Engaging with Community: Exploring the role of primary school governing boards in developing and implementing a ‘vision’ for Special Educational Needs

Kim Alexandra Walker BSc (Hons), PGCE, MA

Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology

Doctorate in Education

20 July 2020
Abstract

This study explored how members of governing boards in two English primary schools developed and implemented a ‘vision’ for children considered to have Special Educational Needs (SEN). The research questions also examined the meaning of vision for governors in these schools and factors that enabled or constrained them in achieving their vision.

The study drew on a sociocultural perspective and adopted a comparative case study methodology (Bryman 2004). A range of methods were used to explore the research question including: semi-structured interviews with members of the Governing Board and staff in each school; focus groups with parents and children; observations of governing board meetings and lessons; and a review of the SEN policy from both schools. The data was analysed by applying thematic analysis to identify themes from the study.

This research drew on a conceptual framework described as the Community of Provision (Rix et al 2013). The framework supported analysis and evaluation of connections between the views and activities of members of the Governing Board with other members of their Community of Provision including staff, children, parents and policymakers.

Findings revealed continuities and differences in meanings, activities and outcomes for governing boards in these schools. A key continuity was the roles afforded to values and relationships across the school community in achieving a vision for equitable support. The role of agency was also represented across these school communities. Differences which influenced the vision in both schools were linked to contextual factors including social, cultural and historical factors.

These findings have implications for models of governance which allow boards to be responsive to their school communities. The findings also consider tensions arising from the notion of SEN in achieving a vision for equitable support. The study concludes by suggesting areas for future research.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the members of the school communities who contributed to this research. It was a great privilege to learn about the ideas, experiences and views of all the participants across the study. I hope that my writing throughout this thesis demonstrates the respect and sensitivity that they deserve.

I would also like to thank my supervisors Dr Michael Strain and Professor Jonathan Rix for their patience, generosity and guidance, and June Ayres for constant support and kindness.

Finally, thank you to Paul for memories, John for courage and Tim for, quite simply, everything.
Table of contents

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................. VIII
LIST OF TABLES ..................................................................................................................... IX
ACRONYMS .............................................................................................................................. X

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................. 1
1.1 Rationale ......................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1.1 Rationale – research ................................................................................................. 1
  1.1.2 Rationale – personal ................................................................................................. 3
1.2 Governing boards in English primary schools ................................................................. 5
  1.2.1 Exploring the meaning of school governance ............................................................ 5
  1.2.2 Exploring the meaning of ‘effective’ or ‘good’ governance ......................................... 7
  1.2.3 Governing Boards – roles, responsibilities and constitution in English primary schools .................................................................................................................. 8
1.3 Vision and governing boards ............................................................................................. 12
  1.3.1 Role of governing boards and government guidance – whose vision is it anyway? ............................................................................................................................ 12
1.4 SEN and governing boards ............................................................................................... 14
  1.4.1 Governing board responsibilities for children considered to have SEN ............... 14
1.5 Research questions ........................................................................................................... 16
1.6 Overview of the thesis ....................................................................................................... 17

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW ...................................................................................... 18
2.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 18
2.2 School governance – a focus of radical change .............................................................. 19
  2.2.1 Rationale for change ................................................................................................. 19
  2.2.2 Governance arrangements and school improvement ................................................... 19
  2.2.3 Tensions emerging from changes to increase the autonomy of governing boards .................................................................................................................. 22
  2.2.4 Autonomy or accountability? ..................................................................................... 25
2.3 The historical context – from social democracy to neo-liberal reform ......................... 27
  2.3.1 Education governance and social democracy ............................................................ 27
  2.3.2 The meaning of neo-liberalism .................................................................................. 29
  2.3.3 The influence of neo-liberal reform .......................................................................... 30
2.4 Revisiting the current context – the role and responsibilities of school governing boards in England .............................................................................................................. 33
  2.5 Vision and school leadership ........................................................................................... 34
    2.5.1 Research into vision – factors affecting development and constraints .................. 36
    2.5.2 Mission, goals and expectations – constructing the framework of vision .............. 38
2.6 Investigating provision for special educational needs .................................................... 40
  2.6.1 The concept of SEN ................................................................................................ 40
  2.6.2 Provision for SEN – critiquing the continuum .......................................................... 42
### 2.7 An alternative approach – the relevance of sociocultural theory to school governance and special educational needs ................................................. 43
  2.7.1 The relevance of sociocultural theory to this research .......................... 45
  2.7.2 An alternative framework – the Community of Provision ..................... 48
2.8 Conclusion ................................................................................. 53

### CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY .................................................................. 55
3.1 Introduction .................................................................................. 55
3.2 Methodological approach .............................................................. 56
3.3 Research design ......................................................................... 61
3.4 Participants ................................................................................ 64
3.5 Research Methods ...................................................................... 66
  3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews ...................................................... 68
  3.5.2 Focus groups ........................................................................ 69
  3.5.3 Observations ....................................................................... 71
  3.5.4 Documentary review ............................................................. 72
3.6 Ethical issues .............................................................................. 73

### CHAPTER 4 – BUILDING ON THE PILOT STUDY ..................................... 75
4.1 Introduction ................................................................................ 75
4.2 Data analysis and findings from the pilot study ............................... 76
4.3 Implications for data collection and analysis in the main study ........... 77

### CHAPTER 5 – DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS .................................. 79
5.1 Data Collection for the main study ................................................. 79
  Castlemount School ........................................................................ 80
  Greenhill School ........................................................................... 80
5.2 Complete data set collected in Castlemount School and Greenhill School .... 85
5.3 Data Analysis ............................................................................ 85
5.4 Thematic analysis ..................................................................... 87
5.5 Employing Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software to support analysis of the data imitations ................................................. 88
5.6 Phases of thematic analysis .......................................................... 89
  5.6.1 Familiarisation with data ....................................................... 89
  5.6.2 Generating initial codes ....................................................... 92
  5.6.3 Searching for themes .......................................................... 93
  5.6.4 Reviewing themes .............................................................. 94
  5.6.5 Defining and naming themes ............................................... 95
5.7 Conclusion ................................................................................. 97

### CHAPTER 6 – FINDINGS ....................................................................... 98
6.1 Introduction ................................................................................ 98
6.2 Castlemount Themes .................................................................. 99
  6.2.1 Theme 1 – Attitudes to equity and equality .............................. 99
CHAPTER 7 – DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction ...............................................................................................138

7.2 The meaning of vision for members of governing boards ......................139

7.2.1 Community systems ...........................................................................140

7.2.2 Community staffing ...........................................................................143

7.2.3 Community of students .......................................................................144

7.2.4 Community support ............................................................................145

7.2.5 Community strategies .........................................................................147

7.2.6 Community space ...............................................................................147

7.2.7 Summary .............................................................................................148

7.3 Understanding of the vision for SEN by the governing board .................149

7.3.1 Community systems ...........................................................................149

7.3.2 Community of students .......................................................................151

7.3.3 Community support ............................................................................152

7.3.4 Community strategies .........................................................................154

7.3.5 Community staffing ............................................................................155

7.3.6 Community space ...............................................................................156

7.3.7 Summary .............................................................................................156

7.4 Planning to support the vision for SEN ..................................................157

7.4.1 Community systems ...........................................................................158

7.4.2 Community space ...............................................................................159

7.4.3 Community support ............................................................................160
7.4.4 Community of students .......................................................... 161
7.4.5 Community staffing ............................................................. 162
7.4.6 Community strategies ......................................................... 162
7.4.7 Summary ............................................................................. 163

7.5 Activities that governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN ................................................................. 163
7.5.1 Community Systems ............................................................. 164
7.5.2 Community of students ....................................................... 165
7.5.3 Community staffing ............................................................. 166
7.5.4 Community support ............................................................. 167
7.5.5 Community strategies and community space .............................. 168
7.5.6 Summary ............................................................................. 169

7.6 Factors that enable and constrain governing boards in achieving their vision for children considered to have SEN ......................................................... 170
7.6.1 Community systems ............................................................. 170
7.6.2 Community of students ....................................................... 173
7.6.3 Community staffing ............................................................. 174
7.6.4 Community strategies ........................................................... 174
7.6.5 Community support ............................................................. 175
7.6.6 Community space ............................................................... 176
7.6.7 Summary ............................................................................. 177

CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION ................................................................ 178
8.1 Introduction ............................................................................. 178
8.2 Contributions to theory ............................................................ 178
8.3 Methodological issues – further research questions ...................... 181
8.4 Methodological contributions .................................................. 182
8.5 Implications for policy ............................................................. 182
8.6 Implications for practice and professional development .............. 184
8.7 Conclusion .............................................................................. 184

REFERENCES ................................................................................. 185

APPENDICES .................................................................................... 196
Appendix 1 – Governing Boards’ responsibilities for children with SEN ................. 196
Appendix 2 – Pilot study interview guide ......................................................... 198
Appendix 3 – Ethics (information and consent) .............................................. 201
A3.1 Pilot study .................................................................................. 201
A3.1.1 Information letter for Chair of Governing Body ......................... 201
A3.1.2 Information letter for Headteacher ............................................. 203
A3.1.3 Information letter for governors (participants) ........................... 205
A3.1.4 Consent forms for governors (participants) .................................. 208
A3.2 Main study ................................................................................. 210
A3.2.1 Invitation/information letter for Chair of Governing Body ................................................. 210
A3.2.2 Invitation/information letter for Headteacher ................................................................. 213
A3.2.3 Information letter for governors ...................................................................................... 216
A3.2.4 Information letter for teaching staff .............................................................................. 219
A3.2.5 Information letter for all parents for class observations .................................................. 222
A3.2.6 Information letter for parents for focus groups .............................................................. 225
A3.2.7 Information letter for parents to share with children ...................................................... 228
A3.2.8 Consent form – governors and teaching staff ................................................................. 230
A3.2.9 Consent form – parents .................................................................................................. 232
A3.2.10 Consent form – children ............................................................................................... 234
Appendix 4 – School invitation letters ....................................................................................... 236
A4.1 Invitation letter for Chair of Governing Body .................................................................. 236
A4.2 Invitation letter for Headteacher ....................................................................................... 239
Appendix 5 – List of data collection tools and timeline .............................................................. 242
Appendix 6 – Main study documentary review – anonymised SEN Policy ................................. 243
Appendix 7 – Main study interview guides – governors and staff ............................................... 251
A7.1 Interview guide – governors ............................................................................................. 251
A7.2 Interview guide – teaching staff ......................................................................................... 253
Appendix 8 – Main study focus group guides – parents and children ........................................ 255
A8.1 Focus group guide – parents ............................................................................................. 255
A8.2 Focus group guide – children ............................................................................................ 257
Appendix 9 – Main study observation record ............................................................................ 259
A9.1 Observation record format ................................................................................................. 259
A9.2 Observation record example ............................................................................................... 259
Appendix 10 – Thematic analysis phase 1 – familiarisation with data ......................................... 262
Appendix 11 – Thematic analysis phase 2 – generating initial codes – Castlemount and Greenhill .......................................................... 266
Appendix 12 – Thematic analysis phase 3 – searching for themes – example of codes linked to themes .................................................................................. 271
Appendix 13 – Thematic analysis phase 4 – reviewing themes – thematic map .......................... 272
A13.1 Castlemount ....................................................................................................................... 272
A13.2 Greenhill ........................................................................................................................... 274
Appendix 14 – Thematic analysis phase 5 – defining and naming themes – table of themes and definitions ......................................................................................... 276
List of figures

Figure 1: The community of provision as a focused collection of practices, services, policies and individuals .......................................................... 52

Figure 2: The community of provision as an interconnected but diffuse collection of practices, services, policies and individuals ........................................ 52

Figure 3: The community of provision: a constantly changing dynamic between diffuse or focused connections in practices, relationships, services and policies ........................................................................................................ 139
List of tables

Table 1: Key features of Castlemount and Greenhill including national averages in England .................................................................81

Table 2: Role of interview participants in each school ........................................83

Table 3: Participants in the parents’ focus groups ...........................................84

Table 4: Participants in the children’s focus groups ........................................84

Table 5: Complete data set ...........................................................................86

Table 6: Number of data extracts which related to each of the research sub-questions – Castlemount and Greenhill ........................................91

Table 7: An example of codes and descriptors identified in Castlemount ..........93

Table 8: Examples of final definitions of themes from each school ...............97
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronyms</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BERA</td>
<td>British Educational Research Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAQDAS</td>
<td>Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DfE</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHT</td>
<td>Deputy Headteacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHCP</td>
<td>Education, Health and Care Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERA</td>
<td>Education Reform Act 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HT</td>
<td>Headteacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HREC</td>
<td>Human Research Ethics Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Local Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA</td>
<td>Local Education Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSA</td>
<td>Learning Support Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGA</td>
<td>National Governors Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofsted</td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>School Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEN</td>
<td>Special Educational Need(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Rationale

This study explored how members of governing boards, in two primary schools in England, developed and implemented a ‘vision’ for children considered to have Special Educational Needs (SEN). It also explored the supports and constraints they encountered in developing and implementing their vision. The aim of this chapter is to provide the rationale for this study through an overview of the research, my personal interest and an examination of the roles and responsibilities of governing boards in England when the research was conducted. The chapter concludes with the research questions.

1.1.1 Rationale – research

Arrangements for school governance have received increasing attention from governments and researchers in recent years (Wong 2011, Huber 2011, Heystek 2011, Connolly and James 2011). A review of international research by Connolly and James (2011) concluded that variations to arrangements adopted in different countries were frequently linked to national interventions that aimed to improve outcomes in schools. Ball (2009) and Balarin (2014) provided further insights internationally. They suggested that, while improving outcomes was a common theme, differences in approach were influenced by the degree to which governments aimed to retain control of schools centrally, while also delegating responsibility to them at an individual level.

In England, the enactment of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) (United Kingdom. Education Reform Act 1988) initiated greater delegation of responsibility to schools and extensive alterations to the roles and responsibilities of governing boards (Ranson 2011, James et al. 2013). Fifteen years later, Earley and Creese (2003) expressed concerns that limited research had been undertaken into the work of school governors, following these changes. While the literature in this area has grown in England, there continues to be a paucity of research in many areas of governing board responsibilities.

Nonetheless, crucial insights have been gained. Research by Ranson (2011), contributed to understanding of the impact of engagement between governing
boards and their local communities, to secure improvements in school provision. His conclusions also offered insights into the tensions that arose for governing boards from implementing governance frameworks that had been developed at national level when they were applied to schools at a local level. Baxter (2017) and Wilkins (2014) also contributed to understanding the pressures and constraints that accountability systems, designed to ensure compliance with these frameworks, exerted on the way that governors enacted their roles and responsibilities in individual schools.

Furthermore, these researchers concluded there continued to be a need for exploration of school governance, through research in other areas affected by related changes to national policy and guidance. They also argued that research on school governing boards should contribute knowledge and understanding that would support school governors to carry out their responsibilities, and address the challenges they experienced (Ranson 2011, Balarin 2014, Wilkins 2014, Baxter 2017).

Two areas where members of school governing boards in England may experience challenges, arose from their responsibilities for ‘vision’ and for children considered to have SEN. Governors are expected to contribute to the development and implementation of a ‘vision’ to secure improvement in their school. They also have specific legal responsibilities for learners considered to have SEN (DfE 2019).

However, the literature search I conducted to develop the research questions, indicated an absence of studies investigating the role of members of governing boards in developing and implementing vision as school leaders. A search of governing boards and responsibilities for SEN revealed two studies since 2000 including a study conducted by Pearson (2011). Her research explored the activity of governors with a delegated responsibility for SEN from the perspective of SEN Coordinators (SENCOs). The findings led her to assert that there was a need for research exploring the views of governors on these responsibilities, and to develop knowledge and understanding of the outcomes of their activities for learners considered to have SEN. Furthermore, the role of school governors in improving outcomes for children considered to have SEN were areas where there was national and international concern (Bush 2015, Pearson 2011, Rix et al. 2013).
As a result, I concluded that research focused on governing board responsibilities for vision development, with a specific focus on children considered to have SEN, could contribute new knowledge and understanding.

However, it is also crucial for researchers to be transparent about their personal interest in their choice of study in order to: support readers to situate the study within the context of the researcher’s personal perspective; clarify the researcher’s personal perspective; and enhance their capacity to identify bias (Robson 2002). Therefore, in the next section I have aimed to provide the rationale for my personal interest.

1.1.2 Rationale – personal

My interest in this area emerged from my leadership experience in primary education during a period which led to radical changes in the roles and responsibilities of governors and governing bodies in schools.

My teaching responsibilities at that time included leading and managing educational provision to support the diversity of children’s needs within mainstream schools as a SENCO and Inclusion Leader. International debate about the usefulness of the concept of SEN also intensified during this period, leading to attempts to move policy and practice from SEN towards inclusion and inclusive pedagogy. The New Labour government, elected in 1997, developed policies, guidance and resources on SEN and Inclusion to promote this change. While these initiatives had limitations, they increased my awareness of the impact on children of processes and practices associated with SEN. Furthermore, the administrative processes that support its implementation lead to tensions for all those involved with school communities that are unresolved (Rix 2015). These tensions, together with exploring the concept of SEN, will be reviewed in Chapter 2. However, my teaching experience informed my perspective as a researcher and my work in my current role as a Lecturer in Primary Education Studies at the Open University.

I was also a school governor from 1995 until 2011 in an Inner London primary school. The school was in an area considered to have significant deprivation and served a diverse community. It was also judged by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) to be a ‘highly inclusive’ school (a designation which is no longer included in Ofsted reports) and attainment results were above the national average for all groups of children, based on annual data reports.
As a staff governor, the importance of context and community engagement in the way that governing boards fulfilled their responsibilities was apparent to me during this period. The diversity of the school community was also strongly represented on the Governing Body (as it was referred to at that time) as members considered that this would enhance the school’s ability to develop provision that would support all children. Irrespective of the constituency they represented, governors attempted to work together collaboratively on a range of tasks including policies, development planning, staff recruitment and supporting children’s progress. The notion of vision was not explicit in guidance from government during the early part of this period. However, it existed as a shared understanding of why, what and how we wanted to improve provision for children. This continued to be the case in later years when explicit references to vision were included in guidance for governing bodies from government and Ofsted.

Provision for children considered to have SEN had been a consistent focus of our responsibilities as governors. It was a priority for the school as we developed an understanding that strategies and resources, which supported children considered to have SEN, supported all children in the school. This challenged the notion of a separate SEN pedagogy. However, when the Governing Body reconstituted following changes in government and policy in 2010, the priorities and ethos changed. A factor in these changes was the reconstitution of the Governing Body to reflect national policy priorities. For example, the reduced emphasis on inclusion in government policy at this time was accompanied by changes in recruitment to the Governing Body. Including parents with diverse backgrounds was replaced with promoting recruitment of governors with professional skills.

Observing, and being part of these changes, led me to reflect on the notion of ‘vision’ for governing boards in their school ‘community’, and how this was linked to support for children considered to have SEN. It also stimulated my interest in the way that governing boards responded to and understood their changing roles and responsibilities, for instance, what did the notion of ‘vision’ mean to them, is it different for different groups of learners, and how do they implement this?

Furthermore, responses to provision for children considered to have SEN appeared to be influenced by the changing membership of the Governing Body. I interpreted this as an indication that the influence of the social and cultural context of the school community itself required further consideration. These reflections informed the focus, approach and rationale for my thesis.
The next section of this chapter provides an overview of the work of school governing boards in England. The roles and responsibilities of governors in state funded primary schools in England, are examined across this section by referring to the guidance that was in place during the period when the study was conducted. In order to set the context for these roles and responsibilities, this section begins by exploring the meaning of school governance and notions of ‘effective’ or ‘good’ governance.

1.2 Governing boards in English primary schools

1.2.1 Exploring the meaning of school governance

Ranson asserted that governance:

“Constitute(s) a public sphere to undertake those activities which individuals cannot do alone, but only together, collectively” (Ranson 2011, p. 405).

He went on to suggest that, in relation to school governance, this task included the exploration of values and beliefs held by those within the school community, in order to enable governors to improve educational provision that supported children’s learning. His suggestion implied that school governance is an autonomous activity.

However, previous observations by Rhodes (1996) and Cooper (1998) argued that central governments used powers available to them to constrain autonomy and determine the way in which governance is enacted locally. They proposed alternative definitions of governance to take account of the influence of central government power upon governance at local level as:

“government without governing” (Rhodes 1996, p. 652) or

“governing at a distance” (Cooper 1998, p. 12).

Wilkins and Gobby (2020) added to these insights and concluded that social, political and economic aims have been central to the current meaning of school governance, as a result of changes to views on the roles of national governments since the 1970s. They argue that current meanings of school governance reflected these changes through redefining it as an expression of small, devolved or bottom-up government where roles and responsibilities previously allocated to local government education departments were moved to a range of organisations, including school governors.
Accordingly, they suggest two interpretations to support understanding of this new construction of governance, described as 'Instrumental-Rational' and 'Agonistic-Political'. The Instrumental-Rational interpretation considers:

“Governance can be understood as a blueprint or model for producing schools that are publicly accountable (narrowly conceived), properly audited and monitored, high achieving, financially sustainable, law compliant and non-discriminatory.” (Wilkins and Gobby 2020, p. 4).

This technocratic approach to school governance describes the elements of a strategy to support central government priorities for improvements in schools. Consequently, the meaning of school governance incorporated governor accountability to community stakeholders and a range of para-government organisations, who evaluated their governance according to an Instrumental-Rational interpretation of success determined by external inspection and testing.

Viewed from an Instrumental-Rational approach the technology of governance is reflected in:

“Rules and expectations enshrined through the formulation of professional guidelines, performance targets, strategic objectives and contractual obligations against which (schools) are compared and judged to be effective, cost-effective, consumer-responsive, industry-facing and high performing” (Wilkins and Gobby 2020, p. 8).

The Agonistic-Political approach acknowledges that social, political and economic aims prioritise diverse interests which can result in the inclusion and exclusion of different groups within school communities. It also reveals that the meaning of governance currently incorporates a range of activities that enable government to control the way decisions on governance are enacted within schools, by increasing their ability to scrutinise and direct.

This analysis explored the meaning of school governance and the influence of central government in England upon that meaning, at the time of when this research was conducted. However, the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 indicates that some school communities considered that values and beliefs are a crucial element in their understanding of governance in spite of these constraints (Ranson 2011).
1.2.2 Exploring the meaning of ‘effective’ or ‘good’ governance

Exploring the meaning of school governance in England at the time when this study was conducted, also requires interrogation of the concept of ‘effective’ or ‘good’ school governance.

The concept of ‘effective’ or ‘good’ governance is evident in consecutive guidance documents published by the Department for Education (DfE 2015, 2017(a) 2017(b), DfE 2019). The contents of these guidance documents are explored further in the next section. However, the extracts of the guidance that are relevant to this concept represent the way the meaning of school governance has been reconstructed by central government. Therefore, descriptions of ‘effective’ or ‘good’ governance were linked to compliance with specific approaches, practices and skills allocated to governor roles and responsibilities. Constructing ‘effective’ or ‘good’ in this way allowed government and government agencies to intervene and support compliance by monitoring, evaluating and comparing school governing bodies.

Wilkins (2020) identified three aspects of ‘effective’ or ‘good’ governance as it was constructed in DfE guidance. The first aspect was concerned with carrying out responsibilities for performance management, together with monitoring of and intervention on, financial and educational standards within schools. This had consequences for two other aspects:

“Recruiting and retaining school governors who are able to deploy prescriptions and solutions … which includes conditioning certain people to stay out of governance” (Wilkins 2020, p. 4).

Furthermore, governors who are effective were considered to contribute to:

“The design and management of internal control systems and standard operational procedures to enable schools to meet certain performance objectives and outcomes” (Wilkins 2020, p. 10).

The second aspect has consequences for participation by members of a school's community as a member of a school governing board. This can be seen through the emphasis on recruitment of governors who possessed technical skills associated with corporate organisations, and recruitment by skills audits and competency frameworks. Further evidence arose from the concern to recruit
“business figures” and “skilled professionals” to become governors, particularly in academy schools (Wilkins 2020, p. 21).

This restrictive interpretation of ‘effective’ or ‘good’ governance and governors is problematic for school communities. The limitations on those who can participate undermine the potential for members of governing boards to represent their communities and make claims for democratic accountability to them. For example, parent governors and those with religious or political affiliations were considered to be problematic, resulting in reductions in their membership of boards. Therefore, their voice and those of the students they represent have risked exclusion and their contribution to educational provision have been limited. Furthermore, the agency that governors bring to the enactment of their roles and responsibilities is constrained by an interpretation of ‘effective’ or ‘good’ governance which reflects the priorities, practices and skills of a corporate rather than an educational environment.

The next section will explore those roles and responsibilities in further detail.

1.2.3 Governing Boards – roles, responsibilities and constitution in English primary schools

Baxter (2017) observed that school governance in England has a lengthy history of at least six hundred years. During this period the main focus of its activity was to oversee the use of school funding. However, since the late 1980s the roles and responsibilities of members of school governing boards have been subject to rapid change, which was heralded by the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) (United Kingdom. Education Reform Act 1988). An aim of the ERA and subsequent legislation in England was to move control of school governance from local education authorities (LEAs) to control by individual schools. This shift in control continued and was reflected in legislation which encouraged state schools to increase their autonomy, by changing their status from ‘Maintained Schools’ to state funded ‘Academies’ (England and Wales. Academies Act 2010, United Kingdom. Education Act 2011). As a result, the roles and responsibilities of governors in state funded schools increased substantially (Ranson 2011, Wilkins 2014, Baxter 2017). It also led to concerns about the underlying rationale for these changes together with tensions arising from conflicting policy priorities. These concerns and tensions will be explored in Chapter 2.
Tensions were evident in the guidance on roles and responsibilities which were described in the ‘Governance handbook’, a document which also identified the categories of schools which it applied to including Academies, Multi-Academy Trusts and Maintained Schools (DfE 2015, DfE 2017a, 2019). Recent versions of the Handbook also advised that it should be implemented alongside the ‘Competency framework for governance’ (DfE 2017b).

The use of the term ‘guidance’ was perhaps misleading because the contents of these documents were both specific and directive. They described the Government’s perspective on effective governance, together with governor functions and responsibilities for leadership, accountability arrangements, the way that governors are expected to work to develop the school team, and the structure and constitution of governance in different forms of schools. Furthermore, this guidance directed governing boards to recruit governors who were ‘people with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity’ (DfE 2017a, p. 11). The ‘Competency framework for governance’ described the personal attributes, time commitment, knowledge and skills, governors should provide in order to be effective in these roles (DfE 2017b). Taken together, these documents revealed the increase in governing board responsibilities, as well as the high degree of specificity and levels of accountability involved in these voluntary roles.

The Governance handbook also detailed the constitutions of boards of schools that had changed their status as well as local authority maintained schools.

In the version of the handbook which was in operation at the time this study was conducted, academies were described as:

‘A charitable company limited by guarantee. It is an independent legal entity with whom the Secretary of State has decided to enter into a funding agreement on the basis of agreeing their articles of association with the department’ (DfE 2017a, p. 43).

As a result of this difference in legal and financial arrangements, members of governing boards of academies were referred to as trustees, to reflect the charitable status of these schools and their roles as company directors.

Advice on the constitutions of schools with ‘Academy’ or ‘Maintained’ status appeared to give more flexibility to academies. However, while stating that
academies had the freedom to design their own constitution they were directed that:

‘The board must include at least two elected parent Trustees …
no more than one third of the board can be employees of the trust;
no more than 19.9 per cent of the board can be LA (Local Authority)
associated, i.e. people employed by an LA’ (DfE 2017a, p. 44).

Guidance on the constitution of local authority maintained schools was more specific and directive since it referred to numbers, rather than percentages, of governors recruited from different areas of the school community. It stated that the membership should include:

‘at least two Parent Governors – elected where possible, otherwise
appointed;
the headteacher, unless he/she decides not to serve on the board;
only one elected Staff Governor;
only one LA Governor; nominated by the LA, appointed by the board …
The board may appoint as many additional Co-opted Governors as it
considers necessary’ (DfE 2017a, pp. 49-50).

Changes in school arrangements, constitutions and roles since the ERA (United Kingdom. Education Reform Act 1988) led some researchers to argue that they were driven by a model of governance which was problematic for schools. For example Ball (2007), Baxter (2017) and Wilkins (2014) asserted that the approach was based on private sector rather than education contexts. As if anticipating these developments, Mintzberg (1992), had warned that governing structures and processes needed to draw on frameworks that were appropriate to their context. His concerns appeared justified by findings from subsequent research which concluded that understanding of context is critical for governors to carry out their roles and responsibilities (Ranson 2011). James et al. (2011) proposed that the skills-based model addressed contextual issues by focusing on the ‘capital’ that governors bring to their schools. However, this also fails to acknowledge the sociocultural context of school communities. Accordingly, governing boards continue to experience tensions in managing the conflicting demands of their roles (Baxter 2017).
Ranson, who explored the pressures experienced by board members in his research, described the changes to school governance arrangements since the 1980’s as the ‘largest democratic experiment in voluntary participation’ (Ranson 2011, p. 398). His observation, and those made by Wilkins (2014), highlighted the complex demands made on volunteers in these roles, particularly in their responsibilities for school improvement and pupil performance (Ranson 2011, James 2014 and Wilkins 2014). These responsibilities are linked to another aspect of this ‘experiment’ which involved the transfer of control away from LEAs to governing boards. Previously, LEA professionals provided support for many of these functions. However, as a result of this alleged transfer of control, governing board members were expected to carry out increased leadership responsibilities with less assistance.

Drawing on an empirical study that explored the experiences of these volunteers, Wilkins (2014) described findings from interviews with board members in a range of schools. He explored the way that governors experienced being accountable for leading school improvement and pupil performance through inspection. He concluded that governors often felt ill-equipped to fulfil these responsibilities, since they were expected to meet them without the resources which were previously afforded to LEAs. These findings led him to question the success of this ‘high stakes transfer of power’ (Wilkins 2014, p. 183). However, other researchers have concluded that governing boards can support improvement by drawing on their wider community, to support education for all children (Heystek 2011, Pearson 2011 and Ranson 2011). This research will be examined in further detail in Chapter 2.

In this section, I have aimed to show the extent of changes to school governor roles and responsibilities for school leadership. I have also aimed to reveal that the way in which these responsibilities are enacted is, to a large extent, directed and controlled by central government through published guidance. The guidance also specifies aspects of leadership which boards must engage in to achieve improvement. One of these aspects is the notion of ‘vision’.
1.3 Vision and governing boards

1.3.1 Role of governing boards and government guidance – whose vision is it anyway?

In the Foreword to the 2017 Governance handbook, John Nash described school governors as:

‘The vision setters and strategic decision makers for their schools’ (DfE 2017a, p. 4).

This statement reflected the ‘transfer of power’ to school governing boards that was referred to in the previous section (Wilkins 2014, p. 183). However, it also revealed the increasing prominence of the term ‘vision’, which in this context referred to a range of diverse responsibilities delegated to board members. The implications underlying its use in the quotation above, was that the development and implementation of a ‘vision’ to secure improvement in schools, was seen by central government as a significant responsibility of governing boards.

The alignment of vision to strategic direction in this description also highlighted an expectation that vision development and implementation, were related to the formulation and dissemination of strategic decisions and plans within schools. Furthermore, it implied that boards themselves were responsible for setting their own vision, so the term as it was used here, requires further examination.

According to successive versions of guidance for governors, vision in the school context was able to be subjected to continuous ongoing changes. Examples of this could be seen in changes to subsequent versions of the Governance handbook, as the interpretation of vision changed in these publications (DfE 2015, DfE 2017a).

In 2015, the previous description of vision as an improvement journey for all in the school community, was replaced with an emphasis on:

‘Setting priorities, creating accountability and monitoring progress in realising the school’s vision’ (DfE 2015, p. 10).

These changes were significant as they revealed that the interpretation of vision was adapted to support the implementation of policy priorities. Further support for this argument can be drawn from the 2017 Governance handbook which stated that it:
‘Sets out the government’s vision and priorities for effective governance’ (DfE 2017a, p. 6).

There is an apparent contradiction therefore, in suggesting that governors were vision setters in their own school context, when the Governance handbook conveyed the Government’s own vision of ‘effective governance’. This version of the Governance handbook went on to identify what the Government saw as the three core functions of school governors including:

‘Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction’ (DfE 2017a, p. 9).

The focus on the role of vision in strategic leadership was repeated in the description of key features of effective governance, which included the presence on governing boards of:

‘People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity’ (DfE 2017a, p. 11).

This implied a further conflict between the vision determined by government and the agency schools brought to developing a vision relevant to their context. For example, there may be considerable differences between national and local assessment of the ‘right skills, experience, qualities and capacity’, which can lead to confusion for governors in fulfilling their roles (Baxter 2017).

Further evidence of prioritising central government policy objectives was present in this guidance through the emphasis on the progress and achievement of all children. Successive governments in England had increasingly emphasised results and testing to analyse children’s progress and achievement. However, as Rix and Parry (2014) pointed out in their discussion of inclusive practice in the UK, the focus on results had consequences for the approaches to provision and practice that were implemented by schools. It has also had the potential to pressure board members to prioritise government interpretations of progress and achievement, rather than implement approaches to progress and achievement which are based on the needs of children within their school community. These contradictions had implications for conclusions drawn by Ranson (2011). He asserted that engaging with members of the school community to develop priorities for action has had positive outcomes. However, constraints arising from guidance on recruitment of members have resulted in conflict for governing boards in achieving those outcomes (Baxter 2017).
The discussion so far aimed to show that there is a tension between the advice that boards should develop a vision which is appropriate for their context, and their capacity to do so, arising from constraints within the guidance (DfE 2017a, DfE 2017b). This tension has been highlighted further where guidance on school governance emphasised monitoring the progress of groups of children. This is particularly evident for children considered to have SEN.

The notion of vision will be explored further in the next chapter. However, the aim of the introduction in this section, was to begin to reveal the complexity of governor leadership responsibilities and the tensions that can emerge in enacting them. Complexities and tensions also exist in their responsibilities for children considered to have SEN.

1.4 SEN and governing boards

The Governance handbook contained specific legal responsibilities on governing boards for children considered to have SEN (DfE 2017a). The term SEN has been a subject of contention since it was employed in the Warnock Report (DES 1978), and incorporated as a legal concept, into the 1981 Education Act (England and Wales. Education Act 1981). Subsequently, it has been linked to and unlinked from the term disability, depending on the approach adopted by different governments to policies affecting children considered to have SEN and/or children with a disability. This research only employs the term SEN to support consistency, since government documents are inconsistent in their use of these terms. Furthermore, SEN and disability are distinct notions and the researcher considered it inappropriate to conflate them. At the time of writing, governing boards had extensive responsibilities for children considered to have SEN and, although quotations from policy may refer to SEND, discussion of these responsibilities will only refer to SEN. Limited research exists on these responsibilities, therefore the next section explores them in further detail.

1.4.1 Governing board responsibilities for children considered to have SEN

Governing boards have been tasked with legal responsibilities for specific groups of children to ensure that they meet requirements arising from the Children and Families Act 2014 (United Kingdom. Children and Families Act 2014). They were
also advised to identify a member or a committee to monitor compliance with their responsibilities for children considered to have SEN (DfE 2017a).

These responsibilities were extensive, and included roles in policy development, funding and staffing, as well as holding schools accountable for the progress of children considered to have SEN. Responsibilities also included their approach to meeting the needs of children with and without Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). There were further expectations that the governing board would work with partners to develop provision for children considered to have SEN, and publish information on that provision, together with arrangements for admission to their school (DfE 2017a, pp. 69-70 – see Appendix 1).

The role of Ofsted, as the inspectorate for schools, had also been developed to ensure that the governing board was evaluated on its accountability in developing a school vision that supported the progress of all children (Ofsted 2014). In order to implement this, Ofsted inspectors were required to make judgements on the effectiveness of governor leadership which included an evaluation of the vision for the school, based on evidence provided by the school, observations by inspectors and data collected from surveys of parents and staff. Ofsted also made judgements on the ability of governing boards to hold schools accountable for the achievement of children considered to have SEN (Ofsted 2015). These included the requirement to engage in planning developments to support provision, interpret the performance data of their school for children considered to have SEN and hold the headteacher to account for their attainment.

There is limited research which explored the way that governing boards engaged with these activities to support SEN provision. However, a study by Pearson (2011) provided some insights. Pearson investigated the impact of school governance responsibilities for SEN, by exploring the activity of governors with delegated responsibility, from the perspective of SENCos. She concluded that, there was considerable variation in the way that governors engaged with these responsibilities. Furthermore, she argued that in her view, it was appropriate for SEN to be part of the responsibilities of governing boards in guidance and legislation. However, in a caveat she added that governing boards should be able to take account of distinctive features of their context as they engaged with leadership of SEN.
This caveat highlights an underlying theme of this chapter, the extent to which schools are able to develop and implement governance practice appropriate to their context and community.

This led me to conclude that, in this study, I aimed to develop new knowledge by:

- exploring the way that members of governing boards plan their vision for children in their school who may be considered to have SEN;
- investigating how their plans are operationalised;
- exploring the outcomes of these processes.

I aimed to do this by building on the research identified in the literature review. A further aim of this study was indicated by the observation that the social and cultural context of individual schools required consideration. Therefore, this study also aimed to contribute to the development of an appropriate conceptual framework that would support governing boards to develop provision for learners considered to have SEN, in a way that takes account of the context of individual schools. Therefore the following research questions were identified.

### 1.5 Research questions

The research question for this study was:

- How do governing boards in primary schools develop and implement a ‘vision’ for children considered to have SEN?

This question was addressed by exploring the following sub-questions:

- What is the meaning of vision for members of the governing board?
- How is the vision for SEN understood by members of the governing board?
- How do governors develop a vision for children considered to have SEN (planning question)?
- What activities do governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN (operationalising question)?
- What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision (outcome question)?

The remainder of the thesis reports on the progress of this research.
1.6 Overview of the thesis

The conclusion of this introduction describes the structure of the following sections of the thesis.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature which was relevant to the study, in order to relate it to existing theory and research, and extend them further to develop new knowledge in this area. It also considers the theoretical foundations for this research and the implementation of a conceptual framework to analyse and evaluate the findings.

Chapter 3 provides the rationale and justification for the methodology which was applied. It also discusses the issues that were considered during the development of the research design, as well as the identification of appropriate research methods, in order to develop and implement the study. This chapter goes on to provide an account of the decisions that were made in selecting and developing research tools. It concludes with an account of the ethical issues that were considered and taken account of before approval for the study was given.

Chapter 4 provides a summary of the pilot study which preceded the main research study for this thesis. It describes how the findings from the pilot study informed changes to methodology and data analysis in the main study.

Chapter 5 describes the data collection that was undertaken in the main study and justifies the approach to data analysis that was applied to the data set. It also presents an analysis of the data across different phases in order to identify key themes that emerged from the study.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings from the data.

Chapter 7 presents a discussion of the findings from this study and addresses each of the research sub-questions.

Chapter 8: The final chapter presents the conclusions arising from the research and ends with a reflection of the issues that arose from it, together with recommendations for future research, policy and practice.
Chapter 2 – Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature that was relevant to key areas of the investigation. The description that follows provides the structure for this review.

Section 2.2 reviews international literature which has explored changes in the role of governing boards, together with some of the tensions that have emerged as a result of these changes.

Section 2.3 considers the historical context, including legislation and policy in education that resulted in changes to arrangements for governing boards in England at the time of writing. It also continues the discussion of tensions emerging from changes by exploring the influence of market principles on these developments.

Section 2.4 revisits the current context which was explored in more detail in Chapter 1.

Section 2.5 considers the notion of ‘vision’ in education and reviews its role in school leadership by drawing on research in this area.

Section 2.6 critiques the concept of SEN, and investigates the way that provision for children considered to have SEN, has been implemented within primary education. It goes on to examine the implications of this approach for the way that support is provided within schools.

Section 2.7 situates this research within a sociocultural perspective and justifies that decision. The chapter concludes by considering the ‘Community of Provision’, a conceptual framework which can be applied to explore approaches to support for children considered to have SEN (Rix 2015). It defends the use of this framework in the current study because, in addition to providing an approach that addresses the inconsistencies of the concept of a continuum of SEN, the inclusion of different ‘perspectives’ within the framework enables the activity of governing boards focused on developing support for SEN to be explored.
2.2 School governance – a focus of radical change

2.2.1 Rationale for change

Change is frequently presented by governments and organisations as a process involving a rationale that justifies planning a series of actions, to achieve improvements. This process is particularly evident in education which, since the latter decades of the last century, has been a focus for governments experimenting with change programmes to achieve improved outcomes in diverse aspects of school performance (Balarin 2014).

School governance is one of the areas where governments have increasingly focused their attention on implementing change in order to achieve improvements (Connolly and James 2011, Huber 2011, Heystek 2011, Wilkins 2014, Baxter 2017). However, even though there have been extensive changes, through legislation and policy, in the roles and responsibilities of governing boards, the success of these changes in meeting anticipated outcomes has been inconsistent, particularly for groups within school communities which may be disadvantaged (Ranson 2011). In the following section, research examining some of the changes in school governance have been reviewed in order to evaluate outcomes in different contexts.

2.2.2 Governance arrangements and school improvement

In a report which compared arrangements for governance in England and Peru, Balarin (2014) observed that there had been increasing pressure on governments internationally to borrow policies and practices in education which appeared to be successful in one country, and implement them in very different settings to achieve improvements. Her observation was supported by a review of research that explored changes to arrangements for and outcomes of, school governance in five countries: England; Israel; South Africa; Switzerland; and the USA (Connolly and James 2011). While the authors acknowledged that there were limitations to the conclusions that could be drawn when comparing the studies, they argued that the literature revealed similarities between the themes underlying policy borrowing and the changes made by the governments in these countries.

One theme which they considered emerged as a consistent aim of national governments for making changes to school governance arrangements, was a
concern for improving school performance in children's academic progress, particularly for groups of learners who had been described as vulnerable or disadvantaged. However, findings that indicated links between changes to governing arrangements and improved outcomes for children's academic progress have been inconsistent. This was demonstrated by an extensive study conducted by Balarin et al. (2008), who concluded that there was a:

‘lack of data which demonstrates that (good) governing has a direct effect on school performance’ (Balarin et al. 2008, p. 32).

Their study, which included an aim to explore links between governance arrangements and children’s progress, included a survey of 5000 governors and 43 interviews across schools in England. It also explored the views of 42 headteachers in a range of schools. The researchers concluded that complexity in school environments led to challenges for understanding the interaction between school governance arrangements and improving school performance. They suggested that understanding was further complicated because, in their judgement, school governing was ‘overloaded’ and ‘overcomplicated’ (Balarin et al. 2008, p. 61). Furthermore, they proposed that school governance may have less effect on school performance for disadvantaged communities, while acknowledging that this was not the same as improving performance for learners who may be disadvantaged.

Subsequently, James et al. (2011) conducted an investigation into the role of school governing bodies and the way they functioned, following additional changes to national policy which increased further the responsibilities of governing boards in England. Their research comprised case studies conducted in 16 primary schools and interviews with governors and headteachers, together with observations of board meetings and field notes. They concluded that recruiting members to governing boards was easier in schools that were already considered to be high performing, particularly where judgements had been made by drawing on school attainment data or inspection reports. They also suggested that governors in ‘disadvantaged’ schools had a different view of school performance and children’s progress than those in schools which were not considered to be ‘disadvantaged’. The researchers argued that their findings indicated that effective governing was concerned with governors’ ability to analyse the performance data of the school, scrutinise it and hold the headteacher to account. However, their observation that governors in different schools had different views on school
performance and children’s progress, implied that activities relating to effective governing may be interpreted differently by governors. Furthermore, their interpretations were influenced by their school communities.

James et al. (2011) proposed the notion of ‘governance capital’, to describe the way that governing boards achieve improvements within their schools and address the complexity of school communities. They described governance capital as ‘the network of individuals and their capabilities, relationships and motivations that are available for the governance of any particular school’ (James et al. 2011, p. 429). Their notion drew on the idea of social capital which, in organisational terms, prioritises the skills and knowledge some members bring to their roles above others (Portes 1998).

The research by James et al (2011) influenced an increased emphasis on recruiting governors with specific skills, to optimise the potential of governing boards to effect improvements in schools. Evidence of this influence appeared in the Governance handbook (DfE 2017a) indicating that the government at that time actively promoted this practice within schools. However, implementing a skills-based approach to increase governance capital has had consequences for school communities resulting in criticisms raised in findings from research in England and other countries (Balarin 2014, Heystek 2011, Wong 2011). Furthermore, Ranson (2011) observed that some governing boards had challenged this approach and judged that their membership needed to prioritise representation from the whole school community, in order to achieve and sustain improvement for all children. Ranson’s analysis also reflected findings from previous research which raised concerns that minority ethnic and socially disadvantaged groups have been underrepresented on governing boards (Ranson 2004, Ranson et al 2005, Balarin et al. 2008).

In the next section, these studies and the implications from their findings for the notion of governance capital are examined, as they provide further insights into the complexity of the relationship between governance and school performance. They also reveal how changes that aimed to increase the capital of a governing board, could lead to tensions which may disrupt improvement to school provision, particularly for vulnerable or disadvantaged groups of children that they aimed to support.
2.2.3 Tensions emerging from changes to increase the autonomy of governing boards

The findings from research referred to in the previous section, indicated that it was unclear if changes in school governance implemented by successive governments in England, have achieved their aims to support improvement in academic progress for all groups of children (Balarin et al. 2008, Ranson 2011). In spite of this, experimenting with governance arrangements to achieve improvements in school performance and children’s progress, continued to be a favoured strategy in many countries (Balarin 2014, Heystek 2011, Wong 2011). As well as an increasing emphasis on recruiting governors with specific skills to governing boards, another theme of changes to governance arrangements to support children’s progress has been described as ‘awarding’ different levels of autonomy directly to schools at a local level.

Balarin (2014), Ball (2009) and Connolly and James (2011) argued that a number of tensions have emerged from these changes. One tension related to the degree to which governments or regions aimed to retain control of schools, in order to achieve policy objectives relating to improvement, while seeking to delegate increased levels of responsibility to schools at an individual level (Ball 2009, Balarin 2014). The following studies, drawn from an international context, revealed how tensions between control at national or regional government level and individual school autonomy had an impact on their local communities. They also provided insights into ways that recruitment to increase governance capital had consequences for membership of governing boards within local communities.

In a review of school governance in post-Apartheid South Africa, Heystek (2011) asserted that governing boards were viewed as having a crucial role in improving the quality of education and valuing diversity within school communities. He also observed that, while the roles and responsibilities of governing boards in that country may have had some similarities with those in England and Australia, the social, cultural and political differences made their contexts distinct. However, like England and Australia, South Africa had also sought to increase autonomy of schools at local levels, while distinguishing between governing boards and school leaders by specifying that:
‘Governance is the responsibility of the governing body and management is the professional activities managed by the principal and teachers’ (Heystek 2011, p. 459).

At that time, parents held the majority of roles on school governing bodies in South Africa so their role and responsibilities in governance were significant. Yet, in a study exploring their activity Heystek (2006), reported that many parents experienced difficulties in fulfilling these responsibilities. He argued that the time required to undertake governor tasks, including the literacy levels of some members, often presented barriers which prevented them from carrying out their roles. These factors had implications for the prioritisation of governance capital advocated by James et al. (2011). The implication of their analysis was that schools needed to adopt ‘skills-based’ approaches, to recruit members to their governing boards and increase the capital afforded to them, in order to secure improvements in school provision and children’s progress. However, Heystek (2011) concluded that notions such as ‘trust’, provision of training and changes to funding arrangements, had a more powerful influence in ensuring that school communities were able to support school improvement in a way which was democratic and sustainable. He also asserted that continuing to support parents to engage in these roles was crucial, because actions that constrained their participation, could have a negative impact on children’s achievement.

