**INV**-**007-S-U-S-STA-F:** SENCO, urban, southern, state school, female

## General introduction

**INTERVIEWER:** So can we just start off talking more generally about your teaching experience and how you’ve ended up in the job that you’re in now?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Okay. Um…so I went straight from university into teaching. And then, um, taught in XXXX, um, in XXXX for about four years…and taught Year 5 and 6 and 3 and 4. And then, um, got married, moved to XXXX and then I’ve been at the school where I currently am for…thirteen years and then I’m going to move in September.

**INTERVIEWER:** Wow. And you’ve had a few different roles in the school you’re in now?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yes. So I’ve taught…always Key Stage 2, so I’ve taught Year 3 for a long time and then Year, um, 6 and then I’ve taught Year 5 this year. And I’ve been, um, I’ve done the role of SENCO and I’ve been in charge of English and, um, I’ve done [unintelligible] history and RE. And I do Pupil Premium at the moment so children who, um, are either service children or children in care, it’s basically those who need to make accelerated progress because of deprived situations, free school meals, that type of thing. So that’s me at the moment.

**INTERVIEWER:** Wow, that’s quite a range.

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yeah, it is actually. It’s quite tricky…that role…um, because unfortunately there’s not a lot of resourcing to now be able to give the support to the children that need it. So it all comes down to having good quality first teaching…and whole school stuff really. Um, but the idea of doing little interventions with the children that need it…there’s just not the staffing or the money to do it anymore. So that’s tricky.

**INTERVIEWER:** So can you describe a typical classroom – if there is one – in your school, or the class that you have at the moment?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yep. So, um, I’ve actually got, um, probably not a typical class at the moment in my school. I’ve got quite a well, um, behaved probably, calm class. I’ve got 26 of them, of which I’ve got, um, half a dozen Pupil Premium, um, two special needs who are also Pupil Premium children. I think there are probably more children, I would say there’s probably four children who should be on the SEN register, but there are two officially on it. Um…I’ve actually got equal numbers of boys and girls. I would say in my school though it’s not typical because in my school we’ve actually probably got at least one child in every class who…is either accessing a part timetable or, um…has a workstation and a one-to-one and is potentially not within the classroom working on that. Um, or, attends sessions with our ELSA because they can’t come into the mainstream classroom, um, so mine’s quite a nice year this year because it’s quite straightforward.

**INTERVIEWER:** And have you got any children with ADHD in your class this year?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** No, not this year. But I did have last year. Um…I’ve got one who shows possibly some small traits of it this year but I think it’s more of an attention, um, deficit rather than the whole, um, spectrum of ADHD. I did have last year, um, someone who found it really tricky to concentrate or focus at all. It was hard to distinguish with them though – I had a few last year actually – hard to distinguish with them how much was down to…the autism – both were autistic as well. So it was quite tricky to work out whether they just weren’t…linked into a topic or whether they actually just couldn’t find the focus for it. But that would result in them…leaving the classroom – one particularly leaving the classroom by any method. If the window was open, out they hopped. So things like that, yeah. Um…but yes, so, probably my most recent was last year.

## ADHD as a disorder and its symptoms

**INTERVIEWER:** So when you think of ADHD…as a disorder, like, how would you describe it? What kind of symptoms would you expect or what have you seen?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Um, I would say- [unintelligible] if they’re on medication quite often they change during the day. So they might come in calm in the morning, um, and then we had one child who, um, was medicating in the morning and then they had another lot at lunchtime I think. And you could often see a deterioration…pre the need for medication again at lunchtime. Um, I’ve seen…things like actually when we’re on the carpet, being unable to…just look where you want them to look at the board or when you’re trying to do a teaching input. Um, an awful lot of things. Background noise – so, um, pencils tapping, um, and- or feet jiggling. Just a constant need to move or to fidget or, um, fiddle with something – anything – near them. And I think we’ve been quite lucky in school because quite often those children…have been quite accepted by the ones next to them. I think probably if I’d have been sat next to someone doing that all the time I would’ve, like, found that really tricky. So I think in my head it’s someone who – I don’t know because I haven’t had a lot of training on it at all – um, but it’s a child who possibly can’t maintain focus or concentration on something for any sustained length of time really.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay so kind of inattention, bit of hyperactivity. People also talk about impulsive behaviour so…they might do something without thinking which isn’t a great choice. Have you seen that?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** So, um…I suppose where it’s- hard to figure it out with the children as to whether that’s the ADHD bit of it or whether that’s the, um, autism coming in. But yeah, no, things like, um…possibly answering back when they don’t mean to answer back. Like you know it’s not come from a place of them being rude but actually, it’s their instant, like, to give you a gobby answer back. Might be that. Or to sort of just refuse to do something. Quite a lot of the stuff we push at the moment is, um, resilience. So one of our sort of key learning things is finding resilience and I think that’s where it’s very tricky because sometimes those children it’s, um, instant – ‘If I can’t do it in a minute, then I don’t want to do it anymore at all.’ And yeah, I think that’s where possibly they can get into trouble with it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you know much about ADHD or what causes it or?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** No, very little at all really. Um, I think probably the most I’ve seen of it is that it’s written down when children have aid with the EHCPs and things or we’re applying for them. You have to, um, get all the notes on, um, GP involvement and CAMHS involvement and often you have to list all the medical needs that they’ve been diagnosed with. I think what’s quite tricky is quite often parents self-diagnose their children as well and say, ‘My child has.’ But when you’re obviously looking for funding for a child like that, you need to have more than just a parent Googling the fact that they think their child might have it.

