

How pupils, with a specific learning difference, verbalise their academic self-image and feelings of self-esteem.

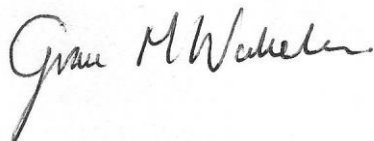
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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Grace M. Wakelin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G'.

20th August 2020

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Abstract

The importance of a positive academic self-concept, for pupils with a specific learning difference, is in no doubt, with a body of research that has explored the self-esteem of pupils in different settings. Nonetheless, there is little research with younger pupils, therefore, this paper explores how young learners, with a specific learning difference, verbalise their academic self-concept. A small case study was conducted in an independent girls' junior school, nine girls aged 9 to 11 consented to take part. Semi-structured interviews were used, to listen to the voices of the participants and explore their thoughts and feelings and how these perceptions shape their academic self-image and feelings of self-esteem. The study revealed how much anxiety and stress affected the girls' cognitive processing capacity and metacognitive thinking, consequently their approach to challenges in learning. One participant displayed natural protective factors, with acceptance of her difference, enabling her to demonstrate self-efficacy and resilience to deal with the difficulties she encountered. Learning to notice, challenge and reframe unhelpful thinking; the use of calming strategies; developing a growth mindset, self-advocacy and self-acceptance, were all factors that the girls expressed as helping them. Developing these protective factors leads to greater self-efficacy and resilience which in turn enables a pupil to control their anxiety, embrace their difference and strengths, and approach challenges in learning with greater confidence, motivation and perseverance. Young learners, with a specific learning difference, need support to ensure they develop these protective factors and have an environment where their strengths are valued.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

This paper explores academic self-esteem and self-image in young pupils and how these can be supported by a resilience-based programme. The study aims to identify how learners with dyslexia or identified as having a cognitive processing difference, can feel and be successful learners and go on to reach levels of achievement that their underlying ability indicates they can attain. The following definition of Dyslexia is used:

'Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory, and verbal processing speed. Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points. Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration, and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia. A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention.' (Rose 2009).

Including an addition from the British Dyslexia Association (BDA):

'the visual and auditory processing difficulties that some individuals with dyslexia can experience and points out that dyslexic readers can show a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process. Some also have strengths in other areas, such as design, problem-solving, creative skills, interactive skills, and oral skills.' (BDA 2007 cited Rose 2009).

This study uses the term cognitive processing 'difference' rather than 'difficulty', as for some individuals the brain is set up to process differently, this difference, makes some learning tasks difficult and effortful (Eide & Eide 2011).

Identification of dyslexia in pupils is made through a full diagnostic assessment, either by a specialist dyslexia assessor or an Educational Psychologist, which parents request privately. In school, dyslexia screening and a lack of expected progress will flag up pupils where further assessment is carried out to identify a profile of strengths and weaknesses including cognitive processing. These include the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP2, Wagner et al 2013); the Test of memory and learning (TOMAL2, Reynolds & Voress 2007); and, the Symbol Digit Modalities Test (SDMT, Smith 1973), alongside attainment and progress data. A standardised score of 84 and below is in the below-average range and together with attainment and progress data and background information, including

family and education history, will identify whether there is a cognitive processing difference that will pose difficulties in learning.

In my professional practice, I have experienced dyslexic pupils from the age of seven who have developed a negative academic self-concept and low self-esteem. As Riddick (2010) discusses, it is difficult to unpick the exact causes, however, what is clear, is that for some the process of learning to read and write is a struggle. When literacy and maths are such an important part of the primary school day and are regularly measured, negative comparisons are easily made by dyslexic pupils, there is little they feel successful with and consequently, confidence and self-esteem is eroded. Pupils' self-image or perceptions of themselves as a learner will be built from their learning experiences and therefore affect their self-esteem (Humphrey & Mullins 2002). These learning self-concepts will, without doubt, affect their approach and thinking to new challenges and tasks (Burden 2000). Do failure and lack of progress cause low self-esteem or does low self-esteem cause a lack of progress and failure? This study does not seek to answer this 'chicken or egg' dilemma, but to explore how teaching resilience explicitly, might support a pupil's self-esteem.

1.2 Terms defined

1.2.1 Self-concept, self-image and self-esteem

The terms self-concept, self-image and self-esteem are often used interchangeably, however, there is a distinction in both meaning and use (Burden 2005, Riddick 2010). We have thoughts concerning a variety of aspects about ourselves, including our learning ability, physical attractiveness, physical abilities, social interactions, and so on. These thoughts and beliefs or 'perceptions' are what we build our self-image with, how we evaluate and feel about our self-image is our self-esteem (Burns 1982, Burden 2005). Put another way, self-esteem is our evaluation of the beliefs we hold about ourselves and the feelings about those thoughts (Zelege 2004). Our self-concept is constructed from our self-image and our self-esteem (Burden 2005).

1.2.2 Resilience

The concept of resilience exists at different levels from the individual to family, communities, and societies, with no unified definition. However, adversity is the one feature common to many definitions (Hart et al 2016), Resilience is 'overcoming adversity, whilst also potentially changing, or even transforming, aspects of that adversity.' (cited Hart et al., 2016 :3). Bernard (2004) and Masten (2014) suggest it is qualities or protective factors that enable us to adapt successfully and develop the capacity to recover from adversity. Adversity differs on so many

levels, individual, day to day, situations, groups, communities and societies; and, from failing a test in school to societies experiencing floods, war, or disease (Tran et al 2014, Masten 2014). There is no scope in this study to examine the construct of resilience but the term here is used in the context of individuals demonstrating resilience when facing barriers to learning due to having a specific learning difference.

McGrath and Noble (2017) define resilience as ‘the ability to cope and bounce back after encountering negative events, challenges, difficult situations or adversity and to return to the same level of emotional wellbeing’ (cited McGrath & Noble 2017:28) additionally, and importantly, the ability to adapt to difficult situations. The very consequence of coping with adversity will mean adaptive change, lessons learned and moving forward (Masten 2014). Some would argue that bouncing back is too simplistic a concept as it implies, we bounce back to where we were, yet such experiences may involve struggle, pain, hard work and inevitably change us (Neenan 2017). Nonetheless, McGrath & Noble (2017) would argue, bouncing back to a state where we feel mentally and emotionally able to move forward is crucial. This study would acknowledge that resilience requires strategies to cope, adapt and responding effectively, with adjustment, growth and lessons learned to be inevitable.

Masten (2014) suggests the term resilience should be used exclusively to refer to positively adjusting when faced with life’s challenging situations and cautions the use of the term resiliency as a trait. The concept of resilience as a personal trait will lead to a perception that some individuals do not have resilience to overcome adversity (Masten 2014). We do not become resilient, after developing and demonstrating resilience in one situation as a new situation or challenge may present new difficulties and adversity not experienced before, requiring us to develop and learn new resilience (Neenan 2017).

1.3 Rationale

This study will focus on the pupils’ academic self-concept, made up of their perceptions of themselves as learners or academic self-image and how they feel and evaluate themselves as learners, their self-esteem (Burden 2005). Research has revealed that pupils with positive self-esteem and confidence in their learning are those who view dyslexia, not as a difficulty or disability, but as a difference in thinking and learning, (Pollack 2005, Eide & Eide 2011).

Attitudes, self-concept and agency are all internal factors that influence and shape the way we perceive ourselves and consequently, how we act (Burden 2008). From personal experience it is evident that some pupils have innate ‘protective factors’ that enable them to exhibit resilience and overcome the difficulties they encounter in learning. Those who have

not learned strategies to do this can develop a negative academic self-concept and low self-esteem leading to task avoidance, anxiety and little or lack of progress in learning. In a society where good literacy skills are valued and expected, individuals who find it difficult to develop these skills will undoubtedly be affected in some way (Burden 2008). Crucially, these protective factors can be learned, furthermore, studies advocate a need for an alternative intervention to the standard remedial teaching (Firth et al 2013, Haft et al 2016 and Soni 2017). Both Riddick (1996) and Burden (2005) discuss the need for a programme supporting the development of self-esteem, not focussing on measured gains in their academic achievement but evaluating psychological effects.

More research is needed into a metacognitive programme that will support pupils to develop a positive academic self-concept and a healthy self-esteem, through teaching techniques of resilience (Firth et al 2013). Having a more positive perception of oneself despite the difficulties encountered and challenges faced will lead to progress and success (Armstrong & Humphrey 2009). Changing mind-set from deficit to strength and difficulty to difference is an important focus of such a programme (Haft et al 2016).

This study, then, seeks to explore how pupils verbalise their academic self-image and feelings about their self-esteem, as a learner who experiences difficulties due to their specific learning difference. The participants were supported to voice these perceptions by a 10-week resilience-based programme. The programme was based on Bounce Back, 'a positive education approach to wellbeing, resilience and social and emotional learning' (McGrath & Noble 2017).

The school is currently developing a mental health and well-being framework into which this study can feed and inform.

1.4 Research Question

How does a pupil with a specific learning difference verbalise their academic self-image and feelings of self-esteem?

The researcher's aim is to explore a pupil's perception of themselves as a learner, their academic self-concept (self-image and self-esteem). The study will listen to the voices of pupils, with a specific learning difference, before and after a 10-week resilience-based programme. Exploring their academic self-concept and how they perceive the difficulties they have with learning.

1.5 Outline

The next chapter reviews literature and research in the field of dyslexia, self-esteem and resilience. The methodology details how the study was undertaken, the setting, participants, data gathering, data analysis methods and ethical considerations. Any limitations to the methodology and study will then be discussed. Excerpts and quotes from the interviews are used to discuss the findings with the final chapter summarising and suggesting recommendations and implications for future practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Dyslexia, perceptions of Self-Image and feelings of Self-Esteem

At the time of her writing, Riddick (1996:1) acknowledges the sizable body of research into the cognitive nature of dyslexia with only a small but growing body of research on the lived experience of dyslexia. Furthermore, Riddick (1996) contended a need for more overlap with these areas of research, such as, how the cognitive difficulties or differences that have been identified in the dyslexic brain affect an individual's perception of themselves as a learner.

Two decades on, there is now a notable body of research which has examined the social and emotional experiences of individuals with dyslexia from school pupils to adults (Riddick 1996, 2010, Osmond 1993, Edwards 1994, Humphrey & Mullins 2002, Humphrey 2002, Burden & Burdett 2005, Burden 2008, Glazzard 2010, Firth et al 2013, Soni 2017). Much of this research has listened to the 'voice' of older pupils, university students, adults and the parents of dyslexic children (Riddick 2010, Glazzard 2012). Undoubtedly, this has provided powerful insights into the lived experience of dyslexia but reveals a lack of research into the voices of younger pupils and the impact that being dyslexic has on their sense of self.

Much of the above research with older students and adults details the negative experiences from their earlier education and observes the scars left (Edwards 1994). Experiences include unfair treatment and discrimination, inadequate support and even neglect, and humiliation (Edwards 1994:1). It is then no surprise to learn that emotional reactions to these experiences were reported to be, school refusal, lack of confidence and self-doubt, stress-induced pain and illness and behaviour problems (Edwards 1994). Rosenthal (1973), Osmond (1993), Humphrey (2002) and Humphrey and Mullins (2002) all support these findings with evidence of low self-esteem in dyslexic pupils attributed to the challenges, frustrations and difficulties of their lived experience. Participants describe how a lack of understanding of their learning differences had a greater impact than the difficulty they faced with literacy (Osmond 1993).

On the other hand, research by Burden and Burdett (2005) challenges this, their findings reporting pupils with a positive attitude to learning and a strong self-image. Examining these studies and findings, the participants in the Burden and Burdett (2005) research had already been identified as dyslexic and were in an understanding supportive setting of a residential independent school for dyslexic pupils. Their findings are supported by the research of Humphrey (2002) involving dyslexic pupils from eight to fifteen years, from a mainstream and specialist setting with a control group. Self-esteem was assessed and triangulated using teacher ratings of pupil's self-esteem through a checklist; a Likert scale used to assess behavioural outcomes of self-esteem; and, pupil ratings, using a seven-point scale, of their

perceived self-esteem. Findings reported pupils from the mainstream setting having lower self-esteem than the other two groups, where there was no notable difference. Consequently, Humphrey (2002) argues that dyslexic pupils in a specialist setting, receiving understanding and support, can develop a positive self-concept and higher levels of self-esteem.

Glazzard (2012) would challenge this, his study interviewed mainstream dyslexic pupils who presented as confident learners, they attributed their positive self-concept to having an early identification of dyslexia and acceptance of this identity. The study does concede that before dyslexia assessment, they had a negative self-concept and levels of self-esteem were low, due in part to negative experiences with peers and teachers (Glazzard 2012). Though parents, in many cases, provide positive support it is often negated by these other negative experiences (Glazzard 2010).

Osmond (1993) describes the overwhelming relief when pupils realise there is a reason for the difficulties they've been experiencing and that they are not stupid or lazy, Humphrey and Mullins (2002) concur with this.

2.1.1 Accommodating the dyslexic label

Some research suggests that having a diagnosis and a difficulty being given a label increases self-esteem because it provides an individual with an explanation for their difficulties, this was particularly seen in older pupils and adults (McNulty 2003, Glazzard 2010). Positive reframing of the dyslexia label leads to success, progress and achievement (Armstrong & Humphrey 2009, Riddick 2006). This involves an explanation of what is dyslexia and then reframing one's self-concept concerning the difficulties in a positive way. The 'Resistance-Accommodation' model from Armstrong and Humphrey (2009) proposes there is a continuum from complete resistance, where an individual is unwilling or unable to accept dyslexia, to complete accommodation and acceptance.

