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Towards an understanding of how children and families with experience of seeking asylum can be supported by educational communities in the UK

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctorate in Educational Psychology

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<u>Abstract</u>

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Towards an Understanding of How Children and Families With Experience of Seeking Asylum Can Be Supported by Educational Communities in the UK

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Individuals seeking asylum in the UK may face long periods of uncertainty and increased stress due to the complex asylum-seeking process, along with potential experiences of discrimination and hostility from their 'host' country. For families seeking asylum, schools may provide opportunities for a positive and successful integration due to the role schools play in fostering a cohesive local community. In order to understand how schools can provide this support, this thesis seeks to explore perspectives from school staff as well as families with lived experience of seeking asylum in the UK.

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter one introduces the topic and the rationale for the thesis. In order to understand how school staff experience working with and supporting pupils who have sought asylum in the UK, Chapter two presents a systematic literature review. The review consists of nine studies of qualitative design and finds five over-arching themes following a thematic synthesis of the data. The themes depict the interacting factors that influence how staff work with this population and describe the role of: communication, knowledge, provision and resources, a holistic approach, and compassion. Implications are provided for a wide audience, highlighting the value of a systemic approach to education for children and young people who have sought asylum in the UK. Finally, Chapter three presents the findings of a qualitative study exploring the perspectives of families who have sought asylum in the UK, and how they found the process of joining a school. Parents were invited to bring their children to the interview, with eight participants taking part (five parents and three children) across five interviews. Reflexive thematic analysis was used, identifying four themes: life as a refugee, navigating a path to integration, communication, and school as a sanctuary. Implications are provided for the educational psychology profession, along with a summary of recommendations made by the families for school settings to implement.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Imogen Crockett

Title of thesis: Understanding how children and families with experience seeking asylum can be supported by educational communities in the UK.

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signature: Date: 17th June 2024

Acknowledgements

Definitions and Abbreviations

CWESA .... Child(ren) with experience seeking asylum

FWESA .... Families with experience seeking asylum

LA.. Local authority

SLR .... Systematic literature review

CASP................................... Critical Appraisal Skills Programme

SPIDER .... Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation, Research

Refugee.............................. An individual who has sought safety in another country, after fleeing their own country due to fear of lack of safety.

Asylum seeker .... An individual who has sought safety in another country and is awaiting a decision on their status as a refugee.

Integration .... The two-way process, in which both those who have newly arrived to a community, and those who are welcoming them, make adaptations to behaviour to successfully integrate the group, whilst still maintaining aspects of their own identities.

Chapter 1   Introduction to Thesis

1.1   Thesis Aims

This thesis seeks to understand how educational settings may support families who have sought asylum in the UK. Chapter 2 consists of a systematic literature review, which explores the perspectives of staff in school who have supported pupils who have sought asylum, meanwhile Chapter 3 explores the perspectives of families who have joined a school after seeking asylum in the UK.

1.2   Key Definitions and Language Used

A refugee is defined by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR, 1997) as someone who has had to leave their country due to a fear of their safety, be it based on their identity or ongoing civil unrest. Within the UK, a person who seeks safety in the UK is referred to as an 'asylum-seeker', until they have gained refugee status (Home Office, 2017). Almost 70,000 people sought asylum in the UK in 2023, due to ongoing conflict across the globe (Refugee Council, 2024). Within this thesis, I will use the terms: child(ren) with experience of seeking asylum (CWESA) and families with experience of seeking asylum (FWESA). This is to ensure that a person's identity is not limited to their experience, but rather captures one part of their story. Some research into identity for people who have sought asylum has found that once settled, individuals preferred not to be referred to as a 'refugee' as they felt part of their new community now and the term 'refugee' felt 'othering' (e.g., Worrell, 2022). Within this research, in particular the empirical paper, participants hold many pillars of identity, such as their gender, ethnicity, religion, marital status and educational background.

1.3   Background and Rationale

When initially training as a teacher, I spent a placement at an inner-city primary school with a high number of pupils who had migrated to the UK during their education. The school was often seen as a 'transition school', where families would spend a few years before moving on and settling in another local authority. During my placement, I was amazed at the way in which the school managed this turnover of pupils, whilst providing an incredibly warm and welcoming ethos that helped all pupils, and their families, to belong. I found out that the school had 'School of Sanctuary' status, which led me to explore this organisation further. Both the School and City of Sanctuary organisations aim to provide safe space for children, families and individuals to learn and live after having fled from their home country. During my doctorate training, I had the opportunity to work with a City of Sanctuary charity as part of a diversity placement. I was able to learn about the local

authority (LA)-wide care that was provided for individuals and families joining the LA after having sought safety in the UK. I was able to continue volunteering with this charity through the remainder of my doctorate training, and build connections with volunteers, families and organisations that the charity works with.

Through volunteering with the charity, I learnt more about the process of seeking asylum in the UK. The Refugee Council (2024) states that at the end of 2023, there were approximately 129,000 individuals still awaiting a decision on their asylum claim. Whilst waiting for refugee status, individuals may be moved at a moment's notice and are not able to work (Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act, 2006). Lomba (2010) suggests that this period of uncertainty can make it incredibly difficult for individuals to integrate into their new community. However, for families with children, school may provide an opportunity to support integration. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that all children have the right to an education, irrelevant of refugee status. It is, therefore, important to consider how education may be provided for CWESA, as well as what kind of support school communities may provide for the families of CWESA.

Educational settings can provide connection with the local community for FWESA, particularly in helping them access wider systems and key information (Molla, 2024; Benson et al., 2021). In order to understand the role in which schools can play in supporting integration for FWESA, it is important to understand the current and historic barriers and facilitators that aid this process. This requires both a systematic review of literature and the opportunity to gain perspectives from those with lived experiences of seeking asylum and joining a UK school. Therefore, this thesis has two studies; a systematic literature review and an empirical study. The systematic literature review allowed me to gain an understanding of the perspectives of school staff who work alongside children and families who have experience of gaining asylum in the UK, in the hopes to understand the barriers and protective factors that promote these young people's educational outcomes. In turn, I hoped to understand what schools, and the systems around schools, may be able to do to welcome and help integrate FWESA in the UK. With my empirical paper, I hoped to triangulate this information further by gaining the perspectives of parents and their children, who had sought asylum in the UK, in particular, how they felt about how well their child's school supported them. This is in line with ecological models of psychology (e.g., Bronfrenbrenner, 1979), in understanding the interaction between systems that support a child and young person in education.

1.4   Research Paradigms

Within these two research papers, I adopted a social constructionist position. This is characterised by the belief of reality being constructed through social processes and interactions, as in the ontological perspective of relativism (Guba, 1992). This shaped my epistemological perspective that knowledge

is subjective, but also co-constructed (Gergen, 1985). Through my systematic literature review, I aimed to create new meaning from existing research, whilst being aware that the analysis provided in each paper reviewed was conducted by others, with their own personal views and biases shaping how they made sense of their participants' experiences. Within my empirical paper, I sought to understand and explore individual experiences of joining UK schools from the perspective of FWESA. To capture experiences and provide analysis in both the systematic literature review and the empirical paper, I employed qualitative methods. This enabled me to explore experiences and contexts that may have impacted upon individuals' perspectives of what they felt it meant to be included, welcomed and integrated into a school community.

The specific chosen methodology for the empirical paper was Braun and Clarke's (2021b) thematic reflexive analysis. This type of analysis is thought to capture, what is described by Kidder and Fine (1987) as, 'Big Q' qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2021a), meaning that the "research is qualitative in both techniques and values" (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, p.39). This links to the axiology of this research, in recognising that my own beliefs, social experiences, and values have influenced the way in which the research was analysed. As a white, British, educated, female, I have my own lived experiences and hold clear personal and political views (which include the psychological models I value and the principles underpinning my professional practice), so I am well aware that these will be inevitably infused into how I view , interpret and draw conclusions from the findings. I do not see this as a limitation of this work, as this thesis is seen as a co-construction between researcher and participants, but recognise this as something to be transparent about and to keep fully in mind (and, sometimes, in check). Braun and Clarke (2013) posit that the subjectivity may even be a resource to the analysis. However, as part of valuing subjectivity, also comes the importance of reflexivity. During the process of conducting this thesis, I ensured to use supervision throughout, as well as keeping a reflective log, to actively reflect on my own influence of the research. This was particularly important when designing the research, at key decision points, and in the analysis and interpretation of the data. Each paper includes a section on reflexivity, which can be found within the methodology.

1.5   Ethical Considerations

Throughout the process of this thesis, I have encountered ethical decision points, along with moments to consider my research values and values as a practitioner psychologist. When initially researching the wider area of education for CWESA, the meaningful engagement and participation of children and young people seemed particularly pertinent. As such, I chose to utilise a methodology based on participatory action research principles. This would involve creating a co-researcher group, made up of young people with lived experience of seeking asylum. However, after initial ethical approval was given, I experienced several difficulties with the recruitment process. Schools were not

always aware whether their pupils had experience of seeking asylum or not, something that was also raised in the systematic literature review by staff. It made it difficult to identify young people to approach for participation. In addition, schools that had expressed an interest in joining the research project were unable to safeguard time, staff and resources for the study. Ultimately, I was unable to partner with young people with lived experience. Given the tight limit on my time-scale for this research project, I had to change my research project and work within extremely limited timescales. Current research exploring this area focuses on both pupil perspective (e.g., Bešić et al., 2020; Sobitan, 2022) and staff perspective (e.g., Prentice & Ott 2021; Ward, 2021). Research exploring parental perspective is predominately located in other countries, including Australia, Croatia and the US. Therefore, I was aware of a gap in the literature of parental perspectives of joining a UK school community. In my work as a trainee educational psychologist, I am very much led by interactionist and ecological approaches to psychology, in understanding that there are wider systems and interacting factors that affect a child and young person's educational outcomes. As well as this, I often find that my role within consultation includes the advocacy of the family of a young person, in particular their parent or carer. I, therefore, felt that although I was not able to be led by participatory research principles, I was able to be led by my values as a practitioner psychologist, in empowering parents and carers and including their voice within the research field.

The empirical project also involved working with a vulnerable population. I needed to ensure that throughout the process that they were protected and felt safe to be involved within the study. By working with the manager of the refugee charity I had been volunteering with, I was able to recruit participants who were considered by the manager to be in a psychologically safe position to reflect on their experiences with me. This was decided by the manager, who acted as a gatekeeper, and who had a good understanding of all the families that are supported by the charity. The families that took part all volunteered for the charity as well and had been in the UK for at least one year. I believe that my role as a volunteer also may have helped the families feel safe in taking part, through recognising that I was an advocate for refugee and asylum-seekers. As well as this, I shared with them that I used to be a teacher and still work in education. From conducting the research, I have been able to develop key skills in working and communicating with different populations, highlighting the need for advocacy and opportunities to empower the voices of those who may not always been listened to.

1.6   Dissemination Plan

I intend to submit both of my papers for publication in peer-reviewed journals. I hope to submit my systematic literature review to 'Educational Review', which welcomes review articles. It particularly aims to publish articles that encourage debate and reflection on current educational

practices and carries a strong social justice agenda. The journal is aimed at a range of audiences, including: educators, researchers and policy makers. My systematic literature review is aimed at a wider audience, in the recognition of systemic change and systemic working that needs to occur for young people with experience seeking asylum to be supported effectively in their school communities. I aim to submit my empirical paper to the 'Educational Psychology Research and Practice' journal, which is an open-access journal that seeks to publish research that focuses on social justice and civil engagement.

As well as submitting my papers for publication, I will also be presenting the findings of my empirical paper at the University of Southampton's Post-graduate conference. Alongside this, I will be travelling to Glasgow in December 2024 to present both papers to the Educational Psychology service there, where one of my supervisors works. I will be creating an accessible print-out summary of my findings to give to the charity that I volunteered with so they can share with families, as well as the local authority that I conducted my research in.

Chapter 2 Exploring the voices and perspectives of those who shape the educational outcomes of refugee and asylum-seeking youth in the everchanging UK context; a qualitative synthesis.

2.1 Introduction

At the present time, the concerning challenges and changes facing humanity (and our children to come) are being documented on a daily basis. Rapid evolutionary shifts in technological innovation, trans-planetary systems of communication, and the impacts of mass migration and cross-contagion have, arguably, created a global and ecological polycrisis affecting us all (Søgaard Jørgensen et al, 2024). How we, safely and sensibly respond to this shift, turning our individual and collective efforts towards adaptation and thriving together, is an interdisciplinary question for education, science, and politics alike.

By the end of 2023, there were approximately 117 million "forcibly displaced people" around the world (The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; UNHCR, 2023). Within this figure 36.4 million people were considered refugees, 6.1 million were described as asylum-seekers, and 62.5 million were forcibly displaced within their own country. The UNHCR define a refugee is someone who has been forced to leave their country of origin and is unable to return due to fear of their safety. Such individuals have been granted refugee status in another country, and are protected and able to live and work in the country that they now reside in. In contrast, an asylum-seeker is a person who has applied for refugee status under the Refugee Convention (United Nations, 1951) and is awaiting a decision on their asylum claim. Asylum-seekers in the UK do not receive the same protection as refugees or British citizens; for example, they are unable to work (Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act, 2006). Within this systematic review, the term: children with experience of seeking-asylum (CWESA) and families with experience of seeking asylum (FWESA) will be used to capture the variety in experiences that individuals hold in terms of the stage of process they are currently in, whilst also valuing the other identities that they may hold. It is approximated that 35% of the global refugee and asylum-seeking population are children and young people, which is reflected in the UK asylum statistics (British Red Cross, 2023). Along with the difficulties of leaving their home, CWESA may experience a range of environmental factors that may impact upon their mental health and in turn, their learning and education experiences. Fazer et al. (2012) found that due to the violence witnessed, along with other traumatic events in the process of leaving their

home country (such as challenging journeys and experiences of persecution), CWESA were ten times more likely to have post-traumatic stress disorder than their age-related peers.

CWESA under the age of 18 have the right of access to an education (United Nations, 1989). Accordingly, UNICEF (2018, p.1) states that: "local authorities have a legal duty to ensure that education is available for all children of compulsory school age resident in their local area that is appropriate to age, ability and any special educational needs (SEN) they may have". When supportive, schooling experiences can be key to helping FWESA integrate within new communities, in that both children and parents can access local information, connections, and wider systems through the school (Molla, 2024; Benson et al., 2021). Within this review, integration is defined as a two-way process, in which both those who have newly arrived to a community, and those who are welcoming them, make adaptations to behaviour to successfully integrate the group, whilst still maintaining aspects of their own identities (Berry, 1977; 2005).

Research exploring the voices and perspectives of CWESA has highlighted that the staff-pupil relationship is a vital part of gaining a sense of belonging, and, therefore, achieving integration into the school community (Bešić et al., 2020; McIntyre & Neuhaus, 2021). In a study exploring the experiences of belonging in secondary schools for CWESA, Sobitan (2022) found that pupils associated positive teacher relationships with the feeling of safety, in that they felt supported, understood, and were helped to share their stories. Not only this, but school staff were able to provide protection against challenging behaviour in the classroom that made CWESA feel unsafe.

As well as capturing the voices of CWESA, it is important to understand perspectives of staff who are helping to shape the educational and wellbeing outcomes. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory depicts the interacting systems that influence a child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and in the context of refugee and asylum-seeking pupils CWESA, we can understand how valuable the role of the staff member is to providing support. However, there are also external factors (i.e., those part of the meso-, exo- and macro-systems) that the staff member must interact with, potentially influencing how well they feel they can provide support to CWESA. Owen-Hughes and Parker (2021) conducted a small-scale literature review exploring the voices of educational professionals. This considered what UK local authorities (LA) and schools do to ensure that CWESA are successfully included in their allocated education settings schools. Through this review, key protective factors and barriers were presented. Staff highlighted the importance of protective individual factors (resources available for pupils), whole school factors (English language provision, peer support and the school ethos), as well as systemic factors (LA policy, multi-agency work, family support). Owen-Hughes and Parker discussed how studies that placed a higher consideration of a 'whole-child' approach to inclusion, emphasised the importance of considering systemic factors impacting upon support and outcomes for this population.

When considering systemic factors across the past two decades in the UK, there have been a slew of political, legal and ecological events affecting the prevalence and experiences of CWESA. During late 20th Century, education across the UK was central to government manifestos. The Labour Party took control of central government, following their then-leader, Tony Blair, stating that their three highest priorities were: "Education, education and education". Working alongside social care, the Every Child Matters framework (DfES, 2003) was created to provide clearer guidance to improve child care and ensure that all children and young people in the UK were able to achieve their potential. Parallel to this, as 2002 saw the highest number of asylum seeker applications in the UK to date (84,132; Sturge, 2023), the Home Office were tightening restrictions, making it more difficult for asylum seekers to come to the UK. Whilst local government and education policy spoke of inclusion, the Home Office (2004) expressed that only those with indefinite 'right to remain' status should be able to integrate fully into their communities. This dissonance between the Every Child Matters framework and Home Office policies led the Immigration Law Practitioners Association (2006) to lament that CWESA were excluded from Every Child Matters and were considered "migrants first and foremost and children second" (Immigration Law Practitioners Association, 2006, p.3).

Key policy affecting local communities and schools included the dispersal scheme (Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999), which saw individuals and families seeking asylum being placed in areas outside of London and the South East as a way to spread need across the country. A report by Ofsted (2003) found that many schools that were in these 'dispersal areas' were not prepared for teaching and supporting CWESA, with concerns around teachers having a lack of knowledge and "expertise" (p.3) in teaching English as additional language (EAL) learners. Recent policy, by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019), emphasises that learning English is still a high priority within a successful integration for new arrivals to the UK, and highlights the development of resources for learning English as an action within their Integrated Communities Action Plan (p.13). However, research continues to suggest that newly qualified teachers (NQTs; now referred to as Early Career Teachers, ECTs) do not feel adequately prepared to teach EAL learners and support the integration for new arrivals to the UK (Flockton & Cunningham, 2021; Cajkler & Hall, 2009). This seems in line with Bogotch and Kervin's (2019) suggestion that specific contextual factors can lead to even positive policies not being guaranteed to support refugee education.

A recent systematic review by Arar et al. (2022) explored global educational leadership and policy literature in relation to CWESA in schools. Despite difficult contexts, particularly in relation to governmental policy, they found that school leaders often went above and beyond to provide a humanistic and compassionate approach to ensure that CWESA were supported to feel welcomed and to integrate successfully into their school community. School leaders noted how challenging it was to manage these needs amongst the backdrop of a xenophobic and anti-immigrant backdrop, as was reported during the post-Trump election discourse in the USA (Nguyen & Kebede, 2017). Their

study focused primarily on school leaders and did not consider the perspectives of school staff who may be more directly working with and supporting CWESA in the child's micro-system.

2.1.1 The Present Study

This systematic literature review aims to explore and illuminate the views and perspectives of school staff working with CWESA within their education settings to understand how wider systemic factors may impact upon the protective factors and barriers in supporting this population. The papers identified for this review span over two decades, therefore, it is important to recognise that the findings in each paper may not be fully representative of the current context in which we live in now and will reflect the wider rhetoric and narrative that was present at that time. It is also important to recognise that whilst a study may have been published at a specified time, the data collection may have happened several years before this. Contextual information for the period of time in which data was collected and the paper was written is provided for each study in the data extraction table (Appendix B). This systematic literature review asks the research question: What are the factors that affect how school staff work with and support refugee and asylum-seeking pupils?

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Search Strategy

A pre-registration protocol was uploaded to the Open Science Framework. The SPIDER framework (Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation, Research; Cooke, Smith & Booth, 2012) was used to support the structuring of the review question and develop key terms for the systematic search (Appendix A). Relevant literature between 2003-2023 was searched for using Psych INFO, Web of Science and ERIC in August 2023. Furthermore, to limit the risk of missing relevant literature, citation chaining and hand searches were conducted.

2.2.2 Eligibility Criteria

To gain a rich picture of the perspectives and views of staff helping shape the educational outcomes of CWESA within the UK, qualitative studies based in the UK, and written in English were chosen. Studies that were mixed methods were included if the qualitative data within the study met the rest of the inclusion criteria. In recognising the impact that multi-agency professionals (e.g., those in the charity or social care sector) have on children and young people's educational outcomes, multi-agency voices that are relevant to understanding educational experiences were also included. This is consistent with an ecological perspective (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979) recognising the multi-level systems that are part of a child's education. However, to ensure that the focus remained on educational

outcomes, any included papers with the voices of other professionals also needed to have gathered the perspectives of school staff.

