaction and, therefore, to sustain staff motivation:

‘We do work in quite a deprived area with quite difficult children. Actually, we all share that love of working with the children that we work with and commitment to them’

(SB: P1)

‘They’re not to be worried about all the things that are happening in their home lives. They can leave them at the door. I couldn’t work in a school that wasn’t in a deprived area...I wouldn’t be making a difference like I do’

(SD:P1)

‘There’s a lot of examples I could give about staff going the extra mile. To stay back later in the evening and do some work. A lot of members of the staff are long-serving ... they’re very dedicated, loyal and motivated’

(SC:P3)

Shared values were perceived as both positively and negatively related to staff wellbeing. On the one hand, shared values contributed to a sense of team spirit and thus might be considered a protective factor. On the other, the commitment to ‘making a difference’ was described as a challenge by staff of all three role types and in both primary and secondary schools, due to the intensity of work this involves (this theme is further explored below in the section on ‘work intensity’):

‘We have to do a lot emotionally to support our children, because if we didn’t they’d just be rioting...actually, I think our children get a better deal resilience-wise from our school than most schools provide...(but) staff weren’t feeling resilient. The staff were the ones that were feeling, emotionally neglected’

(SB:P3)

In school D, external validation of staff commitment to shared values appeared to be a protective factor that helped to sustain the shared ethos:

‘We’ve got an NQT at the moment, who spoke to me the other day and she said: ‘I’ve never ever come across a school where all the staff genuinely have like, the child at the heart of everything. They’re really caring’...Ofsted did recognise that we were ‘Outstanding’ for how we cared for the kids...how we managed to break down the barriers that the kids were facing...I was a bit like: ‘There we go! We’ve cracked it.’
(SD:P1)

Considering the extent of local deprivation and shared values identified by staff in the above quotations, the stated aims of the ARA (to build whole-school resilience and enable the most vulnerable pupils to achieve good academic outcomes (Hart & Williams, under review)) seemed congruent and appropriately matched to schools’ needs. The synergy is particularly evident in the quote below from one teacher:

‘Our main vision for the school ... that every child will succeed to the best of their possible ability, despite any barriers that are in their way...to ensure that every single child gets the best overall grades that they can. That’s the ethos’
(SE:P2)

Another way in which school ethos correlated with the principles of the ARA was identifying the link between school success and long-term health and wellbeing outcomes (Hart & Williams, under review). In all school types, staff described academic success as part of broader holistic development. Staff in three schools (including primary and secondary schools) linked a holistic whole-school ethos to increasing relevance of the LFARA:

‘Our ethos is very much about you know, we believe we’re these children’s one chance. So, it’s very much about making every second in school count...it (the LFARA) seemed like the natural next step’
(SA:P1)

‘Education is a lifelong journey, it doesn’t finish at 16. It’s about building aspiration and building resilience... if we can put them on a pathway, so that they feel confident enough to engage in education, I think that’s more important than their [pause] academic results’

(SC: P1)

Congruence of shared staff values with the originally stated aims of the ARA were, therefore, perceived to increase relevance of the LFARA. Given the scale of adversity for pupils, staff suggested that in order to meet pupil needs, staff wellbeing was often negatively impacted by the intensity of the role and high workload. Staff highlighted a need for greater focus on this aspect of school climate.

5.4. Structural Factors

5.4.1 Work Intensity and Workload. Staff described heavy workload as being a feature of existing school climate in all sub-sample schools. There was an important distinction between perceptions of the intensity of work and ‘workload’. Staff considered their day to day experiences of work as ‘intense’ due to the weight of responsibility, emotional drain and multi-tasking required. However, staff perceived that without continuing to work at this level of intensity, it was not possible to ‘make a difference’ to the children they supported. Conversely, ‘workload’ was a term used in relation to the number of tasks that staff are expected to complete within a limited time, including those seen as having less impact for pupils but ‘imposed’ on staff.

In relation to role intensity, at least one member of staff in four schools (of all three role types and in primary and secondary school types) mentioned that staff not only chose to stay in spite of identified challenges, but because of them, creating a tension:

‘So, there’s that balance that I worry about. There’s all these people that go over and above, but are they going to go under because of it? But then, what can we do because we have nobody else to do it? It’s always us. It is hard, and it is difficult, but I don’t know how without giving the kids a poorer deal that we get around that to be honest’
(SD:P1)

‘We work in a very difficult school in a very difficult area, it’s hard, but if it wasn’t something that we didn’t love to do, we wouldn’t come because you would go and work in a school where there weren’t any issues’
(SB:P3)

Staff of every role type and in every school acknowledged the impact of challenging and demanding work conditions on their own wellbeing. However, at least one staff in four schools said that a sense of accomplishment sustained a high level of personal investment, and buffered against sources of stress:

‘The daily drain is high... but relationships with parents and pupils mean you really see the difference you’ve made’

(SC:V)

‘I’ve had a member of staff on the phone at 6 o’clock at night, trying to prevent a family being homeless... There are times when you walk away, and you think: ‘All of this hassle and all of this stress.’ But... I think there is a sense of accomplishment whenever that (a child has better than expected outcomes) happens’

(SD:P1)

In relation to high workload (for example, marking and planning), poor work-life balance and high stress levels were considered examples of inescapable aspects of the job for all role types but especially for leaders and teaching staff (possibly due to the increased accountability measures these staff also discussed):

‘Obviously, you know, as a teacher you usually spend your Sundays working or even the whole weekend working, prepping for the week’

(SA:P2)

‘In terms of responsibilities, we do take quite a lot on... It can be overwhelming at times, it’s what we do’

(SD:P2)

‘I came into this field probably 14-15 years ago now. Someone said to me: ‘Don’t do this for more than 4-5 years, because it burns you out.’ It is stressful and it’s very demanding’

(SC:P1)

Two members of staff (in two primary schools) linked staff and pupil wellbeing. For example:

‘On an emotional level, some members of staff weren’t resilient and needed support. What they felt was, if they couldn’t be happy and confident and able to engage and deal with their own problems, how could they help children to do that?’

(SB:P3)

Staff perceived that the impact that they were able to have for pupils, to some extent justified the high intensity of their professional role. However, in combination with high workload, staff perceived that their own wellbeing was negatively affected by the support they were required to provide for pupils. Facilitators of the LFARA identified staff wellbeing as the focus of action plans in four of five sub-sample schools, highlighting that this was previously an underdeveloped aspect of school climate.

5.4.2 Lack of Time. Four staff in three schools identified lack of time as a constraining factor to engaging in the LFARA. This included staff in all three role types but was most frequently mentioned by teaching staff. Each of these staff expressed concern that a lack of staff capacity might constrain the implementation, even though they acknowledged it was a priority:

‘I was like: ‘Well, what would we really get out of this? ...Also, um, the extra workload, because all of us are up to our eyes in it all the time. So, I wasn’t like 100% on board’

(SD:P1)

‘Yeah, the biggest barrier, it seems to be the same with everything – is time. We’re so busy trying to cram so much in...introducing something like emotional wellbeing, which we all recognise is really important...it’s just another thing to try and fit in’

(SD:P2)

For leaders in both primary and secondary schools, a tension existed between the need to support staff, and the perception that they should be managing their own workload:

‘As a senior member of staff, you always have to appear like you can do what Ofsted are saying, despite the fact that we’re absolutely under the cosh’

(SD:P1)

‘When you’re supporting staff within the role of a Head, you have to remain professional, rather than saying perhaps what you truly feel... We have to be resilient, we have to keep going, we have to be upbeat... Because the last thing they (staff) want to hear is someone moaning’

(SC:P1)

Lack of time was therefore a potential constraining factor of the LFARA. However, facilitators in three schools and staff in four schools mentioned a change in perceptions as a result of LFARA training sessions. Participants suggested that the LFARA training helped to reframe perceptions through a strengths-based approach, and explicitly addressing staff adversity:

‘Louise ¹⁰ (school facilitator) came to see me and was like: “Look. It’s no extra work. You’re just looking at what you’re already doing and then seeing if you could tweak anything”... I thought: “Yeah, what’s the harm in us reviewing what we’re doing and seeing if we could be doing anything more?”’

(SD:P1)

As a result of the locally facilitated training and audit sessions, lack of time was perceived by staff as an aspect of school climate the LFARA might help to improve, by addressing staff workload.

¹⁰ All names in this thesis are pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of participating staff and anyone they refer to by name

5.4.3 Structural Change and Uncertainty. Across all schools in the sub-sample group, staff identified structural change at school and county level as negatively impacting school climate (staff morale) and individual staff wellbeing. Interrelated aspects of structural reform were identified by staff. These included: budget and service cuts, a county-wide redundancy process, the amalgamation of schools and resources, and a perceived increase in the complexity of pupil needs. Both participant and facilitator accounts mentioned that the impact of structural change has manifested for staff at three levels of the school system: individual (feelings of anger, frustration and anxiety), peer (strained relationships between staff groups including a reduction in trust of leaders) and whole-school (a subsequent breakdown in communication).

Budget or service reduction was cited by at least one member of staff in every school, including all three role types. Staff expressed frustration that a perceived increase in pupil need was juxtaposed with service cuts. Staff perceived this to have negatively impacted both pupils and staff:

‘Educational Psychology Services have been reduced, CAMHS have been reduced. So, we have more young people in school with more complex needs and less support...being resilient for our staff, is very challenging. In all honesty, I feel sometimes that we’re failing young people...we’re not meeting their needs ...That’s why you come into the job isn’t it? To help young people.’

(SC:P1)

‘Social services is at capacity – and there’s nothing we can do...you refer and refer and refer and it just doesn’t go anywhere’

(SC:V)

A county-wide redundancy process occurred in parallel with the LFARA. This process (mostly involving teaching assistants), was referred to by five staff in three schools as negatively impacting school climate. In particular, the redundancy process was perceived to reduce staff morale and perceptions of leadership. In addition, staff in four schools (of every role type) said that excessive change had resulted in anxiety and a sense of powerlessness for themselves or colleagues.

‘We had a lot of job losses and we haven’t got a lot of money in the school and people are worried about their jobs....I think it’s tiring ...some of these changes are things that we can’t do anything about’

(SD:P1)

‘A lot of the things that were happening were beyond our control, but it completely affected the emotional wellbeing of our Teaching Assistants. That was then exacerbated by the fact that, as a school our budget had to lose some of the workforce’

(SB: P1)

Since day-to-day role demands were already high, staff had reported that peer support and morale were crucial protective factors. However, recent structural change was perceived as a threat to these aspects of school climate, as identified by one facilitator:

‘Budget concerns led to a redundancy process, this has caused staff much anxiety and stress...There were very significant trust (issues) which made the second training on staff resilience quite a challenge’

(SD: F)

In this way, the impact of structural change on school climate could have reduced readiness for the LFARA. However, facilitators in three schools suggested that by explicitly addressing the impact of structural change, staff could be supported to improve aspects of school climate that they could control, which could build resilience against future adversity. In this way, the LFARA had the potential to increase the sense of agency in staff and the capacity to improve school climate:

‘The initial atmosphere was quite tense with some staff understandably feeling uptight and angry. However, feedback suggested that through using a world café approach, groups of staff merged, communication channels were really opened up, and the process became very positive’

(SD:F)

In one school, a recent Ofsted inspection resulted in LA involvement, and considerable structural reform. The facilitator for this school suggested that this had been the cause of increased pressure and stress for leaders, which she felt had detracted from the LFARA, resulting in this school temporarily disengaging completely from the process.

In addition to structural change, at least one member of staff in three schools (both primary and secondary schools) perceived the LFARA to be relevant to a perceived increase in pupil or parent needs. For example, in relation to rising mental health concerns, one teacher reported that:

‘We’ve seen a huge increase in mental health issues in our school, for the pupils and the parents. So, when this (the LFARA) came along, we knew that it was something that was important’

(SB: P1)

However, not all structural change was perceived to have resulted in adversity for staff. In School E, a recent inspection had prompted intense structural change at school level. These reforms were perceived positively by each member of staff interviewed from the school:

‘A new behaviour programme was already implemented at the beginning of last year – academic school year. That’s benefitted the school greatly...Staff seem more empowered to do that, and it’s consistent through the school. We seem to be all singing from the same hymn sheet’

(SE:P3)

Because School E had recently implemented changes that were perceived to have led to positive improvements in school climate, staff may have perceived the LFARA as less necessary. High levels of change in the school system could, therefore, be considered as a constraint to the LFARA, due to reduced staff prioritisation of the approach during times of change. Thus, staff perspectives suggest that an optimal level of change (in which change is desired but the system is not totally unstable) was required to enable the LFARA.

5.4.4 Accountability and Inspection. At least one member of staff in four schools mentioned accountability as a source of adversity for staff. The perceived pressure to evidence outcomes was associated with increased workload and also considered to detract from other less easily evidenced aspects of pupil development. In addition, especially for staff in primary and special education settings, scrutiny of pupil progress and outcomes was seen to have recently intensified:

‘I left mainstream because I was sick of policy getting in the way of making a difference to the children. Now, the target driven culture is seeping in to our school...grass roots resilience practice is being scrapped to make room for ‘rigorous learning’. My kids are hurt at the end of the day, my kids are wounded, education has become about jumping through hoops’

(SC:V)

‘some schools are going really overboard on assessment in all areas...there’s a bit of a panic now. They’re putting things in place, maybe for the sake of it, rather than because they have an impact on the children’

(SD:P2)

In addition to increasing scrutiny, three members of staff (again, in primary and special education settings) suggested accountability measures did not always take account of pupil needs:

‘To have an HMI sitting in front of you saying: ‘The young people in your school should be getting 92% attendance, and X amount of (grades)... we have really high aspirations for the kids that go to this school, but we also understand the complex issues that go on within their lives. I think if you get an Inspector in the school who doesn’t understand that and has never worked in this field, that’s very frustrating’

(SC:P1)

Ofsted inspection was not perceived to necessarily present adversity under all circumstances. Rather, a school’s position in the inspection ‘cycle’, the outcome of inspection, and the extent to which leaders ‘shielded’ staff from pressure were mitigating

factors. For example, in one of the sub-sample schools, a recent successful Ofsted inspection was seen by two staff to reduce the pressures of accountability for staff. Staff suggested that, having satisfied the inspectors that academic progress in the school was sufficient, they were more able to ‘take risks’. ‘Risks’ included investing time and resources in activities not directly linked to academic learning and focusing on pupil’s social and emotional development:

‘I think when the (LFARA) came along we’d just had quite a very successful Ofsted. So, we didn’t have the threat of Ofsted breathing down our necks, which gave us a bit of a chance to take some risks...if I’d have had Ofsted looming, I don’t think I’d have been so prepared to take on those risks’

(SA:P1)

The notion of investing in long-term or pastoral aims as ‘risky’, in comparison to focusing on evidencing short term outcomes, was reflected across all schools. A conflict was identified by participants between shared staff values (related to holistic development and ‘making a difference’) and the perceived external pressure to focus exclusively on proxy ‘outcomes’. Staff of every role type (at least one in each school) raised concerns about the long-term impact of this conflict for pupils and staff:

‘I mean, the biggest thing in our school is that our children’s emotional wellbeing isn’t as good as what it should be...There isn’t as much of a priority on there as there is on maths and English. They take precedence in every school, because that’s the data you submit at the end of the year’

(SD:P2)

‘I think that you have to accept that where emotional wellbeing is concerned, school still is a business...ultimately the school has to evidence that what we’re doing provides a good education for the children. If we’re not getting the levels, we don’t have that evidence’

(SB: P3)

‘We are measured by what the progress of the children is their attainment in Year 6. It sort of feels like you’re on a treadmill, you just keep going and going to get them to

this point...in our school, in the area that we're in, we really appreciate the importance of focusing on wellbeing. But we are torn between the two'
(SD:P2)

This conflict seems to have impacted senior leaders most significantly, as identified by this facilitator:

'Senior leaders felt pressure to prioritise the areas identified as actions that emerged from the Ofsted inspection around achievement and academic progress. These seemed initially in conflict with staff values of holistic development and preparation for life beyond school'
(SC:F)

In all schools, at least one member of staff suggested that academic attainment and pupil wellbeing were complimentary rather than competing aims, reflecting the holistic conceptualisation of resilience underpinning the ARA:

'Yes, our ultimate focus is achievement and outcomes, but our big focus is on developing their resilience and develop social and emotional skills...before they can engage academically. It's hard to weigh that. It's hard to put a measurement on that, but that's our bread and butter, and if we can't do that, the outcomes don't come'
(SC:P1)

The existing frustration in relation to narrow performance indicators and desire to unify academic and pastoral aims potentially created the foundations upon which the LFARA could reinforce or establish a holistic approach to building resilience.

5.4.5 Structured Support for Staff. In two schools (both primary), at least one member of staff referred positively to structured support services for staff. Continuing professional development (CPD) and counselling were both given as examples of structured support for staff that was perceived to buffer against workplace stress:

‘We’re very committed to CPD. Staff access a wide range of CPD, which is clearly linked to our target areas in school, but also to their individual areas for performance management. Staff are supported to develop through those goals’

(SA:P1)

‘With Place2Be it’s a counselling space for the pupils, ...but she would see a member of staff about anything at all, not necessarily an issue with a child’

(SD:P1)

Whilst participants highly valued staff training and counselling support, there were few examples provided (three in total) of regular opportunities to take up support in this way. In secondary schools, no examples were provided, although one school leader acknowledged that structured support might benefit staff:

‘People do get stressed, anxious and worried...you don’t want them to take it home with them. That’s something I would love for us to have in school – a form of counselling/therapy in school for staff, so that they have trained people they can talk to about how they feel’

(SC:P1)

Aforementioned aspects of budget and service reduction may have reduced school capacity to offer such structured support for staff, and the resulting gap between staff needs and support available is likely to have increased the perceived need for WS approaches to building resilience.

5.4.6 Unstructured Support for Staff. At least one member of staff in each of the sub-sample schools (13 staff) defined peer support as the most significant aspect of school climate. All three staff in each primary school, and two staff in each secondary school, made comments linked to this theme. Staff responses (in all role types) suggested that practical and emotional support was seen to contribute to personal wellbeing and collective morale. This was a feature of interviews in both primary and secondary schools:

‘It’s like a little family. We always help each other with stuff and nobody, I think is actually afraid to say how they feel or if you have a question you won’t be afraid to ask’

(SD:P3)

At least one member of staff in each of the sub-sample schools (including all role types) suggested that spontaneous interactions in the workplace, and social connections outside of school contributed to team spirit:

‘I think we’ve got a good team spirit, we motivate each other, we help each other out. A lot of people are really, really close friends...we’ve got a good team spirit and a high level of co-operation and support’

(SC:P3)

‘Staff are incredibly supportive of each other, socialising with each other outside of school as well as in – a great team atmosphere’

(SD:P1)

In addition, four members of staff across three schools suggested that peer support was an important protective factor against workplace adversity, which included staff of all role types:

‘A big strength is that staff are very good at peer support, they are very good at looking after each other...people recognise when each other are perhaps a bit stressed and feeling a bit, a bit delicate in relation to what’s going on through the day’

(SC:P1)

‘If staff are feeling the pressure and feeling the strain... There’s always somebody there who is prepared to listen, support and back you up. We are quite a close-knit team’

(SC:P2)

These findings indicate that staff perceived peer support to foster their own wellbeing, which is also perceived as a foundation for improving pupil outcomes. This is strongly correlated with the intended reciprocity of the ARA process (Hart & Williams, under review)

in which protective factors for one group of stakeholders can also have a positive impact for others. However, there appeared to be an optimum balance between protective and risk factors related to staff support. Unstructured opportunities to develop trust, collaborate and communicate with colleagues *could* offer some buffer against adversity, as long as the adversity was not so extreme that these opportunities were lost. Examples were given by teaching and support staff of organisational restructuring that had reduced opportunities for informal peer support:

‘The challenges are that the school has changed since September...the shorter day means the staff have less time to meet with other staff and have less social break-out times and things to support your colleagues - because time is of the essence’
(SC:P2)

5.5 Communication and Feedback

5.5.1 Communication between Leaders and other Staff. There was some variation in staff accounts of leaders’ communication with other staff prior to the LFARA. In two schools, no issues were reported in relation to leadership and at least one member of staff perceived communication with the leadership team as a strength of school climate due to approachability and open information sharing:

‘The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are always available to talk to...there’s always a feed of information, there’s never a time where you feel a bit lost wondering what you should be doing, or what part of your job role you need to be improving on’
(SA:P3)

In contrast, in three schools, difficulties were expressed by at least one member of staff around communication with leaders:

‘SLT didn't always share things, so things came as a surprise... There were lots of complaints about SLT not being available when there was a crisis. Things like that’
(SB: P3)

Facilitation staff asserted that, due to a county-level redundancy process, interactions between non-teaching staff and leaders had become strained. In training sessions in two

schools, the facilitator focused on building trust and communication between leaders and teaching assistants. Making this potential constraint a focus of the LFARA was perceived by multiple staff to increase readiness for change, as discussed in relation to the second research question later in this chapter.

5.5.2 Communication and Feedback with Parents and Carers. Six staff across four schools considered home and community communication to be an important aspect of school climate that supported pupil resilience, and which was therefore a school priority:

‘There’s a lot of parents who are in challenging situations. I think with them, sometimes the resilience word doesn’t exist... It’s just saying, if you build that resilience yourself you are also instilling that resilience in the children... It’s going to benefit everybody’

(SA: P3)

‘I feel having that relationship with parents, if we work together, we can usually overcome any obstacles within school for each pupil’

(SE:P3)

Eleven of fifteen staff (primary and secondary) mentioned the structured and unstructured ways schools already support parents and carers:

‘We’re quite proud of our relationships with parents...if something has happened at home we’re very good at supporting them and we have a counselling service specifically for parents’

(SD:P3)

‘It could be around housing, it could be around unemployment, it can be around to death, it can be around domestic abuse, it can be around drugs and alcohol. The list is endless and we would support in all of those areas’

(SB:P3)

Staff also cited regular sharing of information using a range of different channels to foster a sense of belonging for parents and carers in the school community. These included welcoming caregivers at the school gate, ‘celebration assemblies’, ‘parent-mail’ notifications, newsletters and social media posts. Although less frequently discussed by staff, there was some acknowledgment that communication with parents included feedback from parents about school. One example was given by a non-teacher in a primary school of parent responses on social media helping staff improve understanding of caregiver views. Another member of teaching staff suggested frequent opportunities for ‘parent voice’ were followed up through school actions:

‘Any parent’s evenings, any time they’re invited into the school to see anything. There’s always that opportunity for the parent voice and that’s acted on straight away’
(SE:P2)

Leaders in three schools stated that there was an ongoing intention to increase home and community links:

‘When I first took over as Headteacher, it was very fragmented. Parents weren’t allowed into school... Over the last five years it’s something that we’ve worked incredibly hard to develop’
(SA:P1)

These findings demonstrate that in most schools, although existing support for parents and carers was already high, staff identified meaningful participation of parents and carers in school life to be a target for development. In this way, the LFARA, as a WS approach, could possibly be viewed as offering schools the opportunity to extend home school links.

Home and community engagement was perceived to support parents and benefit pupils by staff of every role type in all school types. However, three participants (in two schools) also linked this aspect of their role to increased workload and lack of time. One school leader articulated the conflict between a sense of accomplishment and the strain of the scale of the challenge:

‘If a family comes into school, which happens on a regular basis, and they haven’t got any money or they are going to be made homeless or there is a child protection issue, that’s invariably me that deals with that...there’s just no more hours in the day...(but when) you see a family fleeing some horrendous domestic violence and managing to start their own business, you’re like: ‘Oh, look at that!’...look at what’s been achieved for those families’

(SD:P1)

Existing links with parents, carers and the community could potentially have enabled the LFARA through providing a foundation for a WS approach. However, concerns were raised by staff about their capacity to extend this support, highlighting the importance of a focus on staff as well as pupil and parent resilience.

5.5.3 Communication and Feedback with Pupils. One member of staff in two schools (both teaching staff and both primary schools) identified communication with pupils as a strength of existing school climate. Both staff members identified opportunities for pupils to provide feedback, which they perceived was linked to an increased sense of belonging as illustrated by this example:

‘We have a school council, which is fantastic – it gives the children like a sense of responsibility for their own class and ... gives that child voice, which I think every school should have’

(SB:P2)

Two members of staff referred to a pupil survey issued by the LA as one way in which pupil perceptions had been gathered prior to the LFARA. Both staff members perceived this as a helpful tool for staff that increased understanding of pupil experiences:

‘It was fascinating to read some of the comments about their stress levels...that really highlighted the fact that within schools there aren’t enough easy ways to self-refer’

(SE:P1)

Whilst there were some schools in which there were opportunities for pupils to provide feedback, in two schools, staff said that this does not always lead to meaningful action. One member of staff argued that pupil voice accounted for little more than ‘lip service’, indicating that the LFARA could potentially improve this feedback process.

Existing communication between staff and pupils was therefore either perceived by staff to enable a WS approach, or as further justification for adopting a WS approach that aimed to increase pupil feedback.

5.6 School Readiness

Staff responses to interview questions have been considered in relation to aspects of the existing system and the LFARA that enabled or constrained implementation. Congruent with survey findings from the Time 1 baseline SPSC survey, staff identified a high degree of connection to their professional roles, their colleagues and their sense of shared purpose. Core professional values expressed by participants were similar across all role types and for both primary and secondary schools. Staff values and school ethos were considered to be congruent with the underlying conceptualisation of resilience of the ARA, and therefore, the aims of the LFARA.

Staff desire to ‘make a difference’ was seen to act as a buffer to role adversity, aided by other protective factors including peer support. Staff and facilitators expressed concern that high levels of adversity at multiple system levels could threaten to undermine existing protective factors, having a negative impact for aspects of school climate (for example, leadership and communication). The LFARA was perceived by most staff as an opportunity to reinforce existing strengths and address these potential constraints, in order to improve school climate for both staff and pupils.

Contextual factors that therefore constituted school readiness for the LFARA included values that were congruent with the LFARA, a lack of competing priorities, supportive leadership, and the capacity of the LFARA to address challenges within the existing system (especially workload adversity for all staff, a lack of participative decision-making opportunities for all staff, and tensions between pastoral and academic aims for leaders). These contextual factors can be seen to interact across the system, both affecting school readiness for the LFARA and directing its focus.

Chapter 6: Findings Part Two: Perceptions of the Locally Facilitated Academic Resilience Approach and Changes to the School System

In this chapter, a diverse range of changes that staff perceived to have emerged from the LFARA process are described, both at school and county level. Examples from the rich data set are included in the discussion that illustrate these changes in multiple school-specific contexts. A summary of rationale for sub-sample school selection is provided in both **Chapters 4 and 5**. **Chapter 5** outlined staff perspectives from these multiple school settings about the existing school system. This chapter moves on to look at perceptions of the process of the LFARA, and the extent of perceived change as a result of the LFARA. Specifically, attention is turned to the impact of the LFARA on leadership in the second half of the chapter.

6.1 Staff Perception of the Locally Facilitated Academic Resilience Approach and its Enabling and Constraining Factors

The adaptability of the LFARA, facilitator support, strengths-based approach and informative training sessions were cited by staff as enabling aspects of the LFARA. In establishing school aims for the LFARA, four staff (teachers and leaders in both primary and secondary schools) suggested that collaboration between the facilitator and the whole staff contributed to establishing meaningful aims:

‘The whole staff have been discussing (with our facilitator) where they think the areas are that we need to develop, because it is important to get the opinions from every single person...So I think that’s what’s been good about this resilience training’
(SB:P2)

The strengths-based nature of the ARA audit was perceived by staff of every role type and in every school type to increase their motivation and commitment to the project:

‘It was about aspects of what we already did. To look at areas of strength. [pause] it was really helpful ...we scored really highly in ‘connectedness’ for each other and it

feels like that in our school, that we all look out for each other. I was really proud of that because sometimes you can be a bit blind to how your own school is'

(SD:P1)

This was an especially important aspect of the facilitated process, since staff asserted that services or support had been 'reignited' as this quote from one school leader demonstrates:

'We already have a lot of tools and a lot of expertise in looking at resilience. We're quite lucky that we do have a full-time counselling service in school, a play therapy service and a school counsellor, who is more than happy to speak to staff as well as pupils. Sometimes that can often be forgotten...we can re-use them as well'

(SB:P1)

Seven staff from both primary and secondary schools identified a changing focus of the LFARA throughout the process. Whilst staff initially expected the LFARA to focus solely on pupil resilience, the focus shifted to (at least) equally consider staff resilience in four schools. This change in focus may have been prompted by additional adversity faced by staff during the implementation. Participants suggested that in this way, the LFARA was not only adaptable to existing needs, but to changing needs as the project progressed:

'Obviously, we thought it would be fully focussed on the pupils, and the staff would just be kind of the tools to implement that. We had to be very reflective over it and willing to let it go in the direction that it led us, rather than the direction that we led it... we could see a huge benefit for the emotional wellbeing of our whole school team, although we were expecting it just as something purely for the pupils'

(SB:P1)

Whilst the adaptability of the LFARA was seen as enabling factor by staff in four schools, in School E, a lack of structure was perceived as a constraining factor, perhaps due to the larger school size and increased accountability measures staff were used to:

'It was very much: "What do you want?"...one of the things I wanted from them was their expertise, to support me in deciding where we needed to move the school forwards...Every time I sign up to one of these things I want somebody to do it all for

me! Then, get some counselling for our pupils from it. You know, on a one to one basis without having to pay for it'

(SE:P1)

'I would have liked there to be more structure... "This is what we're doing this term. Step two, this is what we're doing next term". I would like to have seen:

"Demonstrate how you've done that, evidence it."

(SE:P1)

With the exception of one school, staff in every sub-sample school identified the approach taken by facilitation staff as an enabling factor of the approach. Staff suggested that successful facilitation involved external expertise on the one hand, and positioning school practitioners as experts on the other:

'So, yes, we were given a little bit of guidance, but we were also given a bit of free rein if that makes sense? To try and discover for ourselves and try to implement it in our children. Because obviously, we are quite experienced'

(SC:P3)

'It was much more of a coaching approach...the person who was assigned to our school knew our school very well... so she knew what our values were'

(SA:P1)

County staff echoed the importance of the role of the facilitator as both an 'insider' and 'outsider', due to increased credibility and uniquely non-punitive role in supporting school improvement. This was both seen to support schools to maximise the impact of the LFARA process and to help county staff adapt the LFARA process in response to feedback:

'We called ourselves 'Facilitators' for a reason, didn't we? We're not going in as experts with the answers to everything. We're going in to...help them to reflect on their needs and their provision and how they can develop that'

(SG:P5)

‘Because you’ve got that credibility and you’ve got that honest relationship where the schools were able to feedback and say: ‘This isn’t working. We’re not keen on *this*, but this is why.’ You’ve had that honest brokerage and responsive nature to go: ‘Let’s listen to that and let’s adapt it.’

(SG:P4)

The LFARA training, delivered by facilitators, was also perceived to increase understanding of resilience. Staff gave examples of moving from notions of resilience as an internal characteristic to the socio-ecological conceptualisation that forms the basis of the ARA (Hart et al., 2016):

‘We had support from (our facilitator) to sort of develop our wider-thinking around resilience. Some people think of resilience in quite a narrow sense in that it’s just children’s ability to have a go, but actually it’s much wider than that... it’s the resilience of your whole school community... Resilience is the organisation and things as well. So, it became about developing resilience across everybody’

(SA:P1)

Staff in two schools (both primary) highlighted existing experience of working with the facilitating staff to have established trust and respect that increased staff ‘buy-in’ of the LFARA:

‘I’ve met her through a couple of things and yeah. I like her. So, that does help when you kind of respect the person who has come through the door to talk to you about things’

(SD:P1)

‘I’ve worked with the (facilitation) team in lots of different capacities...we’ve seen the impact that some of the strategies and schemes that we put in place, so when the Resilience Project was mentioned to myself it seemed like a really natural next step’

(SB:P1)

In schools where the facilitator had no prior experience, staff tended to perceive the capacity of the practitioner to provide an objective mirror to school practice to be an equally enabling factor:

‘It made it feel quite non-judgemental from the staff’s point of view... it has really helped to move the project forward, somebody who didn’t know our school at all. We wouldn’t have been able to do it without the facilitators...It wouldn’t have had the same impact at all’

(SB:P1)

Consistent staffing was perceived to enable the LFARA, both in terms of school leads and facilitators. This was an issue identified by both secondary schools. In School E, the school leader felt that momentum stalled due to long term absence, but was re-established when a new facilitator was appointed:

‘It took a while for somebody to come in and replace them...so we stalled slightly ...not having the staffing available to support moving it forward to the next stage’

(SE:P1)

In School C, teaching staff suggested momentum was lost when the school lead left the post, although after this interview, the school re-engaged in the LFARA, and the participant who provided the following quote was appointed the new school lead:

‘There was nobody leading it. I think that’s probably the crux of it...I think this thing dropped because the person who was managing it is no longer here’

(SC:P2)

In three schools (all primary), the training and audit process was not disrupted by staffing issues, which may have contributed to the positive perceptions of the audit process. Audit tools were adapted from original ARA resources¹¹ by LA staff for the LFARA. The LFARA process involved a whole-staff meeting to audit school practice, considering current strengths and challenges in terms of building resilience for the school community. All staff

¹¹ <https://www.boingboing.org.uk/audit-whole-school-academic-resilience/>

and all pupils were invited to complete a survey about their perceptions of school climate. Lastly, additional pupil views about their experiences of school were gathered through a focus group meeting, chaired by LA staff. In these schools, the opportunity provided by the LFARA for anonymous and open feedback from multiple groups was highlighted as a strength by every member of staff. Participants of each role type noted that this was unique in comparison to other, previous attempts to gather feedback:

‘We did a peer review before - it wasn’t anonymous...with this it was anonymous, they could say what they really felt, which I think probably made them feel heard’
(SD:P1)

‘At the first twilight session, the Head was present. People talked about all our positives and everything seemed hunky-dory... By the time the focus group came, people had realised that they could be honest, and they wouldn’t be judged for it’
(SB:P1)

‘I’ve never been involved in a project like this... just to be honest and work together, and just say ‘right we might not be amazing at this but how can we work together to improve it further’ - I think it was very beneficial’
(SB:P2)

Participants in each of the five schools (mostly school leaders) suggested that they had greater clarity about challenges facing their schools as a result of the LFARA audit process:

‘You think you know your school, but you don’t always...I knew the workload was high, but I don’t think I realised it was such a big, big thing to them. So, it has made me think about that far more’
(SD:P1)

‘Communication was a huge thing, that had come up time and time again. We thought as a senior leadership team that we’d addressed that. Actually, in the meetings, when we spoke to the staff...they meant something completely different...So, it was really positive that we managed to break that cycle, from everybody’s point of view’

(SB:P1)

The LFARA process was perceived to increase interaction across role types, especially connecting staff who did not usually communicate day-to-day. Comments were made in relation to this theme by at least one staff in three schools:

‘It was important to get the opinions from every single person, not just the teachers, not just the SLT, but also, you know, cleaning staff, the kitchen staff, people who might not get the chance to speak to each other as much... just letting everyone have a say, that’s what’s been good about this resilience training’

(SB:P2)

The facilitators of two schools (both primary) proposed that the audit process seemed to disentangle internal (school level) and external (county or national level) challenges, through increased interaction. Leaders (in both of these schools) also referred to this dynamic, suggesting that focus shifted to aspects within staff control:

‘It was quite difficult to unpick one from the other at the meetings... some things that were beyond our control and some that were in our control...getting beyond peoples’ bad feelings; how unfairly they feel we’ve been treated by budget cuts in general, to them actually seeing ways that as a school that we could still improve’

(SB:P1)

The audit process was also perceived by staff to increase feedback from pupils. Three staff (in three different primary schools), reflected that the audit tools provided a valuable insight into young people’s experiences:

‘It was important to gather the children’s point of view...it’s not as often now that you can sort of sit down with the children as much as you’d like to because so much comes into the curriculum, there’s so much that you need to cover, there’s not enough time to just sit down and actually get to know the children’

(SB:P2)

Staff in all five sub-sample schools referred positively to audit and action planning resources. However, only two members of staff mentioned using other ARA resources available online, and both examples referred to the Resilience Framework for pastoral support and school planning. Multiple available resources, including interactive frameworks, lesson plans, assembly plans, worksheets and digital media, were not accessed by staff, and many staff were not aware they existed. In facilitator interviews, a perceived lack of suitability of the resources for some schools, facilitator lack of awareness, and a lack of school readiness were cited as barriers to using the resources. In addition, it is possible that the focus on local ownership of the LFARA might have reduced a desire to use existing resources developed beyond the LA. However, these resources, which form the basis of the 'web-based ARA', could have enriched the facilitated process by providing examples of how resilience ideas have already been applied in practice. This may also potentially have saved staff planning time, further extending this ARA on staff wellbeing. In addition, because secondary school staff expressed a desire for ways to measure progress, the tools may have helped schools capture the impact of the LFARA. There is some suggestion (based on informal conversations with staff since the interviews) that online resources have been incorporated in the next phase of the LFARA and are being adapted for the local context.