## The diagnosis and treatment of ADHD

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. So do you ever get asked…say by a parent or a doctor or CAMHS, to fill in any forms about children or to give some evidence?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yeah. So, um, quite often at parents’ evenings and things when, um, it is often the children who we’re saying lack focus or can’t concentrate and then we might suggest, ‘Have you explored the idea of…um, seeing whether your child might have some kind of, um, ADHD?’ They often pick up on the word quite quickly though so we try not to say it, partly because we’re not qualified to do it, um, and actually say, ‘Your child has it,’ but you can make a suggestion of, ‘Maybe this is an avenue to explore.’ Um, and then what will happen is we often send to GPs, um, to get them referred to CAMHS and the GPs quite often say, ‘We can’t do that anymore,’ but they can. So then we get them back again, um, and then we do, um, we go through a school referral at that point. And that requires us often to say some of the typical traits that we would see in the classroom, things that we think are affecting their learning, um, things that we’ve found that possibly work…for them. And then we often have, like, a tick list of hundreds of different things on a scaled basis of, um, ‘Would you say this applies to the child very often? Not very often?’ And then there’s lots of-

**INTERVIEWER:** Can you think of any examples of the kind of questions they might have?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Um…it’s often quite a lot to do with, um, social interaction with people around them and peers, their ability to, um, focus on a task or to focus on a task unaided. To, um, how they would react to something. So, um, there are things like whether they would become introverted or whether they would often do things that are possibly inappropriate in a scenario. It tries to pin down as well like timings I think, not timings but sort of events in the day that might trigger I suppose…like trying to narrow it down I think. And then to be honest you often don’t hear – that’s what’s tricky because the CAMHS waiting thing is potentially up to a year. So you might fill that out as a teacher for a child in your class, but then you never really see…any impact of that because it happens in the next year and the child might then get followed up. Quite often the criteria for what, um, they’ll accept or like investigate now has changed. So you might fill it out in what would’ve been accepted and they might have had funding to investigate two years ago, but there now isn’t so unless the child is…unfortunately self-harming or something like that they’re often really low on the waiting list.

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh okay, so the threshold’s gone…much higher.

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** So what impact, when you’ve got a child with ADHD in your classroom, what impact is there on that classroom…and maybe on you in terms of preparation and teaching?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Um…there’s I think the class have to have a lot of patience because, um, to be honest there’s quite often…not the calm working environment that you would choose to have. Because you’ve got you, um, background noise or someone constantly…bopping around, um…on the carpet when everyone else is trying to look past them to the board. Or…they’re calling out when everybody else knows that the rule is actually you wait or you put your hand up or you talk about it with a talk partner. So there has to be quite a lot of tolerance for all of the class. It’s trickier because you feel like you’re managing…quite often you feel like you’re managing a number of groups anyway, ability wise. Um, because at the moment with no LSA, I mean often the classrooms you’re doing is split input so you would start teaching one group their maths whilst the other’s doing independent stuff at a table and then you bring one back and you sort of push another off so it’s quite a juggling act anyway. And then you throw into the equation somebody who…doesn’t really want to do any of it or…doesn’t want to…or can’t do a lot of it on their own, then you’ve got a fifth way of trying to differentiate it. So it can be quite difficult. Particularly because you have to be quite aware of the group that they’re working with. So you’re planning an activity for them but…sometimes the effect that they have on other people on their table is unfair on them being able to concentrate too. So …unfortunately as much as you see a child as an individual and you like them as an individual in your ideal learning scenario, having a child with ADHD that isn’t, um, possibly calm enough to work can be really difficult and isn’t one of those classes you think, ‘Woopie, I’m getting again next year.’

**INTERVIEWER:** So…in terms of like preparing that lesson or…you know doing it on the spot, how does it change the way you approach, you know, the lesson?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Um…I think…up to this point when I’ve had additional adults it’s been easier to do because they can sort of touch base with that child quite regularly, whereas actually when you’re doing the input it’s really difficult to have something, and in that case I know that previously I’ve had really quite set timetables, um, for that child. Like actually we need to have five minutes on this and then almost like [unintelligible] scenario, um, and if you can get through that then actually there can be a choice activity at this point or…some kind of star chart or something that records positive behaviour. Um, it’s constantly having that in the back of your mind, really, and planning down where you would possibly do the timings based on how many physically different groups you can teach within a session when it comes to, um, a child like that. Actually you’re having to think and at that point they might need something different then or they might need to- sometimes they just need a job. So, um, to take a piece of paper that says, um, [unintelligible] or like, ‘Could you just find me something like…’ and it’s something really random just to have given them a change of space and a purpose to go somewhere and do something. So it’s just trying to have those up your sleeve as well so if you read a scenario and you think, ‘Okay, you need…a little bit of time as to the rest of your table, what can I give you that’s purposeful to do?’ Let’s change the scene. Let’s go and see that person or just go and find me this or I think we might need that resource, trying to change it for them. So it’s…a bit of a juggling act really.

**INTERVIEWER:** So do you find the other children in the class are mostly accepting or generally find it quite difficult?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** I think they’re accepting when…they’re set off to work independently. So if they’ve got- say it’s a maths lesson or something, um, and then they’ve all got like the different work they’re doing but they’re doing it on their own that’s fine. Because they can hopefully ignore to a certain amount. What’s tricky is when that child is then part of a group, so if you’re doing an English activity and it’s a discussion-based thing, um, and that child has to come into that discussion then there’s often frustration. It’s initially, like, fun. It’s good fun normally, they’re entertaining like, ‘Oh this is a real joke, look what I just did.’ And then when they realise that they’re going to have to show or talk about what they’ve done and they’ve actually done nothing, then there becomes a frustration of, ‘But they won’t let us’ and ‘We can’t do it’ and then there’s crossness from the other child who’s like, ‘I am trying.’ And you think…well you are, but you’re also- you’ve got an audience as well so then it becomes difficult. That’s when I think as a teacher it’s hard to work out whether some of it is choice behaviour and some of it is uncontrollable and that’s what’s really tricky.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. Do you ever get asked…in some way to be involved in the treatment of a child? Either to sort of administer medication or to follow some kind of behavioural intervention or anything like that?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yeah. So, um, medication wise we don’t. It’s always sent down- it’s recorded and kept in the office. I think because – I don’t know whether we’ve had anyone recently because most of the medication seems to now be done at home, so whether it lasts for a longer period of time. But when we had children who had to be medicated at lunchtime, it was- had to be kept locked away and things I think, and it was all administered by…I’m not [2 s] I’m not even sure whether the parents came in to do it actually at lunchtime. But I know that sometimes our headteacher had to do it in the morning because it was very obvious when they hadn’t had it at home if they’d refused it. And actually she would say, ‘Well actually we aren’t able to…have him in the classroom at the moment until he’s taken it.’ Um…but behaviour wise, um, I think when quite often if a child is in your classroom like that and can potentially be disruptive then you would have a behaviour plan. And that’s sometimes like when people like the XXXX would get involved, which are like behaviour support. So we’re really lucky because…our school’s just around the corner from the centre. So quite often they would touch base, come in and see the child working in the classroom, look at possibly now-and-next trays or having a workstation or, um, meet with the parents and try and come up with a solution to sort of help the child stay in the class really.

**INTERVIEWER:** Are they a specialist…behavioural-?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yeah, so they’re primary behaviour. So they’re from XXXX but they’re based in XXXX and my school’s XXXX so it’s really close. They’re great.