The systematic search yielded 154 results. Once duplicates were removed, 129 papers were screened using the eligibility criteria (Table 2.1). The screening of titles and abstracts and access to full-text papers reduced the relevant literature to 13 papers. These papers were read fully and reasons for exclusion from the final review can be seen in Figure 2.1 (PRISMA flow diagram; Page et al., 2021). This screening process was also conducted by a peer doctoral student. Any disagreements or uncertainty was taken back to the supervisory team to come to a group decision. For example, two of the papers (Prentice & Ott, 2021; Prentice, 2022) report on findings from the same dataset. However, due to their differing research questions and lens captured through the analysis, both papers are included in the review. The final review consists of 9 papers. One piece of gray literature was excluded due to eligibility criteria (Bailey, 2011).

Table 2.1   Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Mainstream schools (primary and secondary) and colleges, specialised and alternative provisions within the UK.	Schools and settings outside of the UK.
Staff who work within schools and have direct interaction with children and young people (e.g., teachers, teaching assistants, headteachers etc.). Multi-agency professionals who have worked with refugee and asylum seeking pupils where school staff voice is also present in the paper.	Multi-agency professionals who have worked with refugee and asylum seeking pupils where school staff voice is **not** present in the paper.
Staff experiences of teaching or working with CWESA. If pupil voice is present, staff voice needs to be clearly separated to ensure that data can be analysed.	Staff experiences of working not related to CWESA.
Journal articles published in or after the year 2003	Journals/articles published before 2003
English language	Papers not in the English language
Qualitative studies or mixed methods (but only focus on qualitative data)	Studies with only quantitative data.
Published and peer-reviewed literature	Grey literature

Figure 2.1   PRISMA Flow Diagram
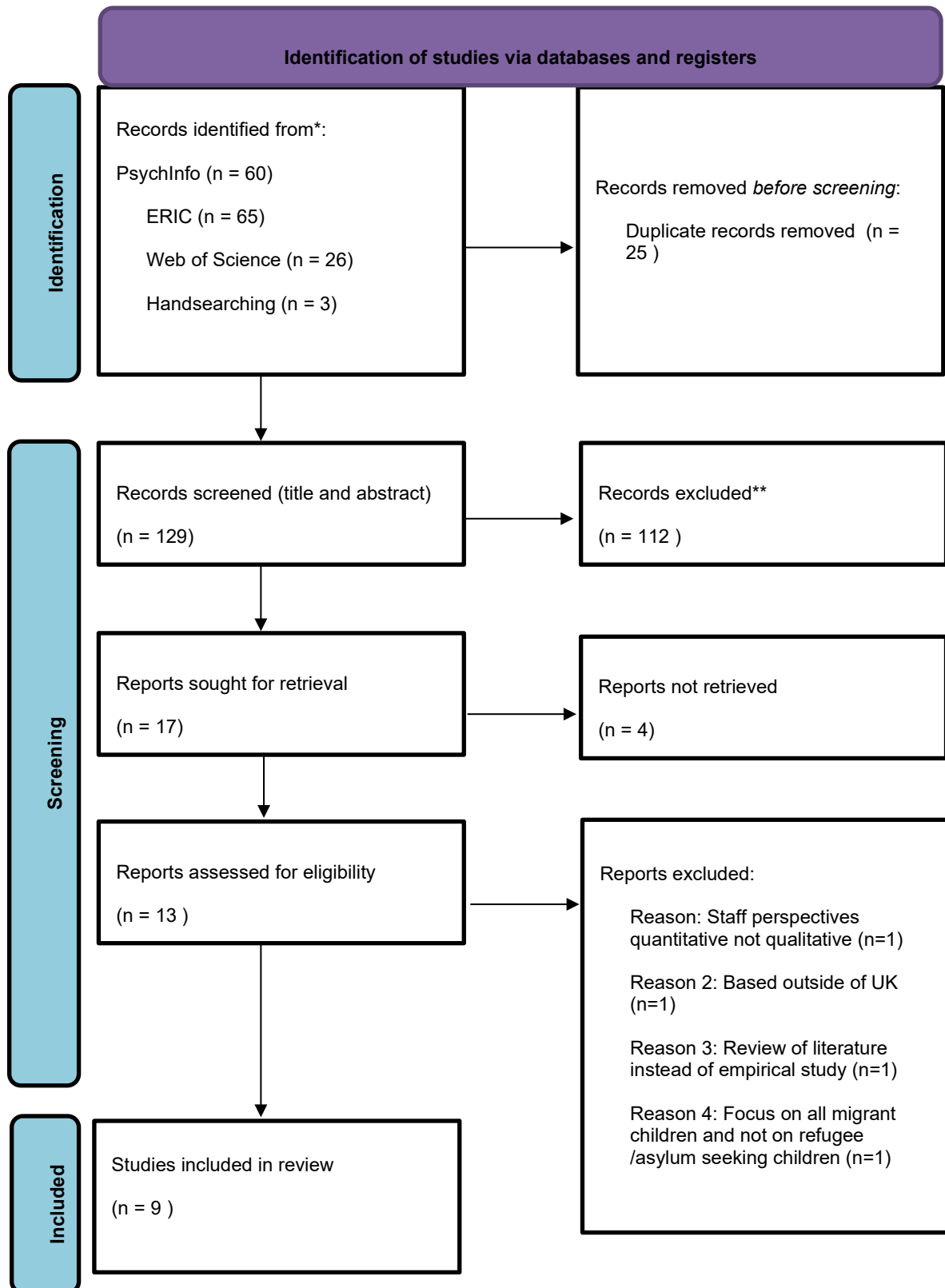
2.2.3   Quality Assurance

Included studies (*N* = 9) were scrutinised using a minimally adapted version of the quality appraisal checklist for qualitative studies (CASP, 2016; Appendix C). An item was added to the checklist to highlight the value of participatory research, whereby the researcher acknowledges that they are not the expert of the participants' lives ('question 5: Does the research include any participatory methods of data collection or analysis?'). Due to only one additional question being added to the checklist, it was not deemed necessary to re-validate the tool.

In line with Thomas and Harden's thematic synthesis (2008), no papers were excluded at this point in the process, despite quality, if they were relevant to the review question. In all papers, the choice of qualitative methodology and chosen research design was appropriate in answering the research question. Several of the papers (Whiteman, 2005; Ott & O'Higgins, 2019; Holt & Taylor, 2022) included participatory methodology within their research, such as reviewing the interview template with practitioners and experts by experience (a previous unaccompanied asylum-seeker).

2.2.4   Data Analysis

All text under the 'findings' or 'results' sections of the papers was included in the analysis for this review. This included participant quotes as well as analysis by the authors. Sections of findings explicitly about pupil voice or quantitative data were removed. On occasion, sections of findings included interwoven pupil and staff voice, where it was not possible to separate the voices (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017). These sections were also removed.

Thomas and Harden's approach to thematic synthesis (2008) was followed. This approach was chosen due to its aims in taking the analysis a step further, where deeper analytical themes are formed alongside describing what is presented in the research. Relevant findings were copied into NVivo (Bazeley, 2013), where the analysis began with the first stage of line-by-line coding of each text. The codes here were 'free codes', meaning that they had no hierarchical structure. Lines from the text were either added to already formed codes or new codes that could better describe the data. This process led to 187 free codes. The second stage involved forming descriptive themes. This followed a more iterative approach to compare and contrast codes, rename and group together where appropriate, and eventually form 14 descriptive themes that emerged from the data. Finally, in the third stage, analytical themes were created. In this phase, the analysis sought to go beyond the original studies' findings to bring new meaning to the review question. Through an iterative process, the 14 descriptive themes were broadly grouped into an adapted version of the ecological systems model (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979). The school staff member was placed in the centre and the surrounding circles describe systems that the school staff member works with to support CWESA. Five analytical themes were created that describe the interaction between the staff member and

these systems. Appendix D provides a table displaying analytical themes with linked descriptive themes, codes and example quotes, whilst Appendix E presents the spread of analytical themes across the nine papers.

2.2.5   Reflexivity

It is important to acknowledge that, as the lead researcher, I hold views and biases in relation to working with refugee and asylum-seeking pupils in schools. Not only do I have experience as a teacher working in a school, I also volunteer with a refugee charity where I provide support for refugees and asylum-seekers. However, I do not have lived experience of being a refugee or asylum-seeker. I adopted a reflexive approach throughout the process, utilising supervision with my research team (made up of two educational psychologists and one professor and researcher), where we reflected, questioned and explored alternative perspectives throughout. This allowed me to bring any biases to a more conscious awareness and consider why I was drawing particular conclusions.

2.3   Findings

2.3.1   Study Characteristics

The key characteristics and findings from each of the studies were summarised (Appendix B). All studies were conducted in the UK and were published between 2005-2022. All studies collected data through interviews. Some studies also gathered observational data (n = 2), whilst others also analysed written documents (n = 2). Data was analysed using a variety of qualitative analysis including thematic analysis, content analysis and thematic reflexive analysis. Two studies included questionnaires, which yielded quantitative results. These results were removed from the thematic synthesis. Sample sizes ranged from 4 to 26 participants (M = 15.5), with one study (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009) not detailing exact sample size, although is estimated to be around 15 participants. Two of the studies (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017; Prentice & Ott, 2021) had larger sample sizes detailed as part of wider studies; however, the sample sizes reported here account for the data analysed as part of the thematic synthesis. Participants varied in job role, including: teaching staff, support assistants, headteachers, tutors and social workers.

2.3.2   Synthesis of Results

Five analytical themes were generated which reflected how educational communities support and work with CWESA. These outline the role of: 1) communication, 2) knowledge, 3) resources and provision, 4) a holistic approach, and 5) compassion. All themes concern the dynamics between the individual (i.e., staff member) and the system within which they operate. Through the

Figure 2.2 Thematic Map
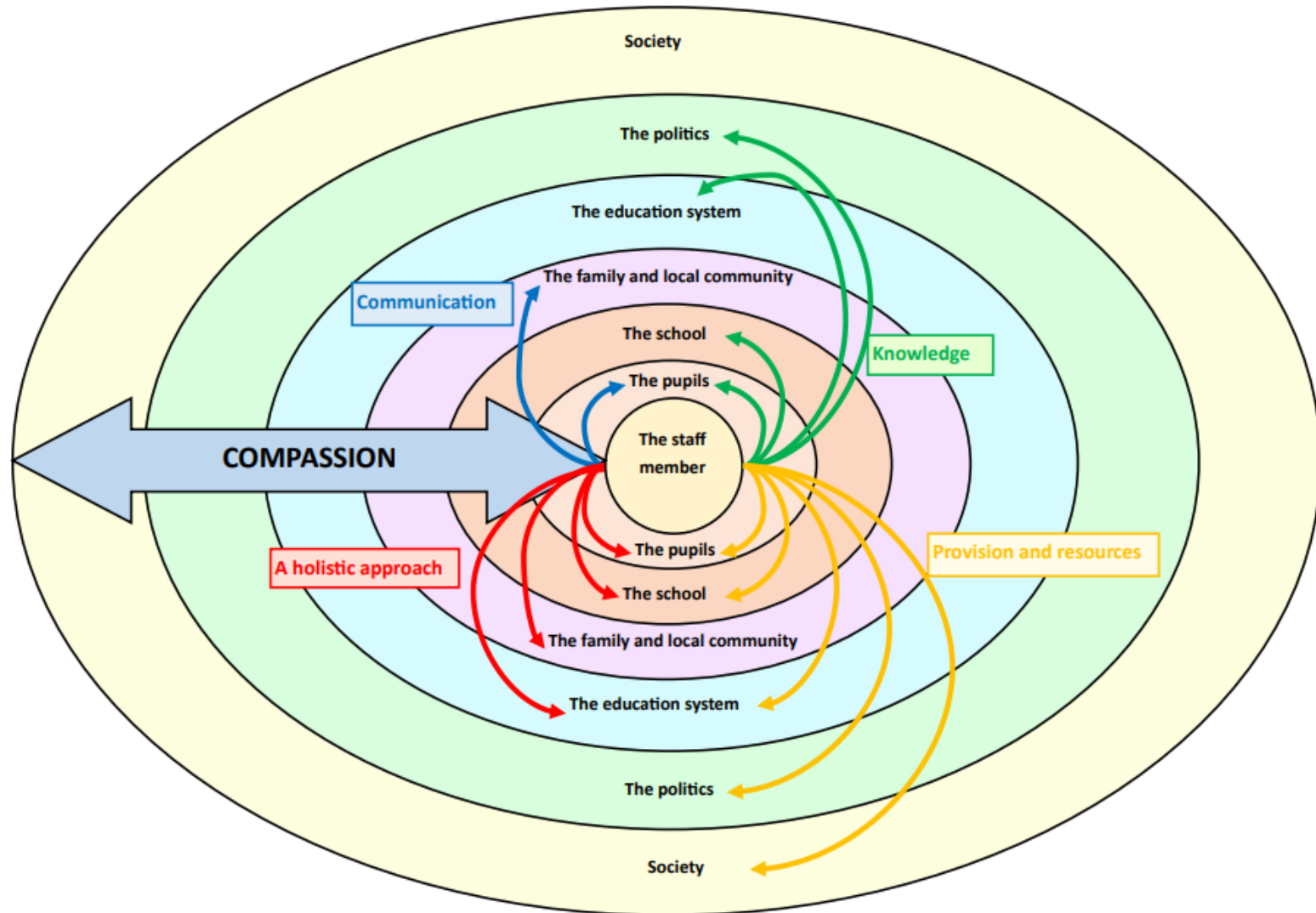
inductive process of data analysis, it was found that the descriptive themes could be broadly understood within an adapted version of the ecological system framework (Bronfrenbrenner, 1977). This places the staff member at the centre of the systems within which they interact with in order to support and work with CWESA. These interactions are demonstrated in Figure 2.2. Within this findings section, the analytical themes will be described, with reference to any sub-themes within the overarching theme itself.

2.3.2.1 The Role of Communication. This theme explains how communication affects the interaction between the staff member and refugee and asylum-seeking pupils, along with their families. Communication was seen as a core component of the barriers and successes to supporting CWESA.

Communicating with the family

Fostering a relationship between home and school for CWESA allowed for school staff to gain a greater understanding of a pupil's background and history. Often data provided to schools for newly arrived CWESA has large gaps in it and staff are given "no information at all." (Whiteman, 2005, p.381). One teacher spoke of the benefits of conducting home visits to learn more about a FWESA in his class:

> "I've been round there [the child's home] I think three or four times now. And that has been so important, because they [children] can't tell us anything about their own lives, and mum has been brilliant. When I go round to mum, she's always got loads of questions for me, and I've always got loads of questions for her" (Madziva & Thondlana, 2017, p.956)

However, being able to effectively communicate with the family can be challenging without a shared language. Parents may lack confidence with their English language skills, "preventing them from initiating communication with their children's schools." (Madziva & Thondlana, 2017, p.955). One teacher spoke of how parents may feel "embarrassed to say anything about their country. Or even say a word in their own language" (Prentice, 2022, p.1134). Teachers expressed difficulty in sending messages home, which would, typically, feel "confusing, because they don't understand English" (Madziva & Thondlana, 2017, p.955).

A protective factor in being able to communicate with a FWESA often came from bilingual staff members. Within one school, it was noticed that "parents lingered longer" with a class teacher who spoke Arabic to parents at pick-up time. She was observed frequently "translating various documents that [parents] brought to her, often unrelated to school matters". This communicative support "gave her classroom a welcoming, sociable air" (Prentice, 2022, p.1134), demonstrating the value of listening to FWESAs, as well as providing them with a voice. Bilingual staff were often called

upon to help with communicating with families, such as one staff member who supported a child who was feeling unwell:

> Not only did she speak with the child to find out what was wrong, but she also ended up speaking with his mother and helping them make a doctor's appointment over the phone. (Prentice & Ott, 2021, p.274)

There was, however, recognition of the appropriateness of various methods of translation when talking with parents. School staff in Whiteman's paper (2005, p. 382) reported that "pupils were required to translate for their parents". As well as this, staff used "other members of the same community with language skills". This was described as sometimes "undesirable", particularly when thinking about "potentially sensitive information" that may need to be communicated to parents (Whiteman, 2005, p.383).

Emphasis on learning English

Due to the aforementioned difficulties in communicating effectively with pupils and their families when they first arrived in the UK, an emphasis was placed on learning English within many of the participants' experiences. Learning English was "seen as critical to access the broader curriculum and integrate into society" (Ott & O'Higgins, 2019, p. 563). By providing English language support, it was felt that key barriers within communication were somewhat reduced. One participant referred to the difference they noticed when a child began to feel more comfortable with the English language, stating:

> Now, she can say sentences, words, [...] She can ask another person in class, instead of coming to an adult. ...you see them out in the playground and then they get the respect of other children, and their fun, bubbly personality just starts to show. (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017, p.953)

When considering the support that is provided to meet the needs of English as additional learner (EAL) pupils, one participant discussed that the breadth of provision being offered included: "home tutoring by volunteer university students, to free English lesson for mothers, to classroom activities", which allowed the support to feel "embedded" across the school (Prentice & Ott, 2021, p.276). In some education settings, there was a focus on building the skills of school staff in teaching learners who were new to English, with training focusing "mainly on EAL pedagogy" (Prentice & Ott, 2021, p.276). However, some participants felt that there was too great an emphasis placed on learning English, resulting in CWESA potentially missing out on other learning opportunities:

The current secondary school curriculum was seen as rigid and inflexible, and overly focused for new arrivals on EAL (which was considered important, but not to the exclusion of all else). (McIntyre & Hall, 2020, p.592)

Prentice (2022, p. 1137) found that participants had a much greater focus on EAL professional development when discussing staff training and knowledge in relation to supporting CWESA, in comparison to "trauma and social-emotional well-being", which was "much less emphasised than EAL knowledge". When considering the complexity of teaching English as an additional language, alongside the Department for Education monitoring data on the proficiency of English for pupils with EAL (DfE, 2020), it becomes apparent why schools may prioritise this.

2.3.2.2 The Role of Knowledge. This theme describes how knowledge impacts upon how school staff work with CWESA and their families, whilst working within the wider education and political systems. School staff recognised the value of 'knowledge', in terms of own personal teaching knowledge, and knowledge of the wider systemic issues that are part of the asylum-seeking system.

Knowledge and experience of teaching

Staff within the studies reflected on how long they had been teaching for, with some staff having "only recently started teaching", in comparison to others who had "decades of collective experience working with refugee pupils" (Prentice, 2022, p.1137). As within the previous theme of communication, the importance of EAL is acknowledged, but here staff reflect on how their knowledge and experience of teaching EAL pupils affects their confidence in supporting CWESA. One teacher's breadth of experience meant that "her ability to simplify language comes naturally to her now because she has spent 15 years doing it" (Ward, 2021, p.320). Those with more limited experience found that "it can be quite hard to modify your language to make yourself understood." (Ward, 2021, p.320). In addition, those earlier on in their careers experienced lower self-confidence in their teaching abilities: "The student often didn't retain what had been taught from one week to the next, and I began to feel doubtful about whether what I was doing was of any help." (Holt & Taylor, 2022, p.486).

Knowledge of how to assess and monitor progress was felt to be integral in working with and supporting CWESA. It was noted that assessment procedures were often different to when assessing non-refugee populations. Staff needed to have an understanding of pupils' prior educational experiences in their home countries, as well as understanding how pupils may have a "quiet period", where they may not be appearing to be actively engaged in lessons but rather absorbing the new language and taking in their new environment. Without such knowledge, teachers could "underestimate competencies" of pupils' abilities and achievements (Ott & O'Higgins, 2019, p.564).

Moreover, staff use their experience and knowledge of assessment and teaching to understand what their pupils need to make progress:

> I think quality comes when you first are able to see where your kids are at when you're given them. And then it's about plugging the gaps, what do my students need to reach that goal? What do I have to do? What resources do I have? What support staff/parental input is needed, what technology, what can I use to make sure that they reach the desired end? (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017, p.957)

Staff recognised the importance of understanding individual differences between pupils, and that it is their job to "react to the need that is expressed in the best way" that they can (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.255). However, it was also found by some staff that adopting strategies that may be recommended for CWESA for the whole class allowed for a more universal approach. One teacher "aimed to teach the whole class as though they have EAL, since she found many of the strategies to be engaging and effective for everyone." (Prentice, 2022, p.1135).