In summary, in addition to aspects of the existing school system potentially enabling and constraining the LFARA process, staff perceived aspects of the LFARA to influence the extent to which the LFARA was accepted and implemented. **Table 6.1** collates staff perspectives of the existing school system (**Chapter 5**) and of the LFARA (**Chapter 6**) to consider the multiple contextual factors across the system that influenced the adoption and implementation of the LFARA.

Table 6.1. Factors identified by staff that enabled the LFARA.

Individual Staff	School Level	Local Authority
Perceived need for the LFARA – resilience of pupils, staff and parents	School prioritisation of the LFARA – e.g. through School Development Planning	Identified need at county level for a sustainable approach to integrating services
Leaders feel the climate is right to ‘take risks’	Lack of excessive change already occurring in system	
Need to feel valued, and adapt the LFARA to be relevant for school context	Facilitators knew schools well including existing values	Strengths-based approach, existing knowledge of schools, adaptable approach
Desire/need to focus on staff wellbeing	Existing staff support and desire to increase support	
Perception that leadership is supportive Identifying opportunities for increased distribution of leadership	Supportive leadership	
	LFARA seen as compatible with other approaches	LFARA seen as compatible with other approaches
Staff commitment to shared values of ‘making a difference’	School ethos is based on holistic development/congruent with ARA conceptualisation of resilience	LFARA developed to make local meaning of the ARA aims
	Desire to take a whole staff approach – increasing connections between role types	Facilitation style to support whole staff reflection and collaboration Increases communication between role types
Aim to increase understanding of school climate	Timely completion of audit resources to benefit from feedback	Increase feedback from multiple stakeholder groups
	Desire to increase communication with parents	Offers strategies to increase parent/carers communication
	Desire to improve links to LA and other service providers as part of an integrated approach	Offering a broad range of specialist services, accessed through the LFARA ‘gateway’

As can be seen in the table, challenges faced by schools, such as adversity for school staff, or perceived need for whole-school approaches to mental health, were perceived to be met by the conceptual basis and form of the LFARA, resulting in a congruence between existing system and intervention.

Having considered aspects of the existing school system and the LFARA that interact to determine school readiness for the WS approach, this chapter now considers the nature of this interaction, including the ways in which staff perceived the school system to have changed as a result of the LFARA process.

Changes that are perceived by staff to have emerged in the school system as a result of the Locally Facilitated Academic Resilience Approach (RQ2)

Staff perceptions of change were gathered through additional questions in the Time 2 survey, interview questions with sub-sample staff, and the pre- and post-survey results comparison which can be found in **Chapter 7**.

6.2 School Values and Staff Morale

The stated aim of the ARA is to build whole-school community resilience (Hart and Williams, under review). Staff values expressed by participants in every school can be seen as congruent with this aim. Therefore, few staff identified a change to school values or vision as a result of the LFARA. However, at least two staff in each school reported increased cohesion of values or clarity of purpose:

‘I think staff are now clearer on what the vision for the school is. I think they were a bit bewildered before’

(SB:P3)

‘Our vision has become clearer ... Through the (LFARA) process we realised that staff had kind of forgotten, or our vision needed clarifying. So, we’ve had staff training and meetings looking at those things... making sure that everyone had the same vision, not just the teachers –admin staff and the children too’

(SB:P1)

An increase in staff morale, happiness or collective wellbeing was also perceived as an outcome of the LFARA by five members of staff in three of five sub-sample schools (all primary). Two staff linked these changes to increased collaboration between staff, and two staff said that increased morale had positively impacted pupils:

‘I think generally the school seems a much happier place, and people are helping each other and sharing resources even more than before’

(SB:P2)

‘Looking at how our staff and our children are interacting with each other, it is so much more positive now. The staff are happier... we’re a happy workforce and happy adults always help with happy children’

(SB:P1)

Four members of staff and two facilitators proposed that improved communication as a result of the LFARA had led to an increase in staff morale. Changes to communication were perceived to have had multiple outcomes and, therefore, this theme is given further attention in the following section.

6.3 Increased Communication and Feedback

In three schools, strategies to increase communication were included in the LFARA action plan. These suggested changes include increasing communication with parents (including ‘stay and play’ sessions), introducing ‘circle time’ to all classes (opportunities for pupils to develop communication around emotional development with peers), ‘Solution Circle’ (to aid collaborative staff problem solving), ‘Big Brother Diary Room’ (an innovative approach to recording pupil feedback), ‘active listening’ training and ‘a Day in the Life’ (a staff role swap day). Methods of increasing information sharing that were part of LFARA action plans included additional staff meetings, the introduction of CPOMS (an online communication system), the introduction of parent newsletters, increased parental ‘stay and play sessions’ and ‘student council’ to facilitate pupil feedback. In two schools, changes to communication involved all of these methods.

6.3.1 Staff Communication. At least one participant in four schools perceived the LFARA to have increased and improved communication between staff. In particular, staff suggested that communication between leaders and other staff had improved, which was significant due to aforementioned tension arising from the redundancy process:

‘I know I keep repeating that it was communication, but I think that that’s the really huge improvement... communication between all staff and also SLT and teaching staff and teaching assistants, I think that’s had a huge impact on everybody and also that then filters down to the children and their education as well’

(SB:P2)

‘We used this (the LFARA) as an excuse to listen, to move our school and staff forwards... It did make me stop and think about how you can get that open and honest communication with people... That was something that we were finding quite difficult but has improved’

(SB:P1)

In two schools, increased spontaneous communication was seen by multiple staff to have resulted from the LFARA:

‘We’ve tried to make efforts to sit together in the staff room at break times and lunchtimes and have a chat... Teaching assistants were expected just to go in with the notes, pick up the plans and work. Whereas, actually you need to have 5-10 minutes just to have that chat and just to catch up. That’s really important’

(SB:P1)

In one school, staff of all three role types suggested that historical issues with communication had been resolved by the LFARA audit process and addressed in the action plan:

‘(In) an audit session looking at how people felt... communication was highlighted as a big issue. That isn't communication between the school and parents, that's communication between staff’

(SB:P3)

‘Actually, it was only when we went through the meetings, when we spoke to the staff, that we had addressed it...and actually, we hadn’t got to that point before then’
(SB:P1)

‘I feel like it’s opened up communication even more than before...not that we didn’t talk before, because we did...but there’s definitely more communication with SLT, teachers and TA’s’
(SB:P2)

One specific strategy to increase communication employed by three schools was to increase structured staff meeting time and include a broader range of staff in these meetings:

‘The briefings on the Tuesday morning allow more communication with SLT, teachers and TA’s, I mean that’s definitely improved communication with dates and things’
(SB:P2)

In three schools, technology was perceived by at least one staff to have increased communication. In one school, staff said that sending group messages and synchronising calendar dates minimised the need for meetings, enabling efficient long-term planning:

‘It works so much better, it’s really clear to see when we are doing things, so things can be put on there in advance for everyone and it’s not so much a last-minute thing’
(SB:P2)

Authors of the ARA propose that schools develop a ‘Pyramid of Need’¹², which refers to a method for ranking pupils according to levels of risk and need in order to identify, support and track pupils (Hart & Williams, under review). Facilitators reported that they had not introduced school staff to the ‘Pyramid of Need’, due to reservations that in some formats, the tool could compromise confidentiality. However, facilitators had emphasised the importance of a consistent and efficient approach to safeguarding and tracking vulnerable pupils and their changing needs. In response, three schools elected to introduce safeguarding

¹² <https://www.boingboing.org.uk/academic-resilience-resources-directory/>

and child protection software for schools (CPOMS) as part of their LFARA action plan. Staff in each of these schools reported that CPOMS improved approaches to identifying pupil needs, tracking progress and co-ordinating support:

‘CPOMS means that we can communicate with any member of staff any concerns ...If there is something that’s happened late on in school and you haven’t had a chance to tell anybody, you can put it on there and they (SLT) get alerted to that. It’s kind of ‘a problem shared’

(SA:P2)

‘CPOMS has been put in place since the resilience training, which is a really fantastic tool to record and log any incidences of any behaviour issues, children who might need extra support - it’s a much better system’

(SB:P2)

In addition to communication within schools, facilitation staff reported an increase in communication with other staff from other schools. Initiated by one of the schools within the sub-sample group (School A), a panel style community of practice between schools had been established in which schools met twice during the school year to share experiences and collaborate to find solutions. In addition, the LFARA ‘celebration event’, organised by the LA, invited staff from all participating schools to share their successes and exchange ideas.

6.3.2 Pupil Communication. Pupil communication was perceived by staff to have improved as an indirect result of other changes made as part of the LFARA. Staff linked new playground equipment, extra-curricular activities, peer ‘buddy’ systems, and increased pupil understanding of resilience to improvements in pupil communication. Two common themes were that at least one member of staff in three schools referred to increased pupil confidence in asking for help, and five staff mentioned more supportive pupil peer interaction:

‘Two years ago, were in a zone where they weren’t confident in themselves at all. But now, they’re buddies and they’re the children who are leading the other children by example. I think that’s all stemmed from the resilience input’

(SA:P3)

‘These were children who struggled to communicate with each other. Now, they’ll become team leaders and make, like rafts, tents and camps’

(SC:P3)

‘I think they’ve embraced that they can challenge themselves a lot more within lessons...they’ve got the resilience to go and ask for help more, and the help is always there’

(SA:P3)

In one school, two participants suggested that improvements to pupil communication stemmed from staff modelling peer support:

‘Probably it does reflect in the children, ‘cos they can see staff are more relaxed and happier, and I think that has a major impact...that added communication really takes a lot of the stress out of the daily job, it definitely had a positive effect on the children as well’

(SB:P2)

Providing pupils with new opportunities and experiences planned as part of the LFARA was perceived by staff to have increased communication between pupils and staff. For example, as part of one school action plan, pupils were taken on an adventure sports trip:

‘It was about taking them out of their comfort zone –exposing them to things that they wouldn’t have done previously. I cannot underestimate the improvements that our children are benefitting from it. I honestly think it’s massive...the kids talk about their experiences to staff who weren’t involved in the trip...so everyone buys in’

(SC:P3)

Hart and Williams (under review) suggest that gathering and triangulating feedback from multiple stakeholders in the school community is a ‘key step’ in adopting the approach. In three schools, at least one member of staff referred to increased opportunities for pupils to participate in planning or provide feedback, developed as part of their LFARA action plan:

‘The pupil council is fantastic because it really gives the children a sense of responsibility for their own class ...which I think every school should have’

(SB:P2)

‘We’ve always had student voice – it wasn’t done thoroughly or given enough attention – it used to be lip service – now it is listened to and acted on immediately’

(SB:V)

‘Circle time’ had been introduced in two schools as part of their LFARA action plan. The strategy established structured time for group pupil discussions at the start of lessons, facilitated by staff. In one school, circle time was used to generate and gather pupil perspectives of how aspects of school could be improved. In the other, circle time was used to increase pupil understanding of the concept of resilience, including discussion of practical strategies to promote resilience. Both functions can be seen as highly congruent with key recommendations made by the authors of the ARA.

6.3.3 Communication with Parents and Carers. Three schools within the sub-sample included improving communication with parents as part of their LFARA action plan. In each of these schools, at least one member of staff referred to an increase or improvement in communication with caregivers. In schools in which staff identified a need to improve communication with caregivers, the LFARA was perceived to have contributed to ongoing efforts to change this culture. For example, staff of all three role types demonstrate this process in one school:

‘It was very much a ‘them (parents) and us (staff)’ culture, where they sent their children through the door and that was it. There was very little communication... it’s something that we’ve worked incredibly hard to develop, and we have very much an open-door policy now’

(SA:P1)

‘I think that it’s something that we’ll continue to do and do more of. It has been successful ...getting the parents involved and ...we want to do it more across the whole school’

(SA:P2)

In two schools, staff said that parents and carers had increased knowledge of what was happening in school as a result of changes made, which they perceived would support pupil learning:

‘Now we have every half term... we have an event that the parents and carers can come to... also we’ve started doing a newsletter every half term letting the parents know exactly what the children are going to be learning’

(SB:P2)

Staff in two schools said that the LFARA had led to staff being more aware of spontaneous opportunities to engage parents and carers, for example at school drop-off:

‘We have very much an open-door policy now. One of the staff members on the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) stands on the door and personally greets everybody (parents and pupils) as they come through the door’

(SA:P1)

Training received as part of the LFARA was perceived by staff in School A to improve understanding of how multiple protective factors could emerge from relatively small changes to current practice. Staff said that existing newsletters and ‘stay and play’ sessions were tailored to existing needs in order to increase caregiver engagement:

‘Through the resilience project, it was really something we really began to unpick. Now we report to parents in quite a simple visual format, because we recognise that within our community there are some parents who struggle to read...That’s been really successful and encourages parents to come in and talk about their children’

(SA:P1)

In addition, staff reported that pupil and caregiver resilience was promoted simultaneously through co-ordinated strategies. For example, in ‘stay and play’ sessions, breakfasts were provided, parents increased knowledge of how to support pupil reading, and pupils benefited from improved home-school relationships:

‘We also have Stay and Play now (where we invite parents in to come and work with us) in all key stages... to kind of strengthen the relationships between school and the community. The parents feel like they can help the children out a little bit more and we supply breakfasts when we invite children to come in and work with parents’
(SA:P1)

6.4 Changes to School Environment

Across all schools, at least one member of staff gave examples of changes to the school environment introduced by the LFARA action plan. One frequently cited change in environment was the use of visual displays to promote resilience across the school. In two schools, displays were adapted from the pictorial or word-based resilience frameworks developed for the ARA¹³. In two schools, a resilience display was created that involved ‘buckets’, which were filled up when pupils demonstrated internalised resilience, for example when coping with a challenge or supporting others:

‘I know that we’ve got these buckets that they fill with these ‘gemstones of power’ ...the children respond quite well to that. They like the idea of personal power and getting a reward for making their own decision’
(SB:P3)

Visual displays were perceived by staff to aid pupils’ self-expression, and to facilitate social emotional learning:

‘In terms of the physical environment...all classrooms have displays linked to the zones of regulation... We had a little boy the other day who was really, really angry.

¹³ <https://www.boingboing.org.uk/academic-resilience-resources-directory/>

He's done something to another child and he went over to the zones of regulation and he was able to find the 'guilty' one and say: 'That's how I feel.'

(SA:P1)

In two schools, staff referred to the benefit for pupils of occupational therapy (OT) provision introduced or extended as part of the LFARA. In one school, specialist OT equipment was introduced for pupils with additional needs, and in another, existing equipment was made available to all pupils rather than a targeted minority. Staff reflected that this was prompted by LFARA training that drew on existing research to highlight the benefit for all pupils of universal approaches to promoting resilience:

'We buy in to an OT and sensory support provision now, called Future Steps, which is very much about developing our children in terms of their physical development and also their sensory development'

(SA:P1)

'The OT has introduced space hoppers, a safe space with sensory lighting...they were initially only used for the enhance mainstream provision, but that support has been extended universally, it has encouraged integration, benefiting everybody'

(SB:V)

In one school, leaders said that as part of the LFARA, a sensory themed reflective space was available if pupils wanted 'time out', reflecting a focus of the ARA on ensuring pupils have access to 'safe spaces' (Hart & Williams, under review). Other schools focused on creating more structure at break-times to increase opportunities for peer interaction, social learning and ensure pupils felt safe. In two schools, pupils were given a structured timetable of activities to choose from, and a 'safe space' was created for vulnerable pupils:

'Play times are better. We have a lot more equipment on the yard now. Little bits of equipment - we've got balls and stuff and we've got big equipment- go-karts and all sorts of bits and pieces'

(SB:P3)

‘If he’s feeling like he doesn’t want to make the wrong choice or he’s feeling scared or something’s bothering him he can go to the bench at the front of the school and he knows that’s a safe space to go to. He can go there and sit down, and someone will come and talk to him’

(SD:P2)

In two schools, staff reported that Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) provision had been established in their playgrounds as part of their LFARA action plan. OPAL is an evidence-based initiative to improve outdoor play and learning in primary schools in the UK. Staff perceived the OPAL provision to provide resilience promoting activities, as well as to involve pupils in school planning, thus increasing their sense of belonging, which is a core aspect of the ARA (Hart & Williams, under review). In both schools, pupils were involved in the design development of the outdoor space, including clearing a field for an orchard, building a fitness ‘trim trail’ and creating a quiet space for reflection during break times. In one school, parents were also invited to be involved in the development of the play area by volunteering resources or time to help build equipment:

‘We’ve had positive improvements in the playground because of children’s input with certain equipment...there’s been a lot of things that have been changed around school that the children have sort of, put into place themselves, which is really great’

(SB:P2)

‘We have OPAL provision in the school now, which means instead of having lovely, pristine playgrounds, our playground looks like a junkyard! The children absolutely love it! We have Forest Skills as well, so we have firepits up in our woods which I think initially absolutely terrified people. But now, it’s just a part of what we do’

(SA:P1)

In one school, staff report that all-in-one weather gear was provided for all pupils to encourage outdoor play. An example was given by staff in this school of increased physical and creative play in relation to pupils working together to build a mud slide at break time. During a visit to School B, staff said that removing a fence that separated pupils in Early Years from older pupils had been a seemingly small change that helped achieve the LFARA aims. Staff said that removing the fence had provided all pupils access to the climbing

equipment, increased social learning and resulted in younger pupils developing confidence through opportunities for risk taking, supported by their peers.

6.5 Formalising Action Plans in School Development Planning

Staff in three schools suggested that including the LFARA action plan in their formal school development plan (SDP) helped to create shared ownership, and integrate the LFARA with existing priorities. Where this approach was taken, staff reported distributed responsibility for implementing the LFARA action plan, which was perceived to increase sustainability:

‘We made it a part of our School Improvement Plan...I think if it’s something that you do as an add-on it’s not going to have any impact...It was a priority for us, because then, everybody in the whole school community was accountable for it, not just the SLT... it permeates through everything’

(SA:P1)

In contrast, in schools where the LFARA was not explicitly mentioned in the SDP, competing pressures and priorities were perceived to significantly reduce momentum:

‘I don’t think it’s ever taken off...I don’t think anything was ever put in place to actually introduce the students or introduce the staff. It was competing with just general day to day working within a very busy school I suppose...’

(SC:P2).

6.6 Policy and Strategy Change for Staff

At least one participant in three schools perceived policy or strategy changes made as part of the LFARA to have had a positive impact for staff. These changes were all in relation to increased training or support, including performance management, CPD, workload and staff wellbeing.

Two members of staff (in School E) suggested that the LFARA had triggered a change in performance management, due to a greater emphasis in the facilitated training sessions on dialogue and coaching between staff:

‘Performance management is very much a communications process versus a directive process these days, um, which I think is difficult in the environment of performance-related pay but ... that does make a difference’

(SE:P2)

In one school, a wellbeing policy was created in response to staff audit feedback regarding high workload and low staff morale. All three members of staff in this specific school referred to this policy in their interview as a significant change triggered by the LFARA:

‘We put in place a School Wellbeing Policy. It sits across the top of all of our local authority policies, but sets out quite clearly the SLT’s responsibilities to staff, their responsibility to themselves and the governors’ responsibility to staff’

(SA:P1)

‘In lots of schools, staff plan on the weekend for the week ahead. There’s no point, we don’t do that anymore, because you’ll plan a week and then on a Monday you’ll cross out the rest of it because things have gone in a very different direction. So, we very much looked at as well-how staff manage time’

(SA:P1)

The school leader in this school mentioned increased training for staff that was identified as a need on the LFARA action plan. The training provided was linked to improving staff confidence and competence to manage pupil behaviour, which the school leader felt would positively influence staff wellbeing:

‘When it comes to teaching strategies we’ve kind of retrained teachers on their PSHE. So, we’ve given them circle time training...and staff have been refreshed on things like de-escalation training and behaviour management training’

(SB:P1)

One member of staff in this school suggested that although some improvements occurred, other ideas in the action plan had not yet been fully realised (partly due to competing priorities). The member of staff suggested that changes initiated by the LFARA could take longer to embed. This assertion may be supported by the re-audit for this school, discussed later in this chapter under the heading ‘future impact’:

‘I think if I’m being critical, it hasn’t been given enough time to embed...In the midst of all we’ve had redundancies here and a lot of our staff have felt very negative. That impacts very negatively on the emotional wellbeing of all staff... we’ve put some things in place...but others haven’t happened. We have other stresses involved in school, which all schools do around standards and around education. You can’t help that’

(SB:P3)

6.7 Policy and Strategy Change for Pupils

Proposed changes to policy and strategy that were intended to promote pupil resilience were included in the action plans of four schools. These intended actions included introducing a pupil ‘buddy’ system, ‘circle time’ to develop social and emotional skills ‘nurture provision’, OP provision for pupils with sensory needs, extending EY policy, ‘Attachment Aware’ training and training pupils in mental health (YAMH). Changes that involved externally provided training are discussed under the next heading, ‘Enlisting external services’. Examples are provided in this section of change initiated by school staff.

In two schools, staff emphasised the ‘refreshing’ and ‘revitalising’ existing staff practice that could promote pupil resilience. In both schools, leaders said that senior staff offered training for newer staff on establishing a positive school climate:

‘We’ve got a lot of therapeutic things that were already in place, but as I said, they’d fallen by the wayside...so staff have been refreshed on things like that, refreshed on de-escalation training and behaviour management training’

(SB:P1)

Efforts to create consistency in approaches to behaviour and establish a supportive school climate can be seen to relate to multiple aspects of resilience promotion, as summarised in the ‘Resilience Framework’ (Hart et al., 2012). For example, effective approaches to behaviour could support ‘basics’ (‘being safe’), ‘belonging’ (‘responsibilities and obligations’, ‘somewhere to belong’) and ‘coping’ (‘understanding boundaries’, ‘calming down’), as well as to facilitate learning.

In three schools, at least one participant gave an example of adapting curricula content, teaching strategy or marking approach to focus on internalising resilience. The common themes of celebrating achievements and developing positive attitudes to challenge can be seen to reflect aspects of the ‘learning’ and ‘coping’ aspects of the Resilience Framework (Hart et al., 2012):

‘It (the LFARA) definitely made us more aware of giving the children more responsibility, making them feel more positive and trying to bring in more of a sense of resilience...especially in Maths... (but) the children are really sort of building on that resilience themselves, in all their lessons now, so it’s been really inspiring really.’
(SB:P2)

Two members of staff referred to extra-curricular trips or activities that focused on risk taking and new opportunities to build pupil resilience. In both schools, staff suggested that the LFARA had provided a rationale for extra-curricular trips based on their potential to promote resilience in young people. For example, these experiences could be seen to increase pupil access to exercise and fresh air, play and leisure, new experiences, and to help foster positive relationships. These are all aspects of the Resilience Framework that supports the ARA (Hart et al., 2012):

‘We took 8 pupils on a camping experience over 4 days. Get them away from technology and get them into challenging situations that they haven’t been exposed to before, to build up their resilience that way’
(SC:P3)

‘Once a half-term now they’re out and they’re doing like forest school activities. Just basic things like: ‘If it’s pouring down with rain, get outside anyway!’ You know, you need to run around and go and play -let’s go and see how we can explore that’

(SB:P3)

‘Usually at school we tend not to go to those kinds of activities because of the health and safety issues ...but they’ve just thrived, and become more independent and more resilient... it really has been just fantastic to watch the children grow’

(SB:P2)

6.8 Enlisting External Services as part of the LFARA

In many schools, examples were provided by staff of introducing training or external support as a result of the LFARA. Staff indicated that the LFARA acted as a gateway to other training and support services. These included the YAMH project (Youth Awareness of Mental Health issues) in which pupils are trained in mental health issues, OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning), in which staff, parents and pupils are supported to redesign outdoor play areas and Attachment Aware training provided by Adoption UK. In addition, LA staff in the facilitation team offered existing staff training packages to support LFARA action plan implementation. For example, LA staff delivered training on setting up ‘nurture groups’ for pupils with additional needs in three schools.

Staff in three schools noted an improvement in approaches to behaviour management, with the common theme being an increased awareness of the drivers of disruptive behaviour. Two schools paid for training from LA educational psychologists. Training in both schools aimed to increase staff understanding of emotional wellbeing and regulation and included developing strategies for managing behaviour based on social learning theory and cognitive behaviour therapy. Staff in School A identified the contribution that the training had towards the aims outlined in the LFARA action plan to improve staff wellbeing and pupil behaviour:

‘Behaviour Policy has been one of the biggest changes that we’ve made. We look at the emotions that guide the behaviour rather than looking at the behaviour itself... We try and defuse situations now as much as possible, rather than allowing things to get to crisis point ... that’s not productive for anybody’

(SA:P1)

One school’s LFARA action plan highlighted the behaviour policy as an area for development, and staff accessed ‘Attachment Aware’ training from Adoption UK. Leaders

reported that staff had improved understanding of behaviour as communication, and were therefore able to apply a preventative approach to behaviour management:

‘The Behaviour policy was kind of changed a little bit too. Since the resilience project, we had training from Adoption UK, which talks about the emotions driving behaviours’

(SB:P2)

Staff in one school had included the introduction of bullying and mental health training for some Year 10 pupils as part of their action plan. Two members of staff referred to the positive impact of this adaptation to emotional and mental health policy:

‘Well we have trained student ambassadors who are there to offer support for younger pupils. Now, one of the things that we now do is make them more visible...making other pupils within the school know...they’re the people to go to, they can support and can offer you advice’

(SE:P1)

Specialised SEN provision for pre-school age children was introduced in two schools. Both cited an intention to improve preventative approaches to identifying, tracking and supporting pupils with additional needs, which is a fundamental aspect of the ARA (Hart and Williams, under review). Staff suggested that LA training in both schools supported a whole-school approach to meet this aim by increasing staff understanding and developing strategies to support pupils. In these schools, staff reported that as a result of the LA SEND and inclusion training, a ‘nurture group’ had been established for pupils with special educational needs:

‘It’s building their resilience, because they’re learning everyday skills within that group. So, that’s one area that I think has developed over the period of time since we were introduced to it (LFARA)’

(SA:P3)

In one school existing continuous provision in Early Years was extended across Key Stage One, which staff say reflected increased staff understanding from LA training about the opportunities this can provide to promote early resilience:

‘I think with some of our SEN pupils, they were very reliant on adult support. So, we’ve looked at that and we’ve restructured our SEN so that we now offer nursery provision ...and one of the things that we’re developing is continuous provision across Year 1 and Year 2, because we just feel that it will develop and support our children’s resilience as well as their language and their academic progress’
(SA:P1)

Because training that staff received included concepts other than resilience, there was a potential that they would either conflict or compliment the conceptual basis of the ARA. For example, the ‘Attachment Aware’ training that multiple schools recruited, can be seen to be conceptually linked to the ARA, although staff did not discuss whether potential tensions between different concepts had been explored. For example, the authors of the ARA have proposed the concept of ‘belonging’, as opposed to attachment, in order to place emphasis on the ongoing human need (beyond infancy) to draw on a range of trusting and supportive relationships to promote resilience (Hart et al., 2012). The authors of the ARA have also criticised approaches to resilience building used in isolation, as opposed to as part of whole-school approach (Hart and Heaver, 2013). Whilst staff reported the contribution of external training to their LFARA action plan, the congruence of this provision to the ARA may have been underexplored.

No information was provided about how facilitators supported schools to identify and integrate different training with the LFARA. Since much of the external support that schools accessed was offered by LA staff, LA objectives to increase school uptake of their existing training may have increased facilitator promotion of their own training offers. However, staff interviews suggested that the LFARA had increased links between school and LA, which could potentially have mutual benefit for schools and the LA by increasing sustainability. This was especially pertinent in the light of increasing privatisation of Educational Psychology services nationally. There was some indication, particularly from school leaders that being involved in the LFARA had helped schools to justify access to training and support, by perceiving their relevance and contribution to a holistic approach:

‘Other projects that we’ve been asked to become involved in certainly fit with the Resilience Project and therefore, that has given greater justification to saying: ‘Yes. We’ll definitely do that, such as the Youth Awareness of Mental Health training’
(SE:P1)

The sustainability of the LFARA was perceived by staff within the steering group as partly attributed to the ‘bottom up’ approach being driven by school staff and supported by external services. Participants suggested that this constituted a different way of working compared to ‘top down’ educational reform. This was a point expressed by staff both in schools and the LA:

‘I think there is a culture in education that because of the way the curriculum and processes in schools work, we’re waiting for someone to define it for us and then we just implement the plan. I think this asks differently of people. I think schools sometimes feel a bit uncomfortable about that to begin with...They want that expert to come in and to provide that. We’ve been quite careful not to...and actually they’re starting to create opportunities from within’
(SG:P5)

6.9 Future Impact

It is important to note that staff in four schools mentioned that they anticipated future impact of the LFARA. In three schools, structural changes made as part of the LFARA action plan were perceived to have influenced culture and behaviour. Staff perceived that cultural and behavioural change might lead to improved outcomes for staff and pupils (including attainment, attendance and staff turnover) in time.

The LA focus group identified that staff at multiple levels reflected that they had initially expected the LFARA to have much more immediate impact, but felt they had underestimated the complexity of the process. Two members of school staff and two county level employees connected the idea of ‘being realistic’ to embracing complexity, including accepting the changing nature of the project and its long-term impact:

‘It got me to think a lot about realistic timescales for doing anything as well...you get an idea in your head and you think that you’ll be there in twelve months. Actually, in reality it very rarely turns out like that, particularly with complex projects like this.

You’ve got to be realistic about that’

(SG:P5)

‘It’s an extremely complex area... something which we worked together to grow, shape and develop, I think that has been one of the real strengths of the project, while there is an appeal to having what appears to be a very simple format, the world isn’t like that’

(SG:P2)

Although the LFARA had been perceived to have short-term impact, staff at both school and county level suggested that, in time, the approach could re-frame or re-define existing practice as part of a more holistic purpose (resilience building):

‘I think in the very early days, very much at the beginning it felt like: ‘This is in addition to my job.’ Which now feels like: ‘This is part of my job.’ I think that shift has been a bit of a journey’

(SG:P3)

In one school, a re-audit (completed after the interviews) suggested that readiness for change may have increased as a result of connecting with other schools during the LFARA process. At a celebration event at which participating schools shared the impact of the LFARA, leaders from this school reflected that the LFARA has supported, rather than detracted from post-Ofsted reform. The school subsequently invited their facilitator back for a further session, at which a full action plan was drafted. As the facilitator stated:

Having had the opportunity to hear from other schools about the impact of the project across a range of outcomes within the school community (at the LFARA celebration event), senior leaders engaged with the project as a process for addressing the issues that emerged from the Ofsted report’

(SC:F)

The process described in this school in terms of increasing ‘readiness’ for change, has also been articulated at county level. In the LA focus group, staff reflected that momentum for change was generated through reflecting on shared values, increasing understanding, and improving communication:

‘At the early stages where we had to stumble around a bit, didn’t we? We were kind of defining roles and responsibilities... We almost got going and then for a variety of reasons didn’t quite get the traction to go forward. But actually, looking back I do feel that those were really important moments...you make connections and you develop new understandings, and you’re clearer then about what you’re trying to do’

(SG:P5)

Facilitators visited two schools for an evaluative review of the action plan, a stage other schools had not yet reached. Both of these re-audits suggest that momentum for the LFARA had increased, rather than decreased over time. It was found that initial changes were being sustained and increasingly embedded. For example, the facilitator noted that circle time was still being used at the start of the day for year 6, but had also been introduced for other year groups each half term. Other ideas that had not been implemented at the time of interviews were reported in the re-audit as later having been put into place. The facilitator was told about a ‘solution circle’ that took place in one of three staff meetings the previous term, a termly SLT ‘staff morale’ meeting, and a staff swap ‘day in my shoes’ planned for next term. One of School B’s initial LFARA aims had been to increase staff morale and decrease teacher turnover. The facilitator noted that no staff had left the school since the LFARA began, and staff perceived an increase in their own resilience.

It was also found that every aspect of the action plan had been at least partially implemented. The facilitator noted that staff wellbeing was a school focus and that staff had already perceived increased morale. Solution circle discussions were introduced to daily staff de-briefs and there was increased approval and recognition of school staff (for example, pupil nominations and a staff ‘thank you’ post box). In addition, staff mentioned increased communication with parents and carers, which they feel has improved home/school relationships. ‘Restorative Justice’ training for young people and staff has also been planned, which is a restorative approach to preventing and managing conflict focusing on preserving positive relationships.

As evidenced by the re-audits of two schools, whilst the LFARA was perceived to result in school level change during the first year of implementation, staff also anticipated that the impact of the approach may increase over time. The focus on ongoing school improvement was discussed by staff in the focus group as at the core of the LA intention for the LFARA:

‘Schools will often talk about things being flash in the pan, won’t they?...What we really want is for this to be seen as an ongoing thing, not as a fad or something that comes and goes. We’ve got to signal its importance, partly through us being prepared to go back and revisit, and be interested and curious about what’s been happening since we were last involved’

(SG:P5)

Multiple staff suggested that a parallel process occurred at county level as the LA team adapted the way they engage with schools and offer their extended services. In addition, one participant suggested that schools moved through stages of the LFARA at different paces, and that necessary support could be identified as part of the process:

‘This aspect of readiness... it has happened at several levels of the system: local authority level, this team and the schools. There are different paces and different journeys...Some schools are already ready due to their strengths... Some schools need further time... Some schools get there quite quickly with a little bit of support’

(SG:P1)

Interview responses suggested that school leader prioritisation, and the extent to which schools employ a distributed leadership model were two particularly important aspects of readiness:

‘I think it’s not incompatible to think of a model where there is a leadership framework, but there is also efficacy and agency from all members of the community. Some schools absolutely get that. Some schools are not quite there, and you start at the point where you can. I think that’s the whole point of the project’

(SG:P2)

In addition to the potential of the LFARA process to increase readiness and have impact at school level over time, LA staff reported increasing momentum county-wide:

‘What I think we’re starting to see now is that snowball. Right now, we’ve got a regular number of schools coming forward. It’s because they’re hearing about how it’s benefitted the schools that have already received it’

(SG:P4)

As more schools completed the first year of the LFARA, staff began to share the impact of the process, either at ‘celebration’ events or more informally. As a result, other schools requested to participate, creating a reinforcing feedback loop.

The extent to which staff perceived the Locally Facilitated Academic Resilience Approach to have resulted in changes to leadership (RQ3)

Across four of the five schools, changes to leadership were perceived to have occurred as a result of the LFARA. Staff noted changes in terms of increased distribution of leadership responsibility, and changes in the way senior staff approached their role as school leaders. At least one member of staff in each of these schools referred to increased participation in leadership including decision making processes:

‘I think leadership is more open since this (LFARA). As I said before, everybody has more of a shared responsibility...You don’t feel like decisions are made solely by: The Headteacher...Because everyone has responsibility’

(SA:P2)

‘The Leadership Team isn’t like most workplaces, where there is the one voice that you listen to. It’s very much dispersed around everybody in the school and I think that’s what that (the LFARA) brought in’

(SA:P3)

In three schools, the process of the LFARA audit and planning sessions were perceived to have increased participative decision making through the collaboration of all staff:

‘I think it (leadership) definitely has changed. This project actually came as a top-down thing, it came from myself and the Headteacher ...but actually... it was important that we weren’t as much a part of that and let our staff take it themselves...I’ve took a bit more of a backward step through our action plan and kind of the natural progression of the project’

(SB:P1)

At least one member of staff in four schools mentioned an increase in opportunities to contribute to planning and decision making for all staff post-LFARA. Their comments suggested that a more distributed leadership model had emerged from the action planning process, which staff gave examples of in every day practice:

‘I think it’s helped the staff realise that we do want to listen and respond to them and we do want it to be a whole-school approach, not a top-down approach.’