His argument was supported by Wong (2011), who reported on a strategy to reform school governance that was implemented in the USA, called the ‘diverse provider’ approach. This approach aimed to improve the progress of children who were vulnerable to underachievement. The strategy implemented a skills-based approach that allowed District Mayors to appoint the members of school governing boards from diverse service provider organisations including providers of special education. However, Wong (2011) noted that, although this strategy appeared to lead to improvements in the academic progress of children, it also led to criticisms and concerns from members of the school communities. One of the concerns was that the shift to skills-based appointments led to reduced community engagement and a sense of disempowerment for parents. He also concluded that this weakening of community engagement may have had an impact on decisions about the location of new schools, which further reduced the potential for sustained improvement. For example, the most deprived districts did not receive the new schools they needed.
Additional insights into disruption to community engagement within school governing boards can be gained from research by Huber (2011), who analysed the impact of changes to school governance in Switzerland since 2006. Some of these changes to relationships between education authorities, headteachers and governing boards, reflected those which had taken place in England. An aspect of school governing which was a focus of activity in both countries was the increase in strategic and evaluative activities allocated to the board in order to assess and improve the quality of school provision. In Switzerland, a new system of school inspection had been introduced alongside this which resulted in an overlap between the roles and responsibilities of governors, principals, inspectors and education authority officials. Huber concluded that the new inspection arrangements had changed the balance of control and autonomy between these actors, and disrupted relationships between them. A consequence for members of the governing boards was that this imbalance was considered to have undermined democratic participation within their communities, which they considered to be central to their role within schools.

Changes in school inspection arrangements and evaluation of governing boards had also taken place in England. The responsibilities governing boards had been allocated for evaluating the quality of their schools, and the way that they were held accountable for this by Ofsted, the body responsible for inspecting schools, also had consequences for school communities which will be explored further in the next section.

This section sought to demonstrate that common themes underlying changes to school governance included school improvement to support children’s progress, and increased autonomy at local level within a framework of national or regional control. It has been argued that an aspect of this control was enacted through approaches to recruiting members to governing boards. This has included the promotion of a skills-based approach to membership, which drew on the notion of social capital (James et al 2011). The research findings that have been referred to indicate that this approach can marginalise groups within the school community, prevent parents from participating and disrupt the development of provision to support children who may be vulnerable to underachievement. Heystek (2006, 2011), Ranson (2011) and Wong (2011) highlighted the importance of diversity within governing boards to represent their communities and support improvement in school provision for all children. However, research conducted in England,
supports observations made by Huber (2011) in Switzerland, that actions by national governments to extend the role of governing boards in accountability processes, can also disrupt aims to improve school provision (Wilkins 2014).

2.2.4 Autonomy or accountability?

Focusing on changes to evaluation of governing boards, Wilkins (2014) investigated school governors’ experiences of accountability through inspection by Ofsted in England. In his review of the literature he observed that, while governments since 1988 had argued that schools had been offered increased autonomy to meet the needs of children in their context, changes to arrangements for inspection had also increased their powers to intervene and direct governors on school performance. He conducted a comparative case study of nine different forms of school in England, which included interviews with headteachers and school governors. The findings led him to conclude that there had been an increased emphasis on ‘good’ and ‘poor’ governance which had consequences for decisions by and relationships between members of governing boards.

Wilkins (2014) argued that the interview data from his study revealed inspection judgements and evaluations, together with the descriptions of ‘good’ and ‘poor’ governance they received, influenced subsequent activity by school governing boards. Many governor participants considered that the descriptions of ‘good’ and ‘poor’ did not take account of their school context, leading to disagreements between board members and inspectors, about judgements and approaches to planning future activities. Furthermore, some interviewees described how inspections had begun to determine the way that they engaged in practices which had a detrimental impact on relationships within schools. They also reported an impact on relationships between board members, as a result of interviewees reflecting on the value of their respective skills and knowledge, in relation to each other.

Subsequent research by Baxter (2017) indicated that inspection processes influenced the way that governors engaged with their roles and responsibilities, as well as relationships between members. Her study explored the impact of inspections on governor behaviour through interviews with headteachers and a review of inspection reports from the schools. A potential limitation to this study was an absence of data from members of governing boards who were not headteachers, which may have constrained insights into their experience.
However, the analysis supported the concerns that had been raised by Wilkins (2014), on the impact of inspections on relationships between members of governing boards, particularly perceptions of the value afforded to individual board members. Considering this finding, Baxter (2017) argued that the increased emphasis on recruiting governors based on their skills, had led to tensions in the relationships between governors because they appeared to prioritise some members above others. She suggested that this was particularly apparent when governors with expertise in business were appointed in response to accountability processes.

In a review of the challenges faced by governing boards as a result of changes to their role, James et al. (2013) had continued to argue that an emphasis on recruiting governors with specific professional skills, would enable school governors to meet the challenges of their responsibilities and accountabilities. They argued that this approach did not preclude involvement from diverse groups within the school community and acknowledged the importance of a balance within the governing board. However, the review did not address the consequences that could emerge from the emphasis on skills. The findings from Wilkins (2014) and Baxter (2017) suggested that skills-based approaches have led to perceptions that the governance capital of some board members was prioritised above others. Furthermore, their findings indicated that accountability processes could exacerbate these perceptions, disrupt relations between members of governing boards and impact on subsequent activity. The notion of agency provides insights into the way governors enact their responsibilities offering a different perspective to the ‘skills’ approach.

Strain (2009a), acknowledged the role of agency when he argued that disciplinary or performance ‘tools’ are recognised by those who are under pressure to implement them. Drawing on research by Taylor Webb (2006), which explored the experiences of teachers responding to disciplinary pressures in schools in Washington DC, he argued that teachers in this study shared similarities in their responses to accountability pressures with governors in England. The study found that some teachers chose to subvert practices which were imposed if they did not feel that they were appropriate to their context (Taylor Webb 2006). Therefore, the response to inspection processes which was described by Wilkins (2014) and Baxter (2017) may be interpreted as agentive in responses of governors who recognised these constraints.
The skills based approach to appointing members of governing board could also be considered as a performance tool since it is underpinned by notions of ‘efficiency and effectiveness’ (Connolly and James 2011, p. 503). The following section will explore how these notions were derived from the business community and applied to governance practice in schools in England, and consider the current model of school governance in greater depth. It begins with an analysis of the historical background in England at the time of writing. The aim of drawing on this background is to identify ways in which these notions have underpinned changes in school governance.

2.3 The historical context – from social democracy to neo-liberal reform

In Chapter 1 I noted that Baxter (2017) had observed that school governance has a history that dates back six hundred years. However, she went on to assert that the ‘multi-faceted accountabilities faced by today’s governors have no historical precedent’ (Baxter 2017, p. 25). Her view indicated a significant shift which required further investigation to understand the changes that had taken place.

Strain (2009b) argued that, in England, the ERA (United Kingdom. Education Reform Act 1988) represented a point where the principles of social justice, which had underpinned the governance of education, were replaced by quasi-market principles drawn from the business sector. He went on to assert that the application of these principles was accompanied by a shift towards an ethos of competition and ‘the dominance of neo-liberal economic and political principles’ (Strain 2009b, p. 151). Those principles related to the way that the notions of ‘efficiency and effectiveness’, referred to by Connolly and James (2011, p. 503), have been implemented in education. The following section explores this dominance further and argues that they influenced the radical changes in the role of school governing boards (Ranson 2011).

2.3.1 Education governance and social democracy

Ranson (2008) proposed that the structure of governance in education which followed the 1944 Education Act (Education Act 1944 (7&8 Geo. 6, c. 31)) supported an aim to achieve social democracy. This was, he concluded, partly due to the desire for social reform to address inequity following World War II. The Act
aimed to deliver reform through a system of shared decision-making among partners with different powers within education. These partners included:

- a Minister for Education ‘to promote the education of the people of England and Wales’ (Section 1, *Education Act 1944* (7&8 Geo. 6, c. 31));
- Local Education Authorities (LEA) with direct responsibilities for provision and development within defined geographical areas and;
- the individual institutions where a governing or, in primary schools, a ‘managing’ body provided general guidance supported by the Local Education Authority (Wilkins 2014).

This complex arrangement for distributing responsibilities, was designed with an expectation that the three bodies would work in partnership, while acknowledging the professional skills possessed by those directly engaged in teaching. However, these arrangements for schools were not without criticism. In promoting the power of professionals, the views and contributions that children and parents were able to bring to school arrangements could be marginalised. For example, decisions on educational provision for children often prioritised the views of professionals over those of parents/carers (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2006).

The election of a Conservative government in 1979 initiated a change in approach and arrangements. This government argued that the public should have a greater role in determining their services. In education, it argued that parents/carers should be afforded greater opportunities to engage in decision-making within schools. Although the aim of this approach appeared to focus on increasing opportunities for parents to contribute to decisions within schools, Balarin (2014) argued that the underlying purpose had been to reduce the role of the LEA in supporting school services. Furthermore, it was accompanied by an emphasis on increasing school ‘efficiency’, a notion borrowed from the business sector and an indication of the movement towards introducing market principles into education.

In order to achieve this, parents/carers and children were positioned as consumers with a (theoretical) choice in the services they accessed, which was viewed by government as a mechanism to improve those services. By encouraging parents to exercise choice in the selection of schools for their children, the government of the time also hoped to create competition between schools, another market principle borrowed from business.
Competition was also viewed as a driver for efficiency and effectiveness, part of the justification for the implementation of an agenda of neo-liberal reform. In the context of school governance, this has been described as the focus on consumer choice, efficiency, accountability for performance and the transfer of powers from local authorities to the governing bodies of individual schools (Wilkins 2015). Together, these elements heralded a significant change to the role and responsibilities of the governing board which coalesced in the legislation that followed.

2.3.2 The meaning of neo-liberalism

Wilkins (2018), in his analysis of the interpretation of neo-liberalism from a range of theoretical perspectives, argued that no single meaning could be applied to this concept. However, elements that are consistent across interpretations, indicate it is concerned with the approach of state governments to economic intervention in public services. The approach is critical of 'welfarist' intervention by the state and advances the privatisation of public services where possible. In areas where complete privatisation is not possible, neoliberalism endorses interventions by governments to compel public services to adopt market or corporate practices.

Therefore, neoliberalism describes the promotion of:

“Marketization, privatization, competition and de-democratization” (Wilkins 2018, p. 509).

Furthermore, it:

“Shifts responsibility towards citizens, communities and organisations to govern themselves and therefore relinquishes some of its direct (state) control” (Wilkins 2018, p. 513)

However, it is debatable that any control by central government has been surrendered in implementing neoliberal policies and reforms since the 1970s. Rather, control was transferred away from local government agencies to strengthen the direct link between central government and local agents, e.g. schools, and increase control over implementation of neo-liberal reforms.

In schools, reforms to increase direct links between central government’s objectives in education and local organisation of schools, have been evident through eroding the local government education services which represented
welfarist interventions. These reforms encompassed the hollowing-out of LEAs, some of whose functions were replaced by charities and para-governmental organisations, including the school inspectorate, OFSTED. Furthermore, new forms of ‘autonomous’ school were created, such as academies and free schools, which require school leaders and governors to adopt market principles and practices in order to earn and retain their status.

These reforms and their influence upon legislation, schools and school governance is explored in further detail in the next section.

2.3.3 The influence of neo-liberal reform

The ERA (United Kingdom. *Education Reform Act 1988*) strengthened the move in England towards decentralising responsibility for governing from local government to schools. Part of the structure for achieving this was the establishment of ‘Governing Bodies’ in each school, which were constituted to represent ‘stakeholders’ of school communities. Stakeholders included parents and staff who were elected by their respective constituencies, while other representatives from the wider community, including politics and business, were appointed by the LEA. A centrally managed structure was also introduced at national level which increased control of the curriculum, together with standards and accountability, at a local level. Alongside the changes to the constitution, the roles and responsibilities of governing body members in these areas increased further (Ranson 2008, Caldwell 2013).

Ranson (2008) asserted that the architects of the ERA described the aim of this legislation as raising ‘standards of attainment for all pupils by a better definition of what is to be taught and learnt’ as well as ‘enhancing quality and accountability’ (Ranson 2008, pp. 205-206). The ERA included an extensive set of measures including the introduction of a National Curriculum and testing regime to assess children’s levels of attainment, together with the publication of those test results and school league tables, to measure and compare the ‘quality’ of each school. Arrangements for inspection were also changed and a new inspectorate, called Ofsted, was created. In addition to evaluating school performance and identifying how they should improve to raise their standards, the creation of Ofsted was significant, because it weakened the link between each school and their LEA. It was also claimed that Ofsted would be independent but, since it was constituted as a non-ministerial government department, that is questionable. Furthermore,
the role that LEAs had held in providing a balance of power between national government and individual schools was and continues to be, eroded, while the controlling power of national bodies was strengthened. This outcome supports the argument made by Balarin (2014) referred to above.

The trajectory of centralised power escalated through subsequent legislation, including the Education Act 2002 (England and Wales. *Education Act 2002*) and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (United Kingdom. *Education and Inspections Act 2006*). These increased the responsibilities of governing boards, yet again, for the standards achieved by their schools through additional changes to the constitution of these bodies (DfES 2005).

In spite of the arrangements to increase direct control of schools to raise standards and improve provision, researchers have questioned the success of these changes (Balarin 2014, Wilkins 2014, Baxter 2017). Wilkins (2014) argued that, governing boards were positioned to undertake the role previously played by LEAs but were not provided with the ‘authority’ that arose from public representative procedures. He found evidence to support this when he reported that governors in his study described themselves as ill-equipped to respond to accountability to Ofsted without the resource previously afforded to LEAs. Such concerns may also have been affected by the extent to which governors experienced constraints on their identity and agency through these changes.

For example, non-governmental organisations such as the National Governors’ Association and Modern Governor, were set up to provide governors with advice and training on meeting their responsibilities. However, they also had a role in reinforcing the perspective of the state as a result of the funding they received from government. Therefore, although governors were encouraged to act to take account of their school community to secure improvement, their actions were being directed by a range of organisations ‘through disciplinary tools of professionalization and inspection’ (Wilkins 2014, p. 200).

Similar trends emerged for other countries within the UK during this period. Scotland, which had retained the role of local government in school governance, did not have governing boards in each school. However, these arrangements were under review at the time this study was conducted (Arnott 2014). Furthermore, Farrell (2014), highlighted a similar trend in her research on governance in Wales.
Ball (2007) concluded that these changes reflected the integration of market or private sector principles into educational leadership, management and practice. He argued that this shift prioritised a concept of liberal democracy that relied extensively on market values as reflections of individual choice, above a social democratic approach, resulting in tensions for the way that governing boards enact their roles and responsibilities (Balarin 2014, Wilkins 2014 and Wilkins 2015). His analysis was echoed by the findings from international research that were reviewed in Section 2.2 (Heystek 2011, Huber 2011, Balarin 2014).

The integration of these principles, particularly the focus on competition, had an impact on developing educational provision that meets the needs of all children within school communities, by creating competition around social interests. This is indicated by the research findings which have been drawn on in this chapter and support assertions that the introduction of competition in education has acted to advantage privileged groups and disadvantage vulnerable learners (Ranson 2008, Wong 2011). These findings led Strain to reflect that this is unsurprising as:

‘Social justice and a competitive ethos do not normally work toward the same goals’ (Strain 2009b, p. 153).

Ranson (2004) provided insights into reasons why these principles disadvantage some school communities and suggested ways in which they may be addressed. Drawing on a study that examined schools in diverse communities in Wales, he explored the activity of Governing Bodies that had effected improvement in their settings (Ranson 2004). However, members of these bodies described their school’s inability to sustain improvements after a certain point. They cited the ‘performativity approach to learning and teaching’ as a factor in their difficulties in sustaining further progress (Ranson 2011, p. 404). They also expressed concerns about the consequences of this approach which included marginalisation of some groups of parents within their communities. Furthermore, participants in the study claimed that these pressures had undermined children’s enjoyment of learning.

The performativity approach will be explored further in Section 2.5 but these findings led Ranson (2011) to conclude that members of governing boards needed to be able to acknowledge the social and cultural context in their schools. Furthermore, he suggested that their membership should be strongly linked to their community and represent the diversity of the parents within their school, in order to make meaningful and ongoing improvement for their communities.
These suggestions indicate that the principles that underlie arrangements for governing boards, and the models through which those principles are applied, need to reflect the social, cultural and educational requirements of school communities, rather than market principles of efficiency and effectiveness.

2.4 Revisiting the current context – the role and responsibilities of school governing boards in England

The discussion in the previous section argued that the role and responsibilities of members of school governing boards in England have been subject to rapid change. This argument was supported by examining legislation from the 1944 Education Act (Education Act 1944 (7&8 Geo. 6, c. 31)), through to the 1988 Education Reform Act (United Kingdom. Education Reform Act 1988), the 2002 Education Act (England and Wales. Education Act 2002) and the 2006 Education and Inspections Act (United Kingdom. Education and Inspections Act 2006).

Although legislation has been more extensive, the focus on these Acts aimed to demonstrate the shift in responsibilities for school provision from local education authorities to individual school governing boards.

The analysis in the previous sections also highlighted that this legislation progressively increased responsibilities for school improvement and pupil performance by members of governing boards (Ranson 2011, James 2014, Wilkins 2014). Since members were participating on a voluntary basis the expectations of engagement from the public by government have been considerable and described as the ‘largest democratic experiment in voluntary participation’ (Ranson 2011, p. 398). I have also drawn on analysis and research which has argued that this democratic experiment was driven by a notion of liberal democracy and replaced the principles of social democracy that underpinned the 1944 Education Act (Education Act 1944 (7&8 Geo. 6, c. 31)). This argument also asserted that market or public sector principles such as competition have led to tensions for governing boards in enacting their current responsibilities, since research findings have indicated that these principles disadvantage vulnerable groups of children, when applied to education (Ranson 2008, Heystek 2011, Wong 2011, Balarin 2014). However, findings have begun to emerge that provide insights into the way that governing boards can act to support progress and improve provision for all children in their schools. These findings indicate that a
framework that represents the diverse membership of the school community provides the foundation for achieving such progress (Ranson 2011, Rix 2015).

Chapter 1 outlined the current roles and responsibilities of school governing boards in England in some detail. In this chapter I also argued that the Governance handbook (DfE 2015, DfE 2017a) aimed to provide a mechanism for controlling this ‘experiment’ through detailed direction to governing boards which, at the time of writing, included responsibility for setting school vision. In the following section, I explore how claims for the concept of ‘vision’ have been increasingly promoted in school improvement and educational leadership, by considering the research in this area.

2.5 Vision and school leadership

Many claims have been made for the role of vision in supporting schools to improve. Haydon (2007) suggested that it is a complex notion, because it is embedded in everyday language and the linguistic connection with the sense of sight, links it with the capacity to see potential. The connection with developing potential also led Ungoed-Thomas (1996) to apply the notion of vision to educational leadership and suggest that it can:

‘Offer an ideal of what a school should be’ (Ungoed-Thomas 1996, p. 146).

Yet, the use of the word ‘ideal’ provides limited additional insight into this notion. Bush (2003) sought to address this by elaborating on the link between leadership and vision when he asserted that:

‘Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision’ (Bush 2003, p. 8).

In this description, vision is constructed as a notion that enables leaders to achieve identified outcomes, by drawing on their values and influencing others to support them in achieving those outcomes. Subsequently, he elaborated that vision:

‘Is valuable because it provides the sense of purpose and direction required for educational organisations to thrive’ (Bush 2015, p. 175).
However, although the reference to direction aims to provide clarity by adding another element alongside achieving purpose, it raises further questions. Those involved in any task may have multiple purposes based on numerous factors including their roles, their identities and the agency they bring to their roles. The diversity of purpose will also affect the contribution made and direction taken by agents, arising from their experience of participation. Therefore, sense of purpose and direction in themselves are not static or uniform in their ability to ensure that organisations will thrive.

Strain (2009a) offers an alternative insight into the construction of the notion of vision in school leadership. He suggested that changes in the organisation of school governance, following the educational reforms explored earlier in this chapter, have influenced the development of this notion. In his argument, notions such as vision were a mechanism to constrain the way that governing boards carried out their new responsibilities as the control of national government over governance was strengthened in individual schools. If the development and achievement of vision was expected to achieve change, those changes could be directed towards the behaviour, attitudes, relationships and values of others through guidance. Constructed in this way, governing boards become mediators of the national government’s purpose and direction for education in schools, and vision a mechanism for controlling governing boards to achieve those outcomes.

Ball (2003) employs the concept of performativity to describe the wider structure of this control which he defines as:

‘A technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)’ (Ball 2003, p. 216).

According to Ball, the technology of performativity operates to secure compliance from those who are engaged within its area of practice. However, reference has already been made to the way in which pressure to comply can also lead to resistance (Strain 2009a). Strain highlights how Ball’s focus on power structures can obscure consideration of the values that individuals bring to their activities. Therefore, has the notion of vision gained popularity in order to regulate the way that planning for school improvement is practised? Furthermore, what are the consequences for schools when the values that agents bring to their roles disrupt
or are in conflict with, rather than being complementary to that technology? Gaining insights into the meaning that vision has for governing board members themselves, and the impact it has in directing their activities as school leaders, may help resolve this conflict.

Further discussion of the meaning of vision and the way in which it has been interpreted by researchers and national governments, requires investigation of findings from this area of research, in order to explore current understandings of this notion.

2.5.1 Research into vision – factors affecting development and constraints

The analysis in the previous discussion argued that it has been claimed that vision can be operationalised as part of a planning process that supports schools to develop and improve (Bush 2015). The discussion also revealed tensions in the ‘ownership’ of vision which have consequences for its development. So how does the development of a vision become operationalised in a planned process? Furthermore, if it draws on values, purpose and direction to achieve change how can schools develop a vision which is relevant to them when they are regulated or constrained by national policies and guidance?

Research indicates that such constraints can impact on vision development in a way which is problematic for schools. Bolam et al. (1993) highlighted this, when they noted that the vision statements developed by schools, appeared to lack the unique character which would be expected given the diversity of school communities. Elaborating on this observation, Hoyle and Wallace (2005, pp. 11-12) described this as a disparity between the ‘visionary rhetoric’ that may be offered by schools and the ‘prosaic reality’ which members of the school community experience. However, Hoyle and Wallace may have conflated two separate issues, the process of constructing a statement or ‘rhetoric’ and the ‘reality’ of practice.

Block (1987) aimed to provide insights into factors which may constrain and support implementing vision from his research. He suggested that factors such as timescale and resources could act to constrain school leaders in developing a vision which was informed by values prioritised by their local community. This insight was particularly relevant to the current context in England, where the timing of the school year is increasingly influenced by testing arrangements and the
financial resources allocated to schools are being reduced. Support for this view is provided by Kotter (1996) who suggested that communication and dialogue supported organisations to address constraints in the process of implementing vision.

Further evidence that the wider context can act on school communities to constrain vision development and implementation in schools can be found from research into ‘Vision Schools’ in Malaysia. Malaysia is a diverse country which experienced events that led to tensions between its Malay, Chinese and Indian communities. One source of the tensions was the perception that the education system discriminated against different ethnic groups (Othman et al. 2012). The Ministry of Education in Malaysia developed an initiative called ‘Vision Schools’ as a response to these events. The aim of a Vision School was to ensure that children from different cultures were educated together to promote tolerance, by increasing opportunities for interaction between children and members of the wider school community. Othman et al. (2012) explored the views of children in these schools to analyse their progress in achieving this aim. Their findings indicated that the outcomes varied between schools. However, they concluded that increased tolerance was related to opportunities for extended interaction between children beyond the school in their local community; activity that could not be enforced by schools or by government. There are implications here, for the context in England where national priorities have not been based on the priorities and values of individual school communities. This is particularly relevant when planning for children who may be vulnerable to exclusion as a result of social responses to diversity.

Kose (2011) provided insights into planning to support children’s diversity when he examined the way that school leaders developed a vision that supported equity and diversity in children’s progress. His research employed multiple case studies which included interviews with school leaders and staff, together with observations and reviews of the schools vision statements. The data led him to conclude that sharing a rationale, to ensure that the purpose and advantages of the vision was clear to all who were engaged in implementing it, was a key action for school leaders. He also suggested the data indicated that engaging with the wider community, and including members of marginalised groups in vision development activities, was crucial to ensure ownership of the underlying ideas and values of the community. The author proposed that the themes emerging from his research
indicated dimensions which were present in developing a vision to promote equity and diversity. These dimensions were: specific; manageable; coherent; focused on children’s learning; and transformative. However, he also argued that wider engagement was necessary for schools to understand the ‘nature, history and power relations of different stakeholder groups’ in their context (Kose 2011, p. 132). This implies that further insights into interactions between different elements of school communities are required in order to develop a vision to support equity and diversity. It also highlights the role of identity, agency and participation in this process.

Additional evidence that the wider school community plays a significant role in developing vision emerged from a study by Blandford (2012), who explored the role of school leaders in developing a vision to improve inclusive practice in schools. Her research focused on the role of headteachers and LEA leaders in implementing an initiative to support children considered to have SEN. Her findings provide further support that engaging different groups within the school community in developing a vision for inclusive practice was critical.

Taken together, these studies indicated that the wider school community plays a significant role in supporting the development and implementation of vision within schools. The research findings that have been discussed also suggest that vision draws on the values and purposes prioritised by the community, particularly when vision aims to secure change, in planning for learning diversity within individual schools. However, they did not focus on the components of vision in a way which could support the process of implementation. Understanding of this structure could make a valuable contribution to practice in developing school provision, particularly in areas where agents, such as members of governing boards, are required to engage in development, implementation and monitoring of outcomes.

An empirical review of studies on vision which aimed to provide some insights into the underlying structure is considered in the next section.

2.5.2 Mission, goals and expectations – constructing the framework of vision

Murphy and Torre (2015) conducted an empirical review of research into vision in school leadership which drew on studies conducted between 1995 and 2012. The purpose of their review was to provide a more tangible understanding of vision by analysing the data from these studies to reveal its underlying concepts. Through a
review of evaluative studies, they concluded that those underlying concepts were mission, goals and expectations.

In order to clarify these concepts, Murphy and Torre defined mission as “the bedrock of school improvement” (Murphy and Torre 2015, p. 179) and proposed that eight values were associated with effective missions: a sense of hope; commitment to success; asset-based thinking; student focus; academically anchored; outcome focused; continuous improvement; and collective responsibility.

They also asserted that goal setting contributed to vision development and argued that the studies revealed that goals should have an academic, child-centred focus. Goals were described as being relevant to the individual needs of all children, flexible and meaningful while being specific. Furthermore, they reported that goals included a focus on allocation of resources in schools that achieved identified outcomes (Huberman et al. 2011). However, engagement by members of the school community in developing goals appeared to be focused on the communication of goals rather than engagement to set the goals. This is indicated by the suggestion that goals became effective when they were communicated widely through a variety of formal and informal, written and verbal forms to sustain awareness of the school’s mission and goals to:

‘Signal importance to all stakeholders … help people see more clearly’ (Murphy and Torre, 2015, p. 183).

This questions the interpretation of ‘effective’ employed in their conclusion which indicated an approach that could constrain identity, agency and participation.

Expectations provided the third element to scaffold vision. Described as having the potential to provide a method for, and measure of, achieving goals, the researchers argued that expectations are significant for children who may be vulnerable to underachievement, by maintaining a central focus on their progress. However, there is no indication of how this focus on progress would be maintained, or how progress itself was defined and who defined it.

Finally, the researchers acknowledged that, while they asserted that drawing on these elements to develop vision could support schools to operationalise it, schools themselves exist in a dynamic environment, subject to ongoing change. Differences within local communities and changes to national policies disrupt the
stability of the framework proposed by Murphy and Torre and requires schools to
go beyond mission, goals and expectations to engage with ‘trust’ and shared
‘commitment’ (Murphy and Torre 2015). They acknowledged that, when trust and
commitment are also present, vision appeared to be embedded into strategic
activities including organisational structures, policies and allocation of resources
and was less vulnerable to disruption.

The elements of trust and commitment, which are relational, acknowledge the
centrality of the identity and agency of those engaging with these processes.
Furthermore, a consistent theme which emerged from the literature was the
requirement for engagement across the school community.

In conclusion, Murphy and Torre (2015) asserted that vision appeared to be
supported by three elements: mission; goals and expectations. However, they
concluded that ‘trust’ and ‘commitment’ are essential to support schools to
withstand disruption from external influences. Interestingly, the review ended with
a reminder of the importance of context for those engaged in work on vision in
schools where context includes: the culture of the community and the school; the
school structure and size; its organisation and access to resources as well as the
children, parents/carers and teachers who are involved with it on a day to day
basis.

All of these elements indicated that, addressing complex influences on members
of communities are crucial in developing a vision for children’s learning and
support, and may have particular consequences for children considered to have
SEN.

2.6 Investigating provision for special educational
needs

2.6.1 The concept of SEN

The term SEN has been controversial since it was incorporated into the Warnock
Report (DES 1978) and subsequently embedded as a legal concept, along with a
framework of provision, in the 1981 Education Act (England and Wales. Education
Act 1981). It was intended to be a progressive term and aimed to be less
restrictive than previous labels which had been employed to describe children’s
differences. It was also intended to move educators from applying the prevailing
psycho-medical model that emphasised diagnoses and individual intervention,
towards a child-centred approach which was based on adapting educational provision to support learner diversity, within mainstream school settings (Norwich 2014).

However, the term was subsequently implemented through a framework that constructed categories of need, based on the assumption that each category existed on a continuum of variation. As a result, use of the concept has resulted in replication of the difficulties it aimed to address (Rix et al. 2013). Research has identified extensive criticisms of the concept of SEN and the way in which it has been implemented, including: the changing descriptions of areas of need; systems of identification and assessment of needs based on assumptions of validity of an underlying continuum; and the systems of support that have been created to administer provision for SEN (Thomas and Loxley 2001, Norwich 2002, Tomlinson 2012, Rix et al. 2015).

Findings from this body of research have indicated that the implementation of the SEN concept and its accompanying framework resulted in a system which replaced one label with another, one form of assessment with another and one description of difference with another, leading to continuing stigmatisation of learners and failure to support diversity (Thomas and Loxley 2001, Tomlinson 2012, Rix et al. 2015). However, a study by Norwich and Kelly (2002), which explored the experiences of learners with statements, concluded that applying the term SEN to children was experienced as less problematic than the use of negative colloquial language. Nevertheless, a recent report on levels of exclusion of children considered to have SEN from schools, contradicts their conclusion that applying SEN terminology to children is less problematic (DfE 2018a).

Norwich (2002) provided insights into the challenges of applying the concept of SEN and the framework to support it when he conducted research into the process of identifying SEN. He concluded that its application led to key dilemmas relating to recognition of children’s differences which he described as core questions for education. These focused on:

- ‘Whether to identify individual children as having SEN or a disability in the first place;
- What children should learn – the curriculum; and
While differences in educational needs themselves could be characterised as:

- Those which are shared with all other learners;
- Those which are shared with some learners but not others; and
- Those which are unique to the individual learner (Norwich 2002).

However, all learners are likely to have common, shared and unique needs. Furthermore, the concept of unique learning needs which were linked with the presentation of the curriculum, implied that there was a specialist pedagogy which could support unique needs or required qualitatively different learning support. Research in this area has been critical of this assumption. Rix and Sheehy (2014) reviewed studies to explore pedagogical approaches for children considered to have SEN. They concluded that there is little evidence to support specific pedagogies for each type of SEN but the interactions between all those involved in the community of learners may be a critical factor in providing effective support.

These dilemmas around provision, identification, categories of SEN, and the descriptions of categories which have been applied through the system of assessment in England, also resulted in criticisms of inconsistency in the administration of the system (Ellis and Tod 2012, Rix 2015).

### 2.6.2 Provision for SEN – critiquing the continuum

The process of identification of, and funding for, SEN in England at the time of writing was underpinned by an approach that allocated provision by diagnosing and categorising need. It assumed those needs were based on a ‘continuum’ which was definable and measurable and, once a diagnosis was provided, levels of support could be determined by assessment from a range of professional services as those needs increased (Rix et al. 2015). This approach reflected an underlying belief that in special education ‘disabilities and disorders can be meaningfully identified and classified’ (Farrell 2012, p. 40). However, Rix et al. (2015) concluded that there is little evidence that any continuum which was assumed to underpin SEN, was consistent in practice, provision and theory across international contexts. Their research identified considerable variation in the number and description of categories that were used across 55 administrations internationally. Further evidence of this variation in England, was identified through an analysis of data on the assessment and identification of categories of SEN in LEAs, which also revealed considerable differences (Rix 2015).
This critical evaluation of the continuum indicates that an alternative framework is required to develop new knowledge and practice that supports children considered to have SEN within schools. Furthermore, the previous discussion on school governance revealed the need to develop and apply models which take account of diversity within individual school communities, to enable governing boards to fulfil their responsibilities. Therefore, development of an appropriate framework requires identification of a theoretical perspective that can take account of these complex contextual features. The stakeholder and skills-based models of governance have limitations since they do not take account of interactions between diverse aspects of school communities. The next section reviews this area and justifies the adoption of sociocultural theory as a theoretical perspective to underpin this study since it draws on concepts of agency, identity and participation which support exploration of the range of perspectives within a school community.

2.7 An alternative approach – the relevance of sociocultural theory to school governance and special educational needs

‘What does it mean to be ‘first’ if we do not address the countervailing ideal of developing human potential as fully as we can? … If the broader culture took on the challenge of becoming a mutual community, perhaps our boasts about our future prowess might be accompanied by the guarantee that making the country richer by working hard in school … would result in a new pattern of distributing the national wealth more equitably. In a word, we would not simply be trying to reproduce the culture as it has been’ (Bruner 1996, pp. 82-3).

Earlier in this chapter I referred to the way that countries had increasingly borrowed policies from each other in order to improve school performance in a range of areas (Balarin 2014). In the quotation above, Bruner (1996) reflected on the purpose of these improvements and their implications for culture and communities.

Heystek (2011), Ranson (2011), Wilkins (2014), and Baxter (2017) revealed insights into the tensions that emerged for governing boards when they adopted the skills-based approach, which has been more concerned with efficiency than equity. This approach was based on the premise that there was a need to recruit
governors with the ‘right’ skills (DfE 2017a). However, the focus on identification of people with the right skills requires consideration of the meaning of ‘right’. What does right mean, why were they ‘right’ and who were they ‘right’ for, as well as in what context were such people ‘right’? The restrictive focus which was an outcome of this approach also resulted in tension with the values associated with developing and sustaining school cultures that promoted equitable provision for all children within a school. Evidence to support this view emerged from research that indicated schools that promoted equitable provision had wider engagement with parents and the local community rather than restricting the focus on those with specific skills (Ainscow and Sandill 2010, Ranson 2011).

Further evidence can be drawn from international studies that were referred to earlier in this chapter, where research by Wong (2011) indicated that the implementation of skills-based models of school governance led to mixed outcomes in improved provision where the engagement of community members had been reduced. Heystek (2011) observed that adult literacy presented challenges to involving community members, including parents, in school improvement as governors. However, he argued that, rather than excluding members on the basis of bringing insufficient skills or capital to their role, governing boards should be provided with tools and structures to support members to participate. This approach was endorsed by Ranson who asserted that sustained school improvement requires understanding:

‘The need to make the practice of learning and teaching more responsive to the needs and interests of pupils, and to include the voice of parents and communities in the processes of improving schools’ (Ranson 2011, p. 399).

He went on to conclude that research had indicated a relationship between governance and learner achievement where participation and voice is represented from diverse members of the school community on the governing board (Ranson 2011). Therefore, he also argued that the stakeholder model continued to have relevance. However, the question raised by Bruner (1996), together with the realisation that existing models of governance in England do not meet the needs of all children within the school community, provides an opportunity to reconsider the role of research in developing a more appropriate model of governance.

This suggests that there are three requirements for developing a new model of governance which have implications for this research: the need to draw on an
appropriate theoretical perspective in order to adopt a relevant framework; the identification of a framework which takes account of community engagement; and implementation of a framework which supports analysis of interaction within the school community. Outcomes of the analysis of interaction could then provide the foundation of recommendations for policy and practice which could support the development of a new model of governance which is responsive to the dynamic nature of each community.

Rix (2015) addressed these requirements, when he argued for the implementation of a framework to analyse and support learning by taking account of the social and cultural aspects of school environments. This will be explored further below.

2.7.1 The relevance of sociocultural theory to this research

Sociocultural theory has had a significant impact on pedagogical approaches to learning because it challenged dominant biological, individualised ideas of human development (Gindis 1999). Vygotsky, who is considered to have developed the foundations of sociocultural theory, argued that the central influences on learning were social and cultural processes rather than a normative staged process. He proposed that learning was mediated by social engagement and cultural influences rather than determined by biological factors (Vygotsky et al. 1978). Accordingly, identity, agency and participation became central concepts for sociocultural theory since they acknowledged that individuals drew on a range of influences arising from cultural and social contexts.

Building on his observations as a child psychologist, Vygotsky also argued that ‘impairments’ were only perceived as abnormal within social contexts. Within education, this approach has had consequences for the role of adults in providing support for learning, since it required adults to take responsibility for ongoing dynamic interaction between child/ren and adult/s (Vygotsky 1978). Therefore, adults are viewed as playing a significant role in mediating responses to difference between children and other members of the school community, within learning environments.

Rogoff (2003) also highlighted the concept of participation for learning and engagement within school communities when she argued that:
‘Human development is a process in which people transform through their ongoing participation in cultural activities, which in turn contribute to cultural communities across generations’ (Rogoff 2003, p. 37).

Furthermore, Lave and Wenger asserted that:

‘Participation is always based upon situational negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world’ (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 51).

Their statement implies that, the social character of experience in school communities is in a state of constant change as a result of engagement by participants. However, participation is also affected by the degree to which members of the community are agentive and experience affirmation of their identity in participation.

Therefore, the notion of agency is linked to participation as it acknowledges that individuals have the capacity to bring about activity in any field of social interaction as they are:


Furthermore, agents bring into their interactions within communities, a complexity of socially constructed identities operating within culturally mediated norms. ‘Membership’ of a school community is just one aspect of that identity alongside gender, family, ethnicity, religious, cultural and economic identity.

Since participation, agency and identity are located in the social environment, collectivised regulations and institutionalised practices can act to constrain or support learning. This is particularly relevant to children considered to have SEN where regulations and practices may act as constraints on participation, agency and identity through the affirmation of institutionalised identities associated with SEN. This is supported by research. Campbell et al. (2019) found that fewer children with a ‘Statement of SEN’ transferred from their school nursery to the reception class in that school (26% transferred with a statement in comparison with 18% for children with no Statement). While the authors suggest that this difference could be due to children with a Statement transferring to a school with improved provision in another setting, a report on exclusions in schools in England indicated their interpretation was optimistic. The report on ‘Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions in England: 2016 to 2017’ (DfE 2018a) noted that rates of exclusion for children considered to have SEN continued to rise since 2013 and, in
2016-17, 46.7% of children considered to have SEN were permanently excluded from their school while a slightly lower level, 44.9% of children received fixed period exclusions. Furthermore, Done and Knowler (2019, p. 1) described the practice of ‘off-rolling’ which ‘involves the removal of students from the school roll, where removal is in the interests of the school not the student’. In their article they suggested that there may be similar incidence of ‘off-rolling’ of children as exclusions. They argued that the context of neo-liberal policies including accountability processes have influenced school leaders to implement this practice (Done and Knowler 2019).

Other evidence acknowledged the role of agentive activity in supporting improvements across the school community. Rix et al. (2009) concluded that children considered to have SEN made progress as learners where pedagogies that drew on agency were implemented within school communities. Furthermore, Hart (1992) proposed strategies to acknowledge the significance of participation in children’s learning, and ways of working with them to embed their views in decisions on learning provision. This suggests that, irrespective of role, identity, agency and participation have consequences for all those engaged in school communities but they have particular consequences for children considered to have SEN.

The influence of biological and individualist ideas has continued to be dominant within the concept of SEN and the framework for identification and assessment which support its implementation. Individualist approaches can also be seen in models of governance which promote within-person approaches such as the skills-based model. The ongoing prioritisation of these approaches indicate that, while the contribution of sociocultural theory within education has been acknowledged, it has the potential to make further contributions to research, theory and practice across diverse areas within education including school leadership, governance and improvement. Research by Gallucci (2007), provided additional support for this argument since she applied sociocultural theory in research on school improvement. Her research explored involving teachers in developing practices to reduce the achievement gap between schools in the United States. She concluded that drawing on sociocultural theory had supported teacher understanding of learning provision in schools and implementing changes to school structures, policies and practice that sustained these changes. Brewer et al (2020) provided further insights into the relevance of concepts emerging from sociocultural theory.
to school leadership and governance. In their review of educational leadership they argued that responsive leadership drew on agency, which they defined as ‘situated and a product of the context in which it is practised’ (Brewer et al. 2020, p. 331). However, they suggested that there was limited exploration of the way in which school leaders drew on agency.

These analyses and findings suggested that a framework which drew on sociocultural theory had the potential to address some of the omissions of current models of school governance. This led me to conclude that sociocultural theory provided an appropriate foundation to explore the way in which governing boards enacted their responsibilities for vision and for learners considered to have SEN. However, understanding of the concept of community within schools required further reflection in order to justify the selection of the framework that was applied to the research.

### 2.7.2 An alternative framework – the Community of Provision

Rix (2015) suggested that a community could be defined as:

> ‘The interweaving characteristics, resources, groupings and priorities of its members. Its internal and external boundaries can be both porous and restrictive; its shape is context dependent and its relationships tenuous. It carries with it the sense of an ideal, but also a warning of insularity, serving to remind its members that they can both welcome and marginalise others from inside and outside the community’ (Rix 2015, p. 173).

This definition revealed the complex elements of the concept of ‘community’. It indicated the diversity of the forms, settings and memberships to which it could be applied, the potential for constant change, the range of aims it could address, the centrality of the relationships within it and the potential of those relationships to include and exclude.

Accordingly, Philip et al. (2013) cautioned against the tendency to idealise it. They argued that the complex nature of communities meant they were often sites of challenge which could engender contradictory responses of belonging and isolation, equality and inequality, action and inaction. The discussion of sociocultural theory above offered some insight into this complexity through the central role of social and cultural processes. These acknowledge that interactions between members are not static since they are relational and constantly changed.
through interaction. Furthermore, identities, agency, participation and the purpose
ascribed to the community by its members constantly impact on membership.

This capacity to represent human interaction reveals community as a powerful
concept for exploring phenomena in organisations. Accordingly, it has been
invoked to explore a range of aspects of practice within education including
communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991), learning communities (Peterson
1992), communities of learners (Rogoff 1995) and classroom communities
(Bridges 1995). Furthermore, Gibson and Knowler (2007) advised educators on
the role of community in developing an accessible and relevant curriculum,
classroom and policy provision. The application of community across this range of
areas indicates that it is seen as a potent metaphor for analysing diverse aspects
of social interaction within educational settings. However, there has been criticism
of applying some of these frameworks to educational setting. An example of this is
the ‘community of practice’ when it has been applied to school settings (Lave and
Wenger 1991). As a result, Lave and Wenger acknowledged that their framework
was not appropriate to schools as they are constantly engaging with a range of
diverse and changing communities with fluctuating boundaries.

In contrast, the Community of Provision offered a framework able to explore
educational support through the metaphor of community by drawing on the notion
of perspectives. It takes account of the constituents of the community of provision
within schools, and integrates identity, agency, participation and practice (Rix et al.
2015). Furthermore, Rix et al. (2015, p. 335) asserted that any framework for
analysing SEN provision within schools should reflect ‘complex societal support
systems’.

This framework emerged from empirical research that examined the
conceptualisation and application of a ‘continuum’ in provision for SEN across fifty
countries (Rix et al. 2013). The researchers observed that the concept of a
continuum encouraged an individualised approach to provision. However, the data
also revealed a ‘range of conceptualizations of the continuum’ (Rix et al. 2015, p.
334). The lack of consistency in these continua led the researchers to conclude
that it was ‘beyond the scope of the continuum to encourage … multi-dimensional
understanding’ (Rix et al. 2015, p. 335). As the reference to ‘complex societal
support systems’ implies, multi-dimensional understanding may be crucial to
develop provision for all children within schools, including children considered to
have SEN.
In contrast to the continuum, the framework of the Community of Provision aimed to address these issues by recognising that agency, participation and identity affected the range of views, goals, working arrangements and boundary issues that affect provision for learning within a school. It also acknowledged the influence that external factors may have on the community as well as the way that perspectives within the community will interact with and affect provision. The integration of contextual and dynamic influences provided an appropriate framework for analysing issues which are central to this research: SEN and school governance.

Rix et al. defined the Community of Provision as:

‘The settings and services which work together to provide learning and support for all children and young people within their locality’ (Rix et al. 2015, p. 337).

The central role of settings and services in providing support for all children, indicated that this was an appropriate conceptual framework to support analysis of educational support for learners considered to have SEN.

Furthermore, Rix (2015) proposed six perspectives which addressed the diverse constituents of a learning community.

These were:

1. Community space – concerned with where support takes place.
2. Community staffing – concerned with who is providing the support.
3. Community of students – concerned with who is being supported.
4. Community support – concerned with the quantity and type of support.
5. Community strategies – concerned with the quality of support.

The inclusion of these diverse perspectives provided flexibility as it allowed any form of educational context to be analysed including maintained, academy, or independent school settings.

These six perspectives also allowed analysis of provision in the context of aspects of delivery. They ‘recognise(s) support as an active process, ongoing in nature,
involving formal and informal connections.’ (Rix 2015, p. 177). Furthermore, they were viewed as interacting with each other so that no element of practice could be considered without reflection on all of the perspectives, which recognised the potential for instability. Rix (2015) acknowledged that the Community of Provision would, therefore, be experienced differently in different school settings. Terms such as ‘diffuse’ or ‘focused’ were employed, to describe the way in which these differences in engagement affected the approach to working together to deliver practice, policy, and services to support learners, where ‘focused’ described an aspirational approach.

The concept of perspectives also allowed the significance of context, participation and practice, in provision to support learning within a school, to emerge and be acknowledged.

While recognising dynamic influences on school communities bring instability and variation, Rix (2015) suggested an aspirational vision of the Community of Provision, based on policies which had inclusive aims. This included the proposition that:

‘The community of provision requires leadership which coheres and supports practices and strategies which emerge from and enhance collaborative working and planning’ (Rix at al. 2015, p. 341).

Figure 1 provides an aspirational representation of engagement between the perspectives within the Community of Provision. Figure 2 represents an image of the perspectives when engagement is connected but diffuse.

The ‘community systems’ perspective had a particular relevance for this research as it offered a direct focus on governance and leadership. It acknowledged the specific roles and responsibilities of governors and the processes they were engaged in, including the range of ‘professional, political, social and cultural communities’ they interact with in the wider Community of Provision (Rix 2015, p. 179). The dynamic aspect of this framework ensured that account could be taken of the positions of governors who had specific roles and high levels of engagement, or those who may be acting at the boundaries of provision and have lower levels of engagement. Therefore, this perspective also acknowledged the relationship between governing boards and the wider context of participation within the school, including external agencies beyond the school.
Figure 1: The community of provision as a focused collection of practices, services, policies and individuals

(Rix 2015, p. 178) Reproduced with kind permission of Professor Jonathan Rix.

Figure 2: The community of provision as an interconnected but diffuse collection of practices, services, policies and individuals

(Rix 2015, p. 177) Reproduced with kind permission of Professor Jonathan Rix.
However, the concept of boundaries within the Community of Provision required further consideration. Rix referred to the internal and external boundaries of communities as being ‘porous and restrictive’ (Rix 2015, p. 173). Star (2010) suggested an analysis of boundary objects which has relevance for the notion of boundaries in the Community of Provision framework. She described boundary objects as existing ‘between social worlds’ and ‘worked on by local groups who maintain its vague identity as a common object while making it more specific’ (Star 2010, p. 604). In her description of boundary objects Star also asserted that ‘groups that are cooperating without consensus tack back and forth between both forms of the object’ (Star 2010, p. 605). Therefore, the concept of boundary objects provided an opportunity to explore how governors engage with other members of the school community to develop vision, since they may be abstract, e.g. values, or material, e.g. policies. Furthermore, it provides a notion to explore the way that groups within schools act to orientate towards focused or diffuse practices, services, policies and relationships.

As a result, I concluded that analysis and evaluation of activity which drew on perspectives within the community of provision, had the potential to reveal insights into and recommendations for practice that supported integrated partnership between leaders and learners.

2.8 Conclusion

The literature which has been reviewed in this chapter has addressed five areas which are relevant to this research. It explored findings from research drawn from a range of countries in order to set changes in school governance within an international context and compare them. The review went on to explore the changes to legislation and policy on arrangements for school governing boards in England. These sections concluded that there were some continuities between the tensions that had emerged from these changes, which included an aim to effect improvements in schools through changes in arrangements to school governance. This had been accompanied by the delegation of increased responsibilities to schools at a local level, while also aiming to increase direct control of schools at national level, in order to achieve policy objectives relating to school improvement.