**INTERVIEWER:** And would they come and work with you as an individual class teacher or would they come to work with the staff as a whole or?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** They do both actually. So they can, um, look at supporting the school. Often the headteacher gets them. Um…it’s a bit tricky because they often can’t work- well they will not work with children who have an EHCP. So anyone who has like a particular diagnosis for something and has been given funding for it, then they back right off - they can’t be involved with that child. Which is difficult because…once children have an EHCP, yes they get funding but they don’t get any more expertise on it. Like actually so it might say they’ve got all these particular needs and they need specific things but actually…there’s nobody trained then to give them which is difficult. And that’s when you potentially really do need your people like your primary behaviour to come in and say, ‘Okay we need to set these things up – how would you suggest doing that?’ So they come in before that point. And they can do- they’ve done whole staff training with us on behaviour management plans, um, and sort of just positive behaviour within a classroom with those children in it. But then they’ve also done- they do quite a lot of observations of children, um, and working with teachers. And then they also…are quite often mediators in like meetings. So for those children quite often, um, it sort of varies. Sometimes there can be that- sometimes the parents are almost at despair because they don’t know what to do either, um, and then at other times the parents are really cross because they sort of feel that, ‘This is your time to have my child and you need to manage them, so actually get on with it.’ And so then there can be a breakdown either from the school saying, ‘Yes but these sort of behaviours are unacceptable,’ and primary behaviour saying, ‘Let’s see if we can find a middle ground. We don’t want the child excluded, so what can be find to do?’ So they can be quite good at that side of things too. And sometimes they do meetings offsite as well. So if you’re a parent who finds it tricky to come into the school, actually doing one up at the XXXX just feels nicer. And then we’d observe and what they do- they often do a thing a little bit like an IEP. They write up a record of having come in, what they saw, what they discussed like with the teacher and then they would say things that they would put in place, so things that they would recommend, um, for that child as well.

**INTERVIEWER:** You’ve mentioned a few things about, um, how you would manage the situation when a child with ADHD is in the classroom. Can you sort of expand on any of the strategies you’ve tried or things that have worked, um, to help manage their behaviour so that they can access their learning?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yeah, um, keeping things, um, as structured as possible is really helpful. So, um, often I move the rest of the class around so that then we don’t have, ‘So and so gets to sit next to her best friend and [unintelligible].’ But what I tended to do is to keep that child at that seat so actually the rest of the class rotated around them so, um, he was always sat next to different people, um, so in maths or English or [unintelligible], but he knew that was his place to be. The only thing is that can, for him- last year I’ve seen with a child who then had autism and became, um, obsessed about no one else must ever sit on his chair and he labelled his chair because that was his place, his chair. So it can go both ways but generally structure helps. Um…having something that they can fiddle with, so like a fiddle toy rather than just throwing their arms around all over the place. We’ve had those like Koosh ball things, um, stress balls, like even just a bit of Blu Tack that I’ve got near me at the time can be just quite handy to give them something to do when they’re on the carpet. Um…other things I think which has helped the whole class – just making sure that there’s not lots of periods of time where they’re just listening. So actually lots of partner stuff and being able to discuss and to practically do things, um, and obviously trying to make sure that there’s lots of movement in the classroom. So, um, we- I specifically, although they’re Year 5, don’t have them sat up at tables because I’ve still got room for carpet space. Because I quite like some time on the carpet listening to me, and then back to your tables, and then come back, and then work with pairs, and then find somewhere else to be so there’s lots of, ‘Wake yourself up, have a quick movement break’ type of thing and that helps. Um…sometimes positive behaviour, um, charts, that type of thing, something that motivates them. So, um, like time on an iPad or when I had LSAs, um, one of them particularly loved playing basketball so being able to go out for five minutes before lunch and, um, seeing it as small chunks as well. So they didn’t have to wait until the end of the day for a reward; actually pre-breaktime there could be five minutes there, pre-lunchtime there’s a little breaktime there. Um…giving them somewhere…they can choose to go as well, for the ones who felt sometimes it’s all just too much being in the classroom and just walk out, we then needed to have an agreed safe place that they would go to.

**INTERVIEWER:** And could they just go or did they need to ask to go or?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** So long as they went there that was fine. Um, because sometimes…them physically saying they needed to go could be a point of eruption so actually it was easier for them just to take themselves out, um, and to be there. That’s been trickier since we haven’t had LSAs because often the LSA would sort of just have eyes on the fact that they got to the place they were supposed to be going. Um, but we’ve got walkie talkies and things now so actually if the child leaves, you can just say, ‘Can anyone give me eyes that they’ve got to that place,’ otherwise I don’t have- I don’t know where that child now is.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, and would that be someone like a non-teaching member of staff, like a headteacher or something?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yeah. It’s, um, not working quite so brilliantly now because we’ve had redundancies so there aren’t so many non-class based people. But yeah, normally there’s one of the walkie talkies on in the headteacher’s office and then one in the office, um, and one in the PPA room where potentially staff are working non-class based. Just not necessarily that they need to get involved with that child but just so that for safeguarding we know where they are. Um…I’ve also found having things that the child’s interested in in the classroom so that actually if they just need- So in the book corner, um, I had one who was really – again it could’ve been the autism as well – but was obsessed with presidents of America. So just having a book that I knew that that was the one thing when he needed to just have some time, he would go and tell me loads of facts about Trump and about all [unintelligible] and all the other people and what animals they kept in the Whitehouse. But giving them something that…is a bit of…outside equipment stuff that’s just for them that they can go to when they need to have a bit of space and then come back in again.

**INTERVIEWER:** So I guess the things you mentioned like for example going to play basketball or something, you need another member of staff at that point. But some of those other things you could manage on your own, if they’re going to the book corner or to a safe space.

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yeah, or if they’re having a go, um, on something on the iPad or something for five minutes before lunchtime that’s fine. The trickiness becomes, I think, for a teacher working out, um, that feeling of…it’s not fair that the rest of the class can see that this child has, um, the chance to play basketball. This child has the chance to get the iPad out in the corner in the room. Why can’t they do that? They’ve all worked hard. Um…so balancing that between personalising learning so that child can succeed is tricky. And talking to the children about it is tricky. But I always go with well actually, we all learn in different ways and, um, actually each one of you is different and if there was something that one of you needed, then we would work on making sure you could succeed with it too. But they don’t always understand that. They don’t think it’s fair. For the same reason as what I just said, lower maths group always get to, like, do cooking and things when actually, why do they get to do practical measuring? And then I think, ‘Well, you’re right actually. Let’s all make cakes.’ And then we’ll all measure and see how it all works. Um…so yes there is. It definitely becomes much harder…when you don’t have a second member of staff. So we have to use at the moment our ELSA worker in school, sometimes comes and – because lots of the classes don’t have a LSA – she will sort of try to come around at the end of the day or at a particular time if she knows that someone potentially has a choose time at that particular stage. She will come in and say, ‘Do you need me to go to the pond area with so and so or should we go over on the arch bit in the playground and have a play on there for a bit?’ which is great.

## Training and support for teaching children with ADHD

**INTERVIEWER:** So are most of the strategies you’ve come up with through having had training in this area or through talking to colleagues or through your own experience of trial and error or what? What would you say?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Definitely not through training, I don’t think. I haven’t done any training on it. Um…I think it’s from finding out what’s worked for the previous class teacher. Um…the tricky thing is when you get a child that transfers to you mid-year, um, and then you have to adjust your trial and error to find out what happens. So you can phone the previous school and find out what’s been going on there. But I think as well as…sort of finding out what works, you need to have a strong behaviour policy within your school. Partly because from what I’ve seen and the children that I’ve taught with ADHD, they are actually very, um, intelligent at finding loopholes as well. So recognising, um, ‘If I’m given a little bit I can take it further.’ So, there needs to be a real strong sense of- I use a lot of timers. Like actually, ‘You’ve got five minutes, if you look at the sand timer or the timers on the board.’ Or actually, ‘By the time it gets there…’ or ‘I want to come back and find that you’ve done that by the time that it pings and it’s gone from green to orange,’ just because it needs to be really structured with them. Um…but I can’t remember what I was talking about at all. [laugh]

**INTERVIEWER:** Well I was just asking if you had worked out your strategies by sort of training or experience.

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Actually LSAs are great and I think what’s happened possibly is that I’ve felt less and less skilled, um, because the LSAs have been so good with those sorts of children. So what’s happened in the past has been that actually, my role has been more of a maintaining the teaching in the classroom. And then if there’s been an LSA in there, actually they’ve been the person who’s been the quiet, talking by that child’s head, sort of explaining what’s going on, having that little internal dialogue but externally with them. Um…and so that’s been really interesting because suddenly you almost become scared to manage those children because you suddenly think, ‘Well they don’t really do that, like that’s not me.’ Like actually I keep the rest going whilst that person has a meltdown over there, and my LSA gently steps in to manage that. So the rest of the learning happens. So it’s been interesting watching the balance go back again because…once you take your LSA away you have to then remind yourself how you did that and that’s quite scary. It’s okay once you’ve done it once. I think the problem is when you’re not used to dealing with those children…and you don’t necessarily have a good relationship with them – possibly because they’re not in your class or something like that – then you worry about, ‘Actually, what if I don’t win the situation? Actually if I come out of it and…I feel like I’ve lost and you feel like you’ve won, I’m then going to be panicked about tackling you on anything again.’ Whereas often…LSAs potentially don’t need to have that whole class overview so there’s no time pressure there. Whereas with me I’m thinking, ‘That group in about in one minute’s time need to move on to the next task,’ or ‘They’re going to have finished and so and so and so and so are then going to have a lovely time mucking around in the corner.’ So I need you to do this in the next minute – we need to find a way for me to persuade you to do it. Otherwise I’m going to have a problem there as well as and I think that adds an extra stress to it all.

**INTERVIEWER:** That does sound very stressful and tiring.

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yeah, trying to juggle it all is exhausting.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. Do you feel like you get enough support to do that? I mean you’ve already said you’ve lost your LSA, but in terms of the whole school do you feel you have enough support?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Um…I think it’s tricky because I’m lucky this year…because I haven’t felt like I’ve needed it so that’s been great. And last year I had a LSA so that was brilliant. I think if I’d have had a different class in my school this year I wouldn’t have felt that at all. Um…but I wonder if that comes down to the whole school approach for SEN and, um, behaviour. We changed- so the background of the school was that two years ago- it’s all been lovely; I’ve loved the school but then hence the fact I’ve now moved- well moving. Um…we had a change. Our headteacher went off ill, something like the last day of August and we had a deputy that had just left, so really strong team before then. And then so we came back with a guy that stepped into the deputy role – didn’t know the school. [unintelligible] and half the staff team knew. So we then had parachuted in two interim heads to share the headship, which was a bit of a nightmare because they kept saying, um, they sang from the same song sheet and they really didn’t. Like so, my job sharer and I would see each of them at different ends of the week and, um, basically behaviour went completely nightmare-y because the children saw a loophole which was that these two people treat things differently. So in two terms while they were there it was a nightmare. So then we got a permanent head who came, um, and within six weeks of her being there it was Ofsted-ed, um, with behaviour that was just horrendous because the children had decided- this is it: if they didn’t like something, they would just leave the classroom. And so- and where before we would’ve always had, ‘No. You make up your time so you’ll be in at lunchtime or we’ll get your parents in actually and you would be sent to the head [unintelligible] or someone else’s classroom.’ There was clear structure. We were then told by the two interim heads that, um, ‘Well there must be something not right with your classroom. So why would they leave? So something’s wrong with your teaching. And then actually, well if that child wants to climb a tree, we won’t tell them off for climbing a tree, we’ll let your LSA take them into the hall and they can climb something safely.’ Insane. So there what you have is children just leaving the classroom, to run off, not come in. LSAs, who are trained to do brilliant things learning wise, trailing children around the school because they had to know where they were. Other children seeing that other children didn’t have to be in the classroom so then they’re out the classroom, so suddenly it’s like an absolute nightmare. Nightmare scenario. So you’ve got children…who you then can’t necessarily distinguish whether it’s learnt behaviour, whether it’s actually something medical – so like ADHD – and then you’ve got the children with autism who have all this other stuff combined as well who, for them, there’s no structure. If they want to walk out they can walk out [unintelligible]. And there’s no power to say, ‘You need to come back in the class,’ because they don’t have to come back in the class because when they talk to the headteacher, the headteacher says, ‘Oh, you want to climb a fence? I understand that. Let’s find you somewhere safe you can climb. Oh, you want to do that? Let’s see if we can write to so and so, so you can drive a Ferrari car rather than going into the car park and looking at all the nice cars. Let’s get you back in school and write to the Ferrari garage.’ Um…so that all happened and then we get the poor headteacher that’s come in. Six weeks in, we get Ofsted. Obviously it’s a nightmare. We’re put in inadequate status so then that means that we have to be taken over as a forced academy, so we don’t get a choice in it. Um…so then we get that signed for two terms. And then basically we’re told we’re going to be a forced academy and taken over by XXXX, um, who don’t really want quite a lot of staff and the headteacher didn’t want to be an academy so she leaves. So this is all within two years. So she leaves. We then get an interim guy, who has now been appointed as the guy in charge, and he’s come in and I think – I don’t know how academies work – but there’s been a lot more, ‘That’s not acceptable.’ Like actually, ‘You’re in the classroom or you’re out. You scream and run around with a LSA, no. Actually, we’ll get your parents in and you’ll be on a part timetable and if you can’t do a morning you’re here for an hour and then you go home.’ And…it’s not been very popular but actually for the parents it’s been- for the parents of the other children it’s been really popular. So that’s sort of the background of…where it’s all come to a head in the end. But now it’s much calmer because there’s an expectation that everybody’s in the classroom. Why are you not in your classroom? And it’s come from the head down. When it doesn’t come from the head down- So even the lady who was here for about a year…her attitude was, ‘Actually if you don’t want to be in the classroom, then that’s fine. If you’re going to kick off in the classroom, we’ll remove all the other children, you just stay in there, we’ll stand at the back and watch whilst you just rip down displays, fling chairs and tables and get on with it. And then when you’re calm, we’ll talk to you about it. And then maybe you can clean up a bit and then we’ll get on with our day.’ Hence the fact I’m like, two years of this – I’m not doing any more of this. I need to be somewhere where what I think is wrong…is wrong. Like, rather than, ‘It’s okay you kicked a child…we can understand why you did that and we don’t want to exclude you so you say you’re sorry.’