(SB:P1)

‘From my perspective, the leadership has definitely changed, I’m more involved in that now than I ever have been...my voice is more important than it was. We were looking at assessments recently, and we were discussing together as a group, rather than those decisions being made by senior leadership and then filtered down...I think the project sort of catalysed that’

(SD:P2)

Staff perceived leaders to be more approachable and supportive post-LFARA implementation. Five members of staff in four schools referred to improved trust, listening and openness of communication between leaders and other staff:

‘I think in all honesty the most important thing that’s come out of it is that it’s probably made me as the Head and SLT, think about ensuring that we support each other...ensuring that the staff feel supported and that they’re valued’

(SC:P1)

‘What we’ve done with the project and what we’ve done last year as well is allowed people to come and speak to us if they have issues or worries, rather than kind of letting it build up... they can speak to any of us...any concerns have been dealt with quickly and also sometimes just a bit more informally’

(SB:P1)

In one of the sub-sample schools, existing aspects of school climate (staffing changes) were perceived by staff to interact with the LFARA process to result in changes to leadership:

‘We lost two senior members of staff...so, they’ve left a bit of a [pause] a space, which Sarah and I have sort of stepped into...there is more of an inclusive way of doing things at the minute. I think that was where we were heading to, but I think this project has been a bit of a catalyst for it’

(SD:P2)

Role type did not seem to influence perceptions of the extent to which leadership had changed throughout and after the LFARA. However, there was some suggestion that increased direct participation in the LFARA increased the likelihood of staff perceiving changes to leadership. This may have been influenced by these staff accessing opportunities within the process itself for increased participative decision making (audit and action planning).

6.10 Leader Priorities

Leader prioritisation of the LFARA was perceived by nine staff of mixed role type to increase the extent to which the action plan was implemented across the WS. In some schools, leader prioritisation was perceived to maximise the opportunities presented by the LFARA for meaningful change:

‘I feel that it’s been very successful. I think that it’s allowed us to explore avenues that we probably wouldn’t even have looked at previously...I think that some of that has to do with how we’ve approached it as a school, as a leadership priority and the opportunities that we’ve taken from it’

(SA:P1)

Conversely, two members of staff from two schools identified a lack of school leader presence in the LFARA training sessions as indicative of a lack of prioritisation. These staff suggested that the presence of school leaders would have improved whole staff perceptions of the relevance and importance of the LFARA:

‘Your head-teacher has to be on board and be part and parcel of those meetings...ours wasn’t... I kind of think it loses its importance then... the head-teacher is the person who is supposed to drive the vision of your school, ultimately. They have the final say...they’ve got to be on board with it’

(SB:P3)

At least one participant in three schools also suggested that alternative leader priorities could detract from whole staff engagement or ‘buy-in’ to the LFARA. For example, staff said that short-term targets set after a recent Ofsted inspection may have reduced the extent to which leaders prioritised the LFARA:

‘It’s whether or not the SLT and Head-teacher are prepared to take the jump...I think for a long time the drive has all been about attainment...what they’re going to come out with and how they’re going to compare to other schools on that league table... I think that for the teaching staff and SLT- that has become the main priority: trying to keep the pupils in the school, trying to engage them and trying to make the lessons interesting... As a result, (the LFARA has) kind of come in and gone ‘woah’ and just veered off’

(SC:P2)

As identified by both county and LA staff, pressure for school leaders to evidence progress through quantifiable outcomes contributed to the extent to which the LFARA was perceived as a priority:

‘I think for busy Head-teachers who got this as a priority, compared to Ofsted and school attainment standards, which are *priorities*. I think there’s always a danger that

if progress is too slow, mercurial or fuzzy that they're going to lose interest quite quickly'

(SG:P5)

'I always find it personally incredibly useful if I have ... an aim of: 'Right OK, we need to have this in place by this particular point to measure its success or not by this point.' That kind of timeline of plan wasn't given to me'

(SE:P1)

Criticism of leader prioritisation was mostly identified by teaching and non-teaching staff. However, leaders in two schools also acknowledged that their increased prioritisation would have further enabled the LFARA:

'Louise is coming to see me to fill out the action plan, because I still haven't done it. Because on my list of things it does go to the bottom. I wish I had less on my plate when we took it on. Then I could have really focused on it more than I did I think'

(SD:P1)

In two schools, leaders perceived that in spite of pressure to focus on short-term targets, an aspect of their role was to preserve school purpose and staff values through a commitment to long-term pupil outcomes:

'We are building a meaningful pathway to adulthood, we are investing in developing and nurturing the whole child as the first step – what we believe is right. It does work and we'll go down with our ship if we have to'

(SB:V)

'I think sometimes as a Headteacher you need to be prepared to think: 'Actually this is what we need to do and is right for us.' You have to be brave enough'

(SA:P1)

All leaders discussed a similar sense of staff values and school purpose in their interviews, which were congruent with the stated aims of the ARA. In addition, LA staff

reflected in their focus group on the high level of leader enthusiasm for the LFARA at the start of project:

‘I think there was a genuine passion and enthusiasm at the outset, to do something worthwhile here. We knew that from the feedback from schools. So, it did feel like it was something that we wanted to do well, not just something to do for the sake of doing’

(SG:P5)

However, contextual events during the LFARA seemed to result in leaders being more or less likely to prioritise the LFARA. For example, a recent positive Ofsted inspection in School A was perceived to increase leader autonomy, in comparison to the reform process initiated in School C, which was perceived to dictate a narrow leadership focus on immediate outcomes.

6.11 Whole Sample Perception of Change

Additional questions were included in the SPSC_{T2} as a result of qualitative data analysis. These questions were intended to explore the issues arising from sub-sample interviews across the whole sample. The additional questions asked staff to indicate if they perceived a change in certain aspects of school climate as a result of the LFARA. These questions were prompted by responses given by sub-sample staff in interviews in order to compare the sub-sample with the total sample. The first five questions asked respondents whether the LFARA had resulted in specific changes to school environment, pedagogical practice, school ethos, leadership, and feedback and communication. Participants were asked to select ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘I don’t know’ as their response. Five follow up questions asked respondents to provide examples, if they had perceived change to have occurred. **Table 6.2** shows the results of these questions for the whole sample, divided by school type.

Table 6.2 Additional SPSC_{T2} questions that asked if staff perceived a change to these aspects of school climate.

	Yes	No	Don't know	Missing Data
Primary Schools	%	%	%	%
School environment	34.1	19.8	38.5	7.7
Pedagogical practice	38.5	15.4	38.5	7.7
School ethos	38.3	20.9	35.2	7.7
Leadership	20.9	30.8	40.7	7.7
Feedback and communication	23.1	29.7	42.9	4.4
Secondary Schools				
School environment	5.4	21.4	58.9	14.3
Pedagogical practice	5.4	25.0	57.1	12.5
School ethos	7.1	23.2	57.1	12.5
Leadership	0.0	25.0	60.7	14.3
Feedback and communication	3.6	25.0	62.5	8.9

Overall, for every additional question, primary school staff perceived more change to have occurred in school climate as a result of the LFARA, supporting both interview findings, and SPSC_{T1} and SPSC_{T2} comparison. Since most secondary staff responded 'do not know' to each question, it is possible that school size may have restricted the extent to which staff were aware of changes, or that these changes might take longer to embed. For example, School C, as discussed in **Chapters 6 and 7**, re-engaged in the LFARA but at the time of survey completion had not yet developed an action plan.

Staff were also asked an open ended follow up question in relation to each of these aspects of school climate in order to provide examples. These responses (drawn from staff who observed changes in each aspect of school climate) were considered in the light of qualitative findings of staff interview data obtained from staff in the five sub-sample schools.

School environment: Staff who observed changes to school environment as a result of the LFARA reported improved understanding of resilience across the whole-school community, mirroring interview findings. Staff suggested that resilience practices have stemmed from a culture shift, and have been embedded in work with parents, pupils and approaches to leadership.

Pedagogical practice: Staff who observed changes in pedagogical practices in relation to the LFARA reported that changes in staff perspectives influenced approaches to teaching. Increased staff reflexivity and improved understanding of resilience as a predictor of academic success were seen to influence chosen pedagogy (reflecting outcomes expressed by staff in interviews). Staff provided examples of encouraging problem solving, perseverance and risk taking in pupil learning.

School ethos: Staff who perceived that the LFARA had an effect on school ethos reported further commitment to an holistic approach. For example, staff noted the importance of understanding children's home lives, the importance of fostering a sense of belonging (such as promoting safe learning environment) and reinforcing a sense of school community. These responses reflected interview findings, particularly from primary schools.

Leadership: Staff observed that the LFARA affected multiple aspects of leadership. For instance, a relationship policy was developed, and head teachers reported increased understanding of staff wellbeing. There was also a higher profile of resilience in leadership meetings and staff suggested that leaders were quicker to support and celebrate achievements. As with staff interviews, increased feedback led to greater awareness of leaders for the need for staff support in primary schools in particular.

Feedback and communication: As in staff interviews, survey findings showed that staff reported improvement in communication, partly due to increased feedback. Strategies were described to reduce the negative impact of emails and social media, whilst staff perceived better information sharing procedures to be in place and a shared language around resilience to aid communication.

6.12 Summary of Perceived Change

Changes that staff report as having emerged from the LFARA process are shown in **Table 6.3.**, based on both quantitative and qualitative data described in this chapter. Changes occurred for individual staff, in school climate, and at Local Authority level. Each level can be understood to have interacted, to either increase or decrease momentum for change. For example, through an increase in communication between staff of different role types, individual leaders improved understanding of school climate, and leadership across school climate was perceived as more supportive.

Table 6.3. Perceived emergent changes due to LFARA intervention.

Individual	School Level	Local Authority
	Increased clarity and cohesion of school values/ethos	
Improved leadership team understanding of problems faced by staff	Increased communication between staff of different role types More supportive leadership	Increased awareness of school needs
Improved understanding of the socio-ecological concept of resilience	Use of resilience concept to frame current practice and pedagogy	Use of resilience concept to frame current practice
	Increased communication with caregivers	
	Increased feedback from pupils	
	Increased distribution of leadership and participative decision making	Increased distribution of leadership and participative decision making
	Environmental change	
Increased pupil awareness of resilience concept and using 'shared language'	Improved pupil behaviour (including internalised resilience and peer support)	
	New staff policy (e.g. staff wellbeing)	
	Changes to curriculum and behaviour policy (pupils)	
	Increased access to and justification for additional training	Increased links with schools
	Increased readiness over time	Long-term approach to change 'Snowball effect' of more schools joining

6.13 Chapter Summary

Findings have been discussed in relation to the second and third research questions of the study, including staff perceptions of the LFARA, and the extent and type of change resulting from the LFARA process. Particular attention has been paid to the important role leaders play in prioritising the LFARA and sustaining momentum amongst all staff for the approach. The strengths-based nature of the LFARA and support of facilitation staff, congruence of the LFARA with existing values, and prioritisation of the LFARA by school leaders were perceived by staff as a precursor to embedding the approach across the WS. Prioritisation was dependent on optimal conditions in which leaders perceived reduced pressure in order to embrace the complexity of the approach.

The potential of the LFARA to increase school readiness for change, by improving aspects of school climate (including communication, leadership and staff wellbeing), have been proposed in the light of the findings. The likelihood of the LFARA having further impact is suggested, considering staff perceptions of changes to school climate and recent re-audit reports. In the following chapter, results of the SPSC survey are presented that illustrate how staff perceptions of school climate have changed as a result of the LFARA process.

Chapter 7: Results of the Staff Perception of School Climate Survey (SPSC)

This chapter presents findings from quantitative data in relation to staff perspectives of school climate. As described in **Chapter 5**, all participating schools were invited to complete the Staff Perceptions of School Climate (SPSC) survey at Time 1 (before the LFARA process began) and at Time 2 (approximately one year after the LFARA process began). A short summary of the purpose of quantitative data collection (in terms of contribution to the overall research questions of this study) is provided. Subsequently, a brief description of the process of data collection is given that summarises the process described in more detail in **Chapter 4**. The reliability of the Staff Perceptions of School Climate scale (SPSC) is explored in detail and the degree to which the final sample can be assumed to be representative of the overall target population is established. Time 1 (hereafter, T1) and Time 2 (hereafter T2) data are then compared, presenting the results of a range of statistical analysis procedures using SPSS. Findings are summarised and, where appropriate, considered in the light of qualitative data findings.

7.1 Purpose

The primary purpose of quantitative data collection was to expand understanding of staff perceptions of school climate, before and after the LFARA intervention. The results of the T1 survey indicated potential constraining and enabling factors in schools that could have influenced the LFARA process. In addition, T1 results were also used to identify a sub-sample of schools in order to provide staff experiences of the LFARA in application at school level. The sub-sample was created mid-way through T1 data collection, using mean SPSC scores to identify the two highest, two lowest and one middle scoring schools. By the end of T1 data collection, the variation between overall SPSC scores across all schools decreased, and all five schools were ultimately mid-range scoring schools.

Comparison of T1 and T2 results helped to identify aspects of school climate that may have been improved following the LFARA, contributing to qualitative enquiry into changes resulting from the intervention process. In addition, SPSC results were used to shape the interview schedule, in order for participants to expand on their changing perceptions of school climate.

7.2 Procedure

The scale used for this study is referred to as the Staff Perceptions of School Climate (SPSC) scale. It was created for this study by combining aspects of three existing scales: (i) the School Organisational Health Questionnaire (Hart et al., 2000), (ii) the Social Capital Scale (Onyx & Bullen, 2000), and (iii) the Health Promoting School scale (Lemerle, 2005). The nature and full list of subscales included in these scales have been discussed in **Chapter 4**.

Contact information for participants was provided by the LFARA school lead for each school. Survey invitations were then sent to all staff in all schools by email or by post where paper copies were requested in the first data collection period (December 2016 - March 2017). An invitation letter outlined the nature of the project and the first page of the survey required consent to be given in order to continue to data collection. This information letter was adapted for the second data collection period (November 2017- May 2018) and participants were asked to complete the survey online. Data was collected online using the SurveyMonkey platform and then exported to an excel spreadsheet. For paper surveys (completed by participants without access to the online version), these responses were manually entered into Survey Monkey. A backup copy of data was created prior to data cleaning. Cleaning the data involved ensuring that the data was in a tabular format of columns and rows with no blank rows. All data was spell checked and duplicate rows were removed. Spaces, errors and non-printing characters were removed from the text to ensure clarity of the results. Data was inspected for consistency and completeness, removing or correcting identified outliers. For example, multiple responses from the same participant were examined to determine if one entry was partially completed (in which case a partial entry was deleted) or whether two duplicate entries were submitted (in which case one random copy was deleted). All data was then made quantifiable by converting into numerical form (for example, male = 0, female = 1). Data was entered into an SPSS file for analysis. In the majority of SPSC questions, a low numbered response corresponded with a low score, however for six items, the scoring system was reversed.

Staff who did not respond to the invitation to complete the survey, and those who completed early demographic identifiers but no SPSC survey items, were omitted as missing data cases. One likely reason for missing data was lack of staff time. It is therefore possible that these cases were not missing at random, since workload was an aspect of school climate

measured by the SPSC. However, it is also possible that participants experienced technological access issues, did not prioritise the completion of the survey over other work or chose not to participate in the project, which would present as data that was missing at random. Therefore, missing data was omitted assumed MAR (missing at random), but response rates in each case were still considered when analysing findings in order to remain open to the significance of missing data.

7.3 SPSC Reliability

Reliability tests were conducted using SPSS V.24 to establish internal consistency for each subscale and for the total scale. The test was repeated for both T1 and T2 data. For the total scale, the Cronbach Alpha values ($\alpha_{T1} = .969$, $\alpha_{T2} = .961$) suggested excellent internal consistency with this sample. A reliability analysis of all individual scale items correlated with the total scale, is provided in **Appendix VI**.

Subscale Cronbach Alpha values ranged from .750 to .937, also suggesting very good internal consistency. Reliability analysis for all subscales is shown in **Table 7.1**, and individual items of note are discussed in the accompanying text below.

Table 7.1. Reliability Analysis for the all subscales of the SPSC (Cronbach's Alpha)^a

Subscale	α of subscale at T ₁	α of subscale at T ₂
Morale	.919	.918
Workload	.903	.879
Participative Decision Making	.897	.891
Professional Interaction	.880	.879
Supportive Leadership	.877	.848
Community Relationship	.750	.812
Appraisal and Recognition	.937	.919
Goal Congruence	.877	.836
Work Connection	.812	.837

NOTES. ^a Internal consistency for the total scale: T₁ .969 / T₂ .961
^bT1 refers to pre-intervention survey (time one) T2 refers to post intervention survey (time 2)

The subscale ‘Morale’ appeared to have very strong internal consistency ($\alpha_{T1} = .919 / \alpha_{T2} = .918$). Item–total correlations within the subscale ranged from $r = .718$ to $r = .885$ indicating a very good degree of correlation. ‘Morale’ items were also sufficiently correlated with the overall scale ($r = .545$ to $r = .770$). This indicates that the reliability of this subscale would not increase from deleting any items, thus all were considered worthy of retention.

The subscale ‘Workload’ also displayed strong internal consistency ($\alpha_{T1} = .903 / \alpha_{T2} = .879$). Item–total correlations within the subscale ranged from $r = .814$ to $r = .884$, suggesting a good degree of correlation. Correlation of ‘Workload’ items with the overall scale was relatively lower, but still statistically significant ($r = .267$ to $r = .503$). Reliability would not markedly increase following deletion of any items, thus all items appeared to be worthy of retention.

For the subscale ‘Participative Decision Making’ very good internal consistency was found ($\alpha_{T1} = .897 / \alpha_{T2} = .891$). Item–total correlations within the subscale ranged from $r = .695$ to $r = .848$, suggesting a good degree of correlation. ‘Participative Decision Making’ items were also correlated with the total scale ($r = .614$ to $r = .792$) to a good degree and reliability scores would not be increased by removing any items, thus all items can be considered worthy of retention.

Within the subscale ‘Professional Interaction’, strong internal consistency was found ($\alpha_{T1} = .880 / \alpha_{T2} = .877$). Item–total correlations within the subscale ranged from $r = .584$ to

$r=.792$, suggesting a reasonably good degree of correlation. Although some items have slightly lower correlation to the total scale ($r=.459$ to $r=.759$), reliability scores would not be increased by removing any items, thus all items can be considered worthy of retention.

For the subscale ‘Supportive Leadership’, strong internal consistency was found ($\alpha_{T1}=.877 / \alpha_{T1}=.848$). Item–total correlations within the subscale ranged from $r=.413$ to $r=.859$. The reversed item ‘The school leadership team doesn’t really know the problems faced by staff’ was a low outlier with values for all other items in the subscale > 7 . Removing this item from the subscale would have increased the reliability score of the subscale slightly ($T1_{\text{difference if removed}}=.44 / T2_{\text{difference if removed}}=.34$), but the increase would not make a meaningful difference.

Within the ‘Community Relationship’ subscale, good internal consistency was found ($\alpha_{T1}=.750 / \alpha_{T2}=.812$). Item–total correlations within the subscale ($r=.512$ to $r=.727$) suggest good internal consistency. ‘Community Relationship’ items correlated with the overall scale with a range of $r=.384$ to $r=.557$. This subscale is measuring a more distinct aspect of school climate than the other, more highly correlated subscales, which may be why the score was lower. Removing these items from the subscale would not have increased the reliability score of either the subscale or total scale.

The ‘Goal Congruence’ subscale displayed strong internal consistency ($\alpha_{T1}=.877 / \alpha_{T2}=.836$). Item–total correlations of the subscale ($r=.447$ to $r=.824$) suggest internal consistency, with all items having an r value of $> .65$, except the reversed item (‘The goals of this school are not easily understood’). ‘Goal Congruence’ items correlated with the overall scale with a range of $r=.376$ to $r=.763$), with all items having an r value $> .65$ with the exception of the reversed item. Removing this specific item would have slightly increased the internal consistency of the subscale ($\alpha_{T1}\text{increase}=.014 / \alpha_{T2}\text{increase}=.040$) but would not have improved the internal consistency of the total scale.

For the subscale ‘Work Connection’, strong internal consistency was found [$\alpha=.812$ (T1) / $\alpha=.837$ (T2)]. Item–total correlations for the subscale ranged from $r=.431$ to $r=.764$. This suggests adequate internal consistency of the subscale. ‘Work Connection’ items were also adequately correlated with the overall scale ($r=.334$ to $r=.812$). Removing the item ‘I regard my colleagues at this school as my friends’ would have slightly increased internal consistency of the subscale ($T2\text{increase}=.020$) but would not significantly improved internal consistency of the $T1$ subscale or the overall scale.

In summary, for this sample, the SPSC has very good internal consistency. Corrected Item–Total correlations suggest quite a strong relationship between individual items and total scale such that it may be possible to conduct item reduction and still retain a high reliability score. In terms of the overall SPSC scale ($\alpha_{T1}=.969$, $\alpha_{T2}=.961$), the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was higher than the Cronbach Alpha coefficient reported by authors of the three original studies (SOHQ (Hart et al., 2000)=.84; SCS(Onyx & Bullen, 2000)=.84; HPS (Lemerle, 2005)=.80). This suggests that the elements of these three scales are highly compatible. Consistent with the literature, selected subscales were considered reliable measures and in addition, by combining subscales of different measures, reliability of the overall scale was improved.

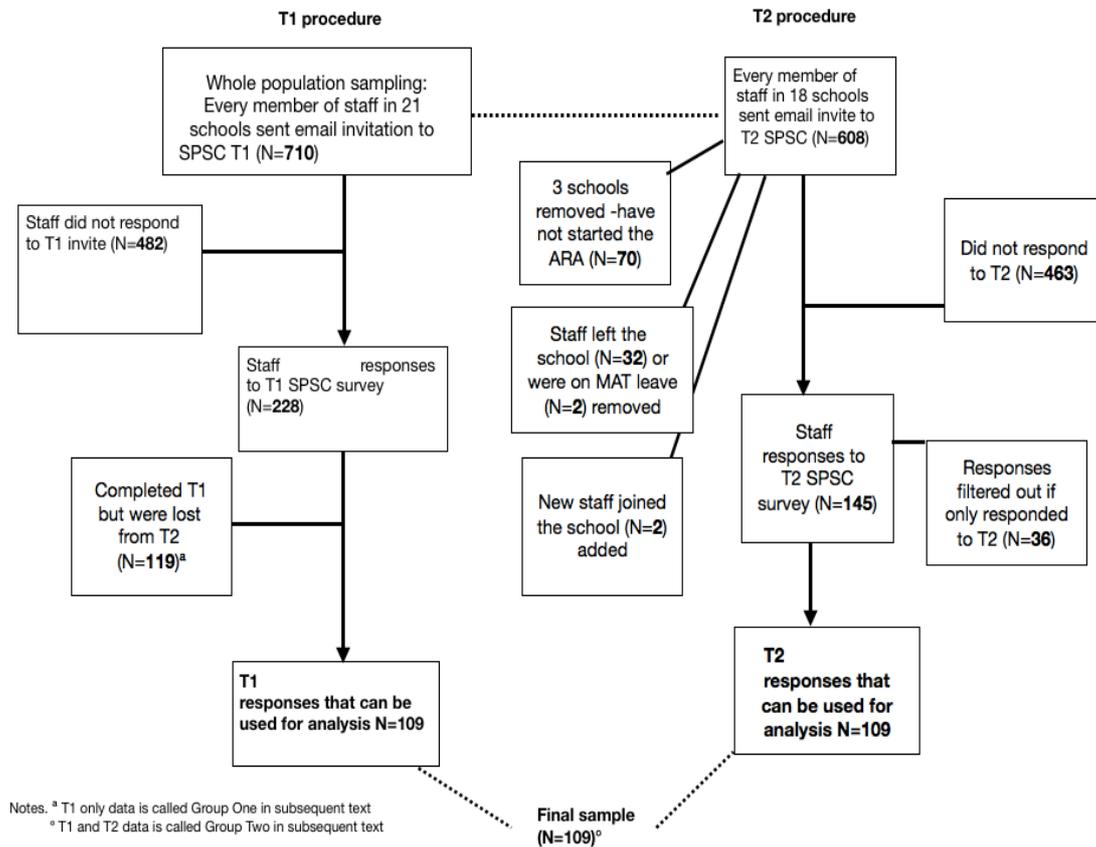
7.4 Sample

Eighteen schools initially responded to the LA invitation to engage with the LFARA. Three schools decided (for a variety of reasons) not to continue or to suspend their involvement in the project. Of these three schools, two postponed their involvement due to competing priorities and are expected to complete the survey once they have had their initial training session in the next academic term. One infant school withdrew since the project would not be collecting data for pupils of their intake age. Shortly after training began in the remaining fifteen schools, a further six schools requested to join the project and were sent email invitations for the first survey because data collection had not yet begun. When the follow up data collection period commenced, three of these schools had not yet started the LFARA process and so were not sent the follow up survey. The remaining eighteen schools were sent a follow up survey in order to measure changes in staff perception of school climate. Thus, data presented in this chapter is from staff in these eighteen schools.

Figure 7.1 shows a process of elimination leading from a whole population sample of the 21 schools, to the sample who provided the final data set used for analysis (N=109 staff from 18 schools).

Reasons for exclusion from the final sample were non-respondents to the survey invitation ($N_{T1}=482$, $N_{T2}=463$), respondents who only completed T1 or T2 survey ($N_{T1}=119$, $N_{T2}=36$), duplicate ID numbers and ‘empty’ sets of data (that is, ID number completed with no further data in answer to any question). A sample of N=109 staff who had responded to both T1 and T2 surveys constitutes the final sample with which statistical analysis was conducted.

Figure 7.1 Exclusion process from whole population to final sample.



7.5 Descriptive Statistics of Sample

The final sample, who had responded both at T1 and T2 (Group 2) included staff from three secondary schools ($N_{\text{staff}}=34$) and fifteen primary or junior schools ($N_{\text{staff}}=75$).

Primary and junior schools were considered the same school type for the purposes of data analysis since both types differ in intake from secondary school and overlap with one another. The greater number of primary schools in the sample reflects the fact that more primary schools were involved in the LFARA than secondary schools. The numbers of staff reflect the fact that the secondary schools were larger than primary schools and therefore had a larger target population. The total response rate of those who completed both T1 and T2 surveys was 17.99% ($N_{\text{staff}}=109$) from a total possible sample of $N_{\text{staff}}=606$, with slightly higher response rather for staff in primary schools ($N_{\text{staff}}=66$, 20.18%) in comparison to

secondary staff ($N_{\text{staff}}=36$, 13.74%).

The sample was predominantly comprised of White British (WB) (93.58%) female (84.1%)¹⁴ staff. Although the sample has limited ethnic diversity, statistics from the latest census (2011) show similar local demographics (96.6% WB residents in the county). Equally, although the sample could be said to have limited gender diversity, the dominance of female staff was also consistent with current staffing demographics in primary schools nationally. There was an even distribution of role type¹⁵, with teachers comprising the majority of the sample (40.6%), followed by non-teachers (36.8%) and leaders (22.6%). Since one would expect fewer leaders than teaching staff in most school settings, this ratio seems to be representative of the target population. The majority of staff in the final sample reported their highest level of qualification to be degree level or higher (73.3%) and the mean number of years in education¹⁶ (11.79) and current post¹⁷ (6.42) reflect the range of experience in the target population, from those nearing retirement to newly qualified staff.

In terms of sample descriptives, staff who completed T1 survey but did not complete the T2 Survey (Group 1) and those who completed both surveys (Group 2) displayed very similar descriptives. A Chi-square test of goodness-of-fit revealed that there was no significant difference based on gender ($\chi^2_{(1, 226)} = 1.299$, ns), with the vast majority of respondents being female staff. This test was not repeated for ethnicity since Group 1 did not contain any responses other than 'non-White British'. However, the low number of alternative responses in Group 2 ($N=3$) suggested that the groups were still comparable.

In relation to role type ($\chi^2_{(2, 225)} = 2.36$, ns), there was no statistically significant difference between non-teachers, teachers and leaders and the number of responses to both T1 and T2 surveys. However, there was a trend of Group 1 (those who responded to T1 but did not respond to T2) being more likely to be non-teachers and less likely to be leaders. This may reflect increased competing priorities for leaders, or, alternatively, reflect high engagement of non-teaching staff in this project.

¹⁴ Valid percentages are provided in cases of missing data. For Group 1, there were two cases of missing data in relation to gender, thus results are provided for $N=107$ remaining responses

¹⁵ There were three cases of missing data for 'role type', thus percentages are given from $N=106$ remaining responses

¹⁶ There were seven cases of missing data for 'years working in education', thus mean is given from $N=102$ remaining responses

¹⁷ There were two cases of missing data for 'years in current post', thus mean is given from $N=107$ remaining responses

Table 7.2 Descriptive statistics comparison between Group 1 and Group 2 samples.

		Sample responded to T ₁ only: Group 1 (TOTAL N=119) N (%)	Sample responded to T ₁ and T ₂ : Group 2 (TOTAL N=109) N (%)
Gender (F)		93 (78.2)	90 (84.1) ^a
Ethnicity (WB)		119 (100)	107 (93.6)
Role	Leader	18 (15.1)	24 (22.6) ^b
	Teacher	49 (41.2)	43 (40.6)
	Non-Teacher	52 (43.7)	39 (36.8)
Mean years in current post		7.98	6.42 ^c
Mean years working in education		14.29	11.79 ^d
Highest level of education	GCSE, NVQ1, BTEC1, BTEC2	7 (5.9)	5 (4.8)
	A LEVELS, NVQ3, BTEC3	15 (12.6)	11 (10.5)
	BTEC dip, NVQ4	3 (2.5)	2 (1.9)
	Foundation Degree, HND, Advanced BTEC	13 (10.9)	10 (9.5)
	BA, BA Hons, Grad Cert, Prof dip	28 (23.5)	32 (30.5)
	BA Hons QTS, NPQH	45 (37.8)	39 (37.1)
	MA	5 (4.2)	6 (5.7)

Notes. ^a Two cases of missing data in relation to gender, thus results are provided for N=107 remaining responses

^b Three cases of missing data in relation to gender, thus results are provided for N=106 remaining responses

^c Two cases of missing data from 'current post' thus mean is provided from remaining N= 107 responses

^d Seven cases of missing data for 'years working in education', thus mean is given from N=102 remaining responses

A One-Way ANOVA was run to compare the mean years in current post, mean level of qualification and mean years of experience in education between Groups 1 and 2, in order to establish any link between these variables and the likelihood of respondents completing both T1 and T2 surveys. There was no statistically significant difference between the means of Group 1 and Group 2 in years of experience in current post, [$F(1,223) = 3.504$, ns]. Similarly, mean level of education qualification (categorised from 1 (GCSE level) to 7 (MA)) did not have an effect on T1 and T2 survey completion [$F(1,219) = .575$, ns]. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in completion of T1 and T2 surveys based years of experience in education [$F(1,210) = 5.153$, $p < .05$]. There was a mean difference of 2.5 years between two groups, indicating that staff with slightly higher professional experience in education were slightly less likely to complete both surveys. This could potentially be linked to increased workload or cynicism of staff who have worked for longer in the education system.

The final sample can therefore be considered on the whole to be representative of the target sample in terms of demographics, with the exception of a statistically significant difference in the mean years of professional experience.

7.5.1 Comparison of Group 1 and Group 2 baseline SPSC scores. T1 SPSC scores were compared between Group 1 and 2 in order to establish whether there was a difference between the perceptions of school climate between the two groups. A one-way ANOVA test was run, which showed no significant difference between the mean scores of any subscales between Group 1 and Group 2. The final sample can therefore be considered to be mostly representative of the overall sample in the way that they responded to the T1 survey, including those who did not go on to respond to T2. There was, however, a small difference between the total survey score for T1 between these groups [$F(1,224) = 3.873$, $p < .05$], with Group 1 scoring slightly lower ($M=3.58$, $SD=.61$) than Group 2 ($M=3.74$, $SD=.53$). In conclusion, the final sample is representative of the overall sample both in terms of demographics and baseline survey results.

7.6 Results

Results of the SPSC survey are reported firstly in relation to the final sample, before comparison is made of results for primary and secondary schools, and for staff of different role type.

7.6.1 Whole Sample. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a change in SPSC scores from T1 and T2 for the final sample. For the final sample (N=109) there was a significant increase ($t(107) = -.283, p < .01$) in the total SPCS scores ($M_{t1}=3.74, SD_{t1}=.53 / M_{t2}=3.84, SD_{t2}=.51$). Effect size (Cohen's $d = .20$) indicated a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). This indicates that, for the overall sample, the LFARA implementation had had a modest but statistically significant effect on school climate.

Paired-samples t-tests were also completed for each subscale in order to determine whether there was a change in scores from T1 to T2 for the final sample. Mean scores, standard deviations and t-test results (including statistical significance) are displayed in **Table 7.3**.

Table 7.3. Paired Samples t-test for each subscale and total survey mean score T1 and T2.

	Time 1 Survey		Time 2 Survey		Paired t-test	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Total Survey	3.74	.53	3.84	.51	-2.83	<.01
Morale	3.81	.75	3.92	.73	-1.53	ns
Workload	2.78	.79	2.99	.83	-3.05	<.01
Participative Decision Making	3.55	.76	3.73	.76	-2.64	<.01
Professional Interaction	4.00	.57	4.08	.56	-1.61	ns
Supportive Leadership	3.80	.78	3.92	.72	-2.09	<.05
School Community Relationship	3.83	.49	3.83	.63	.045	ns
Appraisal and Recognition	3.73	.83	3.81	.73	-1.25	ns
Goal Congruence	3.94	.65	3.95	.59	-.25	ns
Work Connection	3.98	.59	4.07	.59	-1.83	ns

For eight of nine subscales, there was an increase in mean score from T1 to T2, which was statistically significant for three subscales.

For the subscale 'Workload', there was an increase in scores between the two measures ($M_{t1}=2.78, SD_{t1}=.79 / M_{t2}=2.99, SD_{t2}=.83$), which was statistically significant ($t(107) = -3.05, p < .01$). There was a small positive effect size (Cohen's $d = .26$), which suggests a small positive effect of the LFARA implementation on staff perception of workload and work balance in the school climate.

For the subscale ‘Participative Decision Making’, there was an increase in scores between the two measures ($M_{T1}=3.55, SD_{T1}=.76 / M_{T2}=3.73, SD_{T2}=.76$), which was statistically significant ($t(103) = -2.64, p<.01$). There was a small effect size (Cohen’s $d=.24$), suggesting a small effect of the LFARA implementation on staff perception of participative decision making in the school climate.

For the subscale ‘Supportive Leadership’, there was an increase in scores between the two measures ($M_{T1}=3.80, SD_{T1}=.78 / M_{T2}=3.92, SD_{T2}=.72$), which was statistically significant ($t(105) = -2.09, p<.05$). There was a small effect size (Cohen’s $d=.16$), suggesting a small effect of the LFARA implementation on staff perceptions of supportive leadership in the school climate.

Results of the T1 to T2 comparison for the whole sample suggest that staff perceived the overall school climate significantly more positively following the LFARA intervention. In particular, results show that when the whole sample is considered, staff consider ‘Workload’, ‘Participative Decision Making’ and ‘Supportive Leadership’ more positively in comparison to pre-implementation scores. Thus, it is likely that the drivers of the observed change in staff perceptions of school climate were an increase in realistic workload expectations, improved work balance, increased participative decision making, and more supportive leadership.

When SPSC_{T1} subscale scores were placed in order from lowest to highest, ‘Workload’ was the lowest score, ‘Participative Decision Making’ the second lowest and ‘Leadership’ the fourth lowest. This reflects qualitative data findings in which workload and employment uncertainty in relation to redundancy processes (which impacted perceptions of leadership and participative decision making) posed the most significant adversity for staff at the beginning of the LFARA process. It is interesting to note, that in spite of being amongst the lowest scores at T1, these are the aspects of school climate that were perceived by school staff to have significantly increased by T2. Multiple possible explanations must be considered for this being the case. Whilst it is possible that staff uncertainty and stress would have naturally reduced towards the end of the redundancy process, qualitative data supports the suggestion that the LFARA at least contributed to an improvement in staff perceptions of school climate. It is therefore possible that the LFARA intervention (which actively sought to address adversity for staff), made the most significant difference in the areas where most need was expressed. This process can be seen to reflect the original conceptual grounding of the ARA, which defines resilience as ‘overcoming adversity, whilst also potentially changing, or even dramatically transforming, (aspects of) that adversity.’ (Hart et al., 2013,

p.31; 2016, p.3). In this way, through engaging in the LFARA, staff adversity was arguably reduced, which may also indicate increased school-level readiness for change.