Two areas of school leadership where the responsibilities of governing boards had increased included the notion of vision and responsibilities for children considered to have SEN in order to improve educational support and progress. However, it
was argued that research and analysis indicated that structures which had been put in place to increase direct control of governing board activity by governments at national level, had undermined these aims. Furthermore, they had led successive governments in England to promote business or private sector principles within school governance. This, in turn, had led governing boards to adopt models of governance which were inappropriate to the context of education. As a result, relationships and provision for learning within school communities could be disrupted, resulting in barriers to achievement and participation for children and parents who were at risk of disadvantage, including children considered to have SEN.

The review concluded by arguing that the current model of school governance and provision for SEN were based on approaches that did not address the complexities of school communities. I argued that a conceptual framework should be applied which drew on sociocultural theory as this acknowledged the central roles of social and cultural processes on learning and the unique contexts of school communities. I identified the Community of Provision as a framework that was able to explore the way that governing boards develop and implement a vision for children considered to have SEN, together with the outcomes of those plans and activities. Finally, I justified the use of the Community of Provision because the framework drew on the notion of perspectives, which reflect the constituents of the Community of Provision within schools and integrates identity, agency, participation and practice (Rix et al. 2015). However, the selection of the Community of Provision had implications for the development and implementation of the research methodology which will be addressed in the next chapter.
Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the rationale behind the decision to adopt a qualitative methodology, which drew on an interpretative-constructivist approach, in order to investigate the research question.

Section 3.2 begins by exploring the epistemological, ontological and theoretical views that underlie the research methodology. The decision to include a justification of these views was informed by guidance from Newby (2010), who argued that researchers should seek to clarify their philosophical approach and assumptions about knowledge and reality, as part of the process of selecting an appropriate methodology.

In 3.3, the section on research design, I justify the selection of a comparative case study as a strategy to answer the research question. This section acknowledges criticisms of that approach but evaluates the decision in the context of other research. It concludes by arguing that the comparative case study is appropriate for gaining insight, when attention to local knowledge and the perspectives of individuals is required.

Section 3.4 describes the rationale for selecting participants for the study and explores the approach to identifying the strategy that was adopted in the pilot and main study.

Section, 3.5, justifies the choice of research methods and explores the links between the research questions and the conceptual framework that has been adopted in this study, the Community of Provision. I argue that the range of methods were selected in order to represent the groups within the school community including governors, adults and children, and capture the interactions between them.

The chapter concludes, in section 3.6, with an analysis of the ethical considerations for the conduct of this study. These were extensive as the research implemented methods that explored the experiences of a range of participants within two different school communities, including children considered to have SEN and their parents, as well as members of the governing board and school staff.
3.2 Methodological approach

‘If the purpose of research is to understand complex social and educational phenomena, then multiplicity and polyphony in the modes of inquiry are required to respond to the different needs of individual and groups in society’ (Hartas 2010, p. 27).

Authors of social and educational research argue that identifying an appropriate methodology is crucial to the success of inquiry (Bryman 2004, Cohen et al. 2007, Newby 2010). Hartas (2010) also asserted that research has been expected to play an increasing role in addressing educational issues, which has influenced debates about the selection and development of appropriate methodologies. As an example, Hartas (2010) points to interventions in these debates by governments which have criticised educational research, and recommended that researchers should adopt a ‘hard science’ approach to methodology, to support policy development.

In spite of these criticisms, researchers have continued to explore diverse approaches to investigation in education because innovation and responsiveness require ‘methodologies that are responsive to change and uncertainty’ (Hartas 2010, p. 24). Drawing on traditions from the social sciences, they have incorporated new approaches to support inquiry into social, political and economic issues that affect diverse educational environments. Therefore, the process of selecting an appropriate methodology to support inquiry is complex, because the researcher must consider the philosophical foundations for the methodology and decide whether it is consistent with their aims and values, before adopting an approach (Bryman 2004). Newby (2010) argued that the researcher should also clarify their philosophical approach, and assumptions about knowledge and reality as part of the process of selection.

The following discussion aims to implement Newby’s recommendation by exploring the epistemological, ontological and theoretical views that underlie the research methodology which was adopted for this study. It concludes by justifying the implementation of a qualitative methodology as a strategy for inquiry rather than the ‘hard science’ approach which was referred to above.
The research question for this study is:

‘How do governing boards in primary schools develop and implement a ‘vision’ for children considered to have SEN?’

Punch (2009) suggested that part of the role of research in education was to explore issues and provide insights that could contribute to the development of policy and practice. Connections with educational issues, policy and practice are implied in the research question above. However, assumptions on knowledge and reality underlying the approach to inquiry that addressed this question are not. Newby (2010) argued that researchers should articulate their approaches in these areas because they affect the research process and support the researcher to defend the value of their research.

Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) also asserted that identifying approaches to epistemology and ontology support the researcher to develop their methodological strategy. The following discussion takes account of this advice in order to provide a transparent account of selecting the methodological strategy for this research.

Epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge, or ‘how we know what we know’, as well as the procedures for acquiring that knowledge (Newby 2010, p. 93). In the natural sciences, the predominant approach to exploring knowledge has been through the principle of positivism. A positivistic approach has predominantly been aligned with a methodology that, it has been argued, is based on value-free observation and experimentation. It is also orientated to a deductive approach to theory, where theory is developed prior to the research and methodology is applied to test that theory. This process generally involves proposing a hypothesis which is investigated. The hypothesis is then rejected or confirmed and the hypothesis and theory adapted to reflect the results. According to Bryman (2004), the aim of this process is to establish or contribute to laws of human behaviour.

The second element in this triumvirate, ontology, has been described as being concerned with the nature of reality and what can be known about it. A view which also relates to a positivistic approach is that reality is objective and can be observed independently of the observer (Cohen et al. 2007). The ontological perspective adopted by many researchers in education has, however, been criticised by policymakers engaged in the process of selecting findings to inform research and practice. A central focus for these criticisms have been that too
many studies in education have not adopted an objectivist view of ontology supported by a positivistic approach (Hartas 2010).

However, Hartas (2010) argued that knowledge and reality in social contexts are influenced by other factors, including historical and political environments. Furthermore, a dynamic interaction between these factors needed to be acknowledged. Therefore, supporters of this view have suggested that positivistic approaches to inquiry can only provide incomplete data in studies involving social interaction. As a result, a positivistic conceptualisation of epistemology and an objectivist view of ontology have been criticised because they limit the insights that can be gained into social situations in the context of educational research (Cohen et al. 2007).

Adopting the notion of objective reality was problematic for this research. It assumes that the researcher and the research participants are value-free and objective facts can be identified at the site of the study, then replicated elsewhere. This assumption has been challenged by Hammersley who argued that researchers are ‘embodied agents whose identity shapes their work’ (Hammersley 2005, p. 148).

An alternative approach to positivism as an epistemology which takes account of these challenges for educational research is interpretivism. Interpretivism prioritises interpretation of meaning and the way people engage with this to understand their world (Punch 2009). A range of views of ontology have emerged which are orientated to interpretivism. The approach which is most appropriate to this research is constructivism where reality is seen as existing in a dynamic state of construction.

The interpretivist approach to theory is more likely to be inductive, meaning that theory is allowed to emerge from the research, rather than preceding the research process. The interpretivist-constructivist approach has made considerable contributions to educational theory, and has influenced the development of many theoretical positions. These include sociocultural theories which have provided crucial insights through the recognition of social and cultural influences on learning (Vygotsky 1978, Bruner 1996). Sociocultural theories have influenced practice in school leadership and approaches to provision for SEN which supported their relevance to the focus of this study.
Therefore, an interpretive-constructivist view acknowledges that knowledge is constructed from interaction between agents in a social context and reality is interpreted by those agents as a result of shared activities. It also allows the researcher to justify the adoption of epistemological and ontological approaches that acknowledge social interaction is ‘mediated by society, culture and history’ (Hartas 2010, p. 43).

The approaches to epistemology and ontology which are adopted by a researcher also affect the selection of a methodology, since they influence decisions the inquirer can take to explore the focus of their study.

Quantitative methodologies have a tendency to a deductive approach to theory, a positivist epistemology and an objectivist view of reality (Bryman 2004).

In contrast, Bryman (2004) describes qualitative research as a methodological strategy which:

- takes an inductive approach to theory;
- views social reality as constructed;
- emphasises the interpretation of the individual; and
- emphasises words rather than quantification.

These elements suggested that a qualitative research strategy was appropriate for this study as they reflect the philosophical assumptions which have been discussed above.

Sociocultural theory acknowledges the role of an inductive approach and the construction of social reality by agents. In this study, the interpretation of individuals, including governors, school staff and other members of the school community, was central to analysing interactions between governors and those engaged with provision within the schools. Therefore, words rather than quantification were emphasised. The role of interpretation in communications, actions and observations by and between researchers and research participants, also needed to be acknowledged here as it can lead to criticisms of the reliability and validity of qualitative research (Bryman 2004).

Reliability and validity are strategies which have been predominant in assessing the quality of research. Again, the use of these strategies reflects the historical relationship with objectivist/positivist approaches to research. As a result, this is an
area where qualitative methodologies have been criticised, since the potential for bias has been described as a key threat to the validity of research. However, Robson (2002) argued that reflexivity can address this criticism and support transparency in the research process by developing:

‘an awareness of the ways in which the researcher as an individual with a particular social identity and background has an impact on the research process’ (Robson 2002, p. 172).

I implemented a strategy to address this through acknowledging the impact of my biography on my interpretation of the research data in Chapter 1. Nevertheless, social desirability bias from participants also presented a risk to this research. Therefore, including a range of data collection methods which took account of the experiences of a range of members of the school community, aimed to reduce this risk.

However, Guba and Lincoln (1994) argued that the concepts of reliability and validity should be replaced with alternative concepts of trustworthiness and authenticity to evaluate research based within the interpretative paradigm. They argued that reliability and validity had been developed to evaluate positivist, quantitative methodologies with the aim of identifying ‘absolute truths’ or an objective reality. They questioned the relevance of the idea that this form of reality could be established in research focused on the social world, and proposed that an alternative approach to evaluating rigour, should be applied in qualitative research.

Sturman (1999, cited in Opie 2004) described how these concepts could be applied in case study research to replace the traditional criteria of reliability and validity, by addressing transparency in: acknowledging bias; approaches to collection and presentation of data; clarification of the connections between evidence and claims; and distinguishing between inference and description. Therefore, trustworthiness and authenticity were applied to evaluate this research as they are consistent with the methodological strategy which underpinned this study.
3.3 Research design

In this section I justify my research design, which was selected because it supported the implementation of a qualitative methodology, described earlier in this chapter.

A number of definitions of research design have been proposed but the approach that was adopted in this study reflected the description offered by Denzin and Lincoln (1994). They asserted that research design allowed the researcher to take an empirical approach to research, by connecting the research question with data, through the selection and implementation of an appropriate strategy. Furthermore, they argued that the strategy adopted should provide the rationale for answering the research question. The researcher who selects a qualitative design for their study has a range of approaches available to support their inquiry including: ethnography; grounded theory; action research; case studies; or a combined approach (Punch 2009). However, it has been argued that case studies provide a powerful design for research in education because they have the potential to reveal rich insights into phenomena (Robson 2002).

Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) cited in (Opie 2004) described a case study as a:

‘Concentration upon a particular instance in order to reveal the ways in which events come together to create particular kinds of outcomes’


While this offered a description of a case study, defining the case required further consideration. Punch considered that the ‘case’ was ‘a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context’ (Punch 2009, p.119). This implied that the case could involve any arrangement of social groups, including individuals or organisations, which provided justification for its use in the study of a school. Furthermore, it also indicated that the case is flexible in nature and may relate to policy, events or processes. In order to clarify the nature of the case that was the focus of this research I sought to identify the phenomenon and the context. I concluded that the phenomenon was the development and implementation of a vision to support children considered to have SEN and the context was the school.

A further justification for selecting this design to underpin the research arose from reviewing the strengths of a case study. These were summarised as including the facility to be strong on reality, to identify unique features that provided
understanding of the ‘case’, and the potential to provide insights into similar situations through a focus on people and their situations in real environments (Cohen et al. 2007). Furthermore, while it was argued that this approach provided a strategy which could respond to complexity and context it ‘also has a holistic focus, aiming to preserve and understand the wholeness and unity of the case’ (Punch 2009, p. 119). Yin (1984) cited in Punch (2009) also highlighted case studies as a form of inquiry which supported investigation of contemporary issues through the use of multiple sources of evidence. However, the weaknesses of case studies include bias and generalisability (Robson 2002). These must be acknowledged as threats in this study. Earlier in the discussion I argued that alternative strategies – trustworthiness and authenticity – were adopted to acknowledge the impact of bias on the data (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

Furthermore, the challenges to generalisability indicate that, if a case study is only relevant to the case, it cannot claim to apply findings in other settings. This is particularly problematic if research findings aim to make recommendations for future research, practice or policy. However, while claims for generalisability may not be made, Stake (1988) asserted that naturalistic generalisations could be achieved through case studies to develop ‘general understandings’ (Punch 2009, p. 122). Punch also observed that the use of case studies in training of teachers and other professionals, provided support for this claim. As a result, he argued that case studies are a valuable design in the context of education, particularly in areas where ‘knowledge is shallow, fragmentary, incomplete or non-existent’ (Punch 2009, p. 123). The review of literature in areas relevant to this study indicated that this provided a rationale for adopting this design for a study of vision and SEN in governance of primary schools.

Further support for adopting a case study can be drawn from considering the aims and forms of case studies in research. Stake (1994) described the aims of three main forms of case studies as:

- the intrinsic case study – to develop understanding of the case;
- the instrumental case study – to gain insight into an issue or theory; and
- the collective case study – an extension of the intrinsic case study to learn more about the case.
The collective case study has also been described as a multiple or comparative case study. Bryman (2004) described this approach as useful in the development of theory to explore ‘continuities and differences between cases’ (Wyness 2010, p. 159). Wyness (2010 p. 162) suggested that features of this approach included:

‘An approach to participants as reflexive and capable of exerting agency’
with the facility to ‘examine(s) social phenomena in multi-layered contexts’.

Furthermore, he suggested that characteristics for comparison in case studies were:

- institutional and organisational;
- related to the research site;
- between research sites in terms of size of social criteria.

However, comparative case studies have been criticised because these features could lead the researcher to focus less intensively on the examination of the individual case (Bryman 2004). Although this criticism should be acknowledged, successful examples of their use were identified from research by Wyness (2003, 2005). This research revealed insights into children’s participation in their educational experience through the use of comparative case studies in different education settings. Furthermore, it included the investigation of two distinct school settings in geographically different areas and achieved a balanced focus in examining two cases.

This approach was also used in empirical research by Rix et al. (2013), which investigated the way that the notion of a continuum was applied to SEN provision, through an international review of practice and policy. In the third phase of this research case studies were conducted, using multiple sources of evidence, into provision for SEN in three different countries. Themes that emerged were compared with the context in a fourth country and provided insights into continuities and differences between these countries relating to perspectives of: space; staffing; students; support; strategy and systems. These issues also emerged from the pilot study for this research. These examples provided the justification for implementing a comparative case study design, since the research focus built on areas addressed in the studies undertaken by Rix et al. (2013) and Wyness (2003, 2005).
Finally, I would argue that the case study design was an appropriate choice because investigation of the question in this study, required attention to local knowledge and the perspectives of individuals participating in the research. Governing boards of primary schools act in a local context but bring their individual perspectives to develop and agree their vision. The aim of developing a vision is to implement practices which lead to outcomes. These activities do not operate in isolation but involve interaction with other members of the school community who also bring local knowledge and individual perspectives. The aims of this research included allowing participants to draw on their knowledge and perspectives through exploring their experiences. Drawing on the insights they had gained from their experiences, aimed to support understanding of the way that they developed and implemented vision, together with the outcomes for children considered to have SEN, within their school community.

In conclusion, it has been argued that the strengths of the comparative case study design included the potential to be holistic but identify unique features. It was also argued that case studies possessed the potential to allow the researcher to take account of context, while providing insight into similar situations when supported by a range of data methods. Furthermore, this design had been applied in studies which explored participants’ experiences in school communities and had revealed insights in these areas. These features justified its selection as a research strategy to investigate the focus for this study.

3.4 Participants

Participants for the pilot study were drawn from a four form entry primary school in South East England with a children’s centre. It was selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- a population which was above the national average for free school meals and pupil mobility;
- a population of learners with minority ethnic heritages and SEN above the national average;
- the last Ofsted report judged the school to be outstanding and considered the progress of learners considered to have SEN to be rapid and sustained from their individual starting point.
Feedback on the pilot study revealed the limiting effect of these criteria in allowing insights into similarities and differences between schools. These criteria had been selected because the research question in the pilot study had included a focus on inclusive practice. Since this focus was removed from the research question for the main study, the criteria were no longer relevant and limited access to schools who were willing to participate in the research. Therefore, I removed these criteria to increase the potential for insight and access to participants. The main study included a single criterion that schools involved in the study did not operate admissions policies that limit entry, i.e. relating to gender, religion or ability of the learner. The new criterion was included because admissions policies that limited entry risked reducing or removing learners considered to have SEN from their school community. Therefore, the admission criteria aimed to ensure that the study included a population which was the focus of the research question. Including schools that served English communities with different social and geographical criteria, including size, aimed to support the comparative focus of the investigation.

The main study also aimed to include participants from three primary schools in England. However, this was reduced to two schools since a school which had initially agreed to participate, withdrew just before research activity began. These schools provided an opportunity to extend research engagement with the range of groups working with primary schools which included: children; parents; teaching staff and SENCOs; members of the governing board, including headteachers and the chair of governors, together with any members with allocated responsibilities for learners considered to have SEN.

A non-probability strategy, which identified participants using a non-random approach, was implemented in the pilot study as it was consistent with the use of a purposive sample (Bryman 2004) or including ‘people who are relevant to the research question’ (Robson 2002, p. 334). However, as I received no responses to my original attempts to engage participants for the main study, I adopted a convenience sampling approach. The implementation of this approach is described further in Chapter 5.
3.5 Research Methods

The previous discussion of case study design acknowledged that a strength of the case study included the facility to select a range of methods to explore the phenomenon (Robson 2002).

The research question and sub-questions for this study were:

- How do governing boards in primary schools develop and implement a ‘vision’ for children considered to have SEN?

This was addressed by exploring the following sub-questions:

- What is the meaning of vision for members of the governing board?
- How is the vision for SEN understood by members of the governing board?
- How do governors develop a vision for children considered to have SEN (planning question)?
- What activities do governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN (operationalising question)?
- What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision (outcome question)?

These questions were constructed to focus on the way that members of the governing board planned and operationalised their vision and identified the outcomes of that vision. However, the questions also concerned planning, operationalising and outcomes of that vision for children considered to have SEN. This indicated that the study needed to include a range of research methods which allowed rich insights by gathering evidence from different groups and sources of data within the schools. Planning, operationalising and identifying outcomes also involved school staff, parents and children in providing evidence on activity and resources, together with a review of documentation. Therefore, the research methods needed to be able to draw on participants’ views and experiences in their roles, together with observation of the activities they engaged in and the artefacts that they developed.

Semi-structured interviews with governors in a single primary school were conducted in the pilot study to develop the design for the main study interview guides. However, this focus on a single method was a limitation of the pilot study.
In the main study, the research methods were selected in order to gather evidence from groups and sources of data within each school to address this weakness. The results from the pilot study also indicated that interviews, observation and documentary analysis provided appropriate methods to employ in the main study design, since they supported the potential to develop themes that had emerged from the pilot study. Furthermore, these themes reflected the perspectives identified in the Community of Provision proposed by Rix et al. (2013).

Elements in the Community of Provision are described as perspectives that interact including:

‘Community systems – concerned with issues of governance;

Community space – concerned with where support takes place;

Community staffing – concerned with who is providing the support;

Community of students – concerned with who is being supported;

Community support – concerned with the quantity and type of support;

Community strategies – concerned with the quality of support’ (Rix 2015, p. 176).

In order to explore the interaction of community systems with other community perspectives, the methods adopted for the main study needed to be able to explore governor engagement with a range of activities that were linked with implementation of their responsibilities. These included: funding decisions; their role in development planning; staffing and staff training; policy development, including policies on admissions and organisation of the learning environment; arrangements for working with other professionals; and arrangements for working with, and responding to, the experiences of children and parents. Therefore, research methods needed to capture engagement between staff, children and parents on planning, implementation and outcomes to support analysis of interactions between the community perspectives. Furthermore, analysis of documents provided the opportunity to gain insights by examining consistency between policy and practice.

The following research methods were selected as they are consistent with these aims and provided a strategy to support claims for meeting trustworthiness (Guba and Lincoln 1994). The methods were also selected because they had been used
effectively to investigate a sociocultural perspective on school development and provision in other studies (Wyness 2010). The methods selected were: semi-structured interviews; focus groups; unstructured observation; and documentary analysis. In the following sections these methods are evaluated in order to consider their strengths, weaknesses and relevance to the study.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews have been employed to investigate a sociocultural perspective on achieving organisational goals in the context of school development (Gallucci 2007). However, a criticism of semi-structured interviews as a research method is that they provide less control than structured interviews (Opie 2004). Yet it is also argued that they provide the potential to gather rich data by providing a more flexible format. This argument was supported by the outcomes of their application in research on school governance which was referred to in Chapter 2 (Baxter 2017, Pearson 2011, Wilkins 2014).

A face-to-face interview style was adopted as the strengths which have been claimed for this method include: a high response rate; the opportunity to clarify questions; and the ability to use probes to support interviewees to respond and elaborate in their responses to questions (Robson 2002). However, a criticism of this approach is that interviewer effects can increase the potential for bias (Cohen et al. 2007). Cohen et al. also acknowledged that, in spite of these limitations, face-to-face interviews provided additional advantages including increased concentration from interviewees, thoughtfulness in response to questions together with providing the interviewer with access to non-verbal communication which could improve the quality of the data. Since the selection of this method was justified, the pilot study trialled an interview guide to support semi-structured interviews with governors, in preparation for the main study (Cohen et al. 2007).

Bryman (2004) proposed that an interview guide should include: introductory open questions; focus questions which specifically addressed key issues in the research; and ending questions which prepared the interviewee for the close of the interview. He argued that the interview guide should also allow an opportunity for interviewees to provide feedback on the questions and conduct of the interview. The interview guide for the pilot study followed this structure and can be found at Appendix 2.
However, the results of the pilot study indicated that a more open approach to the focus questions could increase insights into the research question. It also revealed that references to systems, space, staffing, support, strategies and students, would balance the risks of increased openness by providing a structure which supported participants to reflect on their views, experiences and practice.

In order to support the trustworthiness of data gathered from governors, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with staff members within schools. However, individual interviews had the potential to be problematic for parents and children for ethical reasons. For children this included addressing their vulnerability and ensuring ongoing consent. Therefore, an alternative method was selected which could address these issues.

### 3.5.2 Focus groups

Focus groups provided a research method which could address ethical issues for children and parents in both schools. The aim of including focus groups as a research method was to acknowledge the agency of children and parents as members of the school community and ensure that they were able to participate in ways that would enable them to discuss issues which affected them directly. Furthermore, these contributions could increase insights into connections between the views and activities of members of the governing board, and other members of the Community of Provision. Finally, the inclusion of focus groups provided a strategy to achieve the criteria of fairness in the research by including the views of different groups within the research setting (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

Hart (1992) acknowledged the significance of participation in children’s learning, and drawing on their views in decisions on learning provision. Accordingly, Holland et al. (2010) conducted research which explored the notion that involving children in qualitative research supported understanding of issues that affected them. They argued that researchers should employ methods that ensured research with children was meaningful. Their findings led them to suggest that there was undue emphasis on quantity of participation in research involving children, together with the potential to manage children’s responses, which raised ethical concerns. However, they concluded that children’s inclusion in research was valuable when supported by appropriate methods. Jones (2005) had also concluded that involving children in research on issues which affect them could provide valuable insights into the experience of learners. She argued that young children could be
involved when supported by visual resources and familiar adults, as these strategies had enabled them to communicate their views on experiences of inclusion. Therefore, this research aimed to engage with children’s views and experiences through focus groups. Furthermore, visual resources and familiar adults were included in the group settings to support children in communicating their views and ideas. However, conduct of the focus groups was also alert to the ethical considerations which had been identified by Holland et al. (2010) and aimed to ensure that participation was enacted in a way which enabled, rather than managed, the voices of children.

The management of adult voices was also addressed in a study by Ng (2013). In a qualitative study on the roles of parents in school governance, Ng (2013) explored the changing ways in which parents involvement in schools were conceptualised. Ng (2013) employed a documentary review and focus groups as methods to gain insight into parents’ experiences and concluded that parents’ involvement should be developed in ways which were ‘real’ not ‘rhetorical’. This was a particular consideration for this study as school processes for identifying, assessing and making provision for children considered to have SEN, can leave the views of parents and children vulnerable to management by those responsible for implementing SEN-related activities.

Analysis by Newby (2010) identified three broad forms of focus groups including interviews, discussions and exploring views. However, this raised further questions about the approach to adopt since elements of all these forms were relevant to the aims of employing this method. He suggested that consideration should be given to issues relating to: group membership; setting; management of the process; questioning; and methods of recording the data to support the research to adopt and integrate these elements. Cohen et al. (2007) also noted that consideration should be given to the contrived organisation of focus groups. While suggesting that this could be a strength as they can lead to insights, they also asserted that this method has the potential to weaken the data since the group dynamics may reduce insights, which may have been revealed through individual interviews. In order to address this, they suggested that attention should be given to the size of group and that, as a method, it should be conducted alongside other forms of data collection. However, the size of the focus groups in each school did not exceed six children or four parents, which allowed all participants to contribute.
Therefore, the inclusion of focus groups as a research method was justified since it provided an opportunity to gain insights, by exploring the views of children and parents within the school community. Focus groups also provided an opportunity to strengthen claims for trustworthiness by offering multiple accounts of the realities experienced within the school settings (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

3.5.3 Observations

Bryman (2004) asserted that observational methods could increase the potential for ‘thick’ description or ‘rich accounts of the details of culture’ (Bryman 2004, p. 275). However, Cohen et al. (2007) identified a number of risks arising from this method. A well-documented risk is changes in the behaviour of participants arising from the process of being observed (Webb et al. (1966) cited in Bryman 2004). In order to address this, Bryman (2004) advised that a research strategy which included adopting a range of methods in addition to observations, could moderate these effects. Since other methods of collecting data were employed in the study, a further consideration in the decision to include observation, was its relevance to the aims of the study.

I concluded that observation of governor meetings (alongside interviews with governors) supported trustworthiness in exploring the way that governors developed and implemented a vision to support SEN, together with the factors that supported and constrained them. Furthermore, observations of children provided an opportunity to reveal how aspirations for provision emerging from their activity were enacted in other areas across the school, e.g. how and where children considered to have SEN were supported. It also provided an opportunity to inform probes to clarify and extend data collected within interviews. For example, the emphasis on parents and governor engagement in research were probed in interviews following observation of governor meetings.

Therefore, two sets of observations were carried out during the research. These included observations of governing board meetings and observation of children considered to have SEN who were being supported in the classroom or school environment. The decision to employ observation as a method of data collection required further decisions on selecting the approach to be taken, since a range of diverse approaches are available from participant to non-participant and structured to unstructured forms of observation. However, full researcher participant approaches can have ethical implications for those engaged in studies as they...
may prevent participants themselves having access to information about the research (Bryman 2004). Additionally, a criticism of structured observations is that they risk obscuring key features of data, particularly in situations where the researcher has limited knowledge of the environment (Snyder and Glueck 1980). Since ethical considerations were a particular concern in this study, and I had limited knowledge of each school environment prior to the study, a non-participant, unstructured approach was adopted. This approach also provided an opportunity to explore consistency between aspirations for vision arising from this data set with aspirations expressed in policy documents.

3.5.4 Documentary review

Cohen et al. (2007) observed that public documents can contain insights which support the use of documentary analysis in qualitative case study research. Nevertheless, the use of documentary analysis as a research instrument has been criticised as many documents are written for a public purpose. However, Bryman (2004) advised that assessing the quality of documents for authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning supports researchers to gain insights through analysing documents.

Therefore, I concluded that a review of school documents had the potential to support the analysis of themes which related to governor activity, within and beyond the school community. Furthermore, the use of documents was relevant to exploring the notion of vision because statements about the vision of schools have been represented in text (Bolam et al. 1993, Hoyle and Wallace 2005).

Initially, the documentary review aimed to include: policies; inclusion/vision statements; development plans including use of the Pupil Premium; and assessment procedures including representation of learner and parent/carer voice. The use of these documents had the potential to support understanding of the way that those involved with interpreting requirements from central government responded to adapt policy to meet the needs of the community. Due to time constraints, the main study only included a documentary review of the SEN Policy which had been developed and implemented in each school at the time when the data was collected. The decision to focus on this document was made because, in both schools, they had been reviewed during the year and they also referred to the concepts which were central to this study, vision and SEN. However, it should be
acknowledged that the focus on these single documents risked excluding key aspects of data.

### 3.6 Ethical issues


The research followed the Open University policy documents ‘Ethics Principles for Research Involving Human Participants’ (The Open University 2014) and ‘Code of Practice for Research at The Open University’ (The Open University 2013).

The research has also followed the guidance of, and secured approval from, the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the Open University for the pilot study and the main study. Information and consent letters to show compliance with the requirements of the HREC can be found at Appendix 3.

Voluntary informed consent – participants were provided with full information on the research aims, processes and activities to report on findings from the research. Consent was sought and obtained from all participants in the research who were provided with consent forms (see also Appendix 3). Their consent was reviewed to ensure that it was ongoing before and during the research. In the case of adults, this involved additional verbal information about consent in addition to provision and signing of forms, before and after they participated in the research. In the case of children, this included discussion with parents and teaching assistants (TAs) to ensure that appropriate strategies to support children’s understanding of consent were implemented and information was accessible. For example, use of language and visual strategies including Makaton to support understanding.

Consent forms were signed and returned before the interviews began. Participants were encouraged to ask for clarification on any questions that were not understood as well as provide feedback on the usefulness of the questions. Participants were also informed that all interviews would be recorded and fully transcribed to support authenticity.

Right to withdraw – participants were informed of their right to withdraw consent up until the point of transcription and anonymising of the data, and information on the
right to withdraw was provided again at key points in the research, e.g. at the point of interview. No participants chose to withdraw.

Children, vulnerable young people and vulnerable adults – the research involved direct contact with this group during the main study through participation in focus groups and classroom observations of children considered to have SEN. Therefore, the researcher followed the guidance of related school policies to ensure safeguarding and privacy.

Jones (2005), provided insights into approaches for involving children by highlighting the role of accessible materials such as visual resources and engagement with parents. This advice was implemented by drawing on these strategies, which are also referred to in the section on voluntary informed consent, since representing the voices of children in this research was crucial in acknowledging their rights and their roles within the school community.

Privacy – information on arrangements for confidentiality was provided together with arrangements to store, use and destroy any personal data arising from the research. Participants were also informed of the processes undertaken to ensure their anonymity, e.g. coding and reporting. Confidentiality was also ensured by assigning the pseudonyms ‘Castlemount’ and ‘Greenhill’ to the schools in the study. Finally, I agreed to produce a report on the outcome of the research and make available to participants.

All data was kept in compliance with the Data Protection Act (United Kingdom. Data Protection Act 1998) and the Freedom of Information Act (United Kingdom. Freedom of Information Act 2000). Research notes and interview material and transcripts were kept in secure conditions.

The project was registered with the Faculty Data Protection Officer.
Chapter 4 – Building on the pilot study

In Chapter 3, I justified the decisions that had been taken in developing the design of this study. I also justified my decision to adopt the alternative criteria proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1994) of trustworthiness and authenticity in order to evaluate this research. Furthermore, Bryman (2004) pointed out that, whatever approach is adopted, reflexivity can support the researcher to achieve rigour in their research.

Basit (2010) also argued that conducting a pilot study can support the researcher to achieve trustworthiness and authenticity. The purpose of revisiting the pilot study was to demonstrate how the main study built on those findings to increase reflexivity, and strengthen claims for trustworthiness and authenticity across the conduct of this research. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter aims to reveal how my reflections as a researcher, on the conduct of the pilot study, influenced my decisions on making changes to the research design in the main study.

4.1 Introduction

The pilot study for this research was carried out between January and February 2016. It involved interviews with seven governors, in a four form entry primary school, in England. The purpose of the study was to develop a research tool by testing the design of an interview guide for semi-structured interviews, with members of primary school governing boards (see Appendix 2).

The interview guide followed the structure suggested by Bryman (2004). Therefore, it included:

- open questions;
- intermediate focus questions which addressed key issues in the research and allowed for probing;
- ending questions which prepared the interviewee for the close of the interview and allowed them to ask questions and provide feedback on the conduct of the interview.

The research question for this phase of the research was:

‘How do members of governing boards in primary schools develop and implement a collective vision that supports inclusive provision for learners considered to have SEN?’
4.2 Data analysis and findings from the pilot study

The interview data which was gathered to explore the research question for the pilot study was fully transcribed and analysed by applying qualitative content analysis. I adopted the eleven step model of content analysis proposed by Cohen et al. (2007), as they argued that this approach supported clarity in reduction and coding of data, as well as moving the data from description to interpretation. The eleven steps provide guidance on: defining aspects of the data; making decisions on codes and categories; identifying patterns in the data, summarising these as themes and making inferences to support explanation. Therefore, the approach appeared to provide a clear and comprehensive process for completing analysis of the data, and supporting claims for trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

After reading and marking the transcripts, the data references were related back to the research question, coded and allocated to categories. Fifty four codes emerged which were related to the following categories:

- Vision – values, goals, curriculum, community engagement, systems, pedagogy, inclusion;
- Activity – leadership aspirations, funding, external engagement, staff support, SENCO, policy, admissions and exclusions;
- Supports – children, relationships, school community;
- Constraints – government initiatives, funding, testing.

One of the insights which emerged from data analysis of the pilot study was linked to the codes for supports and constraints on governing boards in developing and implementing a ‘vision’ for the school. Supports were reported as internal factors which arose from within the school community. In contrast, constraints were reported by interviewees as external factors which arose from beyond the immediate community of the school.

Furthermore, the codes and categories that emerged from the pilot study indicated that the Community of Provision framework (Rix et al. 2015) provided an appropriate model for exploring research in this area since the perspectives within the Community of Provision were represented in the data. However, other codes that were identified through data analysis indicated that there was a need to
improve coherence between the aims of the study and clarity in the research questions.

This led me to conclude that there were implications for the main study which had emerged from the pilot study and needed to be addressed.

4.3 Implications for data collection and analysis in the main study

The process of data collection and analysis from this pilot phase indicated that the research question should be refined. Additional concepts, such as ‘collective’ vision and ‘inclusive’ provision for learners considered to have SEN in the original research question, reduced its clarity. This became apparent during the interviews where items including combinations of concepts appeared to constrain participant responses to questions. It was also confirmed by the feedback I received on my Year 1 Final Report.

A further implication of the data from the pilot study was that the Community of Provision framework provided an appropriate model to underpin the research design of the main study. Revising the research question, and the decision to take this framework forward, also indicated a strategy for developing items in the interview guide. As a result, core items in the original interview guide were refined to increase the openness of questions. Items were also linked to the perspectives in the Community of Provision framework in order to allow participants to elaborate on their views and experiences.

The concept of perspectives indicated that research methods should be included which drew on data from participants in other areas of the school community including staff, children and parents. This also strengthened the design of the case study by providing opportunities to achieve trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

Therefore, a significant implication from the pilot study for the main study was the need to increase the range of data collection methods. The purpose of this was to allow the research question to be explored by drawing on wider representation from those engaged in roles within the school community. Research by Wyness (2010) and Rix et al. (2013), had provided insights into the selection of appropriate data collection methods, as they had conducted investigations in areas of research relevant to this study.
Furthermore, the increase in number of data methods provided an opportunity to strengthen claims for trustworthiness through achieving credibility and transferability, together with authenticity, by aiming to achieve fairness in representing the different viewpoints of community groups within the schools.

The data collection methods were examined in greater detail in Chapter 3. However, a further outcome of the pilot study was a decision to change the approach to analysing the data in the main study.

The outcomes of using content analysis in the pilot study indicated that this approach to data analysis required further consideration before implementing it across data collection methods in the main study. I also reflected that, although Cohen et al. (2007) had argued that the eleven step model supported clarity in reduction and coding of data, I was concerned that the data had become fragmented. It became problematic to retain the focus on the research question during the process of progressing through the eleven steps. It appeared to reduce rather than support clarity in identifying new connections and gaining insights into the answers to my questions.

The emphasis on frequency or incidence in the occurrence of a code was also a concern, as this drew on a quantitative, positivistic methodology which I had rejected, leading to inconsistencies in approach. Bryman (2004) recognised these concerns as challenges that are often experienced by the researcher in the process of analysing qualitative data. Furthermore, Cohen et al. argued that:

‘Paradigmatical purity was unacceptable in the real world of qualitative data analysis, in which fitness for purpose should be the guide’ (Cohen et al. 2007, p. 482).

This led me to conclude that, although my concern for ‘paradigmatical purity’ could be challenged, attempts to be rigorous in pursuing the eleven steps had not supported my purpose. Therefore, I adopted an alternative approach to data analysis for the main study, which is described in the following chapter.

Finally, the pilot study had revealed some practical implications for the main study. Rix (2015) argues that the Community of Provision framework can be applied to schools in any context. In order to explore this further I needed to engage different forms of primary schools to participate in the next phase of the research.
Chapter 5 – Data collection and analysis

5.1 Data Collection for the main study

The data within the main study was drawn from two primary schools in England, an Academy Trust in the South East of England and a Maintained School in Greater London. Each school followed the guidance on arrangements for governance based on their status, e.g., Academy Trust or Maintained School (DfE 2017a). While this status was referred to in previous chapters it will also be discussed where it is relevant in the following sections on data analysis.

Schools were initially approached through the National Governors Association (NGA). The NGA included information on the project and my contact details through their electronic newsletters which were sent to schools on two consecutive occasions. I received no responses from the newsletters and, as a result, I adopted a convenience sampling approach. This approach has been criticised because generalising findings from research employing this approach to sampling is problematic (Bryman 2004). However, in Chapter 3 I argued that this research aimed to carry out exploration, rather than generalise findings. Therefore, it was an appropriate strategy to adopt and provided an opportunity to improve the response rate. As a result, twelve schools were contacted by sending invitations and information on the research to Headteachers and Chair of Governing Boards in the convenience sample of schools. A copy of the letter inviting schools to participate in the study can be found at Appendix 4. These included Maintained Schools, Academies and Church Schools. Five schools responded and indicated that they were interested in participating in the research. Subsequently, three schools withdrew their offer to participate due to staffing issues and inspection visits, which were unforeseen at the time of their original responses.

Differences between the legal status, constitution and operation of governing boards in schools are explored in Chapters 1 and 2. However, the legal status of the participating schools, i.e. a Maintained and an Academy School, was not a focus of the sampling approach in this study. This is because the research questions examined the way that governing boards developed and implemented their vision for SEN, areas where there has been limited research. In order to explore these areas the study adopted the conceptual framework of the Community of Provision which was examined in Chapter 2 (Rix 2015).
Accordingly, analysis focused on the relationships that were defined within this framework for each school. Therefore, the sampling criteria for the case studies were not focused on comparing the impact of differences in legal status, constitution and operation of governing boards between the schools. Instead, it was concerned with exploration of vision development and implementation by each Governing Board within the context of their Community of Provision.

**Castlemount School**

The Academy School included three schools in South East England. The school where the research took place had become an Academy in 2012 and the two additional schools had subsequently formed a ‘family’ with this school. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteachers had been in their roles for more than ten years and the Chair of the Governing Board had held the role for ten years, at the time the research was conducted. The size of the school was larger than average for schools in England. The percentage of children considered to have SEN, who were supported by an EHCP was higher than the national level and the percentage of children considered to have SEN, without an EHCP but receiving SEN support, was lower than the national level at the time of data collection. The most recent Ofsted report had designated the school as ‘outstanding’.

**Greenhill School**

The Maintained School was located in Greater London. The Headteacher was in her first year in that role and was previously a Deputy Headteacher in an Inner London Maintained School. The Chair of the Governing Board had been appointed just prior to the data collection, following a decision by the Board to reorganise. Therefore, the change of Headteacher and Chair of the Governing Board had occurred in the same academic year. The size of the school was larger than average for schools in England. The percentage of children considered to have SEN, who were supported by an EHCP was higher than the national level and the percentage of children considered to have SEN, without an EHCP but receiving SEN support, was slightly lower than the national level at the time of data collection. The most recent Ofsted report had designated the school as ‘good’.

Table 1 below provides information on key features of each school together with data on national levels of schools in England at the time of the data collection.
Table 1: Key features of Castlemount and Greenhill Schools including national averages in England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Castlemount</th>
<th>Greenhill</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of school</td>
<td>Academy</td>
<td>Maintained</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical location</td>
<td>South East England</td>
<td>Greater London</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade at last Ofsted inspection</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years Headteacher in post</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>Less than one</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years Chair of Governing Board in post</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Less than one</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils on roll</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils eligible for free school meals at any time during the past 6 years</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pupils with an SEN EHCP</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pupils with SEN support</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils whose first language is not English</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils meeting expected standard in reading, writing and maths (KS2)</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from: UK Government (2020) and Department for Education (2018b)
I undertook planning visits to the two schools that agreed to participate in the research. These involved: agreeing a research contact for each school; sharing further information about the data collection methods and ethical considerations for participants; and developing a timetable for the data collection. A list of the data collection tools and a timeline can be found at Appendix 5.

The data collection took place between June and November 2017, and involved five full-day visits to each school. All interviews, focus groups, and observations took place on the school premises. Access to a range of school documentation was provided which was either accessible on the school website, available at meetings or provided by the school research contact on request. However, the documentary review focused on the school’s current SEN Policy due to time constraints. An anonymised example of a school’s SEN Policy can be found at Appendix 6.

The interviews were recorded on Quick Time Player Audio Recording software and each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The interview recordings were then sent to a professional transcriber for full transcription. This procedure for recording and transcription was selected in order to support trustworthiness and authenticity during the data collection process (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Participants with specific roles were selected as core interviewees including Headteachers, Chairs of the Governing Boards, SENCOs and governors with responsibility for SEN. However, all other members of staff and the governing boards were also invited to participate in interviews. Therefore, any additional self-selecting volunteers from teaching staff and governing boards were interviewed. Table 2 below provides information on the interview participants within each school.

Nine interviews were conducted in Castlemount School which included the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, SENCO, a class teacher, a TA, the Chair of the Governing Board, and three governors who had specific responsibilities for SEN, curriculum and premises respectively. All governors who were interviewed were also parents in the school and three of the governor interviewees worked in schools in the local area. In Greenhill School twelve interviews were conducted which also included interviews with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, two SENCOs, four class teachers, a TA, the Chair of the Governing Board and two
governors including a governor who had specific responsibility for SEN. The interview guides for governors and staff can be found at Appendix 7.

Table 2: Role of interview participants in each school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Castlemount</th>
<th>Greenhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headteacher</td>
<td>Headteacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Headteacher</td>
<td>Deputy Headteacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>SENCO x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class teacher</td>
<td>Class teacher x 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching assistant</td>
<td>Teaching assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair of the Governing Board</td>
<td>Chair of the Governing Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor (SEN)</td>
<td>Governor (SEN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governors (other) x 2</td>
<td>Governor (other)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The focus groups were also recorded on Quick Time Play Audio Recording software and were sent to a professional transcriber for full transcription. Two focus groups were conducted in each school including a parent focus group and a children’s focus group. Parents were invited to participate if their children were considered to have SEN. The focus groups for parents lasted between 90 minutes and 102 minutes. Two parents attended the focus group in the Academy School (two parents cancelled on the day due to illness) and four parents attended the focus group in the Maintained School. The focus groups for children lasted approximately 30 minutes and children were included in the group if they were considered by the school and their parents to have SEN. The focus groups took place during the school day on the school premises and members of school staff were present during the children’s focus group. This ensured that the research complied with the safeguarding requirements for each school. It also ensured that children could leave if they decided that they did not wish to continue participating in the research at any point. However, it should be acknowledged that the inclusion of a member of school staff who was familiar to children may also have compromised the data since their presence may have managed rather than enabled their responses (Holland et al 2010). Furthermore, conducting the focus groups with parents on the school premises also risked managing the responses.
of parents (Ng 2013). The impact of these issues will be considered further in Chapters 7 and 8, together with strategies that could have been employed to address them.

Tables 3 and 4 below provide additional information on the participants within each of the focus groups. The focus group guides for parents and children can be found at Appendix 8.

Table 3: Participants in the parents’ focus groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Castlemount</th>
<th>Greenhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Participants in the children’s focus groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Castlemount</th>
<th>Greenhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The observations of governing board meetings and classroom teaching sessions were unstructured and recorded in written notes. The rationale for this decision was described in Chapter 3. The notes included: recording information about the number of people who were present during the sessions; resources or records that were available in meetings or sessions; information about the space where the observation took place; and records of verbal and non-verbal interactions which included some direct quotes. Observations of classroom teaching sessions lasted 30 minutes and took place in a Year 3 classroom in Castlemount School and a Year 1 classroom in Greenhill School. Governing board meetings lasted for approximately two hours each and took place on the school premises in the evening after the school day had finished. The format for the observation record and an example can be found at Appendix 9.
5.2 Complete data set collected in Castlemount School and Greenhill School

The complete data set (see Table 5 below) comprised: 21 interview transcripts; four focus group transcripts (one child and one parent/carer focus group in each school); four free form observation write ups (one classroom observation and one governing board meeting observation in each school) and two documentary analyses (SEN Policy from each school).

5.3 Data Analysis

Robson (2002) advised that, in order to meet the criteria for rigorous research, a case study requires:

‘Attention to matters of design, data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting’ (Robson 2002, p. 177).

He also endorsed the use of multiple sources of data, to achieve the depth and richness of analysis that provides a rationale for selecting a case study.

The collection of multiple sources of data was also advocated by Guba and Lincoln as a strategy to support the trustworthiness of qualitative data, an approach that was implemented in this study (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

However, managing the volume of data and analysing it in a way that avoided it becoming fractured, while supporting the researcher to gain insights, has also been identified as a challenge for researchers (Cohen et al. 2007). Following my reflections on the outcome of the pilot study, this led me to consider the need for a method of analysis that would address this issue, in the main study.

Punch (2009) advised that there are several approaches available to support the analysis of data in qualitative research, but cautions:

‘Diversity is valuable, but scholarly rigour and discipline are also important’ (Punch 2009, p. 171).

An audit trail to address trustworthiness and honesty in research, was proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1994) as a strategy to address these concerns. Furthermore, Miles and Huberman (1994) advised that social researchers should seek to adopt an approach to qualitative data analysis that allowed significant elements to be
### Table 5: Complete data set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role/Group</th>
<th>Research method – Interviews</th>
<th>Research method – Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headteacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Head</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair of Governing Board</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor (SEN)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor (other)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group (parents)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group (children)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation (Governing Board)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation (class)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document review</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Castlemount (Academy School)**: 1 interview and 1 other method.
- **Greenhill (Maintained School)**: 1 interview and 2 other methods.
identified, through reducing and displaying data to draw and verify conclusions from it. However, I needed to acknowledge that, as a researcher adopting an interpretative approach, I was bringing my own interpretations to this research. As a result, I wanted to identify a strategy for data analysis that was relevant to the aims of the research, would enable me to manage the quantity of data generated from the increased range of research methods that were used, and support me to achieve trustworthiness in the findings. Thematic Analysis provided a strategy that addressed these requirements by maintaining the focus on the research questions across five phases.

5.4 Thematic analysis

‘Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns of meaning (‘themes’) within qualitative data’ (Clarke and Braun 2017, p. 297). Like content analysis, thematic analysis involves generating codes to support the identification of themes which allow the researcher to:

‘Identify, and interpret, key, but not necessarily all, features of the data, guided by the research question … the emphasis is on producing rigorous and high-quality analysis’ (Clarke and Braun 2017, p. 297).

Clarke and Braun advocated a form of thematic analysis that was flexible and appropriate to a range of methodological approaches, research designs and methods, but was particularly relevant to research which sought to explore participants’ experiences. They highlighted examples of its use in inductive approaches and case study designs that employed a range of methods including interview and focus group methods. Furthermore, they suggested that this approach was relevant to exploration in areas of study where there was limited research. These features provided a rationale to apply thematic analysis to analysing the data in this study.

The use of multiple methods of data collection could require diverse approaches to data analysis. However, thematic analysis provided the flexibility to apply to the complete range of data.