Knowledge and understanding of the asylum-seeking process

Another branch of staff knowledge came from school staff understanding and having experience of working with the complex asylum-seeking process. It allowed for staff to have a greater understanding of what their CWESA populations were experiencing, alongside the difficulties of joining a new school. One headteacher commented:

> We have now learned about a whole additional layer … we've all become much more aware of the immigration system, and how that affects our families, and in some cases some of that has been a revelation to us … just about the way they [the families of CWESA] are sometimes treated, and particularly the dawn raids and the fact that that's happening with very young children in the midst of it, I find it hard to believe that it's happening around me, in the country where I have always lived. (Arnot, Pinson, Candappa, 2009, p.259)

Staff felt that it was important to "continually enhance their contextual understanding of these children", particularly when considering their "migration experiences and home culture they carry with them" (Ward, 2021, p.321). Through developing their understanding of their pupils' experiences, staff could hold space for empathy and patience when considering how factors such as "living under the threat of deportation often for many years in poverty, appalling housing conditions, with parents who cannot work" may "limit their progress and affect their behaviour." (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.260).

Knowledge and experience of working with CWESA embedded in the school community

Staff felt even better prepared and supported to work with CWESA when it was not only them that had specific knowledge and experience of working with this population, but when this was embedded across the whole school. Schools that were more diverse, with more pupils from different ethnic backgrounds tended to prioritise making "adaptations to the environment" (Whiteman, 2005, p.385). One caseworker recognised the differences in schools that had experience of working with CWESA and compared with those that did not:

> The attitudes have been different, depending on where. If schools have the experience of taking refugee children the attitude is completely different … there's a lot more leniency there and understanding that the children are going to struggle and will need extra support … but one school had a really bad attitude and they were saying 'what do we do with these children?' (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017, p.951).

When schools had a good understanding and knowledge of the experience FWESA went through, school staff were able to develop more skills and expertise within this area. This was sometimes through having access to resources and more knowledgeable staff members, with one paper explaining that "simply by being employed at one of the case study schools, participant educators had relevant experience" due to their "long history of educating refugees." (Prentice & Ott, 2021, p.275). Other school communities used their understanding and experience of the asylum-seeking process to prioritise developing staff skills in working with these populations through "trauma-awareness training" and training that is "more explicitly related to migrant children's experiences" (Ward, 2021, p.320).

A key barrier raised by some participants concerned the lack of data and information given to schools about CWESA which meant that often it could be challenging to know how to support a young person or what kind of support they might need:

> Even though you have a box for ethnicity, that doesn't always give you an opportunity to capture who they are, you know; that breakdown doesn't take you into refugees or new arrivals. (McIntyre & Hall, 2020, p.590)

2.3.2.3 The Role of Provision and Resources. The third analytical theme describes how policies and the education system affect how school staff can support CWESA. Staff are impacted by working within set policies and structures as well as the availability of resources within schools.

Working within set policies and practices

The aforementioned 'role of knowledge' theme highlighted the importance of developing staff knowledge to effectively meet the needs and provide support to CWESA. However, when discussing increasing staff's EAL training, this was commented to be difficult with restricted school

budgets: "perhaps due to the current austerity policies that are characterised by significant cuts and reduction in education budgets, some teachers are not being properly trained in this area." (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017, p.955).

School staff spoke of the difficulty of wanting to provide a bespoke and inclusive curriculum, that met the child's needs and interests, but not being able to due to lack funding:

> if a child is quite good at a certain subject that they've done, and they arrive and suddenly that option is full I can't hire a new teacher to teach art at Key Stage 4 just because of one child. The shortcut I'm going to take there is to put that child in a different class. And that's criminal. That, there, has robbed a child of the chance of, not just a good grade but maybe a career. (McIntyre & Hall, 2020, p.592)

Participants noticed how Home Office policies, such as the dispersal scheme (Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999) had a direct impact upon education and the level of provision and resources available within school for all pupils. Schools across the country, including those in poorer areas, are needing to support CWESA, but may not have the funding or community support to do so, thus placing FWESA into areas that are already experiencing heightened deprivation and tension within the community:

> Situated in poorer areas of the city where private rental accommodation was cheapest, the schools were struggling to meet the demands of what Jonathan Darling (2017) called "a profoundly uneven geography…dominated by cutting costs and housing asylum seekers in areas of existing social deprivation, often without fully preparing the communities to which asylum seekers are dispersed." (McIntyre & Hall, 2020, p.594)

School staff also spoke of positive policies, such as the Pupil Premium funding, which was "viewed as critical for providing adequate provision in secondary schools" for CWESA who were unaccompanied on arrival into the UK (Ott & O'Higgins, 2019, p.562). However, changes in how schools are managed, with the rise of academisation and the abolishment of local education authorities (LEAs) was reported to be an issue in the access of resources such as training, with one teacher noting "that she had received extensive training from the LEA […] before LEAs were abolished in 2010" (Prentice, 2022, p.1137).

Working with available resources

There was a recognition from participants that working with CWESA required a higher level of resources and provision due to the expected learning - and socio-emotional needs. A differentiated approach was important, acknowledging that "while some young people integrated

into mainstream classrooms on arrival, many benefited from additional instruction delivered by teaching assistants or small tutor groups." (Ott & O'Higgins, 2019, p.562). Often these different approaches led to a workload increase "because everything has to be from scratch" (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017, p954). One headteacher commented how the challenge of time was a factor in how staff were able to support CWESA: "the other resource seen as lacking – apart from money and teachers – was time." (McIntyre & Hall, 2020, p.593). This increase in workload, coupled with the limited resources available to staff was suggested to increase stress, with one staff member commenting "we just spread ourselves so thinly", although, importantly, she also seemed to attribute "this stress to the education system rather than the pupils themselves" (Prentice, 2022, p.1139).

Managing the often limited resources caused tension between the local community and FWESA at times, with local communities worrying that they may face a reduction in services and resources for themselves with the growing population of individuals and families seeking asylum within their communities. One headteacher was aware of this growing tension within her community, understanding the conflict of: "placing people who are quite vulnerable into an environment which is already quite highly disadvantaged and doesn't necessarily accommodate newcomers very well" (McIntyre & Hall, 2020, p.593). This tension was also prevalent prior to the economic situation at the time of writing this review, with similar fears in 2005: "large numbers of vulnerable children within the local population, already making significant demands on staff and resources, could influence a school's capacity to accommodate asylum seekers with very complex needs." (Whiteman, 2005, p.380).

2.3.2.4 The Role of a Holistic Approach. When supporting CWESA, staff expressed that working across and with different systems, as well as ensuring that the curriculum and all staff in the school were appropriate for the young people, was essential in providing a holistic approach.

Whole school ethos

Participants felt that the whole school ethos could be captured through many means, including the physical environment. Careful consideration had been made by staff in one school as to how displays were used to create an inclusive and welcoming environment to match the school ethos: "The reception area was decorated with framed newspaper articles of pupils, school prospectuses and school newsletters, accompanied by photos reflecting the diverse ethnic make-up of the pupil population" (Prentice, 2022, p.1132). At the same school, there was "an EAL 'base', which was a classroom located in a central, well-frequented part of the campus, making it easy for pupils to drop in and emphasising that EAL learning was a central part of the school's work." (Prentice, 2022, p.1133). Alongside the physical environment, schools made use of policies to ensure

that their school ethos reflected the welcoming and inclusive environment they wanted to create, such as "regular use of the 'Red Card to Racism'" and inclusion of "questionnaires to parents and pupils about how to improve welcoming new arrivals" (Whiteman, 2005, p.384). Sometimes the whole school ethos was more abstract, and was sensed through how staff responded to CWESA and their families:

> In contrast with crossing the country's borders, crossing into the school system is something which the schools we visited were clear about – they adopt an ethos of inclusion and integration which is very different than that of central government. (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.258)

Staff captured this feeling through demonstrating their understanding of what integration was to them: "I think that it's not about this is a refugee, we need to help – it's about this is what we would do for a member of our community … Which is quite nice, because that's integration, really." (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.256).

The curriculum

Participants spoke of the wish to create and teach a bespoke and inclusive curriculum, that met the needs of all pupils. Tutors in Holt and Taylor's study benefited from a more flexible approach that allowed them to "plan learning experiences or lessons that suited the interests of the individual with whom they were working." (Holt & Taylor, 2022, p.482). Meanwhile, several teachers based in schools found ways of adapting the already set curriculum to meet the needs of all their pupils, whilst teaching about equality and diversity: "General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) unit "Poems from Different Cultures" offers an entry point into discussions of diversity, identity and different experiences of conflict." (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.255).

Nevertheless, participants reflected on how challenging it was to create a holistic curriculum when they were under pressure to generate good exam results and follow statutory obligations. There was a sense of fear amongst school staff, particularly headteachers, that by welcoming in and accepting CWESA into their school community, their exam results would be negatively affected:

> "Look. We'll take him on to our books", you know, with a heavy heart to be honest, knowing that, much as I was pleased to help this young man, I was going to have to go back and explain to my colleagues who are working terribly hard to make sure that our outcomes are as they should be, that this was in a sense a statistical headwind that they would have to run into… So it can be quite a divisive thing. It's divisive. (McIntyre & Hall, 2020, p.591)

There was a sense that "schools would refuse a place to a newly arrived UASC because of fear that it would affect their exam results" (Ott & O'Higgins, 2019, p.565). This led some participants

to reflect on the current curriculum expectations: "We need to take a step back and actually think about whether our provision as it is, is fit for purpose" (McIntyre & Hall, 2020, p.593), as well as how success is measured within UK schools: "educators repeatedly pointed out the difficulty of helping refugee pupils to be successful in a system with a narrow – and timebound – definition of success." (Prentice, 2022, p.1138).

Multi-agency work

In order to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for CWESA, staff recognised the need for a multi-agency approach, that allowed for different systems to work together. This sometimes came from other organisations, such as charities in the third sector. One participant interviewed worked for a charity, who oversaw "programming in numerous school settings", where they provided: "(1) mentorship-focused after-school clubs for UASCs; (2) schools with students on predominantly free lunch plans; and (3) special schools for those with added learning needs." (Ward, 2021, p.322). This was seen as particularly vital for children identified as unaccompanied asylum-seekers, who may not have contact with their family for support, so that they could be part of a new community and develop a sense of belonging (Ward, 2021).

As well as this, school staff recognised the benefit from accessing support within the local authority such as "EMTRAS (Ethnic Minority Traveller and Refugee Achievement Service) resources" and "translation or interpreting services" (Whiteman, 2005, p.382). This multi-agency approach allowed for better communication between home and school. In addition, it was emphasised that the local community took a role in providing a holistic approach to support: "One of the key findings in our research is the involvement of the wider community with a view to enable effective integration for Syrian refugees. Several families reported neighbours helping with children's reading and homework." (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017, p.956).

2.3.2.5 The Role of Compassion. When considering the factors in how effective staff felt in relation to providing support to CWESA, compassion was identified as a key theme. This incorporates compassion across all systems: compassion given towards pupils, receiving compassion from others (e.g., other staff members, other systems), and using compassion for action.

Compassion towards pupils

Staff chose to treat CWESA as "children first, migrants second" (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.250), whilst holding onto the notion of all children having the right to an education, with this level of caring being seen to be more in line with "the ethos of *Every Child Matters*, rather than the Home Office distinction that only the youth meeting certain political criteria are "deserving" of

protection and integration." (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.256). Refugee and asylum-seeking status was relevant, but less required for some staff when considering admissions into school:

> I don't think we've ever refused somebody admission if we've got a place, simply because they haven't had the right documentation. We tend to put them on and worry about it later … Because to be honest even if it turned out that they were here illegally, in a way *that's not our concern* … . We would still not refuse because we honestly don't know the circumstances *and that's not for us, the school, to judge*. (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.256

Staff reported wanting to demonstrate compassion and empathy without pitying or victimising pupils. One Assistant Headteacher suggested that "pity is not helpful – rather compassion means giving them the maximum benefit from education. "I don't think, you see, that a lot of these students want people to sit around feeling sorry for themselves"." (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, p.255). Often teacher care and empathy was shown through a celebratory and strengths-based approach. One teacher spoke of selecting "topics of learning that would 'celebrate' the countries and cultures of newly arrived pupils so that refugee pupils and their classmates did not see them only 'through the optics of the conflict'" (Prentice, 2022, p.1135).

Staff found ways of stepping into the shoes of CWESA, through using their own experiences, to build a level of understanding of what they were experiencing. Some staff members who had themselves experienced migrating to the UK (although not as asylum-seekers) used these life experiences to show empathy towards the pupils:

> She acknowledged that her circumstances were profoundly different from the refugee families she now serves ('[We're] not exactly from a refugee tent in Jordan'), yet noted how the experience of moving countries had helped her understand what they might be going through upon resettlement—not only in terms of language learning, but in terms of shifting identity. (Prentice & Ott, 2021, p.275).

Above all else, staff expressed their drive to develop trusting relationships with their pupils to ensure that the CWESA felt safe and secure: "for kids to feel as though they belong in school, I think it is a relationship with the adults" (Ward, 2021, p.322).

Compassion and support from others

Some staff felt better supported to work with CWESA due to the level of compassion that they received from peers. They would refer to more-knowledgeable-others, such as staff in one school referencing the EAL lead "as their source of knowledge, saying she would either give targeted advice and assistance or direct them to the EAL resource drive she had created." (Prentice & Ott,

2021, p.274). Compassion also came from wider systems, to provide additional support to pupils, where school staff were not always the best person to do so:

> A number of voluntary organizations or other services, such as children's charities, education welfare, school nursing and church or community refugee support groups, were mentioned as additional sources of support for children who had suffered traumatic experiences. (Whiteman, 2005, p.383).

A lack of compassion from others within the system was also often reported, particularly when considering the role that the media and politics plays in people's perceptions of individuals and families seeking asylum. One teacher described "racist images portrayed of refugees by the media" (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.259) as a barrier in providing education for CWESA, but also as a motivator to better educate and change attitudes of particular groups of people. Staff felt that "negative attitudes towards asylum seekers" was a "factor in hindering integration" (Whiteman, 2005, p.385). However, when media and political stances provided a more educated and positive response, the narrative shifted: "Syrian children, perhaps because of the ways in which the Syria refugee plight was widely publicised, appear to have been more generally welcomed in schools." (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017, p.952)

Compassion as a core value in action

The role of the teacher or a member of school staff was predominantly seen as a caring one, with staff often going above and beyond to ensure that CWESA felt welcomed and part of the school community. Part of this was teachers choosing to actively teach compassion to other pupils through providing opportunities to learn about democracy and injustices:

> The more critical teachers used media representations as a means of teaching young people about democracy, and civic action in the most active sense: campaigning and taking action politically against injustices whether at home or abroad for those without protection and in danger of forced removal by the UK government. (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.258)

Teachers acted as role models and encouraged their pupils to "confront democracy when they explore the ways in which media and politicians create a culture of rejection and hostility" (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.260). This supported pupils to gain critical thinking skills and challenge what is presented in the media, overcoming any factors which might contribute to 'hostile environment'.

Some staff members also chose to take an active role in demonstrating and protesting against the treatment of FWESA, once they became aware of living situations and risk of deportation. Some staff were motivated to "join national alliances and engage in campaigning with their pupils

against deportation" (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.257). This kind of active role was thought to "redefine the relationship of teachers to the state", whereby teachers were "in opposition to state immigration policy" (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.258), potentially highlighting the disparity between local and central government.

2.4   Discussion

This review sought to explore the factors that school staff consider to be important in affecting their work with CWESA. Collectively, participants highlighted the importance of (a) communication, b) knowledge, c) resources and policy, d) a holistic approach, and e) compassion. These five themes can be synthesised in a way which demonstrates how they each interact with each other, either positively or negatively affecting one another. This is explored in Figure 2.3, which depicts an adapted version of the Interacting Factors Framework (Fredrickson & Cline, 2009). It shows interactions between themes that act as either enabling or risks factors in how school staff can work with and support CWESA. In particular, compassion is seen as a helpful unifying factor which can help to inspire and support effective practice across other key aspects of school provision for CWESA.

2.4.1   Understanding the Role of Communication

The role of communication was seen by participants to be integral in effectively supporting and working with CWESA. Staff recognised the importance of being able to communicate not just with the pupil, but with their family as well. Proficiency in English (i.e., the host country's main language) was seen as a priority. Indeed, research by Blake et al. (2017) suggests that proficiency in the dominant language of the settlement country allows for greater self-sufficiency, which supports schools prioritising language learning as a way of supporting the integration process. Some participants recognised the increased confidence that came with CWESA improving their use and understanding of the English language, specifically within social groups. Kum (2020) suggests that intercultural interactions (such as interactions on the playground with other pupils of different cultural backgrounds) can lead to anxiety for CWESA, due to the challenge of effectively communicating and potentially being viewed as an 'outsider'. This may negatively affect their sense of connectedness and belongingness with peers and the school community (Miller, Mitchell & Brown, 2005). Therefore, by providing opportunities to learn English for CWESA and, in some cases, their families (e.g., Prentice & Ott, 2021), schools could also be improving their sense of belonging to a new community and, hence, enhancing academic, social and emotional outcomes (Korpershoek et al., 2020).

Figure 2.3   Interactions Between Themes

The role of compassion

Compassion towards pupils

Compassion as a core value in action

Key

(green)	Enabling factor
(yellow)	Risk factor

Allows for greater compassion towards pupils

The role of knowledge

Knowledge and experience of teaching

Knowledge and understanding of the asylum-seeking process

Knowledge and understanding of working with RAS pupils embedded in the school community

The role of communication

Communicating with the family

Emphasis of learning English

Allows for a more varied and inclusive curriculum (rather than solely focusing on EAL)

The role of provision and resources

Working within set policies and practices

Working with available resources

Can reduce abilities to use a holistic approach

The role of a holistic approach

Whole school ethos

The curriculum

Multi-agency work

Can enable staff and schools to use a holistic approach

Can negatively impact on how those outside of school community provide compassion

Compassion and support from others

Participants spoke to the importance of CWESA being able to access the school curriculum, and that learning English was part of this process. However, some school staff also recognised the value in not prioritising English language learning and wanting to take a more holistic approach to learning. In some cases, staff referred to the curriculum that focused on EAL as "rigid and inflexible" (McIntyre & Hall, 2020, p.592). Picton and Banfield (2020) argue that developing a sense of belonging to a school community is not wholly dependent on English language learning, but rather providing a warm and welcoming environment that promotes inclusion throughout the school. Maintaining one's own identity is still crucial within the context of having an authentic sense of belonging and it must be acknowledged that an individual's language and culture form key parts of their identity (Tadayon & Khodi, 2016). Participants within the review spoke of the benefit of bi-lingual staff members who were able to communicate with FWESA in their home language. A report by Tereshchenko and Archer (2014), recommends that all schools with EAL pupils should consider the use of bilingual teaching assistants and staff members to support both the engagement of pupil learning and home-school communication. Through providing opportunities for CWESA to work with bi-lingual school staff, the school not only improve communication strategies, but also seek to actively celebrate diversity across their school community (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). It also means that schools do not need to prioritise EAL learning to access the curriculum, as support is in place for translation. This allows schools to take a more holistic approach, meaning that CWESA can access a broad and varied curriculum, not one that is overly focused on EAL learning.

2.4.2 Understanding the Role of Resources

Although participants recognised the importance of a holistic approach when working with CWESA, the availability of resources and set policies was highlighted as a barrier to providing this, particularly in the context of funding in the wider school system. Participants' accounts were reflective of a real tension between the level of support that they wished to provide (with a focus on extra staff members and a diverse, holistic curriculum), and the challenges posed to realise this due to lack of funds and a confined education policy that seemed overly focused on exam outcomes. In one instance, a headteacher in McIntyre and Hall's paper (2020) spoke of these difficulties feeling "divisive" (p.591), due to concerns about CWESA impact on exam results. Further to this, in the context of funding, between 2003-4 and 2009-10, per-pupil spending rose by 23%. However, since then per-pupil spending has decreased with, per-pupil spending by 2019-20 falling by 9% (Institute of Fiscal Studies, 2023). Research has suggested that those that benefit the greatest from higher spending in schools are pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those that access free school meals (Gibbons, McNally & Viarengo, 2017; Williams and Grayson, 2018). With CWESA being part of this population, participants spoke to the difficulties with resources allocation, particularly when

working in communities that were already encountering high levels of deprivation and high educational needs.