7.6.1.1 Effect of years of education and years in current post on SPSC scores. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to test the null hypothesis that there was no relationship between total and subscale scores and the variables of years in education and years in current post. Years in education and years in current post were not significantly correlated with total survey scores for T₁ or T₂ survey. There was also no significant correlation for any subscale with the exception of 'Workload' (T₁R, years_in_current_post = -.222, n=107, p> .05, T₂R, years_in_current_post = -.233, n=106, p> .05). For the 'Workload' subscale, the years a respondent had been in their current post was negatively associated with 'Workload' scores at a significance of $\alpha > .05$. The direction of the relationships between the variables is negative, showing that a lower number of years in current post is associated with higher 'Workload' scores, though the strength of this relationship was small (Cohen, 1988). Since all items in the 'Workload' subscale had been reversed, a high score in the workload subscale would indicate a better perception of work life balance for staff with less years in their current post. This could potentially be due to an increase in workload with increased responsibilities assumed as part of the current post. Alternatively, this could be due to a decrease in the capacity or desire (that is, some work is considered less meaningful or relevant) to meet workload expectations.

Table 7.4 Bivariate correlation analysis (Pearson's *r*) for Group 2 scores and descriptive variables.

	Years in education		Years in current post	
	<i>Pearson's r</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>Pearson's r</i>	<i>Sig. (2 tailed)</i>
Total Survey	-.032	Ns	-.039	ns
Total Survey_2	-.048	Ns	-.133	ns
Morale	-.071	Ns	-.002	ns
Morale_2	-.061	Ns	-.018	ns
Workload	-.088	Ns	-.222	<.05
Workload_2	-.073	Ns	-.233	<.05
Participative Decision Making	.053	Ns	.035	ns
Participative Decision Making_2	.076	Ns	-.035	ns
Professional Interaction	-.047	Ns	.068	ns
Professional Interaction_2	-.077	Ns	-.051	ns
Supportive Leadership	-.083	Ns	-.162	ns
Supportive Leadership_2	-.078	Ns	-.160	ns
School Community Relationship	-.040	Ns	-.155	ns
School Community Relationship_2	.081	Ns	-.182	ns
Appraisal and Recognition	.005	Ns	-.100	ns
Appraisal and Recognition_2	-.013	Ns	-.104	ns
Goal Congruence	.052	Ns	.039	ns
Goal Congruence_2	.024	Ns	-.098	ns
Work Connection	.083	Ns	.163	ns
Work Connection_2	-.095	Ns	-.006	ns

7.6.1.2 Comparison of mean increases of scores between SPSC_{T1} to SPSC_{T2} between Primary and Secondary schools. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted in order to test the null hypothesis that school type (primary or secondary) did not have a significant effect on change in SPSC scores. The means and standard deviations are presented in **Table 7.5** that show the change in SPSC scores (for total scores and each subscale) between T1 and T2.

Table 7.5 Repeated measures ANOVA – Estimated Mean scores and Standard Errors of Total Scores across Primary and Secondary schools.

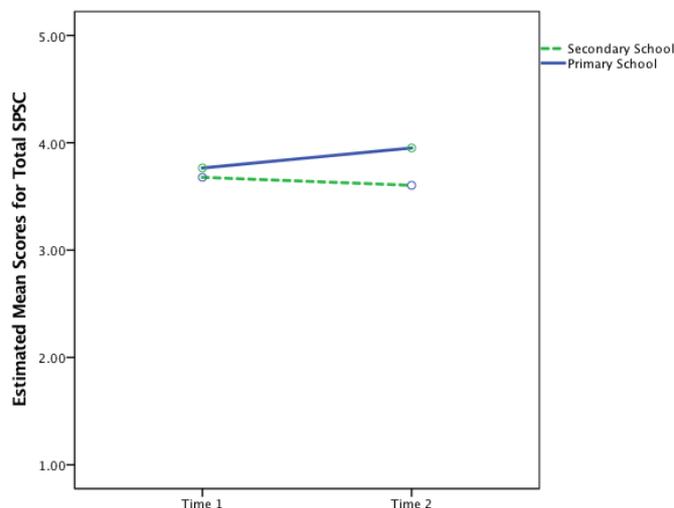
	Primary T ₁ / T ₂	Primary T ₁ / T ₂	Secondary T ₁ / T ₂	Secondary T ₁ / T ₂	Sig. <i>p</i> ^a
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	
Total Survey	3.77/3.95	.06/.06	3.68/3.60	.09/.08	<.01
Morale	3.83/4.12	.09/.08	3.77/3.48	.13/.11	<.001
Workload	2.74/3.02	.09/.10	2.85/2.92	.14/.14	Ns
Participative Decision Making	3.69/3.87	.09/.09	3.26/3.43	.13/.13	Ns
Professional Interaction	4.04/4.22	.07/.06	3.90/3.79	.10/.09	<.01
Supportive Leadership	3.91/4.01	.09/.08	3.58/3.73	.13/.12	Ns
School Community Relationship	3.85/3.93	.06/.07	3.80/3.63	.08/.11	<.05
Appraisal and Recognition	3.69/3.88	.10/.09	3.82/3.67	.14/.12	<.05
Goal Congruence	4.02/4.08	.08/.07	3.79/3.69	.11/.10	Ns
Work Connection	3.97/4.18	.07/.07	4.00/3.84	.10/.10	<.01

Notes. ^a: *p*= significance of the within subject effect of school type on change between mean scores from Time 1 to Time 2 SPSC score

There was a statistically significant effect of school type on the extent to which total survey scores increased between T1 and T2 ($F(1, 106) = 11.95, p < .001$), with a moderate to large effect size according to Cohen's guidelines (1988, pp.284-7), (partial $\eta^2 = .133$).

There was some suggestion in the qualitative data that staff perceived aspects of primary school characteristics to enable the LFARA (including small school size, links with the local community and a lack of competing priorities). It is possible that the results of the one-way repeated measures ANOVA support this assumption and indicate that the LFARA positively influenced staff perception of school climate to a greater extent in primary schools. This pattern can be seen in **Figure 7.2**. However, the result could also be influenced by secondary school sample size, since fewer secondary schools than primary schools participated in the LFARA.

Figure 7.2 Estimated Mean Scores for Total SPSC from Time 1 to Time 2 for secondary and primary school staff



When the effect of school type was considered in relation to each subscale, there was a statistically significant effect of school type for the subscales ‘Morale’, ‘Professional Interaction’, ‘School Community Relationship’, ‘Appraisal and Recognition’ and ‘Work Connection’. Each of these estimated mean score comparisons are shown in figure form in Appendix VII.

The subscale ‘Morale’ ($F(1, 105)=16.183, p < .001$). The effect size of this result (partial $\eta^2 = .134$) suggests a small effect (Cohen, 1988) of school type on morale scores in which only primary schools reported an increase in morale scores between T1 and T2 surveys, although similar T1 values were provided.

A statistically significant effect of school type was found for the subscale 'Professional interaction' ($F(1, 102) = 8.024, p=.01$). The effect size (partial $\eta^2 = .073$) suggests a moderate effect of school type in which only primary school staff reported an increase in professional interaction scores between T1 and T2 surveys, although similar T1 values were provided.

A statistically significant effect of school type was observed for the subscale 'School community relationship' ($F(1, 104)=5.342, p=.023$). The effect size (partial $\eta^2 = .049$) suggests a small to moderate effect of school type on scores relating to school community relationship between T1 and T2 surveys, with primary staff group scoring slightly higher in T2 compared to their T1 score.

There was also a statistically significant main effect of school type for the subscale 'Appraisal and recognition' ($F(1, 101) = 6.872, p = .010$). The effect size (partial $\eta^2=.049$) suggests a small effect of school type in which only primary staff reported a slight increase in scores. As can be seen in Appendix VII, the pattern for this subscale is slightly different to those seen for other subscales. This is due to primary school types scoring lower at T1 than secondary school types for 'Appraisal and Recognition', whereas the norm for other subscales was that primary schools scored more highly at T1 and still went on to have a higher score at T2. In this instance, primary school type had a statistically significant effect on the extent to which 'Appraisal and Recognition' scores increased and also had a higher mean score compared to secondary schools, in spite of scoring a lower T1 score.

Lastly, the 'Work Connection' subscale indicated a statistically significant effect of school type on survey scores ($F(1, 104) = 12.517, p = .001$). The effect size (partial $\eta^2 = .107$) suggests that school type has a moderate to large effect on staff perceptions of work connection between the T1 and T2 surveys, with only primary staff increasing their score, in spite of similar T1 scores for both school types.

For the 'Workload' subscale, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted that controlled for the variable 'years in current post', since this had been shown to be negatively correlated with workload scores in previous tests. School type did not have a statistically significant effect on scores for the 'Workload' subscale. For the subscales 'Participative Decision Making', 'Leadership' and 'Goal congruence', no significant effect of school type on SPSC scores was observed.

7.6.1.3 Comparison of mean increases of scores between SPSC1 to SPSC2 between different Role Types. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted in order to test the null hypothesis that role type (leaders, teachers and non-teachers) did not have a significant effect on SPSC scores. The means and standard deviations are presented in **Table 7.6**. Role type did not have a statistically significant effect on the mean scores of any subscale or for the total survey.

Table 7.6 Repeated measures ANOVA – Estimated Means and Standard Errors of Total Scores by staff role type.

	Leaders T ₁ / T ₂	Leaders T ₁ / T ₂	Teachers T ₁ / T ₂	Teachers T ₁ / T ₂	Non- Teachers T ₁ /T ₂	Non- Teachers T ₁ /T ₂	Sig. <i>p</i> ^a
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	
Total Survey	3.84/3.98	.11/.11	3.77/3.83	.08/.08	3.65/3.78	.09/.08	ns
Morale	3.78/3.89	.15/.15	3.94/3.94	.11/.11	3.68/3.88	.12/.12	ns
Workload	2.94/3.23	.16/.17	2.63/2.81	.12/.13	2.84/3.04	.13/.14	ns
Participative Decision Making	3.93/4.13	.15/.15	3.52/3.65	.11/.11	3.37/3.53	.12/.12	ns
Professional Interaction	4.04/4.13	.12/.12	4.09/4.13	.09/.09	3.89/3.99	.09/.09	ns
Supportive Leadership	3.93/3.98	.16/.15	3.80/3.89	.12/.11	3.72/3.94	.13/.12	ns
School Community Relationship	3.90/4.08	.10/.13	3.77/3.74	.08/.10	3.85/3.78	.08/.10	ns
Appraisal and Recognition	3.83/3.96	.17/.15	3.92/3.89	.12/.11	3.48/3.64	.13/.12	ns
Goal Congruence	4.03/4.10	.13/.12	3.89/3.95	.10/.09	3.96/3.87	.11/.10	ns
Work Connection	3.92/4.14	.12/.12	4.02/4.06	.09/.09	3.96/4.05	.10/.10	ns

Notes. ^a: *p* refers to the statistical significance of the within subjects effect of role type on change between mean scores from Time 1 to Time 2 SPSC score

Whilst no significant effect of role type was observed, attention was drawn to non-teaching staff perception of school climate at SPSC T1, which was the lowest of all role types ($M\ SPSC_{T1}=3.65$, $SD_{T1}=.55$; $M\ SPSC_{T2}=3.78$, $SD_{T2}=.52$). This may reflect the increased contextual adversity teaching assistants faced at the time of data collection due to redundancy processes. However, for this role type, the increase in mean score between T1 and T2 was greater than the increase between means for teaching staff and almost as large as the increase for leadership staff (Leaders mean increase=.14, Teachers mean increase=.06, Non-teaching staff mean increase=.13). This suggests that the LFARA may have been able to negate the impact of contextual adversity for this role type, who were able to improve their perception of school climate in spite of these challenges. Although not statistically significant, these findings support the overall pattern identified in the qualitative findings of the LFARA process helping to buffer adversity for staff.

7.6.1.4 School Level Comparison. A comparison of mean scores between $SPSC_{T1}$ and $SPSC_{T2}$ for each participating school is displayed in **Appendix VI**. The intention of this comparison was to consider the impact of school specific factors, such as school size and type, as well as length of engagement, with the facilitation team. However, due to the low number of respondents in some schools, firm conclusions cannot be drawn from the significance levels reported in these tests. Nevertheless, a pattern has been identified in the results when schools are compared (see **Appendix VI**) that mirrors qualitative findings and is worthy of inclusion in this chapter.

When comparing mean SPSC scores for different schools (school-by-school comparison, **Appendix VI**), statistically significant increases were identified between T1 and T2 survey scores for School A (<.05), School L(<.05) and School P(<.01). School A and School P were both smaller than average primary type schools. In both schools, staff or facilitators had noted the strength of pastoral care, strong links to the community and staff commitment to school values, which could perhaps have enabled the LFARA. School L was a much smaller than average secondary school, whose staff had been engaged in communication with the facilitation for the longest amount of time possible, being one of the first schools to attend ‘information sessions’.

Facilitator and staff interviews divulged that in School A, a positive existing professional relationship between leaders and the facilitator acted as an enabling factor for the LFARA. In School L, the facilitator was already working in the school itself, hence she

knew the school very well. School P had a strong relationship with the facilitation team although they were new to the facilitator. Characteristics of school size, congruence of school values with principles of the original ARA, existing connection to facilitation team and length of time engaging in the programme could all, therefore, have possibly positively influenced staff perceptions of the LFARA and its effect on school climate.

Furthermore, based on SPSC_{T1} scores, all three schools had mid-range scores, ranking 7th (School P), 8th (School L) and 12th (School A) when scores were ranked in chronological order from highest to lowest score for all schools. Consistent with qualitative findings, SPSC baseline data helped to identify optimal conditions that enable readiness for the LFARA, due to a mix of sufficient existing protective factors, and some aspects of school climate that could be improved.

7.7 Conclusions

In summary, quantitative data analysis has established the reliability of the scale for the current sample and demonstrated that the final sample was representative of the total population both in terms of demographics and SPSC baseline scores. SPSC_{T1} results support staff interview findings regarding existing enabling and constraining factors in the school system. Professional interaction, work connection and goal congruence were the highest mean scores for SPSC_{T1} subscales, suggesting these were enabling factors in the existing school system. Workload and participative decision-making were the lowest SPSC_{T2} mean scores, suggesting these were potential constraints in the existing school system.

The results of paired samples t-tests suggest that staff perceived overall school climate significantly more positively post-LFARA intervention. Specifically, results have shown that the drivers of this observed change are likely to have been more realistic workload expectations, improved work balance, increased participative decision making and more supportive leadership. It has been suggested in this chapter that the reason that low SPSC_{T1} subscale scores were seen to significantly increase by T2 was related to the capacity of the LFARA to explicitly address adversity for staff, both as part of the process, and in some instances, intended outcomes. This assertion is based on both qualitative and quantitative findings that suggest this process. Key aspects of this process are further explored in **Chapter 8**. Subscales that scored highly on SPSC_{T1} were either sustained or improved, thus reflecting the aims of the original conceptual approach of the LFARA to preserve existing strengths whilst tackling significant adversity. I also suggested that the

iterative and WS nature of the ARA, which the LFARA has employed, means it is possible that positive effects of the intervention may be cumulative over time.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient established that there was no relationship between total and subscale scores and the variables of years in education and years in current post, except for years in the current post and 'Workload' (T_1 and T_2). That a higher number of years in one post could negatively influence perceptions of workload was posited. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA found no effect of role type on changing perceptions of school climate between $SPSC_{T_1}$ and $SPSC_{T_2}$. However, the same test in relation to the effect of school type showed that primary school type had a statistically significant positive effect on the extent to which mean scores between $SPSC_{T_1}$ and $SPSC_{T_2}$ increased. This positive effect of primary school type was statistically significant for total SPSC score and for the subscales of 'Morale', 'Professional Interaction', 'School Community', 'Appraisal and Recognition' and 'Work Connection'. SPSC results therefore suggest that, whilst staff across the whole sample perceived an increase in perceptions of school climate post the LFARA, staff in primary school settings identified the most change.

Chapter 8: Synthesis of Findings

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, quantitative and qualitative data is synthesised, with an overall goal of understanding staff experiences of the LFARA process. The ontological assumption underlying this thesis is that the social world is complex (Byrne & Callaghan, 2013), and as such, is characterised by systemic interconnectedness, diversity, adaptability and emergence (Boulton et al., 2015, see **Chapter 3**). Therefore, concepts from complex systems theory have been used to illustrate the LFARA as a dynamic social process.

Four aspects of the implementation process are described that were of central importance to the interaction between the existing school context and the LFARA. Exploring these four aspects extends what is known in the existing literature about the complex interaction between whole-school intervention and existing school climate. The four key aspects of the LFARA process outlined in this chapter are: ‘optimal turbulence’; the importance of values as attractors; the transformation of constraints to enablers; and emergent change in school climate. Using complexity concepts, the emergent and iterative nature of change in the process of the LFARA is described. In particular, the role of positive feedback loops in initiating and sustaining change in the nested school system (Meadows, 2008, see **Chapter 3**) is outlined and WS resilience is conceptualised as an attractor state, which schools move towards in the process of the LFARA.

In order to explain how the LFARA process was influenced by the four key aspects in practice, three examples are provided in their WS context that also demonstrate how the LFARA affected school climate to varying extents.

8.2 Four Key Aspects of the LFARA Interaction with School Climate

As discussed in **Chapter 5**, staff identified factors within the existing school system (at multiple system levels) that were seen to enable or constrain the LFARA. In **Chapter 6**, aspects of the LFARA itself which were thought to enable or constrain the WS approach are summarised from findings, and staff perceptions of change as a result of the LFARA are explored. However, existing literature (for example Joseph & Reigeluth, 2010, see **Chapter 2**) has suggested that we do not currently understand in enough detail the interaction between complex interventions and the complex contexts in which they are applied. As discussed in

Chapter 2, in many previous studies, enabling and constraining factors are presumed to be static elements of the existing school system or intervention as opposed to the interaction between the two. Therefore, in this section of the chapter, four key aspects are discussed that have emerged from findings as dynamic and fluid enabling or constraining factors that emerged from the LFARA/school interaction and influenced adoption of the WS approach to varying degrees.

8.2.1 Selection of Whole-School Examples. This chapter includes a detailed description of the LFARA change process in WS contexts, as well as feedback about the process from facilitation and steering group staff. School-based examples have been selected from the sub-sample in order to demonstrate the different ways in which the LFARA interacted with existing school contexts. Each school context described had an existing climate that interacted in a particular way with the LFARA, together representing the three ‘types’ of LFARA interaction seen across the sub-sample.

School A (Embedding) School A was considered to have a number of aspects of existing school climate that created high readiness for change, in conjunction with optimal system turbulence. WS resilience was an existing system attractor (as defined in **Chapter 3** as ‘something that a complex system is pulled towards over time, altering the system as it changes its trajectory’), readily accepted by staff in this school as a cultural norm due to the congruence with existing values and lack of competing priorities. Staff in School A reported that many aspects of school practice had changed as a result of the LFARA process, and, in comparison to other schools, had implemented much more of the intended action plan. Staff interviewed reported that this could be attributed to the synergy between staff values, school needs and the LFARA. This school-based example therefore demonstrates how the LFARA was perceived by staff to have been embedded across the whole system, representing schools in which extensive change was able to occur as a result of multiple enabling factors within the existing school climate.

School B (Catalyst) was demonstrative of the potential for the LFARA to increase readiness for change by transforming constraining factors into enabling factors. This readiness work focused on community building, including fostering WS resilience as a shared value and attractor for change. Across all schools, staff from School B reported the most change in relation to staff perception of school climate, perceiving changes in school culture to have led to some changes to policy and practice. Future impact was also anticipated, as

further change was planned. Staff frequently referred to the LFARA as a ‘catalyst for change’ in schools in which school climate enabled the LFARA to some extent, whilst addressing challenges in the school climate and ‘re-igniting’ staff acceptance of school ethos and WS practice.

School C (Fizzled Out/Catalyst) School C initially lacked momentum for a WS approach, due to excessive system turbulence following a challenging Ofsted inspection at the same time as staff redundancy and service reduction. Although pockets of new practice emerged, and leaders reported increased understanding of staff views, there was less cohesion across the school. Multiple staff reported the approach as having ‘fizzled out’, ‘being forgotten’ or ‘not prioritised’. However, after attending a LFARA celebration event, a senior leader from School C expressed interest in re-engaging in the programme and the school has now implemented and reviewed their action plan. As such, staff experiences in School C both demonstrate potential barriers to be negotiated in the interaction of school climate and the LFARA, and further illustrates the ‘catalyst’ process.

Each of the four key aspects of the LFARA as summarised from the findings and considered in the light of existing literature are outlined briefly below. Each of these school-based examples are then used to illustrate the key aspects of the LFARA process in WS contexts.

8.2.2 ‘Optimal Turbulence’. As discussed in **Chapter 3**, ‘turbulence’ is thought to be necessary for change to occur, although social systems like schools are sensitive to levels of turbulence, which can either ensure or undermine attempts to change the system (Gross, 1998). School staff in this study, and especially leaders, have identified that a certain amount of stability at school level was required in order to prioritise and legitimise the LFARA. Tensions were expressed by leaders of four schools in the sub-sample group, between acknowledging the need to embrace a more holistic set of aims and values, and the perceived pressure of evidencing academic outcomes as part of a widespread culture of accountability.

Consistent with existing research, most leaders were partially driven by external pressures, such as changes to curriculum, implementing new initiatives, assessment and inspection (DfE, 2018a). Prior research has suggested that some school leaders were ‘driven by the fear of Ofsted’ to focus intensely on data collection, even though other staff did not perceive such intense focus to be necessary (DfE, 2018a, p.16). Therefore, in order to justify

prioritising the LFARA, leader perception of relative stability in the school system was an enabling factor.

Similarly to Gross' (1998) definition of moderate turbulence, when school leaders identified existing adversity (both for pupils and staff), the LFARA was perceived to support schools to respond to these needs in order to sustain and improve the functioning of the school system. In some schools, even though a need was perceived for the LFARA, competing priorities were disruptive to the process because leaders did not perceive enough stability to prioritise the approach. Therefore, data suggested that a delicate balance of perceived need for the LFARA, and a lack of severe disruption, created what is referred hitherto in this chapter as 'optimal turbulence'. The concept accurately represents the findings of this thesis, since it reflects staff perspectives of being 'in the right place at the right time' (SA:P1), and highlights the potential of turbulence to either enable or constrain the LFARA, depending on its intensity. When schools in this study experienced optimal turbulence, leaders could prioritise reforming the system in response to stakeholder needs, or environmental change. Additionally, a lack of competing priorities, and a relative stability in the system allowed for the communication and collaboration necessary to address these issues. Both findings were consistent with existing research regarding the need for some stability in order to initiate change (Mulford, 2005, see **Chapter 3**), and the potentially constraining impact of the competing priorities for leaders (Beabout, 2008, see **Chapter 2**). In addition, the findings make a unique contribution to the literature in their exploration of how leadership and leader sense of turbulence is linked to programme adoption. As stated in existing research (Tourish, 2018, see **Chapter 2**), there is a need to explore issues of 'power, control, dissent and resistance' (p.27) in complex perspectives of organisational leadership. In the present study, as discussed in **Chapter 6**, the tensions experienced by leaders were directly related to goal conflict and interwoven with power (of accountability measures over schools) and resistance (of leaders to prioritise long term aims).

Whilst leaders in School A perceived optimal turbulence from the outset of the LFARA process, staff in School B and C described reaching optimal turbulence through the LFARA process itself. In particular, School C provides an example in the WS context of why perceiving 'optimal turbulence' was a necessary part of the LFARA process because optimal turbulence was necessary in order for School C to move from the LFARA having 'fizzled out' to being able to 'catalyse' change. In School C, staff interviews suggested readiness for WS change was initially low due to a combination of structural issues, including a challenging Ofsted report, insufficient specialist support for pupils and staff redundancy.

Leader perceptions of the LFARA were, at first, that the approach was in contrast to targets set by the LA post-Ofsted inspection. Initially, therefore, leaders had low psychological readiness for the LFARA. In the same school, non-leadership staff were highly committed to the LFARA, and did not perceive the same competing pressures as leaders. Thus, pockets of new practice emerged, mostly in extra-curricular or pastoral aspects of the school, but a WS approach was not embedded. A re-audit completed six months later identified a shift in leaders' perceptions as a result of attending a 'celebration event' showcasing the LFARA in other schools. The facilitator and school leaders referred to uniting existing priorities with the LFARA, and subsequently, the facilitator observed the action plan as having been initiated in multiple areas of school practice.

In this example, optimal turbulence was achieved through the perceptions of school leaders about the congruence of the LFARA to existing priorities. Alternatively, changes to inspection and assessment policy beyond school level may potentially contribute to system-wide optimal turbulence. For example, prioritising holistic development and accounting for complexity in assessing school quality may reduce disruption to the system caused by competing priorities.

8.2.3 The Importance of Values as Attractors. Both quantitative and qualitative findings have shown that existing values shared by school staff and as part of school ethos were highly congruent with the aims of the LFARA. Extensive protective factors were already established for pupils and parents and staff peer support was high. Dominant staff values were also already congruent with the concept of resilience underpinning the ARA (Hart & Williams, under review), since they focused on supporting pupils facing adversity to achieve better than expected outcomes. However, due to competing priorities, the notion of building WS resilience was not always at the forefront of daily lived, professional experiences of staff, and especially not in relation to their own resilience. In other words, WS resilience was already an attractor for schools (see **Chapter 3**), but was not the only attractor to alter the system state, competing with the attractor of accountability for legitimate prioritisation in school planning and practice.

The majority of staff perceived workload to be un-manageable, staff reported excessive system turbulence in some schools, and in most schools, staff suggested that inadequate resources and lack of specialist support for pupils and staff restricted school capacity to promote resilience, thus suggesting that most schools were far from the attractor of WS resilience, even though some of the core values were shared.

Where system turbulence was not excessive, leaders were more likely to prioritise the LFARA, thus enabling the amplification of WS resilience as a more dominant attractor than school accountability. In schools in which the LFARA was embedded, leaders were willing to ‘take the risk’ of moving towards a WS resilience approach because existing conditions allowed for the attractor of accountability to become more dormant. For example, in School A, after a successful Ofsted inspection accountability pressure was reduced. School C was originally far from the attractor of WS resilience, but the ‘pull’ of this attractor was amplified when leaders saw evidence in other schools that the LFARA might also help to achieve academic and behavioural outcomes. In this example, school accountability was no less dominant, but WS resilience was a system state seen to be necessary for academic pupil progress. Thus, the concept of WS resilience which the ARA is based on has guided the LFARA process in unifying the attractors of pastoral support and academic outcomes, creating a dominant attractor that combined both aims.

School leaders and facilitators targeted existing shared values and sense of common purpose to amplify the attractor of WS resilience, whilst addressing potential constraints. In this way, systemic transformation was sought as a result of increasing understanding of multiple stakeholder perceptions and developing shared values of resilience. Findings of the present study therefore strongly support existing research that has suggested that values can become powerful attractors that have the capacity to transform the school system (Reigeluth, 2004, see **Chapter 3**). Reigeluth argued that once cultural norms are established amongst key stakeholders, emergent change to behaviour and structures occurs (2004, p.16-17). The process of the LFARA in Schools A and B strongly resonates with Reigeluth’s description of shared values and cultural norms (of WS resilience in this instance), which gathered momentum as an attractor, through multiple ‘leverage points’ (Reigeluth, 2004, p.17, see **Chapter 3**), at which staff motivation and perception of efficacy is reinforced.

Leadership was seen as one example of a leverage point that amplified the attractor of WS resilience and navigated barriers to optimal turbulence, thus enabling the LFARA. Leadership was not a singular function restricted to school leaders, but a diverse set of functions, adopted by different staff, at different points in the LFARA process. Hazy and Uhl Bien’s (2013) five functions of leadership help to illustrate this process (see **Chapter 2**).

Findings suggest that school leaders enacted the ‘generative’ and ‘administrative’ function of leadership, particularly in the early stages of the LFARA. School leaders were perceived to legitimise the LFARA, through setting high aspirations for the project, and encouraging all staff to adopt the approach. Including the approach in formal school policy

and planning, delegating roles and responsibilities (including distributed leadership), and ensuring appropriate resources were seen as ways in which school leaders sustained and built staff engagement. Findings suggest that, especially during training and audit sessions, facilitation staff enacted the ‘information gathering’ and ‘community building’ leadership functions by collecting a wide range of data, clarifying and unifying shared values, increasing communication and trust between multiple stakeholders, and building a sense of community based on the attractor of WS resilience. Later in the LFARA, staff perceived a distribution of all three leadership functions (‘administrative’, ‘community building’, and ‘information gathering’) across all staff, due to a collaborative nature of action planning and implementation. As such, leadership functions have been distributed across all staff in the LFARA, in order to legitimise, amplify and sustain the attractor of WS resilience. The shared functions of leadership in the LFARA process will be referred to henceforth in this thesis as ‘attractor stewardship’.

8.2.4 The Transformation of Constraints to Enablers. Survey findings have shown that staff perceived aspects of school climate to have been transformed through the process of the LFARA. In staff interviews, participants suggested that an explicit focus on challenges of school climate enabled the approach, through increasing the relevance of the intervention to staff needs. Therefore, rather than seeing challenges in the school climate as potential constraints of the LFARA, facilitators and school staff reported that the approach had transformed these aspects into further enablers of WS resilience. This suggests that the LFARA may increase school readiness for change and was evident in all three school-based examples. The three ways in which the LFARA process was experienced by staff (as ‘embedded’, ‘catalysing change’ and ‘fizzling out’) suggest varying degrees of readiness that can be influenced by continued engagement in the LFARA.

It was, therefore, a unique finding of this research that aspects of school climate identified in existing literature as constraints, were perceived by staff in the process of the LFARA to ultimately enable the WS approach. The concept of building resilience across the school community (from the ARA) resulted in an explicit focus on addressing adversity for staff in the LFARA process. Although many schools already had high levels of support in place for pupils, staff resilience was identified as an area for development across the county, particularly in relation to workload, communication and leadership support. Rather than staff adversity (including lack of time and high workload) being perceived as a constraint, a focus

on building staff resilience was seen to increase the perceived need and relevance of the LFARA.

SPSC_{T2} results indicated increased participative decision making, more supportive leadership and reduced workload, whilst staff interview data highlighted improvements to communication and information sharing. These aspects of school climate have been identified by existing literature (outlined in **Chapter 2** and **3**) to enable a WS approach. As such, findings suggest that the LFARA was perceived to have improved school climate in such a way that may have subsequently increased readiness for change.

The concept of ‘organisational readiness for change’ has been described as both a psychological (Weiner, 2009) and structural (Bloom, 2000) concept (see **Chapter 2**). Findings from staff interviews in this study suggested that readiness for the LFARA was a result of complex interaction *between* structural and psychological factors. Staff suggested that these factors were dynamically interrelated, which is consistent with an understanding of the school as a nested and complex system. For example, budget constraints at national level were related to a county-level redundancy process, which was then seen to have negatively impacted school climate, manifesting in individual fear, anxiety and frustration.

The extent to which system change at county and national level impacted school readiness was relative to context. For example, more references were made by staff to the negative impact of structural change in smaller schools with fewer staff. Such local variation is an important contextual variable often missed by generalised regional analysis, as discussed in relation to the North-South divide in the introduction and in **Chapter 4**. Outcomes of the inspection process (even if the same inspection grade was given), also varied. In School E, for example, a reinforcing feedback loop was established, in which post-inspection reform led to improvements in school climate and staff morale. Similar inspection feedback was given to staff in School C, although, in this instance, a reduction in staff morale followed, partly because the feedback was considered unfair. This multiplicity of varied local outcomes from the same cause has previously been discussed by Van Der Steen and colleagues (2013, see **Chapter 3**) as a feature of complex causality in school systems.

As existing research has proposed, organisational readiness is the result of interaction of a receptive *context for* change and *content of* change (Weiner, 2009). In other words, adequate resources and supportive leadership were enabling factors, but they did not alone constitute school readiness for the LFARA. Perceived need, relevance and efficacy of the approach also contributed to the commitment of leaders and other staff. Furthermore, schools could exhibit increased readiness in one area, and decreased readiness in another. For

example, at the time of interviews in School B, there was acceptance of the need to improve communication (contributing to readiness), but resistance to establishing ‘solution circles’ (a barrier to readiness). By the time School B completed the re-audit, readiness to implement the latter strategy had increased. Readiness could have been improved by a reduction in stress for pastoral staff (who ran ‘solution circle’ training), as the redundancy process had ended.

Researchers adopting a complexity perspective propose that readiness for system transformation is influenced by not only changes to the external environment, but also by existing aspects of the school system *and* the interaction of the two (Joseph & Reigeluth, 2010, see **Chapter 2** summary). This assertion has been strongly supported by the findings of the present study. For example, in School B, readiness was increased because turbulence caused by the redundancy process had resulted in increased staff needs, which the LFARA was perceived to meet. In addition, certain aspects of existing school climate enabled the LFARA. For example, having shared staff values that were congruent with the ARA was cited as an enabling factor in every school.

8.2.5 Emergent change in school climate. The LFARA has been perceived by staff as a reflective school improvement process resulting in emergent change. As the school system re-organised in response to increased feedback, changes were made to the existing system structure that moved the school towards WS resilience as an attractor.

Central to the process of emergent change in the school system appears to have been the role of generating and sustaining feedback. In particular, the LFARA audit process was perceived by staff in all schools to increase feedback about the school system. Gathering multiple stakeholder perceptions of school climate was seen to improve understanding of existing needs and strengths, as well as generate momentum for change. Staff suggested that the audit process was a key enabling factor of the LFARA process, echoing previous research that suggests evaluation methods can combine with implementation to create powerful feedback loops (Meadows, 2000; Kearney et al., 2017, see **Chapter 3**).

When changes were implemented, staff reported observing a positive effect of these changes in practice, which sustained and built further momentum. The results of the SPSC_{T2}, which were shared with schools, demonstrated an improvement in perceptions of school climate, which facilitators suggested could reinforce staff commitment. In this way, increasing commitment of staff over time was achieved through multiple waves of reinforcing feedback that demonstrated the need for the LFARA, and the efficacy of the approach. In two schools, a high level of consistency of staff responses, and multiple

references to the embedded nature of the approach, suggest that a ‘critical mass’ (Lemke & Sabelli, see **Chapter 2**) may have been formed, potentially increasing the sustainability of the LFARA in these schools. In addition to increased staff commitment to the LFARA, specific aspects of the school climate also improved through reinforcing feedback. For example, in one school, an increase in communication between staff of different role types led to increased collaboration, which in turn improved sharing of information and resources.

Staff also reported emergent change in pupil behaviour that appears to result from reinforcing feedback loops. For example, an under-confident child was reported as having an increased sense of purpose through being a ‘buddy’ to a younger child, which staff perceived to improve her self-esteem and subsequently increase her confidence in peer interaction. In each of these examples, reinforcing feedback has driven the school system further towards whole-school resilience, through amplifying staff perceptions of the efficacy of the LFARA.

The concept of optimal turbulence has been used to describe readiness conditions that enable the LFARA in the nested nature of the school system. The concept can be seen to relate to reinforcing feedback, since initially light or moderate turbulence (increased pupil, staff or parent needs) could be amplified by the audit process, further de-stabilising the system and allowing for change to emerge. During the LFARA celebration event, organised for schools to share the impact of the LFARA, positive stories of changes implemented in the LFARA process counteracted the balancing feedback dynamic in some schools adopted in order to preserve ‘status quo’ during times of extreme turbulence (for example, School C). Facilitation staff subsequently reported that an increasing number of schools choosing to participate in the LFARA, triggered by the awareness and understanding generated by the celebration event. This has resulted in a larger number of schools who planned to attend the next celebration event, and so the reinforcing dynamic appears to continue, as with a ‘word of mouth’ feedback loop.