Positively, a label can help an individual know that they are not stupid, allow them to advocate for themselves and challenge views from others about the nature of dyslexia (Macdonald 2009, Riddick 2010, Kauffman 2015). Negatively, labels can impact self-esteem and consequently attainment, labels can stereotype and stigmatise (Macdonald 2009). Riddick (2010) argues that the way dyslexia is explained to a young person will contribute to either accommodation or resistance. A dyslexic label should qualify a pupil for support and determine the nature and level of that support. Unfortunately, some mainstream education settings and research still refute the concept and existence of dyslexia, some will refer to it as a middle-class label (Riddick 2010). Many teachers acknowledge that they do not have the training and

therefore the understanding of dyslexia, furthermore, expectations for a pupil can be lowered or even limited by a label (Arishi et al 2017).

Burden (2002:272) makes the argument against labelling, as this defines the whole person and in doing so classifies them as having a disability. Rather, he would suggest that a more positive approach would be to identify the specific learning difficulties or differences that are of a dyslexic nature. Facilitating an individual to make sense of their specific difficulties and the possible implications that result, follows a more social model of disability. It argues that it is the social structures and organisation that cause difficulties and disability (Shakespeare 2014). The medical model focuses on the fixed difficulties which are defined by the disability in contrast to the social model which focuses on removing barriers to learning, barriers restricting life choices and embracing difference (Shakespeare 2014).

Recent research and literature today have a far more positive perspective on the term or label dyslexic, with the view of it being a difference in the structure of the brain leading to considerable abilities and strengths (Riddick 2010, Eide & Eide 2011). The social model of disability also argues for the dyslexic brain to be viewed as different and part of the normal range, advocating that dyslexia does not need fixing, rather that it is the social environment that presents barriers and disables individuals (Singleton 1999). However, it has also been criticised for downplaying or ignoring the reality of individuals' physical or cognitive disabilities and their experiences (Shakespeare 2014).

2.1.2 Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

As defined earlier, self-concept is a term that embraces the feelings or self-esteem combined with our thoughts and beliefs, self-image, that an individual has about themselves, either concerning a task or more generally (Burns 1982, Zeleke 2004, Burden 2005). An example to differentiate these terms is, '*I can't spell, I feel stupid*' (low self-image, low self-esteem as a speller. 'I am a poor speller, but I feel good about the effort and practice I am making to improve' (low self-image but positive self-esteem). Positive self-esteem is not just a case of 'feeling good', it is a belief that factors such as support and practice will enable an ability to overcome a difficulty or problem faced (Burden 2005).

If there is a perception that we have an insufficient attribute or ability, we will most probably come to believe and feel that we are insufficient and lack ability in that area, although for some this perception can pervade many areas of the self (Burden 2005). The beliefs we hold concerning our self-concept will influence our thoughts, attitudes and behaviours (Rotter 1966).

A dyslexic pupil will know that good literacy skills are beneficial and there are high expectations for all pupils to achieve these. So, when they experience difficulties it is no wonder that they develop a low self-concept concerning literacy, in many cases, they develop a general low self-concept and negative feelings of self-esteem regarding the whole self (Burns 1982). An illustration of this is hearing a pupil refer to themselves as stupid because they find reading difficult, in some instances this belief can lead to behaviours in other situations confirming this belief (Lawrence 2006).

Marsh et al (1991) hypothesize that a younger child initially develops a global, general self-concept that evolves into a differentiated academic self-concept and non-academic self-concept. An academic self-concept can be separated into different academic subjects and the non-academic self-concept into areas such as social, emotional and physical (Marsh 1991). Early childhood experiences contribute significantly to our sense of identity or self-concept (Burden 2005). These experiences will come from family, school and the wider community and environment, and become an interactional process with the environment shaping the child and the child influencing their environment (Riddick 2010). In the same way, academic self-concept influences achievement and achievement influences academic self-concept (Marsh 1991).

Teachers play a critical role in the development of the academic self-concept and would be more equipped for this if they were given the knowledge and skills to ensure the development of a positive self-concept (Lawrence 2006). It is difficult for a teacher or parent to change a negative self-concept simply by praise or even positive reinforcement (Burns 1982). From years of research on self-esteem, Seligman (2018) argues that trying to boost self-esteem by emphasizing feelings over persistence, meeting challenge and mastery, will leave children open to failure and depression. He emphasises that parents, teachers and society must understand that if we advocate 'doing-well', the 'feeling-good' aspect of self-esteem will develop, as feeling good itself cannot be taught (Seligman 2018). Self-esteem develops as a result of effort, overcoming challenges and being successful, positive self-esteem generates further success (Seligman 2018:33).

2.1.3 Attitudes and Agency

In addition to the self-concept, two other factors are shaping the way we perceive ourselves, which in turn influences the way we act, these are attitudes and agency (Burden 2005:18). Attitude concerns how we will perceive learning in general as well as specific subjects and situations. We will assess the value, personal relevance, and interest we have in the learning.

Additionally, the enjoyment it may bring and the challenge it may present will influence our attitude to the learning (Burden 2005).

Agency is related to self-esteem, it is described as the level of feelings of confidence and competence we have concerning a task or activity (Burden 2005). Including, our perception of how competent we think we are, how confident with having the skills to engage in the task and how successful we think we might be. The concept of agency, a Vygotskian principle has been an important part of thinking and practice in education for centuries (Charteris.2013). This belief we have concerning our control over life events is also known as 'Locus of Control' a term used in the social learning theory of Rotter (1966). Agency is where the learner takes an active role in the learning process and a belief that their attitude and thinking about learning will make a difference for them, namely, identifying the locus of control. By teaching and supporting dyslexic children to develop a positive internal locus of control they will have the thinking needed to help overcome the difficulties they face (Burden 2005). Praising effort and perseverance is important together with helping them attribute outcomes to those factors within their control (Seligman 2018, Dweck 2006).

2.1.4 Self-Efficacy

Successful and positive learning experiences develop a stronger sense of belief in our self or self-efficacy (Bandura 1993), on the other hand, repeated failure can lead to task avoidance. (Burden 2005). Nonetheless, we need to experience and deal with failure. When faced with a difficulty or problem we can either, act to change the situation or overcome the difficulty, developing mastery, alternatively, we can give up and even learn to avoid similar situations in the future, which Seligman (1975 cited in Seligman 2018) termed 'learned helplessness'. If we deprive children of mastery through dealing with such situations, we will weaken self-esteem just as if we had criticised and humiliated them (Seligman 2018:45).

Also, contributing to a sense of agency is the self-efficacy theory, where we will either believe that outcomes are within our control or determined by something beyond our control. (Bandura 1993). Research has found that poor readers blame themselves, attributing failure and difficulties to their poor abilities, things beyond their control, and often success will be attributed to luck, likewise, beyond their control (Riddick 2006). The self-efficacy theory suggests that we can exert a degree of control over our thoughts, feelings and actions (Rotter 1966, Burden 2005). Seligman (2018) refers to the way we attribute success or failure as our attribution or explanatory style and identifies that we will explain an outcome, whether positive or negative in terms of permanence, pervasiveness and personalisation (Seligman 2018:52). Children who believe that the bad things and difficulties are permanent, outside of their control

and most likely to reoccur, will be pessimistic, use avoidance tactics and be susceptible to depression (Burden 2005, Seligman 2018).

Our explanatory style will develop in childhood and, 'without explicit intervention' may become negative and lifelong (Seligman 2018:52). This view is reflected by research, that has identified the interrelation of thinking and behaviour and has reported positive outcomes in achievement when the focus is on changing fixed negative self-beliefs rather than remedial intervention alone (Lawrence 2006, Riddick 2010, Soni 2017).

2.1.5 Construct definition

Burden (2005) highlights the complexity of the self-concept and, consequently, identifying appropriate methods to assess and measure. He cautions accepting that different writers and researchers are using the terms self-concept and self-esteem to mean the same construct. Similarly, Marsh et al (2019) discuss this issue with construct definition, measurement and validity with terms such as self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, agency and growth mindset. Two measurement scales with the same label may measure different constructs, likewise, two scales with different labels may be measuring a similar construct (Marsh et al 2019).

2.1.6 Protective factors

Despite the difficulties experienced with dyslexia, some pupils demonstrate resilience and a positive mind-set (Haft et al 2016). Studies have found that having an innate cognitive resilience is due to protective factors such as having oral language strengths and being able to use semantic context in reading to support phonological decoding difficulties (Muter & Snowling 2009). Pupils can also have a socio-emotional resilience, with a positive internal locus of control, enabling them to use adaptive strategies as seen in the study by Firth et al (2013). Demonstrating a growth mindset contributes to this resilience (Dweck 2006), believing that intelligence and ability are not fixed, that learning requires effort and making mistakes is part of learning.

These socio-emotional protective factors can be learned and developed in those pupils who do not naturally have them and future studies can explore factors that promote resilience (Haft et al 2016:138). By developing protective factors our learning self-concept can be changed (Dweck 2006). This has led to the focus of this study and the programme chosen, Bounce Back (McGrath & Noble 2017).

2.2 Justification for research

Historically intensive literacy support and intervention programmes are based on a deficit and difficulty and do not address strengths (Riddick 2010). Researching an alternative intervention, Firth et al (2013) implemented a programme, at a primary level, developing coping strategies, thinking skills and challenging negative self-talk. Resulting from this intervention was a greater internal locus of control and the findings advise the need for support and intervention that develops a pupil's resilience and well-being. (Firth et al 2013). Through developing strengths and experiencing success, dyslexic pupils will develop a positive self-image leading to motivation to learn (Soni 2017). Soni (2017) suggests future research using a similar programme but focusing on personal reactions to pupil's experiences of their difficulties and developing a positive self-concept and identity. Exploring perceptions of dyslexia and academic success, Soni (2017) concluded that, an intervention for dyslexic pupils should develop self-advocacy, resilience and positive reframing of their dyslexic label, in addition to any remedial literacy support. The programme used in this study is designed to develop such strategies.

Developing metacognition will contribute to a positive academic self-concept and healthy self-esteem, particularly for a dyslexic pupil (Burden 2005). Vygotsky (1962), proposed two phases in the development of knowledge, the cognitive and metacognitive. He explained cognitive as automatic unconscious acquisition or learning, in other words, we can learn but not be conscious of how we learned (Wray 2002:302). The second, metacognition is 'thinking about our thinking', having an understanding and awareness of our thinking and the ability to choose appropriate strategies to use in our learning (Reid 2016). Studies have identified that learners with dyslexia can find it difficult to develop metacognitive thinking and skills (Tunmer & Chapman 1996, cited in Reid 2016). Throughout the 10-week programme, the sessions develop metacognitive thinking skills explicitly.

For learners, developing resilience and a growth mindset enables them to use their strengths to support their difficulties, consequently, improving their attainment and building on confidence (Haft et al 2016). Having a growth mindset is especially important given the academic difficulties pupils with dyslexia face (Dweck 2006). In recent years, there is a growing understanding of the need for pupils to develop these positive skills and strategies of resilience and growth mindset, together with mental and emotional support before unhelpful behaviours develop and become established (McNulty 2003) or mental health and wellbeing are adversely affected. Studies have indicated mental, emotional and practical implications for early intervention with resilience-based support (Ingesson 2007, Gibson & Kendall 2010). The

Bounce Back programme is designed to develop such metacognition, growth mindset and coping strategies (McGrath & Noble 2017).

Research in individual identity as a learner has been emerging (Burden 2005, Glazzard & Dale 2013) but there is more scope to add to this body of research in pupil identity and dyslexia in education (Glazzard 2012). A pupil's identity constructs an 'inner story' (O'Brien 2015) and when their inner story is fuelled by a poor external locus of control, a fixed mindset and unhelpful thinking, there can be negative consequences (Burden 2005). More can be learned as to how we can bring about a change in identity and an individual's inner story. Studies, where the stories of individuals' life experiences are told, listened to and constructed can offer a lot to dyslexia research (Prevett et al 2013).

This study then seeks to facilitate younger pupils to 'tell their story', express and verbalise their academic self-image and feelings of self-esteem as a learner.

3. Methodology

3.1 Setting and Participants

This small-scale study was carried out in one independent junior girls' school in the South West of England, where the participants were known to the researcher. The researcher works part-time as a learning enhancement teacher, including assessing and supporting pupils. Like any junior school, the girls are regularly assessed, and their progress tracked. All are screened for dyslexia, on entry, using Lucid Rapid from GL Assessment and followed up if necessary, through further assessment as outlined earlier.

The school provides an environment where the girls are aware that making a mistake is part of the learning process. Through an extensive range of curricular and extracurricular activities, the girls are introduced to new learning experiences, where they can discover more of their strengths and the areas of learning they find difficult. They are encouraged to take risks, supported to face challenges and given opportunities to develop teamwork and leadership skills.

Nine girls consented to take part, with their parents' permission. The girls were aged 9-11 years old from years 5 and 6. Three of the girls had been identified as dyslexic through a full diagnostic assessment, one had been assessed by an Educational Psychologist, identifying social and emotional factors impacting on learning, together with weakness in working memory. The other five had in-school assessments that identified cognitive processing weaknesses, indicating a specific learning difficulty, or put more positively, a specific learning difference.

After screening and further assessment, conversations are had with parents as to whether a full diagnostic assessment would be helpful. Some parents would prefer there not to be a label as they feel this can be limiting from both the child and teacher perspective. Others feel, identifying the specific cognitive processing weaknesses brings enough understanding of the difficulties experienced by their child and informs ongoing support, to not warrant the extra cost of a full diagnostic assessment at the time.

At the start of every academic year, the girls sit InCAS assessments (interactive computerised assessment system from CEM, Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring) in reading, spelling, mathematics, mental arithmetic, developed ability and attitudes to learning. These provide data to identify strengths and weaknesses, track progress and inform support and provision for individual pupils. This data together with data from the cognitive processing assessments and background information, including family, health, developmental and

education history, will provide a good profile of a pupil's strengths and weaknesses. For all the girls in this study, their attainment and progress data does not reflect their level of underlying ability.