As well as being a risk factor to providing a holistic approach in schools, set policies and resource allocation also interacts with the role of compassion, specifically compassion received from others. Participants recognised the fear that some members of the local community may experience when considering how resources may be allocated to FWESA. A report by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2015) suggests that people are twice as likely to believe that migration in their country should decrease if they rate their country's economic state as being 'poor' or 'fair', than those who view the economic state as 'good' or 'excellent'. It can therefore feel challenging to receive compassion from local communities where their resources are already stretched. The dispersal scheme (Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999) was created as a way of dispersing refugee and asylum-seekers across the country to reduce the high concentration of refugee and asylum-seekers in London and the South-East (Stewart, 2012). The policy has been in place for the duration of all nine studies analysed in this review, with research by Phillimore and Goodson (2006) finding that seven of the local authorities that act as key dispersal areas were in the top 20 most deprived areas in the UK at the time of the research. The effect of this on staff, other pupils and the wider community was noted across the timeline of papers within this review (McIntyre & Hall, 2020; Whiteman, 2005). One impact of this was noted as there being a: "critical need for schools to be well prepared to deal with varied and complex needs and to be flexible in terms of workload and resource allocation" (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017, p.954), so that all schools across the UK are in a position to welcome, support and educate refugee and asylum-seeking pupils.

2.4.3   Understanding the Role of Knowledge

One way of mitigating the risk of reduced compassion from others, was by improving the knowledge of the complex asylum-seeking process. An increased understanding of the circumstances FWESA faced was considered by school staff to link with being more patient and empathetic to difficulties experienced concerning integrating or making progress in learning. One participant directly linked compassion with an understanding of the politics of the asylum-seeking system: "He concludes that being more compassionate is linked to being more politically aware of the issues" (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p258.). A review that explored educational experiences of CWESA in the UK concluded that a greater emphasis should be placed on staff accessing training and development on understanding previous educational experiences and the wider asylum-seeking system so that they could provide appropriate support to CWESA (Peterson et al., 2017). Participants in this review recognised the value of working in a school that had plentiful experience of working with CWESA and how it supported their continual professional development, particularly when they were supported to engage in training and learning from more knowledgeable peers.

2.4.4   Understanding the Role of a Holistic Approach

Through increasing compassion within the whole community, school staff can take a more holistic approach, focusing on the needs of the individual pupils, whilst providing a broad, inclusive curriculum within a school that is welcoming for all, by all. Participants spoke of all staff who had any contact with pupils in school needing to adopt this welcoming and compassionate attitude: "[I]t needs to be a whole ethos, not only from the teacher but right down to the caretaker and the dinner lady." (Ward, 2021, p.321). Research exploring how education settings can support CWESA highlight the need for schools that embody inclusivity at their core (Veck & Wharton, 2021). This approach cannot come from individual staff members alone, but rather from a whole-school approach, that focuses on school leadership, links with other agencies and families, and working alongside the local community in which the school is based in (Block et al., 2014; Pugh, Every & Hattam, 2012). Participants acknowledged how important areas such as staff training and the curriculum were within this holistic approach, and their hopes to develop knowledge of staff members along with creating bespoke and more diverse curriculums that fitted the needs of all pupils.

The interaction between resources, knowledge and communication demonstrate the need for a holistic approach that can be adopted at a systemic level, rather than on an individual school basis. Living in the uncertainty of an asylum claim can result in families being moved from different local authorities multiple times, meaning that children may change schools at short notice (Ryan et al., 2010). As a result of this, some school staff in this review reflected on the difficulty of knowing exactly how many pupils that attended their school had experience of seeking asylum (McIntyre & Hall, 2020), and others recognised the importance of understanding individual's stories and life experiences in order to provide the best education they could (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009). In order to support schools in providing a holistic approach, it may be helpful to consider the successes of the systems set up in the UK for care-experienced children and young people, such as the role of the Virtual School and Designated Teachers. In fact, for CWESA who are unaccompanied, they are supported by the Virtual School (Ott & O'Higgins, 2019). Research into the role of the Virtual School has suggested that this system has not only helped improved the attendance and educational outcomes of care-experienced children (Macdonald, 2020), but also allows for greater communication between school, home and other systems, resulting in a more holistic approach (McIver & Bettencourt, 2024). As well as this, the role of the Designated Teacher within schools has been found to further support the Virtual School, through enacting systemic change and the ability to better understand the experiences of, and therefore provide a higher level of support to, the children and young people (De La Fosse et al., 2023). These systems may be able to contribute to a better understanding of CWESA experiences, and to provide a holistic approach in providing support despite the many barriers they may face.

2.4.5   Understanding the Wider Role of Compassion

This degree of compassion that FWESA receive from others may also be shaped by the way in which refugee and asylum-seekers are portrayed in both politics and the media. One participant spoke of the way in which their Syrian families were more welcomed due to being part of a resettlement scheme set up by the government (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017). Such observation is consistent with a report on public perspectives of refugee and asylum-seekers by Dempster and Hargrave (2022). They present two case studies and highlight how the public welcomes refugees differently dependent on the narrative pushed by the government. Similarly, but in another example, xenophobic language and behaviour increased alongside a political campaign in Hungary that focused on anti-immigration (Howden, 2016). Conversely, the Canadian government had previously set up large-scale initiatives to support refugees resettle, alongside programmes that were aimed at reducing prejudice, saw more favourable attitudes towards refugee communities (Esses, Hamilton & Gaucher, 2017). It is acknowledged that the dominant rhetoric from the Home Office and much of the media, throughout the time of all the papers in the review, has portrayed migration as negative and has shown support for attempts to decrease the amount of FWESA settling in the UK (Goodwood & Kirkwood, 2019). This may negatively impact how local communities view and therefore welcome FWESA, thus affecting how well they are able to integrate into the school.

2.4.6   Strengths and Limitations

This paper contributes to the current research field by providing a synthesis of the literature exploring the voices of those that support CWESA in schools. By including research from over the last two decades, the review provides an understanding in how the different systems interact and are impacted upon by changes in education policy, immigration policy and other current affairs. As the number of CWESA arrive in the UK with the hope for a safe future, it is imperative to understand how schools can provide a place of sanctuary, whilst understanding what is needed for staff to best support CWESA and improve educational outcomes for all. This synthesis followed a systematic approach including peer checking to ensure that all relevant data was analysed. A further strength is that this review provides clear implications for different individuals and systems working with and around CWESA, which are discussed in a following section.

The limitations of this systematic review include the fact this is focusses only on peer-reviewed articles, meaning that theses, dissertation chapters and other non-published reports were not included. Accordingly, the review may have omitted other data and valuable perspectives that may have been relevant to the research question and may have influenced the findings. Further limitations were revealed in the quality assessment of the included papers, where many of the papers did not provide enough transparency about the type of thematic analysis used, meaning that

it is not clear whether analysis had come through a specific lens (such as biases that the researcher may have held). Furthermore, the current review only focused on UK based literature, within the UK education context. It will be important for future research to provide comparisons between differing educational contexts in different countries, to allow for shared good practice and learning opportunities. Finally, within this report, the phrase 'children or families with experience seeking asylum', was used to describe people with lived experience of being a refugee or asylum-seeker without confirmation or clarity that this term was the most appropriate one to use. It would be helpful to have direct participatory research, working with those with lived experiences in seeking asylum to understand how they would like this part of their identity to be captured and how they would like to be referred to in future research and publications.

2.4.7   Implications for Practice

There are key implications at the different system levels of those supporting and working with CWESA in schools (either directly or indirectly). These are described in Table 2.2, which outlines the implications for different stakeholders.

Table 2.2   Implications for Practice

Relevant persons	Implications
School teaching staff	Adopt a 'Total Communication Approach' to enriching the support for language development in a way that meets the needs of all children, for example, using EAL strategies that also support speech and language development for those with other communication needs. Adopt relational approaches to teaching and learning, that ensure the presence of emotionally available adults, prioritise building safe and secure relationships, and support social-emotional development and sense of belonging for all.
School leaders	School leaders to prioritise continuing professional development for all staff in school in understanding relevant asylum-seeking policies and the experiences of CWESA and FWESA. School leaders to continually monitor how many CWESA there are in their school and keep relevant data about pupil progress and outcomes to ensure that provision can be effectively developed for this vulnerable and minority group. School leaders to consider how effective teaching practice can be shared across their school, to ensure that less experienced staff are supported in providing for CWESA and that staff wellbeing is upheld.

Parents and families	Maximise opportunities within the school community for FWESA to take an active and valued role and to be represented within the school. This could include opportunities for bi-lingual staff to help the school better reflect the community that it serves.
Educational practitioners	Other professionals such as educational psychologists (EPs) may be able to provide training opportunities for all staff in school. This could include the differentiation of teaching and learning strategies, trauma-informed and relational approaches, and whole-school culturally attuned practices. EPs support sensitive ways of gathering the views and participation of CWESA where staff may be experiencing difficulty helping them integrate into their new school environment and help to co-produce a plan of support which helps CWESA to thrive within school. EPs can also provide staff supervision to provide a containing space to problem-solve, as well as to help manage worries and difficulties in supporting a vulnerable population.
Local authority members	LA staff may benefit from working with schools to gather relevant quantitative and qualitative data about their school populations and ensuring that the overall experiences and needs of CWESA in their community are accurately captured. This will help to provide appropriate support in the local offer. Consider how schools are provided with translators that are representative of their school community.
Wider UK policy makers and education theorists	All trainee teachers to be provided with training about relevant asylum-seeking policies and systems, as well as key strategies in adapting teaching and learning to suit the needs of a diverse classroom. Participatory work with CWESA and their families on how schools can support their integration and educational outcomes, as well as to explore how they would like to be referred to. Consider use of adopting structures already established for care-experienced children and young people, and how these could support CWESA. Such as a designated teacher within schools for CWESA and a Virtual School, that is able to keep data and monitor progress of all CWESA to ensure that relevant information is passed onto schools if the young person moves.

2.4.8   Conclusion

The interacting nature between the analytical themes created from this review speak to the importance of a holistic, multi-agency and systemic approach to working with and supporting CWESA within schools. Across the last two decades, participants in this review spoke of the challenges they experienced in providing support for CWESA within the local authority, whilst navigating the policies and structures of central government policy, which impact upon the lives of FWESA. The findings demonstrated how such challenges become particularly prevalent when the dispersal scheme is considered, whereby FWESA may be placed in communities who are not well resourced to meet need. This can impact upon on how well staff feel prepared and equipped for supporting and working with CWESA, due to the wider school's lack of knowledge and experience about the asylum-seeking system along with working with such limited resources (Brown, 2022). Despite such difficulties, this review demonstrated how many school staff will frequently go above and beyond to ensure that they can meet the needs of CWESA, despite reporting their lack of experience, lack of resources, and a dearth of compassion from outside the school community (Brown, 2022; Wilkinson & Langat, 2012). With some increased education, collaboration and communication across all the systems supporting schools and some increased participation, with FWESA, in developing a shared understanding of how best to help them to thrive, it may be possible to create and maintain a supportive and welcoming educational landscape, across the UK, where children with experience of seeking asylum may be seen as "children first, migrants second" (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009, p.250).

Chapter 3 "You can't just ignore them": Understanding the experience of joining a school community for families who have sought asylum in the UK.

3.1 Introduction

According to the Refugee Council (2024), in the year 2023, there were almost 70,000 asylum applications made in the UK. The Refugee Convention (United Nations, 1951) states that those awaiting this decision are called 'asylum-seekers', whilst individuals who have had their application approved and are deemed to be able to not return to their home country due to fear for their safety are given 'refugee status'. For this research, the term: children with experience of seeking-asylum (CWESA) and families with experience of seeking asylum (FWESA) will be used to value and capture all the differences in experience, stages of the process and other identities that those who have sought asylum hold. This term also seeks to be sensitive to the notion of not placing the status or label of being an asylum seeker before the basic human identity of being a child or a family.

The road to gaining refugee status is complex and often lengthy. The Refugee Council (2024) report that at the end of 2023, approximately 129,000 people were still awaiting a decision on their asylum claim in the UK. The Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act (2006) dictates that those in the process of seeking asylum may not work and receive £7 a day to live on. In addition, at any moment a person may be moved between local authority or detained and returned to their home country (Refugee Council, 2024). This level of uncertainty, along with managing resettlement stress, such as language difficulties and potential prejudice or discrimination from the 'host' country (Stewart, 2014), can make it extremely challenging for people who are seeking asylum to integrate into the local community (Lomba, 2010). Indeed, recent research has highlighted the negative mental health and wellbeing impact of experienced stress and uncertainties in the host country on persons seeking asylum (e.g., Gleeson et al., 2020; Phillimore and Cheung, 2021; Sengoelge et al., 2022). In particular, lack of feeling integrated and included in the local community was an important factor (Gleeson et al., 2020; Schick et al., 2016).

Schools play an important role in fostering a cohesive local community. For FWESA, schools may provide a path towards integration within a local community through creating a space where key information can be accessed, along with access to wider systems that may provide support and opportunities for social connections for parents and children (Molla, 2024; Benson et al., 2021).

However, several factors are important to consider with respect to the important role schools can play to facilitate inclusion of FWESA in the local community.

Firstly, recent data suggests that starting school for many CWESA can have significant delays (UNICEF, 2018) despite the recommendation to all local authorities to place all children of compulsory school age resident in their local area in appropriate educational settings within 20 days. Such delays likely further compound feelings of isolation and stress for FWESA and impeding their integration and inclusion in local communities. It is, therefore, important to consider how systems within the local authority may work together to provide support for a challenging and turbulent time for CWESA.

Secondly, there are important variations between schools across the country relating to their preparedness and experience of supporting a diverse community. For example, the dispersal scheme, brought forward in the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999) saw local authorities from around the country increase their intake of people seeking asylum as a way to reduce numbers of families settling in London and the South East. However, following initial implementation of the dispersal scheme, Ofsted (2003) reported that there was a lack of preparedness and pedagogical knowledge for supporting CWESA in schools in some dispersal areas which historically served less diverse communities. Importantly, research suggests that schools with greater experience of serving diverse communities and working with FWESA are better prepared to support the educational outcomes of children who have sought asylum in the UK (Prentice & Ott, 2021; Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017).

Thirdly, headteachers in a qualitative study by McIntryre and Hall's (2020) reported that it was difficult to hold accurate data about the numbers of CWESA that were part of their school community, explaining that admission forms often did not ask for that information. Clearly, without such data schools and their staff face challenges in knowing who may be in need of support and what kind of support is likely to be of benefit.

Fourthly, along with recognising the support needed for schools to be ready to welcome and help integrate CWESA, such as through continuing professional development, the UNHCR (2019) highlights the importance of family participation in the education of children who have sought asylum. Primary caregiver's involvement in their children's education is generally thought to improve children's educational outcomes (Goodall & Montgomery, 2023; Wilder, 2023), and is suggested to be a facilitator in multicultural education (Banks, 2017). However, for children who seek asylum, feelings of dissonance may arise, as the behaviours and attitudes needed to adapt to the school environment in the UK may be different from those they were used to in their home culture (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). Indeed, parents who sought asylum with their children in the United States (US) reported feelings of increased tension between maintaining their own traditions and religious observances alongside their children adapting to a new social culture, where there may not have been space created for traditions to be maintained, such as time to pray at school (Rosenberg

et al., 2021). Such experiences of not managing to integrate differing cultural customs and expectations can make fostering connections between parents and their children's school difficult and suggests additional sensitivity, flexibility, time and effort may be needed for good mutual relations to develop. Indeed, researchers such as Haines et al. (2022) have highlighted the importance of educators providing opportunities to genuinely connect and engage with FWESA who are part of their school community.

There are additional factors which can get in the way of developing positive partnerships between school and FWESA. For example, qualitative research (using an embedded case study design) conducted in the US found that many refugee parents experienced difficulty engaging and communicating with their child's school (Haines et al., 2022). For some, this was due to language differences and, for others, they did not feel welcomed or part of the school community. Similarly, a qualitative study found that Burmese parents who had sought asylum in the US reported difficulties communicating with their children's teachers, which resulted in misunderstandings about their child's learning and progress. One example from a parent described the school obtaining a translator for a meeting, but the translator used a different Burmese dialect, meaning that it was difficult for the parent to understand them (Isik-Ercan, 2018). Vrdoljak et al (2024) have also shown that parents who have sought asylum have shared their wish to be involved in their child's education, yet face difficulty becoming part of the school community, which parents stated was due to the language barrier and managing their work life alongside integrating into a school community.

Research exploring the voices of parents who have sought asylum with their children has predominately been conducted in countries outside of the UK, such as Australia, Croatia and the US. Due to the limited body of research gaining the perspectives of FWESA in the UK joining a school community, this research seeks to take an exploratory approach. The present study, therefore, aims to listen to the voices of FWESA and understand their perspectives of joining a UK school community.

3.2   Methodology

3.2.1   Researcher Perspective

This research adopts a social constructionist position, meaning that there is the belief that reality is constructed through interactions and social processes (Guba, 1992). Knowledge is thought to be subjective and impacted upon by different experiences and interactions with others (Gergen, 1985).

3.2.2   Ethical Considerations

The present study gained ethical approval from the University of Southampton's School of Psychology Ethics Committee (Ethics ID: 79547). Culturally appropriate pseudonyms are used throughout the report. The name of the participants' current local authority, along with any previous local authorities that they resided in has been kept confidential. To conduct this research, I volunteered with a refugee charity that provides support for people seeking asylum, as well as individuals with refugee status, in a local authority. The charity works in the local community, providing a 'refugee hub' for casework and access to basic amenities, as well as offering activities during the week for individuals and families to join to help integrate into their community, such as gardening, dancing, and cooking. A member of the refugee charity in which the participants were recruited from was onsite for all interviews, in case any safeguarding issues arose.

3.2.3   Participants

Sampling was purposive, where participants were identified by the refugee charity manager, who was able to invite FWESA to take part who they felt were in a psychologically safe position to reflect on their experiences. This was determined by members of the charity who knew the families well and were aware of them living in the UK for at least one year. Parents were invited to join the research project and were able to bring their children (aged 10-15 years old) along with them to be interviewed if the children chose to come. The age range was chosen based on the children being old enough to engage in a reflective conversation, but not in their final GCSE year of education. Eight individuals (five parents and three children) with experience seeking asylum from one local authority (LA) in the South of England took part in this study across five interviews. Participants had to have been living in the UK for at least one year and had to have reasonably good spoken English, meaning that they were able to engage in a conversation about their experiences and understand key concepts about school and education. This was to remove the need for translators in the interviews, which may have changed the dynamic of the discussion. Berman and Tyyskä (2011) argue that there are many challenges when using translators in qualitative cross-language research, including the translator potentially not being experienced in research methods, and the different dialects and cultural aspects of language found across different parts of a country, of which the translator may not be fluent in. As well as this, it was felt that a translator added to the interview dynamic may have impacted upon the relational approach taken in the interviews, where the priority was building a trusting relationship between interviewer and participant(s). One child took part with their father and two children took part with their mother. Consent forms, information sheets and an advert were given to the charity to give to parents selected by the manager. Parents consented both for themselves and their children taking part and, additionally, assent of the children was gained at the start of the interview and during the debrief afterwards.

Participants' nationalities, the time that they had been in the UK, the journey they had taken since arrival in the UK, and the time taken for children placed in school varied (see Table 3.1). Two of the five parents gave birth to their children whilst in the UK. The other three parents sought asylum in the UK with their children. All participants received a £25 voucher for a supermarket or online shop of their choice following the interview. Any money spent travelling to and from the interview was also reimbursed.