Many different examples of emergent change in the school system were provided in **Chapter 6**, and are supported by survey findings, which show improved staff perceptions of school climate. An example of change that emerged from aspects of the existing system was the introduction of ‘Stay and Play’ sessions in School A. Communication with parents was well established in the school, and pupils already had extensive literacy support, but staff identified school-community collaboration and parental resilience as areas for potential development. Themed stay and play sessions that supported both parents and pupils could therefore be seen as an emergent property in School A’s system. In addition, in both survey and interview findings, staff anticipated further change to emerge as the LFARA was

embedded across the WS over time. For example, staff in School B suggested that improved relationships with parents and carers would promote resilience in staff, parents and pupils, which they expected would affect academic outcomes. Therefore, small changes in localised parts of the system were perceived to create a ‘ripple effect’ that lead to system wide patterns of behaviour. This is similar to White and Levin’s suggestion, based on empirical findings, that change at classroom level can ‘bubble up’ to create school level change (2016, p.75).

Adopting a complexity perspective assumes a multi-dimensional, dynamic and iterative conception of causality (Mason, 2008, see **Chapter 3**). Therefore, we cannot understand change in schools in terms of a predictable and linear ‘input and output’ process. Neither can it be assumed that change can only be initiated ‘top down’. As previous studies have suggested (White & Levin, 2016, for example), small changes can also lead to emergent properties that redefine the school system over time. In the findings of the present study, staff perceived change to emerge as a result of increased feedback, and to involve a complex process of self-organisation. Previous research has warned that targeting change at one level of the school system (for example classroom level) is likely to be ‘ephemeral’ (Kozleski, 2009, see **Chapter 3**) unless attempts to initiate change are co-ordinated and sustained. Indicating the likely sustainability of the LFARA, staff perceived that structural change at school and county level was co-ordinated and mutually reinforcing. In order to sustain momentum for the LFARA, additional policy and strategy change could be required, as is discussed in **Chapter 9**.

The challenge of explaining and modelling complex systems and processes has been widely discussed, and efforts to do so with complete accuracy will be inherently flawed, as Richardson summarised (see **Chapter 3**). However, embracing such limitations arguably frees the researcher from an imposed reductionism that is equally flawed in its over simplification of complex reality. Commonly identified enabling factors are presented in **Figure 8.1**, a model of LFARA readiness, including those factors initially identified as constraints (for example, budget cuts), that later resulted in increased acceptance of the need for the LFARA. The figure displays these factors across multiple system levels.

Factors at each level of the nested school system interacted, resulting in reinforcing or checking feedback. Mixed method findings suggest that school leader prioritisation of the LFARA, shared staff values (that were congruent with the LFARA aims) and a perceived need for the LFARA were the most commonly experienced enabling factors. These findings were not surprising and are consistent with research explored in the literature in **Chapters 2**

and 3. Across all schools, structural change including reduced budget, service reduction, redundancy and increased workload were perceived as significant sources of adversity for staff. However, a unique finding of the study was that these aspects were also seen to enable the LFARA. This was because staff perceived the LFARA to help to tackle staff adversity, thus further increasing the perceived relevance of the approach, especially considering local disputes regarding working conditions and redundancies. Through increasing opportunities for open communication and staff support, the LFARA was perceived to improve school climate and thus increase readiness for WS change.

Figure 8.1 Commonly identified enablers and constraints of the LFARA across schools in the sub-sample.

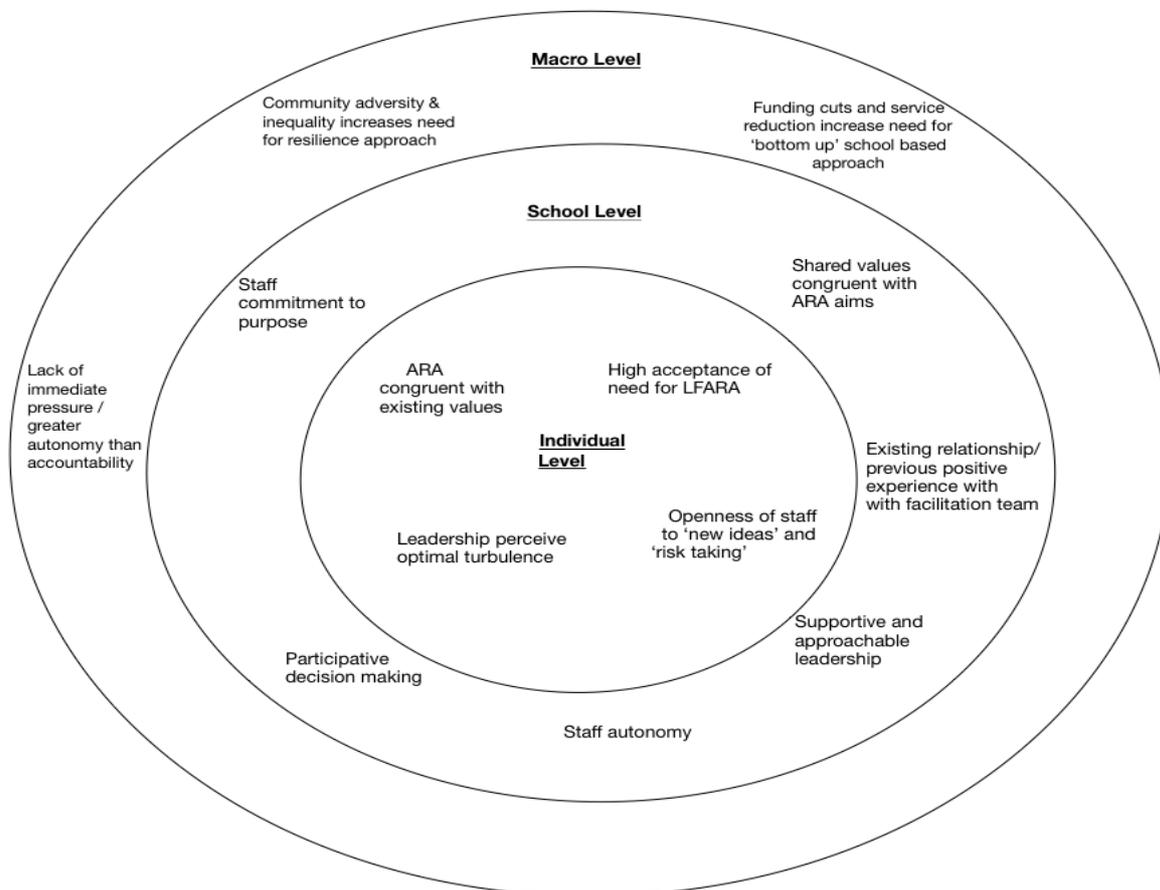


Figure 8.2 depicts the process of the LFARA using the metaphor of a tree to represent the strong influence of existing conditions to determine the potential for growth and change. In the first phase of the LFARA (training), school leaders have the potential to steward the attractor of WS resilience, based on their legitimisation and prioritisation of the approach. Findings underpin this conceptualisation since existing system conditions were

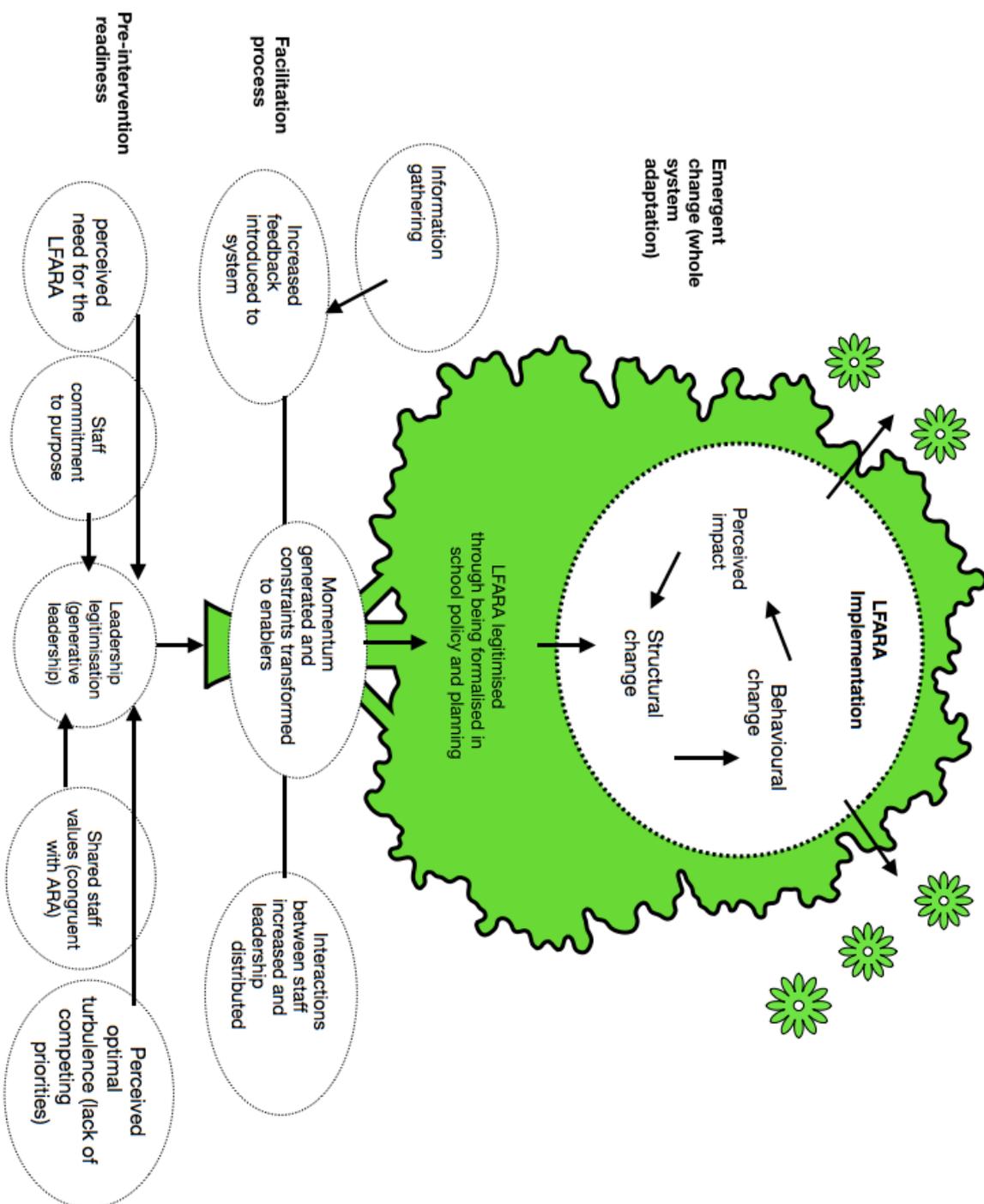
perceived to both influence leader prioritisation and direct the focus of the LFARA. In **figure 8.2**, aspects of the existing school system are symbolically represented as roots of a tree. The delicate balance of optimal turbulence provides the ‘fertile’ conditions for change (enough stability in conjunction with perceived need and efficacy). At this pre-intervention phase of the LFARA, findings suggest that school leaders could be the hinge that ‘opened the door’ to change or initiated further readiness development.

As schools moved through the audit sessions, the facilitator assumed the attractor steward role. Facilitators gathered comprehensive information about how the school was functioning from multiple stakeholder perspectives. During this phase, tools used to audit the school created feedback, generating momentum for change. In addition, the audit process helped schools to adapt the LFARA to the needs within specific school contexts. Data provided from staff and pupil surveys supported schools to make context-specific meaning of the LFARA aim, which was to build WS resilience, in order to ultimately improve outcomes for all pupils and especially those facing disadvantage.

Both the ARA audit tools (available online and adapted by the LA) and research evaluation tools were utilised by staff as mechanisms to increase feedback and generate momentum for change. This was critical to school readiness preparation, especially in contexts in which excessive turbulence was perceived as a barrier to change. In these schools, survey findings helped to increase staff perception of the LFARA’s relevance and potential efficacy.

Future iterations of the LFARA are represented in **Figure 8.2** through the metaphor of seeds falling from the tree. Change that emerges from the LFARA may lead to the school system moving closer to the attractor of WS resilience and involving evolution through multiple system states, based on the changing needs of the school community. This phase of the LFARA process was hinted at in Schools B and C’s re-audits. For example, the changing needs of staff in School B (in a second wave of redundancy) created a new focus on increasing staff morale. In both schools, momentum for change seemed to be increasing rather than decreasing, and the LFARA, as it is embedded across the WS and LA, continued to change the overall system.

Figure 8.2 Whole-school adaptation as whole-school resilience building in the LFARA process.



8.3 School-based Examples

School-based examples are provided in their WS context in order to give some sense of the process of the LFARA and how it interacted with school climate in each case. As described in the introduction to this chapter, the selection of each of these examples was based on having identified three ways in which school context tended to interact with the LFARA, of which these schools are representative.

8.3.1 School A: Embedding the LFARA.

8.3.1.1. Optimal Turbulence in School A.

Staff responses suggest that in spite of identifying some challenges in school climate, staff commitment to the LFARA was high in School A at the point of engaging in training. In this school-based example, two potentially constraining factors were identified by staff. These were: high workload, and staff uncertainty in relation to the redundancy process. Both of these factors were reflective of wider system issues that were not specific to School A, and, as such, were reported by staff in most participating schools. Although supportive leadership was recognised in the staff survey, facilitator interviews suggest that communication between staff of different role types had been negatively affected by the redundancy process.

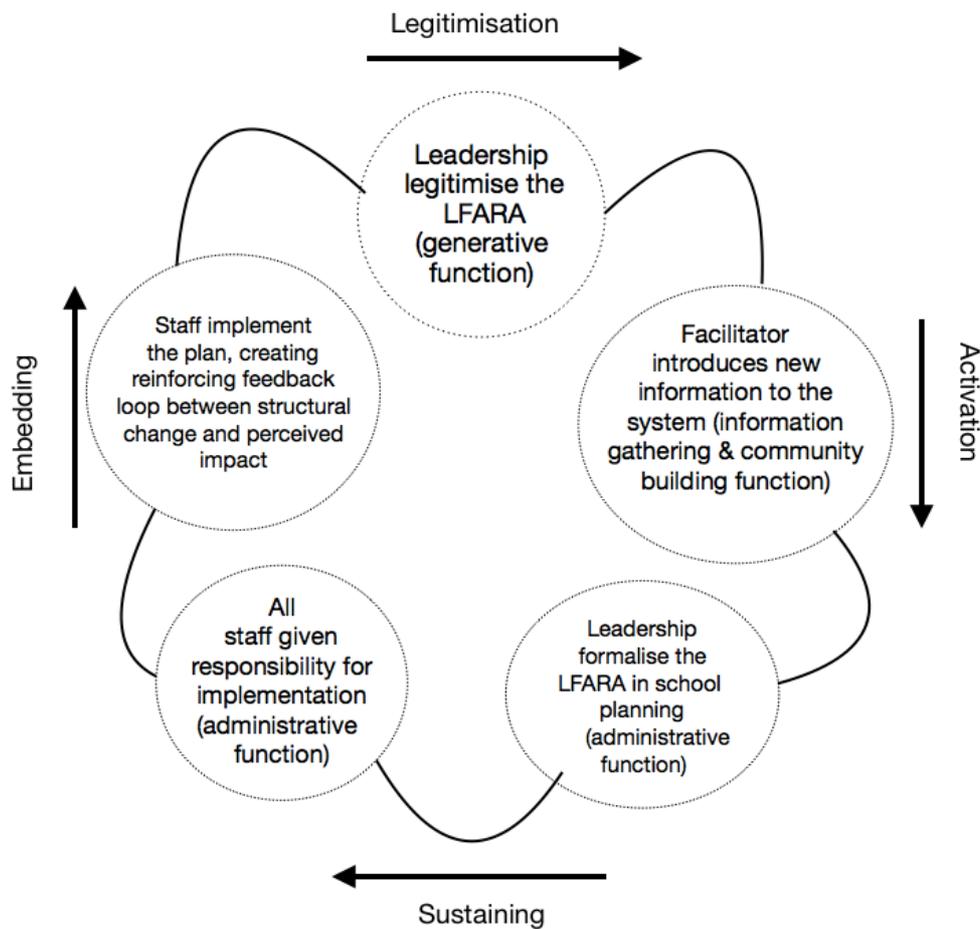
Staff reported experiencing increased workload and little impact for pupils following interventions adopted by School A prior to the LFARA. This had resulted in some scepticism of the LFARA, particularly for more experienced staff. SPSCT1 results indicate that existing workload was already high, potentially increasing concern about any additional work, and background stress resulting from the redundancy process created additional pressure for staff.

In spite of some challenges facing staff, school leaders perceived School A to be in a state of optimal turbulence (Gross, 1998) because there was decreased short-term pressure following a successful Ofsted inspection and good assessment results, which had enabled the school to prioritise a broader range of pupil and staff needs. Staff suggested that this enabled prioritisation of the LFARA, which was seen as a preventative, long-term and holistic approach. All staff were involved in the decision to engage in the LFARA, which was then included in formal school planning, thereby increasing staff engagement through shared responsibility.

8.3.1.2. Value Based Attractors in School A. Staff referred to a strong sense of shared values, which focused on holistic pupil development through nurturing school experiences. The school was perceived to provide multiple protective factors against high levels of community disadvantage, mostly in establishing a sense of belonging and broadening life opportunities through academic success. Staff described the school, for example, as ‘an extended family’(SA:P2) for pupils, and ‘these children’s one chance’(SA:P1). Furthermore, staff felt that communication between staff, parents and pupils was effective and integral to their school community. As such, both the nature and purpose of schooling in School A can be seen as highly compatible with the systemic approach to resilience building proposed by the authors of the ARA. The LFARA was therefore perceived (pre-LFARA implementation) as relevant as an extension of school purpose to build resilience for ‘life beyond school’.

In School A, leadership was identified as an existing strength of school climate that was perceived to significantly influence the extent to which the LFARA was legitimised, prioritised and embedded across the WS. At the pre-intervention stage of the LFARA, staff in School A perceived senior leader prioritisation to dictate whole staff commitment. This activation of the attractor of WS resilience involved ‘generative’ and ‘administrative leadership’ leadership functions (Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2013). School A’s leaders could be seen as ‘gatekeepers’ that initially legitimised the LFARA and generated staff ‘buy-in’. This legitimisation was necessary to ‘release the potential’ of multiple stakeholders within the organisation (Keene, 2000, p.17), which was sustained through formalising the approach in school planning.

Figure 8.3 Attractor stewardship in School A during the LFARA process.



The facilitator for School A also acted as an attractor steward during the LFARA training and audit process, by enacting ‘information gathering’ and ‘community building’ leadership functions (Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2013). By linking the value of WS resilience to contextual need arising from staff adversity, the facilitator was perceived by staff to establish and strengthen the attractor of resilience as a cultural value. As cultural norms were adopted, all staff had responsibility for actualising proposed changes, through school wide self-organisation. In **Figure 8.3**, increasing legitimisation and distributed responsibility for the LFARA in School A is shown. School leaders, the facilitator and all staff can be seen to have acted as ‘stewards’ of this attractor at different phases, enacting diverse functions of leadership that sustained momentum in the direction of the attractor.

8.3.1.3. Transforming Constraining to Enabling Factors in School A. Prior to the LFARA, there were six aspects of the existing school system that staff perceived to increase readiness for change and enable the LFARA. These factors were: (i) supportive leadership, (ii) shared staff values that were congruent with the ARA, (iii) increased staff autonomy (post inspection), (iv) identified need for the LFARA for pupils, (v) strong links with parents and carers, and (vi) existing relationship with the facilitator. These enabling factors were also dynamically interrelated. For example, the perceived need for the LFARA was also related to an existing school-facilitator link and prior experience of the efficacy of LA support.

Findings suggest that the leadership team in the school was perceived as available and approachable. Staff perceived collegial trust, effective communication and shared core values as strengths of school climate that enabled the LFARA.

Lastly, the existing link between the facilitator and school staff was an enabling factor. The school leadership team had established and trusting relationships with the LFARA facilitator, and felt that previous LA intervention work had been beneficial for the school. This resulted in school leaders having positive expectations of the LFARA, and being more willing to prioritise the approach. The facilitator's extensive knowledge of the school context also helped the facilitator to adapt the LFARA to school priorities ('Sarah knew how to support and develop us' (SA:P1)), which staff perceived to increase the relevance of the approach.

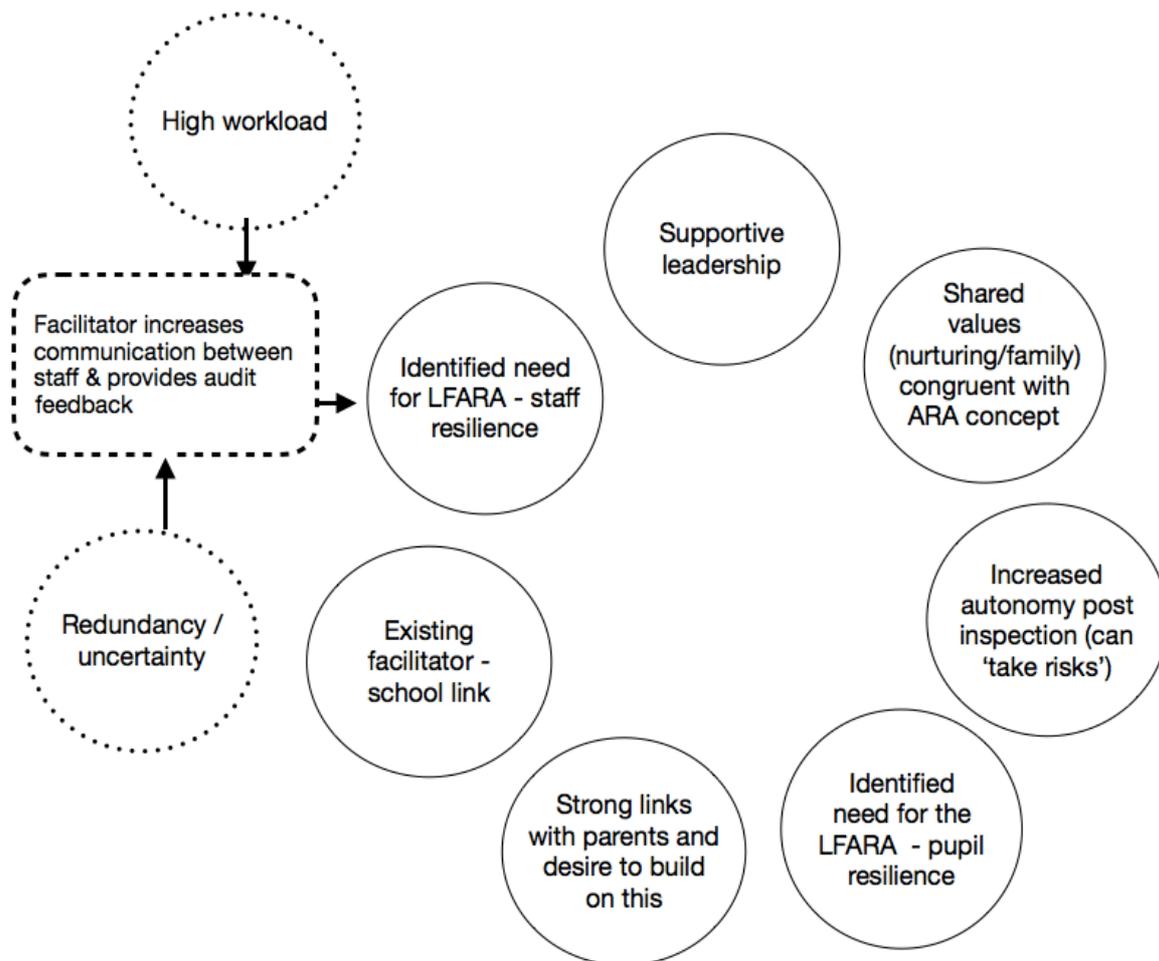
Staff in School A identified high workload and uncertainty regarding redundancy and employment conditions as the most significant challenges to school climate and as potential constraints of the WS approach. However, in the early phases of the LFARA process, the facilitator managed concerns about excessive workload by emphasising the strengths-based and reciprocal concept of the LFARA. A perspective shift occurred in which staff understood the LFARA to be mutually beneficial for staff and pupils. SPSCT1 results facilitated the identification of strengths in the school climate, including professional interaction, and high staff sense of work connection. Potential constraints (workload and staff uncertainty) were positioned as needs that the LFARA could address through a WS approach, drawing on enabling factors as the toolkit that staff would use to engineer their response.

The audit and action planning process facilitated 'community building' (Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2013) by increasing interaction across staff groups and focussing on common values, thus helping to buffer against the recent 'polarisation' resulting from the redundancy process.

Findings suggest that the most challenging aspects of school climate actually *increased* perceived need for the LFARA, and were also perceived to have improved post-

LFARA, thus implying school readiness had also increased. The ARA is based on a conceptualisation of resilience in which overcoming adversity involves transforming aspects of this adversity (Hart et al., 2013, p.31; 2016, p.3). Consistent with this definition of resilience, staff reported that in LFARA training, a strong emphasis was placed on building resilience across the school community by transforming aspects of adversity. In relation to staff, the facilitator used the SPSCT1 survey to discuss aspects of school climate (including workload) that could improve staff wellbeing, and school leaders made staff wellbeing the focus of the LFARA action plan. These ‘leverage points’ (Reigeluth, 2004, p.17) helped to reframe staff perceptions of the LFARA as helping to tackle workload, as opposed to adding to it. In order to move the system closer to WS resilience, staff adversity in School A was not controlled for, but directly addressed by the facilitator, in order to build momentum for change. This approach mirrors existing research in which the creative potential of organisational challenges is emphasised, rather than seeing them as avoidable and negative influences on programme fidelity (Haynes, 2015, p.127, see **Chapter 3**). In **Figure 8.4** below, constraints (represented by dotted lines) were tackled by facilitator actions (represented by the dashed line), resulting in an additional enabling factors (solid lines), and thus, increased relevance of the LFRA for staff and the school.

Figure 8.4. Constraints of the LFARA that were tackled by facilitator actions, resulting in increased enabling factors in School A.



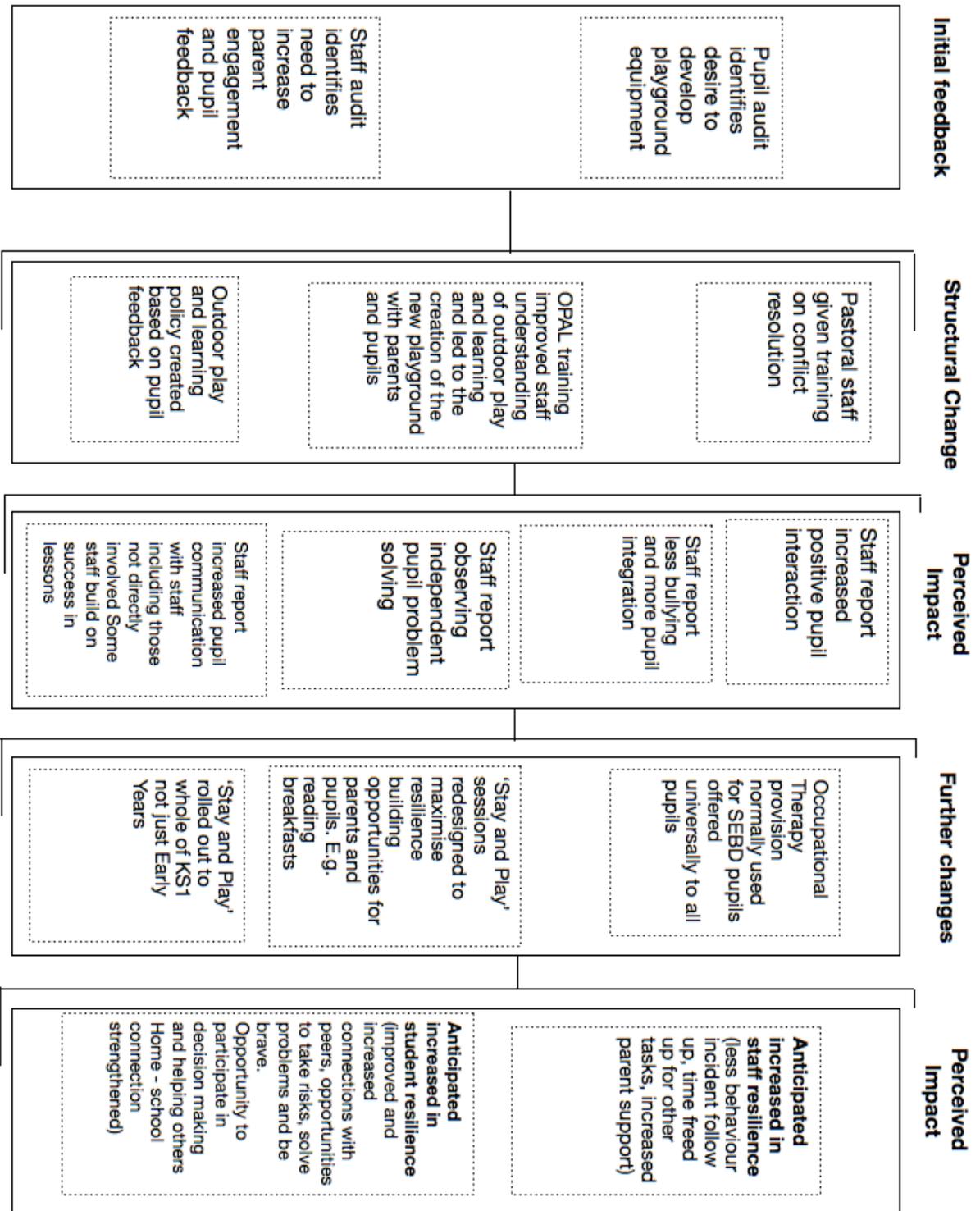
8.3.1.4 Emergent change in School A. The LFARA action plan for School A included: a focus on staff wellbeing, outdoor learning opportunities for resilience building, fostering resilience through teaching strategies, creating safe spaces and improving parent and carer engagement. The action plan reflected the conceptual underpinning of the ARA, in its aim ‘to look at the whole child, the bigger picture and the social, emotional needs of children as well as a drive for academic success’ (see **Appendix VIII** for full action plan). The action plan aimed to enhance positive relationships between staff and develop trusting relationships between staff and pupils, reflecting the set of practices in the ‘belonging’

category of the ARA resilience framework. The plan also acknowledged the need to improve staff awareness of opportunities for learning in outdoor play, and their understanding of the drivers of challenging behaviour. Training was enlisted (to use the language of the ARA framework) from the LA, and local community interest company (OPAL), and a national charity (Adoption UK).

Senior leaders incorporated the LFARA action plan into School A's formal school development plan (SDP). This meant that the LFARA was formally linked to policy and strategy planning in all areas of school development including the curriculum, behaviour, wellbeing and assessment. The formal school development plan dictated the responsibilities and priorities for all staff, establishing sustainability through collective accountability and distributed leadership. As part of the school development plan, the LFARA introduced changes to policy in the following areas: outdoor learning, pupil behaviour, parent and carer engagement, SEN, and staff wellbeing.

Multiple changes were reported in the school structure, reportedly having a subsequent influence on behaviour and culture. Overall, policy change focusing on relationship building and increased communication were perceived to have led to the most noticeable changes in practice. **Figure 8.5** represents this process in relation to the outdoor learning policy.

Figure 8.5 Outdoor play and learning policy and related change in School A



The first column shows how the information gathered from the staff and pupil audit triggered the need for policy change. Staff training was provided on conflict resolution at playtime, and an outdoor learning policy was created. Structural changes occurred episodically, as a feedback loop was established in which the more impact staff perceived, the more structural change was proposed. As a result of merging two separate playgrounds, staff perceived more positive peer interaction and integration between pupils with enhanced mainstream provision (EMP) and their peers. This momentum was accelerated by offering OT provision normally reserved for EMP universally for all pupils. The second wave of change was linked to policy development in other areas, integrating multiple strategies to form a co-ordinated approach. Staff perceived increased parent engagement through their involvement in designing and building the playground. Subsequently, further opportunities for parent and carer participation were established in the curriculum, through re-designing ‘stay and play’ sessions. Sessions were extended to Key Stage One (KS1) (previously just Early Years) and targeted increasing both parent and pupil resilience. For example, workshops about supporting literacy at home that aimed to increase both caregiver and pupil understanding.

Areas of focus initially thought to be distinct, therefore, began to overlap and interact once structural changes had taken place and the LFARA began to integrate school practice. Across all changes reported by staff in School A, a pattern emerged of five key areas of perceived impact which were: increased communication, improved behaviour, decreased workload expectations, increased parental engagement, and increased pupil peer interaction. Whilst **Figure 8.5** depicted one aspect of policy change and showed how it ‘rippled out’, the figure provided in **Appendix X** takes a broad view of the impact of the LFARA across the WS including five areas of policy change that built momentum for a WS resilience approach.

In response to adversity for staff, as highlighted in the LFARA audit, a staff wellbeing policy was created. The new policy included regular whole staff training on the systemic importance of wellbeing and resilience. The policy also outlined the shared responsibility of all staff to reduce and manage school-wide workload, through collaboration and distribution of tasks. Lastly, the policy initiated changes to other aspects of school practice such as marking, planning and behaviour management. Staff perceived these changes to significantly reduce workload and stress. This impact was evident in both interview responses and survey data, in which the mean score for the ‘workload’ subscale significantly increased.

As the LFARA was embedded across the WS, there was a change in perspective about the concept of resilience itself across all staff, but especially for leaders. Initially, resilience was understood by staff in the school mostly as an individual capacity. However, following the LFARA training, staff defined resilience as a quality of an organisation or community to adapt to meet the needs of its members. In addition, notions of the boundary of the school organisation shifted. Staff have initiated contact with several other schools to form a ‘community of practice’ or ‘hub’ in which they share ideas, discuss what is working well in different contexts, collaborate and provide peer support.

8.3.2 School B: The LFARA as a Catalyst for Change.

8.3.2.1 Optimal Turbulence in School B. Staff in School B perceived an optimal turbulence resulting from a recent positive Ofsted report of which the school leader said afforded additional flexibility and freedom to prioritise aims beyond academic outcomes. Non-leading staff also noted that the willingness of leaders to formally prioritise the LFARA increase staff ‘buy-in’ across the school because all staff shared responsibility to actualize the LFARA aims and felt measures of school performance was tied to the LFARA process. Staff felt that leaders supported the use of time and resources in LFARA activities and that there was a good balance of pupil and staff directed actions. This was important because as with School A, redundancy processes had created additional staff adversity which was already high due to challenges faced by pupils and their families.

8.3.2.2 Value Based Attractors in School B. Staff in School B described their shared ethos as intrinsically linked to the adversity in the local community. Therefore, a shared aim was to support pupils to overcome barriers they face. Professional values were perceived to

buffer against the challenges staff faced, although staff reported increased workload related to supporting pupils and their parents and carers.

The LFARA was perceived as highly relevant and necessary. In addition to the adversity pupils face outside of school, one member of staff suggested that the pressure of assessment in school also posed a risk to pupil resilience. The participant referred to a relatively able group ‘just crumbling under the pressure of SATs’ (SB:V) in the previous academic year, perceiving that this was caused by a narrow focus on academic outcomes. Therefore, the need to address social and emotional aspects of learning was accepted by all staff, both for pupil health and wellbeing and their academic outcomes.

Similarly to School A, attractor stewardship was shared between school leaders and facilitation staff in training and audit phases of the LFARA. Staff perceived SLT to legitimise the approach, and the facilitator to strengthen community values and interaction. Staff sustained the ‘pull’ of WS resilience as a value-based attractor, through shared responsibility for the LFARA implementation. As an extension of this process, staff also reported that pupils helped to embed the LFARA, and build momentum for ongoing change. As part of circle time, pupils were given increased opportunities to participate in decision making processes, resulting in the co-production of displays and playground equipment, and collaborative assembly planning.