Not all the girls are identified as dyslexic, for the purpose of the study, the term 'specific learning difference' will be used unless comparisons are made in the findings and discussion.

3.2 Design

This study sits within a qualitative framework where the data is subjective and sits within an interpretivist methodology (Greig et al 2013). It has sought to further understanding by observing, listening, co-constructing and interpreting the experience of pupils within their environment and relationships (Bassey 1999). It is a small-scale case study, with nine participants. Yin (2009) describes case study research as an enquiry into real-life experiences, facilitating the collection of thoughts and feelings from individuals concerning a situation or experience. Case study research provides a meaningful methodology for advancing our understanding of educational theory and practices (Bassey 1999). Furthermore, it can provide descriptive and detailed information about many perspectives of the case investigated (Hammersley 2014).

Teaching and learning pedagogy needs to reflect the experiences, feelings and viewpoints of children; therefore, children must be viewed as participants in research (Fraser et al 2014). In many societies, children may be valued for who they are yet are not valued enough for their present views and experiences to be listened to and acted on (Greene & Hill 2006). A key objective of this study is that it helps us to develop awareness and understanding into the lived experience of young people with a specific learning difference such as dyslexia. Recognising that children are individuals has implications for the methodological approach, as we are exploring individual lives, their lived experience and reactions to their environment (Greene & Hill 2006).

A central aim has been to ensure that the experiences of the participants are presented in a way they speak for themselves, as Kelly (1995), who proposed the personal construct theory would say, "*if you want to find out how somebody feels or what they think, then just ask them and they might just tell you*" (cited Burden 2005:15). Much of the recent research listening to the 'voice' of dyslexic individuals has been undertaken with older pupils and adults.

The children's' voices are central to this study however there is an understanding that interpretations are dependent on a researcher's experience, knowledge and views (Denzin 2002) thus direct speech has been cited as much as possible in the findings and discussion.

3.3 Data, generating and gathering

Case study research can comprise a range of data collection methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to construct rich data. (Ashley 2017). A small-scale study enables a detailed recording of an individual's experiences of dyslexia, including thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviour which can get lost in larger-scale data collection and quantitative methods (Cohen et al 2018). This study has sought to provide an opportunity for young people to express their thoughts and feelings, for these 'to be listened to and acted upon as appropriate' (cited Lundy 2007:928). Pupil voice is one aspect of a child's right for their thoughts, views and feelings to be heard (Kellet 2014). The right of a child to express views and ideas is set out in article twelve and thirteen of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989). Consequently, this study has employed semi-structured interviews to gather the participants' perceptions of their academic self-image and their feelings of self-esteem pre and post a ten-week resilience programme.

As discussed in the literature review, past research using terms such as self-concept, self-efficacy and self-esteem may not be defining or measuring the same construct as each other (Burden 2005, Marsh et al 2019). Burden (2000) developed a standardised scale, 'Myself as a Learner Scale' to assess a learner's self-concept, that is related to the learning process and not a 'global' self -concept. These assess and measure a participant's opinion or attitude with a variety of statements either orally by structured interviews or a written questionnaire (Burden 2005, Cohen et al 2018). Studies with this scale have revealed a close relationship between learning self-concept and achievement (Burden 1998, cited Burden 2002). Also, Burden (2005) developed 'the Dyslexia Identity Scale' to draw out from individuals their feelings about being dyslexic, how well they learn, their self-efficacy and locus of control.

This study could have used such a rating scale survey to triangulate findings and check for validity, such as 'Myself as a learner scale' (Burden 2000) and explore the impact of such an intervention programme using a quasi-experimental design. The participants in this study were not familiar with completing such rating scale surveys and questionnaires, therefore it was initially felt that this would not have given a true picture of their perceptions and feelings, as listening to their narrative from open-ended questions would.

Attempting to quantify the thoughts, feelings, actions and meanings of these participants, would not accomplish an understanding and 'knowing' about them (Greig et al 2007). Yet, undertaken in an experienced way and built on psychological theories from the social sciences, such as the work of Burden (2005), quantitative data can support and enrich qualitative data and gather a true representation of those who are dyslexic. Responses to

rating scale statements can be influenced by several factors, from understanding the statement or question, the time given, difficulty deciding on which score or option to select and so on (Flewitt 2014). Additionally, day to day events and experiences can affect and influence a pupil's self-concept and therefore their response to the statements.

Keeping the study qualitative and considering the complexities of intervention research, determined this study would not measure the impact of an intervention. An intervention is an intention to bring about change in some way and then assess its impact (Tymms 2017). Identifying what works from an intervention is not straightforward as there will be a complex interaction between the participants and contingencies not controlled by the study, unexpected, or even unseen factors (Cohen et al 2018). Research designs that look to identify causal relation must consider whether the impact observed has been caused by the intervention or would these changes have happened due to other variables (Tymms 2017), through inductive analysis cause and effect relationships can be inferred (Cohen et al 2018). Nonetheless, the study listens to how the girls verbalise their academic self-concept before and after a resilience-based programme to observe how such a programme might support them.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as the participants would not be familiar or at ease with the unstructured in-depth interviews and conversations that characterise narrative research (Flewitt 2014). The semi-structured interview as a tool for data collection is flexible, giving space for conversation. It allows verbal and non-verbal responses and these responses can then be explored further (Cohen et al 2018). Unique experiences and perspectives can be captured using questions that are open and conversational (Flewitt 2014). By adopting these aspects of narrative research this study was seeking to explore, with the participants, their thoughts and feelings and the ways these shape their identity and perception of their self-image and feelings of self-esteem.

Interviews allow us to collect stories about individual lives seeking to 'know', their thoughts, feelings and experiences (Seidman 2006). Throughout history, stories have provided a means by which people have recorded, passed on and made sense of their lives (Flewitt 2014). Interviews can either been viewed as a way to extract information, or, as a means of co-constructing knowledge and experience (Kvale 1996). When an individual speaks in their own words, they are reconstructing their thoughts, therefore, as researchers, we must understand that the data we collect is co-constructed (Bucknall 2014). The voice of the participant will be

shaped by the questions we ask, our prompts to elicit information and the participants' response in the time, context and setting (Bucknall 2014).

Consideration was given, whether to conduct a group or one to one interviews. Group interviews may result in some participants preferring to remain silent or feeling less confident, for fear of not being 'right' in their responses or concerned with what their peers might think (Flewitt 2014). Participants may agree with the responses of others in the group when it is not a true reflection of their views and feelings (Greig et al 2007). One to one interviews, on the other hand, may feel uneasy and intimidating for the participants particularly if this is their first experience, causing them to find it difficult to articulate their feelings (Flewitt 2014). Some would argue that questioning children involves their cognitive language abilities and some children may not have the expressive language to convey their thoughts and feelings (Greig et al 2007). However, Psychologist O'Brien (2015) has recorded the conversations he has had with young people demonstrating that they can express an 'inner story'. Relationship and trust can take time to build but a good relationship is essential for children to feel relaxed enough with the researcher to verbalise their thoughts and feelings (Greene & Hill 2006). Having a role within the setting meant there was already a relationship but as the researcher, ethical implications have been considered as discussed later.

Two individual semi-structured interviews took place with each pupil, pre and post the ten-week programme. Interview sessions were conducted during non-academic periods in the school timetable and at a time each participant was happy with. The duration of each interview session ranged from twenty to thirty minutes. Audio recordings, using a voice recorder, were made to enable the researcher to fully tune into the interaction, join the participant with mindful colouring and make additional notes on non-verbal responses, such as body language. The focus was on enabling a positive and enriching experience for all participants of the research which as Kvale (1996) suggests is a key characteristic and outcome of qualitative interviews. The conversations were then transcribed, each participant assigned a pseudonym, names with a floral theme have been used. The recordings and transcripts were then stored digitally in password secured files.

A set of questions were used to provide a structure to the first interview but leaving flexibility to follow up with spontaneous questions to the responses given and allow a more natural conversation (Bryman 2012). The questions were designed using the research question and aims, avoiding ambiguity and leading questions and keeping vocabulary simple (Cohen et al 2018). Children are influenced by the way questions are asked therefore, the researcher made every effort to use neutral language (Sullivan & Rees 2008).

The following questions were used:

“What are you good at in school?” and *“What has gone well recently?”* asks the participant to identify their strengths and gain a picture of their academic self-image.

“How does this make you feel?” explores their feelings of self-esteem. If the response was a single word such as ‘good’ it was followed up with, *“Where is that feeling good?”*, *“What does that look like?”*, *“Is there anything else about?”*. For example, with Poppy, this elicited a more detailed response. *Researcher, “How does this make you feel?”. Poppy, “It feels good”. Researcher, “Where is that feeling good?”. Poppy, “I’m smiling’. Researcher, “Where is that smiling?”. Poppy, “It’s in the whole body”.*

“What do you find difficult at school?” and *“What has been difficult or not gone well recently?”* asks the pupils to identify their weaknesses and adds to the picture of their academic self-image.

“How does that make you feel?” explores their feelings of self-esteem relating to their difficulties and as above was followed up if necessary, to draw out more information as illustrated by Poppy again. *Poppy, “It’s annoying”. Researcher, “And what does annoying look like?”. Poppy, “Sometimes I just chuck my pencil down, I can’t do it, it’s like telling a fish to walk”.*

“What would help you to do better at this?” explored any strategies they use and metacognitive thinking to help them when faced with difficulties in learning.

“How does it make you feel when you see others finding writing, spelling or reading easier than you?” and *“Have others made comments about you because you findhard?”*, look at the comparisons these pupils make with others, the narrative they tell themselves. Follow up prompts were used to draw out feelings concerning comparisons and the effect on self-esteem.

“Who do you talk to about what you find difficult?”, enquires into self-advocacy, important for any pupil but particularly for those with a specific learning difference to understand their needs and what help and support to ask for (Soni 2017).

However, we cannot presume that listening to children’s voice and their ‘inner story’ will correct the imbalance in adult-child relationships, as the adult has carried out the research and decided the methodology used (Bucknall 2014). It was imperative then that children were given control by offering participation as a choice after fully informing them on the purpose of

the research and how their views, experience and feelings would be sought and used (Alderson 2014).

Consideration was given to how the researcher would respond to a participant's silence or body language such as a shrug. Silence or non-verbal responses communicate meaning, such as, not wanting to answer the question, not understanding the question, or needing time to think about their response (Bucknall 2014). A practical strategy offered participants choice by providing cards to use if they wanted to indicate responses such as "I don't want to answer that question", "I am thinking about what to say" (Bucknall 2014).

As the participants were familiar with the researcher and the room where the interviews took place, this led to a more natural and relaxed experience. The room has fiddle toys that were familiar to the participants and they would be familiar with helping themselves to one if they feel it needed. The participants were familiar with mindful colouring and so mandala patterns as well as blank paper, pencils and colouring pens were provided. Engaging in activity can significantly add to the meaningfulness of the context (Westcott & Littleton 2006) in most cases the participants chose to colour, and the researcher coloured as much as possible resulting in a natural conversational experience.

3.3.2 The programme

The 10-week programme was based on Bounce Back, a positive education approach to developing wellbeing and resilience (McGrath & Noble 2017). It is a whole-school programme designed to be taught to all pupils and can be integrated into all curriculum areas. Within the programme is the BOUNCE BACK acronym, which is ten coping statements (appendix 1) built on key cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) principles. These are what make up the ten sessions for this study as they teach and model concepts and thinking to develop a strong sense of agency, self-efficacy, growth mindset, optimism, gratitude and hope (appendix 2). This study will explore how teaching these coping strategies will support the participants in responding to the difficulties and challenges they face and how they verbalise their self-image and self-esteem.

3.4 Data Analysis

Both within-participant and cross-participant, inductive analysis was adopted. The within-participant analysis reviewed a participants' understandings of their identity, feelings, behaviour and situation from both interview sessions and explored any change with their responses and what may have precipitated that change. The cross-participant analysis explored any themes emerging across the participants.

Using a thematic approach guided by the research questions, the narratives from the transcripts were analysed and themes explored. Initially, the transcripts were entered into a spreadsheet under the interview questions. Colour coding keywords highlighted themes emerging from the transcripts, i.e. vocabulary labelling emotions and feelings, curriculum subjects and activities they saw as strengths or weaknesses, and strategies they used to help themselves and support their learning. Several themes emerged from the transcripts including: a positive self-image and self-esteem when knowing their strengths; protective factors: anxiety and stress; calming strategies; attribution styles; helpful thinking; growth mindset; self-advocacy; and, self-acceptance. These themes informed the structure of the findings and discussion.

Interpretive data analysis requires accurate recording as there is the possibility that the researcher's views, values, life experiences and understandings will affect the interpretations (Flewitt 2014). This study purposed to listen to the participant's voice about feelings, experiences and issues important to them and reflect the emotion, personal views and values, from the transcripts and notes made, to construct a narrative with authenticity. Making direct reference to the recorded narratives provides evidence to support the discussion in this study (Bassey 1999).

3.5 Ethical Issues

This study adhered to the ethical guidelines for educational research as set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA 2018). Furthermore, it recognises the rights of the child and enabled those who can express their views, feelings and ideas in issues relating to them. (UNCRC1989:11&12, BERA 2018:23). The headteacher of the school consented to the research (BERA 2018:11) and transparency in explaining the study to all stakeholders was upheld (BERA 2018:27).

Informed consent is critical to research ethics, this study made every effort to ensure participants understand all that was involved and that their consent was free from pressure or persuasion (Alderson 2014). The parents were first asked for consent after being informed of

the nature and purpose of the research (appendix 4). If given, their child was invited to take part and it was made clear to them that they had the choice whether to take part even if their parent had given consent (appendix 6). Additionally, it was made clear that the participants had the right to withdraw at any time (BERA 2018:31&32).