Table 3.1   Participant Characteristics (Names are pseudonyms)

Interview participants	Ethnicity	Length of time in the UK	Journey to current LA	Time taken for children to start school
Yahana (Mum) **Aaliya** (Daughter – aged 15) **Nasir** (Son – aged 11)	Nigerian	4.5 years	September 2019 – arrived in UK 2 weeks in another LA before moving to current LA	4 months – January 2020
Bassem (Dad) **Kamal** (Son – aged 13) Bassem has one other son aged 11.	Egyptian (but spent 10 years living in Qatar before arriving in UK)	1.5 years	November 2022 – arrived in UK Placed in another LA Moved to current LA in May 2023	Started school in first LA after 2 months – January 2023 Family told to move elsewhere in March 2023, then had to return to initial LA – could not start back at school. Started school in current LA in November 2023 (8 months without schooling)
Sanyu (Mum) Sanya has two daughters aged 17, 10 and one son aged 8.	Ugandan	18 years	Arrived in UK in 2006 (whilst pregnant with daughter) Moved to current LA in 2012	Daughter started school as soon as school age

Abigail (Mum) Abigail has one daughter aged 8.	Ghanian	14 years	Arrived in UK in 2010 Lived in various LAs during this time Moved to current LA in 2015, pregnant with daughter	Daughter started school as soon as school age
Ruha (Mum) Ruha has three daughters aged 17, 15 and 11.	Afghani	2 years	Arrived in UK in June 2022 Immediately placed in current LA	1 month – July 2022

3.2.4   Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were carried out in a private room in the charity's workspace, so that participants were in a place that was familiar to them. A staff member from the charity was available in the workspace for the interviews as a safeguarding measure. Interview length ranged from 27 minutes to 1 hour, 3 minutes (M = 37.5 minutes). Informed verbal consent was gained from each participant at the beginning of the interviews, and participants were reminded of their right to withdraw at any time during the interview and after the interview up to May 2024, when the data had been fully analysed. The interviews were conducted in-person, but the recording feature of Microsoft Teams was used to audio record them. Following transcription, the audio recordings were permanently deleted and any identifying data was anonymised in the transcripts.

A topic guide was created (see Appendix F), which had questions about the participants journey to the UK, their positive and more challenging experiences of joining a UK school, and what they would hope for schools to do in the future to support refugee and asylum-seeking families feel welcomed in their schools. The semi-structured element of the interview allowed for follow-up questions and for participants to share experiences outside of the planned questions (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). This research therefore held a social-constructivist epistemology, whereby meaning was developed and shared through participants' own experiences. The participants were recognised as experts of their stories and an active, curious, compassionate and credulous listening was central to the process, something which was deemed important given the lead researcher's position as a White-British national, with no lived experience of being a refugee or asylum-seeker. The lead researcher had also received training in the 'Social Graces Framework' (Burnham, 2018), intersectionality, and the 'Invisible Knapsack of Privilege' (McKintosh, 1995) so was deeply mindful of

the need to consider and seek to reconcile any cultural or power differentials within the interview dynamic.

3.2.5   Data Analysis

Analysis began after the final interview took place, so that interviews could be analysed as one data set. Braun and Clarke's (2021b) reflexive thematic analysis was used as an "artfully interpretive approach" (Braun et al., 2023, p.20) to capture meaning and patterns across the dataset. Reflexive thematic analysis was chosen due to this research valuing and centring the individual participants' experiences, alongside recognising the role of subjectivity that the researcher brings to the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2021a).

Phase 1 began with familiarisation of the transcripts, which involved reading and re-reading transcripts to ensure meaning was clear. This led to phase 2, where initial codes were created using NVivo V.11 software (Bazeley, 2013). Codes were created through analysis of meaning-units. As more transcripts were analysed, more codes were created, with re-naming, collapsing, and merging of codes happening once all initial codes had been created. Following this, phase 3 saw the codes grouped into initial themes. This was taken back to the supervisory team, in order to recognise the subjectivity of this process and ensure that the lead researcher had not missed key findings. The initial themes were finalised and sub-themes were created to help capture overarching themes as part of phase 4. Phase 5 saw these themes being named as: life as a refugee, navigating a path to integration, communication, and school as a sanctuary. The themes were explored and reported as part of phase 6.

3.2.6   Reflexivity

Within this research, it is important to note my position as a White-British national, with a stable background and no lived experience as a refugee or asylum-seeker. I am currently a trainee educational psychologist, and previously worked as a teacher, giving me particular insight into school dynamics and the influence of those with professional titles, who can be seen as 'experts'. Over the course of the two years of my thesis project, I have volunteered with the refugee charity that the participants were identified from, and, therefore, developed an increased understanding of the experiences of some refugee and asylum-seeking people through that immersion. It is likely that participants felt safe working with me due to my role in the charity. I am influenced by wider systems, such as the current policies and news coverage around migration, and how these are perceived by the media and society. These potential biases were discussed with my supervisory team throughout the research process, meaning that particular lines of thinking were met with curiosity to widen my lens of the data. Reflexive thematic analysis recognises and values the resource of

researcher subjectivity, whilst ensuring that contextual factors and perspectives are documented (Gough & Madill, 2012; Braun et al., 2023).

3.3 Findings

Four themes (with additional sub-themes) were identified as part of the reflexive thematic analysis. These themes capture the experiences of FWESA when joining a new school community. Figure 3.1 depicts these themes in a pictorial thematic map, where themes and subthemes are represented with images and coordinating colours. 'Life as a refugee' is depicted as a home, where part of the house is not showing, demonstrating families still having part of themselves in their home country. The road depicts the 'Navigating a path to integration' theme, whilst the people talking with each other represents 'Communication'. Finally, the sun demonstrates 'School as a sanctuary', depicting the positive possibilities that comes from a welcoming school environment.

Participants shared their stories using a language that was not their first, and therefore, when quotes have been adapted to give clarity to what an individual was saying, this will be indicated with the use of square brackets.
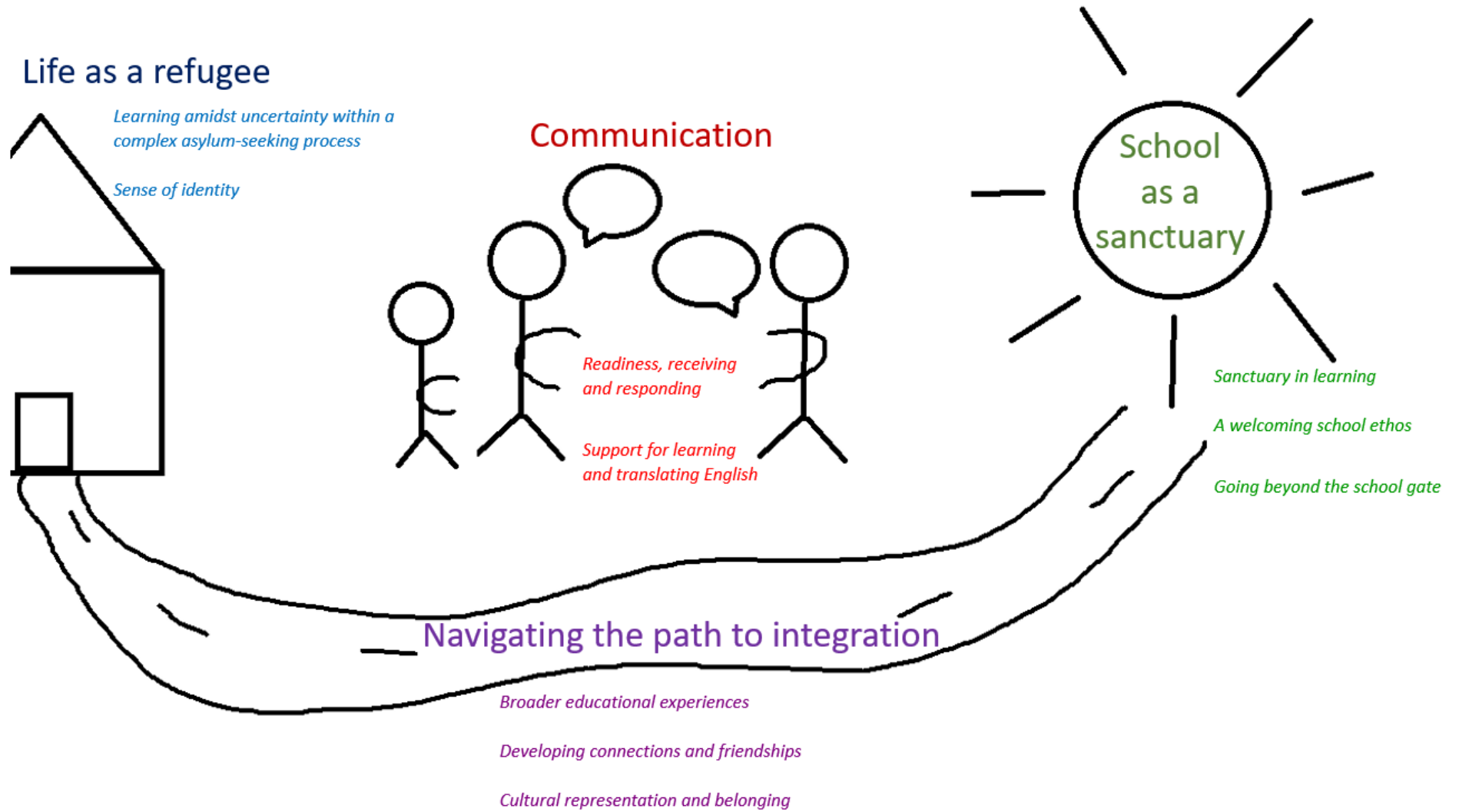
3.3.1 Life as a Refugee

3.3.1.1. Learning Amidst Uncertainty Within a Complex Asylum-Seeking Process. Parents shared their experiences of the journey to their current local authority (LA), which varied across families (as seen in Table 3.1). Once in the UK, parents spoke of the importance of their children starting school, with Yahana, for example, commenting: "when we first came to the UK, I think my concern was my children's education". However, the process in starting school was considered by some to be an arduous and difficult task. After first arriving at the hotel that Baseem and his family had been allocated, Baseem explained that they did not receive much help in navigating the school placements: "We asked them about school for kids and no one tried to help us. No one explain for us how we can join the school". There did not seem to be consistent experiences of specific organisations helping with this process. Sometimes, support seemed to come from third-sector organisations, such as local charities, and sometimes from local authority services, such as a social worker, with Ruha sharing that her "social worker help find nearby school".

A key difficulty faced by two of the families was the length of time it took for their children to start school. This was made more challenging when families needed to move LAs:

It's just, you know, the longer time of waiting, like when we where we were in [name of previous LA], we was living in hotel. So for the past September to January, the weren't in school. (Yahana)

Figure 3.1   Thematic Map

Life as a refugee

Learning amidst uncertainty within a complex asylum-seeking process

Sense of identity

Communication

Readiness, receiving and responding

Support for learning and translating English

School as a sanctuary

Sanctuary in learning

A welcoming school ethos

Going beyond the school gate

Navigating the path to integration

Broader educational experiences

Developing connections and friendships

Cultural representation and belonging

Baseem and his son, Kamal, shared their difficulties of having to move LAs with no notice, without the security of a school place. At one point, they reported that their family was told to move, before being told to return to the previous LA. By this point, they had lost their placement in the school:

> So like after two months, we were told we were gonna go to another house. So we pack everything up. Yeah and then halfway through the journey, they told us that the house is not like we can't be in anymore. So we have to go back. So my mum had sign me out from the school. So when we went back to [name of previous LA], I didn't have any school for like four months. (Kamal)

Living with this uncertainty meant that there were extended periods of time out of education. Baseem explained that once they finally moved to their current LA, there was still a long delay in Kamal starting a school: "from March to November without school". Contrastingly, where both Sanyu and Abigail gave birth to their children in the UK, they did not experience the same kinds of delays:

> Because she was born here and you know, like that time it wasn't that hard to get to school. You know it's it's started being a bit stricter, but at that time it wasn't as strict about getting into a school. Like I never experienced that. (Sanyu)

Families shared that once they did have the stability of a school place, this was not always easy to manage, with the named school often being far away from where they were currently living. Kamal explained that his school was "four miles" away from their hotel, whilst Ruha reported that one of her daughter's schools was a "45 minute walk", and the other daughter a "25 minute walk". Situations were more complex when siblings were placed in different schools, with Baseem asking: "What can I do? Cut myself into two pieces to get them there? Okay if I have a job and I work, what I do? I don't have car, I don't know the area to know how can I go there?". Families commented on the lack of support they received for this travel: "no bus pass, nothing", explained Ruha. When asked what could be done to make joining a UK school more positive for families who had asylum-seeking experience, Abigail shared that "they could do something about it [transportation]", as she was currently walking two and a half miles a day each way to and from school with her young daughter. It was discussed that the money received from the government to support asylum-seekers (called section 95), was not enough to help with school journeys, as they often had "no money for bus or train" (Baseem).

Alongside these challenges, families were often facing additional challenges associated with the complex asylum-seeking process. They were living in uncertainty regarding the outcome of their claims, little money, and in temporary and overcrowded accommodation, with no knowledge of when they might be moved. Abigail explained that despite the distance between her current home

and her daughter's school, she had been advised by the Home Office not to move schools in case her accommodation suddenly changed: "I've been told by the Council not to change their school because if I change now, I might move. They don't know where I'm gonna go again". Living conditions were also often described as a struggle:

> Around 100 people live in same hotel. Kids and others and we can't live like this […] We don't know anything in in the in this town, so it's very difficult to live with our kids and all of us in the same room. We have only one room, […] one big bed and two small beds in the same room. And we don't know anything outside the hotel. Sometimes, umm because we came in November, weather is not good at this time and we can't go outside and look around. (Baseem)

> No food in the hotel, no food, no money. We have, for five people one week: £40. For one week. Frozen food in the hotel. Frozen food and then not enough money for outside food. Very difficult. For 15 months, very difficult. (Ruha)

3.3.1.2. Sense of Identity. As part of their transition from their home country to their new place of residence, parents spoke of the challenges to their identity, particularly in being seen as a 'refugee'. Abigail shared: "For the sake of my daughter, I don't want her to be seen as a refugee or to be tied with anything like that", she felt that it was better for her daughter to be "seen as like a normal child". This view was also shared by Kamal and his dad, Baseem. Baseem explained that whilst in their previous LA, they had identified themselves as refugees, but that this was "not good, not good for Kamal's age". He explained that Kamal being only one of three refugees in his old school meant that he was bullied for being a refugee. His advice to Kamal and his other children is to "not tell anyone about our situation. No one need to know your story…just our family. Other students don't need to know why we are here". Kamal agreed with this, saying: "I don't [tell] them that I'm a refugee, I just tell them I was born here and that I lived here all my life". Although Sanyu gave birth to her daughter in the UK, she explained how the complexity of the asylum-seeking process meant that, when her daughter started school, they were still in the process of gaining refugee status, and were struggling with their living conditions and receiving support from social services. Sanyu explained that her daughter began to notice that she was different from her peers, asking her mum: "Mummy, are we poor?".

Despite challenges in being seen as a refugee, families were also proud of their heritage. Baseem shared that he is happy for Kamal to say that "we are from Egypt ,or my father is Egyptian". Aaliyah shared her excitement at her school hosting a "world adventure day", where she was able to share information about her home country, Nigeria. The intersectionality here in each person having multiple pillars of their identities meant that there was much to celebrate. Yet, difficulties also came

with this, with Aaliyah explaining the challenges she faced when she first started wearing a hijab to school:

> In Year 8 cos of my hijab people would go 'bald, bald'. It got to the point where I didn't wanna go to school but I had to cos otherwise I'd miss out. And they were going 'oh she's bald, she's covering her head, she's wearing a hijab and she's bald'. (Aaliyah)

On the contrary to other families, Ruha explained that everyone at her daughters' schools knew that their family were seeking asylum. She felt that this helped, and also shared the pride of her elder daughters' new pillars of their identities as Youth Members of Parliament for the LA.

3.3.2   Navigating a Path to Integration

3.3.2.1. Broader Educational Experiences. Families arrived in the UK with an array of different previous educational experiences. Baseem and his family lived in Qatar for a period of time, before seeking asylum in the UK. While in Qatar, Kamal and his siblings attended the International School, which supported their English language development. Baseem described the learning in Qatar as "very very difficult", meaning that Kamal has "more knowledge from Qatar that support him here". Kamal explained that when he first started school in the UK, he was placed in the lower sets, but he quickly moved up to "set one", which he feels is a "good type of challenging". In contrast, Ruha's daughters were not allowed to go to school in Afghanistan and she explained that her "daughters were home-schooled". Ruha noted that her daughters were now "very happy for school".

 A similar experience for a friend of Kamal had a slightly different outcome. His friend was from Syria, and "since there was a war, they couldn't have school" (Kamal). However, this friend had been told by school that he "can't do his GCSEs because he doesn't know what he's doing". Kamal and his father felt that the school were not doing enough to support Kamal's friend and they shared that later he stopped attending school. Aaliyah shared her difficulties with catching up on a different curriculum. She explained that on her first day at a UK school she "really didn't understand what [they] were talking about" as she had joined "halfway through Year 6".

For Kamal and Baseem, the curriculum in the UK felt very different from what they were used to, particularly when facing very different cultural expectations and norms. Baseem explained the difficulty in broaching relationship and sex education, describing it as "very sensitive", whilst Kamal expressed a wish not to learn about it at school:

> I think um teacher told me that the PSHE like you have to learn about certain things by the law, but it's like it's not good thing like we're not used to it. It's umm especially at our age. So we don't have a choice either to learn this lesson or not. (Kamal)

These differences in educational experiences sometimes meant that parents found it more difficult to provide support for their children's learning, as Abigail explains when considering the difference between teaching in Ghana and the UK:

> Yeah, it's different. At some point I was actually struggling myself because most of the things she need to do from Year 2, I have to teach her. And my way of studying was much more different than here, so it was a bit of a struggle for me. Yeah, it's still a bit too hard like when she ask me some questions. I'm like, you know, I'm afraid that I don't know. I wish I could and understand ...I want to explain it in my way. She doesn't understand it because she's been taught a different way.

Sanyu echoed this experience, sharing that "the system here is different from the system where we come from". However, she also had a positive experience at her eldest daughter's school, where support was provided to parents so that they were able to understand how their children learn at school:

> They had a program which you as a parent can sign up if you don't know how your children learn. So we will sign up and say, OK, I'm able to come and see how you teach the children the English and the maths, and that was very helpful. (Sanyu)

3.3.2.2. Developing Connections and Friendships. Alongside getting to know a new curriculum and way of learning, families spoke of the other changes they experienced when joining a UK school. For Kamal, it was the social integration that he found more challenging: "I didn't know the way to talk, like the phrases and slang and that. So I just didn't know how to act...to fit in basically". He shared that this was made worse by the length of time that he was not attending school due to the delays in finding an appropriate school placement. This was echoed by his dad, who struggled to help his children in learning the social norms:

> I think because we don't have any experience with the school here. We need someone tell us...I work before came here as social worker at school in education. So I know a lot about school and try to support my kids and the siblings about culture here, but I don't know anything. (Baseem)

Baseem went on to suggest ways of supporting parents through providing opportunities to learn more about the UK culture, through the use of third-sector organisations. He suggested a "focus group" set up in the local refugee charity's hub, where someone could "explain the rules here [...], something about culture or something about how we can learn here". The use of third sector organisations for supporting new arrivals into the LA was also recognised by Abigail:

Because I didn't know much people…but it didn't take me so long for me to meet people, especially my support worker, introduced me to…at the time it was [name of charity]. So I met lots of people there and it was good for me. (Abigail)

Building connections and friendships was seen as important by families. Kamal explained the challenges that sometimes came from this, particularly when the other students "were different and treated me differently". Nasir also found it difficult to initially form friendships, describing himself as "shy" and not "really talking to anyone". This soon changed, once he had settled into his new school, as his mum, Yahana described:

But then in Year 5 we would go to school and he would be like 'oh my friend my friend! Can I go to his house, can I play in the park with my friend!'. So I was really happy in Year 5. Yeah…he was able to go out and choose who he wanted to be his friend hanging out with them in the park. (Yahana)

3.3.2.3. Cultural Representation and Belonging. As well as learning and social integration, FWESA spoke of the different adjustments made as part of a new lifestyle. A concern for Yahana was how difficult her son found it to get used to the food, with him often not eating at school and her needing to bring more food to school so that he would eat: "he don't like the flavouring and the spices. So it took us a long time". Yahana suggested that schools perhaps engage in a more diverse menu for lunchtimes, sharing that "there should be kind of recipe for maybe where they're coming from, you know, to be included in the school".