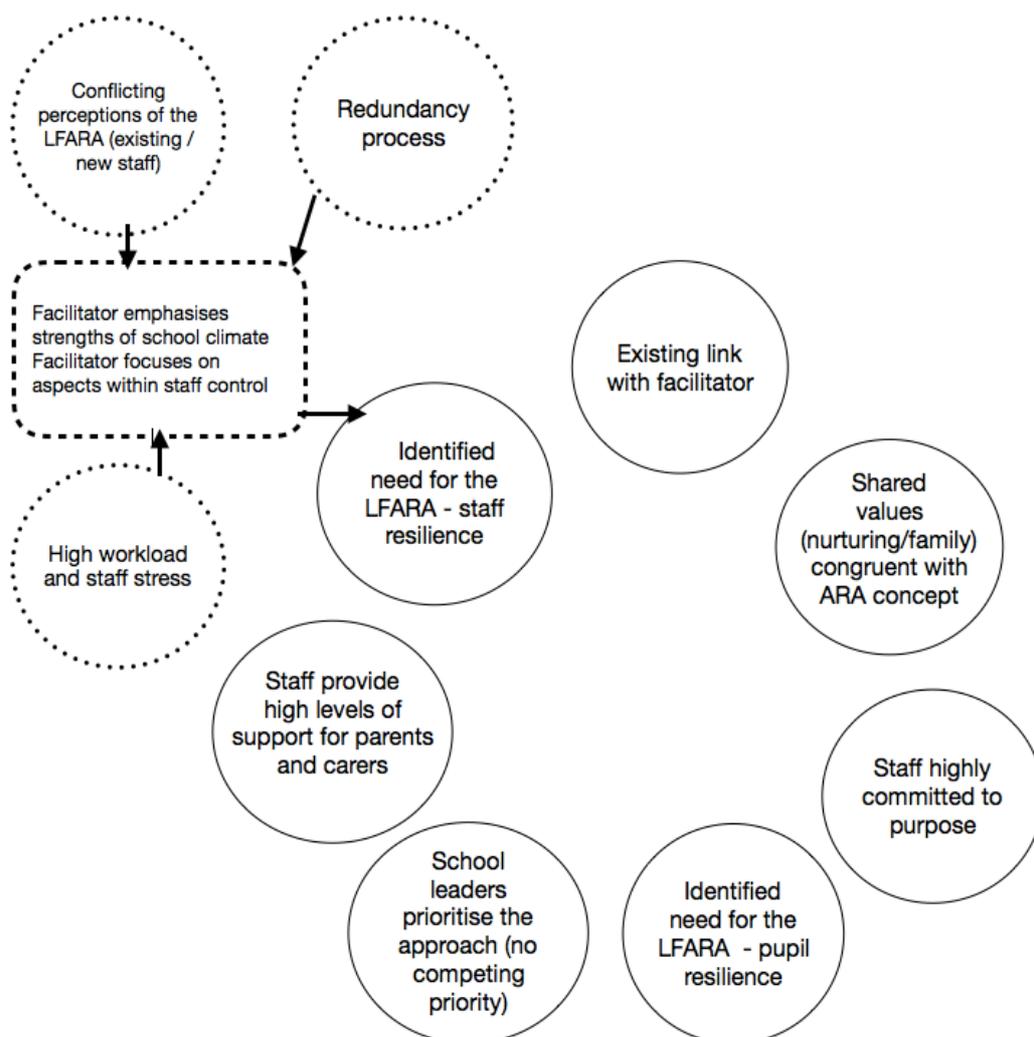
8.3.2.3 Transforming Constraining to Enabling Factors in School B. The six aspects of the existing school climate that increased readiness for the LFARA in School B were: i) existing link with the facilitator, ii) shared staff values, iii) commitment to professional purpose, iv) school leader prioritisation, v) identified need for the LFARA, to increase pupil resilience, and vi) existing support for parents and carers.

In terms of constraining factors, staff in School B referred to high workload and staff stress as a result of offering parents and pupils a consistently high level of support. In addition, staff morale was considered to have been negatively impacted by a sense of powerlessness during the redundancy process. Lastly, the diverse mix of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and experienced school staff had varying expectations of the LFARA. Newly qualified teachers reported feeling optimistic and open to the LFARA, whilst long serving teaching assistants said that they were initially more resistant.

In the LFARA process, School B’s facilitator focused on increasing communication between staff of different role types. Staff feedback, both in interview and survey findings, suggests that this approach was highly successful. In particular, staff perceived the LFARA

as an opportunity to untangle issues beyond staff control from those within staff control. Staff perceived increased communication to reduce conflict between school leaders and other staff, which had become strained due to the redundancy process. During the audit phase, staff survey feedback was highly influential, creating a reinforcing feedback loop that led to further improvements in staff communication, which then further enabled the LFARA. Staff perceptions shifted during training sessions regarding the impact of the LFARA on staff capacity. Staff initially perceived the LFARA as additional work, but suggested that increased communication, established by the facilitator, helped to address current adversity for staff to some extent. This increased the relevance and perceived need for the LFARA, by linking the approach to staff as well as pupil resilience.

Figure 8.6. Constraints of the LFARA that were tackled by facilitator actions, resulting in increased enabling factors in School B.



In spite of constraining factors in School B's context, the LFARA process was perceived by staff to harness turbulence to generate momentum for change. In this resilience building process, School B initiated change intended primarily for one stakeholder group (staff) that was perceived to have a positive effect for at least one other group (pupils and possibly parents). The nested nature of the school system could result in a 'ripple effect' in which the impact increases as the LFARA is embedded further.

8.3.2.4 Emergent Change in School B. Not all staff from the leadership team attended the first audit session, which was perceived both positively and negatively by staff. Staff acknowledged that a lack of school leader (SLT) presence resulted in more open communication. Conversely, they expressed concern that this might have indicated low SLT prioritisation. In the second audit session, all staff attended. The anonymity of surveys, in combination with leader attendance, was considered by both facilitator and staff to create an important breakthrough. Areas identified for development included communication between teaching assistants (TAs) and teaching staff, and communication between TAs and SLT. Staff morale was reported to have increased through the LFARA audit process, due to the focus on strengths of shared values, and the increased communication.

All three staff from School B perceived the LFARA process to increase awareness of school climate. The normally fast pace of school life was perceived to restrict opportunities for such reflection. In addition, one member of staff suggested that reflection about school is not always authentic, due to a pervasive culture of accountability. Both SLT and TAs perceived that 'frustrating' misunderstandings were worked through in the LFARA process, due to more open communication. Staff perceived this to enable greater unity and commitment to a shared school vision, based on WS resilience.

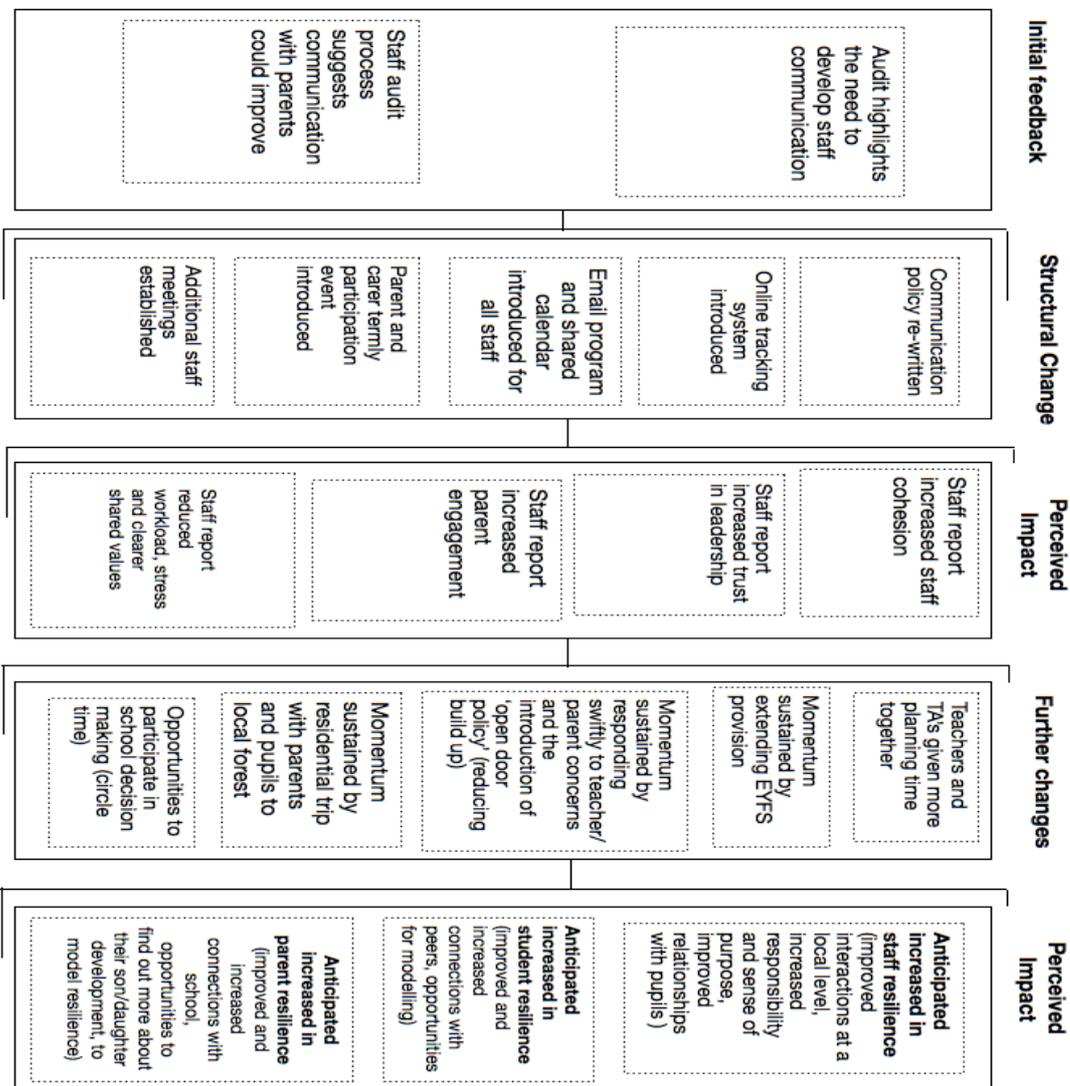
The action plan for School B reflected the need to build resilience for both staff and pupils, distinguishing between intended actions for each group. However, interview findings suggest that these changes were inextricably linked, and had mutual and reciprocal benefits for both groups. Staff of all three role types reported changes in terms of the school structure. This included an OPAL play area, new tracking systems, additional meetings, making provision for SEND pupils universally available, and curricula changes. Resultant behavioural change was perceived to include more open communication, and increased positive interaction.

Significant changes to leadership were perceived to have occurred as a result of both the LFARA training and audit process, and the implementation of the action plan. Two staff

perceived an improvement in communication between leaders and other staff, including increased approachability and listening. In addition, two staff suggested an increased distribution of leadership responsibility. One member of staff highlighted how the LFARA had fostered distributed leadership through encouraging collaborative action planning, which was reported to have become part of daily practice, thus decreasing staff workload.

In **Figure 8.7**, an example of change introduced in School B as a result of the LFARA is provided, specifically focusing on communication. As can be seen in the figure, the communication policy resulted in increased staff cohesion, better communication between staff and increased parent engagement. Each aspect involved improving existing systems or increasing existing provision, thus being perceived to ‘reignite’ existing practice or ‘build on’ what was already in place. As a result, further structural change was initiated that further embedded the LFARA across the WS. For example, circle time was introduced for pupils in order to improve peer communication and increase ‘pupil voice’, and parents were invited to join their children and staff on a residential trip in order to develop positive home-school links.

Figure 8.7. Communication Policy Change Introduced in School B.



Overall, staff targeted five areas of policy change, shown in the first row of dotted line boxes. These were: (i) Personal, social and health education; (ii) information sharing systems; (iii) outdoor learning; (iv) parent engagement; and (v) special needs (SEND) nurture provision. In each policy area, distinct structural changes (represented by blue boxes) were introduced. Staff then identified five areas of resultant behavioural change, as well as the *interaction of these changes*. The five perceived aspects of behavioural change were: 1) increased pupil independence, 2) increased pupil integration and positive peer interaction, 3) improved staff communication and improvements in staff wellbeing, 4) increased parental engagement and 5), improvements in pupil behaviour. Further changes built upon these

outcomes to accelerate the extent to which they were embedded across school practice for multiple stakeholders.

Interview and survey findings support the assertion that staff perceptions of the climate of School B has been positively influenced by the LFARA. Staff described a change in culture including improved wellbeing of staff, which was also perceived to influence pupils. LA staff also reported that the school had made fewer external referrals since the LFARA.

In spite of potentially challenging conditions in School B's context, the LFARA process was perceived by most staff to catalyse change in the school system by harnessing turbulence to generate momentum for change. One member of staff hypothesised in their interview that change would emerge as the LFARA is 'given time to embed', now that the LFARA had catalysed change in the system.

In contrast, one participant was pessimistic about sustaining a focus on staff resilience, especially given high workload and in anticipation of other priorities. Some actions proposed on the action plan (that had not been implemented by interview stage), had now been implemented, according to the school re-audit (completed December 2017). These changes included the introduction of 'solution circle' time in staff meetings, SLT meetings that focused on staff morale, and 'a day in the life of' (where staff exchange roles, aiming to develop empathy). The LFARA re-audit stated that staff turnover was halted post-LFARA, indicating that the action plan aimed to increase staff retention had been highly successful. However, the facilitator noted that since the interviews, the school had a challenging Ofsted report. There were some positives in the Ofsted report. It highlighted positive aspects of the school climate that may have been supported by the LFARA, including school engagement with external and LA services, and high levels of support for pupils to improve self-confidence and to develop life-long coping skills. The report also identified areas for improvement, including the need for pupils to make better progress, to measure school improvement efforts more effectively, and to reduce staff turnover (that was currently detrimental to pupils). Although the re-audit for School B stated that staff turnover had been halted, the facilitator noted that a second wave of redundancy was expected. Concern was expressed by staff that this increased system turbulence could threaten efforts to sustain momentum for the LFARA and risk the LFARA 'fizzling out' if efforts were not taken to address staff concerns and implement the proposed changes for staff.

8.3.3 School C: From ‘Fizzled Out’ to ‘Catalyst for Change’.

8.3.3.1 Optimal Turbulence in School C. Staff in School C differed in their view of optimal turbulence. Non-leaders felt that there was a high need for the LFARA to disrupt the ‘status quo’ to help validate and promote holistic approaches in the face of reduced services and increasing pupil needs. Lead staff also expressed this view, but also described a tension between competing priorities they felt they were expected to balance. The Ofsted inspection that occurred during the LFARA process further increased turbulence, which detracted from the LFARA as a priority as far as school leaders were concerned, much to the frustration of other staff. However, leaders in other schools were able to demonstrate the compatible as opposed to competing aims of the LFARA and School C’s focus for improvement, resulting in leaders recognising the opportunity to disrupt current practices in the pursuit of making school-wide improvements.

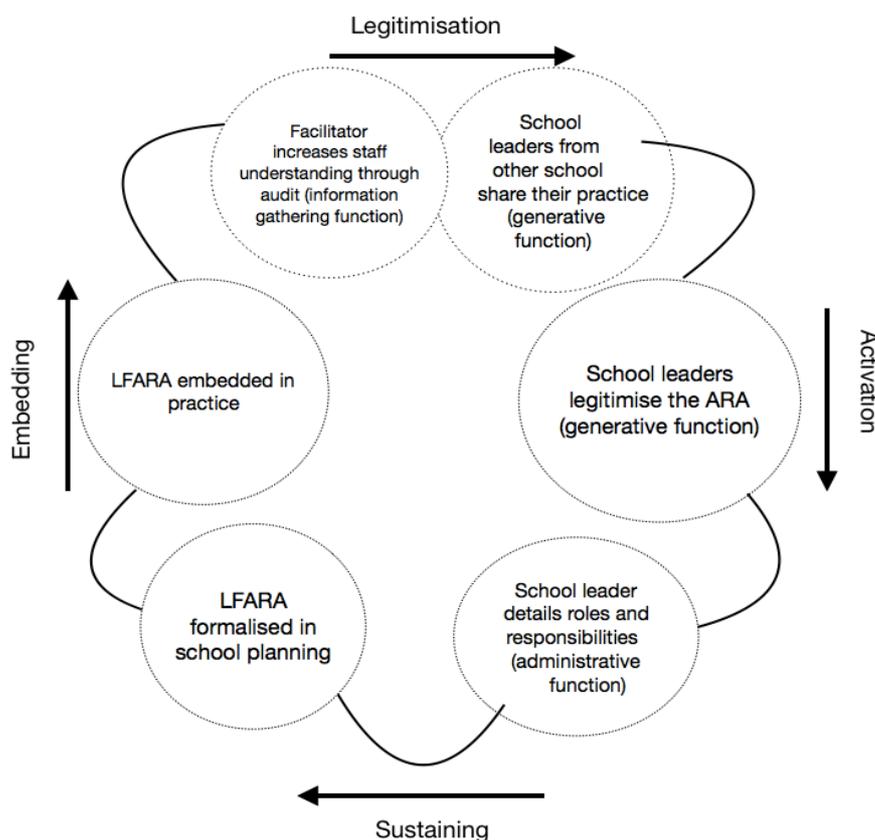
8.3.3.2 Value Based Attractors in School C. Shared staff values in School C were highly congruent with the stated aims of the ARA. All staff considered their professional purpose to prepare pupils for life beyond school, including: developing social and emotional skills, resilience, self-esteem and independence. Holistic development was seen by all three staff as a precursor to academic success. The LFARA was therefore considered to have high relevance and potential efficacy.

Both in survey results and staff interviews, professional interaction was perceived as a strong protective factor that supported staff wellbeing. Informal opportunities both within and beyond school to collaborate and communicate were cited as central to peer staff support. During a visit to the school, for example, one member of staff recalled being able to knock on the classroom wall when they had needed additional staff support, and a colleague arriving immediately. Other staff told the facilitator that collegial trust was so strong that often asking for help was not even necessary, since someone would know before being asked. However, in spite of staff expressing values that were highly congruent with the LFARA, perceived excessive turbulence involving recent school inspection had amplified the accountability attractor, seemingly preventing the school leader from enacting crucial leadership functions to sustain the LFARA.

In terms of the role of ‘attractor steward’, School C therefore differed from School A and B in that the LFARA was legitimised by leaders of *other* schools (as part of the celebration event and hub) before being accepted as a school priority.

Figure 8.8 illustrates the process by which attractor stewardship was passed from staff in other LFARA participating schools to SLT in School C. Leaders within the school had initially considered the LFARA to conflict with short-term school targets. Therefore, the generative function of leadership was disrupted. Although leaders did assign staff specific roles and responsibilities, the administrative function was also restricted due to staffing issues (a school lead who took redundancy was not replaced). As such, the attractor of WS resilience was initially neither fully legitimised nor activated, having a weak pull on the school system in comparison to balancing feedback. When School C perceived a positive impact of the LFARA in other schools, they committed time and resources to re-engaging in the process. The re-audit has shown perceived impact of the LFARA action plan, suggesting that a reinforcing feedback dynamic was established.

Figure 8.8 Attractor stewardship in School C during the LFARA process.



8.3.3.3 Transforming Constraining to Enabling Factors in School C. Staff perceived five enabling aspects of the existing school system, which were: i) high peer support, ii) shared values that were congruent with the ARA, iii) identified need of the

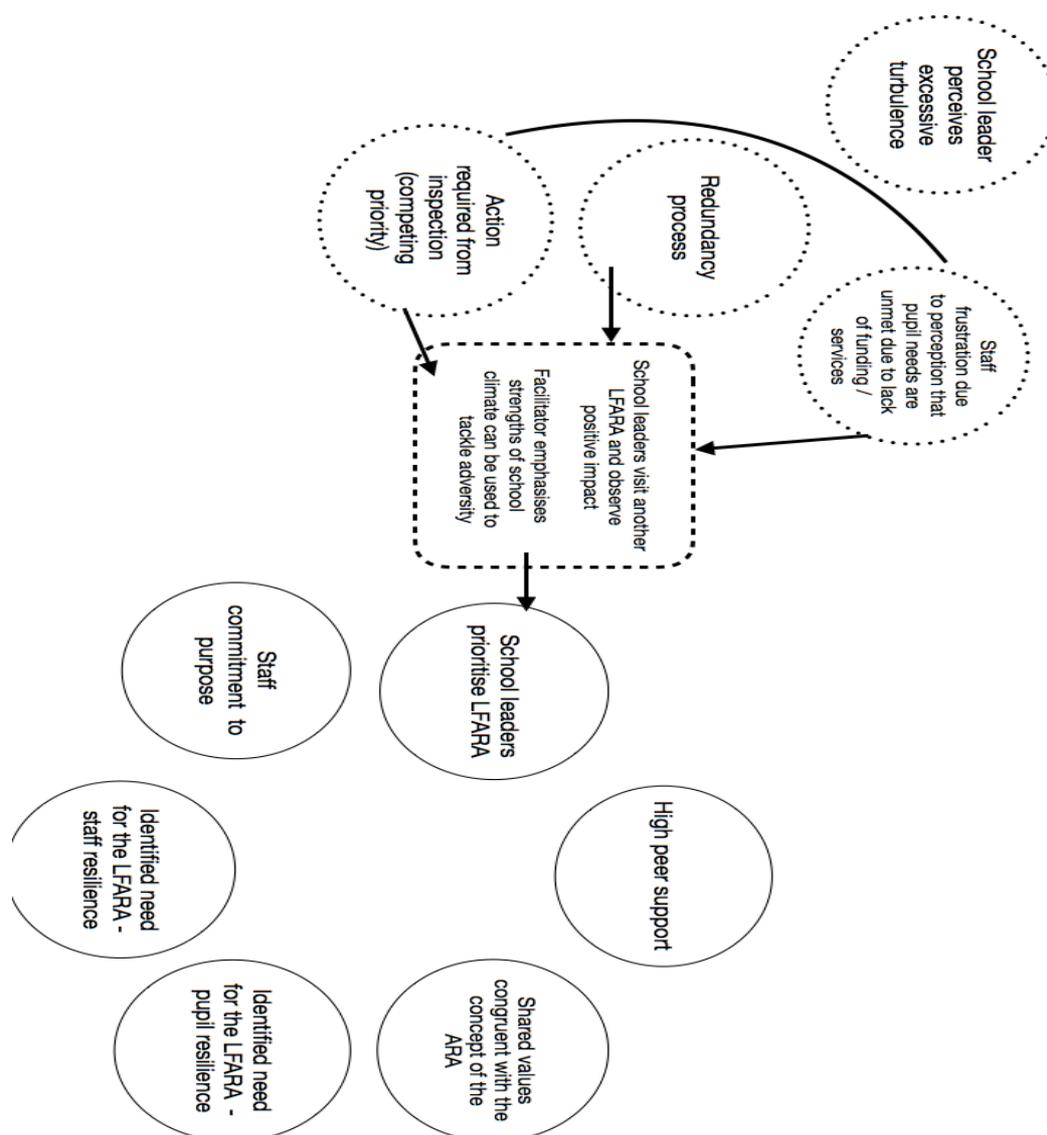
LFARA to build pupil resilience, iv) identified need to build staff resilience, and v) staff commitment to purpose. These factors were interrelated, for example, due to a sense of shared values, staff found professional interaction supportive, and a buffer of workplace stress.

Staff perceived that all constraining factors were imposed on the school from broader, external levels. Staff cited limited resources, reduced services, competing priorities, staff redundancies as the most influential barriers to school change. Two members of staff suggested that the extent of structural barriers facing School C restricted the extent to which the LFARA could be prioritised. Thus, turbulence (Gross, 1998) in the school system could be considered as severe, reducing readiness for change.

Challenges beyond the immediate school level were perceived to cause staff more stress and anxiety than school level challenges (such as pupil behaviour), due to a feeling of powerlessness. Staff suggested that shared values and professional interaction buffered against workload, pupil behaviour and the emotional intensity of the role. However, these protective factors were not perceived to alleviate stress caused by adversity beyond school level.

Transforming constraining into enabling factors in School C (**Figure 8.9**) began with the facilitator addressing variations in expectations of the LFARA process. Expectations differed between staff of different role types. School leaders considered the LFARA primarily as a reflective process, and as an opportunity to build staff morale. Non-leadership staff focused on the potential of the LFARA to change these adversity conditions by providing new experiences for pupils beyond the current curriculum. All staff proposed that the LFARA could be considered unique in its adaptability to school context, the extent to which staff expertise was valued, and the intention to build staff resilience. Staff perceived these unique qualities of the LFARA to ameliorate staff cynicism, which had resulted from poorly perceived interventions in the past, thus increasing staff readiness to engage.

Figure 8.9. Constraining to Enabling Factors in School C.



Existing enabling factors of professional interaction and peer support were also amplified by extending local interactions beyond school level to work closely with LA staff and other leaders from other schools. SLT support between schools counteracted the excessive turbulence, by demonstrating the compatibility, rather than conflict, of the LFARA to short term aims.

8.3.3.4 Emergent Change in School C. A cultural norm identified by the facilitator within School C prior to the LFARA had been to associate professionalism with ‘coping’ in challenging conditions. After the LFARA training session, staff identified a need to develop preventative strategies to manage adversity for both staff and pupils to replace short-term, ‘knee jerk’ reactions (SC:P2).

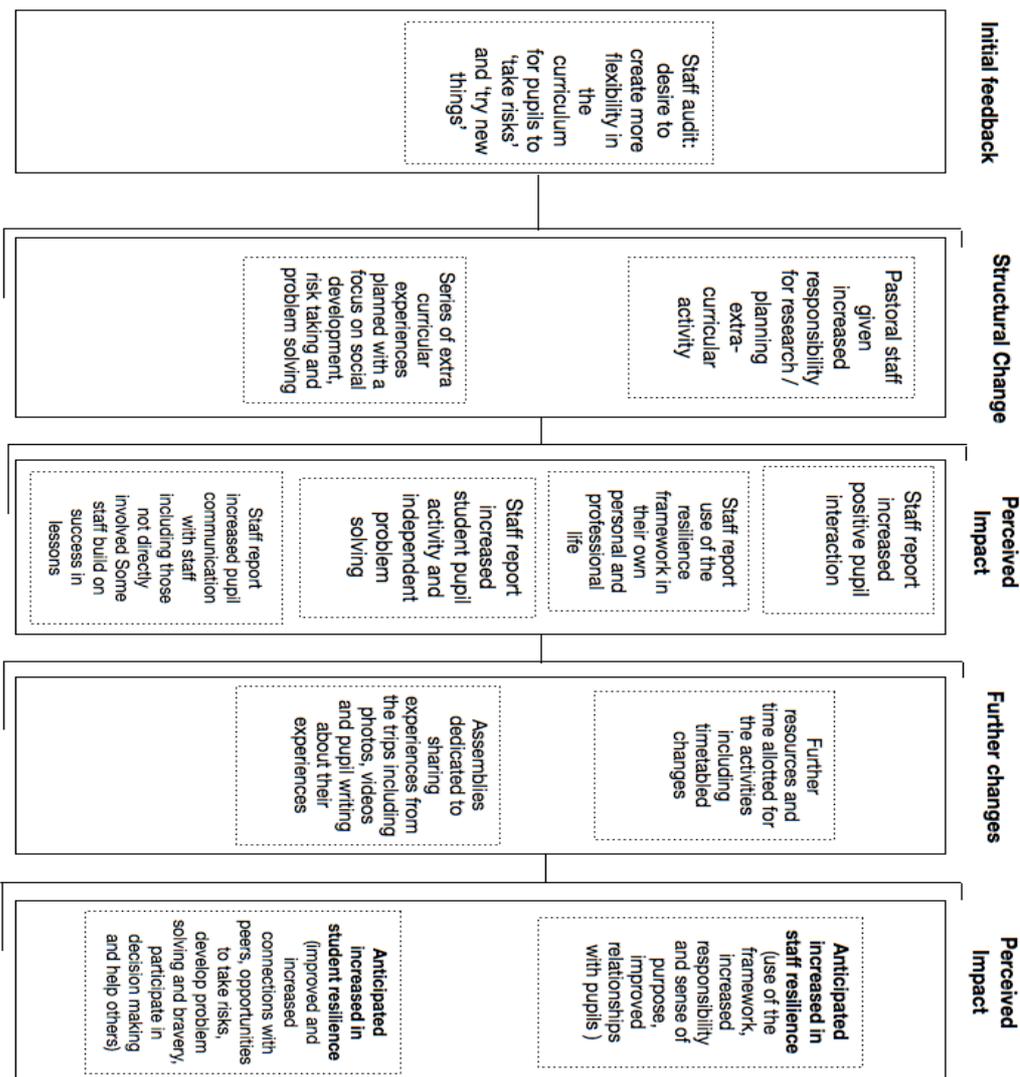
Both the facilitator and school staff recalled a ‘buzz’ of enthusiasm during the audit session. Staff reported feeling proud of the survey feedback, which highlighted strengths of staff commitment to their role and to peer support. However, shortly after the audit session, School C received an Ofsted inspection, in which the inspector advised ‘requires improvements’ in every category. The report specifically drew attention to what inspectors saw as the inability of senior leadership staff to accurately synthesise available data to form an accurate view of school climate. In addition, inspectors suggested that pupils did not get the specific help they needed to overcome difficulties they faced. The facilitator identified the striking relevance of these comments in the light of the evaluative nature of the LFARA, and its focus on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The facilitator contacted school leaders to arrange an action planning session, suggesting that the LFARA could support staff to respond to suggested improvements. However, communication between LA and school staff ceased at this point with staff attributing the loss of momentum to competing priorities. Turbulence that could already have been considered ‘moderate’, had been increased by the Ofsted inspection to ‘extreme’ (Gross, 1998), resulting in temporarily de-railing the LFARA (‘there’s been an initial kind of firework, but then for whatever reason, it’s just been allowed to fizzle out’ (SC:P2)).

The Ofsted inspection could be seen to have created a balancing feedback dynamic, in which available time and resources were directed away from the LFARA in order to maintain existing aspects of the school system in spite of extreme turbulence. Pockets of change were still initiated, including increased SLT awareness of staff needs, and new extra-curricular activities. However, the LFARA did not influence school climate, or result in the introduction of co-ordinated strategies in School C to the same extent as it staff report had happened in Schools A and B.

The singular structural change reported from School C is presented in **Figure 8.10**. Data from the pupil audit justified further research, led by pastoral staff, into promoting resilience through extra-curricular activities. Time was set aside from the normal timetable to contact other schools who had more experience, conduct visits, and to seek funding. The

information gathered from other schools was fed back to school leaders, who agreed to a proposed programme of trip activities, including white water rafting, caving, canoeing and camping. The trips were intended to develop ‘risk taking’, ‘team building’ and ‘leadership’ skills. A reinforcing feedback loop was established in which staff perceived the approach to positively influence the behaviour and attitudes of pupils, and further resources were provided to repeat the trip with a different group.

Figure 8.10. Outdoor play and learning policy in School C.



Staff cited limitations in generative (promoting the LFARA) and administrative (assigning a school lead and ensuring continuity) leadership functions as having restricted the

LFARA. It is likely, considering system events, that leader perceptions of excessive system turbulence (Gross, 1998) prevented prioritisation of the LFARA, thus reducing the strength of WS resilience as an attractor.

Towards the end of data collection, all participating schools were invited to a ‘celebration event’ to share the impact of the LFARA in each school. SLT from School C expressed surprise at the transformative potential the LFARA had shown in relation to improving behaviour, increasing attendance and addressing staff resilience. Facilitators noted that senior leaders ‘engaged with the project as a process for addressing issues raised by the Ofsted report’ (SC:F). A follow-up visit to one of the participating schools was arranged, to enable SLT from School C to see the impact of an LFARA implementation in practice. Subsequently, an action plan was developed with all staff in School C, which became the catalyst for change to emerge. The facilitator reported that the action plan had already been widely implemented by the end of data collection, including changes to pastoral mentoring, staff wellbeing events and the structure of the school day. At the time of writing, School C have already submitted a re-audit (October 2018), suggesting that staff remained committed to the LFARA. The re-audit identified that many changes had taken place, especially increasing staff appraisal and recognition, in efforts to improve staff morale. CPOMS was introduced to improve information-sharing about pupils considered ‘at risk’. There was also an increased focus on involving all staff in planning and de-brief meetings, including pastoral and administrative staff. As such, School C provides a useful example of the potential of the LFARA process not only to make change in schools, but to increase ‘readiness for change’ through a reflective process. School C ultimately avoided the LFARA ‘fizzling out’ completely, by drawing in feedback from broader system levels. By introducing new information into the school system, the potential for change has been catalysed.

8.4 Summary of School-Based Examples

Findings from the present study suggest that the LFARA was perceived to ‘attend to’ rather than ‘control for’ complexity (Braithwaite, Churruca, Long, Ellis & Herkes, 2018; Haynes, 2015, see **Chapter 3**) due to its adaptability and responsiveness to local needs (Boulton, 2015, p.231). In the process of the LFARA interacting with school climate, four key aspects are of central importance. These are: establishing ‘optimal turbulence’ (especially leader perception of ‘optimal turbulence’), identifying value based attractors that generate and sustain momentum for change, identifying existing enablers and constraints of the school

system (and addressing constraints as part of the LFARA so that they become enablers), and building opportunities for emergent change through multiple, co-ordinated actions that move the school system closer to the attractor of WS resilience.

As established by existing research, the centre point of the complex social system is more often an idea, concept or set of shared values than a physical entity or person (Davis and Sumara, 2006, p.146, see **Chapter 3**). The LFARA has been perceived by staff to define this common purpose, moving schools closer to the attractor of WS resilience, by improving aspects of the school climate. This process has been seen to occur to varying degrees in the three examples provided, demonstrating that the conditions of the existing school system, the facilitation of the LFARA process and the interaction between these two factors, determines whether the LFARA ‘fizzles out’, is a ‘catalyst for change’ or is ‘embedded’ across the WS.

Mason (2016, see **Chapter 3**) asserted that there are challenges and difficulties within the local communities and cultures in which schools are enmeshed, which we can seemingly ‘do little about’. This was acutely felt by staff interviewed in the present study, who described in painful detail the level of deprivation experienced in their local communities (as acknowledged by the Children’s Commissioner report, 2018, see **Chapter 1**) and the severe shortfall in required funding and services (which as has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis, is not adequately acknowledged in current analysis of school performance by Ofsted or the DfE).

The nested nature of schools mean that they are frequently exposed to turbulence and need to adapt or change in response. Interview data found that staff often feel disempowered and frustrated by these changes. In addition, challenges beyond the education system, such as inequality, necessitate high levels of staff commitment that negatively impacts their wellbeing. However, as Mason argued, if we ‘do as much as we can with regard to factors we already know will have a positive effect...we stand a better chance of precipitating the change we seek’ (2016, p.439). The reinforcement of protective factors as a buffer to adversity has been evident in accounts of resilience building in multiple school-based examples. The much-neglected aspect of staff resilience in the school climate has been at least the partial focus of every action plan submitted. This does not negate the intergenerational deprivation in the local community, or historically embedded inequality in the education system. However, findings from staff involved in the LFARA reinforce the value of a social justice orientated definition of resilience, such as the authors of the ARA propose. Hart and colleagues have claimed that resilience can be defined as ‘Overcoming adversity, whilst also potentially changing, or even dramatically transforming, (aspects of)

that adversity.’ (Hart et al., 2013, p.31; 2016, p.3). As such, the approach is intended by its authors not only to manage challenges in the school system, but to change existing system conditions. In the LFARA, staff have reported changes to school climate that they anticipate may positively impact pupil outcomes, and could also be seen to increase readiness for future iterations of the intervention. The change process appears to be mediated by four key aspects that determine the extent to which schools adopt and embed the LFARA. These are ‘optimal turbulence’, congruence of values between the LFARA and school staff professional values, the capacity of the LFARA to increase enabling factors in the school climate, and emergent change. The extent to which this emergent change at school level can result in macro level change would require longitudinal investigation, tracking pupil progress in relation to expected grades, as iterative cycles of the LFARA were applied.

8.5 Chapter summary

The LFARA was experienced by staff as a dynamic system event in which the patterns and process of change are similar in multiple contexts and at multiple system levels, although the outcomes are different (Hawe et al., 2009, see **Chapter 3**), depending on contextual variation of the four key aspects. The role of pre-intervention readiness, including the need for optimal turbulence, has been established. The important leadership functions enacted by SLT and facilitators have been shown to be central to legitimising and sustaining the attractor of WS resilience. An understanding of health and wellbeing improvement as intrinsically linked to academic attainment has emerged in some schools as the system moves closer to the attractor of WS resilience. For example, some staff have justified inclusion of the LFARA in formal policy and planning. School climate was a factor in school readiness to engage in the LFARA and the LFARA also increased staff perceptions of school climate. School climate may be a useful vehicle to expand on current measures of school performance when considering impact of interventions for disadvantaged pupils.