Information leaflets (appendix 3 & 5) explaining the nature and purpose of the research were written for participants and their parents and together with the verbal explanation helped them understand the study and make a decision whether to participate or not (BERA 2018:9, 24). This information detailed what was involved, the timescale and what would happen with the findings.

This study had a responsibility to participants, treating them with dignity and sensitivity, respect and fairness and free from prejudice (BERA 2018:1). The researcher, a teacher and having an adult-child relationship to the pupils was thorough and considered in conducting the interview sessions, taking care and being sensitive to support the participants to be co-constructors of their story (Bucknall 2014). Participants were consulted on the draft report of their narratives to enable them to change, delete and agree that it was a true account of what they said (Denzin 2002), (appendix 7).

The design and execution of the study focused on facilitating a natural and relaxed experience for the participants and did not cause any distress or discomfort (BERA 2018:34). Furthermore, this study ensured there was no risk or harm to the participants (BERA 2018:6).

This study also complied with the research integrity and ethics set out by Bath Spa University (2017). The core elements include honesty in every aspect of research, this was especially pertinent to transcribing the conversations. When informing the participants and their parents about the research, clarity and open communication was key, with respect and responsibility for all participants. The researcher was rigorous in undertaking the research, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality for all those taking part (Bath Spa University 2017).

All identifiable data, transcripts and records were anonymised to safeguard rights to privacy and confidentiality (BERA 2018:40). The study complied with GDPR General Data Protection Regulation (2018) where the participants were informed on how and why their data was stored (BERA 2018:48). Recorded conversations were stored digitally in password-protected folders. Subsequent transcripts of the recordings were anonymised and stored digitally with password protection (BERA 2018:50).

3.6 Limitations of the research

It is impossible to conduct objective, value-free research due to a researcher's views, perspectives and values, which will inevitably influence findings and discussion (Ritchie & Lewis 2003). The researcher has sought to limit interpretation as much as possible and use direct quotes from the pupils. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that a researcher will inevitably focus on issues and aspects they find significant. The responses of participants are affected by the characteristics of the researcher and that time and place (Bryman 2012).

The study acknowledges that the responses heard will not be representative of all the dyslexic population of this age. This small case study did not set out to define or create a sample that was representative of a dyslexic population of 9 to 11-year olds. A study such as this is hard to replicate as there is no standard procedure (Bryman 2012) and there is an issue with external validity as the findings cannot be generalised due to the study's small scale and specific setting (Tymms 2017). This study is not expecting to make simplistic claims (Pawson 2013), as what works for some individuals is unlikely to work for all and generalisations cannot be made from such a small-scale study.

It became evident, particularly after the post-programme interviews, that the narratives in the first interviews may not give a detailed insight into how the participants think they feel and help themselves when facing difficult tasks and situations. After having worked through the concepts, skills and thinking in the programme, the participants have developed understanding and language and therefore were more able to articulate this in the post-programme interviews. It is important to note, any absence of a growth mindset, helpful thinking and coping strategies in the pre-programme conversations, does not necessarily mean we can interpret this, as a lack of resilience and metacognition. Nonetheless, it highlights the fact that these pupils may not have had the ability to express their thinking, concerning their academic self-concept. Using a rating scale with statements could have presented them with language and concepts they could not or did not think to express at the time of the pre-programme interviews.

The study did not set out to measure the impact of such a programme, therefore cannot conclude that any difference in findings from the before and after programme interviews were the direct effect of the programme.

4. Findings and discussion

Using inductive, content analysis, the following has emerged from the data the transcripts have presented.

4.1 Knowing their strengths: A positive self-image and self-esteem

When asked what they are good at in school, pre-programme, two out of the nine were not sure or did not verbalise, what they are good at, the other girls spoke of sport, music, art, science, drama or dance. They spoke positively about how being good at something makes them feel, as Holly describes, *“Well, it makes me feel good and it makes me not want to frown and not get annoyed, it makes me want to smile”*. From further prompting about that happy feeling or where is that smile, five of the participants described an all-over feeling, *“it’s like kind of everywhere, all over”, “it’s in the whole body” and “smiling with my, it may sound weird, but smiling with my body itself”*. Daisy spoke of the excitement felt when she was doing well, and Holly likened the feeling to being with her best friend, Fleur described a similar feeling when being successful in sport. Rose expressed how dancing and sport takes her to her happy place and helps her to be calm, *“I feel kind of different, not completely different, you go to your happy place, you show calm, and yeah, you feel, very, like, unique I guess”*.

Lily and Flora found it difficult to express or verbalise what they felt good at, Flora did not think anything outside of lessons counted, *“but they (sport and drama) are not, like lessons, yeah, I like being outside and not having to remember, to like, learn stuff and do writing”*. However, post-programme, Lily and Flora were able to identify something they are good at, for Lily this made things feel *“a bit better”*, Flora was able to describe happy feelings, *“in my body, in my mind”*.

Recognising and celebrating strengths particularly those not seen as academic and exploring dyslexia and other specific learning differences from a neurodiversity view rather than a deficit one is crucial to enabling pupils to thrive and achieve in learning (Rappolt-Schlichtmann et al 2018). Exploring a pupil’s strengths, developing metacognition and talking through how they learn best, all contribute to understanding and coming to terms with their dyslexic brain (Burden 2002). The dyslexic processing style may present a barrier to academic learning however, the implications are that the brain is organised differently and processes information to enable significant abilities and strengths (Eide & Eide 2011). Further research is needed to explore how these strengths can be embraced in the curriculum where they are celebrated and regarded as important as spelling or writing.

4.1.1 The relationship between Emotion and Achievement

Having such creative opportunities in their school setting for these girls enables them to experience success and positive feelings. Emotion and achievement reciprocally influence each other (Pekrun et al 2017: 1653), though emotion does not feature explicitly in many of the theories of attribution, expectancies and locus of control.

Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory focuses on an individual's confidence (outcome expectation) and competence (efficacy expectation) to perform a task and consequently expectancies for success (Eccles & Wigfield 2002). Similarly, Rotter's (1966) locus of control theory posits that expectations of success are linked to the extent to which an individual feels in control of outcomes. Other theories focus on motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic to engage in a task, the interest one has and the perceived value of the task, such as the self-determination theory of Deci & Ryan (1985), the flow theory, Csikszentmihalyi (1988) and the goal theory from Ford (1992, cited Eccles & Wigfield 2002:112-115). Whereas, Weiner's attribution theory (1985) combines expectation and task value. This theory has been developed further as the expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation (EVT, Eccles & Wigfield 2002), proposing that outcome expectations and perceived value, influence individual task choice, performance and perseverance.

Encompassing the above theories, but also integrating achievement emotions, relating to outcomes whether successful or not, is the control-value theory of achievement emotions (Pekrun et al 2017). Emotions are influenced by task expectancies, including self-concept and self-efficacy, locus of control, perceived value and outcomes. Consequently, these emotions impact on behaviour and performance (Pekrun et al 2017), as illustrated by Jasmin who, pre-programme, described how being good at swimming and feeling happy made her want to practice even more and get better, "*I want to do it a lot and get better at it*".

Attributing success to their ability, internal locus of control, creates positive activating emotions, such as pride, enjoyment and hope (Pekrun et al 2017), as Rose describes referring to her dancing, "*It kind of makes me feel happy that I have somethings that makes me feel good and say I'm alright at, that I really enjoy doing this sometimes you just kind of dance it out freestyle, without worrying because usually you might worry I can just dance free*". Erica couldn't think of what she is good at due to being hard on herself and focusing on what she needs to improve on but when asked what had gone well recently, she spoke of the calm she felt when doing art. Pekrun et al (2017) describe these types of emotions, calm, relaxed and relief, as positive deactivating. Anger, stress, shame and anxiety come under negative

activating emotions, with hopelessness and boredom viewed as negative deactivating emotions (Pekrun et al 2017).

Emotions as discussed, affect an individual's cognitive processing capacity, their motivation and metacognitive thinking, consequently impacting on progress and achievement. Despite the participants having positive activating emotions from their areas of strengths, pre-programme, data highlighted the level of negative deactivating emotions present when faced with difficulties in learning, as discussed under anxiety and stress below.

Seven out of the nine girls know they have abilities, and these give them a positive self-image and self-esteem in these areas of strength, which are non-academic. When asked what they would like to be good at, pre-programme, all nine responded with academic subjects especially literacy, their global self-concept is very much affected by their academic self-concept.

4.2 Facing difficulties in learning: protective factors; anxiety and stress; calming strategies; attribution style; helpful thinking; growth mindset; self-advocacy and self-acceptance.

Eight out of the nine participants, pre-programme, did not demonstrate a strong sense of coping and self-efficacy in situations they found difficult, often replying "I don't know" when asked what they can do to help themselves. However, six followed up with, "maybe ask my teacher", "practice more", intonating their response as a question, suggesting they were not sure of their reply. Two were not able to verbalise how they might help themselves, or what they do when they are finding something difficult, *"I don't know, I don't really, I'm not very good at concentrating"*. Researcher, *"What can help you?"*. *"I've never really thought of that, I don't know"*.

All participants described having difficulties in aspects of maths, reading, writing, spelling, attention and concentration, and one has additional challenges with coordination. All difficulties we would expect to find in a specific learning difference, dyslexia profile. Responding to how it makes them feel and what they do to help themselves the following themes emerged.

4.2.1 Protective factors

Jasmin displays protective factors, pre-programme, such as a strong sense of self-efficacy, knowing what she can do to help herself, self-advocacy and self-acceptance, *"I feel fine like I just ask for help and when I understand it, I feel happy"*. Researcher, *"What would help you to*

do better at this?”. Jasmin, “Just probably more practise I feel quite happy knowing what I need to help me”.

Jasmin is the only one to have responded in this way, pre-programme, with these socio-emotional protective factors. Nonetheless, we know these can be learned if individuals do not already have them (Haft et al 2016). Socio-emotional resilience includes strong self-efficacy, internal locus of control, growth mindset, self-awareness, hopeful thinking and realistic goal setting together with strong interpersonal relationships (Haft et al 2016). All these themes emerged from the transcripts post-programme, suggesting how such a programme has contributed to developing protective factors.

4.2.2 Anxiety and stress

Pre-programme, eight out of the nine girls described emotions including, anxious, nervous, tense, stress and being overwhelmed, these are natural responses to difficulty. Research has demonstrated how individuals with a specific learning difference will often display higher levels of stress and anxiety than other pupils (Carroll & Iles 2006, Grills-Taquechel et al 2012) and the following transcripts from this study highlight how stress, anxiety and worry were affecting the girls. Four of the girls acknowledged how much it affects their performance and learning.

Rose describes what happens, *“In my head, it’s telling me off, like, what am I going to do? I feel, kind of like, the world is closing in on me, I get all, kind of, shaky, and wobbly, like everything has been taken out of me, sweaty hands, really nervous, anxious. I kind of get anxiety, I think I’m failing I get overwhelmed.”*

Holly talks about how she responds to finding some learning tricky, *“When I’m finding things tricky, I sometimes, well, I go a bit too over the top and start getting really annoyed and sometimes I can start crying Kind of scrunching my fists up, getting really tense in my chair and just staring at my piece of work and, looking really frustrated. You don’t want to do anything, you just want to stay there and not move.”*

Poppy illustrates how anxiety affects her, *“My face goes like this (grimace), my body, it goes everywhere, just tense”. For Daisy, perceiving other pupils in the class to be progressing through a task faster than her leads to tension, “I feel tense because I could be, everyone could be so much further ahead than me and I could be stuck on question one”.*

Anxiety can negatively impact the execution of tasks, problem-solving, self-regulation, cognitive processing and memory function (Everson et al 1994, Tobias 1979, Moran 2016). Yasutake & Bryan (1995) suggest that anxiety can develop in pupils who find learning difficult,

and consequently, these negative effects lead to continued difficulty in learning. An awareness of being behind in class, as Rose describes, or experiencing failure leads to an increase in anxiety levels and affects attention and concentration, as Holly illustrated above. A cycle can then develop where anxiety and learning difficulties continue to affect each other (Yasutake and Bryan 1995).

When faced with low marks, failure and mistakes, Bandura (1997) asserts that it demands a strong sense of self-efficacy to stay motivated. When we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by self-doubt and adversity our quality of thinking is affected, which in turn will affect achievement (Bandura 2008, Pajares 1996). The brain responds to anxiety and stress stimuli with the amygdala triggering our fight or flight response, releasing the stress hormone cortisol, which affects memory function and cognitive processing (McEwen & Morrison 2013), making it increasingly difficult to think clearly, problem-solve, attend and concentrate, particularly if this stress response is switched on for a lengthy time. It is important to again note that this concerns task-specific self-efficacy and is not a general self-efficacy (Pajares 1996, Marsh et al 2019), as these girls will on many occasions demonstrate a strong self-efficacy in certain tasks and subject areas where they have a stronger self-concept.

Post-programme, there is still some anxiety, this is a natural response to difficulty, however, Rose can now verbalise the strategies she has to help herself, helpful thinking, going to her happy place, calming strategies, growth mindset and, not giving up. *“When I get new stuff I can really panic, I do get quite worried and anxious and a bit shaky. When I make a mistake, I kind of get really red and hot and my eyes start to water, and I get really embarrassed. I can get really angry with myself and need to squeeze it out of myself”. Researcher, “What can you do to help yourself?” Rose, “Listen to others go to my happy place but I’m definitely now having more positive thoughts than I thought I would have.... I definitely think there’s been an improvement about my, positive thinking and stuff before I used to kind of give up but now, I know I can feel a bit more like calm (picking up a liquid oil sensory hourglass) when I have my dog next to me when I read, and stroke it, it makes me feel a lot calmer”.*

Poppy knows she will still get angry but has strategies to help herself and knows she should not beat herself up if she does get angry. Talking about how she helps herself now, *“I try to go to my happy place, always thanking someone when they have done something for me (laugh). I used to have a meltdown, now I go to my happy place and think of positive things I’m just being calm”.* Researcher, *“How are you helping yourself?”.* Poppy, *“Breathing in, (taking a breath in and out), petting my dog but I will still get angry, but I don’t need to beat myself up”.*

The programme acknowledged how important it is to be okay with negative emotions, they are natural responses to adversity and difficult situations such as sadness, grief and fear. How long we stay with those emotions will depend on the situation, but then having the ability to cope, adapt and move on is vital.