Adopting this approach aimed to address an issue which was encountered during the pilot study. Implementing the eleven step approach to content analysis which had been undertaken in the pilot study became problematic, since it led to a sense
of fragmentation of the data, as well as challenges in linking codes and categories back to the research questions. This extended number of steps was reduced by thematic analysis, and although there are different approaches, Braun and Clarke described five key phases which should be taken to support the researcher to achieve rigorous analysis of their data. These are:

1. Familiarising yourself with the data;
2. Generating initial codes;
3. Searching for themes;
4. Reviewing themes;
5. Defining and naming themes’ (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 87).

These five phases, while retaining the key processes required for the analysis of the different forms of collected data, simplified the process. Therefore, applying thematic analysis to the data collected in the main study, offered the potential to address concerns about fragmentation, and retain the focus on the research questions.

In Section 5.3 I referred to the challenges of managing the volume of data which arose from the use of multiple sources of data. However, managing the volume of data continued to be a concern. Therefore, I investigated a range of Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) to support management of the completed data.

5.5 Employing Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software to support analysis of the data imitations

Newby (2010) observed that Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) could support the researcher to manage data volume efficiently by supporting searches, coding and presentation of results. However, Bryman (2004) described a number of criticisms arising from the use of these packages, including the risks of fragmentation, when data is coded and decontextualized. Yet Bryman (2004) also concluded, that CAQDAS offered advantages including an opportunity to increase transparency during data analysis, by influencing the researcher to be more precise in their description of the process. Increased transparency could support claims for trustworthiness in
the research, while fragmentation of the data was an issue that I wished to resolve. Therefore, I explored a number of CAQDAS packages to support these aims.

I investigated three packages that are employed in qualitative research including NVivo, Ethnograph and Dedoose. I rejected NVivo because there were a number of incidents where it became difficult to use during the training session I attended. This implied that the software had the potential to be time-consuming and inefficient. I selected Dedoose because it was web-based and easier to use than the other packages. Ease of use was significant in the choice of selection because it supported my aims to manage the volume of data efficiently in a limited period of time. During the process of data analysis Dedoose also presented challenges in accessing the data. However, features in the software influenced the way that I managed and presented data which supported the aims of increasing transparency (Newby 2010).

5.6 Phases of thematic analysis

The following section describes the process which was followed in each of the phases to provide a transparent account of analysis across the data set.

5.6.1 Familiarisation with data

In Chapter 3 I justified the choice of methodological approach that had been adopted in this research. A key feature of this methodology included an inductive approach that would allow themes to emerge from the data collected.

The discussion in Chapter 3 also acknowledged the role of interpretation in communications, actions and observations by researchers and research participants (Bryman 2004). Therefore, although themes had emerged in the pilot study, it was important to avoid imposing a deductive approach in the main phase of the study in order to allow new themes to emerge in different contexts. However, an important stage of the data analysis in the pilot study was initial immersion in the data through repeated reading of the interview transcripts to identify ideas and areas of interest.

Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that this process of repeated reading to become familiar with the data is crucial to the development of subsequent phases of analysis. This process was applied during phase one to the written forms of all the
data, including transcripts of interviews, focus groups, and text documents as well as observation records.

During this phase hard copies of these documents were stored in files and organised by school, data method and role of research participant. Extracts from each transcript, document or observation record were then highlighted to indicate data that related to each of the research sub-questions in preparation for the second phase, generating initial codes. The process of repeated reading also took place during the highlighting phase as some of the data extracts were reconsidered for relevance to the research sub-questions. An example of this phase of highlighting extracts from a transcript can be found at Appendix 10.

Two extracts in Castlemount and seven extracts in Greenhill were rejected as they were not considered to be related to the research sub-questions following repeated reading in the highlighting phase. In Castlemount, 21 extracts and in Greenhill, 49 extracts were reconsidered and reallocated to Sub-question 3 from Sub-question 4 as a result of distinguishing between actions that related to ‘developing’ vision and ‘implementing’ vision. Table 6 below shows the number of data extracts from each school which were related to each of the research questions across the data set.

The presentation of data extracts in this table requires commentary as there are some large differences between the numbers of data extracts relating to different research sub-questions. As reported earlier in this chapter, there were differences in the number of interviewees, interviewee roles and sizes of focus groups between the schools. There were also differences in the duration of interviews and focus groups between schools. However, the number of data extracts highlighted for Greenhill were considerably higher on Sub-questions 2, 4 and 5. Furthermore, 35 of the extracts highlighted for Greenhill on Sub-question 2 were derived from three interviewees, the headteacher and two SENCOs. For Sub-question 4, 170 extracts were drawn from interview transcripts with the headteacher, the two SENCOs and the Chair of the Governing Board in Greenhill. Finally, on Sub-question 5, 110 extracts were highlighted from interviews with the headteacher and the two SENCOs in Greenhill. The concentration of extracts in these roles provided insights into the relevance of context within each school. In Greenhill, there had also been a high level of new appointments to school leadership and governing board roles at the beginning of that year and these changes were reflected in the transcripts. These transcripts also provided ideas that contributed
to early codes. However, attention was needed to ensure that data from these transcripts was not prioritised over data from other participants or sources, in order to identify less dominant codes.

Table 6: Number of data extracts which related to each of the research sub-questions – Castlemount and Greenhill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Sub-question</th>
<th>Castlemount</th>
<th>Greenhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of data extracts highlighted</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What is the meaning of vision for members of the Governing Board?</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How is the vision for SEN understood by members of the Governing Board?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do Governors develop a vision for children considered to have SEN?</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What activities do governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN?</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision?</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of extracts rejected as not related to RQs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Castlemount</th>
<th>Greenhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of extracts reconsidered**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Castlemount</th>
<th>Greenhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Castlemount</th>
<th>Greenhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>456</td>
<td>903</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of this phase of data analysis had been to allow codes to emerge in preparation for the next phase and support a process of ongoing reflection across the process of data analysis. Highlighting data extracts during the familiarisation phase had indicated that some elements of research which had been reported in Chapter 2 were present (Murphy and Torre 2015). Furthermore, this phase had
also indicated that areas which had not been reported previously were emerging from the study. The next stage allowed further analysis of these areas.

5.6.2 Generating initial codes

Phase one had achieved the aim of familiarisation with the different forms of data included in the complete data set. During this phase an extensive number of data extracts, which were relevant to the research sub-questions, had been identified. This indicated that the next phase of analysis, generating initial codes, was required, in order to organise the data in a manageable form and enable the identification of patterns across the data (Miles and Huberman 1994). However, I was also alert to the need for this process to be transparent, since it drew on interpretation, in order to produce research which could be justified through achieving the criterion for trustworthiness (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

Braun and Clarke describe initial codes as ‘a feature of the data (semantic, content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst … as you are organising your data into meaningful groups’ (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 88). Identifying initial codes involved rereading the highlighted data extracts, which at this stage were in the form of sentences or phrases, in order to identify aspects that were interesting and relevant to the research questions. This stage was carried out manually by writing notes, highlighting text and adding coloured notes to indicate different potential codes on the transcripts. However, Bryman (2004) notes that a criticism of coding is the risk of decontextualising the data resulting in loss of meaning. This was addressed across the process of analysis by repeatedly referring back to the original transcripts, observation write-ups or documents.

After initial codes had been generated these were reviewed, which led to adjustments in the names of some codes to increase the clarity of the feature that they were intended to capture. An example of this was the use of the term ‘Exclusion’ as a name for a code since this was too broad. After rereading the original transcripts this code was altered to ‘Attitudes to exclusion’. The review process was also accompanied by developing descriptors for the codes that had been generated, together with examples, which provided an opportunity to clarify their meaning. It also provided a mechanism to improve consistency and transparency in the application of the codes across the data sources as the data collection method was also recorded. Table 7 below provides an example of this process.
Table 7: An example of codes and descriptors identified in Castlemount

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to exclusion</td>
<td>What Governors say about exclusion which reflects their views about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection method</td>
<td>Example of code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor interview</td>
<td>&quot;We were talking about my visits to x where there were children who had been excluded and how we could support them here&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following this stage a list of codes were compiled and linked to each of the research sub-questions. A final review of these codes was carried out to ensure that they were present in each of the transcripts.

A total of 75 main codes were identified in Castlemount and a total of 67 codes were identified in Greenhill.

A representation of the codes relating to each research sub-question can be found at Appendix 11.

This process of representing the codes began to reveal patterns between them and the next phase of the data analysis, searching for themes, began.

**5.6.3 Searching for themes**

Identification of codes provided the basis for moving to the next phase of analysis, searching for themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe this phase as the point in the process of analysis where codes are reviewed and sorted in order to allow main themes and sub-themes to emerge. Since the research had adopted an interpretative approach to data analysis this phase began with a further review of the original transcripts to explore patterns that had begun to emerge. One of the aims of this action was to ensure that all codes in the data were included rather than rejecting them at this stage (Braun and Clarke 2006). This process confirmed that there were variations in the level of frequency that codes were referred to, both within individual transcripts and across the different forms of collected data. An example of a code that was referred to frequently in Castlemount was ‘Flexible
curriculum' and the ‘Creative curriculum’ was referred to frequently across transcripts in Greenhill. A distinction was made in these descriptions because a creative curriculum had been established in Castlemount while flexibility referred to adapting delivery of this curriculum to the learning requirements of children. In Greenhill the ‘Creative curriculum’ described the change in content and pedagogy as a curriculum innovation.

The analysis of frequency also confirmed the importance of avoiding rejecting codes that were not referred to frequently at this stage to acknowledge that frequency was not an indicator of priority (Cohen et al 2007). An example of such a code was ‘Staff research' in Greenhill. This code was eventually rejected because two members of teaching staff referred to undertaking research to support their practice independently. However, it became apparent that references to this practice by two governor interviewees were influenced by researcher comments rather than reflecting their experience.

Reconsidering the inclusion of codes at this point also revealed where clusters between codes might be identified. For example, codes referring to research in Castlemount were present across different forms of data but had a higher frequency in interviews with staff members.

The codes were grouped together and allocated a provisional title where clustering appeared to be present and these draft titles provided the candidate themes that were reviewed in the next phase. Seven provisional titles were identified for grouped codes from data collected in Castlemount and seven provisional titles were also identified for grouped codes from data collected in Greenhill. The similarity in number indicated the importance of cross referencing the data across the process of analysis to ensure that the themes were fairly represented.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that research should include a visual representation of codes linked to themes to support transparency at this stage. An example of codes linked to themes can be found at Appendix 12.

5.6.4 Reviewing themes

After identifying the candidate themes a thematic map was created to show the connections between the codes and the proposed themes for each school. In order to achieve rigour in reviewing themes, Braun and Clarke (2006) advised the
researcher to review the candidate themes against the highlighted data extracts and recode if this was appropriate, then review and adapt the thematic map.

This resulted in the reconsideration of a number of codes, particularly those linked to research Sub-question 4. For example, the code ‘Engaging with parents’ in Castlemount had been identified as ‘Recruitment to Governing Board’, ‘Supporting parent participation’ and ‘Training in SEN Interventions’. Some of the main code titles were reviewed because they appeared too narrow. However, refining the distinction between planning activities and implementation activities arising from plans supported the process of breaking codes down. Furthermore, some codes were removed because a further review at this stage confirmed that there was insufficient data in the set to confirm their presence. ‘Staff research’ in Greenhill was referred to earlier in this discussion as an example of a removed code.

The revised codes were then reviewed alongside the thematic map that had been developed and the candidate themes that had been present at the beginning of this stage were reviewed. While no new themes were created, this resulted in changes to the titles of some of the final themes. For example, Theme 1 in Castlemount changed from ‘Equity and Equality’ to ‘Attitudes to Equity and Equality’ as this emphasised what was said and participant views on these ideas rather than the ideas in isolation.

The revised thematic map can be found at Appendix 13.

### 5.6.5 Defining and naming themes

The last stage was completed by confirming names and developing definitions for the themes. The names were selected because they represented distinct aspects of codes that were grouped from the data.

Although there were continuities between some of the themes from each school there were also discontinuities. This was evidenced by the list of themes for each school provided below.

Braun and Clarke advise that:

‘Names need to be concise, punchy and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about’ (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 93).
Although the titles aimed to achieve all of these aspects, providing a sense of what the theme was concerned with was prioritised when it was challenging to be concise.

**Themes – Castlemount**

1. Attitudes to equity and equality;
2. Reorganising the Governing Board;
3. Research and empowering teaching staff to improve practice;
4. Children and agency;
5. Keeping parents in the picture;
6. Providing a responsive curriculum;
7. Collaborating to include.

**Themes – Greenhill**

1. Initiating and responding to change;
2. Reorganising the Governing Board;
3. Supporting teaching staff to promote responsibility for all children;
4. Children’s rights and progress in learning;
5. Implementing a creative curriculum;
6. An inclusive learning environment;
7. Communication within the school community to develop agency and participation.

Examples of final definitions of themes from each school are provided in Table 8 below. A complete table of themes and definitions can be found at Appendix 14.

It must also be acknowledged that the naming of themes was my interpretation of the data. For example, it could be argued that the reference to ‘empowering’ teaching staff in Theme 3 of Castlemount was superfluous. However, an aspect of this phase that was unanticipated was the need to acknowledge less tangible elements of the data including personal responses that were described by participants. Therefore, while the process of adopting this approach aimed to support transparency, respecting the voices of participants required consideration.
Table 8: Examples of final definitions of themes from each school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Castlemount</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to equity and equality</td>
<td>What governors say about equity and equality which reflected their views. The way these influenced approaches to SEN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s rights and progress in learning</td>
<td>How children’s rights were interpreted in the school, practices developed to support those rights and the outcomes of those practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.7 Conclusion

This chapter described the rationale for adopting thematic analysis and argued that it was appropriate for case studies that were qualitative, interpretative and inductive. Braun and Clarke (2006) had also argued that it was a flexible approach that could be applied to a range of data methods which was required for the data set collected in this study. Therefore, the implementation of the five phases of thematic analysis was elucidated in order to provide an audit trail and support claims for the trustworthiness of the research (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

Although all identified codes were allocated to a theme, retaining the links to the research sub-questions had presented challenges, and threatened to fragment insights which had emerged from the data. This may have been a result of attempting to link data to questions at a stage that was too early in the process of analysis. The next chapter explores the themes before the discussion of answers to the research questions in Chapter 7.
Chapter 6 – Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings derived from the data analysis by discussing the themes that were identified in Chapter 5.

In the previous chapter I acknowledged that analysing the data, including the identification and naming of themes, was an interpretative process. This included interpretation by the researcher and the participants who contributed the data. The significance of interpretation is highlighted here in order to acknowledge that both researcher and research participants are attempting to make sense of social worlds that are ‘mediated by society, culture and history’ (Hartas 2010, p. 43). Therefore, this also influenced the titles of the themes presented in the chapter.

Hartas reminded researchers that they should aim for ‘scholarly rigour and discipline’ during the process of making sense of, and interpreting, qualitative data (Hartas 2010, p. 171). He also argued that transparency in the presentation of research findings supported the researcher to achieve that rigour. In Chapter 3, I acknowledged that researchers are advised to adopt actions to support transparent presentation of their research in order to achieve the criteria of ‘trustworthiness’ (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Therefore, the current chapter includes direct quotations from participants and references to texts, as a strategy to support transparency and achieve rigour through trustworthiness in reporting this research. The quotations were also selected because they represent some insight into, or aspect of, the themes drawn from the raw data.

The structure for the presentation of the findings in this chapter was informed by the research design. A comparative case study design was selected and each school is presented as an individual case. Therefore, the chapter is structured into three sections which discuss the findings as follows: 6.2 – Castlemount Themes; 6.3 – Greenhill Themes; 6.4 – Summary.

Due to constraints of space it is not possible to include evidence of all codes from the data in this section. However, Appendix 13 provides a list of codes linked to themes from the data set.
6.2 Castlemount Themes

The themes from the data analysis for Castlemount were:

1. Attitudes to equity and equality;
2. Reorganising the Governing Board;
3. Research and empowering teaching staff to improve practice;
4. Children and agency;
5. Keeping parents in the picture;
6. Providing a responsive curriculum;
7. Collaborating to include.

However, the order of these themes does not reflect their significance for the School.

In Castlemount, it should be noted that the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher were staff members of the Governing Board. All other non-staff members of the Governing Board were parents with children at the School.

6.2.1 Theme 1 – Attitudes to equity and equality

This theme reflected the complex way in which attitudes informed the meaning of vision and how the vision for SEN was understood by the Governing Board.

Across the data, participants described attitudes towards the rights of all children to be treated equally and receive whatever support they needed to make progress in their learning. They considered that this was central to the vision for children in the School.

Interviewees elaborated that all children had equal rights to participate and make progress in the School. However, they acknowledged that children’s individual circumstances could introduce barriers to achievement which also informed the vision for SEN. Participants reported that equity – understood as the provision of strategies or support to enable children to make progress – was a priority to ensure barriers were removed and learning was accessible to all children. This was referred to in interviews, focus groups, observations and ‘Beliefs and Values’ in the School’s SEN Policy which are described further in the following sections.
The following discussion reflects the emergence of ‘shared attitudes’ and ‘consistent attitudes’ within this theme. The discussion also highlights how these attitudes supported governors to develop and implement their vision.

Governors and school staff reported that their vision aimed to support the learning of every child in this school and was supported by shared attitudes to equality. The role of shared attitudes to equality in developing their vision was revealed by the Headteacher:

“We have a very similar philosophy. Education for all and opportunity for everybody … There must be opportunities for everybody to do well.” (HT)

However, the use of the word ‘similar’ also indicated variation in those attitudes and the way that they were expressed. This was demonstrated by the SEN Governor:

“I’ve never been afraid to say ‘Actually, I don’t agree with you on this one’ but the majority of times we do (agree).” (SEN Gov)

Interview data also revealed that the Governing Board claimed to implement a vision that aimed to be consistent in its attitudes across all members of the school community.

The Chair argued that this began with identifying:

“Five to ten priorities which the school lives by and aims for.” (Chair GB)

When prompted to elaborate on the meaning of this statement, he asserted that values and attitudes towards equality and equity for children also needed to be reflected in staff development. Therefore a priority was to:

“Help teachers to be trained and to train others, and develop additional sources of income to have enough to support everyone … [maintain] the culture of the school as one of constant learning for all children.” (Chair GB)

This statement indicated that teaching staff were viewed as part of their ‘culture of constant learning’, and entitled to equitable support for their own learning through training. Further evidence of this was identified in the observation of the Governing Board meeting and in the School’s SEN Policy.

During the observation the governor with responsibility for SEN requested information about funding allocation. The Headteacher provided information about
the income generated by the school which had been allocated to staff
development, including SENCO training. He also announced that the SENCO had
become a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in order to ensure that
the progress of children considered to have SEN was consistently communicated
among staff, and not marginalised.

This data represented practice to implement the Board’s vision, since increased
communication between school leaders, staff and the SENCO, aimed to support
equity by ensuring that the progress of all children was transparent within the
school community.

The documentary analysis of the SEN Policy also revealed ways in which attitudes
to equity and equality were represented for children. A section of this document
called ‘Beliefs and values’ asserted that all children should be supported to make
best possible progress, and that governors and staff at the school believed that
 provision should ensure that children considered to have SEN were included in all
aspects of school life. To demonstrate how these attitudes were implemented, the
Policy highlighted practices including identifying staff to support children, listening
and responding to children’s views, and collaborating with partners, including
parents, to ensure provision enabled progress. Attitudes to equity and equality
were also enacted through admission to the school.

“All our children – they’re part of our school community and our school
family … if you live in our catchment you can come to our school no matter
what your needs are.” (HT)

Governors reported that the school operated an admission policy which was based
on geographical proximity, having a sibling at the school and preference from
parents of children with an EHCP.

Evidence that these priorities were implemented emerged in a discussion during
the parents’ focus group where a parent claimed:

“Lots of people do try and get into this school and don’t always get in
because they’re not in the catchment or have a sibling here.” (Parent 1)

However, there was flexibility in the admissions process since some children who
were taught on the school site were not permanent members of the school. This
was demonstrated by children supported in a provision called the ‘Grow Unit’.
Children in this unit had been excluded from other schools, and the Governing
Board had taken decisions to support them in order to ensure they had access to mainstream provision, even though they did not meet the admission policy requirements. These children were taught in separate provision within the school grounds and provided with a programme of reintegration into the school from a support team. The observation of the Governing Board meeting included a reflective discussion on the attendance, and status of these children within the school’s roll. As this discussion developed, a governor identified that this issue revealed inconsistencies in their attitudes to equality in provision if they were unsure of their status as members of the school community. The Board agreed that further discussion was required to explore these inconsistencies.

Data also revealed that governors aimed to be consistent in their attitudes to parents. A staff member of the Governing Board, stated that vision development required attention to building relationships based on:

“Trust and respect … mutual respect.” (DHT)

Interview and parent focus group participants reported that, actions to promote collaboration and listening to the views of parents and carers to support learning, were considered to be a priority in this school. The high level of parent membership on the Governing Board may have influenced the development of this approach. However, staff members of the Board had also promoted parent membership. Their intention may have been to support parent collaboration at all levels from Board to individual parent. For example, interviewees asserted that collaborating with parents was the starting point for planning children’s learning. It was also interpreted as creating the foundations for collaboration by building relationships based on trust and respect. Interview and parent focus group participants also reported that engaging with parents to plan learning was not specific to children considered to have SEN. A parent in the focus group reported that discussions between teachers, parents and children underpinned the approach to support the planning of learning for all children in the school.

The following quotation, from a class teacher, describes her perception of how this approach to planning implemented the vision for learning in the School, irrespective of identification of SEN. She reported that, in her view, there was a:

“Joint understanding that we have as a school of what we hope for all the children … everyone understands … and it’s not just about one person’s responsibility.”

(Teacher)
Attitudes to equity and equality in children’s learning also influenced the approach to pedagogy that was adopted in the School:

“Support is not just for SEN but for everyone to learn … it’s a bit like what’s good in early years is still good in Year 6.” (DHT)

This quotation demonstrated the view that effective pedagogies were not considered to be SEN-specific. Instead, the school emphasised staff responsibility for planning learning experiences that would enable each child to make progress. However, supporting staff to implement pedagogies for all children revealed another aspect of the School’s approach to implementing equitable provision.

Allocating funding for staff to develop and implement research-based pedagogy was seen as a responsibility of the Governing Board by interviewees, including staff. Data gathered from an interview with a TA suggested that developing pedagogy through research was undertaken at all levels. Development and implementation of this aspect of the School's vision will be explored further in Theme 3. However, it should be acknowledged that no data on costs of training and evaluations of these initiatives was collected.

The discussion in this theme has examined the way in which the meaning of vision and the vision for SEN was understood by governors in the School. Governors reported that sharing attitudes to equity and equality was crucial to plan and implement their vision for the School. They also considered that these attitudes should be represented consistently across the school community. Therefore attitudes informed approaches to staff development, admissions, relationships with parents, and planning and pedagogy to support children’s learning.

6.2.2 Theme 2 – Reorganising the Governing Board

This theme provided insights into the way that governors planned and implemented their vision to support children’s learning through funding, collaboration, recruitment to the Governing Board, and allocation of the SEN Governor role.

Reorganising the Governing Board emerged as a theme in the data following descriptions of actions to change the School’s status. This was linked to the transition from Maintained School to Academy School and was significant for the Governing Board since it had political, administrative and funding consequences.
The decision to change the status of the school, the reasons for undertaking it and the procedures involved were described in some detail during the interview with the Chair. Decisions on the structure of the Academy were influenced by school priorities for securing funding to achieve equitable provision for children by increasing staffing, resources and collaboration with other schools. Changing the structure of the Governing Board and allocating responsibilities to members was the strategy that governors adopted to support these priorities. The Chair explained:

“When we changed to an academy we needed to change the governing structure … We specifically recruited people who were experts in four main fields and gave them a structure for reporting.” (Chair GB)

This statement indicated that new governors were recruited on the basis of skills. However, the recruitment process was not open to all those with skills in prioritised areas since all non-staff governors were parents at the school. Therefore, recruitment was limited to parents who were members of the school community.

Interview data indicated that the change in status provided an opportunity to address historical tensions by providing:

“An opportunity to slim down the governing body and keep the governors who actually did anything.” (DHT)

Interviewees also described how the Governing Board consulted a range of local and national bodies to decide on a structure for the Academy. This included the Department for Education (DfE), Local Education Authority (LEA), staff, parents and children. However, the DfE was viewed as having a different vision for the Academy’s structure which was seen as a source of tension. Governors reported that this tension arose from a conflict in expectations between the school’s aims for their local community and that of the DfE:

“There is a clear idea as to what academies should be in the government/DfE’s mind. They’ve asked us to take over different schools and we’ve not always done what they wanted us to do … that was never our vision.” (Chair GB)

Governor interviewees described their vision for the Academy as an increased capacity for supporting learning through collaboration with another school. However, they reported that they chose not to extend collaboration beyond
partnership with two other schools due to concerns that this could fracture relationships within their community. Therefore, knowledge of the school community and agency in decision-making were considered to be crucial in planning for the transition to academy status.

Governor interviewees reported that, as part of the reorganisation of the Governing Board, they decided to allocate responsibility for SEN provision to a named governor. These responsibilities were summarised in the SEN Policy which was developed with the SEN Governor.

The Policy implemented the School’s vision for children considered to have SEN and described the roles and responsibilities of both governors and staff involved with SEN provision. Specific activities were allocated to the SEN Governor role including monitoring and evaluation of SEN provision, and lesson observations with staff. The role of funding allocation to support equity, which was discussed in Theme 1, was also described in the SEN Policy. Furthermore, it stated that the Headteacher would inform the Governing Board of SEN funding arrangements, including the allocation of funding for staffing and staff training, which was observed during the Governing Board meeting. The rationale for maintaining and monitoring funding of SEN provision was described as:

“The key to (support) in this climate is financial … often it will be the LSAs (learning support assistants) that go first and here that doesn’t happen. They see that you’re going to lose the potential of those SEN students to make progress.” (Chair Curriculum)

The following extract also revealed that investment in staffing was seen as a significant outcome of the change to academy status:

“The biggest change was that we had more influence over our money and what we did with it. It allowed investment in staffing … with SEN … we deliberately over-invested in staff for better levels of support and provision.” (Chair GB)

Staff interviewees confirmed that becoming an Academy had a positive impact on funding and subsequently on staffing levels. High staffing levels were also observed in a class teaching session with a class teacher and three TAs. Furthermore, in the focus group data, parents identified the range of staff and training opportunities for both staff and parents, as leading to positive outcomes
for them and their children. Children in the focus group also reported that a range of adults who helped them with their learning.

6.2.3 Theme 3 – Research and empowering teaching staff to improve practice

Governors reported that the meaning of vision was concerned with promoting staff agency through research-informed practice. This was confirmed by staff who also reported that this practice empowered them as professionals by acknowledging that they were active participants in the School’s learning culture.

Governor interviewees described their vision for staff as aiming to empower their practice through a research-based approach to staff development. Promoting research-based practice began with the recruitment process as the SEN Governor commented:

“As part of the interview process the HT will ask if there are any teaching concepts (the interviewee) would wish to explore.” (SEN Gov)

The Headteacher argued that this approach acknowledged professional agency and enabled teaching staff to:

“Experiment with (ideas) to find different ways to support learning.” (HT)

A staff governor reported that the school had also changed its approach to assessing quality of teaching through formal lesson observations because it was seen as ‘de-skilling’ staff. Instead, research underpinned the ‘lesson studies’ approach they had adopted. ‘Lesson studies’ encouraged teaching staff to focus on the needs of children in their class, reflect on their practice and identify how they could develop this to improve their provision for children. This process was described as:

“Teachers get together and they unpick a question that they want to explore about learning.” (DHT)

She went on to explain how lesson studies linked to research within the staff community:

“That means that when we see something as an issue we look at the research … see whether it does have an impact here, if it’s working with someone they will talk about it.” (DHT)
Governors discussed the focus of lesson studies with staff. For example, during the observation of a Board meeting, a governor reported on research and practice developments which were an outcome of lesson study activities and could be accessed through an online forum. However, the driver for promoting research among the staff community was to achieve continuous improvements in pedagogy across curriculum and intervention provision.

Strategies that had been developed from the research projects to support the core curriculum were observed in displays, resources and teaching within the classroom. These are discussed further in Theme 6. However, the SENCO and the SEN Governor also reported that they planned and implemented the vision for SEN by sharing research on inclusive pedagogy and SEN interventions.

The SEN Governor reported on the latter focus during her interview, when she described the significance of research on interventions for her role. She stated that, during her induction, she had researched the School's intervention programme because:

“I wanted to know what benefits they had, how did they benefit the child and where is that child now?” (SEN Gov)

However, there were implications from interview data that the process of researching strategies within the school adopted a different approach for TAs supporting children considered to have SEN. This variation may have had consequences for constraining the School's vision for staff agency and pedagogy. These consequences were suggested by a staff interviewee:

“It’s usually the Leadership team that go out and find about (ideas) first … then … TAs get together with either the SENCO … or whoever is leading on that activity.” (TA)

Although this interpretation of activity may have undermined the governor vision for teaching staff agency, an intervention that was developed in this way was described positively in the parents’ focus group. This intervention aimed to support the development of language and communication skills through using an app called ‘Chatter’. The decision to develop provision in this area emerged from analysis of data by the Senior Leadership Team, the SEN Governor and the SENCO. Further research was conducted by the SENCO and the Speech and
Language Therapist the school employed. Training on the use of the app was then provided for parents, children, and other teaching staff.

A parent described the experience of attending the training and concluded:

“They’re really good at figuring out what strategies will work for different children.” (Parent 2)

However, although this intervention had been undertaken initially to support children considered to have SEN, practices linked to the intervention were integrated into whole-class teaching. This revealed that interventions informed the development of inclusive pedagogy in the School rather than adopting a separate pedagogy for children considered to have SEN. A governor interviewee argued that, while there were external pressures on schools, fostering a research-engaged community to develop provision, provided resilience against those pressures. He reflected:

“It’s very easy for some schools to get hung up on ‘we must get x% of students to pass at level x. There’s never that sense of panic here because the staff team have got their finger on the pulse of current educational research.” (Chair Curriculum Committee)

This leads the discussion to the next section of these findings, which provided insight into the way that the Governing Board engaged with children to plan and implement vision.

6.2.4 Theme 4 – Children and agency

“Children’s ideas are taken seriously here.” (Chair Curriculum)

Governors reported that listening and responding to children’s views were central to their vision for learning in the School. This vision was the same for children considered to have SEN.

The Headteacher described how research had informed practice to integrate listening and responding to children’s feedback:

“Teachers researched the work of xx and practice ‘feedback five’ (to reflect children’s views in the classroom) so they can build their views into their lesson plans.” (HT)
Drawing on children’s views in this way was interpreted as acknowledging that children are agentive in their learning. The theme that emerged from this data was concerned with exploring the way that their agency was embedded into provision.

Planning for learning by drawing on children’s views had particular consequences for governors understanding of the vision for SEN. Processes associated with assessment and identification of SEN, are predominantly managed and implemented by medical and educational professionals. However, data from the SENCO interview and SEN Policy, suggested that listening and responding to children’s views on their learning was integrated into these processes. The SEN Policy stated that the school included children in making decisions about their learning which the SENCO described as:

“Encouraging them to share their work with us in this process and … [asking] what they think their strengths are, what they want to learn and what supports them when they get stuck.” (SENCO)

Practice by a staff interviewee who was observed, confirmed this description, and her interview provided further insights. She reported that, in her class three children received additional support through Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), three children received additional support through ‘One Plan’ provision and other children received support through ‘One Page Profile’ plans. After the observation she described the way that aspects of her practice had developed to acknowledge children’s agency:

“I give them time during the week to reflect on their learning together so they have a chance to express their views at different parts in the day.” (Teacher)

This suggests teaching drew on communicating with children by using and responding to their feedback across the school day, a strategy that aimed to increase agentive learning. Furthermore, the ‘One Plan’ approach, identified learning aims based on children’s own ideas about the areas of learning they wished to develop. For example, a parent described the way her child contributed to the process by identifying his personal, social and learning aims:

“He wanted to learn to ride his bike which was his main goal so they (teaching staff) took him out for five minutes each day to do that. Support is not just for the learning side but the personal development side … social
skills and confidence. They keep him in the classroom … [but] they say to him … pick when you would like to come out [for interventions] so he gets that choice.” (Parent 2)

The parent also described how the focus on children’s views influenced other education professionals who were involved in planning meetings. She suggested that the School expected other professionals (such as Speech and Language or Occupational Therapy services) to support and implement the approach adopted by the School. The SENCO confirmed that an expectation of external professionals involved in planning provision for children in the School was to support learning aims that children had identified for themselves. However, there is no direct evidence to support this suggestion, since no observations of meetings involving additional agencies were conducted.

In the classroom children were observed being consulted about resources they would like to use and the order in which they wished to approach the learning task. They expressed clear views about both aspects of the lesson and selected visual resources to support them to complete their task. The group was being supported in a quieter area of the classroom and it was unclear whether they had selected this area for their learning. However, their focus on completing the activity and their interaction with others could be interpreted as indicating that they were happy to work in this space.

This interpretation was strengthened by the response that one of the children made during the focus group:

“The classroom is lovely for me!” (Child B)

However, the children’s focus group also revealed some tensions between the parameters of children’s agency and strategies to support behaviour, as one child commented that the school would be better if:

“We had no traffic lights.” (Traffic lights are a warning system for children to encourage them to change a specific behaviour) (Child D)

The child’s view was confirmed by data from the focus group when a parent independently confirmed that her child disliked the use of ‘Traffic Lights’.

This brings the discussion to the next theme which builds on an element from Theme 1, engaging with parents.
6.2.5 Theme 5 – Keeping parents in the picture

Governor interviewees reported that the decision to recruit non-staff governors from the parent community supported the Board’s vision for collaboration within the school community, and a culture of openness between, staff, children and parents. Furthermore, they reported that this level of representation supported their vision for improving the experiences of parents of children considered to have an SEN.

The governor with responsibility for SEN described her perception that her experience as a parent gave her insights into the way that the School could promote or reduce a sense of stigmatisation for parents. She gave an example of changing approaches to providing information about the School’s SEN provision at Open Day meetings:

“Nobody wants to go and be the parent that stands by the information on SEN Provision … there is that stigma if your child has SEN. So I discussed it with the SENCO to think about how we could break that stigma. I became that first parent always standing by SEN provision so that they didn’t feel they were the first or only person there.” (SEN Gov)

This informal activity was supported by formal planning for engagement with parents. It was described in the SEN Policy as a commitment to collaborate with and involve parents in a multidimensional approach to identification through planning meetings, contact with family support workers, home visits and advice from professional services.

The Policy indicated that boundaries between school and home to engage parents in planning and implementing support for their children were porous, as meetings took place on home and school sites. Arrangements for learning conferences which included children, parents, teachers and other professionals to review and reflect on children’s progress in learning, provided insights into the way that parents experienced collaboration. A parent in the focus group recalled:

“All the information is there for our One Plan meeting. It’s always kept very positive. They offer us ideas to do at home so we’ve followed through what they do at school at home.” (Parent 1)

The reference to ideas, highlights the way that meetings provided opportunities to develop pedagogical approaches to support children’s learning at home by
working with parents as partners. However, the quotation above also implied that these events may have adopted a one-way approach. An example which supports this interpretation arose through a description of the process of implementing a new initiative to support the development of language and communication skills, using an app called ‘Chatter’.

Parents in the focus group described how they had learned to use an app with their children in a workshop. A staff interviewee elaborated on communication with parents to provide suggestions for follow up activities they could implement using the app at home. However, the following statement from a parent in the focus group indicated that, while it may be argued that the workshops were one-way in approach, they were experienced as multi-directional. She reported that she experienced working within the School to support her child as ‘teamwork’:

“Working together as a team ... it’s a strength of this school. It’s all part of the way they provide information and support and make time to work with you.” (Parent 2)

This statement suggests that the prioritisation of parent engagement in the School was considered to have enabled this aspect of the Governors’ vision.

6.2.6 Theme 6 – Providing a responsive curriculum

Governors’ vision to ensure all children made progress in their learning was based on developing provision that was responsive to children’s needs. Responsive provision for SEN was understood as providing opportunities for children to work alongside peers but also to have access to interventions to support their learning.

The Headteacher elaborated that, to achieve that vision for progress in learning, provision needed to reflect that:

“Learning moves on as things become outdated and you need to be brave enough to say something is not relevant anymore.” (HT)

The idea of relevance in planning was elaborated further by a governor who had reviewed the School Development Plan (SDP) with the SLT:

“The SDP is a circle … with a series of concentric circles around it. The things that stay close to the centre are the things that work so they move inwards but anything that doesn’t is shed.” (Chair Curriculum)
Observation during the Governing Board meeting confirmed that the development of resources and training to support teaching strategies were highlighted on the SDP, through discussion and presentations on pedagogical approaches such as the ‘Growth Mindset’ initiative.

The ‘Growth Mindset’ approach emphasised the social and emotional aspects of children’s learning and was described as:

“Developing practice that empowers children to see mistakes as positive.” (DHT)

Strategies to support teachers to gain feedback from children about their learning in order to make their learning visible, referred to in Theme 4, were also highlighted. Furthermore, adopting approaches to support children to develop tolerant and respectful relationships, had been prioritised in the SDP.

Responses from children in the focus group indicated that tolerant and respectful relationships were valued by children, as one child commented:

“My friends make my school special. Children are kind here.” (Child B)

However, this comment could be a response to children’s recall of learning activities linked to relationships at school. It must also be acknowledged that no observations of children’s interactions during free play were conducted to support this interpretation. However, the lesson observation provided some insights into the way that pedagogies were implemented in the context of the curriculum, including learning displays which reflected ‘Growth Mindset’ and relationship guidance to support learning.

The curriculum was delivered through a topic-based integrated approach across the School and was observed in the classroom. The topic focus was Egypt and children were asked to describe an animal that was a character in a fictional story about that country. The TA supporting two children used Makaton signing and visual symbols related to the lesson, to support reading and understanding the instructions for the activity. The children were able to work independently to record their work using an audio recording machine. During the subsequent interview with the TA, she reflected:

“There’s a lot more visual support like using Makaton. That helps children with communication and they don’t feel separated because everybody is doing it. We do a lot of learning outside as well because there are loads of
things in the playground that make learning fun but we could do with more rooms for interventions.” (TA)

This observation and the interview with the TA reflected the concern for children to learn alongside their peers. The approach to the curriculum was also based on prioritising children’s social and emotional wellbeing.

This is consistent with the description of support which was included in the SEN Policy. The section on support described how teachers should respond to children’s needs, by provision which included planning learning experiences that enabled children to fully participate in the classroom, as well as providing emotional support. However, the extract from the TA interview indicated that interventions where children worked apart from their peers, were also seen as part of a responsive curriculum.

Although participation included whole class teaching, support from interventions was also identified as part of provision for children considered to have SEN. Furthermore, although teachers identified themselves as being responsible for providing a curriculum for all children in their class, other staff including TAs, were also considered to play a significant role in providing responsive support for the curriculum. The following excerpt from an interview with the SENCO described the way that interventions were viewed as enabling children to access the curriculum:

“Teachers support children to use the skills they have learned in one-to-one or group interventions in class. Like talk boost where children are learning to use and clarify their new topic or curriculum vocabulary. So I think that a strength of our school is the support we receive from funding for these developments.” (SENCO)

A child in the focus group implied that integration between classroom and interventions improved his learning environment when he said:

“We’ve got lots of different rooms and it’s nice to learn here.” (Child A).

The comment highlighted the role of activity by governors to allocate funding for curriculum support, staffing and staff development. However, it raises questions about the vulnerability of provision should the financial resources of the School be reduced. Would these practices be sustainable in response to changes in the political, economic or administrative environment? The next theme indicates that
the School’s prioritisation of collaboration aimed to provide resilience in responding to these circumstances.

6.2.7 Theme 7 – Collaborating to include

This theme reflected the way that governors’ vision for the School prioritised collaboration to support children’s diversity. It was linked to the vision for SEN because it acknowledged the stigmatisation and risk of exclusion associated with SEN, and aimed to reduce them. It also extended to including children who had been excluded from other schools:

“The minute you give a child a label there’s an excuse for us not to do well for that child. Including children who’ve been excluded from other schools? We’ve got a waiting list.” (DHT)

This comment implies that the vision for inclusion promoted by the School had implications for planning and implementing support for children in order to ensure progress in their learning. Theme 1 described the Headteacher suggesting that all children were entitled to come to the school in line with the admissions criteria. However, their commitment to include had resulted in extending their support to children beyond their immediate geographical community, to children who had been excluded from other schools.

This commitment presented issues for the Board and had an impact on funding decisions since they required adaptations to school space, staffing and collaboration with organisations providing support for excluded children. However, a governor revealed that an initiative to support excluded children was parent governor-led, when he described his role in the development of the Grow Unit:

“The HT said to me ‘we wouldn’t have had the Grow project here if it wasn’t for your suggestion’ but I didn’t have to do anything more than suggest.”

(Chair Curriculum)

Governors had taken decisions to adapt school space to enable children excluded from other schools to transition back into mainstream schools through the Grow Unit. The initiative was viewed as successful for children – both within and beyond the school community – and the Board had been invited to the Department for Education to share information about this development. However, this was not confirmed from records.
Staffing to ensure children considered to have SEN were making progress in the school was also a priority for governance decisions. Theme 2 discussed how, one of the aims of the decision to become an Academy, was to improve opportunities for funding in order to increase staffing levels. The presence of high staffing levels was evident at the time of the classroom observation where one class teacher was supported by three TAs.

SEN funding was considered to be insufficient for the level of resources and provision that the Board considered they needed to support learning. Interviews with and observation of the Governing Board, revealed that funding to maintain high staff levels was sustained by developing an income from teaching staff who provided training in other schools. As a result, funding had been allocated to purchase training rooms and locate them on the school site. Therefore, an expectation of staff was extensive collaboration, within and beyond the school to:

“Generate income to support all our children by supporting other schools.”

(HT)

The interview with the SEN Governor acknowledged that training for other schools was a collaboration rather than a ‘one-way street’. She reflected that this was because engagement also supported school staff in their practice:

“Since we learn from working with different schools because they are working with different communities.” (SEN Gov)

The acknowledgement that all those engaged with the School were involved with ongoing development of support for learning leads to consideration of the boundaries of provision for the School.

Collaboration with parents and children was discussed in Theme 3 and Theme 5. However, a number of examples of the way that the SENCO worked with agencies beyond the School, including Occupational Therapy, Educational Psychology, Counselling and Art Therapy emerged from the interview data. Furthermore, the School’s training provision was extensive since, as well as providing training on site and across academy partners, staff provided training and attended events to share practice across the country. This suggests that the boundary for the School’s provision for teaching and learning was determined by the School itself, based on balancing the needs of the immediate community and the communities that the School chose as collaborators.
6.2.8 Conclusion

This section of Chapter 6 explored the themes that emerged from the data collected from the case study of Castlemount. The discussion of the findings drew on multiple sources of data to present them and justify the interpretation of the data that had been adopted. However, this section also acknowledged that there were aspects of the study of Castlemount which required further development in order to strengthen interpretation of these findings.

6.3 Greenhill – Themes

The themes that emerged from the data analysis for Greenhill were:

1. Initiating and responding to change;
2. Reorganising the Governing Board;
3. Supporting teaching staff to promote responsibility for all;
4. Children's rights and progress in learning;
5. Implementing a creative curriculum;
6. An inclusive learning environment;
7. Communication within the school community to develop agency and participation.

The order of these themes does not reflect their significance for the School.

In Greenhill it should be noted that interviewees that were staff members of the Governing Board included the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher. Other interviewees from the Governing Board included a governor who was nominated by the LEA and a parent governor.

6.3.1 Theme 1 – Initiating and responding to change

The title of this theme was identified as a result of references in the data to changes that had taken place in the School during that year. These changes had been central to the development of a new vision for learning in the School which focused on improving teaching and learning to support the diversity of children’s needs. The vision for SEN was also understood by governors to be concerned
with the increase of inclusive practice within the School through changes to staff support and the curriculum.

All interviewees referred to the appointment of the new Headteacher as a significant change. The Chair of the Governing Board commented that the Headteacher, an external candidate, had been in post since the beginning of the school year. She added that further significant changes, which had taken place six months later, were the reorganisation of the Governing Board and her subsequent appointment as Chair. The purpose of the reorganisation was to enable the Board to support their vision to improve provision for teaching and learning. She suggested that increased engagement within the school community was a priority to achieve this because:

“The old Headteacher never did like any feedback. It was his school, his way and that was it.” (Chair GB)

The Chair reported that she and the Headteacher initiated a programme of meetings with the Board and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to develop a new vision for the school. These meetings explored goals, plans and values to support this process. Interview data suggested the process was driven by the Headteacher, who outlined her vision for the School as the basis for discussion in a presentation. The Headteacher stated that this was seen as part of her professional responsibility as a headteacher and governor, as well as supportive of new members of the Governing Board. She also reported that she felt responsible for directing the process since her previous experience led her to:

“See what other people don’t see … [and] enable everybody to play their part and work in one direction (but) my biggest challenge is translating that across the whole school community.” (HT)

This statement provided insights into the challenges of implementing a new vision for learning in the School. The challenges included diverse responses from members of the school community towards actions planned for the year which related to key aspects of the vision. Two of these actions had a direct impact on teaching staff as they concerned arrangements to support children considered to have SEN and the implementation of a creative curriculum to support inclusive provision.
Reduced funding for SEN provision had influenced the Board’s decision to change
the approach to staff support for children considered to have SEN. However,
governor interviewees reported that their primary concern was that the previous
approach to support for children had a negative impact on children’s learning. This
had consequences for quality of teaching and inclusion, since TAs provided
teaching support for children considered to have SEN with limited direct teaching
by class teachers. Therefore, changes to staffing arrangements and curriculum
provision also aimed to develop teaching staff attitudes towards responsibility for
teaching all children in their class.

The Headteacher described how:

“Children with one-to-ones (TAs) would be attached to them all day long.
The teacher wouldn’t be working with that child.” (HT)

Interview data revealed conflicting responses from staff interviewees towards the
changes, although their reports were predominantly positive. A positive evaluation
was demonstrated when a staff interviewee commented:

“The first proper conversations have taken place about SEN at an SLT
level.” (SENCO 1)

However, while these changes were reported frequently to be positive by those
who were interviewed, members of the Governing Board and staff who did not
participate in the research may have responded differently.

Observation of the Governing Board meeting provided further insight into governor
and staff activity to develop the School’s vision for SEN. A presentation of the
‘SEN Vision for Learning’, was given by the Headteacher, the Inclusion Leader
(who was also a staff governor) and the SENCO. The SEN Vision for Learning
document stated that it aimed to implement practice that valued all children,
including children considered to have SEN. In the meeting, staff presenters and
Board members discussed the changes to pedagogy and curriculum provision
which supported their aims to achieve inclusive teaching and learning. Therefore,
changes to staff arrangements and curriculum provision also underpinned the
School’s vision for SEN which was approved by governors. This new curriculum
took an integrated approach based on topic planning which was observed in a
Year 1 class.
However, in her interview the Headteacher elaborated on implementing this new approach to pedagogy and curriculum by providing an example of the challenges of ‘translating’ the vision which she had referred to earlier:

“Initially people were told there’s a new curriculum, a new way of planning, this is what learning will look like in the classroom and there were a lot of hiccups.” (HT)

The hiccups included resistance to implementing the curriculum which was resolved by further consultation between the SLT and teaching staff. Staff interviewees confirmed that further consultation had resolved their concerns. Furthermore, they reported that the approach had a positive impact on their attitudes to responsibility for children, as a result of observing the impact of these changes on progress of children considered to have SEN. They also reported that this pedagogical approach acknowledged their agency and that of children, in teaching and learning.

Changing attitudes to children by acknowledging their agency in learning was also linked to vision-related activities to identify and communicate the values the School aimed to promote. Governors reported that the values, referred to in the SEN Policy, were identified through a consultation process involving governors, staff, children and parents. A parent governor commented that the consultation on values had led to a change in practice on engagement with children’s views by understanding:

“Respect (means) finding out what children think.” (Parent Gov)

Respect was also referred to by a child in the focus group who expressed that it was important to her because:

“Respect for other people always makes things better!” (Child B)

The Headteacher explained that action to implement respect for children’s views underpinned her proposal to develop a new form of School Council where every child was a member. The Chair stated that the wider Board planned to develop their engagement with children by inviting members of the School Council:

“To come and meet the Governors before the end of term, and get some feedback on how the school is and what they want done.” (Chair GB)
Responses from the children’s focus group indicated that children had shared ideas on their experiences, aspects of provision and made suggestions for improvement within their classrooms. As the quotation above indicated, children shared views on attitudes and values but they also made practical suggestions on changes to provision including a request for:

“More school trips!” (Child D)

However, parents in the focus group voiced concerns about changes to SEN provision, particularly in arrangements for one-to-one support. Parents within the group reported that they considered the support for their children to be ‘fantastic’, but received limited information about these changes. Their views indicated that actions to increase engagement with parents required further development. They also expressed concern that staffing changes were exclusively a response to funding cuts which was expressed by:

“There’s too much focus on money!” (Parent 2)

The Headteacher and two governor interviewees referred to the way that parent and staff responses across the year led them to reflect on the meaning of their school community and the way that they interacted within it.

Their reflections were summarised by a member of staff who suggested that there was still a sense of ‘fragmentation’. However, she added that this had begun to improve, although actions were ongoing.

Governor interviewees acknowledged that they were still learning how to engage with the school community, which was captured by a new governor who stated:

“I’d like to know more about this role and be able to have the right knowledge and confidence to answer questions, but I don’t want to overstep the boundaries.” (Parent Gov)

Aspects of the changes that have been described in this discussion will be developed further in the following themes. However, this comment is linked to the next theme, which is concerned with the reorganisation of the Governing Board.

6.3.2 Theme 2 – Reorganising the Governing Board

Governors reported that reorganisation of the Governing Board had been necessary in order to develop and implement their vision for collaboration and
participation to improve children’s progress. The reorganisation of the Governing Board had taken place in March 2017.

The Chair provided the rationale behind the decision to reorganise when she reflected:

“Lot of things weren’t being done by the Governing Board. We had lots of people who wanted to be Governors but weren’t active.” (Chair GB)

Limited participation from members of the previous Board was reported to have undermined aims to develop a shared vision for collaboration across the School’s community to improve progress in children’s learning. Furthermore, data indicated that many governors had not undertaken training which limited their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. An outcome of this experience can be seen in the following excerpt where a governor interviewee stated:

“We sort of had information fed to us and we encouraged. I know we’re supposed to be strategic and plan things but, you know, so long as it was going in the right direction.” (SEN Gov)

The Chair suggested that specific skills had also become necessary to enable the Board to develop its vision and respond to pressures on the school budget. Therefore, the Board reduced its membership from 15 to 12 and recruited new members with specific skills. However, an outcome of this change was to reduce parent representation from six to three, which may have had negative consequences for relationships with parents.

Alongside the review of membership of the Board, the structure and regularity of meetings was reduced. Sub-committees were reduced to two which had remits for Achievement and Standards and Finance. It was also agreed that ad hoc committees would be set up as required. For example, at the time when the research was carried out an ad hoc Staff Working Group had been set up to implement activities related to staff restructuring.

The Chair argued that although the changes were recent, successful outcomes included improved attendance at governor training events, which had supported planning to engage with children’s views. Furthermore, she suggested that training had enabled Board members to contribute to plans to extend parent engagement. Support for the Board’s view that parent engagement should be a priority for
governors emerged from discussion in the focus group where a parent commented:

“I don’t know who these people are. I know they have a lot to do at the school but we don’t meet them. We need to be able to meet them.” (Parent 4)

Therefore, although findings revealed that governor activity had begun to have an impact on some areas, parents in the focus group expressed confusion about governors’ roles and activities at that time.

There was also conflicting evidence of achieving increased engagement with staff to implement the School’s vision for collaboration. Three class teachers and a TA reported that they had not spoken to governors and had no knowledge of their activities or engagement within the School. Confirmation of their experience was provided by a member of the Governing Board who asserted:

“*We don’t work with staff, we work with the senior management, the ones who are at the Governor meetings and they will present something.*” (SEN Gov)

However, a staff interviewee commented this was changing:

“The Governors have been walking around the school a bit more recently and I’ve seen Governors talking to children recently.” (Teacher)

The Chair confirmed that action had been taken by some members of the Board to increase their engagement with school staff. Staff interviewees also confirmed that they had been invited to present on areas of provision including SEN and Inclusion. However, the quotation from the SEN Governor above demonstrated there were diverse interpretations of how this engagement would be enacted. For example, the SEN Policy, which had been updated following the reorganisation of the Governing Board, included a section that described the role and responsibilities of the SEN Governor. It stated their responsibilities included:

‘*Liaison with the school’s inclusion team to support the development of provision.*’ (SEN Policy)

The following statement, from a staff interviewee indicated that this change was welcomed. However, she compared her experience in another setting with her experience of engaging with governors in the school:
“In my previous setting I used to have regular meetings with my SEN Governor and share plans and data, discuss issues. That’s not been my experience here.” (SENCO 2)

One area where governor activity was consistent is connected to the next theme, the restructuring of TA support.

6.3.3 Theme 3 – Supporting teaching staff to promote responsibility for all children

Governors reported that the vision for SEN was concerned with staffing approaches and attitudes to support for children considered to have SEN within the School. A restructure of TA roles and responsibilities aimed to achieve this aspect of their vision.

The Staff Working Group had been set up to undertake activity related to the restructure. This involved board members in conducting a review of funding allocation, together with recommending and implementing personnel changes, including changes to role descriptions, recruitment and redundancies. The roles adopted a more flexible approach to support by TAs working with groups of children rather than providing on-to-one support. Therefore, the restructure also required increased direct teaching by class teachers for children considered to have SEN. Governors on the Working Group also carried out exit interviews to provide staff who resigned with an opportunity to share reflections on their recent professional experience. A departing member of teaching staff confirmed that she had attended an interview and, while she expressed frustration that this had been the only contact she had had with governors, suggested that it was a positive development which had the potential to improve relationships and provision in the school.

The following analysis by the Headteacher, summarised her concerns about the way that the previous approach to support for children by teaching staff, limited children’s learning experiences and undermined class teacher attitudes to their responsibilities for children considered to have SEN:

“What often happened was the teacher wouldn’t be working with that child because it was seen as the teaching assistant’s responsibility. That needed to be challenged … This has been great for the children and some staff are really motivated but others are finding it harder to see the benefits.” (HT)
This revealed concerns that the previous approach to class teacher and TA arrangements had restricted the range of adults working with children. Furthermore, it acknowledged that inconsistency in attitudes were still present.

It is interesting to note that children in the focus group referred only to their class teachers or parents as people who helped them learn. No child referred to a TA, even though a TA known to them was present in the group. The absence of reference to TAs indicated that children’s response to their support was complex and may have implied that they did not want to be associated with individual support. Further discussions without the presence of a TA would have provided an opportunity to explore this issue further but this would have contravened the School’s Safeguarding Policy.

However, parents in the focus group expressed opposition to changes in support arrangements. They stated that they had been unaware that the changes had been planned and implemented, and found it hard to see the benefits to their children’s learning. Therefore, parent frustrations may also have had repercussions for children’s willingness to refer to TAs as ‘adults who helped them’. Furthermore, the views expressed by parents may have had an impact on their relationships with staff and influenced perceptions of inconsistency in staff responses to the new approach.

In spite of the concerns expressed by the Headteacher on achieving consistent changes to attitudes and practice by teaching staff, the SENCO concluded that, in her observations, changes in roles and responsibilities had supported improvements in teacher attitudes and practice. This difference in views may have been influenced by their respective roles since SENCO observations may have had a different purpose to those conducted by the Headteacher. However, the revised SEN Policy which was ratified by governors following the restructure also clarified expectations. The document described explicitly the responsibilities of teaching staff for children considered to have SEN, and outlined training provision to support implementation of this approach.

Observation of a class teaching session identified that teachers were responding to training and had implemented new strategies, as the class teacher provided whole class teaching using a range of visual strategies during the main teaching session. In the follow-up session she worked directly with a group which including a child considered to have SEN as the TA carried out other tasks. While further
observations would have been required to conclude that change in practice was implemented consistently, rather than influenced by a response to being observed, interview data also revealed other activity to embed attitudes to responsibility for all children through training in pedagogical strategies.

An example emerged from staff interviews which described collaboration between teachers, by forming cluster groups, to develop inclusive pedagogical strategies that supported inclusive learning. The teacher who was observed was part of a language and communication strategies cluster group. She described the cluster arrangements:

“We’ve met throughout the year to go through ideas … We look at how we develop strategies to support learning and have led INSETs so that all teaching staff are able to develop their pedagogical skills.” (Teacher M)

Governors and teaching staff also reported that a new approach to observing practice in teaching and learning had been implemented based on coaching rather than lesson observation. Two staff interviewees stated that this approach had led them to undertake independent research to develop provision for children in their class. Furthermore, SENCOs commented that an increasing number of teachers, planned learning around outdoor spaces, rather than teaching exclusively within the confines of the classroom. They reported that, when they had observed these practices, outcomes included high levels of engagement from children, and positive learning behaviours such as listening and sustained attention.

However, a staff interviewee argued that there were ongoing tensions in the way that teachers implemented responsibility for children considered to have SEN

“Our TAs are used a lot for interventions so they’re out of the class a lot.”
(Teacher J)

This suggests that the concerns expressed by the Headteacher on inconsistencies in practice continued to be valid. The data from children’s and parents’ focus groups indicated that further engagement with children and parents could address these inconsistencies.

Actions to listen to and respond to different groups leads the discussion to exploration of findings from the next theme, children’s rights and progress in their learning.
6.3.4 Theme 4 – Children’s rights and progress in learning

Interview data from governors and staff, together with data from the parent focus group, revealed that the Governing Board considered that their vision was linked to children’s rights, including their rights to make progress in learning. Furthermore, they reported that this vision was not specific to their vision for SEN.

Governor interviewees reported that learning was also considered to extend beyond academic skills. Governors highlighted the importance of supporting children’s personal, social and emotional skills including confidence to voice concerns. However, data also revealed that they experienced tensions between their aims to achieve these outcomes for children and from external pressures. A governor argued that Ofsted and government policies pressured schools to develop provision which was:

“Driven by Ofsted or league tables. Exclusions and increase in mental health needs in children are a result of constant pushing, making children feel they are failures because the Government has very narrow criteria for success in learning.” (SEN Gov)

The Headteacher reported that she had worked with the Governing Board, teaching staff, children and parents to develop a vision that would address these pressures by focusing on children’s rights and becoming a ‘rights respecting school’. The process involved children in:

“Selecting five rights that are core for our learning. [We selected] the right to a world class education, the right to be valued as an individual, the right to be safe, the right to play and the right to a voice. That’s why the vision for learning is the same for all children.” (HT)

The SLT planned actions to support these rights through developing strategies to listen to children’s views and improve behaviour management to ensure children felt safe. In addition, the Board allocated funds to improve the school’s provision in this area.

Development of the School Council was prioritised as limited provision for listening and responding to children’s views existed in the school. The Headteacher reported that the new approach was based on the concept of a ‘Smart School Council’ which was structured to include all children. A parent governor commented that this approach aimed to reflect consistency in demonstrating
respect, by embedding opportunities to take account of all children’s views. Governors planned to implement this aspect of the vision by meeting with School Council representatives to incorporate children’s views into future developments.

A class teacher described how the rights respecting approach had influenced her practice and she had developed class surveys to give children opportunities to share their views. She reported that the surveys provided her with information about the lessons that children enjoyed and the ways that she could improve as a teacher, which had influenced her planning.

However, governors reported a tension between children’s rights to education and their right to be safe in the School, when they described behaviour incidents:

“We’ve had a high number of suspensions this year. There was an incident where a child bought a knife into school. We didn’t exclude her and managed to reintegrate her but it’s hard.” (HT)

Furthermore, a class teacher described how a parent’s objections to a fixed term suspension had been overruled by the SLT and supported by governors. These reports were confirmed when governor interviewees described their involvement in exclusions due to behaviour issues. The Chair also referred to ratifying a new Behaviour Policy as an outcome of reviewing the School’s approach to behaviour management in response to these incidents.

A limitation of this research is that no data was available on the outcome of the behaviour strategies described in the Policy. Therefore, implementing these strategies may have had an impact on the incidence of suspensions. Follow-up research may have provided insight into resolution of conflict between the vision for these aspects of children’s rights.

The Governing Board had agreed to support a further initiative proposed by the Headteacher to address this conflict. She proposed changes to pedagogical practices that aimed to support behaviour by changing arrangements for learning. An example was the replacement of ability grouping with mixed ability grouping in teaching. A staff interviewee described:

“More engagement from children with SEN because they can access the lesson with their peers … I think it might work better in some areas than others.” (SENCO 1)
Again there was a qualification that practice was inconsistent, echoed by a staff interviewee who reflected that she continued to see children:

“Just sat at a table separately from other children. They shouldn’t feel isolated they should feel part of the class when they’re in the class.” (TA)

However, another staff interviewee referred to a culture change in the School as a result of understanding that children’s rights were undermined by ability grouping. She described the transition from ability to mixed ability teaching during that school year as liberating and stated:

“When I first started I had ability tables, ability groupings. Didn’t like it. Lower ability groups just didn’t make any progress so this year we were allowed to mix up the tables and the results have been fantastic.” (Teacher S)

Children in the focus group commented on their experience of mixed-ability learning, and expressed their preference for working in groups with friends.

However, in apparent contrast with the move to mixed ability teaching where all children were taught alongside their peers, the Board had allocated funding to develop a separate resourced classroom for children considered to have SEN. The resourced classroom aimed to provide support for children to develop language and communication skills. The view that some children benefitted from learning experiences beyond the classroom was expressed consistently across interviews with governors and staff. However, these plans were also a response to cuts in external agencies, including Educational Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists. Therefore, the School was developing their provision as a strategy to adapt to the reduction in these services.

6.3.5 Theme 5 – Implementing a creative curriculum

The vision for curriculum was represented through emphasis on creativity and to acknowledge children’s diversity, agency and support for participation. The new curriculum had been introduced that year following a presentation by the Headteacher. It was described by governors as emphasising teaching creatively through a topic based approach. A parent governor explained that, in her view, this approach supported the vision for learning and demonstrated:

“Respect for the diversity of our children”. (Parent Gov)
Governors argued that the National Curriculum had narrowed teaching and learning provision which reduced children’s participation and access to learning. Therefore, the Governing Board had allocated funding for specialists across the curriculum to provide training for staff to develop creative learning experiences.

The Headteacher reported that the rationale that underpinned her advocacy of this approach was that it was consistent with an inclusive pedagogy that acknowledged diversity, increased participation and improved access to learning:

“It is based on the idea of providing deep learning … and developing love of learning.” (HT)

Furthermore, she argued that this approach supported the vision for SEN because it emphasised removing barriers to learning by starting with children’s interests, and provided children with choices in their learning experiences. Therefore, this approach to curriculum provision also acknowledged children’s agency in learning.

However, data from staff interviews revealed that a conflict had arisen in implementing the new curriculum. The issues had focused on records that were completed by teaching staff to support curriculum planning. Previously, these had included planning for children considered to have SEN within the class. This had been removed from the new planning documents because evaluation was linked to whole class learning objectives rather than differentiated group learning objectives. SENCOs expressed concern about this change because, in their view, it reduced their ability to monitor provision for children in each class.

In spite of these concerns a teacher reflected:

“It has allowed me to be creative, not just in my lessons but in creativity with the timetable and teaching PSHE, to meet the social and emotional needs of children in my class.” (Teacher S)

A further conflict was evident between aims to implement an inclusive pedagogy and beliefs in the need for a separate SEN pedagogy. SEN intervention programmes were reported as essential because:

“Children with an SEN … don’t always learn in the same way.” (SENCO 2)

This view was expressed by all groups except children in the focus group. It suggested inconsistencies between activities to engage with children’s views,
since children in the focus group expressed their preference for learning alongside their peers.

However, a staff interviewee reported that the outcomes of intervention programmes were being evaluated at the time when the research was undertaken, because the Governing Board had acknowledged this inconsistency. The interviewee had been asked to provide a report to the Governing Board showing the impact of interventions on children's progress. Therefore, the role of intervention programmes in providing support for learning was being reviewed alongside the impact of the creative curriculum.

Further conflicting views emerged between the views of children and parents on curriculum and intervention provision within focus group discussions. Children unanimously described their preference for working with friends in groups while parents expressed strong support for interventions because, as one parent stated:

“*I'm happy with the balance of in and out of class work because you see the progress at home.*” (Parent 3)

A resolution of these conflicts may have been addressed by consulting children in the evaluations of these intervention programmes.

The process of implementing a new curriculum was also linked to the use of space to support change in approaches to learning.

### 6.3.6 Theme 6 – An inclusive learning environment

An inclusive learning environment was prioritised in governors' vision and identified as a separate theme because this aspect of the data focused on changes to the organisation of space for play and learning, within and beyond the classroom.

Governors' reported this played a key role in the vision for SEN in their school because behaviour and bullying issues had increased in the previous year. The Headteacher had carried out an analysis of these incidents and concluded that they frequently occurred during playtimes. As the governor with responsibility for SEN commented, this was a particular concern since children considered to have SEN were at greater risk of bullying.
Children in the focus group confirmed that this was an issue for them and one suggested the:

“Playground is a special place because we like to be together but it would be better if everyone was sensible.” (Child A)

The Headteacher reported that she had developed plans for resourcing and reorganising play spaces. The Board had approved funding for equipment that would support cooperative social play, zoned activities and independent play. However, she argued that adult support during outside play periods was crucial to develop children’s social skills and consistency in behaviour management. Therefore, the staff restructure was linked to these plans.

Governors suggested that positive outcomes had already been seen as a result of these actions with one asserting:

“The games have had an impact on the behaviour but getting the teachers out there makes it even better because the children with SEN, they’re the ones probably most affected.” (Sen Gov)

However, budget cuts and reduced support from the LEA, had created challenges for the Governing Board in accessing funding to implement these plans.

Funding issues also revealed the complex role that animals had for the children in the School. The School had previously kept goats in the school grounds but these had been rehomed. Staff interviewees reported some children had experienced difficulties in adjusting to this change. Therefore, changes to the use of space in and outside the classroom, had a complex impact on children’s social and emotional needs, which was demonstrated poignantly in a staff member’s reflection:

“One boy who has ASD cannot come to terms with the fact that his best friend, Caramel the goat, has gone. The goats had an amazing effect on some children because animals don’t judge them, do they?” (SENCO 2)

Changes to provision in the outside space as a play environment and the constraints on budget, led teaching staff to reflect on how they had developed strategies to support learning in these areas. It is interesting to note that interview data revealed a diversity of responses from this group of participants, implying that the strategies that individual teachers had developed, drew on the agency they brought to their roles.
Teachers described how planning for the new curriculum had encouraged them to organise teaching sessions outside, which increased engagement because lessons were based on experience and exploration. This approach to planning also supported the transition to mixed ability open ended tasks.

However, there was some evidence that other teachers used these developments to remove individual children from their peers, a practice that was indicated by a staff interviewee who stated:

“My child (with SEN), we try to include him and sit him with other children as well but he is really physical so we try to take him outside the classroom as often as possible.” (Teacher W)

It was apparent at this point that the diversity of responses from teaching staff reflected a lack of shared understanding about the vision for space across the school community. This appeared to be linked to a lack of understanding or communication from non-staff governors on these issues. As one staff member asked:

“Do Governors have a vision for the use of space in this school? I don’t know? And I don’t know what that is if they do?” (Teacher M)

The theme of communication within the school community is addressed in the next section.

6.3.7 Theme 7 – Communication within the school community to develop agency and participation

In the discussion of Theme 1, a parent governor referred to developing communication within the School as a priority when she referred to:

“A Headteacher who listens, a decent Chair, people you can communicate with…” (Parent Gov)

She argued that improving communication within and between the different constituencies of the school was central to the School’s vision. Acknowledging agency and developing participation across the school community was viewed as having the potential to improve outcomes for all children. Furthermore, possessing the skills to achieve this had been a priority for the Governing Board in appointing the Headteacher.
The Headteacher described activity to improve communication within the school community:

“Community is a really important word for us … We have had positive responses in the recent parent survey about changes in listening to parents. We have also begun to observe provision in other schools to look at the way that they bring their community together and listen to their views. The thing is, you might have a really great message but sometimes it gets lost in translation for lots of different reasons.” (HT)

Insights into the potential for breakdown in communications emerged from governor interviews. These highlighted issues about their relationships with each other and with others within the school community.

Interview data indicated that, although improved communication within the school community was a goal of the Board, non-staff governors viewed improvements in communication as an outcome of activity by staff governors. The implication that actions to improve communication focused on staff governor activity, and had not involved non-staff governor activity, revealed the complexity of this goal for the Board.

Both the Chair and SEN Governor reported that an issue for non-staff governors on the Board, in achieving their vision for communication, was limited interaction with parents. Accordingly, they highlighted the importance of including parent members on the Governing Board. However, an outcome of the recent reorganisation of the Board was that there were fewer parent governors. Direct engagement between non-staff governors and children to learn about their views on school provision was also limited, although governors had planned activities to communicate with children through engaging with the School Council to address this. Furthermore, they stated that communication with staff was limited to: staff members of the Governing Board; staff presenting reports at meetings (which was highlighted as a change in practice); and staff exit interviews. They also reported that communication with the wider school community had developed through accessing training and governor support offered by the LEA.

Therefore, activity to improve communication within and between the Governing Board and other groups within the school community, continued to be a priority for non-staff governors. They acknowledged implementation had been inconsistent and there was an ongoing need to build relationships and improve understanding
of their roles in order to achieve this aspect of their vision. They described the challenges of negotiating new relationships with each other, staff, parents and children, which resulted in a level of confusion and uncertainty. A new Board member elaborated on her personal experience in her role and the challenges of negotiating relationships and communicating to gain information. She reflected that this had an impact on her ability to contribute because:

“I worry that I am offending anyone … I worry people think I’m being biased or critical. For instance, at the moment in SEN I don’t know what is planned, who plans it and how they implement that planning. (Parent Gov)

The data relating to this theme also highlighted past experience, particularly for staff interviewees, who made frequent references to being excluded from conversations about the school by the previous leadership team and improvements they had experienced, as a result of changes that year.

Staff interviewees also described the complexity of communication to support children considered to have SEN through planning within and between school staff. A SENCO commented that, once the planning meetings for children with an EHCP were completed, the agreed plans should have been used in the classroom to support planning. However, they admitted that they were aware that there was variability in the consistency of use of plans among class teachers. This led to concerns about consistency in contact between parents and teachers in discussing support for individual children.

However, parents within the focus group consistently referred to the quality of communication between themselves, teachers and SENCO’s within the School as constructive. One parent described how school staff had supported her with her daughter by:

“Showing me ways of doing things to help her. That’s helped me feel better about not having a statement for her.” (Parent 3)

The SEN Policy also reflected plans to improve communication, by making explicit references to working with parents, to share understanding of their child and involve them in plans to support their child’s education. This aspect of the discussion highlighted that activity by the SEN Governor could have supported the vision for communication. Although this was stated as an aim by this governor, the SENCO reported that meetings had not taken place at that point.
However, in spite of these challenges there was evidence of positive outcomes from improved communication and relationships between groups within the school community. While parent participants expressed concerns about some of the changes which had taken place, they valued communication between themselves and school staff. Staff and governor interviewees also concluded that communication had improved, and that they had begun to improve communications with groups within the school community. Teaching staff in particular considered that the current Governing Board had begun to promote:

“A community feel for families and for teachers so the (recent) community events support us.” (Teacher S)

They also considered that the research which was being conducted had provided an opportunity to reflect on communication within the school.

The Headteacher had used the analogy of ‘fractures across an engine’ to describe the state of communication she had encountered across the school community during her first year. She considered that the plans and activities she had contributed to support the repair of that engine, had begun to result in improvements, which were confirmed by data sources and participants across this study.

However, it should also be recognised that the complete data set for this study only represented a limited number of participant views and data sources.

### 6.3.8 Conclusion

This section of Chapter 6 explored the themes that emerged from the data collected from the case study of Greenhill. The discussion of the findings drew on the same data collection methods as Castlemount but the role of context becomes very apparent. This aspect will be developed further in the final section of this Chapter which compares the themes in Castlemount and Greenhill.

### 6.4 Summary

In Chapter 3 I justified the adoption of a comparative case study as the research methodology for this study. I argued that it was appropriate as it enabled exploration of the ‘continuities and differences between cases’ (Wyness 2010, p. 159).
The findings which have been reported in this chapter identified continuities between each school. Continuities between the Governing Boards’ planning and implementation of their visions within each school included: reorganisation of the Governing Board; the role of teaching staff; focus on children’s rights; a curriculum based on creativity; and collaboration within the school community.

However, differences were related to the context of change within each school. In Castlemount the reorganisation of the Governing Board had focused on recruiting parents to non-staff governor roles. In Greenhill, while the Board’s vision for collaboration aimed to promote parent engagement, reorganisation had reduced the number of parent governors. Furthermore, there were differences in the focus of the vision for teaching staff. Castlemount focused on empowering teaching staff through developing research-informed practice, while Greenhill focused on developing attitudes towards responsibility for children considered to have SEN.

A significant aspect of the differences in the meaning of vision, the vision for SEN, and the way in which these visions were planned and implemented within each school arose from the historical, social and cultural influences on the Governing Boards. While Castlemount had an established Board membership and SLT, Greenhill had changed the Board membership, Headteacher and SLT during that school year. Furthermore, the differences between the schools arising from their status had consequences that enabled and constrained the development and implementation of their respective visions. These had particular influences on the schools’ responses to budgetary pressures and relationships with external organisations.

In the next chapter these continuities and differences will be explored further by evaluating these findings through the framework of the Community of Provision in order to address the research questions.
Chapter 7 – Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to suggest answers to the questions which have been the focus of this research. This will be addressed by drawing on the findings in Chapter 6 and the literature review in Chapter 2.

The five sub-questions which address the main research question provide the structure for this chapter. Furthermore, each section uses sub-headings from the six perspectives identified in the framework of the Community of Provision (Rix et al. 2013). The aim of applying this structure is to analyse and evaluate connections between the views and activities of members of the Governing Board in each school with other members of their Community of Provision, including staff, students, parents and policymakers (Rix 2015). I have argued that, in addition to being represented as diffuse or focused, these dynamic connections are shifting constantly as schools develop and implement their visions, and can be represented as moving between diffuse or focused (Rix 2015). This is illustrated at Figure 3 below. I have also drawn on the metaphor of boundary and boundary objects proposed by Star (2010) to analyse these orientations.

Across the discussion, I refer to findings from studies presented within the literature review. This aimed to support investigation of alternatives to dominant models of school governance based on social capital and individual skills (James et al. 2011). However, I propose that the Community of Provision provides a model for analysing practice and guiding governing boards to implement their responsibilities and develop practice which is relevant to the social, cultural and historical contexts of their individual communities (Ranson 2011, Rix 2015). It also afforded insights into the significance of relationships and agency in developing and implementing vision within the schools in the study.

Finally, the discussion in this chapter aims to represent the views and experiences of the participants in this study with authenticity and respect. Interpretations of the continuities and discontinuities that emerged from the data for each school are not intended to prioritise one setting over another. Instead, these aspects reflect the differences between the schools, their communities and wider contexts.
7.2 The meaning of vision for members of governing boards

This section addresses Sub-question 1 of the main research question:

“What is the meaning of vision for members of the governing board?”

Sub-question 1 sought to explore governors’ views of vision as a notion, and in relation to their role.
This introduction summarises continuities and differences in the meaning of vision for members of governing boards in both schools.

Continuities included the development of shared values and attitudes to support for children’s learning across the school community. Governors in these schools also reported that vision was concerned with identification of a mission to describe their aims for learning support. The mission in both schools focused on provision of equitable support to ensure all children made progress. Governors reported that their roles involved identifying goals to support achievement of their mission. A further continuity across the schools for members of the governing boards was concerned with collaboration to acknowledge the agency of children, parents and others involved in support for learning within the schools. Governors viewed acknowledgement of agency as the foundation of vision to ensure it was relevant and responsive to their contexts.

Differences between the meaning of vision for members of the governing boards in both schools concerned the emphasis on a teacher-initiated research based approach to professional development in Castlemount. Governors in Greenhill emphasised ‘change’ in their understanding of the meaning of vision which reflected changes taking place in their school and the consequences these had for their roles.

These conclusions are examined in greater detail by exploring connections between the meaning of vision across the perspectives of the Community of Provision.

### 7.2.1 Community systems

Findings across both schools indicated that the meaning of vision for members of the governing boards was concerned with shared values and attitudes (Bush 2003). Meaning of vision was also informed by mission which focused on equitable support for learning in these schools and identification of goals to achieve their mission (Murphy and Torre 2015).

Governors’ views on the significance of values for vision partially supported the assertion by Bush (2003) that they influenced members of organisations to support the ideas they prioritise. Furthermore, the findings supported claims that mission and goals are elements of vision by Murphy and Torre (2015). However, these authors emphasised that vision was communicated by leaders to members of the
school community. The findings from this study suggested that governors viewed values, mission and goals as informed by members of their school community rather than communicated from school leaders to the community.

Members of both governing boards argued that their roles required them to facilitate agentive activity for students, parents and others involved in support for learning, to contribute to the values, attitudes and mission for vision. Liaison between SEN Governors and SENCOs, parent consultation meetings and provision for children’s feedback provided examples of practices that aimed to demonstrate acknowledgement of agency across the school community. Therefore, the role of agency suggested the notion of an ‘agentive community’ underpinned the meaning of vision for governors in both schools.

Agency in this context drew on the definition proposed by Brewer et al as ‘situated and a product of the context in which it is practiced’ (Brewer et al 2020, p. 331). Furthermore, governing boards aims to acknowledge the agency of members of their community supported research on school improvement by Ranson (2011). Ranson argued that activity to support participation and acknowledge agency across the school community sustained improvements in school provision. However, the connections between agency and the meaning of vision in school governance which emerged from this study, provided an additional insight into the way in which it was enacted to sustain improvement.

Rix (2015), provided further insights into agency and vision when he reflected that communities are in a state of constant change and require the:

‘Capacity to maintain relationships and share understandings’ (Rix 2015, p. 179).

Governors in both schools referred to the need to develop and maintain relationships within their communities by engaging with diverse attitudes. They argued that discussions within the boards to explore those attitudes supported accommodation of diverse views. Therefore, such discussions also supported them to respond to dynamic changes in their communities and ensure that the values and attitudes that informed their vision were representative and relevant (Rix 2015). These elements were evident in interviews, focus groups, observations and SEN Policies, which identified values prioritised within each school.
The relevance of sociocultural theory was also supported through identifying differences in meaning of vision for governors in these schools. In the following discussion I suggest that these differences influenced the evaluation of ‘focused’ or ‘diffuse’ aspirations for vision (Rix 2015). Figures 1 and 2 (see Section 2.7.2 above) represent images of connections between perspectives within the Community of Provision when practices, services, policies and individuals are ‘focused’ or ‘diffuse’.

For example, change was emphasised in the meaning of vision in Greenhill which was developing a new vision for learning support in the school following changes in leadership and reorganisation of the Governing Board. The practices which led to the need for change could be characterised as ‘diffuse’, since governors and staff described a lack of coherence in connections between perspectives. Therefore, changes to leadership and vision had consequences for governor roles which aimed to achieve ‘focused’ connections through improved communication between governors, staff, children and parents. They reported that their vision supported goals to develop agentive activity across the school community. However, they had encountered instability and disruption as they developed approaches to communication to engage with the new vision across the school (Kotter 1996).

An area of continuing instability, which resulted in challenges to achieving improvements in communication, arose from levels of governor participation. Murphy and Torre (2015) cautioned that, while goals were key elements of vision, trust and commitment underpinned schools’ ability to identify and achieve them. Board interviewees acknowledged that reduced participation and perceptions of limited commitment had affected levels of trust between the Board and the school community. Governor interview data indicated that limited participation from some members continued to affect consistency in engagement with, and understanding of, the school’s vision. Therefore, participation by individuals within the Governing Board in Greenhill influenced interpretations of the meaning of the vision of the school resulting in ongoing experiences of diffuse aspirations and practices (Rix 2015).

The Board in Castlemount had also sought to address participation through its reorganisation. However, Castlemount had undergone extensive changes previously and had established practices to communicate, sustain relationships and develop shared understandings. This was particularly evident in responses to
questions about the meaning of vision in interviews with governors and staff, and the role of equitable provision, to support learning. Understanding of equitable provision and the meaning of vision in Castlemount was consistent, and supported by activity to support goals to achieve their mission. Therefore, the vision could be characterised as focused at that point since practices, services, policies and individuals were connected in ways that supported the description of ‘focused’ developed by Rix (2015). These differences also support conclusions that timescale can constrain or support vision in schools, since the schools were responding to different influences and timescales, in developing connections across the school community (Block 1987).

Exploration of the views of staff provided further insights into this assertion.

7.2.2 Community staffing

Findings across both schools indicated that governors’ understanding of the meaning of vision for staff, was experienced through development of shared attitudes and approaches to professional development.

Interview data from teaching staff demonstrated that they shared values and attitudes reported by governors including attitudes towards responsibility for progress of all children in the school. Although there were inconsistencies in Greenhill, attitudes were represented by reports that children considered to have SEN were not the responsibility of individual members of staff, e.g. SENCOs or TAs. These findings provided partial support for the assertion by Kose (2011) that a vision to support equity and diversity is achieved by sharing its advantages and purpose with those engaged in its implementation.

This was demonstrated by teaching staff who argued that the approaches to professional development that were adopted in both schools, were relevant to their experience of the way that the meaning of vision was understood by the Governing Board. They asserted that the approaches in their schools demonstrated values of respect and trust towards staff through acknowledging their agency as professionals. Staff interviewees described ‘lesson studies’ or ‘coaching’ approaches to professional development, which had replaced lesson observations to assess quality of teaching, as professionally empowering. In Castlemount, lesson studies focused on teachers assessing their own professional development needs and developing these through research. This approach to professional development provides further support for the notion of an ‘agentive
community’ underlying the vision for these schools. Governors appeared to have resisted the ‘performativity approach to teaching and learning’ which Ranson argued undermined motivation across school communities (Ranson 2011, p. 404). By acknowledging notions of agency and participation described by Bruner (1996) and Rogoff (2003), staff evaluated and changed their practices which enhanced their experience of participation within their community. Furthermore, sharing advantages and purpose were experienced directly (Kose 2011). However, professional development for TAs was based on being trained by teachers on their research findings which represented an inconsistency in acknowledging agency and the experience of participation by all staff.

Differences in the meaning of vision between schools were also represented in reports by staff. Governor views on the significance of change in the meaning of their vision was emphasised by staff interviewees in Greenhill. These were experienced through changes in approaches to adult support for children’s learning. Governors argued that their vision for staff development focused on developing attitudes and skills to enable them to support all children within the class. Mixed responses to these changes resulted in resistance and inconsistencies in practice. However, Kose (2011) also highlighted the importance of recognising historical influences upon responses within the context of each school. Staff reports of subsequent consultation on the changes to their roles and practices to support children’s diversity, indicated that dialogue took account of those influences. Furthermore, the role of dialogue indicated support for Kotter’s (1996) suggestion that shared understanding of vision requires ongoing opportunities for dialogue between community members.

Therefore, in contrast with Castlemount where aspirations and practices were ‘focused’, staff experiences of the meaning of vision in Greenhill reflected transition from ‘diffuse’ towards ‘focused’ engagement.

7.2.3 Community of students

Findings across both schools indicated that governors’ understanding of the meaning of vision for children was reflected in admissions, and listening and integrating children’s views into improvements in provision.

The values and attitudes that underpinned their vision were implemented through the admissions policies of their respective LEAs. These prioritised admission based on geographical proximity, having a sibling at the school and parental
preference for children with an EHCP. Evidence that the priorities were implemented emerged in parent focus groups which also confirmed flexibility in admission to support inclusive aims. However, members of both boards acknowledged that aspects of their vision could be undermined by inconsistencies in implementing their values. In Castlemount, this affected the status of and practice to support children in the ‘Grow Unit’ which implied integration rather than inclusion. In Greenhill, responses to behaviour incidents had resulted in tensions for enacting children’s rights. Although no data was gathered in this area, reports by both schools on including children excluded from other schools, implied the practice of ‘off-rolling’ described by Done and Knowler (2019) should be explored further in this context.

Governors aimed to reduce inconsistencies in implementing their values by prioritising children’s agency within their vision. Goals to support this focused on listening and responding to children’s views on teaching and learning provision and initiatives to support their rights. In Castlemount this was evidenced through governors’ meetings with children to explore their views. In Greenhill, the ‘Rights Respecting’ initiative was linked to changes in governor attitudes on engagement with children’s views. These approaches reflect the proposition made by Hart (1992), that children’s agency and participation should be acknowledged by working with them to embed their views into decisions on learning. Furthermore, children in the focus groups described how their learning was improved through kindness, trust and respect from peers and teachers. Their views indicated that the quality of their relationships were priorities for children and reflected consistency with the values reported by governors.

7.2.4 Community support

Findings across both schools indicated that governors’ vision was evident through approaches to planning learning supported by members of the school community, including parents, LEA and health service professionals, school network partners and voluntary organisations. However, the emphasis on the role of parents in both schools supports Ranson’s assertion that parent partnership is central for governing boards to achieve their aims for children (Ranson 2011).

Governors in Castlemount and Greenhill reported that collaboration with parents was a priority to recognise their unique contribution to children’s progress.
Accordingly, governors reported that they viewed parents as partners in the process of planning for children’s learning.

Both schools had undertaken reorganisation of their governing boards to support participation from members of their communities. However, Castlemount had appointed parents to all non-staff governor roles. This was considered by those parents to contribute to creating a participative culture based on trust and respect between parents and other members of the school community. Accordingly, parent involvement was embedded within policies, team planning with parents to identify targets for children’s progress across the school year, and a programme of parent workshops. Parents in the focus group reported that arrangements to support their involvement reduced boundaries between home and school. Ranson (2005, 2011) argued that a further consequence of activities where parents can engage within the school is the opportunity to engage with governance. His views were supported by these findings.

Improving communication with parents to support the learning progress of each child was also a priority in Greenhill and was evident in the SEN Policy and reports by parents in the focus group of their experience of planning with teachers. Furthermore, the Governing Board of Greenhill had also undertaken reorganisation to support participation within their school community. However, the emphasis on recruiting governors with specific skills reduced parent membership. Accordingly, members of the parent focus group reported limited knowledge of non-staff members of the Governing Board, their vision for the School and changes in practice to achieve it. Furthermore, they expressed confusion about some of these changes.

Rix proposed that ‘any and every educational issue will be affected by’ all the perspectives of the Community of Provision (Rix 2015, p. 176). He goes on to suggest that, where perspectives are not working together at any point, members of the school community may experience marginalisation. The confusion experienced by parents suggests that interactions within the Community of Provision were experienced as diffuse at that point in time. Furthermore, the frustration expressed by parents in Greenhill demonstrated the limitations of adopting a ‘governance capital’ approach to the membership of governing boards promoted by James et al (2011). Instead, it supports the proposition that membership which represents the school community should be prioritised (Ranson 2005). Furthermore, Heystek’s conclusion that supporting parent governors to
engage can lead to sustainable improvements is evident in the findings from Castlemount (Heystek 2011). Therefore, these findings indicated that supporting parents to become members of school governing boards, and increasing opportunities for parents to inform children’s learning, supported aspirations for vision through increasing orientation towards focused engagement.

7.2.5 Community strategies

Governors’ understanding of a vision that supported all children to make progress in their learning was represented through approaches to curriculum provision and pedagogical developments within both schools. These aimed to acknowledge children’s agency through facilitating their experience of participation in their learning and were demonstrated through observations within the classroom, interview and focus group data (Hart 1992). Governors in both schools considered that an integrated approach to the curriculum and the development of inclusive pedagogy supported their goals to achieve equitable provision for learning.

In Castlemount, governors emphasised that flexibility required staff taking responsibility for planning learning experiences that would enable each child to make progress. This was supported by allocating funding for staff to develop and implement research-based pedagogy including ‘Growth Mindset’ to develop resilience, strategies to support language and communication skills, and choice-based approaches to learning.

In Greenhill, a creative curriculum and pedagogical approaches which included mixed ability grouping and ‘Growth Mindset’ were reported to have resulted in improvement to children’s progress. Furthermore, children in the focus group reported that working in the classroom with their friends helped them learn. However, there was a tension between the stated commitment to inclusive pedagogy and the emphasis on an SEN pedagogy, which supports the conclusion that further opportunities for dialogue within the schools were needed to address the inconsistencies they encountered (Kotter 1996).

7.2.6 Community space

The governors of both schools considered that their roles involved engaging with, and improving communication between, the groups within their communities to develop and implement a vision for their school.
The Governing Board in Castlemount had identified goals to support their vision for an agentive community by adapting school spaces to reduce boundaries and increasing opportunities for contact between parents, Academy and training partners.

Governors in Greenhill had also prioritised improvements in communication across their school community which was represented across the data. Observation of the meeting of the Governing Board indicated that plans to develop their vision had begun to be implemented. However, governors in this school acknowledged further engagement between board members and different constituencies in the school community would support them to achieve their vision for improved communication to reduce boundaries.

These aspects of the data implied that the boundaries between individuals, practices and agencies within these school communities changed as they negotiated working towards their vision. Star (2010) suggested that working on boundary objects supported achievement of goals for groups engaged in cooperative activity. Therefore, subsequent discussion will explore how these boards worked with other members of their school community on boundary objects.

7.2.7 Summary

This section argued that governors in both schools reported vision was concerned with the development of shared values and attitudes across the school community to identify a ‘mission’ for their school (Murphy and Torre 2015). They described their mission as equitable provision to ensure all children were able to make progress and prioritised acknowledgement of agency across members of the community to achieve their vision. Governors considered that they had a responsibility to develop vision through engagement with their community to develop shared values and attitudes and identify goals to support achievement of their vision.

Differences between the schools arose from their historical, social and cultural contexts which were evident through ‘change’ in Greenhill. Consequently, differences in engagement and participation between governors and staff, children and parents had consequences for orientations towards focused or diffuse understanding of the meaning of vision within each school.
7.3 Understanding of the vision for SEN by the governing board

This section addresses Sub-question 2 of the main research question:

‘How is the vision for SEN understood by members of the governing board?’

This introduction summarises continuities and differences in understanding of the vision for SEN by members of governing boards in both schools.

Governors in both schools considered that their vision for SEN was concerned with inclusion and inclusive provision for children. They viewed allocating responsibility for SEN to a member of the Board as a key element in developing and implementing their vision for equitable support. Furthermore, both schools considered that SENCOs should be members of the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that provision for children considered to have SEN met their needs. Their visions for SEN also addressed staff attitudes to responsibility for learning support of all children in their care. Finally, governors considered that the vision for SEN in both schools was connected with planning learning support by drawing on children’s views and engagement with parents.

Differences between the visions were influenced by approaches to SEN processes. The difference in approach to processes also influenced understanding of the role of intervention programmes in SEN provision and the development of a separate vision for SEN in Greenhill.

7.3.1 Community systems

Rix (2015) suggested that, in a school that has inclusive aspirations for all learners, the community systems perspective may adopt equitable approaches to allocation of funding. Governors in both schools considered that their vision prioritised equitable support for all learners, rather than offering a separate vision for children considered to have SEN, which implies that governors had inclusive aspirations for their learners (Ainscow and Sandill 2010).

Governors considered their vision for equitable support involved allocating responsibilities for SEN provision to a board member. Responsibilities of this role were outlined in their SEN Policies and included liaising with the SENCOs in their school to develop initiatives that supported equity, together with responsibilities
outlined in the Governance Handbook (DfE 2017a). Furthermore, governors in both schools had taken decisions to fund and appoint SENCOs to the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that issues affecting children considered to have SEN were consistently communicated at this level. However, differences in the way that governors and SENCOs worked together on those responsibilities in each school, supported research findings on variation in the enactment of the SEN Governor role (Pearson 2011).

Differences in school status influenced differences in the way that governors understood and enacted their vision for SEN. Governors in Castlemount reported that Academy status had enabled them to access funding to enact their vision. They reported that the financial stability this status afforded allowed them to maintain high levels of staffing and resourcing for SEN provision which reduced reliance upon SEN systems. Furthermore, liaison between the SENCO and the SEN Governor supported their vision for inclusion by sharing research on pedagogical approaches and interventions that emphasised inclusive practice (Pearson 2011).

In Greenhill funding pressures and reduced LEA support influenced the decision to develop a separate vision for SEN as a strategy to improve learning support. Observation of the Governing Board meeting provided further insights into the elements of this vision following a presentation and discussion of the ‘SEN Vision for Learning’ which detailed changes to staffing, pedagogy, curriculum provision and interventions. Additional understanding of the vision for SEN was derived from the recent appointment of the SEN Governor. She reported that the allocation of these responsibilities in the vision document aimed to address governor engagement which had been limited previously. Analysis of the elements of the SEN Vision in Greenhill suggests that this was not a separate vision to the overarching vision for all children within the school. Instead, it appeared to identify SEN as a separate vision because implementation of SEN processes were a priority to secure additional funding.

These findings on the role of funding indicated that research which concluded funding issues can act as constraints or supports upon vision continue to be relevant (Block 1987). Pearson’s conclusion that there is considerable variation in the way that governors engage in their responsibilities for SEN was also supported (Pearson 2011). Furthermore, they reflected her recommendation that boards should be able to take account of distinctive features of their context. However, the
data indicated that it may be more appropriate for an individual governor to be allocated responsibility for a wider perspective on support for children’s diversity, rather than focusing on SEN which links responsibility to an unstable system.

7.3.2 Community of students

Governors in both schools reported that their understanding of the vision for SEN prioritised the development of inclusive attitudes towards children considered to have SEN. Governors with responsibility for SEN in Castlemount and Greenhill characterised one of those attitudes as responsibility for all learners within the school, irrespective of identification of SEN.

The concern for responsibility for all children within the school’s community reflected a commitment to include children who:

‘Would reflect the local geographical area or those linked to the setting though wider community relationships’ (Rix 2015, p. 182).

Parents in both schools reported that they were perceived as places that had positive attitudes to including and supporting children considered to have SEN.

However, a range of evidence indicated that there were inconsistencies for children considered to have SEN within each school. In Castlemount, the informal status of children who received support from the Grow Unit indicated boundaries to the vision for inclusion. They suggested that this provision represented integration rather than inclusion for these children. In Greenhill, governors acknowledged that there continued to be inconsistencies in attitudes and practice by teaching staff, demonstrated by a staff interviewee who reported that she only taught a child considered to have SEN when the TA was absent. Conflicting attitudes to TA support were also captured by children’s responses to a question about ‘people who help us learn’ in the children’s focus group. While all children referred to their teachers and parents, they made no reference to TAs which indicated negative associations with SEN support were experienced by children (Thomas and Loxley 2001).

Differences in governor understanding of their school’s vision for SEN concerned the role of SEN processes in supporting children’s learning. Governors and staff in Castlemount deemphasised SEN processes and focused on including children in planning their learning experiences to acknowledge their agency in learning (Vygotsky 1978).
In Greenhill, the emphasis on SEN processes concerned with identifying and assessing difference, presented conflicts with the School’s vision for respecting the rights of each child as a learner. For example, there was no evidence that children were consulted about their views on identification of an SEN. Further conflicts for this approach were identified by research conducted by Rix et al. (2013). This international study concluded that there was a lack of evidence that any continuum which was assumed to underpin SEN was consistent in theory, practice or provision. Furthermore, evidence indicates elevated risks of negative outcomes where children are identified as having SEN (DfE 2018a, House of Commons Education Committee 2019).

This suggests that a vision for SEN which emphasises processes associated with a continuum create tensions for aspirations towards a vision that affords inclusion and equity by acknowledging children’s agency and rights. Furthermore, SEN prioritises an individualised focus rather than the social and cultural influences which underpin inclusion. Instead, evidence suggests that identification of SEN has negative consequences for children’s identity, agency and participation, particularly in the context of neo-liberal policies which promote competition (Thomas and Loxley 2001, Tomlinson 2012, Done and Knowler 2019). Finally, the administration of SEN provision is inconsistent (Ellis and Todd 2012, Rix 2015). Therefore, a vision for SEN is not only built on unstable foundations in theory, practice and provision, but it is also a negative vision which has the potential to constrain children’s progress and undermine their rights.

### 7.3.3 Community support

Blandford (2012) concluded that engaging different groups within school communities was critical in sustaining a vision for inclusive practice and addressing destabilising influences from beyond the school.

Governors in both schools reported that engagement with parents or carers of children considered to have SEN was central to their understanding of the vision for SEN. However, engagement with parents was viewed as central to the vision for all children in both schools suggesting a further tension between the whole school vision and a separate vision for SEN.

In both schools, working with parents of children considered to have SEN was based on planning provision with parents by sharing information about children’s views, their skills, and the strategies that supported them to learn in both home
and school environments. In Greenhill the vision for SEN emphasised improved communication with parents on implementation of SEN processes. However, parents in the Greenhill focus group reported inconsistencies between these aims and their experience across the year. These conflicts arose, in part, from communication linked to changes in a range of practices including staffing arrangements and homework provision. They also suggested they would have welcomed discussion on the vision for SEN but were unaware of its existence, acknowledging cautions that parents can experience disempowerment when changes in school governance limit participation (Wong 2011). These findings also suggest support for the role of boundary objects to afford opportunities for collaboration on tasks between groups within school communities (Star 2010). For example, working with parents on the vision for SEN may have supported the school’s vision for improved communication and addressed some of the tensions arising from its development.

Further evidence to support this assertion was derived from Castlemount. Governors reported that the level of parent membership on their Governing Board, and the personal experience of their governor with responsibility for SEN, supported them to negotiate boundaries to communicate with parents on their vision. The SEN Governor in Castlemount provided insights into the way that the Board understood this, through references to the stigmatisation that some parents of children considered to have SEN experienced. These resulted in actions to reduce the experience of stigma for parents. Insight into this stigmatisation was influenced by the presence of parent governors in this school and supports recommendations for parent representation on governing boards (Heystek 2006, Ranson 2011).

Therefore, these findings indicate that differences in vision were informed by the approach to the implementation of SEN processes rather than distinct goals. However, the approach to processes and parent representation on governing boards affected engagement with parents. In Greenhill, communication with parents to plan provision arising from SEN processes was an area of challenge (Philip et al 2013). In Castlemount, the vision emphasised reducing the experience of stigmatisation for parents when engaging with SEN processes. Accordingly, the vision emphasised differences in approaches to the experience of SEN processes for parents rather than a separate vision for SEN.
7.3.4 Community strategies

Governors in both schools reported that their vision for SEN highlighted the role of pedagogy, curriculum and interventions in planning provision.

Governors asserted that their focus on these aspects of provision included ensuring staff were enabled to support all children to make progress, through training in inclusive pedagogies. However, a difference emerged between views that pedagogies to support learning were not considered to be ‘SEN-specific’ and the role of one-to-one intervention programmes. Governors in Castlemount asserted that interventions provided additional support rather than a separate pedagogical approach, while interviewees in Greenhill argued that intervention programmes offered an SEN specific pedagogy, which assumed that SEN was based on individualised, biological factors (Gindis 1999).

In Castlemount, observations revealed children were supported using visual strategies within the classroom and provided with a choice of resources and task options which emphasised the vision for agentive learning. Intervention programmes were viewed as a pedagogical approach to support access to the curriculum, e.g. language interventions were planned to support children’s use and application of key vocabulary during lessons. However, it was unclear if children’s views informed the decisions on their learning spaces and groupings.

In Greenhill, conflicting views emerged on delivery of inclusive pedagogy and a separate SEN pedagogy. Staff argued that intervention programmes provided a distinct pedagogy to support SEN provision and suggested that some children considered to have SEN learn differently, an assumption which was challenged by Rix and Sheehy (2014). However, governors had requested an evaluation of children’s progress on intervention programmes in acknowledgement of the inconsistencies between these views.

Tensions also emerged between the views of children and parents on curriculum and intervention provision. Children expressed their preference for peer-based learning activities while parents expressed strong support for one-to-one intervention programmes. This suggested that the vision for SEN needed to address differences in views between children, parents, staff and governors. Furthermore, it suggests that a vision for SEN presents challenges for governing boards arising from inconsistencies in the concept itself and the system to administer it (Ellis and Todd 2012, Rix et al 2013).
7.3.5 Community staffing

Staffing provision to ensure children considered to have SEN made progress was understood to be central to the vision for SEN by governors in both schools. Data from governor interviews, observation of meetings and policy documents referred to arrangements for sustaining staffing levels, development and responsibilities, as goals that supported this aspect of their vision, highlighting the roles of adults in supporting children’s learning (Vygotsky 1978).

Governors reported that these aims influenced the decision by Castlemount to seek Academy status and facilitate increased staffing since SEN funding was considered insufficient to support equitable provision. Governors reported that they had promoted staff development through self-directed research to support the vision for staff agency, but it also aimed to maintain awareness that staff were responsible for the progress of all children in their care (Kose 2011).

However, interview data demonstrated that provision for research within the School adopted a different approach for children considered to have SEN since research was conducted by staff in teacher and leadership roles. This had consequences for the vision as TAs received training on the outcomes of research rather than conducting their own research. While this approach supported teacher responsibility it provided a potential constraint on support staff agency which may have affected achievement of that vision by constraining progress for children considered to have SEN.

In Greenhill a staff restructuring programme aimed to develop staff attitudes towards responsibility for children considered to have SEN through changes in arrangements for one-to-one support. A working group to manage this process aimed to provide staff with an opportunity to share reflections on their recent professional experience. Furthermore, the SEN Policy aimed to make teaching staff responsibilities for children considered to have SEN explicit. Teachers were identified as responsible for providing a curriculum for all children in their class although TAs and the SEN ‘team’, were described as sharing that responsibility.

The teaching observation indicated that expectations had been implemented in some cases as the class teacher worked directly with a group which included children considered to have SEN. However, in her interview she suggested that undertaking research had influenced her practice. Although provision for staff research was not a school policy another staff interviewee reported that some
members of staff had formed ‘clusters’ to develop inclusive pedagogies to support responsibility for all learners in their class.

Therefore, this aspect of vision emphasised supporting staff to achieve this goal through expectations of staff responsibility for all children and agentive approaches to staff development, rather than a distinct vision for SEN.

**7.3.6 Community space**

Governors in both schools reported that their vision for SEN focused on a flexible approach to the use of space to address barriers to learning in both schools. Flexibility was understood as the way that space was used for play and learning, within and beyond the classroom. Staff interview data supported this as they described how access to different environments enabled them to increase opportunities for children to exercise choice in their learning. However, there was evidence that these developments had been used to remove children considered to have SEN from the classroom which reflected a lack of shared understanding about the vision for space across the school community (Taylor Webb 2006). They also reflected the individualised approach associated with implementation of an SEN continuum rather than acknowledging the social and cultural context of learning (Vygotsky 1978).

Governors’ interviews provided insights into these issues as they described discussions on funding for playground resources. In Greenhill, they suggested this had become a priority because children considered to have SEN were at risk from behaviour and bullying incidents. Children in the focus group confirmed that this was an issue for them and highlighted the need for children to be ‘sensible’ and behave with ‘respect’. Therefore, resourcing and reorganising play spaces had been augmented by additional adult support from class teachers to improve consistency in behaviour management. The decision to rehome animals which had lived on the school site also revealed the complexity of the use of space in and outside the classroom, in providing support for children’s social and emotional needs. These findings support recommendations that children should be consulted on vision development and achievement (Othman et al 2012).

**7.3.7 Summary**

The vision for SEN in both schools focused on supporting the learning needs of all children rather than a vision focused exclusively on children considered to have
SEN. Furthermore, interviewees in both schools acknowledged that SEN could result in stigmatisation and exclusion (Campbell et al. 2019). This was exemplified by a SENCO in Greenhill who referred to the SEN system as ‘broken’, highlighting the tensions for schools in including the implementation of SEN systems as part of their vision. Finally, the criticisms of the system for SEN and the continuum that underpins it, appeared to be supported by the experiences of participants from both schools in this study (Norwich 2014, Rix 2015).

This analysis suggests that governors within these schools have attempted to address this challenge but, in responding to their diverse and different communities, their visions became oriented towards inclusive aspirations supported by different levels of community collaboration. In responding to the changes in their social, cultural, and political environments, they appeared to be orientating towards agentive engagement with their communities. However, their ability to develop agentive communities was affected by the way in which they engaged with systems beyond the immediate environment of the school.

Castlemount had acknowledged social and cultural influences by prioritising representation from, communication with, and relationships between, members of its community. Accordingly, this provided some support for their aims for inclusion. Greenhill had also acknowledged these influences but experienced challenges in their aims as a result of prioritisation of the SEN continuum and its administration. This suggests that a vision for equity supported by agency may be undermined by a separate vision for SEN.

7.4 Planning to support the vision for SEN

This section addresses Sub-question 3 of the main research question:

‘How do governing boards develop a vision for children considered to have SEN?’

Sub-question 3 sought to explore how governing boards developed or planned their vision for children considered to have SEN.

Continuities in developing a vision for children considered to have SEN were present across both schools. These included identifying priorities linked to vision, school development planning, drawing on personal experience, and engaging with different groups within the school community.
Differences between the schools in developing vision related to strategies to engage with different groups within the school community, and preparation of vision documents in Greenhill. This section begins by examining prioritisation and planning as Rix argued that:

‘Priorities should be evident within the actions of leaders and other members of the community, so that their roles and practices reflect the community’s inclusive aspirations’ (Rix 2015, p. 181).

### 7.4.1 Community systems

Bush (2011) asserted that vision can be operationalised as a planning process that enables schools to develop and improve. Governor participants in both schools provided insights into that planning process as they emphasised that vision development began with prioritisation of goals.

Governors reported that analysing data on children’s progress in learning informed prioritisation, as equitable support was central to vision in both schools and reflected their inclusive aspirations. Governors also reported engaging with staff, parents and children’s views through consultation meetings and surveys to support their aims to incorporate agentive activity into decision-making on priorities. This finding supports conclusions by Kose (2011) that engaging with the wider community was crucial in vision development to ensure ownership of underlying values.

Consultation took place alongside review of school development plans (SDPs) and policies linked to the vision for children considered to have SEN to synthesise key sources of information, e.g. SEN and Behaviour Policies. The activity of governors with responsibility for SEN provision was particularly evident in review of SEN information which supported findings on their role from Pearson (2011). Pearson also concluded that personal interest supported SEN Governors to contribute to the vision in their schools in order to reduce the distance between ‘intentions and realities’ (Pearson 2011, p. 710). Governors with responsibility for SEN provision made explicit references to aspects of their own experience that informed planning. They suggested that their experiences informed vision development, because they raised their awareness of issues that may affect children considered to have SEN including stigmatisation and marginalisation. The experience described by SEN Governors in these schools confirmed Pearson’s assertion that their interest informed their contributions to planning vision in addition to formal
sources of information (Pearson 2011). However, the influence of context emerged as governors in Castlemount suggested their approach to vision development was embedded in their practice while governors in Greenhill had introduced their approach that year.

In Castlemount, governors reported that the form of planning they had adopted allowed them to be responsive to their community. Their plan was represented as concentric circles with vision, priorities, practices and resource development in the centre. Areas in the process of consolidation or less relevant were represented in the outer circles of their plan (Huberman et al. 2011). Governor interviewees stated that this format supported inclusive planning for children considered to have SEN because it incorporated all aspects of provision. This aspect of vision development suggests that governors were drawing on values associated with effective missions in planning their vision (Murphy and Torre 2015).

In Greenhill, the change was led by the Headteacher who prepared vision documents which formed the basis of discussions at governing board meetings. She acknowledged that her role had been directive, particularly in arguing that the school needed to prioritise engagement with members of the school community to develop planning a vision for SEN. However, governors reported that the approach facilitated the process as it took account of the changes in their context. Therefore, the influence of context is evident on many levels. Many governors in Greenhill were new members who had been appointed on the basis of their skills and had limited experience of their roles or the school community. Therefore, they were developing their knowledge and understanding of planning in this context. Furthermore, allowing the Headteacher to take the lead role allowed them to manage the level of responsibilities which governors can find overwhelming (Balarin et al. 2008, Connolly and James 2011). Governors concluded that their planning practices would change as they acquired more experience in their roles and had been able to address immediate priorities, e.g. the safety of the school building.

7.4.2 Community space

Developing the vision for SEN addressed the use of physical space within both schools. This aspect of vision development was underpinned by governors visiting their schools to increase their understanding of the use of space. However, variation in the number of visits undertaken in each school suggested that some
governors experienced difficulty in meeting the expectations of their role, as previously identified by Balarin et al (2008). For example, while governors in Castlemount were able to develop vision for space through allocating time to research and visits, governors in Greenhill had to address urgent priorities. These included identifying funding for essential building repairs to ensure that the building met safety requirements.

Alongside this, the development of playground space was prioritised in the development of Greenhill’s vision for children considered to have SEN as a result of an increase in behaviour issues. The SEN Governor identified this as a concern for children considered to have SEN who were vulnerable to bullying. Therefore, planning in Greenhill had to address fundamental safety issues for all children alongside aspirations to support children considered to have SEN.

7.4.3 Community support

Both schools reported that engagement with their communities enabled them to develop a vision for children considered to have SEN.

Governors referred to the role of the community beyond the school through planning with agencies including ‘critical friends’ to advise on practice which was relevant to their SDP review. Governors also acknowledged pressures from external agencies more distant from the school including the DfE and Ofsted, but argued that this engagement allowed them to justify plans to develop their vision when disagreements occurred. Insights into external pressures supports concerns that governors are subject to ‘disciplinary tools’ which can undermine their aims to take account of their school community (Wilkins 2014, p. 200). It is interesting to note that Castlemount considered that the prioritisation of research in their practice was particularly significant when justifying their plans.

Furthermore, collaboration with parents to plan support for children was a priority in both schools and represented in their SEN Policies. However, parents in the focus group in Castlemount did not refer to involvement in vision development consultation activities. In Greenhill, parents in the focus groups reported that they had no knowledge of the ‘SEN Vision for learning’ which supported governor plans to prioritise communication.

These findings indicated that governors were influenced by the social and cultural issues in their school and aimed to take account of these by engaging with the
school community (Ranson 2011). However, they also indicated that achieving their vision of consultation with parents of children considered to have SEN remained challenging.

7.4.4 Community of students

Developing a vision for children considered to have SEN prioritised engagement with children’s views in both schools, although they adopted different strategies to achieve this in their planning.

In Castlemount, research to draw on feedback from children was incorporated into the SDP by drawing on strategies recommended by Jones (2005). However, the role of the School Council in supporting engagement with the voice of children considered to have SEN was less clear. Governors reported that they were unsure if children considered to have SEN were represented on the School Council although they were able to become class representatives. Furthermore, children in the focus group viewed some of the behaviour strategies employed by the school reduced their enjoyment of learning, indicating that their views may not have been represented. Therefore, providing opportunities to represent the views of children considered to have SEN on the School Council would have provided support for the school’s prioritisation of children’s agency and participation.

In Greenhill, governor priorities had been influenced by the prior experience of the Headteacher, who argued that the Board should develop awareness of children’s agency in learning through engaging with their views. This was reflected in planning objectives to develop a ‘smart school council’ which represented all children in the school and meetings between governors and children to ensure that children could share their views directly. Comments from children in the focus groups demonstrated that activities to support this had taken place, as children described the importance of being listened to and respect for their views. However, they also drew on experiences in the playground to illustrate occasions when their views were not listened to or respected.

This suggested that the vision for children within each school was developed by engaging with children’s views to acknowledge their agency. However, there were aspects of practice where focus on representative participation could have informed their priorities and supported the process of vision development (Wyness 2005, 2010).
7.4.5 Community staffing

Governors described meetings between SENCOs and the governors with responsibility for SEN provision as priorities for planning their vision for children considered to have SEN. However, practices in each school reflected different stages of development in achieving these plans.

In Castlemount, the SENCO and the governor with responsibility for SEN provision described their practice of meeting to review and identify research priorities in order to plan development in inclusive pedagogy and SEN interventions. In Greenhill, consultation and engagement between the SENCO and governor with SEN responsibility was planned which reflects the variation in engagement between SENCO and SEN Governor observed by Pearson (2011).

However, governors reported that consultation between governors and staff through exit interviews had resulted in staff informing governors that they needed to be more ‘visible’ to staff through initiatives such as ‘learning walks’. They had also provided recommendations on reviewing and developing behaviour policies within the school which were discussed during the observation of the Governing Board meeting.

These differences provide further evidence to support the assertion that governing boards experience a dynamic interaction in their relationships and practices which influence their orientation towards a diffuse or focused vision (Rix 2015). However, it also demonstrates that vision development provides opportunities to identify boundary objects to negotiate and reduce boundaries between groups including parents, children and staff (Star 2010).

7.4.6 Community strategies

Both schools had analysed data on children’s progress in learning to make judgements on developing integrated curriculum and inclusive pedagogical approaches into SDPs to support their vision. These approaches appeared to prioritise inclusion rather than a separate vision for SEN (Tomlinson 2012).

Contradicting this inference, SENCOs noted that outside agencies provided information to the governing board on accessibility issues which informed planning the development of the vision for SEN. Furthermore, the SENCO and SEN Governor in Castlemount reported that they drew on advice from occupational therapists, educational psychologists, counsellors and therapists, to develop their
vision for children considered to have SEN. These practices appear to contradict the conclusion that approaches to curriculum and pedagogy prioritised development of a vision aspiring to inclusion. However, governors in Castlemount reported that, as part of the process of developing vision, they had identified development of strategies to support inclusive practice as priorities. This was reflected by interviewees in Greenhill who observed that reliance on SEN agencies was not sustainable in the context of funding reductions (Balarin 2014).

7.4.7 Summary

These observations afford insights into developing a vision that is relevant to the needs of all children. The analysis highlights the role of context in planning vision and indicates that governor experiences informs priorities including engaging with the community (Pearson 2011, Kose 2011, Balarin 2014). However, while governors at Greenhill claimed to consult members of their community to plan their vision, their engagement in these activities was limited. The Board relied on the Headteacher, external professionals and government or Ofsted advice. Therefore, the data also provides insights into the way that pressures from agencies more distant from the schools can impact upon governors’ development of vision (Wilkins 2014). Finally, the discussion supports the view that analysis of activity through perspectives of the Community of Provision can support the development of vision and identify ways in which boundary objects can be identified to support participation (Star 2010, Rix 2015).

7.5 Activities that governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN

This section addresses Sub-question 4 of the main research question:

‘What activities do governing boards undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN?’

Sub-question 4 sought to explore the ways that governing boards implemented their vision for children considered to have SEN within the schools.

Continuities in undertaking activities to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN were present across both schools. They included: funding reviews; staffing; monitoring school development planning; reporting; training;
policy reviews; and attending meetings within and beyond the school to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN.

Differences between governing board activities to implement vision were concerned with research, activity conducted by the governor with SEN responsibility, and exclusions.

### 7.5.1 Community Systems

In both schools, governor activity to implement their visions for SEN was consistent with the responsibilities outlined in the Governance handbook (DfE 2017a). However, they reported that activities linked to funding and management of resources were a priority in implementing vision (Block 1987).

An example of this was provided by governors in Castlemount, who emphasised activity to identify additional sources of income to develop and sustain staffing levels and resources, to achieve their vision for equitable support. They allocated some of this income to the SENCO, to extend her role in leadership and increase information sharing about children’s progress, and training to implement research initiatives. The rationale for extending the SENCO role was shared with the Board, which supported findings by Kose (2011) who concluded that communicating rationales for activity linked to a vision focused on equity and diversity, supported schools to achieve that vision.

The extent of activity by the SEN Governor also emerged in observation of the board meeting where she presented this proposal and reported on her engagement with staff, children, parents and external agencies, on language and communication provision. Her interactions indicated that her activity involved working on boundary objects by participating in development activities with different groups within the school community. Star (2010) described boundary objects as existing between groups who engaged with them for specific purposes. Activity undertaken by the SEN Governor indicated that she engaged in working on boundary objects with a range of groups within the school community to define the identity of those objects. Her engagement in the development of the SENCO role and language and communication provision, provided examples of working to define the identities of these boundary objects.

Observation of the Board meeting in Greenhill captured governor activity focused on staffing, pedagogy and collaboration with parents and external agencies to
achieve their vision. However, non-staff governors reported that the aim of their monitoring activities was to support staff governors, including the Headteacher, to address issues arising from these changes. Furthermore, they stated that the reorganisation of the Board led them to prioritise their own training, and develop skills and understanding that would enable them to be more active in collaborating with staff, children, parents and policymakers. This was seen as essential to address the financial pressures that the School was experiencing. Governor activity supported Star’s analysis that ‘groups that are cooperating without consensus tack back and forth between both forms of the object’ here (Star 2010, p. 605). The description of activities undertaken by the Governing Board in Castlemount indicated that, while groups within the school community were cooperating, consensus had not been achieved. Therefore, the Board was working on multiple forms of boundary objects at this point which had consequences for moving between diffuse and focused interactions in achieving their vision (Rix 2015).

7.5.2 Community of students

Governor activity to allocate funding for initiatives that drew on children’s views was observed in board meetings in both schools through School Council and Rights Respecting Schools initiatives.

Although governors in Castlemount met with members of their School Council they were unsure if children considered to have SEN were represented on the Council. Furthermore, it was unclear that children in the focus group considered that the School Council represented their views or that they could become members. The recommendations by Jones (2005) suggest that inclusive approaches to engaging with children’s views could have been adopted to support representation of children considered to have SEN. Furthermore, it supports findings by Wyness (2003, 2005) on the significance of supporting representative participation on school councils, which was referred to in section 7.4.

In Greenhill, non-staff governors had not engaged directly with children to discuss their views on provision. However, children in the focus group reported that they enjoyed telling staff governors what they liked and did not like about their school and highlighted aspects of relationships and playground behaviour as examples of those experiences. Staff governors reported that the revised behaviour policy aimed to take account of their views by promoting consistency in pedagogical
approaches to support positive behaviour across the School. It also aimed to support reduction in the incidence of exclusions and suspensions, which demonstrated a conflict in the vision for children’s rights in the School. Governor activity to take account of children's views, can be interpreted as a crucial development to support their vision for equitable provision, in the context of rising rates of exclusion and the incidence of 'off-rolling' for children considered to have SEN (DfE 2018a, Done and Knowler 2019).

### 7.5.3 Community staffing

In both schools, governors reported involvement in staff recruitment and funding allocation for staffing to implement their visions for children considered to have SEN. Furthermore, both SEN Governors and the SENCOs in each school referred to undertaking activities to review staffing support to ensure equitable provision for children considered to have SEN.

However, in Castlemount, discussions between the SENCO and the SEN Governor which focused on research were viewed as essential by governors and staff. The outcome of one area where they shared research was the development of provision for language and communication, which involved the SEN Governor in training with TAs to explore their response to this development. Children and parent responses to this initiative were positive, and powerful data was provided by an observation of children using these resources to be agentive in their learning in the classroom. In a review of literature on inclusive pedagogical approaches that support children considered to have SEN, Rix et al concluded that 'Pedagogical approaches that effectively include children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms are not about the teacher alone, but are rooted in the community or learners – including other practitioners – with whom they work.' (Rix et al 2009, pp. 92-3). The example of research engagement demonstrated how governors worked within the community to effectively include children in their school. It should also be noted that these activities were reported as collaborative engagement with governors rather than monitoring, which could have been interpreted as a more performative activity leading to different outcomes for staff (Strain 2009a).

In Greenhill, the recruitment of the Headteacher drove all subsequent activity on vision including the staff restructure. Following the reorganisation of the Governing Board, activity by non-staff governors was dominated by the staff restructure
where the Staff Working Group reviewed funding provision for staffing, recruitment, redundancies and exit interviews. Accordingly, references to engagement between staff on these activities were contradictory. Some non-staff governors referred to increased engagement with staff while one governor stated that engagement only took place when staff presented at Board meetings. This contradiction indicated a lack of consistency in activity by individual governors as staff interviewees referred to some increased visibility of non-staff governors. Inconsistencies may have been linked to the delay between undertaking training, and implementing their training and other school activities. For example, the SEN policy which described the roles and responsibilities of the governor with SEN responsibilities, was published after the staff restructure and governor training had been completed.

These findings provide insights that are relevant to influences on the development of existing models of governance in England. Greenhill’s reorganisation of the Governing Board had adopted the skills approach to membership, which drew on the notion of social capital to support its work (James et al 2011). These findings suggest that the notion of capital was not supporting governors to work consistently on goals to support their vision. However, if analysis of governor activity in these schools acknowledges their social, cultural and historical contexts by drawing on notions of diffuse and focused practices and boundary objects, these activities are contextualised (Rix 2015, Star 2010). Instead, the activity of governors in both schools are viewed as aiming to support the vision for children considered to have SEN, by seeking to develop or sustain focused practices to develop their Community of Provision ((Rix 2015). The boundary objects that they worked on to support or sustain focused practices, services and relationships are also indicated through engaging with the wider community of staff to develop provision for learners considered to have SEN through research and arrangements for staff.

7.5.4 Community support

Governor activity to collaborate with the wider school community involved in support for children focused on engagement with parents in both schools, although their approaches were different. An inference of this study has been that the difference in levels of parent representation on the Governing Board of each school influenced these approaches.
Castlemount adopted a hybrid model for membership of their Governing Board where all non-staff members were parents but recruitment to these roles emphasised skills and experience (James 2011, Ranson 2011). However, all non-staff governors except the Chair had become professionally involved with schools after they became governors. Furthermore, the governor with responsibility for SEN provision in Castlemount reported that her personal and professional experience of children considered to have SEN had been crucial to the way she had enacted her role, including prioritising meetings with parents to consider provision (Heystek 2006, 2011). Data from interviews with staff and the parent focus group referred to her commitment, empathy and the trust that she was able to develop which they linked to her personal experience.

In Greenhill, reduction in parent membership appeared to have consequences for parent knowledge about non-staff governors including the governor who had responsibility for SEN provision. While Pearson (2011), also notes variation in levels of knowledge of governor roles between schools, this increased levels of anxiety among parents in the focus group. They experienced a sense of isolation as a result of their perceptions of limited communication about provision for their children. Their experiences support cautions reported in research by Wong (2011).

However, the findings across both schools demonstrated the importance of developing relationships to secure connections between groups and improve provision. The findings by Wilkins (2014) and Baxter (2017) indicated that accountability processes could disrupt relationships between members of governing boards and impact upon their activity. This analysis of connections between governors and parents demonstrates that relationships between them can also act to support or disrupt governor activity.

7.5.5 Community strategies and community space

Rix asserted that community strategies are ‘concerned with the quality of support’ while community space is ‘concerned with where support takes place’ (Rix 2015, p. 176). In this final section, activities that governing boards undertook to implement their vision for children considered to have SEN which were linked to strategies and space, are considered together. The decision to analyse strategies and space together reflects the level of connection between governor activities, advisory and support organisations and the impact upon space in both schools.
The influence of activity to develop space was evident from children’s comments in both schools as they described places where they liked to learn and play. The availability of these spaces within the schools were outcomes of activity by governors to engage with a wide range of professionals beyond the schools and fund these developments.

In Castlemount, collaboration between governors, SENCO and speech and language therapists has already been described as an example of activity to develop pedagogy to support language and communication provision in the school. However, governors also described meetings to implement plans with organisations beyond the immediate school community, including the LEA and the DfE, to become a national training provider. As a result, training spaces were located on the school site to provide training for other schools on inclusive pedagogy, which was seen as providing support for SEN provision. The SEN Governor argued that training provision acknowledged the agentive nature of learning across the wider school community since school staff had developed their practice through working with schools in diverse communities. Therefore, the school’s capacity to develop its vision was supported by governor activity that increased connections between networks to improve pedagogy and use of space.

In Greenhill, governor activity had also focused on allocating funding to enable the introduction of the new curriculum and inclusive pedagogies which were linked to the development of school spaces for learning. Observation of the Board meeting which included a discussion of the SDP also indicated that governors had monitored progress of these developments through ‘learning walks’. Further engagement with organisations beyond the school had focused on language and communication provision. However, the focus of LEA and DfE liaison was concerned with securing funding to ensure basic safety within the building. Therefore, governor activities represented the importance of contextual factors. In both schools, activity focused on improving strategies through the use of space. However, the levels of connections and developments in provision reflected economic and historical factors, as well and the social and cultural contexts of each school.

**7.5.6 Summary**

This discussion aimed to provide insight into the activities that governors undertook to implement their vision for children considered to have SEN. The
analysis indicated that these activities involved governors in working on boundary objects to develop or sustain focused interactions between groups within their school community (Star 2010, Rix 2015). Furthermore, the findings from this study highlight the role of relationships as governors interact to achieve their vision (Strain 2009a, Pearson 2011, Wilkins 2014). This had particular consequences for activities conducted by the governor with responsibility for SEN provision. It also supports the view that governor activity to support equitable provision should acknowledge agency by rooting itself within the wider school community.

7.6 Factors that enable and constrain governing boards in achieving their vision for children considered to have SEN

This section addresses Sub-question 5 of the main research question:

‘What factors enable and constrain governing boards in achieving their vision for children considered to have SEN?’

Sub-question 5 sought to explore factors that enabled and constrained governing boards in achieving their vision for children considered to have SEN within the schools. Governors considered that factors which enabled the schools to achieve their vision included: shared values and attitudes to equitable provision for all learners including learners considered to have SEN; allocation of funding to support equity; board reorganisation; an agentive school community; inclusive curriculum provision and pedagogies; developing responses to pressures from beyond their immediate community.

Factors which constrained governing boards in achieving their vision included: barriers to communication; funding pressures and; conflicts between the priorities and policies of the schools and organisations more distant from the school.

Differences between activities were concerned with the emphasis on research-based practice and parent membership of the governing board which were seen as enabling factors in Castlemount, and cultural change in Greenhill. This section begins by examining issues that emerged from governor interviews.

7.6.1 Community systems

Sharing values and attitudes towards equitable provision was consistently reported to be an enabling factor in achieving the vision within each school, supporting
findings by Kose (2011) on the role of values in developing a vision to promote equity. Funding for equitable provision was also viewed as an enabling factor in achieving the vision for SEN provision, which reflected assertions that funding could enable or constrain vision by Block (1987). Governors in both schools reported that reorganisation of their boards had supported them to enact an equitable approach in funding allocation although they had adopted different approaches to achieve this outcome.

In Castlemount, achieving Academy status was seen as a mechanism to increase and control funding for their school to increase staffing levels and development of resources to support the diversity of children’s needs within the school. It had also considered this to be an opportunity to recruit parents to the Board, to support commitment and increase participation from the school community, which affirms the importance of community representation by Ranson (2011). For example, allocation of responsibility for SEN provision to a governor was seen as an enabling factor since the governor brought her personal and professional experience to her role. Consequently, she had worked closely with the SENCO to develop and implement the school’s vision on a range of actions which staff and parents commended (Pearson 2011).

Greenhill was a Maintained School responding to extensive cultural change arising from the appointment of a new Headteacher, reductions in funding, together with staffing, curriculum and pedagogical change. The funding pressures were seen as a constraint on the development of the school’s vision and reorganisation of the Board was reported to be an enabling factor in developing the vision that they had planned. However, the appointment of members based on skills had not addressed participation issues, although training was identified as an enabling factor in addressing this constraint which supports research findings by Heystek (2011).

These findings appeared to indicate that the difference in funding afforded to Academy or Maintained status acted to enable Castlemount and constrain Greenhill in implementing their vision (Block 1987). However, Greenhill had achieved changes from diffuse towards focused aspirations in its relationships, practices, and policies which were supporting the school to respond to this pressure (Rix 2015). The reorganisation of the Governing Boards and the approach that was adopted by each school provides different insights into factors that support and constrain vision.
Castlemount prioritised the recruitment of parents to non-staff roles on their Governing Board over professional skills which rejects the model advocated by James et al (2011) and the DfE (2017a/b). Furthermore, this finding indicated that this school was challenging the pressure to professionalise their Governing Board which they interpreted as a potential constraint (Wilkins 2014). The personal experiences that governors bought to their roles, including the governor with allocated responsibility for SEN, were valued alongside the professional skills that they brought to their roles, as they provided knowledge and understanding of their school community. These elements indicated that non-staff governors’ parent identities influenced them in developing the vision for their school. Furthermore, both schools had drawn on the notion of agency in their vision. However, the prioritisation of agency appeared to be strengthened by parent membership in Castlemount (Heystek 2006).

Identity and agency also had consequences for the vision for children considered to have SEN in both schools. They recognised the potential for stigmatisation and the need to draw on children’s agency in planning learning provision with support agencies. Therefore, the emphasis was on an inclusive vision in Castlemount while a separate but linked vision for SEN had been developed in Greenhill.

This suggests two overarching factors supported the schools to develop their vision. The first was representation of the school community to acknowledge the role of identity, achieve an agentive community and support participation to meet the learning needs of all children (Ranson 2011). Furthermore, prioritising governance capital through skills appeared to be less supportive of visions to achieve equitable support for learning than prioritising relationships between members of the school community, which is consistent with conclusions drawn by Wong (2011).

The second factor was concerned with the notion of a vision for children considered to have SEN. Although Greenhill had developed a separate vision for SEN, this was largely consistent with the main vision for the school. Furthermore, the separate vision was determined by compliance with SEN structures and processes rather than distinct goals. This resulted in tensions for pedagogy and attitudes which were in conflict with the overarching vision for equity and inclusion within the school (Rix 2015). However, allocating responsibility for SEN to a governor was viewed as supportive in achieving vision in both schools (Pearson 2011). Addressing these tensions could be achieved by allocating responsibility for
‘Inclusion’ or ‘Diversity’ rather than SEN. This would also address the anomalies arising from inconsistencies in categories of SEN and its funding, as well as supporting governors to focus on their vision for equity for all children, rather than identification of difference (Ellis and Tod 2012, Rix 2015, Tomlinson 2012).

7.6.2 Community of students

Building on the notion of agency, governors in both schools reported that practices to listen and respond to children’s views enabled their vision, to acknowledge that children are agentive in their learning.

Castlemount had implemented this by drawing on research into strategies that enabled children to provide teachers with feedback on lessons and classroom arrangements. Greenhill had implemented a ‘Rights Respecting’ initiative which was considered to have supported the vision by changing attitudes and practice to acknowledge children’s agency. However, both schools highlighted the role of including children considered to have SEN in planning additional provision. Discussions with children to plan their provision included conversations focused on their interests, their views of their strengths and their ideas on areas of learning where they required support to participate and make progress. Furthermore, children in focus groups were able to identify teaching strategies that teachers used to support behaviour which they found unhelpful, such as ‘traffic lights’. Research by Holland et al (2010) and Wyness (2003, 2005) concluded that adults should be alert to managing children’s contributions and this example may represent such management. Accordingly, the insights they provided highlight the importance of including children’s views on research into vision development.

These findings also supports the presence of boundary objects in interactions within the Community of Provision. Star (2010) asserted that different groups within school communities may collaborate on activity to develop those objects. The approach to embedding children’s views into learning provision had moved across groups to form this ‘object’ and achieve consensus between them. However, the continued presence of strategies that were viewed as unhelpful by children, suggests a need to strengthen the role of children to address this potential constraint upon achieving their vision.
7.6.3 Community staffing

Governors in both schools considered that their vision for children was enabled by teacher attitudes towards responsibility for teaching children considered to have SEN (Rix and Sheehy 2014).

Castlemount considered that access to funding supported their vision because it enabled them to maintain high staffing levels and implement an approach to staff development that was agentive. This approach emphasised staff identifying their own professional needs to support children’s learning within their classroom and addressing these by undertaking research to develop their knowledge and skills.

Greenhill did not have flexibility in securing additional funding to sustain high staffing levels but their vision emphasised teacher attitudes to responsibility for children considered to have SEN as part of a cultural change away from delegating teaching responsibility to TAs. In order to support this change, coaching had replaced the ‘lesson observation’ approach to staff development in Greenhill, leading to individual teachers undertaking research to develop their practice to support children considered to have SEN. Although there was evidence of inconsistency, teacher interviewees argued that positive outcomes for their teaching and learning arose from this less ‘punitive’ approach.

These findings build on research that suggest performative approaches, which undermine agentive activity, are recognised by school staff and governors and affect implementation of practices that support children’s learning (Ranson 2004, Strain 2009a, Wilkins 2014). In contrast, promoting agentive approaches to staff appeared to have positive outcomes for attitudes to responsibility for all children in the school reflecting recommendations that responsive leadership draws on agency (Brewer et al 2020).

7.6.4 Community strategies

Governors in both schools reported that curriculum and pedagogical approaches which supported inclusion enabled the school’s vision for learners considered to have SEN. Castlemount adopted integrated curriculum provision supported by inclusive pedagogies which emerged from their research. In Greenhill, curriculum and pedagogical changes had been introduced that year which emphasised agentive activity through creative learning experiences, mixed ability groupings and choice in learning activities.
Provision of intervention programmes were viewed as enabling the vision for children considered to have SEN in both schools. However, although research was emphasised strongly in Castlemount, research and analysis was viewed as enabling planning and implementing new interventions. This implied that the development of research and analysis was supporting the schools to address the tension between views on the need for a specialist SEN pedagogy and the development of inclusive curricula and pedagogy in the schools (Rix and Sheehy 2014). Furthermore, it suggests that research-informed practice can address misconceptions on SEN pedagogies which had acted as a constraint in Greenhill. This insight into the role of research reflects views expressed by Rix (2015), who suggested that promoting research could support schools to achieve focused practices within their communities.

**7.6.5 Community support**

Governors reported that trust and respect in relationships with parents enabled their vision in each school and influenced the way they involved parents in planning to support children’s learning.

Parents were also seen as enabling working with support agencies in planning provision for children considered to have SEN since they were able to support communication about children’s strengths and interests and act as an advocate. Accordingly, SEN policies in both schools outlined their approach to involving parents in their children’s learning.

However, relationships with organisations that were distant from the school were seen as a constraint in both schools. Governors referred to the DfE as acting as a constraint in achieving the vision for their school. For example, governors in Castlemount referred to the difference in their vision and the vision of the DfE for academy schools which supports observations by Wilkins (2014) on pressures on academy schools. They argued that the vision promoted by the DfE could act to fracture the cohesion of their provision for the community of their school and they had resisted changes they had suggested to them.

Furthermore, there was a conflict in perceptions of the SEN assessment system in both schools. Castlemount emphasised the potential for stigmatisation that arose from identification of children for SEN provision and suggested that this could act as a barrier to children’s progress and inclusion in schools. Greenhill emphasised the need for children to be assessed by external agencies to support access to
Therefore, their difference in status had resulted in different financial pressures which influenced their views on the constraints promulgated by this system. Further influences upon their views emerged from parents who supported the SEN assessment system. While acknowledging that their children preferred being taught in groups with other children they argued that assessment protected support for their child.

Governors in both schools also reported that Ofsted and inspection arrangements had acted as a constraint upon the vision for children considered to have SEN. They argued that these had previously resulted in higher levels of exclusions which they had aimed to address through changes to curriculum, pedagogy, staffing and approaches to behaviour.

Perceptions that organisations more distant from the schools acted as constraints can be understood when the importance of community and agency are acknowledged (Ranson 2011). The central roles of values and relationships in developing vision have consequences for those organisations since the values that they bring may be in competition with those held by school communities and relationships are also more distant. Finally, practices reflect the models that are implemented by different organisations. The literature in Chapter 2 suggests that the model of governance promoted by national government reflects business models implemented through performative practices and judgements on difference (Ball 2007, Strain 2009b, Wilkins 2014, Baxter 2017, Rix 2015). However, the schools in this study sought to promote a model of community representation by drawing on sociocultural understandings to achieve a vision for equity. Addressing these tensions requires acknowledgement of these conflicts.

7.6.6 Community space

Adapting the school space to engage parents and overcome barriers to communication were considered to enable the vision for children considered to have SEN by Governors in both schools. In Castlemount, these spaces had included the development of training rooms to enable parents to access training events on the school site. Greenhill had implemented a programme of extended consultation with children, parents and staff, and develop community events to overcome the barriers to communication which they considered to have been a constraint on developing the vision for the school. Findings by Othman et al (2012) in vision schools in Malaysia, concluded that tolerance between members of a
community was improved by enabling different forms of contact across communities. This finding implies that these events were used to reduce barriers, whether physical or less concrete, across the school by extending contact across the community. However, the historical, social and cultural contexts for each school had consequences for the form of activity and levels of engagement across the school space between its members.

**7.6.7 Summary**

This discussion aimed to provide insight into the factors that enabled and constrained governing boards in achieving their vision for children considered to have SEN. The analysis indicated that values, representation and relationships within the school community were enablers and reflected prioritisation of agency to achieve their vision (Ranson 2011, Strain 2009b, Wong 2011). However, perceptions that organisations more distant from the schools acted as constraints highlighted the tensions between the different models and practices they adopted (Ball 2007, Wilkins 2014). Furthermore, notions and structures supporting the administration of SEN exerted pressures to promote a separate vision for SEN which acted as a constraint upon the vision for equity and inclusion (Rix 2015). Practices to support and develop an agentive community were enabling schools to address that constraint.
Chapter 8 – Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 presents the conclusions from this study, and considers the contributions it has made to understanding the role of primary school governing boards, in developing and implementing a vision for children considered to have SEN.

It explores theoretical and methodological issues and contributions, implications for practice and professional development, and suggestions for future research, which draw on the outcomes of the conclusions offered in this chapter.

A key contribution is the finding that the Community of Provision provides a framework to analyse and evaluate the activity of governing boards and for them to develop practice which is relevant to their social, cultural and historical context (Ranson 2011, Rix 2015).

8.2 Contributions to theory

In Chapter 2, I argued that government policy in England promoted a skills-based model of school governing which drew on social capital (James et al 2011). The prioritisation of social capital also reflected the integration of business principles of ‘efficiency and effectiveness’ into the membership, roles and responsibilities of governing boards (Connolly and James 2011, p. 503). However, research identified in the literature review demonstrated that notions of social capital act to undermine representation from diverse groups within school communities, when applied to arrangements for their governing boards (Balarin 2014, Heystek 2011, Ranson 2011). Furthermore, performative practices which were implemented to embed this approach to school leadership have had negative consequences for governing boards and members of school communities including children and parents (Wilkins 2014, Ranson 2011). Therefore, the theoretical foundations which underpin current guidance in England can act to undermine governing boards’ responsibilities for vision and children considered to have SEN, as it constrains their ability to take account of their context (Brewer et al 2020).

The framework of the Community of Provision provided an opportunity to contribute to theory and address some of the limitations of the dominant model, by drawing on sociocultural theory which is relevant to educational contexts
(Vygotsky 1978, Gallucci 2007, Brewer et al 2020). Figure 1 and 2 show images of connections between perspectives within the Community of Provision as diffuse or focused (Rix 2015). Analysing and evaluating connections between the views and activities of members of governing boards with other members of their Community of Provision suggested a further addition to this theoretical framework.

The findings from this study captured the dynamic interaction of perspectives within the Community of Provision. It revealed changes in diffuse and focused connections between groups within schools through their relationships, practices and provision, as they developed and implemented their visions and experienced enabling and constraining factors. Therefore, I have proposed that in addition to evaluating connections as diffuse or focused, they can be understood as moving between these orientations. Dynamic movement within the perspectives is represented in Figure 3. This addition acknowledges the influence of social, cultural and historical factors upon schools and is able to represent movement within and between schools.

Castlemount was represented as a focused Community of Provision when the data was collected due to a range of factors including historical opportunities to develop relationships and practices that supported its vision for the school. Greenhill was represented as moving from diffuse to focused as a result of extensive change during the year when the data was collected.

The impact of organisations and systems more distant from the school was also captured in Greenhill because at that point in time, the practices and policies these required, acted to constrain their orientation towards a focused Community of Provision. Accordingly, this affected their ability to develop and implement their vision since relationships were more distant and the values of external agencies conflicted with the vision of the Governing Board. These social and cultural influences had consequences for moving towards a focused community, since relationships and values were viewed as central to achieving the school’s aspirations to a vision to achieve equitable provision (Kose 2011, Blandford 2012).

The notion of boundary objects to analyse activity connected with vision represented a further theoretical contribution to the Community of Provision. In her description of boundary objects Star proposed ‘groups that are cooperating without consensus tack back and forth between both forms of the object’ (Star 2010, p. 605). The findings from this study suggest that members of governing boards
engage with boundary objects within the Community of Provision as they enact vision. Star (2010) also suggested that boundary objects may be abstract, e.g. values, or material, e.g. policies. In this study, engagement with abstract and material boundary objects contributed to orientation towards focused or diffuse practices, services, policies and relationships as they afforded opportunities for collaboration. Furthermore, the impact of organisations and systems more distant from the school can be seen in the development of a separate vision for SEN within Greenhill. There were limited opportunities to cooperate consensually with the SEN system which was in conflict with the vision for the school. Therefore, governors were managing different forms of boundary objects, some of which were in tension with their vision, which undermined the ability to orientate towards a focused community.

The notion of agency in this study was also connected with diffuse of focused connections within schools. Both schools prioritised agentive activity for all groups within their school community to support participation in developing and implementing the vision of their schools. The role of agency suggested that a characteristic of schools that achieved focused interaction could be conceptualised as ‘agentive communities’. However, tensions emerged in prioritising agency for children who were considered to have SEN, as a result of conflicts in views on support between children, parents, teachers and support services. Accordingly, the process of SEN assessment, identification and support constrained the vision of the Governing Boards in both schools to become agentive learning communities. Furthermore, the influence of SEN systems created tensions between visions for equity and inclusion.

Therefore, this study offers four contributions to theory:

- Analysing and evaluating school governor responsibilities for vision and children considered to have SEN through a conceptual framework which drew on sociocultural theory;
- Adding to the Community of Provision to capture dynamic changes in diffuse and focused connections between governing boards and other members of school communities as they work on vision;
- Developing the concept of boundary objects and identification of abstract or material objects that governors work with to develop and implement vision;
• Conceptualising an ‘agentive community’ to represent the role of agency in vision and capture an aspect of movement across and between community perspectives for schools aspiring to a vision of equitable learning.

8.3 Methodological issues – further research questions

This study aimed to respond to the need for research in school governance upon areas affected by changes to national policy and guidance, and address the challenges that governors experienced in implementing changes (Pearson 2011, Ranson 2011, Wilkins 2014).

I adopted the Community of Provision because this framework addressed the context and complexities of school communities (Rix 2015). Furthermore, a comparative case study supported exploration of the focus of this study as it had provided insights into continuities and differences between schools in related areas of research (Wyness 2010, Rix et al 2013).

The need to reflect interactions between perspectives within the Community of Provision required an extensive range of data methods which resulted in a substantial data set. Thematic Analysis provided a strategy to manage this quantity of data (Clarke and Braun 2006). Furthermore, the strategy supported the achievement of trustworthiness and honesty in analysing the findings (Guba and Lincoln 1994). However, conducting focus groups with children and parents on the school site presented ethical considerations, particularly since TAs were present in the focus groups. This suggested that further consideration should be given to methods and approaches that enable rather than manage children’s and parents’ voices in research which examines engagement between governors, parents and children (Holland et al 2010, Ng 2013).

Data analysis also suggested further research questions which could not be addressed in this study. Examples included questions to:

• Investigate governors enactment of vision development and implementation, including responsibilities for SEN, in a wider range of school settings including special schools;

• Explore arrangements for representing diverse school communities on governing boards, particularly representation by parents;
• Explore the experiences of parents and children in engaging with agentive activity to develop vision within their schools;

• Investigate the way that governors engage with research to develop vision to achieve equitable provision with a specific focus, e.g. professional development and staff;

• Examine governor engagement with services connected to SEN provision, advisory services or other organisations more distant from the school to support and implement vision;

• Review a wider range of documents to investigate connections between governor activity on vision and SEN across school provision.

8.4 Methodological contributions

The literature review suggested that there was limited research into the enactment of responsibilities for vision and SEN by governing boards in primary schools. This study offered methodological contributions in addressing developments in this area.

Applying the Community of Provision to analyse and evaluate connections between the views and activities of members of the Governing Board in each school, with other members of their Community of Provision, afforded insights into the complex influence of context. It also addressed the recommendation by Brewer et al (2019), who argued that there was limited exploration of leadership practices that draw on agency in context. Furthermore, in adopting this methodological approach the study addressed Pearson’s recommendation that future research should explore the views of governors with responsibility for SEN on their activities and engagement within schools (Pearson 2011).

Finally, this research supported Ranson’s assertions that governing boards need to be able to acknowledge the social and cultural context of their communities, and that membership should represent the diversity of school communities (Ranson 2011). Accordingly, adopting this methodology provided a challenge to skills-based models of governing board membership (James et al 2011).

8.5 Implications for policy
Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis highlight the complex and rapid changes to policy for school governing boards internationally and nationally (Balarin 2014, Ranson 2011, Wilkins 2014). Therefore, findings from this thesis have consequences for debates on policy borrowing, neo-liberal reform and performative practices (Ball 2007, Connolly and James 2011, Wilkins 2015).

Further guidance on the roles and responsibilities of governing boards has been published in England since this study was completed (DfE 2019). It is interesting to note that this guidance suggests that it emphasises parental engagement and that boards should ‘listen, understand and respond to the voices of parents/carers, pupils, staff, local communities’ (DfE 2019, p. 10). This implied that policy responded to research that concluded that governing boards should be representative of their communities (Ranson 2011). However, it goes on to suggest that engaging with parents does not equate with representation. Furthermore, it strengthens the emphasis on governors’ skills including levels of literacy and numeracy which contradicts findings by Heystek (2006, 2011).

Therefore, this study has four key implications for policy.

- The usefulness of the skills model was disputed by the findings in this study since it undermined the development and implementation of vision in Greenhill;

- Findings from Castlemount suggested that parent representation on governing boards supported schools to understand the needs of their community and act to develop and implement a vision to support all children;

- Conflicts between the priorities and policies of the schools and organisations more distant from the school acted to constrain governing boards;

- Finally, while the allocation of responsibility for SEN provision to a governor was seen as an enabling factor it was in conflict with the schools’ vision for equitable support and inclusive practice.

These findings suggest that policy which supports governing boards to be agentive in representing and supporting participation from their school communities will enable boards to develop and achieve a vision that is responsive to their contexts.
8.6 Implications for practice and professional development

The findings from this study suggest that the Community of Provision provides a framework to analyse and evaluate activity and connections across the school community. The framework could be adapted to support governors to develop practice across the range of their responsibilities. It has particular relevance for values and vision, inclusion, and embedding engagement to develop agentive and participatory practices within schools.

Further implications for practice and professional development by Governing Boards include:

- Developing flexibility in board membership to support responsiveness to changes within the school community;
- Undertaking research with staff to support development of school provision;
- Reviewing opportunities for parents and children to develop vision within their schools;
- Embedding agentive activity for all groups within school communities on key policies including SEN, teaching and learning, professional development and listening and responding to the voices of children, parents and staff.

8.7 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to contribute to theory and knowledge on implementation of the responsibilities of governing boards for vision and SEN. It concluded that the framework of the Community of Provision supported analysis and evaluation of governor practice in these areas in the context of the schools in this study.

The vision in both schools was focused on achieving equity supported by participation and voice. However, their aspirations were undermined by aspects of relationships and practice, particularly when responding to change or engagement with organisations more distant from them. This study concludes that drawing on notions of agency, and enabling agentive activity across their Community of Provision, can support governing boards to address those inconsistencies and achieve the visions to which they aspire.
References


*Education Act 1944* (8 Geo. 6, c. 31).


Appendices

Appendix 1 – Governing Boards’ responsibilities for children with SEN

‘[Governing Boards] must:

• co-operate with the LA in reviewing the provision that is available locally and developing the local offer;

• use their best endeavours to make sure that a child with SEND [Special Educational Needs or Disability] gets the support they need – this means doing everything they can to meet children and young people’s SEND;

• ensure that children and young people with SEND engage in the activities of the school alongside pupils who do not have SEND;

• inform parents when they are making special educational provision for a child;

• ensure that arrangements are in place in schools to support pupils at school with medical conditions;

• provide access to a broad and balanced curriculum;

• ensure that pupils from Year 8 until Year 13 are provided with independent careers advice;

• have a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEND;

• provide an annual report for parents on their child’s progress;

• record accurately and keep up to date the provision made for pupils with SEND;

• publish information on their websites about the implementation of the board’s policy for pupils with SEND, the School SEN Information Report;

• publish information about the arrangements for the admission of disabled children, the steps taken to prevent disabled children being treated less favourably than others, the facilities provided to assist access of disabled children, and their accessibility plans;
• ensure that there is a qualified teacher designated as special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) for the school;

• determine their approach to using their resources to support the progress of pupils with SEND.’

(DfE 2017a, pp. 69-70).
Appendix 2 – Pilot study interview guide

Interview Guide for ‘Developing a collective vision of inclusion provision in Primary Schools: the role of the Governing Body in supporting participation for learners with Special Educational Needs’

Introduction

Introduce myself. Thank participant for volunteering to talk to me. Review main themes of the research and arrangements to ensure ethical considerations are observed including confidentiality and consent. Reminder of rights as a participant and right to ongoing informed consent until the point of transcription. Provide information about recording of interview. Identify number of questions, areas covered by questions and the length of time that the interview may take. Ask if the participant has any additional questions, is comfortable, has any other needs that I need to take into account and if they are happy to proceed with the interview. If yes, need to complete and sign the consent form before the interview begins. Reassure that if there are any questions that are not understood they can ask me to repeat or clarify.

Participant Information

Name:
School:
Role as Governor (Chair, Committee Chair, etc):
Length of time in role:

Warm-up questions

1. What was your experience of primary schools before you became a school governor?

2. Why did you become interested in becoming a school governor?

3. How did you become a governor in this school?

4. Have you been on any training courses since you became a school governor?

Main Body questions

5. What is your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a member of the Governing Body in a Primary School?

6. Developing vision has been described as a responsibility of school governors. What does the idea of vision mean to you?

7. How would you describe the vision for education in this school?

8. In what ways does your role as a member of the governing body allow you to contribute to that vision?

9. What does the term Special Educational Needs mean to you?
10. Can you tell me about your understanding of the vision of the school in relation to inclusion of learners with SEN?

11. What activities are you involved in that support provision for learners with SEN?

   (Prompts to explore areas of activity in relation to school plans, policy development, use of funding including the Pupil Premium, staffing arrangements, reporting arrangements)

12. How do you work with school leaders to find out about the quality of support for learners with SEN?

13. How do you think that you have contributed to developing the vision of the school in this area of provision?

14. Do you think that everybody on the GB has the same vision?

15. Could you describe the similarities and differences?

16. How are differences between the ideas of different members resolved when they occur?

17. Who do you include in your discussions of developing provision to support learners with SEN and how?

18. Can you tell me about your understanding of inclusion?

   (Prompts include diverse learning needs, arrangements for support, culture, training for staff)

19. What, in your view, is the vision for inclusion in the school?

20. How do you think that you have contributed to developing the vision of the school in this area?

   (Prompts include areas of activity in relation to school plans, policy development, use of funding including the Pupil Premium, staffing arrangements, reporting arrangements and asking about any changes in relation to understanding of inclusion since they became a school governor?)

21. What do you feel have been the challenges to developing and implementing a vision that supports inclusive provision for learners with SEN as a School? As a Governor?

   (Prompts include time, funding, government policy or guidance, engaging with the wider school community)

22. What has supported you and your colleagues to develop and implement the vision here?
Cool Down

23. Could you tell me about activities that you have been involved in where you feel you have made a positive change since you became a governor?

24. How would you like to develop this in the future?

25. Is there anything else you would like to add?

26. Do you have any comments about the questions you have been asked?

Thank interviewee for participating in the interview. Remind about right to withdraw consent up to the date when their interview is transcribed. If they have any further questions they can contact me on… I will contact them when the report is available to ensure that they have access to copies.
Appendix 3 – Ethics (information and consent)

A3.1 Pilot study

A3.1.1 Information letter for Chair of Governing Body

NAME AND ADDRESS

Developing a collective vision of inclusive provision in Primary Schools: the role of the Governing Body in supporting participation for learners with Special Education Needs

Information for Chair of Governing Body

Dear CHAIR OF GOVERNING BODY NAME,

My name is Kim Walker and I am a researcher affiliated with The Open University. I am carrying out research into the way that Governing Bodies in mainstream primary schools develop an inclusive vision for supporting learners with Special Educational Needs as part of their role. The project is being supervised by Dr Michael Strain and Professor Jonathan Rix of The Open University. From this research I hope that insight will be gained into:

How members of Governing Bodies in Primary Schools develop and implement a collective vision that supports inclusive provision for learners with SEN.

It will develop this insight by exploring:

- Activities that are undertaken by Governors to implement an inclusive vision of provision for learners with SEN;
- How these activities interact with other aspects of school activity to support provision;
- The meaning of vision for members of the Governing Body;
- How inclusion and SEN are defined by members of Governing Bodies in these contexts and;
- The factors which support and constrain achievement of the vision.

This research aims to contribute to knowledge, policy and practice in primary education by building on our understanding of the leadership activity of Governor as they carry out their roles in the area of inclusion and provision for learners with SEN. The National Governors Association has also asked for further research in this area to encourage the development of policy and practice that supports Governing Bodies to carry out their roles.

If you are happy for your school to participate in the study I hope to carry out interviews with members of the Governing Body in your school. I also hope to carry out a review of some school documents which have been published by you relating to the activity of your Governing Body in this area. The interviews with the Governors would last for approximately 40 minutes and I will ask them questions about:

- The length of time they have been a Governor and their role on the Governing Body;
• Any training or experience they have had relating to their role;
• Their understanding of their role and how this relates to inclusion and provision for learners with SEN;
• Their understanding of vision and how this relates to their Governor responsibilities;
• Activities that they have engaged in to support learners with SEN in the school such as contributing to policy development, school plans, data analysis and decisions on school funding;
• Their views on aspects that support them in their role and responsibilities for learners with SEN and aspects that do not support them.

I will also be seeking the appropriate permission from the Headteacher and individual members of the Governing Body before any research activity is undertaken.

Interviews will initially be recorded as I have a hearing impairment and will need to record interviews for accuracy as well as ensuring that I do not mishear participant comments. Information collected from all participants will be kept anonymous and stored securely. Only myself and the project supervisors will have access to the data. If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of your school or individual governors will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. Your school's involvement is voluntary and you may withdraw permission at any time during the project.

The research will adhere to BERA’s Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011), and the Data Protection Act (1998). The research will also follow the Open University policy documents: ‘Ethical Principles for Research Involving Human Participants’ and ‘The Code of Practice for Research and Those Conducting Research’.

When the research is complete I will share findings with the participants through a presentation and report of the findings in an accessible format. Each participant will also be informed of the publication of any final reports and given free access to those reports.

I should very much like to speak further with you to explain more about this project if you could suggest a suitable date and time.

Please contact me at: Address: KimWalker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.
Email: kim.walker@open.ac.uk Telephone: 0207 435 6258.

Yours sincerely

Kim Walker
Lecturer, Education (Primary) and EdD student
The Open University
Dear Headteacher

My name is Kim Walker and I am a researcher affiliated with The Open University. I am carrying out research into the way that Governing Bodies in mainstream primary schools develop an inclusive vision for supporting learners with Special Educational Needs as part of their role. The project is being supervised by Dr Michael Strain and Professor Jonathan Rix of The Open University. From this research I hope that insight will be gained into:

How members of Governing Bodies in Primary Schools develop and implement a collective vision that supports inclusive provision for learners with SEN.

I hope that it will develop this insight by exploring:

- Activities that are undertaken by Governors to implement an inclusive vision of provision for learners with SEN;
- How these activities interact with other aspects of school activity to support provision;
- The meaning of vision for members of the Governing Body;
- How inclusion and SEN are defined by members of Governing Bodies in these contexts and;
- The factors which support and constrain achievement of the vision.

This research aims to contribute to knowledge, policy and practice in primary education by building on our understanding of the leadership activity of Governor as they carry out their roles in the area of inclusion and provision for learners with SEN. The National Governors Association has also asked for further research in this area to encourage the development of policy and practice that supports Governing Bodies to carry out their roles.

If you are happy for your school to participate in the study I hope to carry out interviews with members of the Governing Body in your school. I also hope to carry out a review of some school documents which have been published by you relating to the activity of your Governing Body in this area. The interviews with the Governors would last for approximately 40 minutes and I will ask them questions about:

- The length of time they have been a Governor and their role on the Governing Body;
- Any training or experience they have had relating to their role;
- Their understanding of their role and how this relates to inclusion and provision for learners with SEN;
- Their understanding of vision and how this relates to their Governor responsibilities;
Activities that they have engaged in to support learners with SEN in the school such as contributing to policy development, school plans, data analysis and decisions on school funding;

Their views on aspects that support them in their role and responsibilities for learners with SEN and aspects that do not support them.

I will also be seeking the appropriate permission from the Chair of the Governing Body for your school and individual members of the Governing Body before any research activity is undertaken.

Interviews will initially be recorded as I have a hearing impairment and will need to record interviews for accuracy as well as ensuring that I do not mishear participant comments. Information collected from all participants will be kept anonymous and stored securely. Only myself and the project supervisors will have access to the data. If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of your school or individual governors will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. Your school's involvement is voluntary and you may withdraw permission at any time during the project.

The research will adhere to BERA's Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011), and the Data Protection Act (1998). The research will also follow the Open University policy documents: ‘Ethical Principles for Research Involving Human Participants’ and ‘The Code of Practice for Research and Those Conducting Research’.

When the research is complete I will share findings with the participants through a presentation and report of the findings in an accessible format. Each participant will also be informed of the publication of any final reports and given free access to those reports.

I should very much like to speak further with you to explain more about this project if you could suggest a suitable date and time.

Please contact me at:

Address: KimWalker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.
Email: kim.walker@open.ac.uk Telephone: 0207 435 6258.

Yours sincerely

Kim Walker
Lecturer, Education (Primary) and EdD student
The Open University
Dear Governor

My name is Kim Walker and I am a researcher affiliated with The Open University. I am carrying out research into the way that Governing Bodies in mainstream primary schools develop an inclusive vision for supporting learners with Special Educational Needs as part of their role. The project is being supervised by Dr Michael Strain and Professor Jonathan Rix of The Open University.

What is the aim of this research?

From this research I hope that insight will be gained into:

How members of Governing Bodies in Primary Schools develop and implement a collective vision that supports inclusive provision for learners with SEN.

I hope that it will develop this insight by exploring:

- Activities that are undertaken by Governors to implement an inclusive vision of provision for learners with SEN;
- How these activities interact with other aspects of school activity to support provision;
- The meaning of vision for members of the Governing Body;
- How inclusion and SEN are defined by members of Governing Bodies in these contexts and;
- The factors which support and constrain achievement of their vision.

This research also aims to contribute to knowledge, policy and practice in primary education by building on our understanding of the leadership activity of Governors as they carry out their roles in the area of inclusion and provision for learners with SEN. The National Governors Association has also asked for further research in this area to encourage the development of policy and practice that supports Governing Bodies to carry out their roles.

What is involved?

If you are happy to participate in the study I hope to carry out an interview with you as a member of the Governing Body in your school. The interview would last for approximately 40 minutes and take place at the end of January 2016. The interview will be recorded so that I can be sure that I remember everything that you tell me correctly. I will work around you to arrange a time which is convenient to you for this interview.
What will I be asked?
I will ask questions about:

- The length of time you have been a Governor and your role on the Governing Body;
- Any training or experience you have had relating to your role;
- Your understanding of your role and how this relates to inclusion and provision for learners with SEN;
- Your understanding of the idea of vision and how this relates to your Governor responsibilities;
- Activities that you have taken part in to support learners with SEN in the school such as contributing to policy development, school plans, data analysis and decisions on school funding;
- Your views on aspects that support you in your role and responsibilities for learners with SEN and aspects that do not support you.

I have also sought permission from the Headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body for your school before contacting you.

Do I have to take part?
Your involvement is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your permission at any time during the project. Even if you say yes to at the beginning of the research you are free to withdraw at any time just by saying so.

Is it confidential?
Everything that you tell me will be in confidence. Only myself and the project supervisors will have access to the data. Information collected from you will be kept anonymous and stored securely. If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of your school or any individual will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. When the research is complete I will share findings with you through a presentation and report of the findings in an accessible format. You will also be informed of the publication of any final reports and given free access to those reports.

My responsibilities to you:

- I carry photographic identification to ensure your safety.
- I will ensure your privacy as your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Your contribution will be used for research purposes only. Nobody will be individually identified in the final report.
- I respect your wishes as participation in the study is voluntary and you are not obliged to answer any questions you do not wish to and you can say you wish to stop being part of the research at any time.
- If there is anything about the research that does not make sense or seems difficult I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at any point.
- This research project has been approved by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee.

What happens now?
I will contact you again soon to ask for your consent to take part in the research and to arrange an appointment to come and see you.

In the meantime, if you have any queries at all about the study, please contact me at:
Address: Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.
Email: kim.walker@open.ac.uk Telephone: 0207 435 6258

Yours sincerely

Kim Walker
Lecturer, Education (Primary) and EdD student
The Open University
A3.1.4  Consent forms for governors (participants)

Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Developing a collective vision of inclusive provision in Primary Schools: the role of the Governing Body in supporting participation for learners with Special Education Needs

Consent form for participants

Name of participant:

Name of principal investigator: Kim Walker

1. The details of the project have been explained to me and I have been provided with a written information sheet to keep.

2. I understand that my participation will involve an interview and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the information sheet.

3. I acknowledge that:

   (a) The possible effects of participating in this research have been explained clearly;

   (b) I am free to withdraw and to request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from me until my interview is anonymised at the point of transcription on February 20th 2016;

   (c) The project is for the purpose of research;

   (d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements and compliance with school policies on safeguarding;

   (e) I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored on an OU secure server. All data relating to this study will be destroyed once the analysis is complete;

   (f) If necessary any data from me will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research and the name of my school will be referred to by a pseudonym;
(g) I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be sent to me when the research is completed.

4. If I have any further questions I can contact the researcher, Kim Walker, for further information on 0207 435 6258 or at kim.walker@open.ac.uk. I can also contact Dr Michael Strain at dmstrain@gmail.com if I would like independent advice about this research.

If you are willing to take part in this research project please tick the box, complete the details below and return the signed form.

I freely give my consent to take part in this research, and I give my permission for the interview to be recorded and the data collected to be used in an anonymous form in any written reports, presentations and published papers relating to this study. My written consent will be sought separately before any identifiable data are used in such dissemination.

Participant signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Please return completed form to: Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA or attach it and send it by email to kim.walker@open.ac.uk
A3.2 Main study

A3.2.1 Invitation/information letter for Chair of Governing Body

Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Exploring the role of Primary School Governing Boards in developing and implementing a ‘vision’ for Special Educational Needs

Information for Chair of Governing Board

Dear Chair

My name is Kim Walker and I am carrying out research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an EdD at The Open University. The research aims to explore the way that Governing Boards in mainstream primary schools develop a vision for supporting learners with Special Educational Needs as part of their role. The project is being supervised by Dr Michael Strain and Professor Jonathan Rix of The Open University. From this research I hope that insight will be gained into:

How Governing Boards in Primary Schools develop and implement ‘vision’ in relation to children considered to have a Special Educational Need (SEN)?

I hope that it will develop this insight by exploring:

- The meaning of vision for members of the Governing Board?
- How the vision for SEN is understood by members of the Governing Board?
- How Governors develop a vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What activities Governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision?
- Which aspects of the vision do members of the school community identify as most valuable?

This research aims to contribute to knowledge, policy and practice in primary education by building on our understanding of the leadership activity of Governors as they carry out their responsibilities in provision for learners with SEN. The National Governors Association has also asked for further research in this area to encourage the development of policy and practice that supports Governing Bodies to carry out their roles.
If you are interested in participating in the study I hope to conduct the research by using the following methods:

- Semi-structured face to face interviews with governors and staff;
- 1 focus group discussion with parents for approximately 1 hour;
- 1 focus group discussion with children for approximately 30 minutes (with an appropriate member of staff present);
- Unstructured observations of 1 governor meeting;
- Unstructured observations of 2 teaching sessions for 20 minutes each;
- A documentary review of relevant school policies or documents related to the activity of the Governing Board and SEN.

I have contacted the Headteacher at your school about this research. If you are both happy for your school to participate in this study I would like to ask you if you are willing to distribute information and consent forms to Governors so that they can decide if they wish to take part. This will need to take place at least two weeks before any research activity is undertaken.

I have provided some information about what is involved in the different methods below.

**Interviews**

The interviews with the Governors and Staff would last for approximately 40 minutes and I will ask them questions about:

- The length of time they have been in their role and any role they have on the Governing Board;
- Their understanding of the school vision and how this relates to Governor responsibilities;
- How they develop a vision for learners considered to have a SEN;
- Activities that they have engaged in to support learners with SEN in the school such as contributing to policy development, school plans, data analysis and decisions on school funding;
- Their views on aspects that support them in their role and responsibilities for learners with SEN and aspects that do not support them;
- Their views on the aspects of the vision that they consider to be the most valuable.

**Focus group discussions**

I will ask parents and children about:

Who helps them/their child with their learning?;

How do they help them/their child?;

What they like about the way they/their child learns at school?;

What would they like to change about the way they/their child learns at school?.

**Observations**

I will listen to discussions in the meeting/classroom

I will observe how children are supported in the classroom.
No information relating to confidential records for individual children will be requested.

Interviews and focus groups will initially be recorded as I have a hearing impairment and will need to record interviews for accuracy as well as ensuring that I do not mishear participant comments. Information collected from all participants including notes from observations will be kept anonymous and stored securely. Only myself and the project supervisors will have access to the data.

If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of your school or individuals will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. Your school’s involvement is voluntary and you may withdraw permission before narratives are anonymised and transcribed on 15th August 2017.

The research will adhere to BERA’s Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011), and the Data Protection Act (1998). The research will also follow the Open University policy documents: ‘Ethical Principles for Research Involving Human Participants’ and ‘The Code of Practice for Research and Those Conducting Research’.

When the research is complete I will share findings with the participants through a presentation and report of the findings in an accessible format. Each participant will also be informed of the publication of any final reports and given free access to those reports.

If you have any further questions about this project I would be happy to discuss it at a convenient date and time.

You can contact me at:

**Address:** Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 2, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

**Email:** kim.walker@open.ac.uk **Telephone:** 0207 435 6258

If you would like independent advice about this research you can also contact Professor Jonathan Rix at jonathan.rix@open.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

---

Kim Walker
Lecturer, Education (Primary) and EdD student
The Open University
A3.2.2 Invitation/information letter for Headteacher

Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Exploring the role of Primary School Governing Boards in developing and implementing a ‘vision’ for Special Educational Needs

Information for Headteacher

Dear Headteacher

My name is Kim Walker and I am carrying out research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an EdD at The Open University. The research aims to explore the way that Governing Boards in mainstream primary schools develop a vision for supporting learners with Special Educational Needs as part of their role. The project is being supervised by Dr Michael Strain and Professor Jonathan Rix of The Open University. From this research I hope that insight will be gained into:

How Governing Boards in Primary Schools develop and implement ‘vision’ in relation to children considered to have a Special Educational Need (SEN)?

I hope that it will develop this insight by exploring:

- The meaning of vision for members of the Governing Board?
- How the vision for SEN is understood by members of the Governing Board?
- How Governors develop a vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What activities Governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision?
- Which aspects of the vision do members of the school community identify as most valuable?

This research aims to contribute to knowledge, policy and practice in primary education by building on our understanding of the leadership activity of Governors as they carry out their responsibilities in provision for learners with SEN. The National Governors Association has also asked for further research in this area to encourage the development of policy and practice that supports Governing Bodies to carry out their roles.

If you are interested in participating in the study I hope to conduct the research by using the following methods:

- Semi-structured face to face interviews with governors and staff;
- 1 focus group discussion with parents for approximately 1 hour;
- 1 focus group discussion with children for approximately 30 minutes (with an appropriate member of staff present);
• Unstructured observations of 1 governor meeting;
• Unstructured observations of 2 teaching sessions for 20 minutes each;
• A documentary review of relevant school policies or documents related to the activity of the Governing Board and SEN.

I will seek your permission to approach school staff, parents and children to participate in these activities including the best way to distribute information and consent forms. I will also contact the Chair of the Governing Board at your school to ask if they would be willing to distribute information and consent forms to Governors so that they can decide if they wish to take part. This will need to take place at least two weeks before any research activity is undertaken.

I have provided some information about what is involved in the different methods below.

**Interviews**

The interviews with the Governors and Staff would last for approximately 40 minutes and I will ask them questions about:

• The length of time they have been in their role and any role they have on the Governing Board;
• Their understanding of the school vision and how this relates to Governor responsibilities;
• How they develop a vision for learners considered to have a SEN;
• Activities that they have engaged in to support learners with SEN in the school such as contributing to policy development, school plans, data analysis and decisions on school funding;
• Their views on aspects that support them in their role and responsibilities for learners with SEN and aspects that do not support them;
• Their views on the aspects of the vision that they consider to be the most valuable.

**Focus group discussions**

I will ask parents and children about:

Who helps them/their child with their learning?;

How do they help them/their child?;

What they like about the way they/their child learns at school?;

What would they like to change about the way they/their child learns at school?.

**Observations**

I will listen to discussions in the meeting/classroom

I will observe how children are supported in the classroom.

No information relating to confidential records for individual children will be requested.

Interviews and focus groups will initially be recorded as I have a hearing impairment and will need to record interviews for accuracy as well as ensuring that I do not mishear participant comments. Information collected from all participants including notes from
observations will be kept anonymous and stored securely. Only myself and the project supervisors will have access to the data.

If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of your school or individuals will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. Your school’s involvement is voluntary and you may withdraw permission before narratives are anonymised and transcribed on 15th August 2017.

The research will adhere to BERA’s Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011), and the Data Protection Act (1998). The research will also follow the Open University policy documents: ‘Ethical Principles for Research Involving Human Participants’ and ‘The Code of Practice for Research and Those Conducting Research’.

When the research is complete I will share findings with the participants through a presentation and report of the findings in an accessible format. Each participant will also be informed of the publication of any final reports and given free access to those reports.

If you have any further questions about this project I would be happy to discuss it at a convenient date and time.

You can contact me at:

**Address:** Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 2, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

**Email:** kim.walker@open.ac.uk **Telephone:** 0207 435 6258

If you would like independent advice about this research you can also contact Professor Jonathan Rix at jonathan.rix@open.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

Kim Walker
Lecturer, Education (Primary) and EdD student
The Open University
Information letter for governors

Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Exploring the role of Primary School Governing Boards in developing and implementing a ‘vision’ for Special Educational Needs

Information about this research project

Dear Governor

My name is Kim Walker and I am carrying out research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an EdD at The Open University. The research aims to explore the way that Governing Boards in mainstream primary schools develop a vision for supporting learners with Special Educational Needs as part of their role. The project is being supervised by Dr Michael Strain and Professor Jonathan Rix of The Open University.

What is the aim of this research?

From this research I hope that insight will be gained into:

How Governing Boards in Primary Schools develop and implement ‘vision’ in relation to children considered to have a Special Educational Need (SEN)?

I hope that it will develop this insight by exploring:

- The meaning of vision for members of the Governing Board?
- How the vision for SEN is understood by members of the Governing Board?
- How Governors develop a vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What activities Governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision?
- Which aspects of the vision do members of the school community identify as most valuable?

This research also aims to contribute to knowledge, policy and practice in primary education by building on our understanding of the leadership activity of Governors as they carry out their roles in provision for learners with SEN. The National Governors Association has also asked for further research in this area to encourage the development of policy and practice that supports Governing Board to carry out their roles.
What is involved?

If you are happy to participate in the study I hope to carry out an interview with you as a member of the Governing Board in your school. The interview would last for approximately 40 minutes and take place on the school site in February 2017. The interview will be recorded so that I can be sure that I remember everything that you tell me correctly. I will work around you to arrange a time which is convenient to you for this interview. I will also observe a meeting of your Governing Board for approximately one hour.

Interviews - What questions will I be asked?

I will ask questions about:

- The length of time you have been in your role and any role you have on the Governing Board;
- Your understanding of the school vision and how this relates to Governor responsibilities;
- How the vision for learners considered to have SEN is developed in the school;
- Activities that you have engaged in to support learners with SEN in the school such as contributing to policy development, school plans, data analysis and decisions on school funding;
- Your views on aspects that support you in your role and responsibilities for learners with SEN and aspects that do not support them;
- Your views on areas of the vision that you consider to be the most valuable.

I have also sought permission from the Headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body for your school before contacting you.

Observations

I will listen to a discussion in a governing board meeting for approximately one hour.

I will take notes which will be anonymised.

No information relating to confidential records for individual children will be requested.

Is it voluntary?

Your involvement is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your permission at any time before the narratives are anonymised and transcribed on 15th August 2017. Even if you say yes to at the beginning of the research you are free to withdraw at any time just by saying so until your interview transcript is anonymised.

Is it confidential?

Your identity and the identity of your school will be anonymised to support confidentiality. Only myself and the project supervisors will have access to the data. Information collected from you will be kept anonymous and stored securely. If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of your school or any individual will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. When the research is complete I will share findings with you through a presentation and report of the findings in an accessible format. You will also be informed of the publication of any final reports and given free access to those reports.
Confidentiality and disclosure of sensitive information

I will comply with school policies on confidentiality and safeguarding in the event of disclosures of sensitive information during research activity.

My responsibilities to you:

- I carry photographic identification to ensure your safety.
- I will ensure your privacy as your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Your contribution will be used for research purposes only. Nobody will be individually identified in the final report.
- I respect your wishes as participation in the study is voluntary and you are not obliged to answer any questions you do not wish to and you can say you wish to stop being part of the research at any time.
- If there is anything about the research that does not make sense or seems difficult I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at any point.
- This research project has been approved by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee.

What happens now?

I will contact you again soon to ask for your consent to take part in the research and to arrange an appointment to come and see you.

In the meantime, if you have any queries at all about the study, please contact me at:

Address: Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 2, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

Email: kim.walker@open.ac.uk Telephone: 0207 435 6258

If you would like independent advice about this research you can also contact Professor Jonathan Rix at jonathan.rix@open.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Kim Walker
Lecturer, Education (Primary) and EdD student
The Open University
Information letter for teaching staff

Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Exploring the role of Primary School Governing Boards in developing and implementing a ‘vision’ for Special Educational Needs

Information about this research project

Dear staff member

My name is Kim Walker and I am a researcher affiliated with The Open University. I am carrying out research into the way that Governing Boards in mainstream primary schools develop a vision for supporting learners with Special Educational Needs as part of their role. The project is being supervised by Dr Michael Strain and Professor Jonathan Rix of The Open University.

What is the aim of this research?

From this research I hope that insight will be gained into:

How Governing Boards in Primary Schools develop and implement ‘vision’ in relation to children considered to have a Special Educational Need (SEN)?

I hope that it will develop this insight by exploring:

- The meaning of vision for members of the Governing Board?
- How the vision for SEN is understood by members of the Governing Board?
- How Governors develop a vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What activities Governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision?
- Which aspects of the vision do members of the school community identify as most valuable?

This research also aims to contribute to knowledge, policy and practice in primary education by building on our understanding of the leadership activity of Governors as they carry out their roles in provision for learners with SEN. The National Governors Association has also asked for further research in this area to encourage the development of policy and practice that supports Governing Bodies to carry out their roles.
What is involved?

If you are happy to participate in the study I hope to carry out an interview with you as a member of the teaching staff in your school. The interview would last for approximately 40 minutes and take place on the school site in July 2017. The interview will be recorded so that I can be sure that I remember everything that you tell me correctly. I will work around you to arrange a time which is convenient to you for this interview. I may also observe a teaching session in a classroom for a maximum of twenty minutes.

Interview - What questions will I be asked?

I will ask questions about:

- The length of time you have been in your role and any role you have on the Governing Board;
- Your understanding of the school vision and how this relates to Governor responsibilities;
- How the vision for learners considered to have SEN is developed in the school;
- Activities that you have engaged in to support learners with SEN in the school such as contributing to policy development, school plans, data analysis and decisions on school funding;
- Your views on aspects that support you in your role and responsibilities for learners with SEN and aspects that do not support them;
- Your views on areas of the vision that you consider to be the most valuable.

I have also sought permission from the Headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Board for your school before contacting you.

Observations

I may observe a teaching session in a classroom for 20 minutes.

I will observe how children are supported in the classroom and record as informal notes which will be anonymised.

No information relating to confidential records for individual children will be requested.

Is it voluntary?

Your involvement is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your permission at any time before the narratives are anonymised and transcribed on 15th August 2017. Even if you say yes to at the beginning of the research you are free to withdraw at any time just by saying so until your interview transcript is anonymised.

Is it confidential?

Your identity and the identity of your school will be anonymised to support confidentiality. Only myself and the project supervisors will have access to the data. Information collected from you will be kept anonymous and stored securely. If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of your school or any individual will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. When the research is complete I will share findings with you through a presentation and report of the findings in an accessible format. You will also be informed of the publication of any final reports and given free access to those reports.
Confidentiality and disclosure of sensitive information

I will comply with school policies on confidentiality and safeguarding in the event of disclosures of sensitive information during research activity.

My responsibilities to you:

- I carry photographic identification to ensure your safety.

- I will ensure your privacy as your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Your contribution will be used for research purposes only. Nobody will be individually identified in the final report.

- I respect your wishes as participation in the study is voluntary and you are not obliged to answer any questions you do not wish to and you can say you wish to stop being part of the research at any time.

- If there is anything about the research that does not make sense or seems difficult I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at any point.

- This research project has been approved by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee.

What happens now?

I will contact you again soon to ask for your consent to take part in the research and to arrange an appointment to come and see you.

In the meantime, if you have any queries at all about the study, please contact me at:

**Address:** Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 2, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

**Email:** kim.walker@open.ac.uk  **Telephone:** 0207 435 6258

If you would like independent advice about this research you can also contact Professor Jonathan Rix on jonathan.rix@open.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Kim Walker
Lecturer, Education (Primary) and EdD student
The Open University
A3.2.5 Information letter for all parents for class observations

Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Exploring the role of Primary School Governing Boards in developing and implementing a ‘vision’ for Special Educational Needs

Information about this research project – All Parents

Dear Parent

My name is Kim Walker and I am carrying out research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an EdD at The Open University. The research aims to explore the way that Governing Boards in mainstream primary schools develop a vision for supporting learners with Special Educational Needs. The project is being supervised by Dr Michael Strain and Professor Jonathan Rix of The Open University.

What is the aim of this research?

From this research I hope that we can find out:

How Governing Boards in Primary Schools develop and implement ‘vision’ in relation to children considered to have a Special Educational Need (SEN)?

I hope that it will develop this insight by exploring:

- What vision means to members of the Governing Board?
- How Governors develop a vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What activities Governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What helps governors to achieve their vision and what doesn’t help them?
- Which aspects of the school vision do members of the school community think is the most valuable?

I would like to learn about the way that the school supports learners and I am writing to let you know what will be involved in this project as you have a child/ren in the school.

What is involved?

If you are happy for your child to participate in the study they may be invited to take part in a group discussion about the way they learn at school. The discussion would last for approximately 30 minutes and take place on the school site in February 2017. The discussion will be recorded so that I can be sure that I remember everything that they tell me correctly.
I may also observe a teaching session where your child is present. I will not talk to children in the class and any notes that are taken will be anonymised.

If you do not want me to watch your child having a lesson they will be able to do the same activity in a different place in the school so this will not affect their learning.

**What will children be asked about in the group?**

Who helps them with their learning at the school?

How do adults help them with their learning?

What do children like about the way they learn at the school?

What would children like to change about the way they learn at school?

**You and your children will NOT be asked about their individual learning needs.**

**Is it voluntary?**

Your involvement is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your permission at any time before the narratives are anonymised and transcribed on 15th August 2017. Even if you say yes at the beginning of the research you are free to withdraw at any time just by saying so until your interview transcript is anonymised.

**Having considered this information you can opt out of the research and indicate that you do not wish your child to be observed or involved in a discussion group. You should inform the Headteacher of this decision.** You also have the right to withdraw your child from inclusion in the research at any time you so wish. In the nursery the researcher will withdraw immediately if, on the advice of the staff, any child is becoming upset because they are being observed. Any observation will only resume on the advice of the Class Teacher.

**Is it confidential?**

Your identity and the identity of your school will be anonymised to support confidentiality. Only myself and the project supervisors will have access to the data. Information collected will be kept anonymous and stored securely. If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of your school or any individual or child will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. When the research is complete I will share findings with you through a presentation and report of the findings in an accessible format. You will also be informed of the publication of any final reports and given free access to those reports.

**Confidentiality and disclosure of sensitive information**

I will comply with school policies on confidentiality and safeguarding in the event of disclosures of sensitive information during research activity.

**My responsibilities to you:**

- I carry photographic identification to ensure your safety.
- I will ensure your privacy as your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Your contribution will be used for research purposes only. Nobody will be individually identified in the final report.
• I respect your wishes as participation in the study is voluntary and you are not obliged to answer any questions you do not wish to and you can say you wish to stop being part of the research at any time.

• If there is anything about the research that does not make sense or seems difficult I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at any point.

• This research project has been approved by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee.

What happens now?

I will contact you again soon to ask for your consent to take part in the research and to arrange an appointment to come and see you.

In the meantime, if you have any queries at all about the study, please contact me at:

**Address:** Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 2, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

**Email:** kim.walker@open.ac.uk **Telephone:** 0207 435 6258

If you would like independent advice about this research you can also contact Professor Jonathan Rix at jonathan.rix@open.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Kim Walker
Lecturer, Education (Primary) and EdD student
The Open University
Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Information about this research project – parent focus group

Dear Parent

My name is Kim Walker and I am a researcher affiliated with The Open University. I am carrying out research into the way that Governing Boards in mainstream primary schools develop a vision for supporting learners with Special Educational Needs. The project is being supervised by Dr Michael Strain and Professor Jonathan Rix of The Open University.

What is the aim of this research?

From this research I hope that we can find out:

How Governing Boards in Primary Schools develop and implement ‘vision’ in relation to children considered to have a Special Educational Need (SEN)?

I hope that it will develop this insight by exploring:

- What vision means to members of the Governing Board?
- How Governors develop a vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What activities Governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What helps governors to achieve their vision and what doesn’t help them?
- Which aspects of the school vision do members of the school community think is the most valuable?

As you are a parent of a child or children in this school I would like to talk to you about your ideas about the way that the school supports learners.

What is involved?

If you are happy to participate in the study I hope to invite you to take part in a focus group discussion about the way your child/ren learn at school. The discussion would last for approximately 1 hour and take place on the school site in September 2017. The discussion will be recorded so that I can be sure that I remember everything that you tell me correctly.
What will I be asked about in the group?

Who helps children with their learning at the school?

How do they help children with their learning?

What do you like about the way children learn at the school?

What would you like to change about the way children learn at school?

You will NOT be asked about the individual learning needs of your child or children.

Is it voluntary?

Your involvement is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your permission at any time before the narratives are anonymised and transcribed on 15th October 2017. Even if you say yes at the beginning of the research you are free to withdraw at any time just by saying so until your interview transcript is anonymised.

Is it confidential?

Your identity and the identity of your school will be anonymised to support confidentiality. Only myself and the project supervisors will have access to the data. Information collected from you will be kept anonymous and stored securely. If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of your school or any individual or child will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. When the research is complete I will share findings with you through a presentation and report of the findings in an accessible format. You will also be informed of the publication of any final reports and given free access to those reports.

Confidentiality and disclosure of sensitive information

I will comply with school policies on confidentiality and safeguarding in the event of disclosures of sensitive information during research activity.

My responsibilities to you:

- I carry photographic identification to ensure your safety.

- I will ensure your privacy as your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Your contribution will be used for research purposes only. Nobody will be individually identified in the final report.

- I respect your wishes as participation in the study is voluntary and you are not obliged to answer any questions you do not wish to and you can say you wish to stop being part of the research at any time.

- If there is anything about the research that does not make sense or seems difficult I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at any point.

- This research project has been approved by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee.

What happens now?

I will contact you again soon to ask for your consent to take part in the research and to arrange an appointment to come and see you.

In the meantime, if you have any queries at all about the study, please contact me at:
Address: Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 2, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

Email: kim.walker@open.ac.uk Telephone: 0207 435 6258

If you would like independent advice about this research you can also contact Professor Jonathan Rix on jonathan.rix@open.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Kim Walker
Lecturer, Education (Primary) and EdD student
The Open University
Hello

My name is Kim Walker and I am doing some research or ‘finding out’. I would like to find out about the things that Governors in your school do to help you learn.

I would like to invite you to take part in my research. This means I want to find out about the way that you learn at school and how different adults in the school help you learn. I have asked your parents if I can talk to you about my research which will happen in September 2017.

The research means taking part in a discussion with a group of other children. The discussion would last 30 minutes and will take place at school.

**Having a group discussion**

This is like a conversation and I will ask you about:

Who helps you with your learning at the school?

How different adults help you with your learning?

What you like about the way you learn at school?

What would you like to change about the way you learn at school?

**Watching a lesson**

I will also come and watch one of your lessons for 20 minutes to find out about the teaching in your school.

I will take some notes to help me remember the lesson but I will change the names of adults or children so that all the information is safe.

**Keeping things private**

I will record the discussion so that I can be sure that I remember everything that you tell me correctly.

When I write about the discussion and lessons I will change the names of everyone including the name of the school.

If you change your mind about taking part you can say so at any time.
When I write my research I will give you a copy of it and come and talk to you about it when it is finished.

I will also make sure that I follow all your school rules and policies on confidentiality so that I help to keep you safe.

**What happens now?**

I will contact your parents again soon if they tell me that you are interested you want in taking part in this research.

In the meantime, if you and your parents have any questions at all you can contact me at:

**Address:** Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 2, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

**Email:** kim.walker@open.ac.uk **Telephone:** 0207 435 6258

If you would like independent advice about this research you can also contact Professor Jonathan Rix at jonathan.rix@open.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Kim Walker
Lecturer, Education (Primary) and EdD student
The Open University
A3.2.8  Consent form – governors and teaching staff

Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Exploring the role of Primary School Governing Boards in developing and implementing a ‘vision’ for Special Educational Needs

Consent form for participants – governors and teaching staff

Name of participant:

Name of principal investigator: Kim Walker

1. The details of the project have been explained to me and I have been provided with a written information sheet to keep.

2. I understand that my participation will involve an interview and an observation. I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the information sheet.

3. I acknowledge that:

   (a) The possible effects of participating in this research have been explained clearly;

   (b) I am free to withdraw and to request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from me until my interview is anonymised at the point of transcription on 15th August 2017;

   (c) The project is for the purpose of research;

   (d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements and compliance with school policies on safeguarding;

   (e) I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored on an OU secure server. All data relating to this study will be destroyed once the analysis is complete;

   (f) If necessary any data from me will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research and the name of my school will be referred to by a pseudonym;

230
(g) I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be sent to me when the research is completed.

4. If I have any further questions I can contact the researcher, Kim Walker, for further information on 0207 435 6258 or at kim.walker@open.ac.uk. I can also contact Professor Jonathan Rix on jonathan.rix@open.ac.uk if I would like independent advice about this research.

If you are willing to take part in this research project please tick the box, complete the details below and return the signed form.

I freely give my consent to take part in this research, and I give my permission for the interview to be recorded and the data collected to be used in an anonymous form in any written reports, presentations and published papers relating to this study. My written consent will be sought separately before any identifiable data are used in such dissemination.

Participant signature: __________________________ Date: __________________________

Please return completed form to: Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 2, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA or attach it and send it by email to kim.walker@open.ac.uk
Consent form – parents

Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Exploring the role of Primary School Governing Boards in developing and implementing a ‘vision’ for Special Educational Needs

Consent form for participants - parents

Name of participant:

Name of principal investigator: Kim Walker

1. The details of the project have been explained to me and I have been provided with a written information sheet to keep.

2. I understand that my participation will involve a group discussion. I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the information sheet.

3. I acknowledge that:
   (a) The possible effects of participating in this research have been explained clearly;
   (b) I am free to withdraw and to request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from me until my interview is anonymised at the point of transcription on 15th August 2017;
   (c) The project is for the purpose of research;
   (d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements and compliance with school policies on safeguarding;
   (e) I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored on an OU secure server. All data relating to this study will be destroyed once the analysis is complete;
   (f) If necessary any data from me will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research and the name of my school will be referred to by a pseudonym;
(g) I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be sent to me when the research is completed.

4. If I have any further questions I can contact the researcher, Kim Walker, for further information on 0207 435 6258 or at kim.walker@open.ac.uk. I can also contact Professor Jonathan Rix on jonathan.rix@open.ac.uk if I would like independent advice about this research.

If you are willing to take part in this research project please tick the box, complete the details below and return the signed form.

Please return completed form to: Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 2, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA or attach it and send it by email to kim.walker@open.ac.uk
Consent Form for Research Involving Children

As a parent/guardian you are making a decision about whether or not you would like your child to take part in this research project about the way that governors support learning in schools. Your signature on this form indicates that you have decided to allow your child to take part in a group discussion and informal observation of the way that learning is supported in the classroom.

It also means that you and your child have:

- Had the purposes of the research project explained;
- Have been informed that you/your child may refuse to participate at any point until the data becomes anonymous on 15th October 2017;
- Have been assured that your confidentiality and that of your child will be protected as described in the letter;
- Agreed that the information that has been provided can be used for educational or research purposes including publication.

You will receive a copy of this consent document.

Signature of Parent or Legally Authorised Representative

__________________________
Signature of Investigator

__________________________
Signature of Witness

Assent of Child

__________________________
(name of child/minor) has agreed to participate in research titled Exploring the role of Primary School Governing Boards in developing and implementing a ‘vision’ for Special Educational Needs
Signature of Child ____________________________ Date ________________

_**Waiver of Assent**_

The assent of ________________ name of child/minor) was waived because of:
Age __________

Signature of Parent or Legally Authorized Representative ____________________________ Date ________________

If I have any further questions I can contact the researcher, Kim Walker, for further information on 0207 435 6258 or at kim.walker@open.ac.uk. I can also contact Professor Jonathan Rix at jonathan.rix@open.ac.uk if I would like independent advice about this research.
Appendix 4 – School invitation letters

A4.1 Invitation letter for Chair of Governing Body

Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Exploring the role of Primary School Governing Boards in developing and implementing a ‘vision’ for Special Educational Needs

Information for Chair of Governing Board

Dear Chair

My name is Kim Walker and I am carrying out research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an EdD at The Open University. The research aims to explore the way that Governing Boards in mainstream primary schools develop a vision for supporting learners with Special Educational Needs as part of their role. The project is being supervised by Dr Michael Strain and Professor Jonathan Rix of The Open University. From this research I hope that insight will be gained into:

How Governing Boards in Primary Schools develop and implement ‘vision’ in relation to children considered to have a Special Educational Need (SEN)?

I hope that it will develop this insight by exploring:

- The meaning of vision for members of the Governing Board?
- How the vision for SEN is understood by members of the Governing Board?
- How Governors develop a vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What activities Governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision?
- Which aspects of the vision do members of the school community identify as most valuable?

This research aims to contribute to knowledge, policy and practice in primary education by building on our understanding of the leadership activity of Governors as they carry out their responsibilities in provision for learners with SEN. The National Governors Association has also asked for further research in this area to encourage the development of policy and practice that supports Governing Bodies to carry out their roles.
If you are interested in participating in the study I hope to conduct the research by using the following methods:

- Semi-structured face to face interviews with governors and staff;
- 1 focus group discussion with parents for approximately 1 hour;
- 1 focus group discussion with children for approximately 30 minutes (with an appropriate member of staff present);
- Unstructured observations of 1 governor meeting;
- Unstructured observations of 2 teaching sessions for 20 minutes each;
- A documentary review of relevant school policies or documents related to the activity of the Governing Board and SEN.

I have contacted the Headteacher at your school about this research. If you are both happy for your school to participate in this study I would like to ask you if you are willing to distribute information and consent forms to Governors so that they can decide if they wish to take part. This will need to take place at least two weeks before any research activity is undertaken.

I have provided some information about what is involved in the different methods below.

**Interviews**

The interviews with the Governors and Staff would last for approximately 40 minutes and I will ask them questions about:

- The length of time they have been in their role and any role they have on the Governing Board;
- Their understanding of the school vision and how this relates to Governor responsibilities;
- How they develop a vision for learners considered to have a SEN;
- Activities that they have engaged in to support learners with SEN in the school such as contributing to policy development, school plans, data analysis and decisions on school funding;
- Their views on aspects that support them in their role and responsibilities for learners with SEN and aspects that do not support them;
- Their views on the aspects of the vision that they consider to be the most valuable.

**Focus group discussions**

I will ask parents and children about:

Who helps them/their child with their learning?

How do they help them/their child?

What they like about the way they/their child learns at school?

What would they like to change about the way they/their child learns at school?

**Observations**

I will listen to discussions in the meeting/classroom

I will observe how children are supported in the classroom.
No information relating to confidential records for individual children will be requested.

Interviews and focus groups will initially be recorded as I have a hearing impairment and will need to record interviews for accuracy as well as ensuring that I do not mishear participant comments. Information collected from all participants including notes from observations will be kept anonymous and stored securely. Only myself and the project supervisors will have access to the data.

If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of your school or individuals will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. Your school’s involvement is voluntary and you may withdraw permission before narratives are anonymised and transcribed on 15th August 2017.

The research will adhere to BERA’s Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011), and the Data Protection Act (1998). The research will also follow the Open University policy documents: ‘Ethical Principles for Research Involving Human Participants’ and ‘The Code of Practice for Research and Those Conducting Research’.

When the research is complete I will share findings with the participants through a presentation and report of the findings in an accessible format. Each participant will also be informed of the publication of any final reports and given free access to those reports.

If you have any further questions about this project I would be happy to discuss it at a convenient date and time.

You can contact me at:

**Address:** Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 2, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

**Email:** kim.walker@open.ac.uk  **Telephone:** 0207 435 6258

If you would like independent advice about this research you can also contact Professor Jonathan Rix at jonathan.rix@open.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

---

Kim Walker  
Lecturer, Education (Primary) and EdD student  
The Open University
A4.2 Invitation letter for Headteacher

Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 3, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Exploring the role of Primary School Governing Boards in developing and implementing a ‘vision’ for Special Educational Needs

Information for Headteacher

Dear Headteacher

My name is Kim Walker and I am carrying out research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an EdD at The Open University. The research aims to explore the way that Governing Boards in mainstream primary schools develop a vision for supporting learners with Special Educational Needs as part of their role. The project is being supervised by Dr Michael Strain and Professor Jonathan Rix of The Open University. From this research I hope that insight will be gained into:

How Governing Boards in Primary Schools develop and implement ‘vision’ in relation to children considered to have a Special Educational Need (SEN)?

I hope that it will develop this insight by exploring:

- The meaning of vision for members of the Governing Board?
- How the vision for SEN is understood by members of the Governing Board?
- How Governors develop a vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What activities Governors undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have SEN?
- What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision?
- Which aspects of the vision do members of the school community identify as most valuable?

This research aims to contribute to knowledge, policy and practice in primary education by building on our understanding of the leadership activity of Governors as they carry out their responsibilities in provision for learners with SEN. The National Governors Association has also asked for further research in this area to encourage the development of policy and practice that supports Governing Bodies to carry out their roles.

If you are interested in participating in the study I hope to conduct the research by using the following methods:

- Semi-structured face to face interviews with governors and staff;
- 1 focus group discussion with parents for approximately 1 hour;
- 1 focus group discussion with children for approximately 30 minutes (with an appropriate member of staff present);
• Unstructured observations of 1 governor meeting;
• Unstructured observations of 2 teaching sessions for 20 minutes each;
• A documentary review of relevant school policies or documents related to the activity of the Governing Board and SEN.

I will seek your permission to approach school staff, parents and children to participate in these activities including the best way to distribute information and consent forms. I will also contact the Chair of the Governing Board at your school to ask if they would be willing to distribute information and consent forms to Governors so that they can decide if they wish to take part. This will need to take place at least two weeks before any research activity is undertaken.

I have provided some information about what is involved in the different methods below.

**Interviews**

The interviews with the Governors and Staff would last for approximately 40 minutes and I will ask them questions about:

• The length of time they have been in their role and any role they have on the Governing Board;
• Their understanding of the school vision and how this relates to Governor responsibilities;
• How they develop a vision for learners considered to have a SEN;
• Activities that they have engaged in to support learners with SEN in the school such as contributing to policy development, school plans, data analysis and decisions on school funding;
• Their views on aspects that support them in their role and responsibilities for learners with SEN and aspects that do not support them;
• Their views on the aspects of the vision that they consider to be the most valuable.

**Focus group discussions**

I will ask parents and children about:

Who helps them/their child with their learning?;

How do they help them/their child?;

What they like about the way they/their child learns at school?;

What would they like to change about the way they/their child learns at school?.

**Observations**

I will listen to discussions in the meeting/classroom

I will observe how children are supported in the classroom.

No information relating to confidential records for individual children will be requested.

Interviews and focus groups will initially be recorded as I have a hearing impairment and will need to record interviews for accuracy as well as ensuring that I do not mishear participant comments. Information collected from all participants including notes from
observations will be kept anonymous and stored securely. Only myself and the project supervisors will have access to the data.

If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of your school or individuals will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. Your school's involvement is voluntary and you may withdraw permission before narratives are anonymised and transcribed on 15th August 2017.

The research will adhere to BERA's Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011), and the Data Protection Act (1998). The research will also follow the Open University policy documents: 'Ethical Principles for Research Involving Human Participants' and 'The Code of Practice for Research and Those Conducting Research'.

When the research is complete I will share findings with the participants through a presentation and report of the findings in an accessible format. Each participant will also be informed of the publication of any final reports and given free access to those reports.

If you have any further questions about this project I would be happy to discuss it at a convenient date and time.

You can contact me at:

**Address:** Kim Walker, Lecturer in Education (Primary), The Open University, Level 2, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

**Email:** kim.walker@open.ac.uk **Telephone:** 0207 435 6258

If you would like independent advice about this research you can also contact Professor Jonathan Rix at jonathan.rix@open.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

Kim Walker
Lecturer, Education (Primary) and EdD student
The Open University
### Appendix 5 – List of data collection tools and timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Data collection tool</th>
<th>Month/Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study School</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>January to February 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Study – Castlemount</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>June to November 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>June to November 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>June to November 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Document review</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Study – Greenhill</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>June to November 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>June to November 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>June to November 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Document review</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6 – Main study documentary review – anonymised SEN Policy

Primary School

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy

COMPLIANCE

This policy complies with the statutory requirement laid out in the SEND Code of Practice 0-25 (July 2014) 3.65 and has been written with reference to our school’s SEND Information Report. (This policy has been written in line with the National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN) guidelines 2014.)

SECTION 1: Primary School’s Beliefs and Values Regarding SEND

Our school believes that all students should be able to make the best possible progress at school and we are committed to ensuring that the necessary provision is made for any pupil who has SEND. We support pupils with SEND to be included in all aspects of school life.

We aim to offer excellence and choice to all our children, whatever their abilities or needs. We have high expectations of all our children. We aim to achieve this through the removal of barriers to learning and participation. We want all our children to feel that they are a valued part of our school community.

This school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for all the children. The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework and National Curriculum are starting points for planning that meets the specific needs of individuals and groups of children. When planning, teachers set suitable learning challenges and respond to children’s diverse learning needs.

Our aims for children with SEND are:

- to create an environment that meets the needs of each child;
- to ensure that the needs of children are identified, assessed and provided for;
- to have a collaborative approach which sets clear expectations with all partners in the process;
- to identify roles and responsibilities of staff in providing for children;
- to enable children to have access to all elements of the school curriculum;
- to ensure that parents and carers are able to play their part in supporting their child’s education;
- to ensure that all children have a voice in this process.

The SEND Co-ordinator for the school is [Name] is a qualified teacher and a member of the school’s Senior Leadership Team. [Name] is the Assistant SENDCo. Both can be contacted via the school office on [Number]. The SEND Governor is [Name] The Family Support Worker is [Name] The SEND Policy has been shared and agreed with staff, governors, parents and carers.

SECTION 2: Primary School’s Approach to SEND

Teachers respond to children’s needs by:

- providing support for children who need help with communication, language, literacy, numeracy and disability (mentally and physically);
- planning to develop children’s understanding through the use of all their senses and of varied experiences;
- planning for children's full participation in learning, and in physical and practical activities;
- helping individuals to manage their emotions, particularly trauma or stress, and to take part in learning effectively and safely.

Children have *special educational needs* if they have a learning difficulty that calls for *special educational provision* to be made for them.

Children have a *learning difficulty* if they:
- have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age
- have a disability that prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local authority
- are under compulsory school age and are likely to fall within the definitions above when they reach compulsory school age if special educational provision is not made for them.

Children must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of their home is different from the language in which they will be taught.

At [Redacted] Primary School, we identify children as having Special Educational Needs and Disability if they have difficulties in one or more aspects of school life, which, as a result, require the provision of support and/or resources that are different from or additional to those provided for children of the same age.

**SECTION 3: Identifying Special Educational Needs**

The code of practice describes four broad categories of need:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties
- Sensory and/or physical needs

Early identification is essential. When we identify an area (or areas) of need and then work out what action we need to take, in discussion with parents, carers and outside agencies where appropriate. This process of identification is multi-dimensional, for example:

- when concerns are raised by parents, carers, teachers or the child
- when limited progress is being made in accordance with age related expectations
- if there is a change in the child's behaviour or attainment
- when concerns are raised by external agencies (e.g. GP or school nurse)
- if information is provided from the previous setting (e.g. pre-school)

We are aware that other factors may impact upon progress and attainment, such as:

- physical disability
- attendance and punctuality
- health and welfare
- English as an additional language
- being in receipt of pupil premium grant
- being a Child Looked After
- being a child of a serviceman/woman

SECTION 4a: A Graduated Approach to SEND Support

The method of identification and provision follows a graduated approach.

Each child’s education will be planned for by the class teacher as part of high quality teaching. It will be differentiated according to the child’s individual needs. This may include additional support by the teacher or Learning Support Assistants in class.

If a child’s needs are not sufficiently responsive to these differentiated strategies and interventions, then the child’s teacher will offer interventions that are different from or additional to those provided as part of the school’s usual working practices. These may be run by the teacher or Learning Support Assistant. The length of time of the intervention may vary according to need but will be monitored regularly.

If a child has higher level needs this may result in the creation of a support plan. This process involves the family, child and other relevant professionals. This process will identify planned outcomes for the child and how they may be achieved.

An ‘Assess - Plan - Do - Review’ cycle is implemented. This is revisited, refined and revised with a growing understanding of the child’s needs.

Assess
The class teacher working with the SEND team carries out an assessment of the child’s needs based on the teacher’s experience of the child, their previous progress and attainment, the views of parents or carers, the child’s own views and, if relevant, advice from external support services. This assessment is reviewed termly.

Plan
The teacher and the SENDCo agree in consultation with the parent or carer and the child the adjustments, interventions and support to be put in place, as well as the expected impact on progress, development or behaviour, along with a timescale. A support plan is put in place; this is known as ______. All teachers and LSA who work with the child are made aware of the child’s needs, the outcomes sought, the support provided and any teaching strategies or approaches that are required.

Do
The class teacher remains responsible for working with the child on a daily basis. The class teacher works closely with any LSA or specialist staff involved, to plan and assess the impact of support and interventions and how they can be linked to classroom teaching. The SENDCo supports the class teacher in doing this and in the further assessment of the child’s particular strengths and weaknesses, advising on the effective implementation of support.

Review
The impact and quality of the support and interventions are evaluated, along with the views of the child and their parents or carers. This helps to feed back into an understanding of the child’s needs. The class teacher, working with the SENDCo, then revises the support in light of the child’s progress and development. Any changes to the support and outcomes, in partnership with the parent or carer and child, are detailed in the process.

When a child’s needs are more complex or severe and the resources available to the school are not sufficient to meet the needs then an educational, health and care needs
assessment may be undertaken by the local authority and an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) developed. This is developed in collaboration with the family, child, the statutory assessment team, and, as appropriate, other relevant professionals.

SECTION 4b: Managing Pupils Needs on the SEND Register

Our school uses the Guidance Toolkit to determine the level and type of provision required. A child is added to the SEND register when provision required is consistently provided across the curriculum which is different from and additional to that provided through classroom support. Where the child requires further support we will consult with external agencies, where appropriate, in consultation with parents, carers and children.

Class teachers, parents, carers, children and the SENDCo work together to create a person centred support plan with clear outcomes. The class teacher, supported by the SENDCo, is responsible for maintaining and updating the plan. It is the teacher’s responsibility to evidence progress according to the outcomes described in the plan. Plans are reviewed on an agreed date or least twice yearly.

SECTION 5: Criteria for Exitng the SEND Register

As part of the 'Assess - Plan - Do - Review' cycle, if progress is made and the gap between the pupil’s attainment is narrowed within their peer group and/or the child has achieved the outcomes identified in their area(s) of need then, in discussion with parents or carers and the child, they will be removed from the SEND register.

If a child no longer requires continued and consistent Additional School Intervention Support provision, as determined by the Guidance Toolkit, they will be removed from the SEND register. They will then be monitored to ensure progress is continued.

SECTION 6a: Supporting Pupils and Families

We work hard to include parents and carers in their child’s education. We encourage an active partnership through an ongoing dialogue and believe that they have much to contribute to our support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Where the school or parents and carers consider that advice from another professional needs to be sought to best support a child further, we will work together to access this pathway and implement recommendations in school. Parents and carers would be expected to monitor this at home and an open dialogue about progress or problems is encouraged.

We support pupils and families through:

- planning and review meetings
- advice on how to support learning at home
- regular contact between home and school, e.g. home/school book, email or text
- individual child/teacher conversations
- Family Support Worker
- home visits
- joint working visits with other professional services, where appropriate

Following a school or self-referral, parents, carers and children can also receive support from the following agencies and support services:
family, child and the previous school. This may also require contact with outside agencies. New children and parents are invited to meet with school staff and visit the school.

Where a child leaves [Redacted] Primary School during the primary years, the school passes on all school records, including SEND, to the new school.

Admission Arrangements

Our admissions policy can be found [link to website] on the school website.

SECTION 7: Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions

Our school recognises that children at school with medical conditions should be properly supported so that they have full access to education, including school trips and physical education. Some children with medical conditions may be disabled and where this is the case the school will comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Some children may also have Special Educational Needs or a physical disability and may have a statement of SEND or EHC Plan. This brings together health and social care needs, as well as their special educational provision following the SEND code of practice (2014).

Children with identified medical conditions may have an individual Health Care Plan, written in partnership with Health Professionals, parents and carers.

The school provides staff training to support the medical needs of children and regularly shares and updates information relating to medical needs with all relevant staff.

SECTION 8: Monitoring and Evaluation of SEND Provision

We monitor and evaluate the impact and quality of SEND provision through a combination of the following:

- annual reviews and the [Redacted] process
- performance management observations and discussions
- observations and discussions with staff
- lesson observations
- monitoring of intervention groups through observation and data analysis
- discussions with parents and carers
- analysis by the senior leadership team of whole school data
- pupil and parent/carer voice
- monitoring by the lead governor

The above forms part of the ongoing 'Assess - Plan - Do - Review' cycle. The SEND Governor has responsibility to monitor and challenge the provision for children with SEND and additional needs.
- Specialist Teacher Team
- Children's Therapy Team
- Community Paediatrician
- School Nurse
- Support and Resources Team
- Educational Psychology Service
- Training Clinic
- General Practitioner (GP)
- Social Care
- Educational Welfare Service
- Support
- Parent support group
- Dyslexia Group
- ADHD Group

The Primary School's SEND Information Report is available on the school website. [http://www.schoolexample.com](http://www.schoolexample.com)

Parents and carers can also access additional information from the above website which can be found on the school website [www.schoolexample.com](http://www.schoolexample.com).

**Transition Arrangements**

For children entering the Early Years, the class teacher visits pre-school settings and/or the home to ensure a smooth entry into school. Information regarding any child's special educational needs or disabilities is gathered and a transition meeting with other agencies involved is held. School tours, transition visits, photo books and a welcome meeting plus booklet are offered.

A transition programme is in place for the move from Foundation to Key Stage 1. 'Move Round Days' and hand-over meetings are in place throughout the school.

For children transferring to secondary school, the SEND teams of both schools work collaboratively to ensure that they are ready to meet the needs of the child concerned. Secondary SENDCos visit children in school and Y7 pupils return to share their experiences. Some extra visits to the secondary school may be arranged for children with SEND in the summer term prior to transition to the school.

Parents and carers are encouraged to visit a range of secondary schools to ascertain the right secondary provision for their child and support for parents and carers is offered.

All school records, including SEND, will be passed on to the secondary school to which the child transfers.

Parent and carers of children who have a statement of SEND/EHC plan are invited to discuss transitional provision with the potential secondary school at a Transition Review in Year 5.

Where a child is entering Primary School during the primary years, the school will endeavour to gain as much information as possible about previous support from the
SECTION 9: Training and Resources

The SENCo is responsible for the operational management of the specified and agreed resourcing for special needs provision within the school, including provision for children with statements of SEND or Educational Healthcare Plan.

The head teacher informs the governing body of SEND funding arrangements.

The funding for SEND in school comes from 3 elements:

Element 1: Key Stage funding
Every school receives funding for each child on the school roll; children with SEND are allocated resources from this element of funding.

Element 2: National funding
The school is allocated additional money from the local authority to fund support for children with SEND.

Element 3: Funding for pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Educational Health Care Plan
This is additional money allocated to individual children through a statement of SEND or EHC plan, or to schools, from the Local Authority as deemed appropriate.

Staff training needs and resources are identified through the 'Assess - Plan - Do - Review' cycle and are planned according to:

- whole school priorities,
- group or individual needs,
- staff needs agreed through individual staff performance management.

SEND courses are offered to staff for whom they will be relevant, assuming there are no financial constraints. Training sessions held at our school or one of the cluster schools, using in-house expertise or visiting professionals, have proved very effective.

The school's SENDCo regularly attends the update meetings in order to keep up to date with local and national developments in SEND.

All staff have access to the Guidance Toolkit and the SENDCo.

SECTION 10: Roles and Responsibilities

It is the statutory duty of the Governors to ensure that the school follows its responsibilities to meet the needs of its pupils with SEND, following the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice 2014. Contact may be made via the school office.

- SEND Governor:
- Designated Safeguarding Teacher:
- Pupil Premium Grant:
- Children Looked After funding:
- Management of the medical needs of pupils:
- SENDCo:
- Assistant SENDCo:
SECTION 11: Storing and Managing Information

All pupils SEND documents are stored in a locked room in filing cabinets, on line documents including emails, reports are kept on a secure database. This is in line with the school’s e-safety, information management and confidentiality policy. Please see these policies for further information.

SECTION 12: Reviewing the Policy

This policy will be reviewed in line with the school cycle or as required.

SECTION 13: Accessibility

The Equality Act 2010, placed a duty on all schools and Local Authorities to plan to increase 'over time' the accessibility of schools for disabled peoples and to implement their plans. Our school has an Accessibility Plan and Strategy, available in school.

SECTION 14: Dealing with Complaints

All complaints are dealt with in line with the Complaints Policy, which is available from the school office or on the school’s website, [http](http://example.com).

Feedback is welcomed and we encourage parents and carers to raise any questions or concerns at an early stage so that problems can be resolved quickly and informally.

SECTION 15: Bullying

Our school takes all possible steps to mitigate the risk of bullying to all vulnerable learners. Please see the school’s Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy, which is available from the school office or on the school’s website, [http](http://example.com).

SECTION 16: Appendices

The policies referred to throughout this document are referenced on the school website or through the school office. The school SEND Information Report can be found on the school website, [http](http://example.com).

Date Agreed by Governors: 27 June 2017

Signed by Chair of Governors: ........................................

Date to be reviewed: June 2018
Appendix 7 – Main study interview guides – governors and staff

A7.1 Interview guide – governors

Main research question: How does the GB develop and implement a vision for children considered to have SEN?

Sub-questions:
a. What is the meaning of vision for the GB
b. How is vision for SEN understood by the GB
c. How does GB develop a vision for children considered to have SEN (planning)
d. What activities do GB undertake to implement vision for…SEN (operational)
e. What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision (outcome)
f. Which aspects/activities to members of sch. Community favour (outcome)

Interview Schedule

Warm up

What is your role?
How did you become involved with this school?

“I’m interested in learning about vision and what it means in schools for so I’m going to start with asking you a few questions on your ideas about it.”

Questions relating to sub-question a

a1) What does the term vision mean to you in relation to schools and education?
a2) In relation to your role in this school?
a3) Tell me about the vision for learning in this school? How did that develop? How is it shared with others?

Questions relating to sub-question b

b1) How does that vision relate to children considered to have SEN?
b2) Are there any differences in the vision for children with and without SEN? What are they?
b3) Do you think your ideas might be different to other members of the GB? Why do you think they might be/are different?

Questions relating to sub-questions c and d

“The next questions are intended to help me understand how you plan and implement your vision so, when you answer, think of it as telling me the story of what you do as a governor starting with planning…”

c/d1) Can you tell me about how you plan and deliver support for children? What do you do …(Prompts relating to funding decisions, development planning, policy development including admissions, assessment, services, working with other institutions and families, sharing information)?
c/d1) How are meetings arranged to support your work here? (Prompts on formal or informal meetings)

c/d2) How do you work with staff to support provision (Prompts relating to budget, recruitment, workload, working with SENCO, supporting collaboration, attitudes, staff views, meetings with staff to develop knowledge of children’s progress and implementing ‘vision’ for school)?

c/d3) Tell me about your children/students. Who are they, where do they come from and what do they think of the school? (Prompts relating to admissions, exclusions, represent community, arrangements for listening to children and families, how did practices develop)?

c/d3) How do you work with them to develop your vision? How do they contribute to it?

c/d4) What is the connection between vision and outcomes/practice in the classroom? Have you been involved in supporting the development of teaching strategies? (Prompts include informed by children, training, pedagogy, assessment, engagement with services beyond school)?

c/d5) What is the role of space in this school to support children with SEN. How has it been used and why? (Prompts include where do children learn and how does the environment support)?

Questions relating to sub-question e

e1) What are the challenges in planning and implementing vision for you? (Connections with c/d4?).

e2) What supports you?

e3) How does government, OFSTED, etc. influence the way you plan and implement?

Question relating to sub-question f

f) What do children, parents/carers and staff think works well and how do you know?
**A7.2 Interview guide – teaching staff**

Main research question: How does the GB develop and implement a vision for children considered to have SEN?

Sub-questions:
- a. What is the meaning of vision for the GB
- b. How is vision for SEN understood by the GB
- c. How does GB develop a vision for children considered to have SEN (planning)
- d. What activities do GB undertake to implement vision for…SEN (operational)
- e. What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision (outcome)
- f. Which aspects/activities to members of sch. Community favour (outcome)

**Interview Schedule**

*Warm up*

What is your role?
How long have you worked at the school?

“I’m interested in learning about vision and what it means in schools so I’m going to start with asking you a few questions on your ideas about it.”

**Questions relating to sub-question a**

a1) What does the term vision mean to you in relation to schools and education?

a2) In relation to your role in this school?

a2) Tell me about the vision for learning in this school? How did that develop? How is it shared here? How do you think that Governors contribute to it through their role?

**Questions relating to sub-question b**

b1) How does that vision relate to children considered to have SEN?

b2) Are there any differences in the vision for children with and without SEN? What are they?

b3) Do you think your ideas might be different to other members of the school community? (Prompt on Governors here) Why do you think they might be/are different?

**Questions relating to sub-questions c and d**

“The next questions are intended to help me understand how vision is planned and implemented here so, when you answer, think of it as telling me the story of what you do as a member of staff starting with planning…”

c/d1) Can you tell me about how you plan and deliver support for children considered to have SEN? How are governors involved in planning? ...(Prompts relating to funding decisions, development planning, policy development including admissions, assessment, services, working with other institutions and families, sharing information)?
c/d2) How do you work with governors and other staff to support provision (Prompts relating to budget, recruitment, workload, working with SENCO, supporting collaboration, attitudes, staff views, meetings with other staff, school leaders and governors to develop knowledge of children’s progress and implementing ‘vision’ for school)?

c/d3) Tell me about your children/students. Who are they, where do they come from and what do they think of the school? (Prompts relating to admissions, exclusions, represent community, arrangements for listening to children and families, how did practices develop)?

c/d4) How do you work with children with SEN to develop your vision? How do they contribute to it? How do Governors get to know what children think?

c/d5) What is the connection between vision and outcomes/practice in the classroom? Have you been involved in supporting the development of teaching strategies? (Prompts include informed by children, training, pedagogy, assessment, engagement with services beyond school)? How have Governors contributed?

c/d6) What is the role of space in this school to support children with SEN. How has it been used and why? (Prompts include where do children learn and how does the environment support, how have governors been involved)?

Questions relating to sub-question e

e1) What are the challenges in planning and implementing vision for you? (Connections with c/d4?).

e2) What supports you?

e3) How does government, OFSTED, etc. influence the way you plan and implement?

Question relating to sub-question f

f) What do you, children and parents/carers think works well and how do you know?
Appendix 8 – Main study focus group guides – parents and children

A8.1 Focus group guide – parents

Main research question: How does the GB develop and implement a vision for children considered to have SEN?

Sub-questions:
a. What is the meaning of vision for the GB;
b. How is vision for SEN understood by the GB;
c. How does GB develop a vision for children considered to have SEN (planning)
d. What activities do GB undertake to implement vision for…SEN (operational)
e. What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision (outcome)
f. Which aspects/activities to members of sch. Community favour (outcome)

Interview Schedule

Warm up

Start with introductions – name, how many children you have in the school, and how long they have been at the school.

“I’m interested in learning about vision and what it means in schools so I’m going to start with asking you a few questions on your ideas about it.”

Questions relating to sub-question a

a1) What does the term vision mean to you in relation to schools and education?
a2) Tell me about the vision for learning in this school?
a3) How do you know about this?
a4) Who develops these ideas here?

Questions relating to sub-question b

b1) How does that vision relate to your child?

Questions relating to sub-question c and d

c) Are you asked to share your views about it?

“The next questions are intended to help me understand how the school plans and supports learning here so think about examples from your own experience.”

c/d1) Tell me about how the school works with you to support your child/ren? (Prompts relating to funding, any policies that may be relevant including admissions, assessment, services, any work with other institutions and families, how information is shared with parents)?

c/d2) Who do you meet at the school to talk about your child/ren? (prompts relating to meetings with governors and staff to support provision and
develop knowledge of children’s progress – links with implementing ‘vision’ for school)?

c/d3) Why did you bring your child/ren here and what do your children think of the school? (Prompts relating to admissions, exclusions, represent community, arrangements for listening to children and families, how did practices develop)?

c/d4) What does the school do that, in your opinion, really helps your child/ren learn? (Prompts include strategies informed by children, training, pedagogy, assessment, engagement with services beyond school)?

c/d5) Where does your child learn and where do they like to learn? (In class, out of class, use of outside or quiet space. Developments in the school environment)?

Questions relating to sub-question e

e1) What helps the school to support your child or children here and what doesn’t help? (Connections with c/d4?).

e2) What supports you?

e3) How do you think government, OFSTED, etc affect the way that your child is supported at the school?

Question relating to sub-question f

f) From all the things we’ve talked about what do you think works well at the school and why?
Focus group guide – children

Issues to note – ensure that a member of staff is present during focus group. Discuss appropriate communication strategies to support children’s understanding with parents and staff beforehand and adjust strategies or questions as appropriate. This could involve use of Makaton, providing visual images, rephrasing questions and adjusting timings or presence of another member of staff to interpret. Children could also draw a picture to record their response if they prefer.

Main research question: How does the GB develop and implement a vision for children considered to have SEN?

Sub-questions:
  a. What is the meaning of vision for the GB;
  b. How is vision for SEN understood by the GB;
  c. How does GB develop a vision for children considered to have SEN (planning)
  d. What activities do GB undertake to implement vision for…SEN (operational)
  e. What factors enable and constrain achievement of the vision (outcome)
  f. Which aspects/activities to members of sch. Community favour (outcome)

Interview Schedule

Warm up

Start with introductions – Explain who I am (My name is Kim and my job is talking to children about their school)

Play the Name Game to warm up.

“I want to ask you some questions about your school. Before we start let’s think about what will help us talk and listen to each other.”

Invite children to decide rules for speaking and listening together.

Questions relating to sub-question a

a) What is special about your school for everyone here?

Questions relating to sub-question b

b) What is special about your school for you?

Questions relating to sub-questions c and d

c/d5) Tell me about your day at school? (Where do you learn and where do you like to learn? In class, out of class, playground or quiet space)?

c/d2) Who helps you at school? (prompts relating to staff)
c/d4) What do adults do here to help you learn? (Prompts include strategies informed by children, training, pedagogy, assessment, engagement with services beyond school)?

c/d1) How do adults know what helps you learn? Tell me what you can do to let them know? (support)

c/d3) What do you like about your school (prompts about friends)? What would you like to change to make it better? (children)

*Question relating to sub question f*

f) What is your favourite thing about your school? Why?

_Cool down_

Thank you for talking to me today.

Did you like any of my questions? Tell me what you think might have made them better?

Is there anything else you would like to say about your school?
Appendix 9 – Main study observation record

A9.1 Observation record format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity observed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A9.2 Observation record example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year Group</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Focus</td>
<td>Integrated Topic – Egypt/Storytelling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation of space – central area for children to sit together on carpet in front of teacher. Whiteboard on wall behind carpet area. Range of visual resources on Whiteboard and physical resources including Makaton signs and sequence of pictures to tell a story nearby. Chairs and tables grouped around the classroom but spaces left to move between and withdraw in groups, 1:1, for quiet time. Displays – Range of children’s topic work represented on walls in classroom. Display tables with table top resources for children to handle and use. Resources on Egypt. Maths display of a problem solving activity supported by visual representation of strategies and Makaton signs. Literacy display of adjectives called ‘In the painting I can see…’ Growth Mindset, Fish philosophy, learning and life skills displays present in classroom.</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.05</td>
<td>Adults in the classroom – 1 Class Teacher, 3 TAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children return to class. Appear calm. Some children return to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>carpet. Others go to sit on chairs. One child goes to a TA and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>begins reading with her in the book corner. One TA sits with a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>group of children at a table. Another TA sits on the carpet with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other children. Teacher is chatting with children as they come in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A child comes in and is wandering around the class. She sits at a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>table on her own and is singing quietly to herself. She looks around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the classroom and then looks at the teacher and begins to listen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.10</td>
<td>Whole class teaching. Class teacher asks children about story they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have been learning about. They say that the story was about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sneeza Snake who lived in Egypt. Questions: What did they like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about the story? What didn’t they like about the story? They are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>going to write their own stories about an animal who lives in Egypt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They will start by choosing an animal and describing it. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>describes activity using Makaton and visual symbols. Children ask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>if they can describe Sneeza Snake and the teacher says yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher asks what problems children might have when they are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>doing their work. A child says that they might forget what they are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>doing. Another child says that they might find it difficult to think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of words. Another child says they might not understand. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>asks what they can do if they have a problem. Children’s suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– ask a friend, ask an adult, look at the Whiteboard, think, don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>worry, use the pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher asks children to go and do their work. ‘Can you decide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>where you need to be? Children move to tables where they are a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range of resources. Pictures, Puppets, Patterns, Colouring pen/cils,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ipads, Laminated story sequencing cards, keyword cards. Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>move around between tables. Seem to be negotiating where they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are going to sit. Child who was singing goes to the Whiteboard and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stands by it doing nothing for a while. Teacher turns to her and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>asks her to decide where she wants to work. She joins a group of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>three children at a round table who are working without an adult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.25</td>
<td>Three children go to sit with a TA at a table. Resources include</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>visual symbols to support children to sequence the activity. They</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>talk about what they are going to do using the sequencing symbols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children say that they want to draw Sneeza snake but make their own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>different Sneeza snake. TA encourages children to check they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>understand what each person is saying. Asks how they are going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to make their own Sneeza snake different? One child suggests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>different colours. Another child suggests different shapes. TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suggests some words/ideas to model language. Children decide how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>they want to record their description. They are offered a choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
between recording in a picture or recording on audio on IPad. Children and TA start to record according to their choice. TA models a recorded description and one child (considered to have a language impairment) decides he wants to record his description on audio instead of drawing a picture. Observations finished at 11.45.
# Appendix 10 – Thematic analysis phase 1 – familiarisation with data

A10 Example of highlighted extracts from interview transcript linked to Research Questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data analysis by interview</th>
<th>Extract from interview transcript</th>
<th>RQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>Opportunities for everybody to do well. Relevant to the world and to life</td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>Learning means that children will make progress, will get relevant skills, interests, opportunity to be creative, opportunity to be imaginative but get to a certain standard that they need to feel successful as well.</td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3</td>
<td>Open…organic culture</td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4</td>
<td>If people have good ideas…use them and share them and experiment with them…with different ways of learning</td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G5</td>
<td>Built up over time</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G6</td>
<td>Growth mindset…grown from the bottom up…assemblies…open mornings for parents</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G7</td>
<td>Children taking risks…mistakes as opportunities for learning</td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8</td>
<td>Teachers will negotiate with parents</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G9</td>
<td>Parents will be in that lesson experiencing with their children what’s going on…opportunities to talk with the teacher…we talk and they talk to their children and to us</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G10</td>
<td>Our governors are parents</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G11</td>
<td>Teachers do presentations…children invited in to talk about…school focus (at governing board meetings)</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G12</td>
<td>All our children they’re part of our school community and our school family…meet their needs whatever their needs are…whatever the child needs</td>
<td>R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G13</td>
<td>Vision is…the same</td>
<td>R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G14</td>
<td>We don’t just want the TAs working with those children</td>
<td>R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G15</td>
<td>We’re all bringing our personal experiences</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G16</td>
<td>Have a very similar philosophy</td>
<td>R1/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G17</td>
<td>We’re expecting creativity…finding out what individual children’s needs are and doing something about it</td>
<td>R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G18</td>
<td>What are we going to do for our teachers…research into the teaching of reading and fluency…understanding why we’re doing something</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G19</td>
<td>Store our information on an online platform so we can comment on each other’s ideas…share it not only in meetings</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G20</td>
<td>School improvement plan is an ongoing conversation</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G21</td>
<td>It comes back to trust…</td>
<td>R1/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G22</td>
<td>Work alongside and get other…to support…walking the talk, being highly visible.</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G23</td>
<td>Non negotiables…growth mindset…Fish philosophy…maths mastery…developing teaching programme</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G24</td>
<td>Pupil perception surveys ask the children about learning in our school</td>
<td>R3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G25</td>
<td>Wallpaper…learning moves on…things are outdated…being brave enough to say…it’s not relevant anymore</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G26</td>
<td>As a school you’re given a certain amount of money but that’s not enough</td>
<td>R1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G27</td>
<td>Finding teachers, growing teachers, developing teachers and supporting other schools</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G28</td>
<td>Generate income by supporting other schools</td>
<td>R5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G29</td>
<td>In our school you’ll probably find five to ten student apprentice teachers</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G30</td>
<td>Teachers going supporting another school bring back good practice and develop practice</td>
<td>R5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G31</td>
<td>I go out and generate money by talking about what we believe in or sharing our practice</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G32</td>
<td>We’re involved in a myriad of different projects…generate income…allows you to overstaff</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G33</td>
<td>Parents come in and they support in classrooms</td>
<td>R5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G34</td>
<td>We want people who are going to come and hold us to account but also help us and be part of our vision</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G35</td>
<td>If this wasn’t for them…our Chair would have a chat</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G36</td>
<td>X came up with…we were building around the school and talking about how we could meet…children’s needs…he just said why don’t we build…</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G37</td>
<td>The DfE want us to go and have a chat about children’s mental health and what we do in our school</td>
<td>R5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G38</td>
<td>Advisor…Ofsted Inspector…reports to the governors</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G39</td>
<td>Education for us all and opportunity for everybody and, you know, what we’ll do we’ll share with anybody.</td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G40</td>
<td>Book monitoring is very organic…lesson observations are...developmental. The traditional pressures that a teacher would have…you don’t have here but you have to buy into the culture and ethos…and you’re part of that whole school development.</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G41</td>
<td>Career progression…making sure that (SENCO) has the training she needs…doing accreditation…facilitator on the developing teacher programme</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G42</td>
<td>(SEN) numbers aren’t reducing…the workload isn’t diminishing…percentage of our children always need more teaching…need to keep generating the income</td>
<td>R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G43</td>
<td>Enjoy school and make fantastic progress and not see themselves as a failure</td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G44</td>
<td>We serve our local community, we serve our catchment, we have a mixed catchment…I’m very keen to serve our community…if you live in our catchment you can come to our school no matter what your needs are.</td>
<td>R1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G45</td>
<td>If we can’t meet that need then we can’t put the learning of other people at risk…but that’s very rare.</td>
<td>R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G46</td>
<td>We take children from other schools who have been permanently excluded…we had a boy who took a knife into his school and threatened…his teacher and classmates…he’s now in year 8 and he’s a really successful pupil</td>
<td>R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G47</td>
<td>We looked at some work by Bruce Perry on trauma and attachment an we’ve adopted his six core strengths and those six core strengths are in addition to the curriculum…relationships are really key</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G48</td>
<td>Governors involved through headteacher reports, visits, observations, walking the school, assemblies. They are parents as well so they go to their class open mornings.</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G49</td>
<td>John Hattie’s work around visible learning, about how feedback from children is really important…teachers researched and practiced feedback five…learning journeys…invited the Hattie team into our school and the following INSET day ‘What are we going to do and what will we see in your classrooms?’</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G50</td>
<td>Took the whole staff to Bristol to look at a school. We came back and thought about the wows. We looked at what they did with their library. We didn’t have particular areas. No we’ve got a reading area, a breakout zone, a general relaxing area, a zone for codebreakers</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G51</td>
<td>Use of space…opposite the ICT suite there’s a Wave Three area that used to be a kitchen…set up chalets for every child a reader and every child a counter…one for the SEN team.</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G52</td>
<td>Our governors are really good with freedom…they hold us to account but they give us freedom and when things are going well that generates trust…like the Grow project.</td>
<td>R1/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G53</td>
<td>Whatever events we hold the school is packed.</td>
<td>R5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G54</td>
<td>The pressure to expand as an academy trust constrains us</td>
<td>R5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G55</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>R5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G56</td>
<td>Regulation constrains us…having to tick boxes and worry about SAT scores and OFSTED</td>
<td>R5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G57</td>
<td>Attitude is more important than knowledge, embrace failure and learn from it, say yes more than you say no, take the opportunities and care about what you do and have passion.</td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 11 – Thematic analysis phase 2 – generating initial codes – Castlemount and Greenhill

Research Sub-question 1 – Castlemount

RSQ1 – School A
What is the meaning of vision for members of the governing board?

- Equity and equality
- Relationships
- Communication across the school community
- Collaborative support networks
- Staff and agency
- Research-based pedagogy

- Shared attitudes
- Shared values
- Open culture

- Parent representation
- All children make progress
- Identifying relevant goals for improving provision
- Flexible curriculum
- Children’s views
- Consultation

Research Sub-question 2 – Castlemount

RSQ2 – School A
How is the vision for SEN understood by members of the governing board?

- Vision for all
- Working with external agencies
- Whole school training provision
- Collaboration with parents
- Inclusive pedagogy and practice
- Interventions and access to curriculum

- Attitude to SEN – whole school responsibility
- Attitudes to exclusion

- Research-informed curriculum
- Staff attitudes to SEN
- SEN Governor and SENCO liaison

- Funding allocation
- Responsibility for equitable support
- Children’s rights
- Children and agentive activity
Research Sub-question 3 – Castlemount

RSQ3 – School A
How do governing boards develop a vision for children considered to have an SEN?

- Personal experience
- Building relationships
- Policy review
- Consultation with external agencies/critical friends
- Consultation meetings with staff
- Consultation with parents
- Responding to children’s feedback
- Research review – pedagogy/interventions
- Data analysis
- Identifying priorities
- School Development Planning – curriculum and pedagogy
- SENCO/SEN Governor meetings

Research Sub-question 4 – Castlemount

RSQ4 – School A
What activities do governing boards undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have an SEN?

- Organisation of Governing Board and allocation of responsibilities
- Funding allocation and monitoring
- Staffing
- Monitoring SDP
- SENCO/SEN Governor liaison
- Training with staff/SEN team
- School visits
- Engagement with parents
- Engaging with children’s views
- Policy development and implementation
- School network collaboration
- Liaising with external agencies (including government)
- Curriculum provision and pedagogy
- Developing provision for excluded children
- Monitoring children’s progress
- Reporting and information sharing on SEN issues
Research Sub-question 5 – Castlemount

RSQ5 – School A
What factors enable and constrain governing boards in achieving their vision for children considered to have an SEN?

- Approach to organisation of Governing Board
- Personal experience
- Shared values and attitudes (SEN/equity)
- Community relationships
- Agency
- Financial control and resourcing
- Staffing support
- Constraint – inspection practices
- Research-focused staff development
- Constraint – DfE vision
- Training provision
- Collaborative practices/networks

Parent engagement

Inclusive provision

Listening to children and responding

Research Sub-question 1 – Greenhill

RSQ1 – School B
What is the meaning of vision for members of the governing board?

- Provision of creative curriculum
- Shared values

- Inclusive pedagogy
- Attitudes

- Developing a collaborative culture
- Consultation across school community
- Identifying goals

- Improving communication – community centred
- Understanding need for change

- Engagement with parents
- All children make progress

- Responsive staffing
- Children’s rights
Research Sub-question 2 – Greenhill

- Funding allocation
- Reorganising space
- Equitable support
- Liaison with external agencies
- Inclusive attitudes and values
- Delegated responsibility for SEN to governor
- Accessible curriculum
- SEN processes – assessment and identification
- SEN vision for learning
- SENCO role
- SEN intervention programmes
- Staff attitudes to SEN
- Inclusive pedagogy
- Planning with parents
- Children’s rights and agency

RSQ2 – School B
How is the vision for SEN understood by members of the governing board?

Research Sub-question 3 – Greenhill

- Drawing on personal experience
- Identifying priorities
- Data analysis
- School Development Planning – Vision documents
- Governor training review
- Consultation meetings
- Policy review – SEN and Behaviour
- Funding review – staffing and space
- Planning for parent engagement
- Planning for children’s voice/agency
- Curriculum and pedagogy review
- Headteacher appointment

RSQ3 – School B
How do governing boards develop a vision for children considered to have an SEN?
Research Sub-question 4 – Greenhill

- Undertaking governor training
- Reorganisation of governing board
- Approving plans for development of school space
- Review of parent views
- Meetings with external organisations, DfE/LEA
- Staffing review – restructure, recruitment, exit interviews
- Funding allocation
- Monitoring pedagogy and curriculum change
- School visits
- Children – exclusions and suspensions
- Approving plans to support children’s rights/voice

RSQ4 – School B
What activities do governing boards undertake to implement the vision for children considered to have an SEN?

Research Sub-question 5 – Greenhill

- Constraint – policy conflicts – external structures, inspection/NC/testing
- Change – Headteacher initiatives
- Personal experience
- Relationships
- Shared values and attitudes
- Reorganisation of board – participation
- Training
- Acknowledging the role of agency across the School
- Funding to support equity
- Plans for communication within the school community
- Develop inclusive pedagogy
- Creative curriculum provision
- Building developments
- Staff development – coaching and reorganisation

RSQ5 – School B
What factors enable and constrain governing boards in achieving their vision for children considered to have an SEN?
Appendix 12 – Thematic analysis phase 3 – searching for themes – example of codes linked to themes

Castlemount – Attitudes to equity and equality

- Personal experience
- Developing provision for excluded children
- Responsibility for equitable support
- Equity and equality
- Shared attitudes – SEN/equity
- Shared values – SEN/equity
- Vision for all
- Attitudes to exclusion
- Attitudes to SEN Whole school responsibility

School A – Attitudes to equity and equality
## Appendix 13 – Thematic analysis phase 4 – reviewing themes – thematic map

### A13.1 Castlemount

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes to equity and equality</th>
<th>Reorganising the Governing Board</th>
<th>Research and empowering teaching staff to improve practice</th>
<th>Children and agency</th>
<th>Keeping parents in the picture</th>
<th>Providing a responsive curriculum</th>
<th>Collaborating to include</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Shared attitudes – SEN/equity</td>
<td>• Parent representation</td>
<td>• Staff and agency</td>
<td>• Listening to children’s views</td>
<td>• Collaboration with parents to develop provision – agentive activity</td>
<td>• Identifying relevant goals for improving provision</td>
<td>• Open culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shared values – SEN/equity</td>
<td>• Building relationships</td>
<td>• Research-based pedagogy</td>
<td>• Responding to children’s feedback</td>
<td>• Parents’ consultation – SEN</td>
<td>• Flexible curriculum</td>
<td>• Consultation on Academy status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Equity and equality</td>
<td>• Review Board organisation</td>
<td>• Staff attitudes to SEN</td>
<td>• All children make progress</td>
<td>• Parent/governor meetings</td>
<td>• Research-informed curriculum</td>
<td>• Role of relationships with community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vision for all</td>
<td>• Allocation of responsibilities</td>
<td>• Funding review – staffing and resources</td>
<td>• Children’s rights</td>
<td>• Provision of SEN information</td>
<td>• Inclusive pedagogy and practice</td>
<td>• Developing communication across the school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attitude to SEN – whole school responsibility</td>
<td>• SEN Governor and SENCO liaison</td>
<td>• Children and agentive activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Research review – pedagogy interventions</td>
<td>• Collaborative support networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for equitable support</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interventions and access to curriculum</td>
<td>Working with external agencies/critical friends/DFE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to exclusion</td>
<td>Academy status and financial control</td>
<td></td>
<td>SDP review</td>
<td>Whole school training provision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing provision for excluded children</td>
<td>Identifying priorities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Funding allocation</td>
<td>Consultation meetings – staff and governors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal experience</td>
<td>Funding allocation/monitoring responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School visits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data analysis – children’s progress</td>
<td></td>
<td>Online information sharing activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### A13.2 Greenhill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiating and responding to change</th>
<th>Reorganising the Governing Board</th>
<th>Supporting teaching staff to promote responsibility for all children</th>
<th>Children's rights and progress in learning</th>
<th>Implementing a creative curriculum</th>
<th>An inclusive learning environment</th>
<th>Communication within the school community to develop agency and participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Drawing on personal experience</td>
<td>• Rationale for reorganisation</td>
<td>• Attitudes to responsibility for all</td>
<td>• Understanding children’s rights change</td>
<td>• Rationale for curriculum change</td>
<td>• Developing inclusive pedagogy</td>
<td>• Role of relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding need for change</td>
<td>• Identifying new structure</td>
<td>• Staff attitudes to SEN</td>
<td>• Children’s rights to make progress</td>
<td>• Policy conflicts</td>
<td>• Development of school space</td>
<td>• Developing a collaborative culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Headteacher appointment</td>
<td>• Approach to recruitment and roles</td>
<td>• Responsive staffing provision</td>
<td>• Review of children’s voice/agency</td>
<td>• Accessibility and curriculum</td>
<td>• Working with SEN processes</td>
<td>• Planning consultation across the school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identifying goals</td>
<td>• Developing shared attitudes and values</td>
<td>• Staffing review</td>
<td>• Planning for agentive activity to support children’s learning</td>
<td>• Curriculum and pedagogy review – children’s progress</td>
<td>• SEN intervention programmes</td>
<td>• Planning for engaging with parents – review of parent views/agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prioritising inclusive attitudes and values</td>
<td>• Identifying priorities</td>
<td>• Approach to professional development for staff</td>
<td>• Exclusions and suspensions</td>
<td>• Monitoring pedagogy and curriculum change</td>
<td></td>
<td>• School visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Funding review and equitable support</td>
<td>• Governor training review</td>
<td>• SENCO role</td>
<td>• Meetings with external organisations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School development planning and vision</td>
<td>• Delegated responsibility for SEN</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Planning SEN provision with parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Data analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Policy reviews – SEN and Behaviour Policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• SEN Vision for Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 14 – Thematic analysis phase 5 – defining and naming themes – table of themes and definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Castlemount</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to equity and equality</td>
<td>What governors say about equity and equality which reflected their views. The way these influenced approaches to SEN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorganising the Governing Board</td>
<td>Reasons why the Governing Board was reorganised and changes relating to recruitment and allocation of responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and empowering teaching staff to improve practice</td>
<td>Views on the role of research, and impact on staff and teaching practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and agency</td>
<td>Interpretations of agency, its role in children’s learning and enactment in practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping parents in the picture</td>
<td>Views on the role of parents and approaches to engaging with them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing a responsive curriculum</td>
<td>Planning and developments in curriculum and pedagogy to support learning for all children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating to include</td>
<td>Influences on arrangements to collaborate across the school community and arrangements for collaboration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greenhill</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating and responding to change</td>
<td>Influences on the need for change and decisions arising from these influences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorganising the Governing Board</td>
<td>Reasons why the Governing Board was reorganised and changes relating to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and allocation of responsibilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting teaching staff to promote responsibility for all children</td>
<td>Views on the role of staff attitudes to responsibility for teaching all children, and the impact on children considered to have SEN. Activities undertaken to support responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s rights and progress in learning</td>
<td>How children’s rights were interpreted in the school, practices developed to support those rights and the outcomes of those practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing a creative curriculum</td>
<td>Planning and development to support diversity, agency and participation through curriculum provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An inclusive learning environment</td>
<td>Views on the role of space to support play, learning and social interaction. Its influence on inclusive provision and outcomes of those views on provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication within the school community to develop agency and participation</td>
<td>Interpretation of the role of communication within the school community and its impact on relationships and children’s learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>