One important staff perception is that the creation of reinforcing feedback loops from audit data resulted in the transformation of potential constraints of the LFARA to further enablers of the approach. Lastly, staff perceptions have been presented that indicate that the LFARA has resulted in emergent changes to behaviour and culture, following structural change, which is anticipated to increase over time.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The concluding chapter of this thesis summarises findings of the study in relation to its contextual background and existing literature. The contribution of this study to research and practice is outlined, including the methodological approach, and the implications of mixed method findings. In particular, staff perceptions of the LFARA as a unique approach to school improvement are considered, including its adaptive, reflective, holistic and strengths-based qualities. The attractor of WS resilience as a shared core value is proposed to have increased collaboration, communication and participative decision making between staff. Staff of all role types acknowledged their contribution to promoting resilience across the school community, and anticipated that even relatively small changes initiated by the LFARA would cumulatively contribute to improving long term outcomes, especially for children facing adversity. The conceptual basis of the ARA is advocated as useful to school contexts, given that the underpinning conceptualisation of resilience is driven by social justice, which is highly relevant to current systemic risk factors.

9.2 Intentions of the study

As **Chapter 1** and **Chapter 3** have explored, whole-school (WS) approaches have been highlighted as an effective and preventative strategy for promoting mental health and reducing inequality (Durlak et al., 2011; Weare, 2000; Weare & Nind, 2011; Wells et al., 2003). Although the case for WS approaches has been well made both in literature and by policy makers (Public Health England, 2015; Department of Health, 2015), the complexity of this process remains under-explored. This study sought to articulate the experiences of staff tasked with the LFARA implementation, in order to examine how multiple system levels (individuals, schools and the local authority (LA) were perceived to dynamically interact in the process. Emergent change in the school climate was explored in relation to concepts from a complexity perspective, including feedback loops and WS resilience as a value-based attractor.

9.3 Methodological approach

As discussed in **Chapter 3**, an increasing number of studies have proposed the complex nature of schools (Hawe et al., 2009; Keshavarz et al., 2010; Lemke & Sabelli, 2008; Mason, 2014; White, 2016). In addition, the need for evaluation of WS approaches to themselves be sufficiently complex has been highlighted (Craig et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2015). However, there are relatively few studies that adopt a complexity perspective within their methodological approach. As discussed in **Chapter 3**, the use of complexity theory in the social sciences has been contested by some authors, who suggest that adopting this perspective can result in the abstract application of mathematical concepts to social settings (Stewart, 2001, for example). There is limited existing empirical research applying complexity theory to education practice and applied research. There is even less available literature that explores the notion of attractors in school contexts. In the present study, complexity theory has provided a useful framework, or language, to articulate the process of change that staff experienced in the LFARA. The concepts of the nested school system, reinforcing and balancing feedback loops, and value-based attractors are considered to have been useful ways of understanding and explaining the complex and dynamic interactions that led to emergent change. Complexity theory has not been rigidly applied to school contexts, and has not imported ideas from the natural world in order to impose them on the social process. Rather, complexity theory has provided an authentic and meaningful vocabulary that reflects the complex reality of school practice. Adopting a ‘complexity perspective’ has been particularly useful in explaining the complex process of the LFARA, including the interaction between structural and relational aspects of school systems across multiple levels. As such, findings strongly support the case already being made in the literature that complexity theory provides a relevant and useful perspective to applied research in education (Davis, 2008; Keshavarz et al., 2010; Mason, 2008).

In **Chapter 2**, discussion of the small number ($N=7$, 17.5%) of mixed method studies, led to the suggestion of a need for further mixed method research in the field. In addition, many studies employing mixed method approaches were not found to be explicit about the chosen design. Studies employing either qualitative or quantitative methods exclusively, often cited reliance on one type of data as limiting the breadth and depth of the research (for example, Honess & Hunter, 2014; Mac Cobb et al., 2014). This study responded to an existing need for complex methods, not only by combining qualitative and quantitative designs, but also by allowing different types of data to ‘interact’ during the research. The

sequential mixed method design meant that baseline survey results were used to identify schools in which to carry out semi-structured interviews and observations. Interview findings were then used to extend the T2 survey questions. In this way, the research methods used have been adapted to suit the complexity of the process studied. The depth of new understanding, and extent of practical use for schools that the study design has provided strongly supports further research employing mixed method designs in complex school contexts. In addition, the use of school audit data to shape the LFARA process suggests that methods employed by the research can inform the use of evaluative data in WS approaches.

9.3.1 Multiple staff perspectives. Existing literature reviewed in **Chapter 2** highlighted inconsistency regarding the extent to which all staff were included in programme training and evaluation. It was a common feature of the studies reviewed in this chapter that data was gathered from multiple perspectives, including pupil, parent, and teacher perspectives. However, of the studies reviewed (N=40), few studies (17.5%, N=7) considered ‘staff’ perspectives other than teachers. Examples were teaching assistants, administration or catering staff. Just five studies (12.5%) reported the perceptions of staff of *more than one* role type in the same study. In some studies, although authors stated an aim to elucidate ‘school staff’ or ‘educator’ perspectives, closer inspection of methods used indicated that only teacher perceptions were gathered. Such lack of clarity creates an unhelpful assumption that teacher perspectives reflect all staff perceptions. Thus, many studies seeking to establish staff perceptions of WS programmes effectively silenced a large proportion of these staff, who may be central to both the delivery and evaluation of the WS approach.

As existing research has explored, all staff have a potential role to play in promoting resilience in pupils (Daniel & Wassell, 2002; Hart & Heaver, 2013). Therefore, as is recommended practice in the ARA (Hart and Williams, under review), all staff required an understanding of the LFARA, and participated in planning and implementation. Therefore, it was crucial to gather a range of staff perspectives of the LFARA, in order to establish the range of staff that participated in the approach in practice. This study has gathered both qualitative and quantitative data from school staff of multiple role types, at multiple time points in the intervention, thus providing a broad range of staff perspectives of the LFARA process. Findings suggested that, although role type did not seem to moderate perceptions of the LFARA or of perceived changes to school climate, extent of staff involvement in LFARA facilitated sessions was correlated with more positive perceptions. Thus, in schools in which

non-teaching staff were not included in action planning sessions, the extent to which they were involvement in its implementation or aware of its impact was reduced in comparison to teaching staff. Gathering data from multiple staff perspectives also helped to triangulate findings. For example, both school leaders and teaching assistants perceived improved communication between the two respective role types and an increase in supportive leadership.

9.3.2 Multiple school settings. As identified in **Chapter 2**, a number of existing research projects were limited to one or two study sites, thus restricting their capacity to consider context specificity (for example, Clarke et al., 2010; Collier & Henrikson, 2012; Crosby et al., 2015; Grim et al., 2013; Raiha et al., 2012). In acknowledging the context specificity of WS approaches, research data for the present study has been gathered from a range of school types: primary, secondary and special schools. In this way, the research has helped to articulate the interaction between existing properties of the school system and the LFARA. One aspect of making sense of this complex interaction has been to consider how change in each school (as a nested system) is experienced at multiple system levels. To this end, data was collected not only from individual staff in different school types, but also at LA level. Qualitative data collection from both school and facilitation staff has shown that the dynamic process of adaptation described in **Chapter 8** effectively rippled across multiple system levels, bi-directionally influencing practice between schools and LA services.

9.4 Summary of findings

This study has contributed in multiple ways to the conceptualisation of the process of change in WS approaches. The integrated mixed method design adopted in this research has enabled close attention to contextual variables in the existing school system that influence staff perceptions and school readiness for the LFARA. Multiple school-based examples have been provided involving staff in multiple role types to account for and explore contextual complexity. In addition, analysis of the data has explored the dynamic interaction between enabling and constraining factors, and with the LFARA as it is adapted and implemented. This analysis has demonstrated four key aspects of the LFARA process that has involved the complex interaction between school climate and the intervention. These four aspects are: the importance of ‘optimal turbulence’; the importance of values as attractors; the capacity of the WS approach to transform constraints to enablers; and emergent change in school climate. As

proposed in **Chapter 8**, this transformative process involves harnessing core staff values to become attractors of WS change.

The dominant theme in both survey and interview data was of the LFARA process resulting in improvements to staff wellbeing and to the school climate, which subsequently increased school readiness for change. Specifically, both interview and survey findings highlighted participative decision making, supportive leadership and increased communication and collaboration as drivers of change. Participants anticipated that these changes would establish the foundations for improving pupil outcomes. This pattern was observed across all role types, even in the light of particular contextual adversity for non-teaching staff during county-level redundancy processes.

Prior to the LFARA, staff reported that in efforts to support severely disadvantaged young people, they attempted to manage an unsustainably high workload, in spite of its negative influence on their own wellbeing. Although the term 'resilience' was not commonplace in most participating schools, staff were nevertheless adopting individual and collective protective factors against workload and stress. This finding was consistent with research by other authors about pupil understanding and development of resilience in school systems (Cocking, Sherriff, Aranda & Zeeman, 2018). Findings suggest that staff particularly identified a strong shared purpose to 'make a difference' in the long-term lives of children to provide a protective factor, which was reinforced through the LFARA.

Increasing pupil needs, decreasing funding and a reduction in specialist support were cited by staff to have created a disconnect between holistic values and the lived reality of daily practice. This adversity context for staff was perceived as so extreme that protective factors, such as peer support and shared values, were not always enough to buffer risks to staff wellbeing. Frustration was expressed by all staff role types, but especially leaders. Consistent with existing literature, school leaders were perceived as uniquely positioned between being tasked with evidencing progress in order for the school system to survive, and being driven by a desire to meet the complex needs of the individual children and adults who comprise it (Beabout, 2008; Fink, 2003).

Findings from this study strongly supports existing research that suggests WS approaches necessitate a high level of support for the staff tasked with implementation. This includes increased communication, feedback and attention to staff needs (Pearson, 2015). The vast majority of European countries, and not only the UK, consider that a lack of staff capacity is a significant barrier to WS mental health intervention (Patalay et al., 2016). The

findings from the present study suggest that sufficient support for school staff is perceived as critical for the sustainability of WS approaches.

The supportive relationship between facilitator and school lead was a particularly important pre-cursor of whole staff engagement. As existing research shows, ‘good inter-agency’ links are known to be an enabling factor of school-based mental health programmes (Wolpert et al., 2013). In the present study, existing relationships with the LA established positive perceptions of the LFARA prior to the implementation. In addition, facilitators (and in one instance, another school headteacher) supported school leaders to align the LFARA to school priorities. Through enacting the leadership functions of ‘information gathering’ and ‘community building’ (Hazy & Uhl-Bien., 2013), facilitators supported staff to cultivate a dynamic response to feedback whilst strengthening existing cultural values. As part of this role, facilitators shared current research and evidence-based practice, which is known to positively influence outcomes for those facing cumulative disadvantage. The facilitator was therefore seen as a multi system level connector, who introduced new knowledge into the system, whilst developing links with external services and other schools. School leads were then able to prioritise the LFARA, formalising the approach by its inclusion in WS planning. In this way, both facilitators and school leaders occupied a unique role in the LFARA process as ‘mediators’ (Beabout, 2008, see **Chapter 2**).

As discussed in **Chapter 8**, findings from staff and facilitator interviews suggest that the detailed audit process increased staff understanding of existing school values, stakeholder needs, existing strengths of practice and competing priorities. The resulting action plans were perceived to be strongly focused on local needs, and offer fertile opportunities for change. Facilitators were perceived to support school leaders to adapt the LFARA to complement rather than compete with existing school priorities, combining health and educational attainment in school system planning. In this way, facilitators supported staff to embrace (Boulton et al., 2015, see **Chapter 3**) and absorb complexity in their approach to school leadership. A combination of offering specialist knowledge and supportive facilitation was perceived to enable staff to reflect in detail on current system properties.

Throughout the LFARA process, complex approaches to leadership and school reform have been identified as both part of the process and as identified outcomes of the process. These included (at school and LA level), setting multiple and conflicting goals, increasing participative decision making and distributed leadership functions (Hazy & Uhl -Bien, 2013, see **Chapter 3**) and planning multi-faceted intervention which allowed for emergent change (Mason 2008; Fidan and Balci, 2017; Kozleski and Smith, 2009, see **Chapter 3**). Findings of

the present study suggest that staff perceived the LFARA to increase readiness for change through amplifying enabling factors and tackling potential constraints. For example, increasing communication and collaboration with parents, whilst addressing the workload concerns of staff. Data showed that school leaders and facilitators avoided imposing strict goals or standardised procedure. Instead, they focused on establishing a community of shared values and emerging purpose, through responsiveness to multiple stakeholder needs (Fidan and Balci, 2017, p.15, see **Chapter 3**).

As identified in **Chapter 2**, existing literature strongly suggests that enhanced relationships among network members and increased participative decision making, is known to strengthen relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Moolenaar & Slegers, 2010; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). The present study has made a unique contribution in identifying the impact of such practices to school climate suggesting that complex approaches to school leadership and reform are both a facilitator and outcome of WS approaches.

Returning to the key findings of the literature review conducted in **Chapter 2**, the research conducted for this study echoes many of the known enabling and constraining factors of WS approaches from staff perspectives. Key themes are summarised below in comparison to findings from existing literature.

Patalay and colleagues (2016, see **Chapter 2**), linked staff perception of capacity with prioritisation of mental health approaches in schools. Findings of the present study were that staff initially perceived a lack of capacity to implement WS reform. The congruence of the LFARA with existing school ethos and staff values was perceived by staff to increase the relevance of the LFARA, in spite of a lack of perceived staff capacity. In addition, staff suggested that the strengths-based and highly adaptive approach did not constitute additional workload or time commitment of staff. Rather, the LFARA was perceived to re-frame and improve existing practice, based on the conceptualisation of resilience central to the ARA (Hart and Williams, under review).

9.4.1 Staff Adversity. As discussed in **Chapter 2**, a quarter of studies in the literature review for this thesis found that a lack of time or competing priorities were perceived by staff to constrain school intervention. A lack of time was also identified both in baseline survey and interview data in the present study. Staff identified this aspect of school climate to negatively impact staff wellbeing and increase cynicism toward new approaches. However, in contrast to studies in which a lack of time reduced staff perceptions of programme relevance and efficacy (for example, Colak et al., 2015, see **Chapter 2**), this study has shown the opposite to be the case. As described in **Chapter 8**, findings indicate that a shift in staff perspectives has resulted in a perceived benefit to staff workload of participation in the LFARA. Survey and interview data both suggest that staff workload and lack of time are being addressed as part of the LFARA. Staff perceive that the programme had positively impacted school climate by providing feedback about this issue, which has been in addressed in the majority of action plans.

Co-production of planning, implementation and evaluation increased staff perceptions of the LFARA as useful, meaningful and relevant to school context, strongly supporting findings of existing literature (see **Chapter 2**). For some schools, co-production meant a collaboration between school staff of multiple role types and the LFARA facilitator, that factored in pupil feedback from focus groups. In other schools, pupils have been given ongoing roles in the co-production and evolution of the LFARA approach. Because this study focused on staff perspectives of the LFARA process, findings particularly highlight the benefit to all staff being involved in the WS training and implementation, as opposed to training select staff. The opportunity for staff to adapt the intervention to local need was identified as a key strength of the LFARA in the present study, echoing findings from existing research (Edmondson and Hoover, 2008; Freeman et al., 2010; Howie et al., 2014, see **Chapter 2**).

Survey findings indicate that there was an increase in participative decision making as a result of the LFARA. This suggests that increased collaboration between staff was both an important quality *of* the LFARA as well as an *outcome* of the approach. Staff identified emergent change as a result of ‘bottom up’, staff-driven reflection and planning. In addition, staff suggested that increasing connections between multiple stakeholders at multiple system levels (for example, establishing school-to-school support, increasing parent engagement and improving meaningful pupil voice) is likely to have a cumulative and ongoing positive influence on outcomes for both pupils and staff. The LFARA appears to have amplified a sense of shared ethos or cultural values across the school community, through the use of a

shared language (based on the resilience framework) and aim (based on the original ARA). Increased collaboration across the school community was perceived as an important foundation to improve pupil long term outcomes.

9.4.2 Funding or Resources as enabling or constraining factors. A number of studies reviewed in **Chapter 2** found that adequate funding and resources are perceived as a facilitator of implementing school-based intervention, and a lack of funding or resources can be seen as a barrier. Interview data from the present study strongly suggests that staff were concerned about national budget and service cuts, and the subsequent impact for class sizes, staff retention and specialist support for vulnerable pupils. However, whilst many staff interviewed for this study expressed a concern about a lack of funding in the education system in general, it was not perceived as a constraint to LFARA implementation. This may be in part due to the strengths-based nature adopted from the ARA, which is intended to build on existing school practices in order to increase sustainability. Findings suggest that additional resources and training helped preserve existing strengths, through ensuring consistency of understanding and application, as well as introducing new information to staff. The majority of the external services schools enlisted as part of the ARA were offered by the LA, thus also increasing sustainability for Educational Psychology services, especially in the light of widespread privatisation.

The initial offer of the LFARA acted as gateway to services schools may have been eligible but not previously accessed. In this way, connections and engagement with local services were increased. In addition, schools nearing the end of the first phase of the LFARA were being encouraged by facilitators to develop existing ARA resources that could be shared with schools new to the programme. This may distribute knowledge and good practice emerging from the LFARA, without schools incurring additional costs. Therefore, the capacity building connections developed by the LA between county and school staff in the present study are likely to increase the sustainability of the approach. As discussed in **Chapter 6**, training delivered in LFARA schools drew on multiple conceptual approaches that were related to the ARA. However, the subtleties of the similarities and differences between concepts that were integrated in the LFARA must be further explored in order to retain meaningful integration of a range of approaches.

9.4.3 Technology as an enabling factor. A small number of studies reviewed in **Chapter 2** referred to technology as an enabling factor in school-based intervention. In the present study, staff perceived technology to contribute to improve communication and reduce workload. Staff in one school said online communication systems had helped to increase efficiency of tracking ‘at-risk’ pupils. In another, staff highlighted increased communication through online platforms that increased communication with parents. Conversely, a reduction in technology (an ‘email embargo’ after a certain time in the evening) was perceived to support work-life balance in one school. At the time of data collection, the majority of facilitation and school staff reported that, although some of the online ARA resources had been used as part of initial staff training sessions, schools were not yet accessing web-based ARA resources to aid implementation. Since many schools had a strong focus on organisational readiness and staff resilience in their first cycle of the LFARA, these resources might be more relevant in future iterations of the programme. In addition, some schools have shown interest in adapting the resources and sharing between ‘hubs’ of LFARA schools in the county.

9.4.4 Perceived impact of the whole-school approach as a facilitator of embedding practice or increasing momentum. Existing literature reviewed in **Chapter 2** links staff perceptions of intervention efficacy to sustainability of school-based approaches. Findings of this study strongly support this assertion. In **Chapter 8**, a process has been described in which initial feedback, generated through the audit process, led to structural change and was perceived to result in subsequent behavioural and cultural change. A reinforcing feedback loop was established, in which staff perceptions of cultural and behavioural change prompted further structural changes that embedded and extended practice. This significant finding provides empirical data that supports theoretical conceptualisation of WS approaches as a process of adaptation within a complex system. In this facilitated LFARA, change has been emergent and cumulative in response to increased feedback about the evolving values, aims and needs of the school community.

The positive impact of utilising or introducing data about the school system to drive change is documented in both school improvement (for example, Schildkamp & Kuiper, 2010) and teacher perceptions of WS approaches specifically (Freeman et al., 2010). However, this study contributes empirical findings to a more recent, specific and less thoroughly understood process, in terms of showing how WS approaches establish

reinforcing feedback loops by utilising data to inform and direct the approach in practice, as well as determine its impact. Survey tools (initially developed for research and evaluation purposes) have been perceived as an integral part of the LFARA in practice by staff. It is therefore recommended that the authors of the ARA consider including the survey tools into the audit and evaluation process of both the web-based and facilitated versions of the LFARA. In this way, survey tools could also support facilitators to assess extent of school readiness, and repeated survey measures may increase the ‘buy-in’ of school leaders, by increasing measures of school improvement.

9.4.5 Interaction between enabling and constraining factors. Much of the existing literature on staff perspectives of school-based approaches has identified enabling and constraining factors. However, some analysis falls short of exploring the interaction between these factors, both of the intervention and the school system. For example, are some factors *more* significant than others depending on the context? Can a number of enabling factors *reduce* the impact of constraining factors (and vice versa)? Can constraints *become* enablers under certain circumstances (and vice versa)?

This study has made a unique contribution to the literature in conceptualizing the complex and dynamic interaction between existing system properties and the LFARA. Findings have demonstrated that the concepts of enabling and constraining factors must be seen as fluid, dynamic and changing depending on the context in which the programme is applied. For example, ‘competing priorities can become amplified during times of increased system turbulence, such as impending examinations or inspection. Conversely, during times of ‘optimal turbulence’, staff leaders perceived that priorities were not actually ‘competing’, but complimentary to existing aims. Prior to the LFARA, a ‘lack of time’ was identified pre-intervention as a significant constraint in every sub-sample school. Yet, as a result of the LFARA process, a reduction in negative behaviour incidents had increased staff time for other tasks in three of these schools. In the LFARA process, staff perceived that factors hitherto considered constraints, have been observed to have had enabling effects on the acceptance and application of a WS approach. This is consistent with the stated aims of the ARA to tackle and transform adversity. These findings have strong significance for future applications of WS approaches of this nature. Since the process has been observed to amplify existing enabling factors in the school climate, the LFARA can be considered an effective aid to increasing school readiness for WS approaches. Repeated iterations of the LFARA may

provide opportunities to capitalise on optimal system conditions, from which further change may emerge.

9.4.6 Staff perspectives of the overall impact of the LFARA. It has been suggested, through a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative findings, that staff have experienced the LFARA to have preserved existing strengths of school climate whilst tackling significant adversity. Staff perceived this process to have taken place both explicitly as part of the action plan and implicitly through the process itself. Specifically, data was analysed to identify the drivers of change in staff perceptions of school climate, which were increased participative decision making, more supportive leadership and addressing workload issues. Findings have identified a number of perceived changes to school policy, structure and practice. These include increased communication and collaboration, distributed leadership, changes to school environment, increased morale and establishing WS as a cultural norm. Staff reported that increased feedback initiated structural change, which, in turn, led to perceived changes to behaviour and culture, which increased perceived efficacy of the LFARA. This reinforcing feedback loop helped to sustain momentum towards WS resilience as a value-based attractor.

9.5 Limitations

9.5.1 Sample Size and Response rate. This thesis presents the first empirical findings of staff perspectives of the LFARA. In addition, the contribution these findings make to the understanding of the process of change in WS approaches and in complex school systems has been outlined. The unique contribution of this thesis to the field of research must, however, be considered in the light of certain limitations.

Sample size was restricted by the lower than expected number of staff (17.99%) who responded to *both* time one and time two surveys, leading to potential for non-response bias. This is lower than what is generally considered to be a good response rate for online surveys, which in a number of studies is found to be around 33% (Nulty, 2008). Existing meta-analysis of how researchers can maximize response rates to school staff surveys (Shih & Fan, 2008; Stern, Bilgen & Dillman, 2014) suggests features that were found to be effective in increasing response rates. These features include offering school staff both electronic and paper copies of the survey, all correspondence being addressed personally to staff, and sending two reminder emails to all staff (although other researchers have not found this to

increase response rates in organisational settings, Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Each of these approaches were adopted in the present study. Schools were also provided with feedback of findings at school and county level, which they could use for their own audit and planning purposes, which has been suggested to maximize the incentive to participate (Sturgis, Smith & Hughes, 2006).

It is likely, considering the well documented problem of high workload for school staff, that non-respondents did not consider that they had time to complete the survey, or encountered difficulty accessing the survey that they did not report due to lack of time. Declining survey responses over time, especially concerning secondary school teachers, has also been highlighted as a problem by other researchers (Sturgis et al., 2006). Sturgis and colleagues found that school staff willingness to engage in research was undermined by the volume of requests they received to participate, in addition to existing statutory requirements to frequently provide data as part of their school role (Sturgis et al., 2006).

9.5.2 Lack of control group. A potential criticism of the study design was the lack of control group. One major reason that researchers employ control groups is to ensure generalizability of results. However, this study did not aim to generalize results, or assess the efficacy of the ARA. Rather, this research has provided detailed information about how one locally facilitated adaptation of the ARA (the LFARA) was experienced in practice. As discussed hitherto, the ARA can be applied using web-based resources, or with facilitation support. This results in a high degree of variation about what the process entails in practice, and what the outcomes might be. The implementation, which has been the subject of this thesis, was developed by and for staff in the LA, and was adapted considerably as facilitators and staff identified school-level need. The aim of this research was, therefore, to articulate staff perspectives of this adaptation of this LFARA in its local context.

9.5.3 Research Tools. Since the SPSC survey scale relied solely on self-report measures, results were potentially biased. Depending on introspective ability, honesty, interpretation of questions and social desirability bias, the data collected may have been skewed through the self-report survey style. However, the findings of the surveys were considered in the light of both qualitative interview data and open-ended survey questions (in the T2 survey) in order to triangulate findings. Strong survey validity was established, and staff also referred to the perceived accuracy of survey findings during data feedback sessions with their facilitators. Staff also reported that the anonymity provided in this data collection procedure allowed staff to be honest in their responses, without fear of compromising their professional relationships. Having considered the limitations and benefits of the self-reported survey, this method was considered appropriate to the study aim, which was to gather staff perspectives of the LFARA.

9.5.4 Lack of time. Time was restrictive in this study in three ways. Firstly, the start of the LFARA was delayed due to the complexities of establishing a project of this kind for the first time between an LA and a large number of schools. In the focus group with the LFARA steering group, staff reflected that, due to the complexity of the LFARA, much more time than had been anticipated was afforded to planning and setting up of school training and audit sessions. Secondly, once data collection began, restrictions of time for school staff meant that survey and interview completion required multiple reminder prompts and researcher flexibility to enable staff to participate. Facilitators reported that busy school diaries often delayed LFARA sessions and slowed the process down. Thirdly, it was only possible to collect data from one cycle of the LFARA, lasting one academic year. Longitudinal data following implementation of the LFARA over time would greatly increase understanding about how locally driven WS approaches are embedded and cumulatively influence practice. Existing research suggests that changes in staff perception of school climate is linked to positive pupil development, pupil attainment and teacher retention (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli & Pickeral, 2009, see **Chapter 3**). Therefore, it is possible that future iterations of the LFARA may not only show further improvements to school climate, but may also result in multiple positive outcomes for pupils and staff.

9.6 Implications for future research and practice

9.6.1 Considering the experiences and outcomes of other stakeholders. For this study, a need had been identified from existing research for more differentiation between staff of different role types and from different school types, rather than to focus solely on teacher perspectives. However, it was beyond the scope of this study to consider pupil, parent, carer or governors' perspectives. Further research is necessary in order to consider the findings of this study in the light of other stakeholder perspectives. This should include longitudinal data about how outcomes for multiple stakeholders interact. For example, it will be important to ascertain the impact of a 'staff wellbeing policy' for pupil outcomes, and how these outcomes subsequently impact staff. Given the complexity of the school system, and the WS approach of the LFARA, it is likely that outcomes for multiple stakeholders are dynamically interrelated, which further research may help to elucidate.

9.6.2 Further analysis required to explore the interaction between evaluation and intervention. Data provided to schools from staff and pupil audits, though initially introduced as part of evaluative research, were identified by participants to inform and direct the LFARA process. Whilst this is an interesting finding that warranted additional exploration, the interaction between research methods and the LFARA process was not the sole focus of this study. Thus, further research examining the interaction between evaluative research and WS implementation is necessary.

9.6.3 Comparison between local authority maintained and academy run school experiences of the LFARA. Considering the multiple contextual influences on WS implementation, LA led status could potentially have influenced staff experiences and perceptions of the LFARA. Potential differences in terms of finances, the curriculum and the pay and conditions of school staff could have been variables that were unaccounted for in this study. Some schools converted from LA status to academy status mid-way through the study and implemented changes in phases, making it difficult to attribute any variation to this school type. However, since the findings of these studies indicate that collaboration between LA led services and schools was both a necessary enabling factor of the LFARA, and an important outcome, the role of academy status on staff experiences of locally facilitated WS approaches warrants further attention.

9.6.4 Embracing complexity in school policy and practice. Findings suggest that staff consider short term ‘fire-fighting’ approaches to planning and practice to result from high stakes accountability that neglects the complexity of pupil progress. Conversely, staff both at school and LA level have perceived the LFARA to attend to such complexity through adopting the systemic approach of the ARA, in which dynamically interrelated influences are acknowledged to influence pupil outcomes. In particular, staff identified the conceptualisation of resilience, which is based on a social justice model, to be congruent with the expressed desire of staff to ‘make a difference’.

From a complexity perspective, learning and academic outcomes are emergent properties of pupils’ engagement with the education system. This renders narrow measures of educational success, and linear planning to meet these outcomes, short-sighted. Planning and practice, from a complexity perspective, must necessarily be relationally and contextually driven, responsive to individual needs and prioritise school and community values rather than the proxy of testable measures. This must include attending to a broad range of local and regional variation. Unhelpful and divisive narratives, such as the ‘North-South divide’, as discussed in the introduction, will only serve to reduce staff morale in the North of England (Jopling, 2018, see **Chapter 1**) and do not address the need to better understand the complex interaction between economic disadvantage and educational progress, or for fairer funding across Local Authorities.

In the present study, the LFARA was perceived to support staff to combine resilience research and existing values, to underpin a reflective assessment of how well schools met their aims. There is scope to develop the resilience framework for school-based use as an adaptable resource, focused on school (including pupil) led evaluation and improvement.

Other recommendations by staff were that the LFARA could be adapted for secondary school context, could include more structured planning and progress measurement and could include a second audit and action planning session at the end of the first ‘cycle’. Lastly, the fact that non-teaching staff perceived less change to school climate suggests that this application of the LFARA may not have directly involved all staff, or changes made had not yet had time to ‘filter’ through the school. The significant role of non-teaching staff in supporting ‘at-risk’ pupils warrants further attention as to how these staff can be more closely engaged in the process.

9.6.5 Evaluating and improving schools. School effectiveness is not currently measured in ways that account for sufficient complexity (see **Chapter 3**). In the present study, participants expressed concern that accountability restricts authentic reflection necessary for adaptation, and that reductive evaluation methods relegate valuable progress made in schools as inferior to narrow performance indicators. The findings of the present study therefore support existing research that suggests schools require sophisticated evaluation that accounts for, as opposed to controlling for, complexity.

These findings come at an important moment in the history of school improvement and inspection in the UK. Having just passed the 25-year milestone since the creation of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), Amanda Spielman, Ofsted's chief inspector has announced that she plans to drive forward changes to the inspection process (see **Chapter 3**)¹⁸. The new framework has been designed, Spielman stated, to enable a focus on the process of schooling that is grounded in current research, as opposed to only the outcomes.

Astle (2017, see Chapter 3), identifies current tensions resulting from a high-stakes, low trust system that is in conflict with the values of staff who work in schools and the needs of the pupils who attend them. This finding also resonates strongly with staff interviews in the present study, particularly with school leaders.

The accountability system cannot be ignored nor eradicated. However, punitive approaches to measuring school performance are counterintuitive to school improvement, because they do not facilitate meaningful or authentic reflection. Findings of this study have shown that there are 'windows of opportunity' in the current system for meaningful reform, either left open by recent positive outcome data or wrenched open by leaders who 'take risks'. However, reforms at multiple system levels, from education policy to inspection criteria, are necessary in order to shift the focus from data output, to creating a school culture that embraces complexity and equity. School evaluation, as a result, would be driven by clearly defined and locally meaningful values. A matter of days before the submission of this thesis, the DfE's own Teacher Workload Advisory Group (2018) reported that spending time producing data on pupils was frequently cited by staff as 'wasteful' (p.4), completed mostly to appease multiple sources including Ofsted, local government and school management. Recommendations were made in the report for the DfE to evaluate how schools currently use

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chief-inspector-sets-out-vision-for-new-education-inspection-framework>

data and develop audit tools to support this task. The DfE has accepted all recommendations of the report in full. Further research will therefore be necessary in order to fully assess the current impact of data collection, both for staff and pupils, and evaluate the impact of changes to policy once they have been implemented.

9.6.6 Overcoming adversity through the LFARA. The negative impact of increasing accountability, rising pupil needs and funding concerns on staff wellbeing and morale has been acknowledged by existing research (Astle, 2017). These concerns are reiterated in the current study. However, findings of this study have differed to Astle's assertion because rather than 'narrowing their focus...to meet the constantly shifting demands of the government's accountability system' (p.1), staff in the present study have painted a different, but equally concerning picture. A common theme across all sub-sample schools was that social deprivation was so significant, pupil needs are so great, and the desire to 'make a difference' is so strong, that staff go 'above and beyond' what is expected of them, in spite of this valuable work being essentially invisible in audit terms. Staff describe a system which is at breaking point. Bureaucratic workload is perceived to have increased, funding cuts have resulted in reduced staff ratio and decreased specialist support, yet staff are unwilling to compromise on pupils' needs. Extra-curricular experiences that provide sports and arts experiences that some pupils might not otherwise access are offered by school staff. These same staff report often working late into the evening and at the weekend planning, marking and liaising with families and support services to ensure the wellbeing of pupils and parents. This juggling ultimately has a negative effect on staff wellbeing and may be unsustainable in the long term.

Findings of this study indicate that adversity is so significant for staff that it is perceived to impact pupils negatively. As discussed in **Chapter 2**, existing literature supports the efficacy of supervision and support models in health and caring professions, yet they remain underdeveloped. In addition, structural barriers to staff wellbeing (for example, inadequate funding and increasing accountability) must be addressed by policy makers in order to address the current issues of falling teacher retention (Weare, 2015).

Spielman has publicly indicated Ofsted's aim to reduce teacher workload ('If we can get so that teacher workload has reduced significantly, I think that we've done a big part of the job we should be doing', (Spielman, 2018)). However, she has also faced criticism for failure to link evidence-based appraisal of educational standards to the structural barriers

schools face including a lack of funding and appropriate specialist support (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2018). Systemic barriers to school capacity to provide effective education must be considered as part of any appraisal of performance, in order to preserve staff wellbeing. More could be done by Ofsted to acknowledge these structural barriers and advise the government on the impact for schools. Campaigns for Ofsted to place wellbeing for staff and pupils at the heart of assessing school quality are also of vital importance, and are currently emerging¹⁹. In addition, a broader, open discourse is required about the purpose and aims of the education system, that includes policy makers, school staff, children, and their parents or carers. In this way, a WS approach to wellbeing has the best chance of ‘changing the odds’ (Hart et al, 2013, p31; 2016, p.3) for the most disadvantaged children.

9.6.7 Developing a whole-school improvement and early prevention model that accounts for complexity. Staff have perceived the LFARA as a uniquely strengths-based, reflective approach to school improvement. This has important implications for school effectiveness evaluation, and government approaches to mental health intervention. A recent report (Critchley et al., 2018), published in the final weeks of editing this thesis) claims empirical evidence that WS approaches to mental wellbeing improve staff perceptions of school environment and increase staff mental health awareness and capacity to support pupils. The report (as discussed in **Chapter 1**) suggests that WS approaches are significantly more advantageous than approaches which only train teaching staff (including the government’s own Mental Health First Aid programme). Findings of the present study in which staff support this assertion, constitute a timely and significant contribution to the expanding evidence base for the WS approach. In an individualised definition of resilience as synonymous with ‘grit’ or ‘character’, a lack of adequate funding and support are clouded by the notion that individual capacity to ‘cope’ can override structural barriers to MH. Hart and colleagues at the Centre of Resilience for Social Justice (CRSJ) at the University of Brighton work to a definition of resilience linked to social justice (Hart et al., 2016), and have used practice-based approaches to building resilience in the context of social deprivation²⁰. Conceptually, the ARA has been developed based on a definition of resilience as ‘overcoming adversity, whilst also potentially changing, or even dramatically transforming

¹⁹ <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/outstanding-schools-should-have-wellbeing-at-their-heart/>

²⁰ <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/crsj/index.aspx>

(aspects of) that adversity’ (Hart et al., 2013, p.31; 2016, p.3) in response to a review of current approaches in which reliance on expensive and time limited support was critiqued by the authors (Hart and Heaver, 2013). In the present study, staff identified the strengths-based and sustainable nature of the LFARA as key enabling factors. Regardless of their role, staff understood the contribution they could make in promoting resilience, as part of a connected school community that also enlisted the support of external professionals in support of the LFARA.

Resilience of school systems depends on dynamically interrelated internal *and* external factors that enable schools to ‘capitalise on disruptive surprises that threaten the system’ (Richtnér & Löfsten, 2014, see **Chapter 3**). Findings of this study suggest that the LFARA was ideally suited to supporting schools to seek out opportunities to adapt in response to change. During times of limited school budget and high pupil needs, the LFARA was considered cost effective, sustainable and efficient in its capacity to improve multiple aspects of school climate, based on building resilience across the school community, and in which support for school staff was integral to the approach. In stark contrast, critics of the MHFA training say that the government risk ‘huge sums (of money) being spent with great flourish, but with little benefit to the people who are affected most’ (McCartney, 2018).

Interrelated risk factors including poverty, special educational need, and mental health issues have been discussed in **Chapter 1** as sustaining inequality and requiring urgent attention to redress the balance. The attainment gap between pupils facing disadvantage and their peers persists, with current empirical studies suggesting that the most vulnerable young people fall progressively behind throughout schooling (Sanders et al., 2018). Existing literature concerning the protective factors in school climate must be considered alongside research that warns of school-based risk factors. High staff turnover, bullying, accumulated disadvantage through disciplinary processes, and exam pressure were highlighted as specific risks. In addition, staff capacity to implement a WS approach may require additional support, given high levels of existing workload and staff stress.

Efforts to initiate meaningful change in schools need to focus more sharply on the complexity of the school system, including the interrelationship between pupil and staff wellbeing and mental health. The present study has contributed to the necessary understanding required in order to develop WS approaches for this purpose. As findings have shown, a dynamic interaction between existing school systems and WS approaches occurs that relies on ‘optimal turbulence’, congruent values, effective communication to transform

school climate. However, changes in school climate must be accompanied by changes to policy beyond school level that address structural barriers to adopting these approaches.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Ethics Approval



University of Brighton

Tier 2 College Research Ethics Committee
College of Life, Health and Physical Sciences
266 Mayfield House, Village Way
Falmer, Brighton BN1 9PH, UK
Tel +44(0)1273 644029

JOSIE MAITLAND

**Mixed methods study of school staff experiences of an Academic Resilience
Approach: a whole systems perspective**

Thank you for your submission to the College Research Ethics Committee for the College of Life, Health and Physical Sciences at the University of Brighton which was considered at the committee meeting on 12th April 2016.

The committee were impressed with the content and presentation of your submission and are happy to **APPROVE** this study subject to the approval of the larger study and with the following comments:

- This proposal is part of a larger study undergoing ethical review and this approval is subject to the approval of the bigger study.
- Data must be held for 10 years as per University policy.

Please note that the decisions of the committee are made on the basis of the information provided in your application. The CREC must be informed of any changes to the research process after a favorable ethical opinion has been given. Tier 2 research that is conducted without having been reviewed by the committee is not covered by the University research insurance cover. If you need to make changes to your proposal please complete a minor/major amendments form and submit this for consideration by the committee. The form is available at:

<https://staff.brighton.ac.uk/ease/ro/Pages/ethics%20and%20governance/CREC-LHPS.aspx>

Once your research has been completed, please could you fill in a brief 'end of project report form' that can be found on the same website.

Finally please could I ask that you report any serious adverse events, or unexpected ethical issues, that arise during the conduct of this study.

We wish you all the best with your research

Dr Lucy Redhead (Chair)
College Research Ethics Committee
College of Life, Health & Physical Sciences

Appendix II: Sample Contact with Participants – Survey Invitation Email

Dear xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx,

I am emailing from the University of Brighton because your school is participating in the LFARA. This is a research project (taking place in more than 15 schools in your county) that aims to develop schools to better support disadvantaged pupils and improve educational and wellbeing outcomes through a focus on the concept of resilience (doing better than expected in spite of adversity).

You are being invited to be part of this research because you are a staff member of the school community in a collaborating school. Part of the research will concentrate specifically on the staff experience of the project and therefore, we want to hear from as many people employed as school staff as possible about their perception of the school and the process, from beginning to end.

Whilst it is not compulsory for you to take part in this survey, gathering as many views will enable us to present a rich and articulate picture of staff experiences and therefore, contribute more fully to future developments. This short survey will not take a great deal of time to complete but will provide us with important information at the beginning and end of the project, from which we can begin to consider what changes have or have not occurred.

The data from the surveys will be entirely confidential and used only for the purposes of the research. We have ensured confidentiality by providing each member of staff with an ID code. We will use this coding to match data you will provide now with data will be provided by you at the end of the project.

However, the confidential information you will provide will be stored securely, used only by researchers at the University of Brighton and not shared with your employers or the County Council.

Further information regarding the project can be found in the attached information sheet, which will also be the first page of the online survey. Please may I request that you follow the link below and complete the short survey using your identification code.

The survey can be found by clicking this

link: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/dstaff>

(IF CLICKING THE LINK GIVES AN ERROR MESSAGE SAYING "This link has been disabled to protect your security" PLEASE COPY AND PASTE THE LINK TO YOUR BROWSER).

Your unique identification code is: xxxxxxxx

Many thanks in advance for your time and participation.

Should you have any further questions, or any problems following this link or completing the survey, please contact myself or my supervisor (see contact details below)

Kind regards, Josie Maitland

PhD student

Centre for Health Research,

University of Brighton

Mayfield House,

Brighton, BN1 9PH

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Appendix III: Interview Schedule for Sub-Sample Staff in Schools A, B, C, D and E

Introduction Script

Hello, and thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this interview. I am interested to find out about your experiences of being involved with the Locally Facilitated Academic Resilience Approach as part of the Resilience Project in your school. Because the approach has been applied by schools in many different ways, I am interested in you describing your experiences of how resources were used and any emergent practices or changes to practice.

In particular, I am interested to find out, from your perspective, what contributed to any changes, that is to say whether aspects of the context of the school system enabled the implementation to be successful or prevented it from being successful. I am also going to ask about your perceptions of the role of leadership and whether this has changed as a result of the implementation.

Please ensure that the focus is on your experiences and that you do not refer to another member of staff or a student by name. If you refer to an individual by accident, the name will be anonymised during transcription. Confidentiality will be breached if I feel that there is a risk to yourself or others that I need to communicate via your school's normal safeguarding procedures.

After the transcript has been completed, it will be sent to you for checking to enable you to have input over the final version and ensure that you feel it is an accurate representation of what was discussed. After the anonymised transcript has been given the go ahead, the raw audio data will be deleted. The content of our conversation could be used in my thesis, and in presentations or papers about this study in anonymised form. Is that ok?

This interview will last no more than one hour and, as you are aware, will be recorded. You can ask to stop the interview at any time. Before we begin, do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Q1: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself - how long you have been a (insert role)/working in a school context? What is your role in this school?

OPTIONAL PROMPTS:

What does it feel like to be a member of staff in this staff team?

How well are staff needs met?

Does the staff team have a strong sense of shared values and vision?

In what way are strengths and successes of staff shared and celebrated?

How are staff supported in this school by leadership and each other?

How involved are you in strategic planning / policy decisions?

What is the school link like with the local community/parents and carers?

Q2: Can you tell me about your experiences of being part of the LFARA implementation? What role did you play? At which point did you get involved?

OPTIONAL PROMPTS:

What did you understand to be the aim of the LFARA implementation?

What were your thoughts and feelings about the LFARA implementation initially?

Did you reconsider aspects of your existing practice or adapt your own practice in any way during LFARA?

How useful and applicable did you find the concept of resilience in relation to challenging adverse contexts of some students?

Did you find the concept of resilience useful in relation to school and school staff as well as individual students?

Q3: What resources or ideas did you use from the LFARA? Which were the most useful? Did you develop your own resources?

Q4: What challenges, if any, were there to the LFARA implementation?

OPTIONAL PROMPTS:

Did any aspect of school in particular seem to constrain LFARA implementation (i.e. resources, time, competing, values)

Q5: What strengths did your school have that helped the LFARA implementation?

OPTIONAL PROMPTS:

Did any aspect of school in particular seem to facilitate LFARA implementation (i.e. resources, time, reduction in workload, values)

Q6: What is the role of leadership in the school? To what extent has LFARA changed perceptions of the role of leadership in your school?

OPTIONAL PROMPTS:

What are the priorities for leadership in your school?

How do teaching staff influence and feedback to leadership in your school?

How do parents and carers influence and feedback to leadership in your school?

How do students influence and feedback to leadership in your school?

Q7: What changes, if any, have been made in your school since LFARA began?

OPTIONAL PROMPTS:

What structural changes, if any, did LFARA initiate in your school? (i.e. school environment, performance assessment criteria, teaching strategies, assessment tools, identifying and tracking 'at risk' students, allocation of resources, communication)

Can you give me a specific example of something you did or used that came from the LFARA implementation?

Were there any changes in the overall vision or values of the school community?

Were there any changes to communication / feedback in the school community?

Overall, how useful or successful do you think LFARA has been for your school?

Final questions (to enable deeper exploration - to be used if time allows or if answers thus far have not explored these topics):

- 1) What is the most significant aspect of your experience with LFARA and how will this affect your own professional practice?
- 2) Are there any suggestions you would make to a school adopting LFARA in order to help facilitate the implementation?
- 3) To what extent did events beyond the school (e.g. policy, funding, local community) influence the project in your opinion?
- 4) How do you think the LFARA compares to other interventions or school improvement approaches? What are the similarities (where it can be used to compliment or support other approaches) and what makes it different?

Closing question.

Is there anything else you would like to add that will help us to understand your experience of the LFARA implementation?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview.

Appendix IV: SPSC Online Consent and Information Sheet

Welcome to Evaluation Study of the LFARA. This is your information sheet and consent form

You are being invited to take part in the LFARA which employs a resilience approach with a focus on capacity building in the educational system in order to support disadvantaged pupils and improve educational and wellbeing outcomes. The study will involve a number of schools in your county. The research team is led by staff at the University of Brighton.

In addition, the study will form part of the Imagine Programme (<http://www.imaginecommunity.org.uk/>) which is about building more functioning communities in local areas as part of imagining better, more resilient futures. **You are being invited to take part in the research as a participant because you are a member of the school community in one of the collaborating schools.**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason and without incurring any negative effects. Your involvement will consist of completing this online survey now, and once again at the end of the project. You may also be selected as part of a sub-sample of staff who will be asked to take part in an interview.

The time and inconvenience of participating might be a possible disadvantage of taking part in this study – though often people find this a positive experience. It is also possible that although you will not be asked to recount personal experiences, you may find thinking about and participating in this study is also a valuable opportunity to reflect on strengths of your own practice, and consider staff needs. **Every part of information given throughout this process by you will remain strictly confidential. Your name will not appear with the data you will provide.** In your invitation email you should have received an ID number, we will use this coding to match data you will provide now with data will be provided by you at the end of the project. Information you will provide will come directly to University of Brighton and be stored securely. Any personal information the data will be anonymised.

The results of this study will be presented in reports, academic papers, at conferences, and at community events. Results will also be included in a PhD thesis. You will not be identified in any report/publication. Should you have a problem with the research please contact Dr. Suna Eryigit-Madzwamuse, (S.Eryigit-Madzwamuse@brighton.ac.uk). Any issues of safeguarding that might arise from the data collection, that are not already under investigation, will be dealt with by complying with your school's safeguarding policy.

If you have any questions please contact Dr Eryigit-Madzwamuse. You will also receive a hard copy of information sheet and consent form.

Thank you very much

***ELECTRONIC CONSENT.** Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:

- you have read the above information
- you voluntarily agree to participate
- you are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in this research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button. **I AGREE / I DISAGREE**

Appendix V: SPSC Items and sample layout for online survey

Items SPSC1-SPSC45 provided a Likert scale option which participants clicked to select the appropriate response. Example below:

20 Work connection

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel I am valued by this school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with my participation in this school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel part of the local community where I work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I regard my colleagues at this school as my friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel part of a team at work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Items LFARA 1- 5 asked participants to click Yes/No/I don't know and provide examples where 'yes' was selected.

SPSC1	There is good team spirit in this school
SPSC2	The morale in this school is high
SPSC3	Staff go about their work with enthusiasm
SPSC4	Staff take pride in this school
SPSC5	There is a lot of energy in this school
SPSC6	Staff are overloaded with work in this school (R)
SPSC7	There is too much expected of staff in this school (R)
SPSC8	There is constant pressure for teachers to keep working (R)
SPSC9	There is no time for teachers to relax in this school (R)
SPSC10	I am happy with the decision-making processes used in this school
SPSC11	There are opportunities for staff to participate in school policy and decision-making
SPSC12	There are forums in this school where I can express my views and opinion
SPSC13	Staff are frequently asked to participate in decisions concerning administrative policies and procedures in this school
SPSC14	There is good communication between staff members in this school

SPSC15	I receive support from my colleagues
SPSC16	Staff in this school can rely on their colleagues for support and assistance when needed
SPSC17	There is good communication between groups in this school
SPSC18	Staff frequently discuss and share teaching methods and strategies with each other
SPSC19	I feel I am accepted by other staff in this school
SPSC20	I have the opportunity to be involved in cooperative work with other members of staff
SPSC21	There is support from the administration in this school
SPSC22	There is good communication between staff and school leadership team in this school
SPSC23	The school leadership team in this school can be relied upon when things get tough
SPSC24	I am able to approach the school leadership team in this school to discuss concerns or grievances
SPSC25	The school leadership team doesn't really know the problems faced by staff (R)
SPSC26	School involves local community organisations (including health and non-health services) in delivery of programs or services to the school
SPSC27	School develops curriculum activities that encourage children's active involvement in the local community.
SPSC28	School encourages participation of students' parents, caregivers or extended families in all school activities (e.g. policy development, program planning, school cultural activities).
SPSC29	School raises local community awareness about school-based health promotion initiatives (e.g. through the local media, school open days, newsletters).
SPSC30	I am regularly given feedback on how I am performing my role
SPSC31	I am happy with the quality of feedback I receive on my work performance
SPSC32	There is a structure and ongoing process that provides feedback on my work performance
SPSC33	I have the opportunity to discuss and receive feedback on my work performance
SPSC34	Teachers receive recognition for good work
SPSC35	I am encouraged in my work by praise, thanks or other recognition
SPSC36	There is agreement in the teaching philosophy of this school
SPSC37	The staff are committed to the school's goals
SPSC38	The school has a clearly stated set of objectives and goals

SPSC39	My personal goals are in agreement with the goals of this school
SPSC40	The goals of this school are not easily understood (R)
SPSC41	I feel I am valued by this school
SPSC42	I am satisfied with my participation in this school
SPSC43	I feel part of the local community where I work
SPSC44	I regard my colleagues at this school as my friends
SPSC45	I feel part of a team at work
LFARA1	Has the LFARA influenced school environment? If yes, please provide examples.
LFARA2	Has the LFARA influenced pedagogical practice? If yes, please provide examples.
LFARA3	Has the LFARA influenced school ethos? If yes, please provide examples.
LFARA4	Has the LFARA influenced leadership? If yes, please provide examples.
LFARA5	Has the LFARA influenced feedback and communication? If yes, please provide examples.

Appendix VI: Reliability Analysis of the SPSC: Correlation of Each Item to Total Scale and Paired sample T-test: T1 and T2 SPSC survey for each school.

Reliability analysis of *all scale items* (Cronbach Alpha scores)

	Item	Corrected Item Total Correlation with Scale T1/T2 ^b	α if item deleted T 1/T2	
	TOTAL ^a			
Morale	SPSC1	There is good team spirit in this school	.747/.659	.968/.960
	SPSC2	The morale in this school is high	.770/.730	.968/.960
	SPSC3	Staff go about their work with enthusiasm	.739/.649	.968/.960
	SPSC4	Staff take pride in this school	.658/.545	.968/.961
	SPSC5	There is a lot of energy in this school	.634/.628	.968/.960
Workload	SPSC6	Staff are overloaded with work in this school (R ^c)	.420/.414	.969/.961
	SPSC7	There is too much expected of staff in this school (R)	.503/.453	.969/.961
	SPSC8	There is constant pressure for teachers to keep working (R)	.267/.305	.970/.962
	SPSC9	There is no time for teachers to relax in this school (R)	.411/.421	.969/.962
Participative Decision Making	SPSC10	I am happy with the decision-making processes used in this school	.792/.746	.968/.960
	SPSC11	There are opportunities for staff to participate in school policy and decision-making	.772/.650	.968/.960
	SPSC12	There are forums in this school where I can express my views and opinion	.712/.656	.968/.960
	SPSC13	Staff are frequently asked to participate in decisions concerning administrative policies and procedures in this school	.656/.614	.968/.960
Professional Interaction	SPSC14	There is good communication between staff members in this school	.698/.645	.968/.960
	SPSC15	I receive support from my colleagues	.637/.496	.968/.961
	SPSC16	Staff in this school can rely on their colleagues for support and assistance when needed	.633/.501	.969/.961
	SPSC17	There is good communication between groups in this school	.643/.687	.968/.960
	SPSC18	Staff frequently discuss and share teaching methods and strategies with each other	.593/.695	.969/.960
	SPSC19	I feel I am accepted by other staff in this school	.593/.459	.969/.961
	SPSC20	I have the opportunity to be involved in cooperative work with other members of staff	.759/.656	.968/.960

Supportive Leadership	SPSC21	There is support from the administration in this school	.670/.606	.968/.961
	SPSC22	There is good communication between staff and school leadership team in this school	.861/.830	.967/.959
	SPSC23	The school leadership team in this school can be relied upon when things get tough	.852/.789	.967/.960
	SPSC24	I am able to approach the school leadership team in this school to discuss concerns or grievances	.784/.713	.968/.960
	SPSC25	The school leadership team doesn't really know the problems faced by staff (R)	.443/.321	.969/.962
Community Relationship	SPSC26	School involves local community organisations (including health and non-health services) in delivery of programs or services to the school	.478/.384	.969/.961
	SPSC27	School develops curriculum activities that encourage children's active involvement in the local community.	.481/.490	.969/.961
	SPSC28	School encourages participation of students' parents, caregivers or extended families in all school activities (e.g. policy development, program planning, school cultural activities).	.534/.557	.969/.961
	SPSC29	School raises local community awareness about school-based health promotion initiatives (e.g. through the local media, school open days, newsletters).	.526/.476	.969/.961
Appraisal and Recognition	SPSC30	I am regularly given feedback on how I am performing my role	.662/.687	.968/.960
	SPSC31	I am happy with the quality of feedback I receive on my work performance	.702/.618	.968/.960
	SPSC32	There is a structure and ongoing process that provides feedback on my work performance	.651/.534	.968/.961
	SPSC33	I have the opportunity to discuss and receive feedback on my work performance	.646/.629	.968/.960
	SPSC34	Teachers receive recognition for good work	.748/.701	.968/.960
	SPSC35	I am encouraged in my work by praise, thanks or other recognition	.721/.701	.968/.960
Goal Congruence	SPSC36	There is agreement in the teaching philosophy of this school	.661/.763	.968/.960
	SPSC37	The staff are committed to the school's goals	.652/.577	.968/.961
	SPSC38	The school has a clearly stated set of objectives and goals	.679/.650	.968/.960
	SPSC39	My personal goals are in agreement with the goals of this school	.697/.676	.968/.960

	SPSC40	The goals of this school are not easily understood (R)	.515/.376	.969/.962
Work	SPSC41	I feel I am valued by this school	.812/.725	.968/.960
Connection	SPSC42	I am satisfied with my participation in this school	.606/.631	.969/.961
	SPSC43	I feel part of the local community where I work	.488/.583	.969/.961
	SPSC44	I regard my colleagues at this school as my friends	.371/.334	.969/.962
	SPSC45	I feel part of a team at work	.637/.639	.968/.961

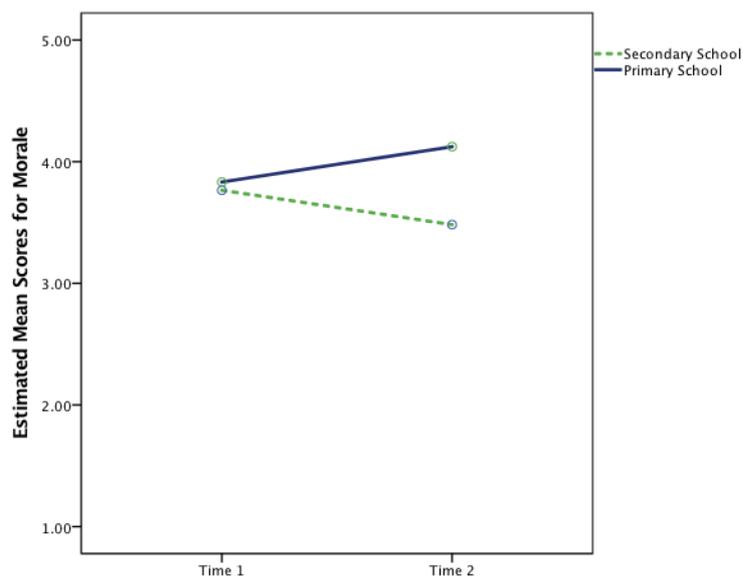
Notes. ^ainternal consistency for the total scale: T₁ .969 / T₂= .961
^b T1 refers to pre-intervention survey (time one), T2 refers to post intervention survey (time 2)
^c R indicates item has been reversed

Paired sample T-test: T1 and T2 SPSC survey for each school.

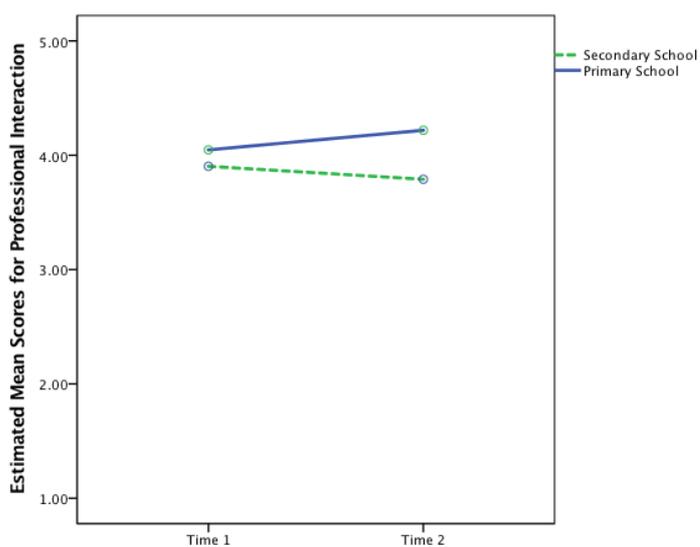
ID (SPSC T1 score ranking)	N in Group 2	Time 1		Time 2		Paired t- test <i>T</i>	Sig. (2- tailed) <i>P</i>
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
SCHOOL A (12)	5	3.48	.54	3.86	.33	-3.25	<.05
SCHOOL B (15)	9	3.25	.66	3.72	.49	-2.26	ns
SCHOOL C (17)	8	3.17	.33	3.12	.32	.75	ns
SCHOOL D (5)	3	3.92	.41	4.07	.20	-1.12	ns
SCHOOL E (6)	9	3.91	.40	4.02	.30	-1.03	ns
SCHOOL F (16)	3	3.21	.64	3.22	.69	-.33	ns
SCHOOL G (4)	6	4.11	.38	4.14	.48	-.17	ns
SCHOOL H (11)	4	3.53	.56	3.75	.21	-1.11	ns
SCHOOL I (5)	3	3.92	.41	4.07	.20	-1.12	ns
SCHOOL J (3)	6	4.13	.32	4.27	.33	-1.48	ns
SCHOOL K (13)	5	3.44	.32	3.56	.31	-1.62	ns
SCHOOL L (8)	17	3.80	.56	3.61	.68	2.15	<.05
SCHOOL M (10)	2	3.61	.68	3.80	.31	-.74	ns
SCHOOL N (3)	3	4.13	.03	4.36	.21	-1.63	ns
SCHOOL O (9)	2	3.71	.13	3.93	.03	-3.33	ns
SCHOOL P (7)	17	3.85	.36	4.10	.32	-3.48	<.01
SCHOOL Q (14)	3	3.39	.32	3.62	.36	-1.09	ns
SCHOOL R (1)	4	4.42	.25	4.24	.33	1.67	ns
SCHOOL S (2)	3	4.27	.16	3.94	.36	.88	ns

Appendix VII: Estimated Mean Scores Comparing Primary and Secondary Schools for all SPSC Subscales

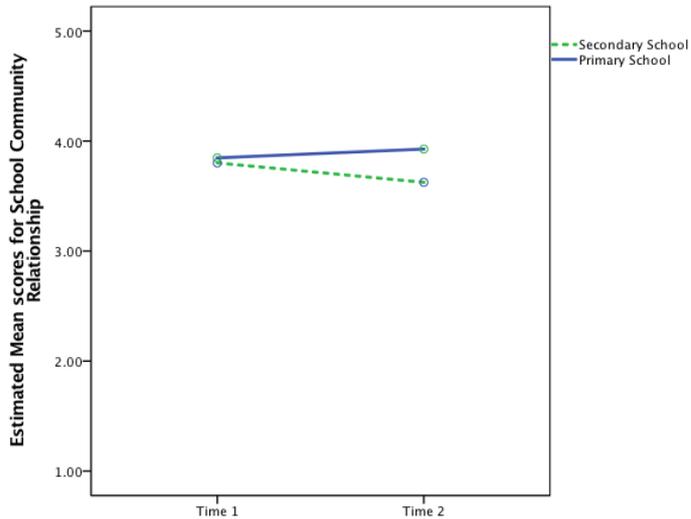
Estimated Mean Scores for Morale subscale from Time 1 to Time 2 for secondary and primary school staff.



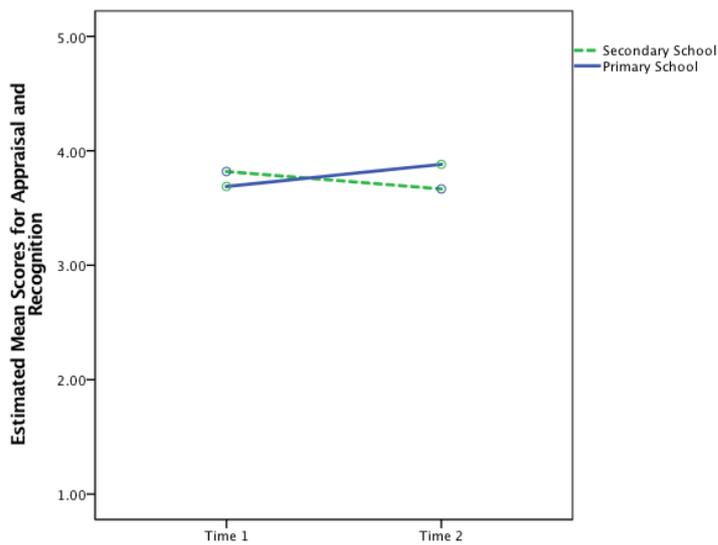
Estimated Mean Scores for Professional Interaction subscale from Time 1 to Time 2 for secondary and primary school staff.



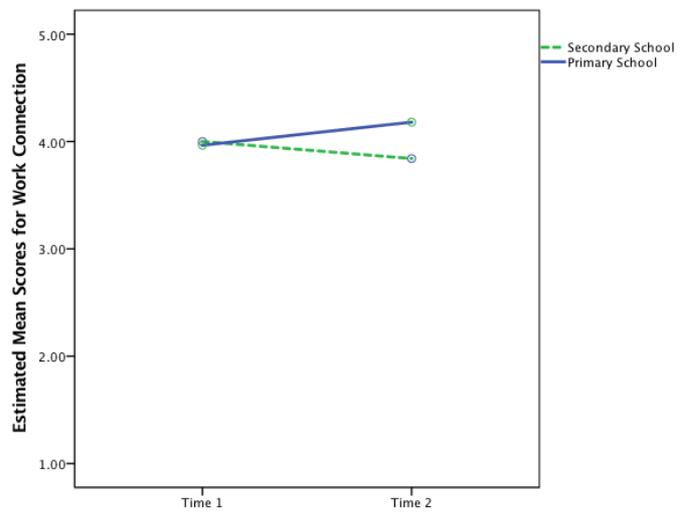
Estimated Mean Scores for School Community Relationship subscale from Time 1 to Time 2 for secondary and primary school staff.



Estimated Mean Scores for Appraisal and Recognition subscale from Time 1 to Time 2 for secondary and primary school staff.



Estimated Mean Scores for Work Connection subscale from Time 1 to Time 2 for secondary and primary school staff.



Appendix VIII: LFARA Action Plan for School A

Academic Resilience Project Action Plan			
School SCHOOL A	Lead with position 1: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 2: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	Contact details – XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	School context Primary
Main focus for project: 1. Staff wellbeing & resilience 2. Children’s understanding of resilience, the ability to compete, fail and bounce back 3. Outdoor Learning	Baseline data: what will you use to assess a starting point? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil audit • SLT audit • Staff audit • Attendance data 	Aspirational outcomes: What do aim to achieve? What will be different for the students as a result of this project- quantitatively and qualitatively? How will you know you have succeeded? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils will have increased resilience to manage adversity as members of xxxxxx Primary and to focus on the whole child <i>not just academic success</i>. For all staff and children to experience calm & consistent approach throughout the day. 	Links to other school priorities; How does this link to your school improvement plan, the Wellbeing strategy, OFSTED action plans etc? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in SDP and provides framework for all planning
Training needs; Who do you want to train? What do they need to know? Who should train them? What is the order of importance? Do you want to do this as a single school community or join with others? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OPAL • Introducing Mindfulness • Attachment Aware training • Nurture Provision training • Introduction of Future Steps – linked to sensory needs 		Involving the students; How are you going to find out what the students really think/ know about resilience (including the vulnerable groups)? How are you going to involve them in designing and delivering the project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School council • Year 6 whole class session • Focus group with Year 2 pupils • Focus group with Year 3 pupils • Access to OPAL • Responsibility for assemblies • Trackers 	
Involving families: How are you going to find out what the families really think/ know about resilience (including the vulnerable groups)? How are you going to involve them in designing and delivering the project?		Involving communities/services How are you going to find out what the local community and available services really think/ know about resilience? How are you going to involve them in designing and delivering the project?	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News letters • Home/school contracts • Parents/carers made aware of the LFARA • Coffee/regular drop-ins • Facebook/App • Newsletters/Assembly • Share trackers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with local schools involved in the LFARA - hubs • Strong links with other service providers in the community
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<p>Community of Practice What do you want to get from a CoP? Who needs to be involved? How can you ensure that everyone can attend? Who should lead it once it's established?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of resources and good practice between schools • Linked resilience activities/ work in schools • Introduction of COL4 shared SEMH/C & L/SALSP SLA meetings 	<p>Notes</p> <p>Staff recognise the need to look at the whole child, the bigger picture, and the social, emotional needs of children as part of a drive for academic success.</p>
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What you are exploring (elements of ARA based on evidence)	The kind of questions you will ask	Notes
<p>At least one trusted adult, with regular access over time, who lets the pupils they 'hold in mind' know that they care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do staff structures allow staff to build trusting relationships over time e.g. a tutor system, or Head of Year role? • Do staff feel they have explicit 'permission' to 'go the extra mile' for pupils that need it or will anxiety about safeguarding get in the way? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All classes have TA access to build trusting relationships • Year groups are to merge for PM sessions to develop joint working and to allow adults opportunities to work with smaller groups (Sep 2017) • Safeguarding procedures are robust and staff recognise their location requires them to go the extra mile on a number of occasions • Staff work well under the guidance of the Headteacher
<p>Preparedness and capacity to help with basics i.e. food, clothing, transport, and even housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the culture in school in relation to inequalities? is the impact understood and are you proactively countering this through policy and action? • Does your school limit itself in relation to help with basics at a cost to academic progress? • Who else in the community can help you with this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High expectations for all irrespective of background • Access TESCO food to support breakfast club • School trips don't incur a cost to parents • Stay and Play opportunities for parents incorporate outside agencies to help parents seek help and support in a non-threatening way • Open door policy to HT

Safe spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do pupils experience the physical spaces in school? • What's safe and what's not? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the OPAL system -access more physical space with more independence and responsibility • Supervision of pupils is very important while children develop responsibility for risk. • Children move confidently around school • Pupils confidently speak to staff to show they feel safe and secure • Forest school is also used • Children know where they can go to feel safe and secure both mentally and physically
Making sure vulnerable pupils actually access activities, hobbies and sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well are you tracking access to additional activities for your disadvantaged pupils? • Who is responsible in the school for ensuring interests are picked up and actively supported – are they making it happen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs are provided and tailored towards interests of pupils • Stay and Play/Forest school for parents allow opportunities for conversations between staff and parents • Buddies lead activities and engage in all OPAL activities • Cohort intervention trackers • Enrichment activities
Help to map out a sense of future (hope and aspirations) and developing life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the career advice your pupils receive mean much to the most disadvantaged pupils with the lowest expectations? • How can it be made more targeted? • How far is aspiration and hope for the future build in to the curriculum, culture and approach of staff to pupils? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the need for more opportunities to inspire pupils and their personal expectations • The importance of learning is threaded through the school day, linking to future aspirations • Pupils could be asked for areas of interest to invite career guidance • Constant encouragement of all young people
problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are opportunities for a problem solving approach created and promoted in every aspect of school life from behaviour management to classroom learning? • How much time do staff spend telling pupils what to do compared with asking them to help solve the problem at hand? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OPAL • Teaching and learning approaches • Fundamental policies in EYFS • Open ended activities • Ethos of encouragement rather than telling

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging independence through tasks set in lessons
Helping pupils to cope – teaching self soothing, management of feelings,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do pupils think of your behaviour management and pastoral support? How would they improve it? • How do staff feel in relation to the relentless challenge from pupils who do not manage feelings well? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding high expectations • Staff are resilient and support each other • To develop opportunities for more talk time to resolve situations • Support plans in place • Whole-school approach to calming and regulating
Support to help others e.g. volunteering, peer mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are opportunities for volunteering maximised across the curriculum? • In what ways could pupils better support each other? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddies at break/lunch • Reading partners • To develop this further by working with the community more to develop tolerance of each other • Further opportunities to celebrate successes would be beneficial
Opportunities for all staff, pupils and parents to learn about resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does your staff understand about the aspects of resilience that can promote academic progress? • How can pupils and their parents be better engaged in the schools' drive to promote academic resilience? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Can do' attitude, perseverance and a willingness to do better • Multi-faceted approach to problem solving

Appendix IX: Focus Group Interview Schedule

Introduction:

‘This is the focus group looking at the evaluation of the implementation of the Locally Facilitated Resilience project. My name is xxxx. I’m a researcher at the University of Brighton and I’m facilitating this meeting. Could I ask you to introduce yourselves and your role?’

‘We’re going to start with some quite broad topics. They’re deliberately broad in terms of the question. To start, I’m interested in your perceptions of the whole implementation process around how the Resilience Project has been implemented. Just for a starter, can I get your overall views on that please?’

Prompt for more detailed responses as appropriate to information provided – e.g. explore facilitators and barriers from participant perspectives.

Explore composition and representation of the Advisory Group

‘The next area to think about is the extent to which you think the implementation of the Resilience Project has succeeded in building capacity in the organisations and the county to continue to deliver this sort of work and this approach’

Explore ‘Communities of Practice’, creative approaches to facilitation and practitioner collaboration

‘Moving on to think about leadership – What kind of leadership styles do you think have been important?’

‘What does this approach to leadership mean when considered at school level? How realistic / sustainable is it?’

‘Have there been examples of ‘bottom up’ leadership?’ Prompt: for example a teacher taking up a leadership role.

‘Moving on to think about information. Information can become an issue in complicated projects in terms of: Have you got the information you need? Who owns the information? Are people willing to share information? Have there been information management challenges on this project, in terms of the need to collect or share information?’

Prompt for further depth, especially what types of information are being gathered and are useful.

‘Moving on to think about resources. What are your reflections on the use of resources, and how they’ve been used?’

Prompt: Do you feel the project is well resourced? Have resources have gone to the right place? Have you been able to move them around and use them creatively?

‘To what extent have issues in local government influenced this project? Have they influenced enthusiasm and momentum to keep going?’

‘What are your reflections on how this project continues in the future - its sustainability?’

Prompts: What are the challenges for this, what might help to make this achievable?

Thank you very much for your time. I enjoyed meeting you and hearing about the project from you all.

Appendix X: ‘Zoomed out’ Whole-School Change Process in School A

LFARA process in School A, across the whole school.