4.2.3 Calming strategies

Pre-programme, the girls did not mention calming strategies, but this does not infer that they were not using such strategies as discussed in the limitations of just using interviews and not triangulating with a rating scale questionnaire. The programme explored practical ways to calm and relax to help lower anxiety and reduce stress to help reverse the fight or flight stress response, as some of the narratives have already illustrated above.

Rose, post-programme describes a breathing technique that helps her, *“I know one thing that helps me” (tracing up and down each finger as she breathes in and out)*. Poppy also voices how she uses breathing to help calm her *“breath in and out, petting my dog or imagining myself petting my dog”*. Holly and Flora go to their happy place, *“Imagine a place you love a lot, like, for me, it would be on the beaches with the wind and like that”, “closing your eyes and imagining you’re in a happy place”*.

4.2.4 Attribution style

Pre-programme, the participants illustrate in their responses, what they attribute outcomes to, particularly when faced with difficulty, mistakes or failure. Poppy and Holly’s attribution style, concerning what they find difficult, is one of permanence (Seligman 2018), both girls stating, *“I’ll never be able to do it”*. Poppy says, *“Sometimes I just chuck my pencil down, I can’t do it, it’s like telling a fish to walk ... I can’t do it. I’ll never be able to do it”*. For Holly, *“It makes me feel like I can’t do anything, I’m useless and there’s loads of things in my head saying that, ahh you are so bad at this, why do you have to be so bad at this? ... everyone else is good at it and you just can’t do it.”*

It is important to note at this point that we will have different feelings of attribution and self-efficacy depending on the task or situation, not a general self-efficacy (Marsh et al 2019). These participants have demonstrated this, expressing feelings of anxiety and stress in some situations yet a stronger sense of self-efficacy and growth mindset in other situations. Fleur demonstrates this, after a maths test, she describes a low self-concept, a permanent attribution style and a fixed mindset, *“I feel really excluded”*. Researcher, *“What does feeling excluded look like?”* Fleur, *“Kind of like butterflies but you feel really, really, really sad and*

down and like, not as clever as themthat you're not good at Maths and like you're never going to be as good as them".

But then talking about wanting to get better at netball she displays a growth mindset, *"Try hard in the lessons, listen to the teacher keep on trying"*. After a difficult maths lesson, she knows that making mistakes is how we learn, *"I say like it's all going to be fine if you mess up it doesn't matter"*.

Erica is attributing failure and mistakes by blaming herself. However, she is also demonstrating some self-efficacy and internal locus of control, by believing she will have the capability to learn, but knows that firstly, dealing with her negative thoughts is the key, as discussed above with anxiety and stress. *"Well, I'm quite hard on myself, I want myself to do really well in a lot of stuff when I haven't quite done something correct, I blame myself and it's just really hard I think that I'm never going to be good at it and I'm never going to get it. That's only at the moment but when I look back, I know I will get it and that one day I'll be able to master this."* Researcher, *"What would help you to do better at this?"*. Erica, *"By knowing different ways to deal with it, I think"*.

Rose is not blaming herself for being dyslexic but is having a battle in her head trying to change unhelpful thinking into helpful thoughts. She also attributed low marks in a maths test due to new content she did not know, in a positive way, not just blaming herself for the low mark. *"I don't like it if I didn't do anything, get help, I wouldn't improve. But when I hear them talk all the time these thoughts are in my head saying maybe I am just bad at this, not any good and you get anxiety It's like, half your brain is saying you're bad at this and the other half is saying, you have to keep on going."*

Post-programme, Poppy demonstrates, after having an attribution style of permanence, *"I'll never be able to do it"*, a change to helpful thinking and a stronger perceived self-efficacy, *"Thinking you can't do thisbut I can, I can do this"*.

Holly also demonstrates her ability to change her attribution style, now less pervasive, *"I'm not bad at everything"*, and with a stronger internal locus of control and growth mindset in knowing she will need to work a bit harder. *"Well believing I'm not bad at everything, I'm actually good at some things and it makes me feel like I fit in. (sigh) I know I don't need to fit in to feel good like, but sometimes it feels a bit weird when you feel out of place like when I can't do it. Now I try and say that, it doesn't really matter if I find something hard, cos I'm basically the same as everyone else but it just means I might have to like work a bit harder than everyone else."*

Rose now understands that just because she finds somethings hard, even if it is Maths and English, she is not stupid and now changes this negative attribution style into helpful thinking. *“Before I kind of thought, I’ll never be good, I did kind of think I am stupid but now I don’t, I know I just find somethings very difficult and it’s kind of like thinking this is just a little thing and it’s not going to affect the big thing, so, it’s just one thing.”*

Personalisation is where we apportion blame, whether we blame ourselves for the cause, internal, or circumstances and other people, external. (Seligman 2018). Young people must learn to ‘blame fairly’, if the cause is internal, then they need support to try again, overcome or to cope with the situation, on the other hand, if they are not at fault they need to understand to not blame themselves (McGrath & Noble 2017). Lily explains positively why she only got half of a test done, she knew there was also year 6 work included, therefore did not blame herself for only completing half.

The programme was explicit in explaining to the girls: that just because they can’t do something does not mean they will never be able to do it, permanence; that they will not find everything in that area difficult, pervasive; and, that they are not to blame, personalisation. Such changes in attribution can be made by noticing thoughts and thinking styles.

4.2.5 Helpful thinking, notice, challenge and reframe unhelpful thinking

It is important to recognise and label emotions and understand how thoughts affect feelings and feelings affect behaviour (Rotter 1966, Beck 2016). Consequently, how we perceive or interpret a situation will affect how we feel about it. Pre-programme, responses did not demonstrate helpful thinking strategies, often the response was *“I don’t know”* or *“I haven’t thought about that”*, however, as discussed previously this does not indicate that the girls were not using helpful thinking styles.

Increases in self-efficacy have demonstrated a lessening in anxiety with CBT style support, where unhelpful thoughts that lead to negative feelings and behaviours are noticed, challenged and reframed. (Gaudio & Herbert 2007, Zlomuzica et al 2015, Beck 2016, Roick & Ringeisen 2016), as Rose and Holly have exhibited through their conversations, post-programme. Rose, although still getting anxious is now using more optimistic thinking to help herself. *“Yeah, I definitely think keeping a positive mind is definitely helping, knowing that’s how anyone would feel, like we have talked about everyone feeling sad at times I’m just like kind of thinking you’re not the only one who goes through these things.”*

Holly demonstrates how this stronger self-efficacy will not stop negative thoughts but will help change negative thinking to more optimistic thinking. *“Thinking about positive things,*

saying you're not good at anything and then thinking of like things I am good at, I'm good at handwriting there's loads of things I'm good at. I have these bad thoughts." Researcher, "How do you help yourself?" Holly, "Thinking of the positives, it does help, it really helps, it's just, it kind of makes me feel bright again and not so gloomy".

Being optimistic and hopeful can enable young people to persevere through challenges and manage the difficulties they face. Hope or hopeful thinking is not wishful thinking or purely optimism but the process of thinking about our goals, together with the motivation and growth mindset, or agency, to move toward those goals, and, the pathways or metacognitive thinking and strategies to achieve those goals. (Snyder et al 2002). Snyder defines hope, not as an emotion but a 'dynamic cognitive motivational system' (Snyder 1995 cited Snyder et al 2002:820).

One of the coping strategies explores the fact that life is about learning, therefore everyone is learning, and everyone finds something difficult, we do not need to personalise it as the girls illustrate. A positive explanatory style acknowledges bad times, setbacks and failure do not last, things will get better, these things happen to everyone, not just me (McGrath & Noble 2017). Daisy, *"We all have something we are good at it's not just me finding this hard".* Jasmin, *"It's like, it's not sad 'cos everyone finds something hard".* Flora, *"Kind of like knowing everyone is different, some people find other things difficult".* Poppy, *"Thinking, it's just learning if we don't have anything to learn what is life! everyone finds something tricky".*

Tugade & Fredrickson (2004) hypothesise over positive emotions and whether resilient thinking leads to positive emotion or positive thinking is a factor in enabling individuals to cope and demonstrate resilience when faced with difficulties. Their research strengthens the 'broaden and build theory' (Fredrickson 1998, cited Tugade & Fredrickson 2004:331) which demonstrates how positive emotion has a regulating effect on negative emotion and supports developing effective coping strategies and resources when faced with adversity, as Daisy highlights. *"Thinking it doesn't matter that I can try again, try better next time and say, but I can tell myself I can do this. Or like I'm good at this at least I am good at something. So, it makes me feel better about myself when, like I can think about what I am good at, like focus on this and not what, the things I can't do.'*

Gratitude tracking has been strongly connected to well-being and promoting resilience (Tugade & Fredrickson 2004). Having an appreciation for things others do, for who others are, and for the little things in life we can be thankful for, the girls have found this gratitude tracking to be helpful. Fleur, *"I liked how we were talking about positive thoughts and messages I know now that being thankful helps me".* Flora, *"Thinking of three positive things, if you are*

annoyed, and also think about three words that describe you, good things about you I didn't get so upset and annoyed". Poppy, "instead of being like this all the time (grimaces and puts on a scowl) I'm always smiling now (big smile) I used to have a meltdown, now I go to my happy place and think of positive things".

4.2.6 Growth Mindset

A growth mindset is modelled and discussed with the pupils in this setting but pre-programme the girl's narratives illustrate a fixed mindset in the areas they find difficult. Flora demonstrates a fixed mindset with spelling, saying *"I'm rubbish at this, maybe I should just give up".*

Post-programme, Rose now talks positively about the importance of perseverance and not giving up. *"You just need to think of who can help you and you think you have worked hard and don't give up, it's really important to not give up yes, and it will get better."*

Holly who struggled with being so hard on herself when getting things wrong is now developing that growth mindset where mistakes are opportunities to learn, a stronger self-efficacy in believing that she can master these challenges, stay calm, try different strategies, ask for help if necessary and even if it is not right, she will learn from it. *"I'm still scared that I'm going to get it wrong and I'm like, but it doesn't matter cos it's improvement I know that getting it wrong is an opportunity to learn. I know that, but then I have to look through it and then see what I have to do say if it looks a bit too hard, then (takes a breath in) you've not got to be so distressed about it and take a deep breath and just go through it and think I'm sure you can do it. Even if you get it wrong it doesn't matter because you know, you tried very hard."*

Having a specific learning difference, such as dyslexia requires acceptance. To enable a pupil to understand it can mean having to work harder than others, particularly in language-based tasks, but keeping that hope and growth mindset, as Fleur describes, *"My brain is just working a bit more. I think I can do it, but I might need just a bit more help. I know now like, I can always try again, and I can work hard."*

Daisy understands that mistakes are part of learning, *"It didn't matter it was one game and we can practice and do better next timeIt doesn't matter 'cos everyone makes mistakes and you can do better next time". Together with Flora and Erica, they know the importance of practice. Flora, "I will keep trying and practice". Erica, "Practice makes perfect, nerves are good cos it means you want to do well I just tell myself, if you try hard enough you will be excelling too, and you'll be doing just as good as they are and don't compare yourself."*

The self-worth theory, another expectancy-value theory, that addresses emotion and mental health (Covington 1984), suggests learners will seek to protect their sense of self-worth through achievement. Pupil evaluation and measurement of ability will result in individual perception of ability and consequently a positive or negative feeling of self-worth. Young children are generally found to perceive effort and ability as synonymous, yet older children and adults are impacted more by their perception of ability being the necessary factor for success over effort (Dweck 2006). For pupils to continue to view effort as essential, classrooms must provide a learning environment that enables mastery and cooperative learning, realistic goal setting and, where the emphasis is not only on what is learned but how, with questioning and problem solving (Covington 1984). Persevering even when tasks and situations are difficult and then being successful develops hope and a stronger self-efficacy (Bandura 2008).

Continuing to practice and keeping on trying with the wrong strategy or method will not lead to success, the programme reminded the girls of this metacognitive thinking. As Jasmin demonstrates *“I can do more practice and try and see if there is a different method to do it. If like, say one method doesn’t work for me, I can like, see if there is another method to use.”* Thinking about how they learn best, looking for other strategies to use, or asking to be shown alternatives.

Developing a growth mindset is particularly important given the difficulties in learning, children with dyslexia or a specific learning difference, face (Dweck 2006). Cultivating these positive skills of growth mindset together with emotional and mental support, through such a programme, will mitigate negative and maladaptive behaviours that may develop and become established (McNulty 2003). A growth mindset enables pupils to use their strengths to support their difficulties, increasing progress and attainment, as well as building on confidence and academic self-esteem (Haft et al 2016).

4.2.7. Self-advocacy

Daisy demonstrates self-advocacy, pre-programme by describing how she will talk to her mum or ask her teacher to understand how she got it wrong and *“to help me see how to do it next time”*. Although, there was not any other evidence of self-advocacy pre-programme, does not mean the girls did not advocate for themselves.