**INTERVIEWER:** So for you the support was there initially but over the last few years has completely deteriorated. And that now the support isn’t…the support that you would want.

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** So now the support is better definitely, because, um, there is structure and routine and everybody knows it and it makes sense. And things that you think- I totally recognise that children with additional needs need to have something in place. But I think my belief has always been if you scaffold stuff and you structure it and you personalise it for those children, if still in that scenario…they then cross the boundaries or they do something that’s unacceptable, there has to be a consequence. You can’t just say, ‘That’s okay because they’ve got that,’ and label it. Um…because actually if you’re doing your job right, you’re putting stuff in place that means they should succeed. If they then choose not to, even though things are in place, then they have to be on the same level as everybody else. And I think that’s where it is now true, but it has not been and that’s what’s been really difficult.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. If we think specificallyabout training in the area of ADHD, have you ever had any specific ADHD training?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** No.

**INTERVIEWER:** Have you had any more general behaviour management skills training?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** I definitely didn’t have any, um, at university, from what I can remember. Um, I don’t remember having any of that. And I don’t think I’ve had any special needs training at all either actually, which was interesting because now I know that people can do…special needs as their specialism in the same way I did English as my specialism. Um…so the behaviour training that I’ve had has only really come…as a result of- so we get [unintelligible] time. Um…and we’ve had her come in and do some support on…specifically, I suppose not behaviour stuff but it could link to behaviour in so far as dyslexia-friendly classrooms and things like that, which sometimes if they’re not managed then you see behaviour as a result of that. But it would probably be under two days training across a huge number of years.

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh okay. So if you- like would you want any training on ADHD I guess is the first question?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yeah. I think, um, what would be- what I’d like really is one that fitted into work hours. I think it’s difficult when there’s training outside of the time that you normally do, so in place of a staff meeting or something like that it’s fine. Um, but yeah I think that’s always really helpful. And I think it’s helpful when you’re not the only person on your staff that goes. Like actually it needs to be brought in as a whole school thing because otherwise you can set things up in your classroom that then aren’t…supported by other people. They don’t understand why you’ve done it.

**INTERVIEWER:** So a kind of whole staff- so maybe like an inset day or-?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yeah. Or like an hour and a half training after school. We’ve had things like on safeguarding where we’ve had- we’ve brought people in for a couple of one-and-a-half-hour stuff instead of a staff meeting.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. And what kind of information would you- you know what content would you want…in terms of ADHD?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Um…I think probably…I suppose the traits a bit so you can spot it when it hasn’t been diagnosed. I think probably the what to do then stage, like who do you contact, um, or what can you put in place. I think probably having…a point of call for local things to be able to signpost parents to as well, because quite often they’re struggling as much at home. Practical things for…ideas that have worked in the classroom. Maybe some case studies but not ones where you have to read shed loads of notes on them, but actually like a couple of paragraphs that sum up a child and then things that were put in place that worked. That’s always really helpful. Because then you can say, ‘Oh yeah, so and so does that. What did they do?’ So in the- we’ve looked after children at the moment there’s something called a PEP toolkit, which, um, it was a document produced by XXXX that just said these are some of the traits that, um, looked-after children often struggle with. Things like attachment or low self-esteem and what they had in the back was then a whole load of ideas and, um, suggestions for what you could then do. And that was really helpful, um, and to work out sort of the area of need for those children particularly, if it wasn’t always obvious there was a checklist. A bit like the ones you get for CAMHS which said, ‘In this scenario do they do that? In this scenario do they do that?’ And then that then gave you the right [unintelligible]. That kind of thing is really helpful.

**INTERVIEWER:** And do you think if you then talked about it with your colleagues in that moment, having done the case studies sort of thing – ‘Oh have you tried this? Have you tried that?’ A bit of shared learning-

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Definitely. And…I think possibly maybe having it over two sessions. So having time in a session to then reflect on, ‘Oh that might work, that might be helpful.’ A discussion. And then possibly some time to- like creating resources and things is a real pain in the neck. Or just having a time to resort your classroom, to work out where you could put that space or we could try that or actually okay, so we need a visual timetable near where they’re sat. Actually those things are all fine to say in meetings and then when you don’t have the time to do it that’s really difficult. So having that built in as well and then possibly having…another meeting six weeks later or something, a month later, and saying what did you try and almost troubleshooting. So you tried that in your school or you tried that with your class. Did that work? How did you adapt it? Was that better? Can we, as a group, sort of work out other ideas for how that might be managed differently if it wasn’t working. That would be good.

**INTERVIEWER:** Wow, there’s some really good ideas. I was thinking…have you done any other training on like a different topic that’s been particularly topic, and can you think of why, you know, that training was particularly helpful?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Um, yah. I did, last year, a course across a year which was about- it was called ‘Teaching the Hard to Teach’ and that was within my role as Pupil Premium. And what they did was they looked at basically, um, whole areas of learning that children might struggle with. So we had one sessions on maths, one on English. We had the EP talk about, um, attachment disorder. We had, um, the SEN inspectors talking about children with special needs. We looked at Early Years. We had sessions from, yeah, the English consultant, the maths consultant. Um, so there were lots of different…specialists which was really helpful. Because actually it suddenly gave you this wide view of…all the areas that potentially a child can struggle in and the training was great because actually you met regularly. So every month or so you met with them, um, and there was often- there was a bit of reading beforehand, that wasn’t always so helpful. But actually when it was…less theoretical and high ground, for want of a better word, with lots of references left, right and centre. When it was more a case of this has worked in a classroom and it’s helpful. And this was a thought and I tried this and this helped. That type of reading is really good, in advance of then having the days and then following stuff up. So trialling something from the day and then at the start of the next session being able to reflect on how that went – that was helpful – with the people who were also trialling the same thing. That’s good. Um…and it was nice having different speakers, I think, and a chance to hear from different- There was a whole spectrum of schools right across from sort of upper XXXX, um, like XXXX type of area and XXXX right across to XXXX and, um, XXXX. [unintelligible] tricky schools to lovely easy ones, where actually their Pupil Premium was maybe three children out of the whole school but those three never made accelerated progress. So having a mixture of social contexts and things.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. I guess getting different perspectives from different schools sometimes…helps you see the things differently from just your own school.

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Yeah, definitely. And seeing how different year groups manage it as well. Because quite often hearing, if you’re in a junior school, how an infant school manages it actually can also be really handy because sometimes you’ve got children who are emotionally immature and so actually the strategies the infant school are using are really helpful to hear. So that’s been helpful.

## Conclusion

**INTERVIEWER:** Great. Brilliant. I think we’ve covered everything that I wanted to cover. Is there anything else you wanted to say about the topic or?

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** No, I don’t think so. I think probably – she says ‘no’ and then answers your question [laugh] – is that it’s bigger than just the one person, and I think it has to be an agreed whole school thing. And a whole school thing agrees with parents as well, which I think is probably what you were saying to start with which is that parents finding they have something that works at home and then it doesn’t work into the school and it’s about- Things like the EHCPs are about bringing everyone involved with the child together around a table and [unintelligible] meetings and things and actually I think that’s really helpful because…the teachers see a different side to the parents to the people that are experts in it all, and so getting everyone together for the child is quite helpful. That’s it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Well, thank you. Thank you very much for talking to me. I do have a debrief sheet so if there’s anything that you’ve said today that you’re not happy with or anything that I’ve said that you’re not happy with, you can either come back to me or you can go straight to the university and talk to them. But we will also let you have a copy of the report at the end that will explain everything that we have found out.

**INV**-**007-S-U-STA-F:** Thank you very much.

[End of interview]