Many of the families felt the process of integrating into a new school community was made easier when the school was situated within a diverse community. This made a particular impact on friendships and developing a sense of belonging. As mentioned previously, Aaliyah faced bullying when she began wearing a hijab. She shared that at this point she was "the only hijab person" in her school and that her and her brother along with "four people were the only black people in the school". Aaliyah explained that at this point the "school wasn't that diverse", whereas now, "it is a big, diverse school". Aaliyah felt that this has made the school "a bit better because it's more diverse" and that now she has "loads of mates" and that she is "getting along with everyone". Kamal also noticed the diversity within the different schools he had attended:

Kamal: The difference between that school in [name of previous LA] and here is like there they had barely any diversity compared to here, cause like here we have like…

Baseem: Different culture.

Kamal: Yeah. Different people. So it's easier to fit in and it's easier to make friends than there.

It was felt by some of the families that schools that were more diverse were better prepared to support families seeking asylum, despite this potentially being challenging, as Sanyu explained: "the schools are now trying their best because obviously they're dealing with different umm, different cultures". When thinking about the provision of resources to aid learning, Kamal shared that in his current school, one of his teachers would "translate the slides" into Arabic for a new pupil who had recently arrived in the UK. In comparison to this, whilst at his previous school, a friend was reliant on other peers to support with translation, as the "teachers wouldn't do anything about it". These differences in approaches, depending on how diverse a school was, frustrated Kamal, as he explained:

> And I know it's not the school's fault that there's only like 3 students that are refugees, but they should take into account there are still refugees…you can't just ignore them.

Some schools took the opportunity to celebrate diversity, giving pupils and their families opportunities to share their culture with the school. Ruha described "culture day" at her daughters' school, where pupils are able to wear traditional clothing from their home country. Ruha was pleased to share that her daughters wore "Afghani suits". In Aaliyah's school, there is a "world adventure club":

> So it's like pretending like you're traveling around the world. But you're not actually traveling, you're just staying in one room. And like every different people from different countries who come in there and they will give you food. You try it and then explain the meaning behind it. (Aaliyah)

As part of the "world adventure club", Aaliyah and her peers were also able to visit a nearby primary school and share information about their cultures with the pupils. Displays are also made in their school about the countries, with maps and pictures of different places around the world.

3.3.3   Communication

3.3.3.1. Readiness, Receiving and Responding. In order to feel part of the school and wider community, parents valued good communication with their children's schools. Sanyu placed the role of communication as central to a good integration, asking: "do they [schools] provide somebody who can understand them and try and help them to integrate?". Sanyu also expressed the need for "patience" from school staff, particularly those that regularly interacted with parents. He gave the following example:

> I've seen where you are behind somebody when you're trying to pay something at the reception in the school and because somebody is not understanding the language, the

person who is receiving that is not patient enough. They just need to understand, OK, this person is trying to communicate this. (Sanyu)

Parents evening was highly valued by all parents. It provided opportunity for both, learning about their child's progress and being able to speak with their child's teacher. For Ruha, this provided her with opportunities to hear positive feedback about her daughters, sharing that "they say everything is good, daughter is very nice girl". However, for Abigail, it felt hard to reach the teachers, saying that "unless something actually happened, I don't really get to speak to the teacher". Abigail went on to explain that one time she had signed up for a meeting over the phone but was never called. Sanyu had a similar experience:

> So the phone call I received was: 'Somebody's gonna call you tomorrow'. Then tomorrow comes. I don't receive a call. And then I say, OK, maybe because the schools are, they're struggling, they're finishing whatever they have time for…then maybe somebody's gonna get in touch. Nothing happened, so that is during the summer period. I'm still waiting. (Sanyu)

Parents recognise the strain schools are under. In the quote above, Sanyu has empathy, recognising the difficulties staff may have with finding time for workload, which was a feeling that Kamal also shared. His father, Baseem, suggested that teachers phoned parents for regular positive feedback about their child, to which Kamal responded, saying: "they have no more time for this now".

This subtheme highlights the importance of good home-school communication, particularly in ensuring that parents are able to be part of their children's education. However, difficulties in translation and simply accessing time to speak with teachers led some parents to suggest alternative ways to communicate, in order to facilitate good home-school connection. These will be discussed in the following sub-theme.

3.3.3.2. Support for Learning and Translating English. Parents shared the challenges for communication when their understanding and use of the English language is limited, particularly when they first arrived in the UK. Sanyu highlighted the importance of being able to speak English or understand the rules and policies in your child's school in order to advocate for her child, sharing the struggle of when "you don't have the voice to say, 'OK, this is happening.'". Baseem explained that he had met a family who has just arrived in the UK, who struggled because the son did not "know anything about English" and the "mother can't understand anything". Sanyu went on to state: "once you know, you can speak and be heard, things are just easy".

Sanyu offered different ideas in supporting the communication between home and school for recently arrived families who were seeking asylum in the UK. One particular idea was the use of technology, specifically within the Reception area of a school:

Let's have an iPad. This iPad is to help those who are struggling. They're trying to say something, so if they speak into that, whatever it will bring up they try to say. Maybe you speak into the gadget and what I try to say and that would translate. Then the person will speak back, then you get the information rather than just assuming: 'OK, this is what they want'. (Sanyu).

In addition, Sanyu spoke of the value of involving people from the community in providing EAL support. She suggested the use of parents who were "trusted" in the school community, as well as ex-students who perhaps now attended local colleges:

Like some parents might be available who can speak the same language. So is there a way that: 'OK there's a new child who comes in, who speaks a language, that there's a parent who's been trusted within the school who can speak with them'. Is there a way they can provide us a space that child to be able to, you know, integrate well within the school? […] Maybe there are other previous kids who are now in college, who are able to in their spare time come in. Because college kids, some of them have spare time, when they don't go to college. Is it possible for them to find a way that, okay this is a child who's been in this school or is able to, you know, support other children to integrate in the school. (Sanyu)

Many of the parents sought out additional support for their own English language development, attending English lessons at the local college and at the local refugee charity. Ruha explained: "At first when I came to the UK, then I can't speak in English, I speak in Punjabi", but English lessons were provided in the hotel her family was living in, where they could practice "speaking together, talking with new people".

For the children and young people, it seemed that schools were prioritising English language support as part of the wider integration into schools. Yahana explained that she felt that her children's school did not want to know details about their story, and instead "what they were really concerned about was where [they were] from and [their] first language". Support for EAL learning within the school environment varied. Aaliyah explained that she had a "'help' teacher", who was also Nigerian and who helped her "whenever [she] had a problem". Aaliyah felt that having someone who spoke the same language as her was incredibly supportive to starting a new school in a new country. Moreover, in Aaliyah's school, simply the layout of the physical environment meant that it was EAL-friendly. Clear signage, numbered rooms, and specific areas for subjects made it easier to navigate. When thinking about what might help future pupils joining the school as a person seeking asylum, Aaliyah focused on the potential language barrier, suggesting "an English helping sheet" that had key vocabulary and concepts on it, so that if there are gaps in learning, you are able to build your understanding of specific subject content.

3.3.4   School as a Sanctuary

3.3.4.1. Sanctuary in Learning. Parents spoke of the joy felt from their children learning, particularly when they could see progress. Abigail highlighted that an important positive experience of the last few years was her daughter's progress in mathematics. For Ruha, where her daughters had been home-schooled in Afghanistan, she was proud to share that one of her daughters received the "highest marks" in science. For Yahana's family, school provided connection over the period of "isolation" and "not going out" over the Covid-19 pandemic. Yahana explained:

> And they were always on Zoom and which you know they could see friends from various homes with their cameras and you know doing their lessons at home everybody and all of that. I think that really helps us you know it's not easy being indoor and all of that… we'd think about their friends but that really helped…seeing their friends on the zoom.

As well as this, Aaliyah found that the period of time over the Covid-19 pandemic (which occurred shortly after her family arrived in the UK) was useful in catching up with learning that she had not accessed prior to coming to the UK. She shared that she "still had to go to school" during Covid, but that it wasn't "like actual school", and instead it was "being able to go to school and like, catch up with everything".

3.3.4.2. A Welcoming School Ethos. Positive experiences of schools were often described alongside a welcoming ethos. Parents commented positively on times their children felt part of the school community and they (the parents) too were welcomed in. Yahana referred to her children's primary school they attended when they first arrived in the UK. Here, she joined the "parents committee at the school, where parents comes together", which she described as a "good experience". As part of this, she was able to get "to know the other parents" where they would have meetings and events for the school.

For Sanyu, the welcoming school ethos felt apparent when school staff allowed for a more open-door policy. One example of this was when one of her daughters was struggling to settle into school and she could "go to class and just sit there with them". Sanyu felt that this gave "both the parent and the child the reassurance to know that okay, everything is fine". During the periods of challenge that Sanyu experienced with her asylum-claim, school staff checked in on her:

> There was a particular teacher who was her teacher. She did talk to us and she was actually, like, getting feedback. Like: 'How is it going?' and checking that everything was okay. It's not just the child that is being affected, so it's the parent as well. So if you as a parent are being affected, how are you able to take care of the child without support? So I think I felt supported at that time. Yes, I did feel supported.

This sentiment of school staff generally being helpful, caring and kind was echoed by all the families, with Nasir describing his teachers as "nice, just like nice you know?". For Aaliyah, she benefitted from welcoming and attentive staff giving her time to talk through problems, with the content of these conversations "stay[ing] between the school and teachers". There was a specific room in Aaliyah's school where she could sit with familiar adults, rather than having to "sit with the person who's been picking on you". This helped Aaliyah feel safer at school, particularly during the period of time when she was being bullied. Ruha felt that her children were supported by staff worried or anxious, saying that staff explained "if you have any problem, any difficulty, please tell me", leading her to think of the teachers as "very helpful".

3.3.4.3. Going Beyond the School Gate. Whilst living in uncertainty, enduring complex asylum-seeking processes and lacking basic amenities, families reflected on the level of support provided by school, that often went above and beyond what was expected. During Sanyu's difficulties in claiming asylum, her daughter's school offered to help the family meet their basic needs:

> You know, like, they will ask me, 'is there anything you need? If you want to do washing like, there is a washing machine available here'. So I felt like, you know what, this is what we need. We don't need to, you know, like, just stay there and do this just by yourself. I felt like, yes, somebody can see it's not only about the food and whatever, there's also you need to wash the clothes. So it was, yeah, it was nice.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Yahana's family received additional food from their school, containing "a little lunch thing, like a wrap or a baguette" for each person in the household. Food was also a welcomed support for Ruha and her family. For the first 14 months of their time in England, they were living in a hotel room. Ruha had been particularly worried about the school holidays, but one of her children's teachers visited the hotel with: "some food, some juices, some salad things, a can opener, [and] spices". This was particularly appreciated by Ruha, who is an avid cook but was not been able to afford the ingredients she needed. For Ruha's family, support from the school went above and beyond basic needs, and her children's school began to help her with items that meant she could engage in activities she used to love, such as sewing, after being given a "sewing machine". Not only this, but the family were supported in being able to access free "dress, shoes, handbag for prom", which they returned to the school after prom.

Taken together, parents shared many challenges in their experiences with schools. These concerned systemic processes, such as finding school placements and making the long journey into school, as well as challenges to develop a sense of belonging and finding a sense of identity integrating vastly different past and present cultures. However, and importantly, schools were also often described as providing a sense of sanctuary in the face of these difficulties. For Yahana, the support provided by her children's school led her to feel "just like family to the school".

3.4   Discussion

This research aimed to listen to families who had sought asylum in the UK to better understand their perspectives of joining UK school communities. The findings suggest that, amongst the challenges of being a refugee, both in terms of navigating a complex asylum-seeking system and through building a sense of identity in a new country, school communities could provide a place of sanctuary. This was, however, contingent on good communication from school staff as well as a school that valued and celebrated diversity and culture. These findings will be discussed, along with implications for the role of the educational psychologist.

Some of the parents interviewed shared their difficulty in finding a school place for their children, with one young person (Kamal) sharing that he was without education for eight months at one period. All children in the UK, no matter their migration status, are entitled to an education and therefore, a place at a school (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). There is a 20-day target for local authorities to find an appropriate education place for newly arrived children and young people (UNICEF, 2018), but despite this, many are spending long periods of time without schooling (Puttick, 2024). In addition, families were often living in temporary housing, and due to limited rights to working and accessing benefits, families were living with limited basic amenities. The combined effects of lack of access to education, high levels of existential insecurity, limited financial resources and lack of opportunities for making social connections exerts significant strain on newly arriving families who seek asylum in the UK. Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs would suggest that experiencing such existential threat would greatly impact upon a child's ability to feel safe and learn at school. Taken together, the lived experiences shared in this study highlight the importance for schools to have relevant knowledge and understanding of current asylum-seeking processes and what families may be experiencing to enable schools to respond sensitively, supportively and appropriately (Kendall & Puttick, 2020).

Importantly, however, some parents were clear they wished not to be identified as a 'refugee'. In some cases, they actively instructed their children not to tell anyone of their experience. For some families, this seemed to be due to fear of how they would be treated with ongoing hostile narratives about refugees and asylum-seekers that circulate the public being present in their minds. These lived experiences described by the families are in line with Fangen's (2007) description of the process of identification as an: "ongoing negotiation process, formed by media images, positive and negative experiences and the reactions we meet in school, in the family, among peers and other parts of society" (p.78). Perceptions of refugee and asylum-seeking communities are influenced by both media and policy, and with the current narrative perpetuating feelings of fear and 'othering' (Cooper et al., 2021), identifying as a refugee may feel unsafe. In research by Worrell (2022), participants shared their wish to no longer identify as a refugee once they had settled in their host

country, and yet they were still often given this label. It is, therefore, important for schools to have systems in place which allow for families to feel safe in sharing their experiences where their individual circumstances and wishes are respected, in a participatory approach, where families are part of their own story-telling.

In this study, families shared their experiences of navigating re-settlement in a new country, and getting to know the social norms and expectations within a different community. This might be described as the process of 'acculturation', which is defined by Berry (2005) as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (p.698). Kamal explained the difficulty in not knowing how to talk with his new peers, resulting in him not feeling like he "fit in", alluding to the concept of 'belonging'. Developing a sense of belonging is paramount to positive wellbeing, as well as being a core, basic need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1943), and the drive to belong to a school community may motivate a young person to adopt particular behaviours in order to 'fit in' (Amina, Barnes & Saito, 2022).

Theories of acculturation, such as Berry's acculturation model (1980), help describe the possible tension experienced by individuals who settle in a country with a different culture to the one prevalent in the country they were born in. Berry considered the process of acculturation along two independent dimensions of receiving-culture acquisition and heritage-culture retention. In other words, individuals need to navigate the degree to which they adapt themselves to the new culture, whilst still maintaining a close identity with their own home culture. Berry suggests that based on the individual's orientation towards both the new and their heritage culture, there are four possible 'attitudes' to acculturation: assimilation through de-identifying with the home culture; separation through not adopting the 'host' culture at all; marginalisation through de-identifying from the home culture and not adopting the 'host' culture; and integration through adopting aspects of the 'host' culture, whilst still maintaining an identity with the home culture. Importantly, a meta-synthesis by Sheikh and Anderson (2018) found that there was a relationship between an integration attitude to acculturation and positive educational outcomes for CWESA. However, Schachner et al. (2018) stress that an acculturation and integration process should not rely just on the person's orientation towards it, but rather should involve the local community, and specifically highlight the role of the school community to support young peoples' process of acculturation. They argue that a school community should be "characterised by positive beliefs and non-discrimination" (p.51). CWESA in this study spoke of the challenges of integrating into schools that were not diverse in culture. Experiences of being bullied for looking different were shared, with the acknowledgement that being in a more diverse school supported these relationships and allowed for greater belonging. This is supported by research (e.g., Prentice & Ott, 2021; Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017), where it is suggested that schools serving diverse communities are better prepared to support CWESA. As part

of this support, teachers would be welcoming and adopting culturally responsive teaching, such as the staff members in a qualitative study by Arnot, Pinson & Candappa (2009), who shared their experiences of actively teaching compassion to pupils as part of PSHE and wider curricula opportunities. As well as this, school staff would seek to celebrate and engage with different cultures within the classroom. The accounts from the families in the present study resonate with Schachner et al.'s recommendation, where families appreciated and were excited by schools representing and celebrating their home cultures.

A particular challenge highlighted by the families in this study, and which related to their integration process, concerned the need to adapt to a new curriculum and style of learning. For the young people in this study, it was about being able to apply their previous educational experiences within a new setting. For parents it felt potentially more complex. For example, parents shared they felt not being able to support their children's learning as they did not understand the curriculum. However, Sanyu highlighted a positive experience, where she had received support from her daughter's school in learning how topics are taught at their school making her feel better equipped to support her daughter's learning. Unfortunately, other parents did not tell of similar positive, supportive experiences. In recognising the motivation that parents who have asylum-seeking experience have in being involved in and supporting their children's education, but with a potential lack of resources and relevant knowledge specific to their host country's education system, Isik-Ercan (2012) suggests a reframing of refugee education, naming it as "advocacy for the whole family" (p.3034). This is in recognition of the interacting systems that are central to a young person's education, in line with Bronfrenbrenner's ecological model (1979), but with the need for educational communities to provide opportunities for families of CWESA to be involved with the child's education.

Parents in this study spoke of the challenges they faced communicating with their children's school, with Abigail reporting that she only has contact if "something actually happened". This difficulty with communication makes being part of their child's educational experience more challenging, and hinders integrating into the wider school community. Kendall and Puttick (2020) capture the importance of bi-directionality in good communication between schools and families in their question of whether there are "'hard to reach' parents or hard to reach schools" (p.38). When Isik-Ercan (2018) spoke with Burmese parents who had sought asylum in the US they found that the parents described their relationships with their children's schools as almost non-existent. Isik-Ercan goes on to argue that often schools are expecting parents to fit into their ways of communication, such as the assimilation attitude to acculturation (Berry, 1980). However, parents in the current study had ideas about how to improve communication and felt they could contribute to school life yet it seemed they were not being given opportunity to do so. For example, Baseem had worked as a school social worker before, and shared experiences of working with families and with young people

in a relational approach, but found that this approach was not as present in Kamal's school, with more punitive approaches to behaviour being used. Sanyu suggested strategies to use modern translation technology as a way of supporting communication between home and school. Indeed, difficulty speaking English was raised by several parents in this study as being a barrier to communicating with school. Similar findings were highlighted in research by Hamilton (2013), who found that it took longer for parents who did not speak English fluently to understand rules and policies, and to learn teaching and learning styles within a school in Wales. However, Hamilton also emphasised the need to recognise the additional challenges that FWESA face, alongside navigating a new school system. FWESA also have to manage the complexity of re-settling into a new country and navigating a complex and uncertain asylum-seeking process, all whilst providing for their children with limited means. Indeed, models of parenting stress (e.g., Abidin, 1992; Deater-Deckard, 1998) describe how contextual strains and demands on parents negatively impact their ability to fulfil their role as parents. Thus, it is important that schools consider the needs of children and their families who have experience of seeking asylum from a holistic perspective. As Sanyu asserts: "it's not just the child that is being affected, so it's the parent as well".

Despite experiencing many challenges, families in this study also emphasised they often experienced a wealth of support from their children's school, which seemed to go above and beyond what was expected. Parents spoke of receiving help for meeting basic needs, such as clothing and food, as well as items to be able to continue with activities that they enjoyed, such as being gifted a sewing machine. This is generally in line with research, which suggests that despite the often challenging school environment, staff provide a compassionate response that allows children and their families to feel welcomed and supported (Pinson, Arnot & Candappa, 2010; Mendenhall, Bartlett & Ghaffer-Kucher, 2017). Whilst valuing this support, some families in this study also recognised the potential stress that teachers and school staff were under, with additional responsibilities and a high level of need across the school. Research into teacher wellbeing has revealed high levels of stress and burnout across the profession (Brady & Wilson, 2021; Kidger et al., 2016), with school staff reporting that teaching and supporting CWESA increases their workload due to the additional time spent on resources and adapting their teaching (Madziva & Thondlana, 2017; Prentice, 2022). When considering the importance of teacher wellbeing for pupil social, emotional and academic outcomes (Harding et al., 2019; Hoglund et al., 2015),] it, therefore, feels paramount to ensure that school staff working with and supporting FWESA are also effectively supported, trained and cared for.