However, the programme made explicit to them: they need to ask for help but think about the type of help they need; they need not be embarrassed in asking for help more than others; and, we all need help at some time, as the girls now illustrate. *Rose, “I ask for help if I really*

need it, if I honestly find it tricky, I wouldn't like, ask if I just couldn't do it, like I wouldn't bother trying. Definitely asking for help really helps me". Daisy, "Well I tell myself I struggle with this and it is alright to get help and not be embarrassed and I know that everyone needs help too, I know it is okay to ask for help". Jasmin, "Try it and then ask for help and see, try it again, sometimes I see if I can break it down". Poppy, "It's okay to ask for help but don't ask for help all the time. Don't be impulsive, I need help, I need help".

Self-advocacy develops independence and self-esteem for any pupil, therefore essential for those with a specific learning difference (Reid 2016). Self-advocacy is the ability to identify, articulate and communicate feelings and needs, and negotiate rights appropriately. This includes understanding and acceptance of one's own specific learning difference and needs; knowing their profile of strengths and weaknesses and what learning strategies work for them; and, being able to ask for help, for example, a different strategy or access arrangements. Self-advocacy necessitates having the right knowledge of one's needs and available provision and access arrangements; self-awareness; and, the ability to articulate this to others (Pocock, et al., 2002). Research has established that self-advocacy is a vital skill for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to develop to experience successful learning (Reid 2016).

Parents and friends were cited by most of the participants as the people they go to, to talk about their experiences. The school encourages and advocates the importance of talking, especially when facing difficulty. *Holly, "I always talk to my mum about those things". Jasmin, "If I'm doing homework, or if I don't understand something in the lesson and we're working in pairs, I normally just ask them, and they explain it and then I understand it".*

4.2.8. Self-acceptance and comparison to others

It is important for our self-acceptance not to be dependent on achievement or failure and not to come from comparison to others (McGrath & Noble 2017). Jasmin was able to express this pre-programme, *"Sometimes I feel upset in a way but other times I just know they're good at stuff and I'm good at other things."*

Whereas Fleur compared herself to others and describes how she feels. *"In the last lesson I couldn't get halves, I got really annoyed because like, some people got 30 out of 30 and saying well done to each other and I feel really excluded..... you feel really, really, really sad and down and like, not as clever as them."*

Post-programme, the girls are learning to accept their difference more, acknowledge the strengths they have are important, and focus on their improvement, not comparing themselves

to others, as Daisy conveys. *“I feel better when I try and tell myself that it doesn’t matter if someone else’s result is better than mine and I should be happy with my result.”*

Jasmin continues to demonstrate her strong self-efficacy, *“I don’t really focus on what other people are doing”*.

For one of the participants, her story post-programme did not demonstrate much change from before. She remained happy to participate but did not respond or verbalise much in the sessions. If her progress and engagement are good then we need not analyse this further, however, some pupils may need a more individualised one to one support, there may be other factors affecting an individual, that this type of programme will not resolve. Researcher, *“When you are finding something tricky, what does that look like? Lily, “I usually just deal with it”. Researcher, “What does ‘just deal with it’ look like?” Lily, “Forgetting about it”*.

Pupils must understand what is different about the dyslexic brain. Their unique thinking and processing style means there is a trade-off with these strengths, resulting in the difficulties experienced with literacy learning and for some, a slower processing speed and working memory (Eide & Eide 2011). Acceptance and understanding are crucial for young pupils with specific learning differences, such as dyslexia, alongside these other coping and metacognitive strategies to develop a stronger self-efficacy leading to a more positive academic self-image and self-esteem. Each of the participants are at different stages of acceptance, whether they have a dyslexic label or know they have specific cognitive processing differences.

By developing a stronger sense of self-efficacy, through using the above strategies, we can lower and control the level of stress and anxiety experienced when faced with difficulty and adversity, as well as keeping us motivated. (Bandura 2008). The higher our sense of self-efficacy the more we can control this process and concentrate effort and space to cognitive processing (Pajares 1996, Zlomuzica et al 2015), leading to successful and enjoyable learning experiences, progress and achievement.

Post-programme the girls demonstrate a stronger sense of self-efficacy, due to the coping strategies, growth mindset and helpful and hopeful thinking the girls are using, as Holly verbalises. *“I knew what I found difficult, I just didn’t know what to do about it.”*

Continuing to develop these strategies will provide protective factors and lead to greater resilience, confidence and academic self-confidence. Erica illustrates that, although she is developing coping strategies and helpful thinking styles, there will still be plenty of times when they find situations difficult and will not use these strategies immediately. As discussed in the

definitions of resilience, it is necessary to understand that resilience is not a trait. Such support and learning will require revisiting and practising. Erica says, *“It’s really tricky when you are in these situations to do the stuff we have been learning because my mind is like really negative and I’m very hard on myself so it will just take a bit longer. Not thinking that I’ve failed when like I have made one mistake.”*

Although through their narratives, the girls have voiced how the programme has helped them, this study was not designed to measure the impact of such a programme. We cannot know whether such changes are due directly to the programme, have been developed further by the programme or were already present. However, their narratives have demonstrated how the girls have been facilitated to voice perceptions of their self-image and feelings of self-esteem. Furthermore, through inductive analysis of the narratives, it has identified protective factors needed to develop resilience to work through the difficulties in learning they face including: calming strategies; noticing unhelpful thinking and reframing those thoughts; a positive attribution style; a growth mindset; self-advocacy; and, self-acceptance.

The role of teachers in explicitly modelling problem-solving, a growth mindset and a positive attribution style is very powerful (Dweck 2006). Additionally, demonstrating a positive explanatory style where they focus on what is going well and the effort pupils are putting into a task, will model to pupils helpful thinking. Furthermore, discussing and problem-solving alternative strategies, demonstrating there is always something that can be tried rather than giving up develops a growth mindset (Boman & Mergler 2014). Supporting pupils in this way to persevere, try different strategies and notice their thinking, reframing to more helpful thinking if necessary, will enable them to experience success and consequently strengthen self-efficacy and self-esteem.

There was no observable difference from the data with those pupils who had been assessed as dyslexic through a full diagnostic assessment and those who have had in school assessments recognising cognitive processing differences, such as, phonological processing, memory and concentration. Having an understanding that there is a difference in the way their brain works and accepting this, whether there is a formal label or not is key for young people, as they then face the difficulties these differences present. This study has noticed how acceptance of difference and protective factors are crucial to a pupil making good progress and achievement, together with an understanding supportive environment, rather than whether they have a dyslexic label or not.

The setting in which this study was undertaken seeks to provide such a teaching and learning environment to provide opportunities for successful learning experiences. Hence, returns us

to the question of whether experiencing success leads to a stronger self-efficacy or developing a stronger self-efficacy leads to success. Burden (2005) suggests this is too complex a construct to unravel and both are essential to progress, success and well-being, this study would concur. Research has evidenced that a strong sense of self-efficacy leads to a greater, motivation to learn, self-regulation, self-evaluation, setting challenging goals, successful learning and hence positive self-esteem (Zimmerman 2000). Other research demonstrates how mastery experiences are the most effective means by which to develop self-efficacy, which in turn will enable the individual to approach tasks and situations with greater effort, perseverance and persistence (Schunk & DiBenedetto 2016). Tugade & Fredrickson (2004) highlight throughout their research how positive emotions, gratitude and hopeful thinking, lead to a greater resilience and self-efficacy, factors that this study has identified.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Summary

The participants in this study have, through their voice, demonstrated how they can articulate perceptions of their academic self-concept and feelings of self-esteem more effectively. Furthermore, they have expressed the factors that have led them to increase their sense of self-efficacy and lower their levels of anxiety. These protective factors include calming strategies; noticing unhelpful thinking and reframing those thoughts; a positive attribution style; a growth mindset; self-advocacy; and, self-acceptance. Although the positive changes in the girls' narratives cannot be attributed to the programme used, the findings of this study suggest how such a programme could, through developing protective factors, contribute to a more positive self-image and self-esteem in the areas of learning where pupils experience difficulty and challenge. Additionally, the findings highlight the need for a pupil's academic environment to embrace difference at brain level and to recognise and celebrate the strengths of learners with a specific learning difference.

Dyslexia or a specific learning difference is a life-long challenge to cope with, hence acceptance is crucial. Consequently, when life throws additional challenges, having developed strategies to exercise resilience, these challenges can be worked through. It is important to reiterate that individuals can still display sadness, self-doubt and anxiety in the face of difficulty, challenge and mistakes, but it is the resilience developed, the coping strategies that they can trigger, the ability to notice unhelpful thinking, challenge it and reframe, that enables them to cope, adapt and carry on. Working through such situations when they have these coping strategies and a stronger self-efficacy, enables pupils to gain positive experiences and be successful. These in turn demonstrate how they can influence situations and outcomes, so boost their self-efficacy further and feed into a positive academic self-image and raised self-esteem. Resilience is often 'forged through pain and struggle' (Neenan 2017:11), we can embrace these emotions, realise we don't have to win every adversity but find constructive ways and more helpful thinking, to cope, adapt and move forward. The Japanese art of Kintsugi, meaning to 'join with gold', involves reassembling the broken pieces of a pot with a gold glue, and is likened to life with mistakes and failures adding to life's worth, beauty and meaning. This study acknowledges that resilience is learned and developed through difficulty and challenge. Young learners need adults who model and make explicit that mistakes and failures are valuable and enriching learning opportunities that develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills.

5.2 Implications for practice

Currently, schools are building and implementing mental health and well-being frameworks and research proposes that such frameworks include three levels of support (Tran et al 2014). A universal level where all pupils receive resilience teaching, a second level for those who need more explicit, intensive support, such as used in this study, and, a third level of individualised support, possibly linking into third party support and provision. A few pupils in a school setting may develop unhelpful strategies and behaviours, together with, low self-esteem and high levels of anxiety, and these pupils will need professional support (Singleton 1999). Additionally, such a framework will encompass the whole school community (Tran et al 2014), as Erica said *“but I think everyone should be able to do it (the sessions), more people need to be learning about it. It can be open to teachers and everyone.”*

We can teach and support young people to reverse the physiological changes in the brain, which are activated in response to difficulty and challenge, By developing self-efficacy and coping strategies identified by this study, they can switch on the prefrontal cortex, shut down by the stress response and calm the amygdala. This will allow them to problem solve and to challenge and reframe unhelpful thoughts and behaviours, that may lead to a spiraling downwards of unhelpful and even destructive behaviour. These are all protective factors that can be present naturally in some individuals, as with Jasmin in this study, but can be learned, to develop a stronger academic self-concept. Educational practice needs to support pupils to develop protective factors at each level of support.

Teaching such resilience and coping skills explicitly develops metacognition, attitudes and behaviours to strengthen a pupil’s academic self-concept and enables them to go forward in their learning and life, generally in a better position to manage anxiety and face difficulties, challenge and failure. Provision for developing these protective factors can be embedded throughout the curriculum, some pupils will require additional support and more explicit teaching, through such a group programme as used by this study.

5.3 Recommendations

A further study could be designed to measure the impact of such a resilience-based programme on pupils’ academic self-concept using qualitative data such as rating scales. The narratives from this study demonstrate the positive effect the programme had on the way the girls verbalised their academic self-concept, self-efficacy and coping strategies. Further studies on a larger scale and different settings could contribute to the knowledge base in this academic field.

Further research is needed in how we celebrate and develop strengths in an already stretched curriculum. Despite the setting offering a broad and enriched curriculum with many creative extra-curricular opportunities, the participants in this study still felt their strengths were not as important as those pupils whose strengths are in literacy and maths. More needs to be explored in how to enable those, with these specific learning differences and a difference in brain structure, to discover their strengths and believe they are as important as any other academic strength, alongside supporting them to reach a good level of literacy and maths.

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Appendix 1 – Bounce Back Acronym

- ❖ **B**ad times don't last. Things always get better. Stay optimistic.
- ❖ **O**ther people can help if you talk to them.
- ❖ **U**nhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset. Think again.
- ❖ **N**obody is perfect – not you and not others.
- ❖ **C**oncentrate on the positives (no matter how small) and use laughter.
- ❖ **E**verybody experiences sadness, hurt, failure, rejection and setbacks sometimes, not just you. They are a normal part of life. Try not to personalise them.
- ❖ **B**lame fairly. How much of what happened was due to you, to others, and to bad luck or circumstances?
- ❖ **A**ccept what can't be changed (but try to change what you can change first).
- ❖ **C**atastrophising exaggerates your worries. Don't believe the worst possible picture.
- ❖ **K**eep things in perspective. It's only part of your life.

Appendix 2 - Bounce Back Sessions

Taken from Bounce Back years 5-6: A Positive Education approach to wellbeing, resilience and social-emotional learning. McGrath, H. and Noble, T. 2017

Introduction

- ❖ Oh, the places you'll go, Dr. Seuss
- ❖ Talk -
 - What are Dr. Seuss's messages about life? (Life has its ups and downs; everybody will meet obstacles. i.e. experience setbacks and make mistakes along the way; persevere and give up, stay optimistic; your life journey will mostly be wonderful.)
 - What is one strength you have and why is it important to know your strengths? (e.g. good at drawing, maths, reading, composing songs, surfing/playing football. Doing something you good at can help you to get through a difficult time.)
 - How do you 'unslump' yourself when things go wrong in your day? What are good ways of dealing with changing a bad mood into a good mood? (e.g. going for a walk, riding a bike, listening to talking to someone, etc.)
- ❖ Inside-outside circle to discuss, move around after each question.
- ❖ Bounce Back Journal – Write down your strengths, what makes you - you
- ❖ Happy feet – Being yourself, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0liQAocT9s>
- ❖ Sticker - Make a list of your strengths, achievements and hopes.

Session 1 - *Bad times don't last, things always get better – stay optimistic*

- ❖ Book – The heart and the bottle. Oliver Jeffers
- ❖ Talk - Bad times and bad feelings are nearly always temporary. Sometimes it takes a while for a difficult situation to improve, but things will get better. Either the situation improves, or you find a way to cope with it. When you are having an unhappy time in part of your life, just try to get through one day at a time. Expecting that things will get better can help you to cope with difficult times.
- ❖ Talk about a survival story – Fleeing natural Disaster – Flood, Fire.
- ❖ Make a Survival Pack – what would they put in a survival pack? (e.g. food, photos, warm clothes, water, games, etc.) How would a survival pack help them emotionally to get through a difficult time?
- ❖ Discuss
 - What might happen if you only focus on the bad time and what you have lost? (You continue to feel sad, depressed, unhappy.)
 - What is optimism? (The belief that things are more likely to turn out well.)
 - What is pessimism? (The belief that things are more likely to turn out badly.)
 - What were the small positives in a bad situation that helped people be optimistic that things get better?
 - How would optimism help you to bounce back from a difficult situation? (You don't feel so sad or worried, it gives you hope, it keeps you trying to solve a problem.)
 - How would pessimism make things worse? (You feel bad, you give up.)
- ❖ Journal – Have you ever been in a situation you did not like and thought it would never improve but it did?

Why don't bad times last? (Because situations change, time makes things seem less awful, other people help along the way, time helps you to see things more in perspective, more ways to solve the problem occur to you.)

- ❖ Stickers - Bad times don't last, things always get better

When it rains look for rainbows when it's dark look for stars.

Session 2 - Other people can help if you talk to them.

Talking to other people when you have bad and feel unhappy or worried will help you to bounce back. Choose someone you feel that you can trust. When you talk to someone else about a problem, you get a reality check. They will tell you their view on your problem and may give you other ideas or information. They will also help you and care about you. Talking to someone about your troubles sometimes takes courage, and it is a sign of strength.

Emphasise that it takes courage to speak to someone and it is a sign of strength, not weakness.

- ❖ Book – Huge Bag of worries -Virginia Ironside
- ❖ Inside-Out Circle Who might you talk to if you were
 - worried about a project/homework that you were finding difficult to complete?
 - feeling really upset about an argument you had with
 - receiving nasty messages from someone?
 - feeling a bit nervous about a dental or medical appointment you have to attend?
- ❖ Sorting worries and bad feelings into categories used in The Huge Bag of Worries,
 - Worries that go away when you talk about them
 - Worries that belong to other people to deal with
 - Everyone has these worries
 - Worries that someone can help me with
 - Feelings I've had before that go away.
- ❖ BLM Reality Checks Sheet - Discuss reality checks by referring to BLM Reality Checks and going through each item.
- ❖ Treasure Coins – Write a problem/worry on one side, write a strategy to deal with it on the other.
- ❖ Mindful Minute
- ❖ Stickers – Other people can help if you talk to them.
 - Ask for help and support. No one can go it alone.

Extra

- ❖ Who could I talk to? Statements
 - If I was disappointed that I didn't get picked for a sporting side/school play, I could talk to..... and in this situation, I would say.....
 - If I had had a fight with my best friend and was feeling miserable, I could talk to and in this situation, I would say.....
 - If I was upset about my best friend moving to another school, I could talk to..... and in this situation, I would say.....
 - If I was disappointed with the mark, I received on a project that I had put a lot of work into, I could talk to..... and in this situation, I would say
 - If my parents told me they were going to separate and live in different houses and I felt upset, I could talk to..... and in this situation, I would say.....
 - If I was nervous about speaking at a school assembly, I could talk to..... and in this situation, I would say.....
 - If I was worried about a friend who seemed really sad about her family dog dying, I could talk to..... and in this situation, I would say.....
- ❖ After completing the circle talk use the following questions to process the activity. Ask
 - Did you choose the same person in each situation?
 - Why do we choose different people to help us sort out different problems?
 - How can other people help if you talk to them? (They can give you a 'reality check' because they can look at the problem differently and give you their view on your problem. They may also give you some new information and ideas and show you they care about you.)

- What might happen if you don't ask for help or talk to a trusted friend or adult when you have a problem or are upset? (You may: over-react; become depressed; have a lack of hope about dealing with the problem and give up; feel sorry for yourself.)
- Why does it help to practise what you might say in each of these situations? (Asking for help can sometimes require courage. It is useful to practise asking for help, so students are more likely to deal with the problem if it happens in real life.)
- What is a reality check? (It's making sure you have your facts right and haven't made a mistake; it's getting a second opinion on your thinking; it's looking for evidence to confirm or contradict your thinking; it's getting more facts so you can understand the problem.)

Session 3 – Unhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset. Think again.

Helpful thinking is sensible thinking based on facts. It can make you feel calmer and more hopeful about things. Helpful Thinking is based on reality checking for example:

- Getting another opinion
- checking facts
- sticking to the facts
- testing things out.

Unhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset and reduces hope. Unhelpful thinking is:

- Jumping to conclusions and making assumptions
- trying to read other people's minds
- exaggerating
- generalising
- panicking

It can even be thinking that things are simpler than they really are. Changing unhelpful thinking to helpful thinking makes you feel better, helps you to cope and helps you to make better decisions in your life.

- ❖ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zERYDG1SgBQ> _negative v positive voices
- ❖ Talk
 - How does our negative or unhelpful thinking influence how we feel and act? (We feel negative emotions e.g. anger, worry, anxiety and can feel overwhelmed.)
 - How do our positive thoughts influence how we feel and act? (We feel more hopeful and optimistic that things will work out, we are more likely to persevere.)
 - What is the message in the story? (We have a choice of using either helpful thinking or unhelpful thinking.)
 - Do you tend to be a helpful thinker or an unhelpful thinker?
- ❖ Work through helpful/unhelpful thinking activity sheet or e-activity
- ❖ Journal – There are three things we can do to get better at using more helpful thinking:
 1. **Listen to what you're saying to yourself.** Notice what your inner voice is saying – is it positive/helpful or negative/unhelpful?
 2. **Check your self-talk-do a reality check.** Question your self-talk

Is there actual evidence for what I'm thinking?

What would I say if a friend were in a similar situation?

Is there a more positive way of looking at this?

Can I do anything to change what I'm feeling bad about?

3. Change your self-talk.

This takes practice. Try to challenge your negative unhelpful thinking and change to helpful thinking.

Try to look for any small good thing in a tough situation.

Session 4 - Nobody is perfect - not you and not others.

Everyone makes mistakes, forgets things, fails some things and is thoughtless at times. It is normal. We are all people just doing our best, and we all have our weaknesses. There is no such thing as a perfect person. If you expect yourself to be perfect, you will be too self-critical. If you expect others to be perfect and never make a mistake, you will be too critical of them. Then you run the risk of people not liking you. However, even though perfection is not an option, it is still possible to improve ourselves and have high standards.

- ❖ Book – Nobody’s Perfect –
- ❖ Sheet – BLM I’m perfect
- ❖ Talk
 - What are some of the problems that people create for themselves by trying to be perfect?
 - Is it ever possible to be ‘perfect’?
 - What happens if you expect people (e.g. your family) to always be perfect?
 - What is the difference between challenging yourself to work hard and put in lots of effort and aiming for a high standard, and trying to be 100 percent perfect? (Challenging yourself and striving to improve keeps you energised, and you don’t overreact to mistakes and problems, whereas trying to be perfect makes you stressed because it is not possible to achieve perfection.)
 - Why are making some mistakes and having some imperfections necessary and useful? (You learn from them.)
- ❖ Accepting Difference – Book – Giraffes can’t dance
- ❖ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RFdY1Xyq98>
- ❖ Talk
 - How are we different from each other? (Different experiences, cultural backgrounds, strengths and weaknesses, abilities, family structures, values, opinions, preferences, personalities, goals.)
 - Has anyone been in a situation where they felt very different from others’?
 - What does acceptance of difference mean? How can we demonstrate this?

Session 5 – Concentrate on the positives (no matter how small) and use laughter,

Concentrate on whatever positive aspects you can find in an unhappy or worrying situation, even though they may be small. Try to see any small funny side of a situation. Looking at the positives and laughter are things to hang on to when a situation is not good. They won’t magically make your problems go away, but they will help you feel a little better. You will also feel more hopeful about finding solutions and handling things

- ❖ BLM Become a Positive Tracker Today
- ❖ What went well and why WWWWW
- ❖ Tracking the good things – 4 good things about – school/being our age/our city/this month/
- ❖ Fortunately – 2 teams -positive and negative, each take turns to tell a story. One day when Alex was out walking, she found a lost dog. Fortunately... Unfortunately.....

Being Hopeful

- ❖ Michael Rosen’s Sad book
 - What is hope? (The belief that a positive outcome or a brighter future is possible, sometimes despite the odds.)
 - What are things people do to help them cope better and feel more hopeful after a big community or country tragedy or loss? (People light candles, leave flowers, say prayers, and write notes about peace and hope.)

- How does being hopeful help you to achieve what you want, solve problems or feel better? (Being hopeful helps you to feel less sad and worried, and this makes you more energised and willing to take actions that might help the situation.)
- What happens if you give up hope? (Despair, a lack of action or problem-solving.)
- How is persistence related to optimism and hope? (If you believe it is possible, you keep trying.)
- ❖ Look up and talk about symbols of hope -
 - nature (flowers, sunrise, spring, rainbows).
 - Lucky charms (four-leaf clover, horseshoe).
 - Light (dispels darkness, e.g. candles, stars, sun).
 - Spirituality (church, cross, star in a crescent moon, lotus flower, dove)
- ❖ Write a message of hope to themselves on a leaf.....
- ❖ Sticker - Concentrate on the positives (no matter how small) and use laughter

Session 6 - Everybody experiences sadness, hurt, failure, rejection and setbacks sometimes, not just you. They are a normal part of life. Try not to personalise them.

- ❖ Song
- ❖ BLM Absolutely everybody – postbox survey – to show that everyone experiences these
- ❖ Discussion
 - Why do we think that bad things only happen to us?
 - How does it help to know that everyone else has problems, difficulties and hard times?
 - What happens when we take these things personally, or something only happens to us?

How being thankful and showing gratitude helps

- ❖ BLM Grateful thinking sheet
- ❖ Discuss how gratitude is another form of positive tracking – noticing and reflecting on the good things in people and places and the kind acts of others. Being grateful also involves considering why the person did the act of kindness, what the action ‘cost’ the person (i.e. what did they have to give up etc.) and the benefits received from it.
- ❖ People are more likely to experience gratitude when they consider the three grateful thinking questions:
 - 1 How did someone’s actions make things better for me?
 - 2 What effort did they make for me?
 - 3 Why might they have taken that action for me?
- ❖ Give each student a 10 cm x 10 cm blank piece of paper on which to draw something are thankful for. Mount each square on a 12 cm x 12 cm coloured piece of paper and piece the different coloured squares together to create a classroom gratitude quilt/collage.
- ❖ Each student writes an acrostic poem of things they are grateful for using the word ‘gratitude’.
- ❖ Daily Students count how often they say ‘thank you’ in one day. They can use a page of 20 circles and cross off and add the time to each circle when they say thank you. They only count that they are genuinely thankful for, but they can include thanking others for little things someone sharing something with them. They record their results in their journal.
- ❖ Gratitude gift box Students each make a gratitude box as a gift for someone special to them box contains thank you messages that specify different actions the person has taken on their behalf. They use the three grateful thinking questions to write on Some ideas to help students to think of things they are grateful for include:
 - books, stories, songs, games, or a movie shared
 - a holiday memory
 - an activity shared
 - a visit together to somewhere special
 - something funny that you shared.

- ❖ Gratitude week photos Every day for 1/2 weeks, each student takes one photo of something they are grateful for. It can be people, places, objects, pets, etc. (e.g. playing sport, being with their pet, engaging in their favourite hobby, enjoying nature). Under each photo, students write a caption to focus attention on why they chose this photo. The key is to heighten students' awareness of the small good things that they see, smell, hear, taste and do. It might be the taste of ice cream, laughing with a friend, a game played with a friend, a big smile from a family member, and so on.

Discuss the benefits of positively tracking the good things that happen each day; it increases our gratitude for the good things in our life, and it helps us to build and remember memories of good things, events and times. Sharing photos with others means sharing the experience.

- ❖ Being thankful reflections - Several times a week ask students to describe two things about their life for which they are thankful/grateful and why. This reflection helps students to develop an ongoing recognition of the good things in their life.
- ❖ Gratitude quotes
- ❖ Positive/optimistic quotes

'However long the night, the dawn will break.' (African proverb)

'Every cloud has a silver lining.'

'If life gives you lemons, then make lemonade.' (Anonymous)

- ❖ Sticker – Everybody experiences sadness, hurt, failure, rejection and setbacks sometimes, not just you. They are a normal part of life. Try not to personalise them.

Session 7 - Blame fairly. How much of what happened was due to you, to others, and to bad luck or circumstances?

- ❖ Song
- ❖ Watch - Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day Official Trailer
- ❖ Introduce the skill of 'blaming fairly'. Explain the three reasons why things usually go wrong are because of:
 - something you do
 - something other people do
 - bad luck or something that is happening at that time.

Explain that when things go wrong, we can usually bounce back more quickly if we:

- try to change the things that we can change, such as what we did
- explain to others what we think they did
- accept the things we can't change, such as bad luck.
- ❖ Make Responsibility Pie Chart
- ❖ Use Blame fairly scenario sheets to decide/discuss how much of the outcome was due to what the character did, something others did or was just bad luck + (yr 4 resilience pdf)
- ❖ Sticker - Blame fairly. How much of what happened was due to you, to others, and to bad luck or circumstances?

Session 8 – Accept what can't be changed (but try to change what you can first)

- ❖ Sticker - Accept what can't be changed (but try to change what you can first)
 - Story of overcoming odds
 - Video Boundin
 - Journal -what might we have to accept that can't be changed? What is accepting? – finding ways to live with them, accepting that something has happened, and it is outside our control.
- ❖ Story of overcoming adversity – If I can't walk, I'll fly instead.