3.4.1 Strengths and Limitations

The voices of parents who have asylum-seeking experience in the UK are currently underrepresented in research on school inclusion. The present study begins to address this gap by

exploring perspectives and lived experiences of joining a UK school in a small sample of families. The present study adopted an interview approach that allowed for family dyads and triads to participate together and engage in rich and natural discussion. In two of the interviews, both parents and children attended together, which created a dyadic and triadic conversation element, where participants were able to engage in discussions amongst themselves as the researcher listened and asked prompting questions. The qualitative nature of this study is seen as a strength. The semi-structured interviews allowed for participants to explore topics and engage in conversations that felt important to their story of joining a UK school community. Temple and Moran (2006) highlight the value in adopting a qualitative methodology when working with populations who have experience seeking asylum, due to the opportunity to centre the voices of those with lived experiences.

However, limitations of this study must also be considered. Firstly, as discussed within the reflexivity section, the lead researcher accepts the likelihood of her own biases that may have influenced data analysis. Throughout the research process, the lead researcher kept a reflective log to enhance the reflexivity and ensure that they remained attentive to the nuances of the data. As well as this, the supervisory team was made up of three individuals with different experiences, that supported the critique and consideration to data. The nature of qualitative research means that it is not generalisable, for it is not the purpose of this methodology. This study was designed to elucidate new information about relevant lived experience and, therefore, despite the accounts in this study stemming from a relatively small group of families in one LA in the South of England, insights of experiences were gained nonetheless. Future research may seek to explore the perspectives of more children and young people, as well as the staff that support them at school. The use of focus groups may lead to further discussions, where participants could be prompted by one another to share different experiences, as well as using a more participatory approach whereby those with lived experiences were able to help plan and lead the research (Johnson, Ali & Shipp., 2009). Thirdly, this study spoke with parents and their children who live together and entered the UK together (or where children were born to parents when they had arrived in the UK). Future research could also explore perspectives of children and young people (CYP) who have sought asylum as an unaccompanied CYP, as well as those that care for them. Finally, it is recognised that two of the parents having had their children in the UK may serve as a limitation in terms of understanding the experiences of joining a UK school when arriving in the UK. However, all participants contributed to all themes, which lessens the impact of this limitation.

3.4.2   Implications for Educational Psychologists

Despite the small scale of the present study, important implications arise from the accounts of the families interviewed in this study. These concern suggestions on how schools may better support and welcome families who have sought asylum in the UK. Implications are discussed here

with a focus on the support that Educational Psychologists (EPs) may provide to schools as part of their service level agreement and local authority work, due to their position in the local authority as a profession that serves to support children, young people, their families, and educational settings. This section finishes with recommendations made directly by the FWESA who took part in this study for school settings, shown in Figure 3.2).

A key finding from this research was the felt beneficial impact on newly arriving families when schools were competently culturally diverse and celebrated difference. EPs are in a position to design and share evidence-based training to support a culturally sensitive and diverse teaching and whole-school ethos, which includes culturally responsive curriculums. Indeed, such approaches are found to have a positive impact on both refugee and non-refugee populations (Gray, 2013; Walker, 2023). Importantly, based on the current findings, developing participatory, or inclusive, processes which allow parents with experiences of seeking asylum to be engaged and heard in the school's life is important and can provide new suggestions for resolving existing, acute challenges. There is an opportunity here to involve families of CWESA, as well as local charities and voluntary groups to be part of co-constructing the training provided by EPs. This recognises the value of lived-experience in sharing knowledge. Currently, there is limited research on exploring the role of educational psychologists in supporting the home-school connection for vulnerable families, and so this may be a helpful area to explore further.

In addition, it seems that raising better awareness about the complexities of the asylum-seeking process and its multi-level effect on persons and families seeking asylum is needed for everyone working in schools (Peterson et al., 2017). Importantly, engaging with other professions across the local authority that may be able to support this understanding is needed (such as ethnic minority and traveller achievement services; EMTAS, and local refugee charities). Guidance co-developed with people seeking asylum in the UK suggests a joint-up approach with different agencies working with FWESA, to ensure that support provided is collaborative and makes use of communication between agencies (Iusmen, Kreppner & Cook, 2024). A further role of the EP, may be to work with their local authority to find ways of accurately identify families seeking asylum in the local authority, as to ensure that schools have correct data and therefore are able to both resource effectively and represent the pupils that they teach (McIntyre and Hall, 2020). Finally, as school staff wellbeing remains a concerns amongst educational communities, with FWESA in this study recognising the stress that school staff are currently under, EPs are in a distinct position to provide psychological support, in the role of supervision, to school staff supporting pupils who have experience seeking asylum.

Figure 3.2   Take-Home Messages for Schools from FWESA

- Where possible, provide alternative translation devices (such as through the use of an iPad, or similar) to ensure that parents and carers can effectively communicate with staff at Reception, and other key members of staff. *(Recommended by Sanyu)*
- Ensure signage across the school environment is clear and accessible for pupils who speak English as an additional language. *(Recommended by Aaliyah)*
- Provide a 'handbook', or something similar, to pupils who speak English as an additional language so that key vocabulary is translated into their first language. Key concepts for different subjects could also be described here. *(Recommended by Aaliyah)*
- Provide sessions for parents targeted around how specific subjects are taught with advice for how to support their children at home. *(Recommended by Sanyu and Abigail)*
- Sessions for parents may also target other aspects of integration, such as understanding the expected social rules. This may involve working with local charities so that translators can be present. *(Recommended by Baseem)*
- Engage parents in conversations about topics such as relationship and sex education, to help prepare them for the curriculum expectations. *(Recommended by Baseem)*
- Actively engage with and celebrate the different cultures that are part of the school community, such as holding 'culture days' with opportunities to share things that are important to each person's culture (like food, dress, music). *(Recommended by Aaliyah and Ruha)*
- Consider how the different cultures within a school community can be represented in other aspects of school life, such as through the school menu having a wider range of food options that come from different countries. *(Recommended by Yahana)*

3.4.3   Conclusion

This research sought to understand the experience of joining a UK school community for families who had asylum-seeking experiences. Families shared their difficulties in finding an identity in a new community, whilst navigating an ever-complex and challenging asylum-seeking system. They explained the value of communication and feeling involved, not just in their child's education, but also in the wider school community. Schools need to be supported to feel adequately prepared to welcome and help integrate families with asylum-seeking experience, as Kamal shared:

> And I know it's not the school's fault that there's only like 3 students that are refugees, but they should take into account there are still refugees…you can't just ignore them.

Appendix A   Search Strategy

Database	Interface/ Platform	Search terms
PsycINFO	EBSCO	AB Abstract OR TI Title: (refugee or asylum seeker) AND (child* or adolescent or youth or teenager or pupil or student) AND (school OR class* OR education* OR setting OR college) AND ('school staff' or teacher or 'teach* assistant' or headteacher or 'deputy headteacher' or 'multi-agency' or 'social worker' or 'charity worker') AND (perspective or view or perception or attitude or opinion or understanding or experience) AND (UK or United Kingdom or Britain or England or Wales or Scotland or Northern Ireland)
ERIC	ProQuest	AB Abstract OR TI Title: (refugee or asylum seeker) AND (child* or adolescent or youth or teenager or pupil or student) AND (school OR class* OR education* OR setting OR college) AND ('school staff' or teacher or 'teach* assistant' or headteacher or 'deputy headteacher' or 'multi-agency' or 'social worker' or 'charity worker') AND (perspective or view or perception or attitude or opinion or understanding or experience) AND (UK or United Kingdom or Britain or England or Wales or Scotland or Northern Ireland)
Handsearching (through references and Google scholar)	ProQuest	AB Abstract OR TI Title: (refugee or asylum seeker) AND (child* or adolescent or youth or teenager or pupil or student) AND (school OR class* OR education* OR setting OR college) AND ('school staff' or teacher or 'teach* assistant' or headteacher or 'deputy headteacher' or 'multi-agency' or 'social worker' or 'charity worker') AND (perspective or view or perception or attitude or opinion or understanding or experience) AND (UK or United Kingdom or Britain or England or Wales or Scotland or Northern Ireland)

Appendix B   Data Extraction Table

Reference and aim	Contemporaneous context	Participant characteristics	Study design	Data collection method	Analysis on data	Themes identified	Strengths and limitations	Take away points
Whiteman, R. (2005). Welcoming the stranger: a qualitative analysis of teachers' views regarding the integration of refugee pupils into schools in Newcastle upon Tyne. *Educational Studies*, *31*(4), 375-391. Aim: "to obtain the views of members of the teaching profession currently working with refugees and asylum seekers, with a view to informing the local education authority of any perceived gaps in information, training or specialist services currently available."	Immigration and Nationality Act (2000) – National Asylum Support Services dispersed across the country DfES (2002) Guidance on the education of asylum-seeking and refugee children Ofsted (2003) report into education of asylum seekers DfES (2003) Every Child Matters	24 members of staff from 24 different schools (nurseries: 2; primary schools: 13; secondary schools: 7; special schools: 1). Participants included headteachers, learning support coordinators and teachers. Two participants consented to more in depth interviews portrayed as short case studies in the report.	Mixed methods – qualitative questionnaire responses and interviews ; and quantitative data collected.	24 questionnaires (open and closed questions). Interviews with 2 of the participants (reported as case studies). Quantitative data (number of free school meals, closed questions) displayed in figures in report.	Not explained.	Information supplied prior to arrival Staff training Access to specialist services Psychological needs Reaction of other pupils and parents to the arrival of refugees or asylum seekers in school Adaptions to school environment Barriers to integration	Strengths: Acknowledges current policies and relevant contextual information about the schools 'Themes'/key points from questionnaires give clear suggestions for areas of support that LA could provide Working group helped devise questionnaire – participatory Limitations: Not enough participant information about roles (only case	Most common barrier cited was around communication difficulties. This was in reference to both language translation, as well as lack of communication and information being given to schools with regards to important information about their RAS pupils (e.g., language ability, background info). Training needs were also highlighted as a future requirement. Negative perceptions portrayed within the media of RAS families impacts on some communities

							study participant roles given) Does not clearly explain methods of analysis from the questionnaires	willingness to support integration. Balance of celebrating pupils' differences and cultures, whilst allowing them to 'fit in'.
Arnot, M., Pinson, H., & Candappa, M. (2009). Compassion, caring and justice: teachers' strategies to maintain moral integrity in the face of national hostility to the "non-citizen". *Educational Review*, *61*(3), 249-264. Aims: to understand how school staff understand and make sense of compassion when working with RAS pupils.	2003 – Every Child Matters Nick Griffin taking over the British National Party – electorate increases for a far-right party. Immigration Law Practitioners Association (2006) – 'a migrant child is first and foremost a migrant' (UK Home Office perspective). Home Office (2004) – 'integration is only appropriate for those who have been given the right to remain indefinitely.'	Between four to five participants from each of the three schools taking part (approximately 15 participants). Staff members from multiple schools (e.g., head teachers, assistant heads, EAL teachers)	Qualitative – interviews and written material collected from the 'Schools against deportation' website.	Semi-structured interviews. Written material from website.	Not explained.	Teachers' caring discourses of compassion: empathy, pedagogy and parenting The politicization of teachers' compassion: equality, rights and social justice	Strengths: Centers current context and policy and how this may impact people's perceptions of RAS families. Uses supported framework for compassion to understand responses and relay the findings. Recognizes positive role teachers and school staff have. Limitations: Not clear methodology for data analysis.	Dissonance between rights of child vs. Home Office priorities. Teachers needing to go 'above and beyond' to provide care and meeting basic needs. As well as understanding legislation and policy that effects RAS families. Importance of increasing compassion in other pupils and adapting curriculum to educate about equality etc., rather than changing the

									RAS pupils – acculturation
Madziva, R., & Thondhlana, J. (2017). Provision of quality education in the context of Syrian refugee children in the UK: Opportunities and challenges. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 47*(6), 942-961. Aims: to understand the processes that are key to the development of quality education for migrant/refugee children	Post-Brexit vote context Conservative government pledge to reduce net migration by 2020 Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme (2015) – UK pledges to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees Dubs amendment to the Immigration Act (2016)	Part of a wider study (57 participants of Syrian families, young people and organisations and agencies working with them) 26 participants from agencies (including: teachers, council authority members, migrant support organisation members, faith-based support members)	Ethnographic pilot study	Interviews (unclear if structured or semi-structured etc.)	Thematic analysis	Syrian children's pre-migration and trans-migration education experiences Syrian children and the UK school environment The role of language in the development of quality education Partnerships between home/community and the school Understanding quality learning	Strengths: Uses framework of quality education (with literature support) to form narrative of results and discussion. Includes range of voices of young people, parents, school staff and those in the community. Clear connection with current political climate and context. Limitations: Not enough information given on methodology for how participants were recruited or how interviews were given.	More resources and time needed for teachers. Community input invaluable to supporting refugee families. Differences in priorities from parental and school perspective for 'quality education'. This group of refugees made to feel more welcome - potentially because of resettlement scheme and support from the government/media. Language learning is crucial to a successful integration.

Ott, E., & O'Higgins, A. (2019). Conceptualising educational provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in England. *Oxford Review of Education*, 45(4), 556-572. Aims: to understand 'what educational provisions UASC in England are accessing' and 'how provision interacts with the needs of UASC in England'.	Number of UASC in England had risen by 130% since 2013. 'National Transfer Scheme' (2018) – UASC who arrive in highly populated areas of RAS families and UASC are relocated to other less populated areas.	12 participants made up of: Teachers, virtual school heads, social workers, third sector providers from 8 LAs across England.	Qualitative – interviews and document analysis.	Semi-structured interviews Collation of documents on UASC educational policies and practices.	Thematic analysis. Inductive coding with the recognition that prior knowledge would influence codes and themes.	Educational provision Assessment of educational needs Additional support needed to access and remain in education	Strengths: Clear epistemological stance. Included participatory methods Is person-focused. Recognizes the focus on acculturation, rather than trying to change a person. Limitations: Unclear how participants were recruited	The importance of acculturation – integrating and allowing a person to understand and learn the norms of new community, whilst keeping and celebrating own identity. Rather than focusing on child's needs as a barrier, reflect on the abilities of the education system to provide for these needs. Lack of staff awareness and staff knowledge of how to work in a trauma-informed way. Bespoke curriculum and personalized learning is essential for a successful education.
McIntyre, J., & Hall, C. (2020). Barriers to the	Discusses change in government in 2010.	4 Headteachers from 4 secondary	Qualitative – interviews	Interviews (not cleared if	Thematic analysis	School level challenges:	Strengths:	The shift away from local to central

inclusion of refugee and asylum-seeking children in schools in England. *Educational Review, 72*(5), 583-600.	Move from Every Child Matters policy in education (multi-agency, holistic and inclusive approach to child wellbeing) to Social Mobility (DfE, 2015), which focused on academic attainment through performance-based outcomes. Increase of academies – meaning LAs have less influence.	schools in one city. All selected based on their 'commitment to social inclusion'.		structured or semi-structured)		Official process and procedures Resources City level challenges	Places findings within political context. Demonstrates impact of privatization and academization of schools. Clear rationale and background information Limitations: 4 heads from similar schools – would be useful to consider views of heads from schools in other socio-economic contexts.	government for issues such as education and RAS families has negatively impacted upon resources and support available. Change in education policy, which now takes a performance-based outcomes approach, follows the economical changes within the country. 'policy-paradox' between LAs drive for inclusion and central governments drive for lowering migration and increasing capital gains. Lack of time, funding and staff to effectively support and welcome RAS families into school. National and global 'burdening' language of RAS families

								impacts schools outlook on supporting these families.
Holt, D., & Taylor, A. (2022). Tutoring project for children from a refugee community: tutor perspectives. *Educational Research*, *64*(4), 473-490. Aims: to gather the perspectives of tutors working with refugees within Scotland as part of a Scottish charity programme.	Set within context of Covid-19 pandemic New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (Scottish Government, 2018) – working with charity to provide at-home tutoring for RAS pupils during the Covid-19 pandemic. Scottish Attainment Challenge (Scottish Government, 2021); Additional Support for Learning Act (Scottish Government, 2017) – support for EAL pupils should be provided within Scotland	18 tutors (trainee teachers and volunteers from the charity). Of the participants, 10 had experience of teaching, 6 had no prior experience and 2 had unknown teaching experience. All tutors were volunteers.	Part of a pilot project. Tutoring took place of Syrian refugees and following this, qualitative data from tutors was collected.	Semi-structured questionnaires. Most took place online, one in person. Follow-ups occurred.	Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021).	Experience of teaching and curriculum knowledge Personalisation Support Resources and electronic delivery Partnerships and relationships Challenges and benefits for the tutor	Strengths: Tutors had good understanding of background of their tutees, which meant that they were able to be culturally sensitive and appropriate. Rich data analysis and explanation of analysis meant that results are transparent and open. Themes and findings were presented to tutors prior to writing up to ensure that each participant felt that their words had been accurately portrayed. Limitations:	Peer support network is very important for educators working with RAS pupils. Personalisation of teaching is an effective tool for engagement. Creating a trusting relationship with the pupil AND their family is vital for programme to be a success. Further training and support should be available for educators working with RAS pupils.

								Due to Covid-19 pandemic, data was collected through questionnaires rather than interviews. Potentially, this may have allowed for a more inductive and semi-structured approach.	
Prentice, C. M., & Ott, E. (2021). Previous experience, trickle-down training and systemic ad hoc-ery: educators' knowledge acquisition when teaching refugee pupils in one local authority in England. *Teachers and Teaching*, *27*(1-4), 269-283. Aims: to understand "how do educators acquire pedagogical knowledge relevant to teaching refugees?".	2021 – Taliban repossession of control of Afghanistan 2014 – Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme Post-Brexit Covid-19 pandemic 2019 – over half of state school pupils now attending academies	Quantitative survey: 295 school educators in one county from 25 different schools (this part not included in thematic synthesis) Qualitative: 2 schools (one primary, one secondary). Both schools are seen as welcoming schools. 17 educators within these schools (educators	Mixed methods (quantitative survey, and qualitative case studies)	Quantitative: survey Qualitative: participant observations (fieldnotes) and semi-structured interviews (transcripts)	Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis. Deductive and inductive coding. Prior to analysis, codes were created based on question. Inductive codes created based on data.	Ask a colleague Confidence from experience The complex role of formal training	Strengths: Clear implications for future practice Clear methodology for data collection Results framed within multi-directional framework Limitations:	Educators' knowledge shaped practice, and practice shaped knowledge (multi-directional framework). Reliance on in-house training from current educators within the school. This has implications for schools without this level of expertise within their school. Knowledge more often came from informal means, such as on-the-go support,

		included: class teachers, subject teachers, EAL teachers, school leaders, teaching assistants)						conversations with colleagues, and their own experiences. Less emphasis on formal training, however, educators were reliant on other colleagues knowledge that they had received from formal training: hence the 'trickle-down' of knowledge. Educators felt that they had lost support from LAs due to academicization of schools in the UK. This meant that there was a loss of funding and support.
Prentice, C. M. (2022). Educators' positive practices with refugee pupils at two schools in England. *British Educational Research Journal*. Aims: to "examine educators' positive practices with refugee	2021 – Taliban repossession of control of Afghanistan 2014 – Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme Post-Brexit	2 schools (one primary, one secondary). Both schools are seen to be welcoming schools. 17 educators within these schools (educators	Qualitative case studies	Participant observation (fieldnotes) Semi-structured interviews (transcripts)	Field notes and interview transcripts deductively and inductively coded. Not clear how the themes were generated.	Welcoming environment EAL strategies Social-emotional well-being Knowledge shaping practices: micro,	Strengths: Clear implications for future practice Clear methodology for data collection Results continuously brought back to	School educators use both holistic and strengths-based approaches when working with RAS pupils. They are impacted by both their own pedagogical knowledge, as well as the current

pupils and explore factors that shape these practices." It also aims to use an "ecological model of educator development" to understand how these factors are shaped.	Post-Covid	included: class teachers, subject teachers, EAL teachers, school leaders, teaching assistants)				meso, and exosystem factors The national education context: macrosystem influences	theory – ecological systems. Limitations: Not clear methodology for data analysis	national context (e.g., curriculum pressures). Macrosystems within education (national education context) can act as a barrier to positive approaches. This is due to the expectations of exams and 'performance' based outcomes. This is more prevalent in secondary than primary, whereby in the primary school curriculum could be more adapted. There was seen to be a 'policy paradox', whereby schools are required to look out for wellbeing, but are also required to produce good exam results. On a local scale (away from central government), the micro- and

									mesosystem levels seem to be in tension with the macrosystem. Holistic practice is easier at primary school level (due to reduced pressures). However, overall inclusive practice can be done throughout the school. This can be done in physical environment (e.g., location of EAL hub), as well as through the language and approaches done by school staff to create a welcoming environment. Acknowledges that these two schools are particularly 'welcoming', and that with current governmental push to 'disperse' RAS families to more areas means that not all families will

								receive such a welcoming response.
Ward, C. (2022). Practitioners' perspectives and needs: Developing skills to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASCs) in experiencing 'belonging' in English educational spaces. *British Educational Research Journal, 48*(2), 311-329. Aims: to highlight how practitioners can support UASC experience belonging in educational spaces within England	Section 67 of Immigration Act (2016) – viewing UASCs as children first, asylum-seekers second.	6 practitioners supporting UASCs: ESOL teacher, volunteer English teacher/mental health specialist, social worker, educational equity support charity worker, legal specialist, LA LAC specialist.	Qualitative 1:1 interviews (constructivist approach)	Semi-structed interviews	Thematic content analysis Initial coding into the discussed belonging framework (acted as parent codes). Inductive coding followed for themes within the parent codes. Further inductive coding in relation to other topics outside of belonging that may relate to the needs of UASCs.	Social locations: English language learners and trauma survivors Communicating Trauma support Individuals' identification and emotional attachments: UASCs' relationships with teachers UASCs' relationships with other professionals Ethical and political value systems: Cultural exchange	Strengths: Clear implications for practitioners working with UASCs. Acknowledges current context of media influence on perceptions of UASCs. Clear methodology and transparency of data collection and analysis. Limitations: Participants spoke about time constraint difficulties of building relationships and pressures in work, but this was not discussed in discussion – instead suggestion for more training.	School counsellors should be able to communicate with pupils with EAL. All staff should undertake trauma-informed training. Other professionals/those working with UASCs should undertake training related to cultural humility.

Appendix C CASP Quality Assessment Tool

Author	Clear statement of aims?	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Was research design appropriate to address aims?	Was recruitment strategy appropriate to address aims?	Does research include any participatory methods?	Was data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Has relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Was data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Clear statement of findings?	How valuable is the research?
Whiteman (2005)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (questionnaire devised from key issues raised in working group meetings)	Yes	No – not addressed	Partially - Ethical approval stated. No further comments on informed consent, confidentiality etc.	Can't tell – no information on how qualitative elements of data was analyzed.	Yes	Yes – gives clear areas of need for schools in providing a positive integration. Centers the voices of those with experience of working with refugee/asylum-seeking pupils and elicits responses that allow for feedback to local authorities on what can be done to support schools, pupils and their families.

											Report states that copies of findings were given directly to the local authority.
Arnot, Pinson, & Candappa (2009)	No	Yes	Yes	Unclear – some data from other studies and some participants recruited from other studies. Not clear how this was done.	No	Yes	No – not addressed	Can't tell – no information regarding ethical approval or consent/right to withdraw etc.	Can't tell – no information on how data was analyzed.		
Madziva & Thondhlana (2017)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell – not enough information about how participants were recruited	No	Yes	No – not discussed at all.	Yes – discussion around how information was collected and to make sure this was done ethically.	Yes – thematic analysis used and brief description as to how this was done between the two researchers	Yes	Yes – clear contribution to understanding the key factors involved in developing quality education for Syrian refugees. Also places political context at the center, acknowledging the systemic factors in being able to provide a quality education.

Ott & O'Higgins (2019)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell how participants were recruited.	Yes – interview template was reviewed by advisory group (including a previous UASC, academic experts and practitioners). Early findings were presented at a workshop including UASC social workers and education professionals, who offered reflections and helped confirm final findings.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – thematic analysis used and brief description as to how this was done between the two researchers		
McIntyre & Hall (2020)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell – not enough information about how headteachers were recruited	No	Yes	Partially – discussed headteachers and researchers knowing one another, but spoke only of the benefits of this and not the potential difficulties	Can't tell – no discussion of ethical approval or how headteachers consented to taking part.	Can't tell – thematic analysis used but no further explanation of how this was done.	Yes	Yes – considers the changes in government, policy and practice and how this directly effects the support given to RAS pupils within schools.

Holt & Taylor (2022)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – the researchers showed the themes and findings to the participants prior to writing up to ensure that the participants felt that their responses were accurately portrayed.	Yes	Yes – discusses links with the charity, but clearly states that researchers were not directly involved with the programme or the families in receipt of it.	Yes – clear statement of ethical approval. Uses translators to increase access. Informed consent discussed.	Yes	Yes	Yes – allows practitioners to recognize the value in 1:1 tuition, in building relationships and allowing for personalization of curriculum. Demonstrates need for further support and training for educators working with RAS pupils.
Prentice & Ott (2021)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Partially – statement of ethical approval given. However does not discuss participants right to withdraw and confidentiality	Yes – thematic analysis described (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Explained how data was coded deductively and inductively, using already formed and new codes.	Yes	Yes – clear implications for teaching practice in terms of not only how educators currently gain knowledge, but how they prefer to. Indicates gap whereby schools without in-house expertise may be without support. Acknowledges current context of academy schools and reduced LA support.

Prentice (2022)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes – researcher acknowledges own biases and experiences and how these may effect responses from participants (e.g., being an ex-educator, being a white woman, being an immigrant from the US)	Yes – clear information about ethical approval and consent/right to withdraw	Can't tell – information given regarding coding, but not methods of analysis.	Yes	Yes – gives clear implications for both future research and for future practice of working with RAS pupils. As well as this, situates the findings within previous research and acknowledges context of current research (based in two inclusive and experienced schools of working with RAS pupils). Recognizes systemic issues within education.
Ward (2022)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes – researcher acknowledges own knowledge and current role as volunteer within mentorship and homework support role for a charity supporting UASCs.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – clear implications and direct suggestions for all practitioners working with UASC in supporting their educative experiences. Clearly links with framework of belonging, that demonstrates the importance of educative spaces

							Discusses own bias in entering into the research believing that UASCs deserve more support in schools.				for increasing belonging.

Appendix D Analytical themes with example quotes

Analytical theme	Sub theme	Descriptive theme	Example Codes	Example quotes
The role of communication	Emphasis of learning English	Knowing what a good integration may look like - The balance of prioritising learning English	Learning English Prioritizing English language speaking Communication difficulties Ability to access services	"The current secondary school curriculum was seen as rigid and inflexible, and overly focused for new arrivals on EAL (which was considered important, but not to the exclusion of all else)." McIntyre & Hall (2020) "Several educators at School A noted that refugee pupils were often placed in bottom sets, owing to language issues or having missed education, and that this was unfortunate since bottom sets were already demanding in terms of the support for learning required." Prentice (2022)
	Communicating with family	Opportunities to work with the family	Working with the whole family Communication difficulties	"Our study has also revealed the critical role of language in facilitating a strong relationship between teachers and the parents of the students they teach within the context of home-school partnership." Madziva & Thondlana (2017) "Habibah, for example, said she had recently been called out of class by the main office because a newly arrived pupil felt unwell.

				Not only did she speak with the child to find out what was wrong, but she also ended up speaking with his mother and helping them make a doctor's appointment over the phone." Prentice & Ott (2021) p.274 "No information given at all. Asylum seekers are left to approach the school themselves, usually have no/poor English. They find it difficult to understand and usually—if we are full—I end up making phone calls to neighbouring schools myself." Whiteman (2005)
The role of knowledge	Knowledge and experience of teaching	Staff skill level - Strategies used - Confidence level - Level of experience - Engaging pupils in learning The needs of individual RAS pupils - Individual differences - Learning needs - Emotional needs - The need to learn English	Adapted teaching practice Confidence of own teaching practices Amount of teaching experience Bespoke, inclusive curriculum Assessing current knowledge and monitoring progress	"They [students] have to study about eight poems and they're all by different poets from different cultures and the themes that the poets tackle are conflict, language, identity and displacement – and moving from one country to another" Arnot, Pinson & Candappa (2009) "The student often didn't retain what had been taught from one week to the next, and I began to feel doubtful about whether what I was doing was of any help." Holt & Taylor (2022) "One challenge in the initial assessment was the differentiation between prior education, levels, and achievement." Ott & O'Higgins (2019)

		The needs of the rest of the class - How needs of other pupils may affect supporting RAS pupils	Different previous educational experiences	
	Knowledge and understanding of the asylum-seeking process	Complexity of the asylum-seeking process - Obtaining information Understanding the asylum-seeking process	Staff knowledge of the asylum-seeking process Peer support in working with RAS	"the teachers we interviewed were aware of the lack of legal entitlement to support of ASR students" Arnot, Pinson & Candappa (2009) "the coordinated approach to support Syrian refugees 'has thrown into context the often very different experiences of the wider refugee and asylum seeker community" Madziva & Thondhlana (2017)
	Knowledge and experience of working with RAS pupils embedded in the	A diverse and experienced school	School experience of working with RAS Racism and discrimination	"simply by being employed at one of the case study schools participant educators had relevant experience. School A, the secondary, had a long history of educating refugees" Prentice & Ott (2021)

	school community		Bureaucracy of the asylum-seeking system	"he highlighted the benefit of ensuring certain staff members in schools and colleges undertake more intensive training in terms of how to manage such trauma, so that they can provide care for a UASC whose trauma manifests in a manner identifying the UASC's distress." Ward (2021)
			Living conditions of RAS pupils	
			Staff training for working with RAS	"In general, the schools with larger numbers of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds made more adaptations to the environment, and those with smaller numbers predictably had other more pressing demands on their budget." Whiteman (2005)
The role of provision and resources	Working within set policies and practices	Local vs. central government	Funding in education	"There was no time to offer the "comprehensive package" that Nick wanted for his students, partly because of the rigidity of the curriculum requirements and the shortage of funds, but also because time was a scarce commodity for both teachers and students and, for refugee students, it seemed to be running out." McIntyre & Hall (2020)
		Policy and legislation	Education policy	
			Spread of RAS pupils across schools	
			Bureaucracy of the asylum-seeking system	"Safiya, for example, noted that she had received extensive training from the LEA – the local government body overseeing schools in each county – before LEAs were abolished in 2010" Prentice (2022)

				"However, she also acknowledged that she felt too strapped for time to sustainably give UASCs extra support outside of class hours, indicating limits to achieving reflexivity in teacher–UASC relationships." Ward (2021)
			Complex asylum-seeking process	
			Living conditions of RAS pupils	
	Working with available resources	Availability of resources - Staff - Teaching resources	Value of bilingual staff	"Our study has shown that some schools are taking advantage of bilingual teachers and students within the school and using them as a resource for supporting the newcomers." Madziva & Thondhlana (2017)
			Time constraints	
			Additional resources needed for RAS pupils	
			Impact on local community	"The other resource seen as lacking – apart from money and teachers – was time." McIntyre & Hall (2020)
			Fear of reduced services and support for community	""One exception was Kasia, who told me that although she was aware it 'sounds so awful', she felt time and resource stresses related to the arrival of refugee pupils – although she attributed this stress to the education system rather than the pupils themselves: […]Because the things being asked of us are just too diverse, you know too – we just spread ourselves so thinly." Prentice (2022)
			Poverty in local areas	

The role of a holistic approach	Whole school ethos	The school ethos - A compassionate school - The environment - A diverse and experienced school	RAS admissions	""we have never, ever questioned a refugee or asylum-seeker who's come in. We've never thought 'shall we have this kid or not?' They just come, and we integrate them straightaway"" Arnot, Pinson & Candappa (2009)
			A welcoming environment	
			Physical environment	"teachers demonstrated awareness of the need to create a welcoming environment and addressing children's psycho-social needs as the initial and important steps toward ensuring a quality education for refugee children." Madziva & Thondhlana (2017)
			Systems in place to support	
			Creating an inclusive environment	"These findings reflect the role of schools in defining their approaches to inclusion, equal opportunities, awareness raising for the other children and their parents and motivating the newcomers" McIntyre & Hall (2020)
			Safeguarding	
			School policies	
	The curriculum	Expectations of the education system	The National Curriculum	"No one wanted to take this young man because they realised the implications for them as a school, that they would take a hit in their outcomes, and that's the problem." McIntyre & Hall (2020)
		Political influence	UK school exams	

		- Local vs. central government - Policy and legislation Knowing what a good integration may look like	Statutory obligations Educational policy Impact of RAS pupils on school data A bespoke and inclusive curriculum	" 'they're playing the percentages. And so, we tend then to say [...] well actually they're probably better off getting some pre-16 ESOL at the college, and usually we manage to scare a bit of funding out of the schools etcetera, to pay for it.'" Ott & O'Higgins (2019) "ESOL teacher Margaret repeatedly emphasised her desire to do more programming with UASCs outside of class hours, so that she could learn more about their backgrounds in order to develop strengthened relationships with them and help them learn about social norms in their new educational institution." Ward (2021)
	Multi-agency work	Support and working with other systems	Support from organisations Multi-agency work Ability to access services	"One of the key findings in our research is the involvement of the wider community with a view to enable effective integration for Syrian refugees. Several families reported neighbours helping with children's reading and homework." Madziva & Thondhlana (2017) "She listed the numerous programmes that newly arrived children were able to access, from home tutoring by volunteer university students, to free English lessons for mothers, to classroom activities that educators could access on the EAL resource drive she had created. 'It's all embedded,'" Prentice & Ott (2021)

| The role of compassion | Compassion towards pupils | A compassionate staff member

- Understanding of RAS pupils' needs

Teaching pupils compassion | A welcoming school

Empathising without needing to experience situation

Not pitying RAS pupils

Personal experiences of staff helping to understand RAS experience

Relating to own experience

Teacher role as caring | "In contrast with crossing the country's borders, crossing into the school system is something which the schools we visited were clear about – they adopt an ethos of inclusion and integration which is very different than that of central government." Arnot, Pinson & Candappa (2009)

"… so when they come into the class, it's all about visually being able to see what mood they're in, or how they act, and then as a teacher you act on that instantly. So if you can see that they're quite comfortable you go along with that, or they look confused, or you can see any signs of discomfort, that's when, personally, I look to put her with comforting students, or I'll comfort her with the TA [Teaching Assistant], so they'll work one-on-one. … once they are settled they can begin to engage with learning…" Madziva & Thondhlana (2017)

"In Year 5, Kasia said she tried to select topics of learning that would 'celebrate' the countries and cultures of newly arrived pupils so that refugee pupils and their classmates did not see them only 'through the optics of the conflict'" Prentice (2022) |

| | Compassion and support from others | Support received
- From other staff
- From the school
- From the wider system

View of the local community

Negative view of refugee and asylum-seekers | Learning from more experienced staff

Sharing knowledge and resources

Dehumanisation of RAS

Racism and discrimination | "communities were very involved in patrolling the streets, sheltering families and developing campaigns to save particular families." Arnot, Pinson & Candappa (2009)

"he highlighted the benefit of ensuring certain staff members in schools and colleges undertake more intensive training in terms of how to manage such trauma, so that they can provide care for a UASC whose trauma manifests in a manner identifying the UASC's distress." (Ward, 2021) Ward (2021)

"Five responses referred to negative attitudes towards asylum seekers as a factor in hindering integration." Whiteman (2005) |
| | Compassion as a core value in action | Knowing what a good integration may look like

- Acculturation
Going above and beyond

Teaching pupils compassion | Campaigning for support of RAS

Staff wanting to make a positive difference

Limits to what can be done by school staff | "The more critical teachers used media representations as a means of teaching young people about democracy, and civic action in the most active sense: campaigning and taking action politically against injustices whether at home or abroad for those without protection and in danger of forced removal by the UK government." Arnot, Pinson & Candappa (2009)

"a head teacher in Manchester explains on the web that the anti-deportation case in which he became involved tested whether "the |

				Reliance on good-will	government feels bound to honour its pledge to promote social inclusivity and citizenship studies in schools"." Arnot, Pinson & Candappa (2009)
				Staff going above and beyond	
				Compassion as action	
				Bureaucracy of the asylum-seeking system	
				Complex asylum-seeking process	

Appendix E Spread of analytical themes across papers

Analytical theme	Sub theme	Whiteman (2005)	Arnot, Pinson & Candappa (2009)	Madziva & Thondhlana (2017)	Ott & O'Higgins (2019)	McIntyre & Hall (2020)	Prentice & Ott (2021)	Ward (2021)	Holt & Taylor (2022)	Prentice (2022)
The role of communication	Emphasis of learning English	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Communicating with family	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
The role of knowledge	Knowledge and experience of teaching		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Knowledge and understanding of the asylum-seeking process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Knowledge and experience of working with RAS pupils embedded in the school community	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
The role of provision and resources	Working within set policies and practices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Working with available resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The role of a holistic approach	Whole school ethos	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
	The curriculum		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Multi-agency work	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		
The role of compassion	Compassion towards pupils	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Compassion and support from others	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
	Compassion as a core value in action	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓

Appendix F Topic Guide

Topic guide

Can you confirm that you have read and understood the participant information sheet?

Do you have any questions about the participant information sheet?

Do you have any questions about the consent form you have signed?

Are you happy to take part in this conversation? *(Ask both parent and child)*

"I want to chat with and learn from you about how you both found joining a school in the UK. This is so that your voices can be heard and that your views and experiences can be used to hopefully make it better for yourself and other families. We will talk a bit about your background, like when you came to the UK and how long it took to start school. Then we will talk about what that was like, how supported you were and what help you had. Finally, we will talk about what you think would make this process better and what you think schools can do to help families like yours. If at any point you want to stop or if there are any questions you do not want to answer, that is absolutely fine."

Questions may be aimed at a particular person in the dyad, however, each person is welcome to contribute to each answer.

Questions aimed at parent and child are coloured in blue.

Questions aimed at child are coloured in green.

Questions aimed at parent are coloured in red.

Question	Follow-up/prompts
Can you tell me about when you first came to the UK, how long ago was this?	- Where is your home country? - How many children are in your family? - Did you come to [LOCAL AUTHORITY NAME] straight away? - When did you move to [LOCAL AUTHORITY NAME]?
How long did it take for your child to start at school?	- Did you have to wait a long time? - How did you find out what school they were going to? - How far away is the school from your home? - Did they start in primary or secondary school?
Can you tell me about how you found your school?	- What was your first day like? - What were the teachers like? - What were your classmates like?
How did you find the process of your child joining their school?	- Did you get any help from the school? - Who helped you? - Did you meet any of the school staff?
Did the staff at school want to know your history?	- Did they ask about your experiences? - Were they interested?
Can you tell me about something that went well when joining your school?	- How did this help? - How did it make you feel?

Can you tell me about something that went well when your child joined their school?	- How did this help? - How did it make you feel?
Can you tell me about something that did not go well when you joined your school?	- How did this make you feel? - What do you wished had happened differently?
Can you tell me about something that did not go well when your child joined their school?	- How did this make you feel? - What do you wished had happened differently?
Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experiences of being included when you/your child joined a UK school?	- What is something you would change about your experience? - What is something you would want to keep the same?
Now let's think about what we want to happen for refugee families to feel welcome when joining UK schools. What do you think should happen before your child starts their school?	- Who would you liked to have spoken to? - What would you liked to have known?
What do you think should happen before you start a new school in a new country?	- Who would you liked to have spoken to? - What would you liked to have known?
What do you think the first day should be like?	- What would happen on the first day? - Who would you meet? - What would you talk about?
What would the teachers and staff members be like?	- What do the staff say to you? - How do they talk to you?
What would the other children be like?	- What do the children say to you? - How do they talk to you?
What do you think would be most important for schools to do to help your family feel welcomed when joining the school community?	- What should they know about your family? - What should they know about being a refugee and asylum-seeking family? - How can they continue to support your family?
What do you think schools could do to make sure that your family feels included and part of the school community after you have been there for a while?	- What teaching and learning could take place? - How could your family feel included a year after joining the school community?
Is there anything else you want to tell me about how joining a UK school can be improved for refugee and asylum-seeking families?	-

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