Humour

Laughter and engaging in humour are enjoyable and fun. It makes you feel relaxed and more able to cope when you feel unhappy. Laughing can make your immune system more effective so that you can fight disease.

- ❖ What makes you laugh? What are the typical things that students of your age find funny? What are the typical things that younger children find funny? What is sarcasm? (A form of putting others down.) What is a book, TV show or film that you find funny? What makes you laugh in this book, show or film?
- ❖ Compile a class book of every student's recommendations for: funniest song, illustrator, poem, book, joke, riddle, website, TV show, film, cartoon, comedian.
- ❖ Rating jokes. BLM Which One is Funniest? Place a numbered joke from BLM Which One is Funniest? With squares of paper with that joke's number written on them on each table. Students individually move from table to table rating each joke and recording their rating on the paper. They rate each joke as: 1 very funny 2 quite funny 3 okay 4 not that funny 5 not funny at all.
- ❖ Students keep a humour diary for a week. They make a note of every time something makes them laugh. Do any patterns emerge regarding coping or relaxing? Students can then a brief reflection about what they learned about themselves.
- ❖ knock, knock jokes
- ❖ The Student Action Team (see page 98) makes recommendations about how teachers and students can enhance their wellbeing and positive mood at school by having more opportunities to laugh and have fun. The team invites ideas from the class about how this might be achieved, and these are combined and presented to senior staff at the school for consideration.

Humour helps us to cope better

- ❖ Revolting Rhymes – A book of rhymes guaranteed to make students laugh.
- ❖ Song/dances – chicken dance, baby shark.....
- ❖ Tongue-twister
- ❖ Words of wisdom – find two or three quotes about humour, laughter, health and humour
- ❖ Journal – favourite quote, who/what makes you laugh, funny film, a pet or an animal done something that made you laugh?

Discussion questions

- How can humour make you feel more optimistic or hopeful? (It helps to get things in perspective and takes our mind off things, makes you feel better.)
- Have you ever seen someone fall over or trip and some people laughed? (why do people sometimes laugh when they see someone have a fall?)
- Is it mean to laugh when someone feels embarrassed? Or is it helpful? (There are some nasty reasons - they don't stop and think about how the other person feels or they want to them feel even more humiliated; some kind reasons - they want the other person to feel better and see the funny side.)
- Is it okay to laugh at other's misfortunes? (No, they will think you are being mean and unkind.
- Can you think of a time when you coped better with something unpleasant when you found the funny side to it, either at the time or afterward, even if it was a small funny side?

Put-down humour is not okay

- Belittling and making fun of someone's way of speaking, dress, actions, ideas etc
- Laughing at ugly pictures or descriptions of others that have been posted online.
- Telling others about something embarrassing that happened to a classmate and encouraging them to laugh about it and mock the other person.
- Children telling their parents or siblings 'funny' stories that belittle or mock others at their school.

Session 9 - Catastrophising exaggerates your worries. Don't believe the worst possible picture.

- ❖ Blow a balloon making an ever-increasingly exaggerated statement with each blow.
 - I've been invited to my cousin's birthday party.
 - I would like to go but I don't know anyone who will be there.
 - I'd probably feel too shy to try to get to know anyone there.
 - I might end up with no-one to talk to or have fun with.
 - If I tried to talk to some of them, they might ignore me or laugh at me.
 - I don't think I will go to the party.

Discussion questions

- What was happening with the thinking in each phase in the story? (The thinking became more and more exaggerated and focused on the awful things that could happen, as though they definitely would happen.)
- How does catastrophising affect what you do? (You probably will avoid doing things because you expect the worst, you feel worse than you have to.)
- What do you think can happen if you start to think in this way? (It can become a habit.)
- If catastrophising becomes a habit, can a person break it? (Yes, habits can be broken but it is not always easy.)
- How can you break such a habit?

A habit of catastrophising can be broken by:

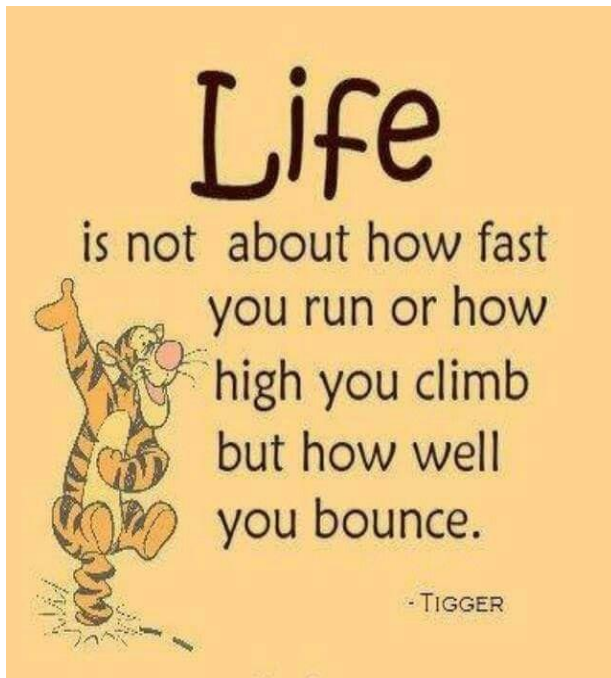
- Doing a reality check and getting a second opinion and more information
 - Saying to yourself that you can't tell what is going to happen in the future
 - Asking yourself 'if the worst did happen, could I cope with it?'
 - Using helpful thinking, not unhelpful thinking (yr 5 resilience pdf)
 - Staying positive and optimistic.
- ❖ Practising Helpful Thinking, Challenging Unhelpful Thinking
 - ❖ Reality check (year 6 resilience pdf)
 - ❖ Sticker - Catastrophising exaggerates your worries. Don't believe the worst possible picture.

Session 10 - Keep things in perspective

Has anything happened to you that at first seemed like the worst thing that could happen, but that turned out to be not as bad as it first seemed? If one thing goes wrong in your life, what happens to the rest of your life? (Sometimes this one thing has a small impact on other parts of your life, but mostly the rest of your life is just as good as it was before, although it may not feel like this at first.)

- ❖ Sticker – Keep things in perspective
- ❖ Look at and discuss the complete Bounce Back acronym, what has been helpful?
- ❖ Use favourite resilience quote to make a fridge magnet.

Appendix 3 - Parent Information Leaflet



Introducing a master's research project.

A lunchtime 'Tigger' Club is starting where we will explore resilience through games and activities. Developing thinking skills and strategies to 'bounce back' from, adapt to, or work through tough situations, difficulties, setbacks and challenge. Resilience is something learned we don't just have it.

The research

The study will listen to the voices of pupils before and after attending the club for 10 weeks. Exploring their perceptions of their academic self-concept and self-esteem, and how they perceive any difficulties they have in relation to their learning.

The club will be based on a programme called 'Bounce Back' which integrates the science of positive psychology with evidence-based

educational practices to enable pupils to thrive and succeed academically, socially and emotionally. It is intended that this club will continue to run after the study has finished adding to the support and provision already in place for the wellbeing of our girls. It will begin after October half term.

Your daughter is being invited to take part in the research, due to assessments she has had with myself or outside of school, identifying a difference in cognitive processing or dyslexia which can lead to challenges in her learning. Before attending the club, I will talk with your daughter about how she views herself as a learner and then again after 10 weeks. These interviews will take place at a mutually agreed time, either before school, at lunchtime, or after school.

There is a gap in research where the voices of younger pupils are listened to in relation to perceptions of their academic self-concept and self-esteem. Young people can make a significant contribution to research that informs teaching and learning, this study seeks to enable them to use their voice, listen to them and act on it. Findings from this research will add to and help shape future support for pupils who are not able to demonstrate their underlying ability or are not fulfilling their potential.

Data Protection

The interviews will be recorded and stored in password protected files. The recordings will then be transcribed using pseudonyms and these saved as password protected documents. Your daughter will then be able to listen to the transcripts, make any changes and agree that it is a true record of what they said.

This data gathered will not be used for any other purpose, than writing the findings of this study.

Your rights

Your daughter is being invited to take part, but this is entirely voluntary, and you and your daughter have the choice whether to consent to take part or not.

*Grace Wakelin
Postgraduate Masters SpLD, Bath Spa University*

Appendix 4 - Parent Letter and Consent Form



Bath Spa University
School of Education
Bath
BA2 9BN

October 2019

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am currently undertaking research at Bath Spa University as part of a Professional Master's Programme. I am writing to request permission to involve your daughter in my research.

The enclosed information leaflet details the nature and reason for the research. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further information or questions.

If you feel able to consent, your daughter will then be given an information leaflet and have it explained to her. She will be given a consent form to sign, this will be done by her class teacher, so she feels more able not to consent than if I asked her.

If you are happy for your daughter to take part, please fill in the attached consent form and send it back to me at school.

Thank you for your consideration in this research which seeks to explore the voice of children and the right of a child to express views, ideas and feelings. Teaching and learning pedagogy need to reflect viewpoints, experiences and feelings of children for it to be relevant and effective. Thank you for considering your daughter to be part of this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Grace M Wakelin".

Grace Wakelin



Research Project: How does a pupil, with dyslexia or a cognitive processing difficulty, verbalise their academic self-image and feelings of self-esteem

Researcher: Grace Wakelin

Parent Consent Form

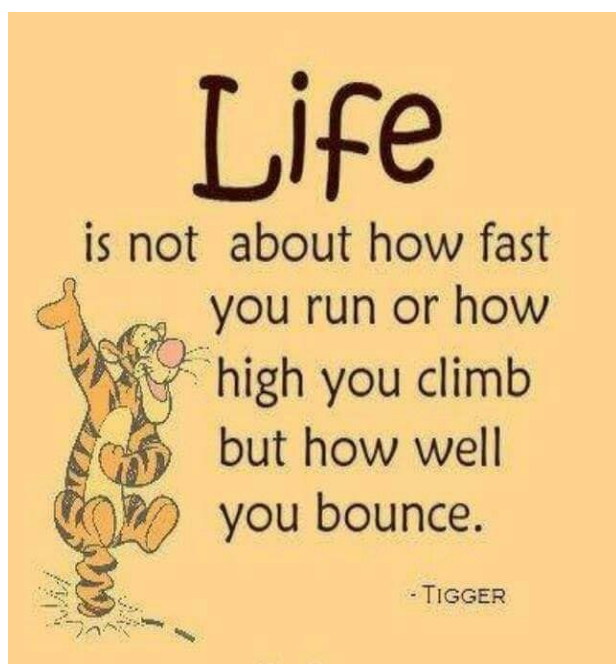
- I have read and understood the Information Sheet.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.
- I agree for my daughter to take part in this project, but it will also be for her to decide.
- I understand that her participation is voluntary and that she is free to withdraw such participation at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that in accordance with GDPR, all personal records, identifiable data, transcripts and records will be anonymised to ensure rights to privacy and confidentiality.
- I understand that all recorded conversations will be stored digitally and be password protected. Subsequent transcripts of the recordings will be anonymised and also stored digitally with password protection.
- I consent to my daughter's conversation being recorded by audio.

I freely give my consent for my daughter to participate in this research study and have been given a copy of this form for my own information.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 5 - Participant Information Leaflet



Tigger Club

A lunchtime 'Tigger' Club is starting where we will explore resilience through games and activities. Resilience is something learned we don't just have it.

Resilience is

- Bouncing back after a difficult time
- Giving things a go and trying your best
- Dealing with challenges
- Coping through hard times
- Trying again, trying another way

This programme is linked to a research project looking at the effect of developing resilience on our learning and how we feel about ourselves as a learner. As part of the research, I would like to hear your thoughts, feelings and views about your learning.

About

The Tigger club will be for 10 weeks at lunch-time and through games and activities, we will look at developing skills and coping strategies for when things go wrong, when you find your learning hard, when you can't remember what to do and you feel like giving up.

It will begin after the October half-term break. Before we begin the club, I will talk with you about how you find learning, your voice and your views are important. We will agree on a good time for you to come and talk with me. We will then talk again at the end of the 10 weeks. These talk sessions will be about 20 minutes long and you will not miss any lessons.

The findings of this study, your voice, and your views will provide positive information on future support for pupils like yourself who find learning a bit tricky and hard sometimes.

Your rights

- It is for you to decide to take part in this, you do not have to. You can stop taking part at any time.
- When you talk with me you can stop at any time and pass on any questions.
- I will store the recordings of our chat and notes made, in safe password protected files.
- When I talk about the research and write reports I will change your name to keep what you say anonymous.
- I would not talk to anyone about what you have said, unless you tell me about the risk of someone being harmed.

*Mrs. Wakelin
Bath Spa University*

Appendix 6 - Participant Consent Form



Participant Consent Form

I agree

- to taking part in the Tigger club for 10 sessions
- to talk to Mrs Wakelin before starting the Tigger Club and then again at the end of the 10 weeks.
- That the interview at the start and end of the programme can be recorded by Mrs. Wakelin, using a voice recorder.

I understand that

- The interviews, once they are recorded and written down, will be securely looked after on a computer and that only Mrs. Wakelin will have access using a password only she knows.
- I can decide not to continue taking part in the clubs or the interviews at any time.
- My name will be changed in the written reports so that I cannot be identified.
- I will have the opportunity to listen to the conversations Mrs. Wakelin recorded between us and make changes with any of it that I do not feel happy with.

I am happy to take part in this research.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 7 – Transcript Agreement



Participant Transcript Agreement Form

Date of Interview

- I have had my conversations written up and read out to me.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions, make comments and change anything I was unhappy with.
- I am happy with the record of my conversation.
- I am happy for it to be used in the research report.

I agree that this is a true record of my conversation with Mrs. Wakelin.

Signature:

Date: