



Can a grace focussed ethos be effective in raising attainment in secondary education?

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Abstract

This dissertation will present the findings of my research, answering the question: 'Can a grace focussed ethos be effective in raising attainment in secondary education?' I have done this through the use of surveys and case studies in three different schools. I used my own primary data as well as finding additional secondary data.

My introduction provides an appropriate working definition of grace within an educational context, by unpacking the Christian understanding of the word. I conclude with a virtuous understanding of grace; that both encapsulates the Christian definition (although not fully) and at the same time makes it possible to be used in a secular environment.

The literary review goes onto focus on the established links and evidence of grace within my three key areas of investigation: Education, Ethos and Attainment.

My methodology chapter explains my use of triangulation within my primary data through the use of: questionnaires, focus groups and structured interviews. I studied three schools: State, Church of England and a Christian Academy (which had an ethos of grace) and revealed the link between their ethos and their attainment. I also used Ofsted to determine each schools attainment (I paid particular notice to the schools previous GCSE results).

In the main section of this dissertation I examine and analyse the research results and provide a detailed evaluation of the findings. My findings will show the effectiveness of each school's ethos in raising attainment and I will therefore conclude with an answer to my dissertation title and consider the implications of my evaluations.

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Introduction

Through this dissertation I would like to discover if grace can effectively raise attainment in secondary education. My hope is that, even though there are a number of things to take into consideration while thinking about raising attainment (i.e. parental input, social class, a school's performance, teaching competence, genes, environment, SEN, etc.), I can show that when grace is implemented (teaching and living it) within a school it can be clearly attributed to raising attainment.

In Christianity, grace is understood to be: 'The free and unmerited favour of God as manifested in the salvation of sinners' (Oxford English Dictionary). It is a word that we find in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and relates most significantly to how God sanctifies his people through the free and atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Grace is a major part of a Christian's understanding of salvation, as we believe that it cannot be earned it just simply has to be accepted.

Grace, however, is also understood to be a virtue ('a character trait a human being needs to flourish or live well' (Hursthouse 1997:229)). As we are shown God's free and undeserved love and forgiveness (Ephesians 2:8, Psalm 103:8), we also understand that we are to do the same, showing free and undeserved love and forgiveness to those around us (as we see in Jesus' teachings Luke 10:25-37, Luke 15:11-32 & Matthew 20:1-16).

'Although grace in the Christian theological tradition is taken to be a free and unmerited favour manifested as a gift from God, it is also possible to think of it as a secular virtue' (Swanton 2010:159)

It is for this reason that I define grace as: 'free and undeserved love and forgiveness given by someone to another'. I have opted to use the word 'undeserved' rather than 'unmerited' as I believe it is more likely to be understood by pupils in year 9. Unfortunately, these two words are not exactly the same, however, their meanings are very similar and denote the fact that grace cannot be earned.

Nishioka importantly notes seven characteristics of grace which we must understand if it is to truly be given by someone to another (2011:246-247):

- Grace is undeserved – (it requires no special behaviour or academic success to receive it).

- Grace is given by God (and humanity as a virtue) – (it is not something that can be taken by force).
- Grace is unexpected – (it goes against the world’s judgments and rules).
- Grace is irretrievable – (it cannot be taken back, people need to know it will be constant).
- Grace is costly – (grace is hard to give when those around you are being unloving and unkind and it is therefore a sacrificial love that manages to give it).
- Grace begets other gifts – (grace is more important than other skills and abilities because it deals directly with humanity’s relationships and fulfils Jesus’ greatest commandment (Matthew 22:36-40)).
- Grace is never finished – (we are people who constantly make mistakes and will always need love and forgiveness, it is therefore something that is never completed). (Brackets mine).

The basis of my argument comes from my belief that many young people are growing up in an achievements based culture and where many are ‘written off’ as a result of their behaviour. I believe that grace is the key element needed amongst staff and pupils themselves in order to develop well and healthily in secondary education. When the world says: ‘you’re useless because you only got D’s, E’s or F’s in your tests’, grace says: ‘well done, you are an amazing young person, let’s keep trying’. When the world says: ‘that’s enough, your bad behaviour has resulted in a permanent exclusion’, grace says: ‘I’ll give you as many second chances as it’ll take to get you to where you need to be’.

Reflexivity

As Payne and Payne (2004:191) note, reflexivity is the practice of being aware of my own beliefs, values and attitudes, and my personal effects on the setting I study. As a Christian whose faith relies heavily upon grace and a practitioner who already works (to the best of his ability) with grace as a fundamental virtue, I am very aware that I have the ability to be very biased. The need to be reflexive is highly important if my claims of validity are to stand (Bowd and Ozerdem 2010:24). Though I may have witnessed an ethos of grace within my own practice to be effective in raising attainment, I cannot simply believe that my research will find the same results.

Positionality (an aspect of the general concept of reflexivity, Greene and Hill 2005:8) states, however, that all researchers come from some sort of position, no matter who the researcher is or what the project. Punch and Oancea (2014:50) also write that any researcher position has both

strengths and weaknesses. They write: 'for example, the insider may bring greater understanding but less objectivity to the research; the outsider may bring greater objectivity but less understanding'. I consider myself to have a greater understanding of the effectiveness of grace than perhaps others who may research the concept, through my practice over the past two years. However, I am more likely to attribute grace as the key element (whether explicit or implicit) and need to only evaluate my findings based on what the research shows.

My pilot study revealed to me that though grace is not explicitly taught or lived; many teachers would regard loving and forgiving pupils as 'professional' behaviour. My research hopes to show a significant difference between 'professional' behaviour and grace and identify when and where each are being used.

Literature review

For my literature review I have chosen to use a thematic approach to help me form a basis of understanding and place my research within a wider contextualised framework. I will examine the existing relationships between grace and my three themes: education, ethos and attainment.

Education

Bates and Lewis write: 'Education is often equated with learning and the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and the skills that will equip an individual for success in their future life' (2009:21). The meaning of education, however, can be different depending on context or approach. For example when using the words 'formal education', it could be more accurate to define it simply as schooling. 'Informal education', is regarded as the process of learning simply through conversation, but is not necessarily linked to school.

It is certain, that there are many potential meanings of the word education and a single definition is not possible, as Sewell and Newman write 'the search for criteria for the term that are relevant for all the meanings it has also seems fraught with difficulty' (2014:5). Most scholars, however, have agreed that education is an intentional and purposeful activity (Bates and Lewis 2009:22). For the purpose of this research I will be using the term 'secondary education' to mean a school (state, public, academy or other) which typically has students from years 7 - 11 (key stage 3 - 4). I would also like to suggest that for this research my term 'secondary education' does not only apply to academic study (attending lessons such as Maths, Science and English etc.), but the entire life and community of the school.

We find education very clearly in the Bible. In the Old Testament we see God trying to educate his people in order that they may obey him better and understand him more. 'Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the Shema, presents both the goal and process of education' (Lawson 2001:17). Jesus, likewise, comes into the world to educate us about God, in the areas where the Pharisees and teachers of the law had got it wrong.

Jesus, however, not only taught us about God, but gave us a new understanding of how we should educate others (not new teaching techniques, but how to treat people). Jesus was patient as he taught (Luke 4:16), kind in his approach (John 8:1-11) and had compassion on those who found some of his teachings hard to comprehend (John 4:1-42). Lawson notes how Jesus 'taught many people on whom the teachers of his day would not have wasted their time – women, Gentiles, and

“sinners”. He welcomed children and did not send them away’ (2001:18). Jesus regarded everyone as ‘worthy’ of knowing and understanding God and did not discriminate, stereotype or give up on them; he educated with grace at the centre (John 1:14).

Many years after Jesus, both the Jews and Christians continued to recognise education as important, (though its purpose was almost entirely devoted to religious study, it was also important for teaching God’s values and beliefs’ (Lawton and Gordon 2002:34)). The Celtic Christian tradition beginning in the 4th century AD began monastic schools to teach the uneducated and greatly advance education within the United Kingdom. This not only increased the intellect of those students but showed the importance of sharing knowledge and teaching the lowly. Similarly, during the 1700’s and early 1800’s Christian based initiatives such as Robert Raikes endeavours and the Sunday School movement helped educate those in their communities despite their social standing. These initiatives showed love and care to people who may have not otherwise been able to access an education. Grace, therefore, is not only evident throughout history within education but necessary to ensure education is available to all and good for empowering those who are learning.

Ethos

An ethos can be defined as ‘the prevalent or characteristic tone, spirit or sentiment informing an identifiable entity involving human life and interaction’ (McLaughlin 2005:311). In a school setting, it is similar to the way we understand culture as described by Thompson ‘the way we do things round here’ (2009:200), by the fact that its ethos sums up what the school does and believes (as Hogan puts it, the ethos is the ‘natural outcome of what is actually happening within the school’ (1984:695)).

When creating an ethos for a school it is important to note as Donnelly writes, ‘it is difficult to create a ‘good’ ethos to improve a school’ because ‘ethos emerges from the dynamics of social interchange and is reflected and reinforced by the behaviour of individuals and groups within the school’ (British Educational Research Association Annual Conference: 1999). Her point being that for an ethos to really be made possible, it cannot simply be talked about, it must be lived on a daily basis. Unfortunately, her data showed that ‘in both case-study schools the ‘aspirational ethos’ set out by school authorities and made apparent in school documents was not only in some cases far removed from the lived reality of ethos but was being undermined and distorted by the

actions and attitudes of school members'. Thus, concluding that a school's ethos does not have the ability to be effective within a school when it is not followed by all the staff and pupils.

David Hope writes that in any Christian educational establishment he hopes 'Paul's reflections on the gifts of the Holy Spirit might figure somewhere in any consideration of the ethos and environment of the school' (1998:23). A good example of grace within a school ethos can be found within the Grace Academy schools in Coventry, Solihull and Darlaston: 'Limitless POTENTIAL, Consistent EXCELLENCE, Mutual RESPECT, Genuine INTEGRITY and Amazing GRACE'. Its website says: 'Our shared values of grace, respect, integrity, potential and excellence influence the actions and attitudes of all in and beyond the Academy' (www.graceacademy.org.uk).

In other schools which are not faith based, it could be argued that the virtuous understanding of grace could be interpreted through using other words such as respect, care and second chances (but do not fully express and encapsulate the meaning of the word grace).

A school's ethos also directly influences its behaviour policies and impacts the way pupils are disciplined. Interestingly, when considering an ethos of grace, it is difficult to conclude how pupils should be dealt with. As grace is undeserved and freely given, it could be argued that no pupil should be punished and an unlimited number of chances should be available. Bagheri's work within an Islamic educational context concludes that justice must be linked to grace when dealing with behavioural problems; 'Justice without grace is too hard to be tolerable, as grace without justice is too soft to be able to manage educational relationships properly' (2001:136). I would argue that good restorative justice is the best procedure to follow when trying to deal with behavioural problems, as it has a foundation of grace (unfortunately, I do not have the space within this dissertation to unpack this further).

It is important to also note that research has already been undertaken by Dr. Elizabeth Green, reviewing the impact of schools with a Christian ethos (*Mapping the field*). One of her main findings within schools in the UK was: 'In terms of attainment, the evidence supported the widespread perception that pupils at maintained church schools achieve more highly and make better progress than pupils at non-denominational schools. The research suggested that prior attainment and pupil characteristics do not completely account for this. There is some 'school effect' (2009:76). This is particularly positive and helpful. I, however, intend my research to go deeper than a Christian ethos and draw a link between grace and raising attainment, proving its worth in all schools (not just Christian).

Attainment

Attainment can be simply defined as the action or fact of achieving a goal towards which someone has worked. Educational attainment is defined as 'the highest grade completed within the most advanced level attended in the educational system' (stats.oecd.org). I would argue, however, that OECD's understanding of attainment is too narrow and simple and ought to include other criteria such as a child's SMSC development. I prefer Scotland's understanding of attainment and what they hope to achieve through raising it: 'Attainment is an individual's passport to personal, social, cultural and economic opportunities. Raising attainment means improving life chances. This does not mean just focusing on exam results, but instead looking at attainment in its widest sense' (www.educationscotland.gov.uk).

Schools are currently highly pressured by government to make sure every student has a high level of attainment and are therefore assessed regularly to make sure they are accomplishing this. I believe, however, that an effective school ought to be 'one in which pupil's progress further than might be predicted from considerations of their attainment when they enter the school (Mortimore 1991:9). This means, a school should not be compared to others based simply on their number of A* - C GCSE's, but how well they have helped the students improve during the time they have been in their care (due to time constraints and the level of difficulty in finding data, this is not something I have been able to research in this dissertation).

The difficulty I believe many young people face today is the pressure to achieve high academic marks. As Nishioka notes: 'most postmodern young people are driven by issues of performance. Most have tied their self-esteem, whether they know it or not, to how well they do on tests' (2001:248). If a grace focussed ethos were to be implemented within a school, I would argue that though academic success is encouraged, only 'manageable' or 'appropriate' pressure would be put upon students to do well. However, alongside that, there would be constant reassurance that their achievement does not determine their worth. As Su writes: 'achievement... is NOT where we should derive our ultimate sense of identity and self-worth, and we need to have a healthy separation between achievement and worthiness' (www.mathyawp.blogspot.co.uk). Sadly, we currently live in accomplishment based society and as Philips also states (cited by the BBC 2014) England's children are being taught in an "unforgiving system" with "no real second chances" (www.bbc.co.uk/news).

Ofsted, who inspect pupil's attainment and grade a school based on its findings could therefore appear to be a tool that lacks forgiveness and grace. At the basic level, they ask themselves the question: 'Is the school good enough or not?' For them, it seems to be a very simple yes or no answer. It is perhaps for this reason that schools struggle to adopt a free and undeservedly loving and forgiving ethos because of the pressure they are under to get their students to the level required. Just as forgiveness in an Ofsted culture may cause concerns that attainment levels may drop, so schools might believe in the necessity to put pressure on students to do well and leave grace to one side. Worsley writes: 'Grace and standards will wrestle at the interface of Ofsted... Attainment will continue to be a core identity as will standards in education' (Worsley 2013:16). As God's people, I believe we have a calling to not only help and enable children and young people to learn, but to be people of grace; people that remind children and young people in this attainment driven culture that they are still special and amazing just as they are.

Unfortunately, I have to acknowledge that 'grace is a substance that cannot be measured and we who live in a culture of continuous assessment need to be reminded of this' (Worsley 2013:15). However, I believe that grace can so vastly impact attainment and my research hopes to prove that once a child knows they are loved and can receive forgiveness, they are more likely to believe in themselves, try harder, behave better and be far happier – all leading to better attainment.

Methodology

Overall research approach: Mixed Methods

For my research methodology I chose a mixed methods approach, using both case studies and surveys. A mixed method approach has a number of advantages and strengths and, as Creswell points out, it particularly allows the researcher to converge/merge quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem (2014:15). By using both quantitative and qualitative data I also ensure that I achieve a better understanding of my research problem that one cannot do alone. I can 'combine the methods in such a way that achieves complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004:18).

The main objective within my research was to carry out a survey (filled out by students) within each school to gain a better understanding of the pupil's thoughts and feelings towards their school and its ethos and how it has helped them in their attainment. Additionally to this, I wanted to discover whether they believed a grace focussed ethos could be more effective than their own. The questionnaires for my survey allowed me to gain better quantitative data and helped me obtain answers to the same questions from a large number of individuals, in order that I might not only describe but also compare (Bell 2005:14).

Alongside my survey, I understood that I needed to conduct case studies within each of the schools through the use of focus groups, staff interviews and considering other additional documents (including Ofsted reports, school policies and other organisational reports). By conducting case studies within each of the schools I was able to perform a three pronged comparison (See Appendix 1 for short biography of case study schools). It enabled me to find out whether there were similar thoughts and feelings about the school between staff, students and government (and/or other independent organisations). It also allowed me to compare the schools themselves in the effectiveness of a grace focussed ethos. Jensen and Rodgers give us a typology of case studies: Snapshot, Longitudinal, Pre-post, Patchwork and Comparative. My methodology, therefore, is a low level form of a comparative case study: 'A set of multiple case studies of multiple research entities for the purpose of cross-unit comparison' (2001:237-239).

Unfortunately, there are disadvantages to using a case study approach; Denscombe notes one as being the 'credibility of generalizations made from its findings' (2000:40). Thankfully, by choosing

a mixed methods approach I am able to combat many of the generalizations, however, I will still have to ensure that my analysis pays close attention to the data gathered in my research rather than making any sweeping statements from one or two of the participants as they may not represent the thoughts or feelings of the whole school.

Design of the data gathering methods - Questionnaires, Focus Groups, Structured Interviews and additional secondary data

My mixed methods design took the form of a convergent parallel set out by Creswell: 'in this design, the investigator typically collects both forms of data at roughly the same time and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results' (2014:15).

I choose these three methods of primary data gathering as I believed they were the best way to draw conclusions for my dissertation title and also achieve a good triangulation with my methods. Triangulation is the 'validation of findings by comparing data collected by a variety of methods or from a variety of sources, researchers or theoretical perspectives' (Maniam et al. 2007:230). It also meant I could achieve as full and as balanced a study as possible as triangulation increases the quality and validity of the research, through the 'use of different data-collection instruments with the same subjects' (Evans 2013:152), (subjects, being in this case the schools, rather than one particular group of people).

An area within my research design that I paid particular attention to was making sure the term 'grace' was understood. This was primarily due to the fact that the meaning of the word grace is unknown by many people (particularly young people) and therefore in all my correspondents with schools and gatekeepers and in my research gathering I gave a clear and simple definition.

Validity and Reliability

In the area of validity and reliability I believe my faith plays a very important role. As a Christian, I believe it is very important to try and live a holy and righteous life and there are numerous Bible verses which are of particular importance when it comes to research. Exodus 20:16 & Philippians 4:8, for example, both speak about being honest and truthful and therefore have direct relevance

to validity. Validity according to Sapsford and Jupp means: 'the design of research to provide credible conclusions: whether the evidence which the research offers can bear the weight of the interpretation that it put on it' (2006:1). Simply put, can my analysis and conclusions accurately sum up my research? Punch and Oancea write that the 'validity question strictly only applies to the inference we make from what we observe' (2014:297) and therefore means if I am to uphold my integrity as a Christian I need to be unbiased and truthful about what I actually discover in my research and draw conclusions accurately; in the same way any other researcher would. Likewise, being reliable is a Godly attribute and verses such as Luke 16:10 & 1 Corinthians 4:2 speak to me about being fair and consistent in my research.

I would predominantly argue, however, that my methodology ensures my validity as well as guaranteeing reliability. My triangulation through the use of surveys and focus groups with the pupils, interviews with staff and secondary data enables me to draw accurate conclusions, which any other researcher would. In order to improve upon this further and in any other research I undertake in the future, I believe it would be important to speak to parents or carers, further validating my data.

Description of the Data gathering methods and research process

Questionnaires

As I have already stated, a difficulty I faced within my research was using a term that is for the majority of people is unused. Because of this, my questionnaires included a short description of grace and examples of when these young people may have witnessed it in their lives. This was particularly important because I was not there to give a definition myself.

I made sure that I gave plenty of time to planning and designing my questionnaires and used my pilot study questionnaire as a helpful framework. I began by thinking through the kind of data I would hope to receive and analyse in order to successfully answer my research question, just as Bell notes: 'thought has to be given to how responses will be analysed at the design stage, not after the questionnaires have been returned' (2005:136-137). I knew I had to pay attention to a number of factors (i.e. question types and question wording) in order to create a good questionnaire. Unfortunately, I was not aware until speaking to my dissertation supervisor that some of my original questions were heavily loaded and I had to rewrite them in order that the

data was valid. 'Loaded questions are worded to influence respondents' answers. Leading questions bias respondents' opinions' (Philips, Philips and Aaron 2013:84). For example, question 10 (see Appendix 2) originally only gave positive options. I had to insert 'It would make no difference' in order that a negative option could be chosen. I will pay closer attention to this in any future research.

I had hoped to receive forty completed questionnaires from each school; however, this did not happen. Despite this, I was still able to accomplish a good proportional percentage of the students in year 9 in each school: Grace Academy Coventry = 11%, Chilwell = 14% & Bluecoat = 15%.

Additionally, all my questionnaires were anonymous as I believed it would mean a better openness from the young people; 'anonymity might facilitate a greater freedom of response; it is likely to be easier for a young person to be honest about their views' (Heath et al 2009:34).

Focus groups

It was in the area of my focus groups that I encountered the biggest difficulty in my research. Initially, I had hoped that each of the participants would have been able to obtain parental consent (due to the schools policies) and use their own names within the research. However, very few schools allowed me to do this and I had to opt for an anonymous approach enabling me to not only work closer to the schools desires but initiate the focus groups quicker because forms did not have to go home and be signed.

The purpose of using focus groups within my research tools was 'to flesh out views and information on topics surveyed' (Punch and Oancea 2014:186). In order to accomplish this; I planned a number of different activities based very closely around my questionnaires. Unfortunately, I was not able to choose all eleven questions because of time restraints (all focus groups were undertaken either at lunch or in tutor time at the beginning of the day). I was able, however, to choose six main questions from my questionnaires enabling the focus groups to last no longer than 30 – 40 minutes (see Appendix 3 for Focus group questions and framework, as well as Focus Group Participant Information Sheet and Consent form). (Unfortunately, I was not able to conduct a focus group within the Grace Academy School in Coventry).

I split the focus group into three sections in order that I might narrow my participants' thinking towards grace and help them feel more and more comfortable and happier to input into

discussion. In the first section I gave time for each young person to walk around the room and answer a question on an A3 piece of paper. The next section involved two group discussions which included pieces of card which had to be put into a priority order. The last section simply contained a discussion around the question: 'How effective would a grace focused ethos be in raising your attainment in school?'

Structured interviews

I decided for my dissertation that I would use a structured approach to my interviews rather than an unstructured approach which I adopted in my pilot study. Unfortunately, this didn't allow for any spontaneity from myself or the interviewees and stopped me from asking questions which may have been particularly useful for my research. 'The advantages of unstructured interviews are that more complex issues can be probed, answers can be clarified, and a more relaxed research atmosphere may contribute to the elicitation of more in-depth as well as sensitive information' (Klenke 2008:126). By conducting my interviews in a structured approach, however, ensured I interviewed each member of staff fairly and consistently, increasing my reliability. It also enabled me to send my interview questions to the members of staff in advance, giving them time to think through their responses (see Appendix 4 for interview questions and staff participant consent form).

Additional secondary data

The secondary data came in the form of a twofold approach. I used the schools policies themselves to compare against my primary data (did the school actually live the way it said it did according to its ethos, behavioural policy or values?) and then used independent organisations (Ofsted and SIAMS - Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) to confirm or deny the data I found in the school myself. These forms of secondary data were particularly valuable to my research and backed up my findings for the use in my analysis, as they gave me a different perspective and enabled a truer representation of the school.

Reflection

I have found performing this research very enjoyable; primarily because the subject of grace has been an interest of mine in recent years. It has been particularly fascinating to understand the different schools and young people's perspectives of grace in their environments.

Although, I was unable to conduct my research in as many schools as I had originally hoped for, due to circumstance outside of my control (my ethical clearance form stated that I wished to enter five schools), I was able to secure the help of three schools: a Church of England school (Bluecoat), a state school (Chilwell Comp) and a Christian academy (Grace Academy Coventry). These schools provided a good range of data through achieving a sample size of approximately one hundred participants.

I have concluded that in order to achieve a higher number of participating schools in the future, I need begin my research process earlier and be aware of different school's anonymity policies. My research methodology has also particularly shown me the importance of having helpful and encouraging gatekeepers. As Masson states: 'gatekeepers have a positive function in ensuring that children are protected from potential harm... and to act as a barrier to poorly thought out or potentially damaging research' (2007:46). It was only through having trust in myself or a mutual interest in the research that I was able to work with the gatekeepers and perform the research in each school.

Data Analysis

Introduction to Analysis

In order to analyse my raw data, I first collated it considerably (a complete summary of the collated data can be found in my appendices: Appendix 5 - Chilwell, Appendix 6 - Bluecoat and Appendix 7 - Grace Academy Coventry). For each interview, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. Similarly, for the focus groups I listed all appropriate quotes from any of the young people and uploaded pictures of the focus group activities (A3 paper & slips of card). Finally, all of the questionnaire data (both qualitative and quantitative) was organised in such a way as to see all of the responses for each question on the same pages. I also used Microsoft Excel when possible to insert my data into pie graphs and bar charts.

Analysing the data

As I have opted to undertake a mixed method approach for my research, it is important that I include both qualitative and quantitative data within my analysis, and use both to draw conclusions.

For my quantitative data, I choose to use the 'descriptive' method of analysis, which involves 'counting the frequency of appearances of certain elements of the research question and comparing this with other elements' (Sarantakos 2013:320). This method allowed me to not only find percentages within my questionnaires, but enabled me to analyse my open ended questions, through finding similar responses. This was particularly helpful as my surveys were completed within three different schools and so enabled me to compare my quantitative data to each other.

The qualitative data within my research was much harder to analyse. Sarantakos notes that the process of qualitative analysis is deeper, more focused and more detailed than in quantitative research (2013:366). For the qualitative data within my research, I focussed on finding commonalities and quotes of particular importance. However, the difficulty I experienced here was ensuring I used the correct data, not leaving out anything important and making sure I didn't pay too much attention to the data that carried little weight. As Denscombe writes: 'Qualitative data, whether words or images, are the product of a process of interpretation. The data only

becomes data when they are used as such' (2000:208), the danger I knew I had with qualitative data was interpreting it falsely.

To combat this danger, I choose to analyse my data by looking at four areas of investigation: Ethos, Staff/Pupil relationships/behaviour, Attainment and Grace, and use six questions specifically to allot my data. These six questions were present in my focus groups and were similar to questions asked in my interviews and questionnaires. This enables me to triangulate my data, ensuring reliability and helped keep me from interpreting my qualitative data falsely. There were, however, occasional inconsistencies (between the staff, pupils and external documents) within my results and when these have occurred I have sought to provide possible explanations.

In order to analyse my research as a whole, I opted to use the method of analytic deduction (the same approach which I adopted in my pilot study). A deductive approach 'seeks to generate and examine findings in relation to pre-established themes which... provide overall direction to the development of the analysis' (Evans 2013:163). The deductive approach to analysis was most appropriate for me because this research seeks to draw conclusions and confirm what I have already set out in my introduction and literature review.

Ethos

What do think of your school's ethos and how does it impact your daily life?

The purpose of this question was to discover whether the school's ethos was evident within the school and whether it was encouraged by the staff and owned by the students.

My focus groups revealed that very few young people believe that their ethos impacted their daily life. In Bluecoat, all but one stated that it didn't impact them and in Chilwell, four out of six pupils also believed that it didn't impact them. There was, however, a lack of explanation given by the participants within the focus groups, as they mainly only stated whether it did or did not impact them. One student in Chilwell commented: 'it is not impressed onto us'; despite the fact that Chilwell school's ethos is written above every white board in every classroom.

My questionnaires showed a very negative response regarding each schools ethos. In Bluecoat, 64% of students answered 'No' to the question: 'Does your school's ethos positively impact the

way you learn, treat others and think about yourself?' this rose to 81% in Grace Academy Coventry and 83% in Chilwell.

Similarly the graph below (figure 1) shows very little agreement that the school's ethos is evident within the life of the school. This is perhaps with the exception of Bluecoat, who has the only students that 'strongly agree' with my question and also quite easily have the highest percentage for 'agree'.

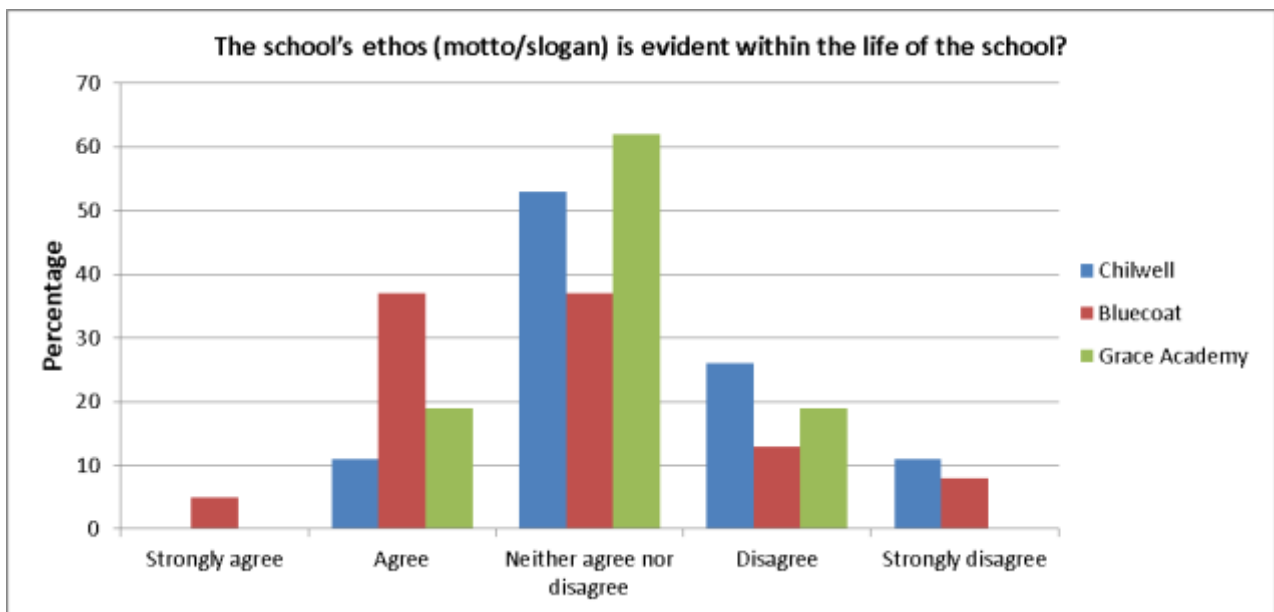


Figure 1 - Comparative graph (Questionnaire question 2)

When asking each member of staff in the schools whether they believed the school's ethos is owned by the school community? I got some different answers:

In Chilwell school, Mr Brierly told me that: 'When I walk around the school you get that sense that the pupils are 'not' following the ethos, but it's within them with the way they are behaving, which is what it's all about'. He particularly expressed to me that: 'I would like to think that when the pupils leave... they'll look back and think 'oh yeah, Share, Care, Believe and Achieve' and they'll remember that', believing that each student who leaves would recognise that their ethos actively made a difference to them while at the school. Additionally to this, Ofsted remarked 'In teaching, assemblies and through its ethos, the school promotes tolerance for others and respect, whatever a person's beliefs, sexual orientation, race, or disability' (7-8 October 2014) and although it doesn't conclusively state whether its ethos is owned, it's clear that it is impacting the students positively.

In Bluecoat, Mr Williams agreed with the responses of the students and said: 'I think when you look at the actual wording of it... it's not something which I would say the students are aware of particularly', but went on to say 'However, I would say that the message is something that is accepted by the students and it is something that is lived by the students'. Furthermore, the school's Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) lists ethos as one of the its 'Established strengths' and says: 'The school's distinctive ethos in which all are valued and benefit from excellent relationships, levels of pastoral care and educational guidance which is totally inclusive' (www.churchofengland.org).

In Grace Academy Coventry, Serena McCarthy believed the school was 'getting there', when reflecting on whether the school's ethos was owned by the school community and spoke quite often about the fact that they operate on a daily basis with the school's ethos and values underpinning and coming 'across in everything that we do'. However, to argue against that point, the questionnaire results from Grace Academy Coventry showed that only 18% of the participants believed that the schools ethos is evident within the life of the school.

The beliefs held by the staff and external documents, which back up the statements about ethos, argue that each school's ethos is in fact making a difference and being lived. The contradictions regarding the students though could come from the fact that a school's ethos speaks of an ideal and is not something which can be perfectly worked out on a daily basis by every member of the school community. This, therefore, means no ethos can be perfect and cannot be evident to everyone all the time.

Staff/Pupil relationships/behaviour

I have chosen to reflect on and analyse these next two questions because they contain hints of grace and allow me to understand and see/not see established evidence of it within the school environment.

What difference does it make when you know your teachers unconditionally care and support you in school?

The following list shows the order of importance given by the students in the focus groups at Chilwell for the above question. (Although this activity was meant to be done as a group activity, there were dominant members of the group who made a final decision about the order).

1. I believe in myself more
2. I am more likely to ask for help
3. I try my hardest
4. I behave better
5. I am happy
6. I am more likely to listen
7. It makes no difference
8. It helps me get away with bad behaviour

One student remarked: ‘Some people think “teachers get paid to care, that’s their job”, so it’s just not gonna make any difference is it?’ Another student said: ‘I wouldn’t put ‘I am happy’ near the top... I think you’d be happier... if you knew someone cared about you’.

The graph below (figure 2) shows the results from the completed Chilwell questionnaires for the question: ‘When I know my teachers unconditionally care for me and support me... (circle all that apply)’. It clearly shows the fact that students would be more likely to listen to teachers, ask for help from them and behave better when they know they are unconditionally cared for and supported. The data also shows that listening to the teachers was high up on the agenda for those who filled out the questionnaire, but not those who took part in the focus group.

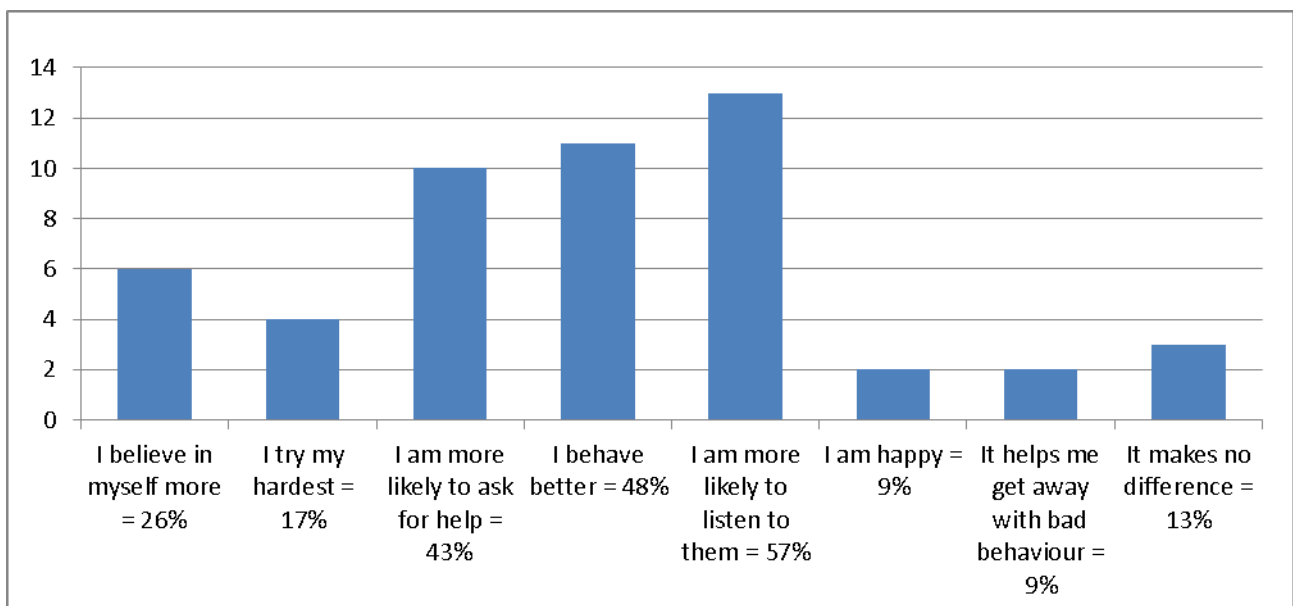


Figure 2 - Chilwell

The next list reveals the priority order for the same question above for the students within the focus group at Bluecoat.

1. I am Happy
2. I try my hardest
3. I am more likely to listen
4. I believe in myself more
5. I am more likely to ask for help
6. I behave better
7. It helps me get away with bad behaviour
8. It makes no difference

Initially, many of the young people within this focus group said it would make no difference because they found it difficult to believe a teacher could unconditionally support and care for them. This was backed up by one of them saying: ‘A teacher has said to me “I’m not here to be your friend; I’m here to teach you”, I don’t think the teachers could unconditionally care and support me all the time’. After telling them that they had to imagine a school where it was possible, they then began to open up more. One student said: ‘I’m more willing to have a go when answering questions, because I wouldn’t be afraid that my teachers would have a go at me’.

This next graph below (figure 3) shows the results from the completed Bluecoat questionnaires for the question: ‘When I know my teachers unconditionally care for me and support me... (circle all that apply)’.

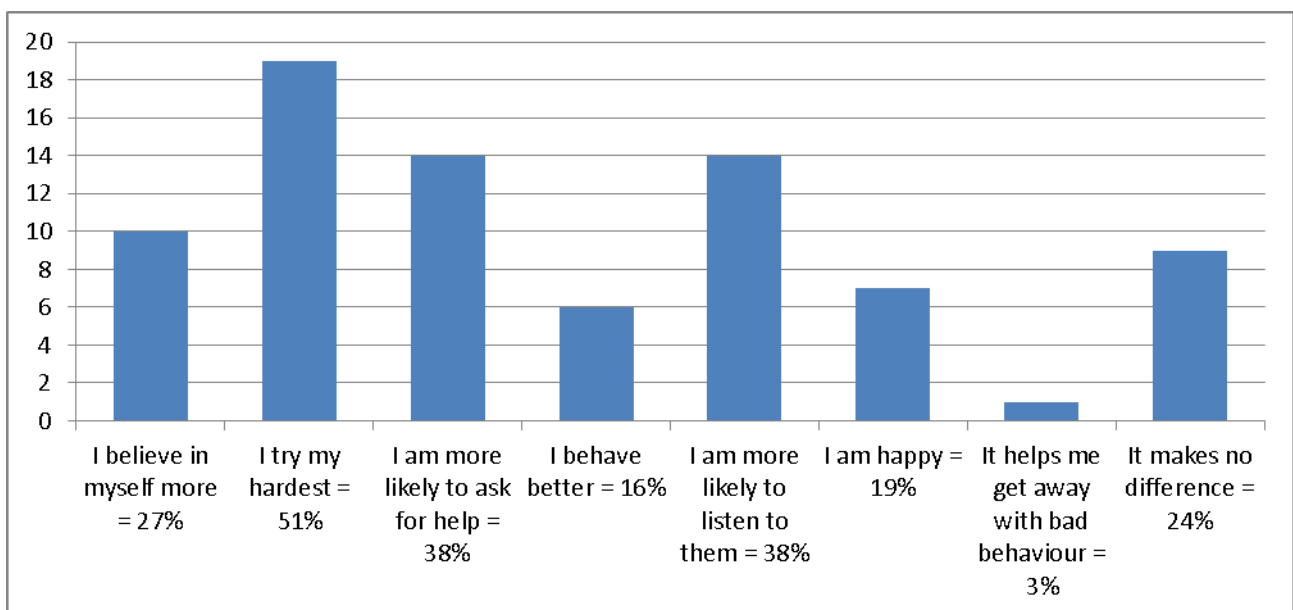


Figure 3 - Bluecoat

This graph again shows that asking for help from teachers and being more willing to listen to teachers as being key things. There is, however, a drastic change from Chilwell, in that ‘trying their hardest’ becomes the highest percentage and is also second on the list in the focus group priority order.

Bluecoat’s students also had the strongest opinion out of all the schools that even if teachers were to show students unconditional care and support it would actually make no difference. This may have been for the same reason I discovered with the focus groups, however, within some of the questionnaires I found contradictions because they had circled ‘it makes no difference’ while at the same time circling other statements.

The graph below (figure 4) shows Grace Academy Coventry’s results from the questionnaires for the question: ‘When I know my teachers unconditionally care for me and support me... (circle all that apply)’. This school again shows a different answer to the other two in that ‘believing in themselves’ is the highest percentage. It does, however, show a similarity to Chilwell, in that the students are more likely to be better behaved.

It also shows again that students are more likely to listen to teachers if they are unconditionally care for and supported, with a percentage of 62%. This, therefore, makes ‘I am more likely to listen to them’ the main response in all the schools.

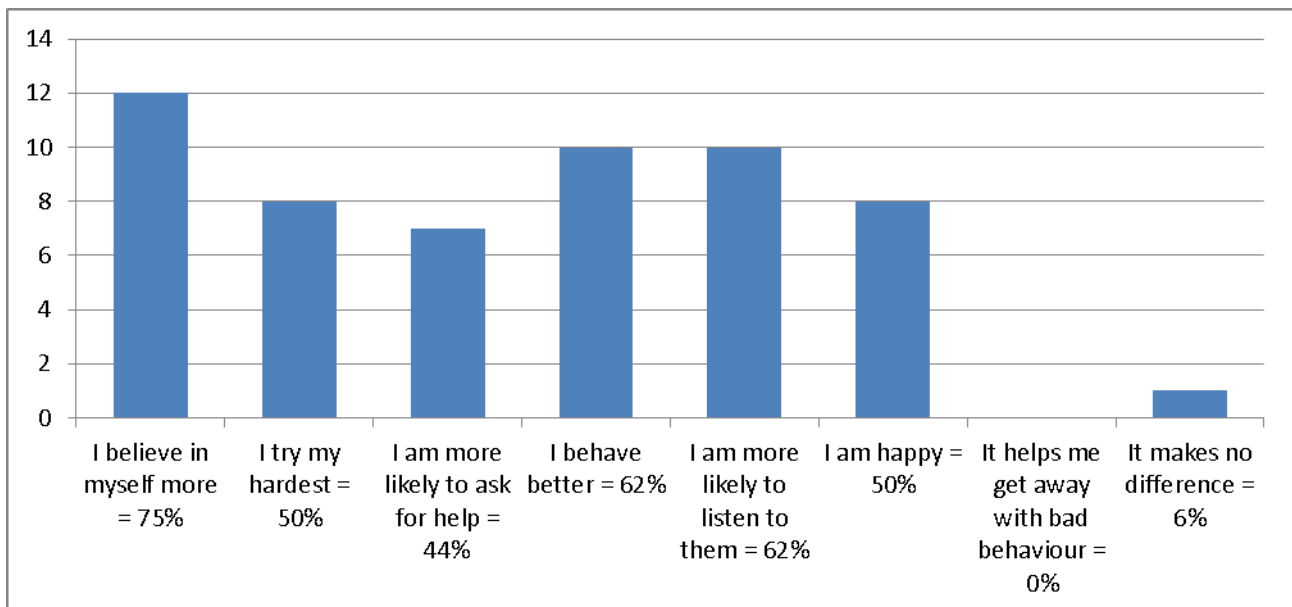


Figure 4 - Grace Academy Coventry

The questionnaires also revealed that in Chilwell only 22% of the students believed that their teachers showed them unconditional care and support. This was similar in Bluecoat with only 21% and Grace Academy Coventry being 25%. Additionally to this, it was undeniable that the main response for this question (no.5) was ‘depends’ with 50% in Bluecoat, 57% in Chilwell, and 62% in Grace Academy Coventry. The largest and main percentage of explanations involved the phrase: ‘some teachers do, and some don’t’.

The graph below (figure 5) shows a comparative graph of the same question: ‘When I know my teachers unconditionally care for me and support me... (circle all that apply)’. The most striking results can be seen for Grace Academy, in which they lead the percentages for five statements, and actually being double that of the results in Chilwell and Bluecoat for ‘I believe in myself more’ and ‘I am happy’.

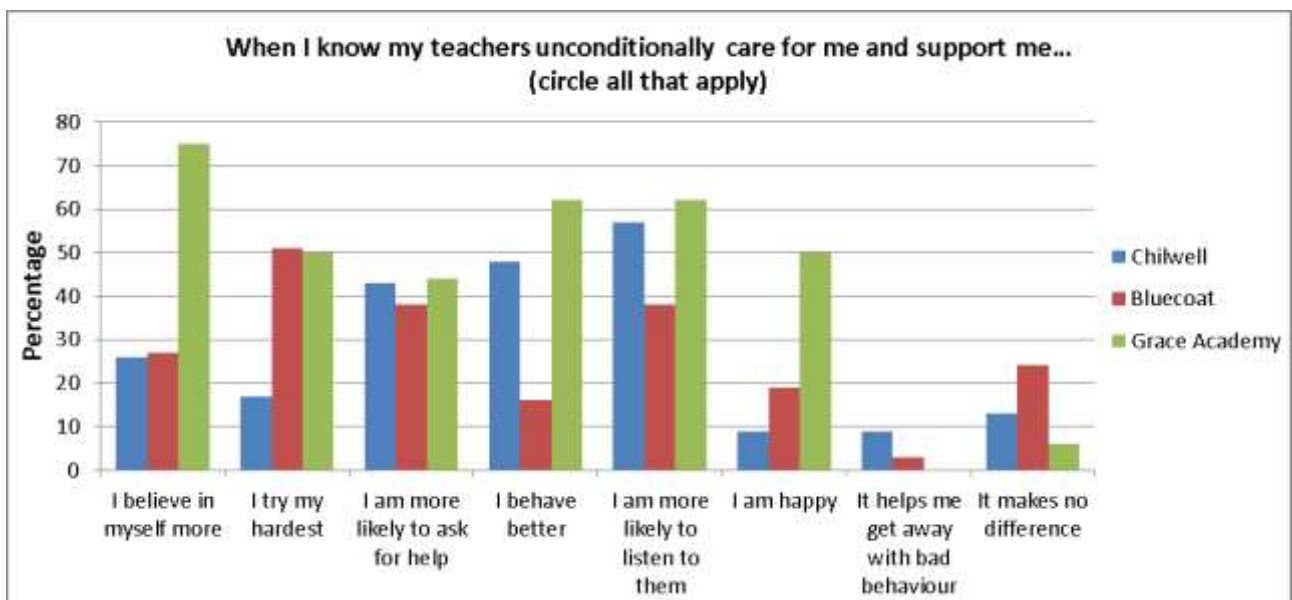


Figure 5 - Comparative graph (Questionnaire question 6)

When trying to deal with bad behaviour, how important is it for you to be given another chance and why?

For this question, I found that the focus groups were the best source of data.

In Bluecoat, the students were particularly deep, with three positive answers being:

‘With no 2nd chance you can’t improve on your mistakes’

‘If a teacher don’t give you another chance then were stuck’

'Yes because you can change'

Chilwell students also gave some good answers:

'People would not progress if they did not have a second chance'

'It is good to be given another chance cause them will be good'

'Depending on the bad behaviour you should forgive and forget'

In both schools, however, students made comments about justice and punishment:

'The punishment should fit the crime'

'Punishment should scale with behaviour'

'No, you should know right from wrong'

I expected within all of the schools when asking the question in my questionnaire: 'How many chances do you believe you should get to improve your behaviour?' for the students to opt for '10+'. However, this was not the case. This may have been the result of students misunderstanding the question, as there is no context. Students may have thought to themselves, 'how many chances per lesson? Per day? Per week?' I did, however, intentionally leave a context out of the question in order that the students would read the question in whatever way they believed, hopefully giving some general data about extra chances, rather than relating it to specific times and places.

I had estimated within my research that the Grace Academy school in Coventry would have had the majority of students answering '10+' to the question: 'How many chances do you believe you should get to improve your behaviour?' because of their ethos' emphasis on grace – 'Amazing GRACE: Life is better with fresh starts and second chances' (www.graceacademy.org.uk/coventry). Second chances are also emphasised within their Student Behaviour Policy, in which the section 'Unacceptable Behaviour' states: 'Students will always be given a chance to consider their behaviour. They will be encouraged and helped to make apologies to other students or staff they may have offended; show they can keep to the Academy rules; or make suitable reparation' (2012:9). However, the graph below (figure 6) shows a comparative graph for question 4 within the questionnaires and reveals that the most '10+'s' are found in Bluecoat.

A possible explanation for this may have been said by Mr Williams, who stated: ‘Bluecoat has not excluded somebody permanently I think for 3 -4 years now because there is chance after chance because there’s that belief that everybody is unique and individual and should be given a chance to succeed’. A reduction in exclusions may be due to their behaviour policy which states under ‘Forgiveness and Reconciliation’ that: ‘Forgiveness and reconciliation are important responses to a breakdown of discipline and relationships within any Christian community and should always be our priority. This applies to relationships between all members of the academy community’ (2014:6). Though the students in my focus group at Bluecoat didn’t believe that their ethos impacted them positively, it seems perhaps, that it is because Bluecoat has a Christian ethos that its students are given many second chances. I wonder, however, had I been able to focus some of my research on students at risk of exclusion, whether I may have found different answers.

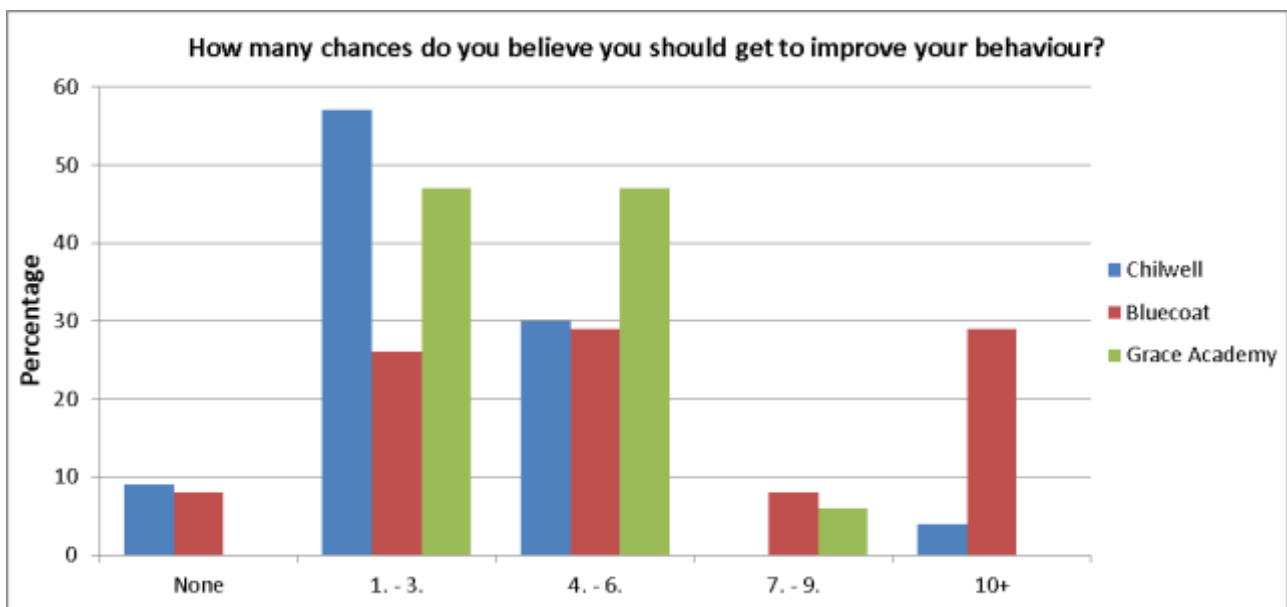


Figure 6 - Comparative graph (Questionnaire question 4)

The graph also shows that the students in Chilwell do not believe in very many second chances. This could be because they would like justice to be done to other students within their classes when they are badly behaved, enabling distractions within their learning environments to be kept to a minimum.

Attainment

What would you change within the school to help you improve your attainment?

The themes that arose from this question primarily revolved around teachers and teaching content. The surveys showed that 39% of all the students who responded in my questionnaires would change either their teachers or the way their teachers behaved in order to help them improve their grades.

Some students responded with practical ideas such as:

- **More time to revise**
- **Study periods**
- **Different size of classes**
- **Take out the people who don't want to learn**
- **Make it cleaner to improve the working environment**
- **Stop working out of text books, stop copying off the board**
- **Do a bit more than just sit in a classroom for hours on end. Go outside do something. I believe people will enjoy the lesson more**

However, these were certainly in the minority compared to the answers regarding teachers.

Contrary to this, however, my focus group shows the opposite. In Bluecoat, there was no mention of a teacher's behaviour, only their teacher's ability to make lessons more interesting and engaging. Similarly in Chilwell, only one participant mentioned teachers directly, the rest wrote down practicalities.

When interviewing the members of staff within each school I found similar data. I asked each of them 'In what ways does the school try and improve student attainment?' In Chilwell, Mr Brierly's focus was on improving staff, he said: 'A robust focus on improving teaching and teachers to optimise their skill set and keep them up to date with current practises'. However, in Bluecoat and Grace Academy Coventry, there was a focus on trying to understand a child's needs and supporting them in whatever way was needed.

Serena McCarthy told me: 'I think we're intrinsically trying to bed in our students that they are of value because when a student understand they are of value... they begin to put value into other things and achieve something of value'.

Mr Williams said: 'So from my perspective, if we have a student who is struggling, then we would look at things like, mentoring... We'd also put on short courses... For example you have friendship

groups, or self-esteem groups and things like that... if that was the underlying cause of the problems of attainment’.

I would argue that from the sheer number of responses I received in my questionnaires that related to teachers, the main way in which a school and a child themselves could improve their attainment is through better relationships between staff and pupils. This has certainly got to be the case, as though many students may not believe all teachers are competent and able to provide exciting and engaging lessons, they have all been trained either through PGCE’s or independent training courses at the schools themselves. Each school would not employ someone who they did not believe had the capacity to teach students to a high level, and so interaction, care and support must be the focus in order to raise attainment.

Grace

How would your school be different if everyone treated each other with grace all the time?

Similar to my questions under the heading ‘Staff/Pupil relationships/behaviour’. I have been able to analyse my next question using my focus groups and surveys side by side.

The following list gives the priority order the participants of the focus groups at Chilwell gave when asked the above question:

- **There would be no bullying**
- **All staff and pupils would have a good and caring relationship**
- **There would be less pressure and stress around exam times**
- **No pupil would be excluded**
- **No lesson would be interrupted by bad behaviour**
- **It would be a fun and happy place to be**
- **It would make no difference**

There were some disagreements to this list however, one student said: ‘There’s always gonna be bullying, somebody would still pick on someone... if you had new glasses, or you were fat...’.

Another remarked: ‘You wouldn’t find it happy, you’d find it creepy’. One student also said something which I hadn’t considered before: ‘I don’t think it would necessarily be a fun and happy place to be... because some people just don’t like history for example’. My original thinking had

been that if a school was full of grace, everyone would be happy. However, as this student has pointed out, you may not be happy due to numerous other circumstances i.e. uninteresting subjects, classroom environments, lunch menus etc.

Figure 7 (below), shows the results to the same question for Chilwell's questionnaires. Contrary to the focus group, 'It would be a fun and happy place to be' has now become the highest percentage.

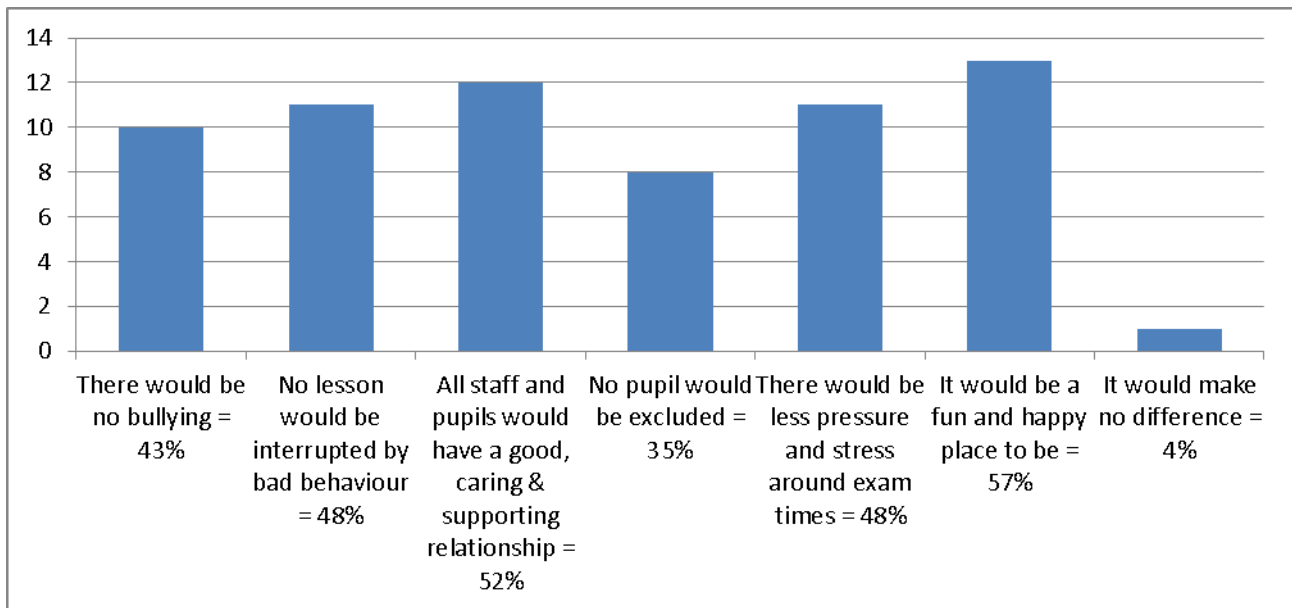


Figure 7 - Chilwell

In my interview with Mr Brierly, he spoke of the importance of grace within school and spoke of good staff/pupil relations and bullying. He said: 'Particularly where pupils are vulnerable, they need to know that when they come into schools they're not going to be judged for some of the difficulties they have, there's going to be someone there to support them and whatever myths or rumours there might be about them they're not going to be in the classroom, they can forget those things and move on with their education'.

Bluecoat's focus group gave the following order to the same question:

- **There would be no bullying**
- **It would be a fun and happy place to be**
- **All staff and pupils would have a good caring and supporting relationship**
- **No lesson would be interrupted by bad behaviour**
- **There would be less pressure and stress around exam times**

- No pupil would be excluded
- It would make no difference

All of the participants in the focus group had some good comments relating to this question, here a just a few:

'It would make a huge difference'

'Everyone would be happier'

'Students wouldn't be afraid to come to school because if everyone treated each other with grace there would be no more bullying'

This was again, however, only after they got their head around the idea that an ethos of grace could actually exist and all staff and pupils would treat each other according to it.

Figure 8 (below) shows the results for the same question in Bluecoat questionnaires. Here, we see that there is agreement between the focus groups and survey that if everyone treated each other with grace all the time there would be no bullying.

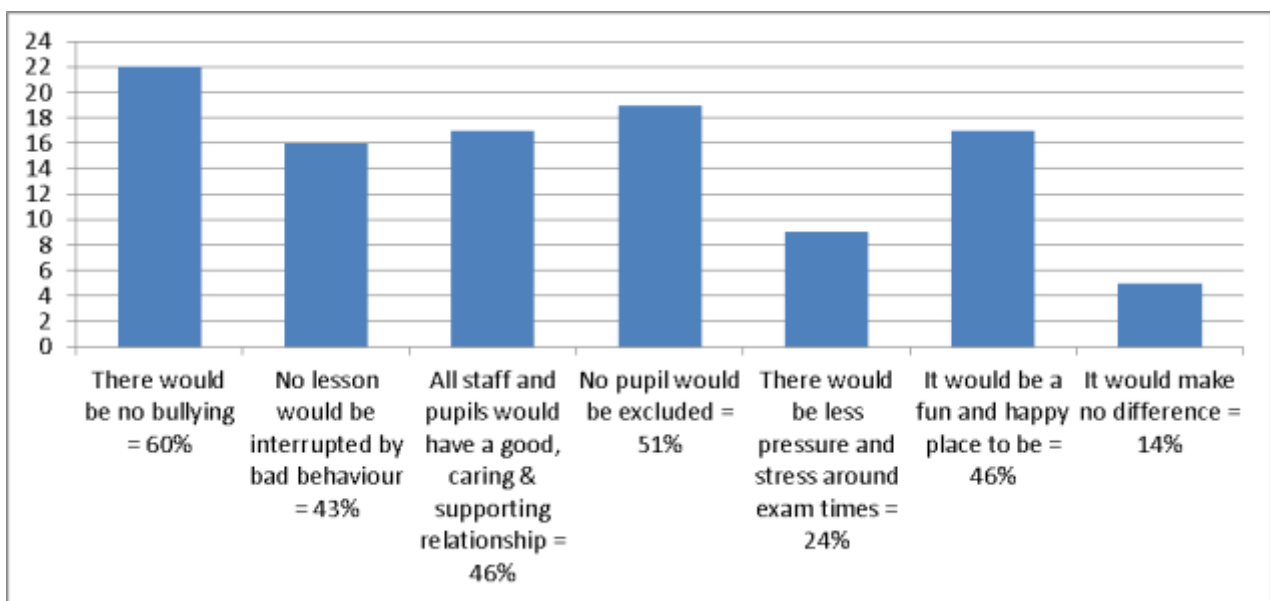


Figure 8 - Bluecoat

Figure 9 (below) shows the results for the same question in Grace Academy Coventry.

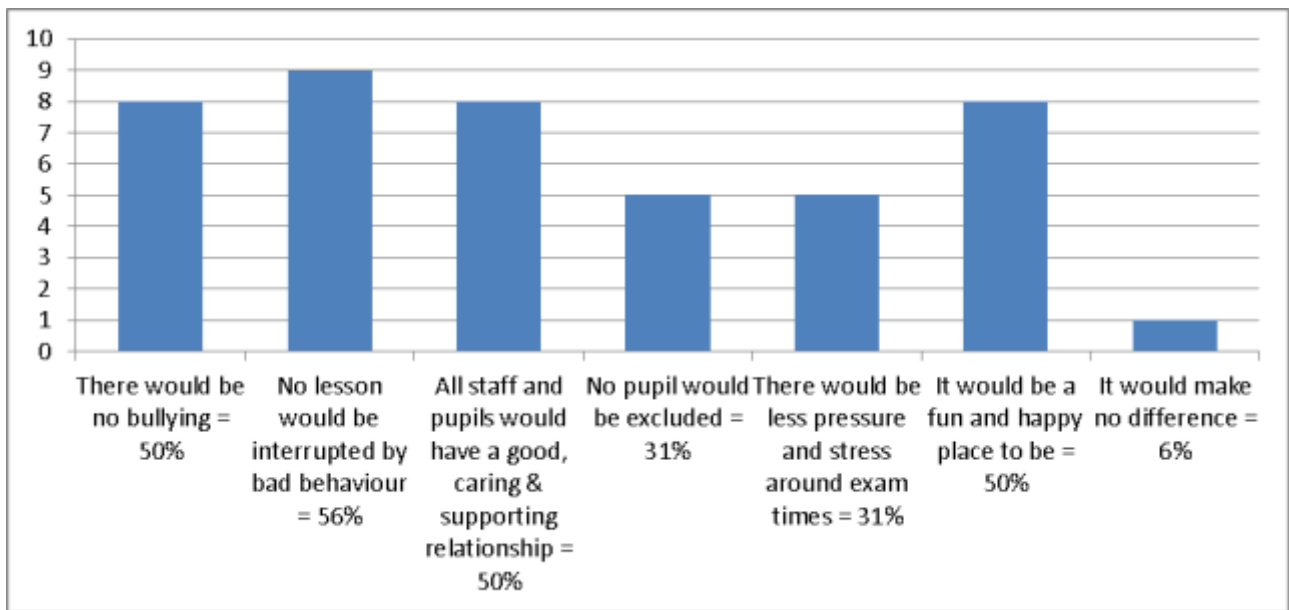


Figure 9 - Grace Academy Coventry

The graph below (figure 10) shows a comparative graph for the results in each school. It shows that almost all of the statements (excluding 'It would make no difference') have all achieved a fairly high percentage. This tells me that, many of the students believe that grace could have a substantial effect in a number of areas. By the very fact that 'It makes no difference' has received very little attention makes me realise that a grace focussed ethos (though it may not be perfect if not lived) would certainly improve a school's environment and community.

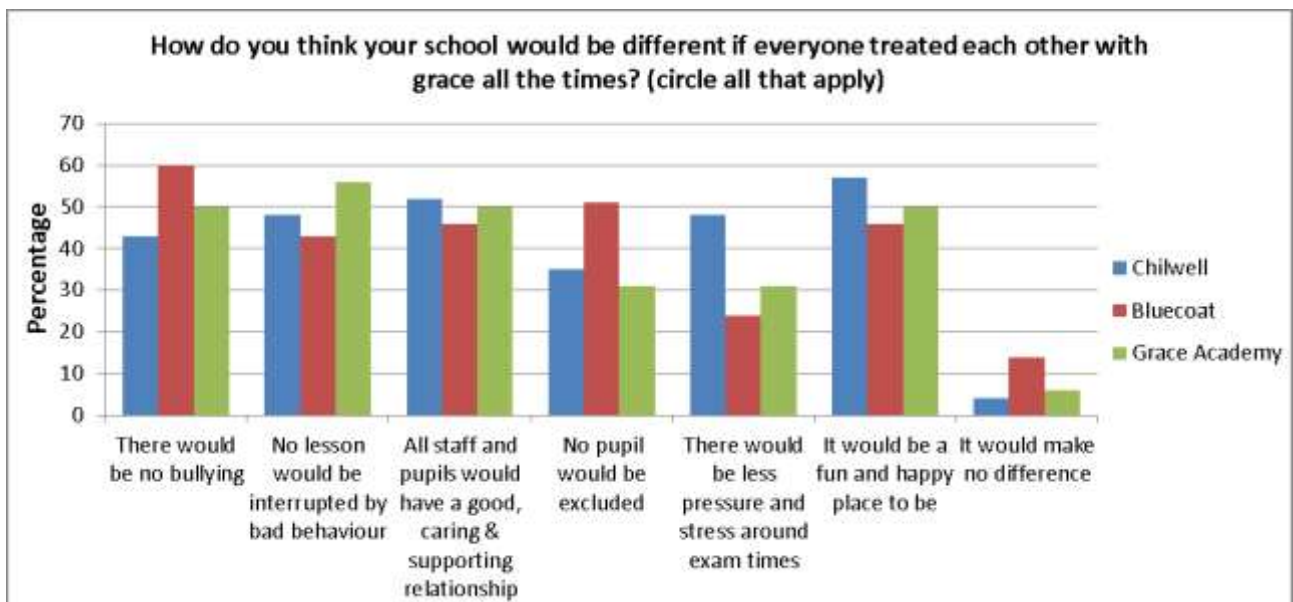


Figure 10 - Comparative graph (Questionnaire question 10)

The graph also shows that despite grace being evident within school life, students believed they would still experience stress and pressure around exam times, as this is the lowest percentage result other than 'It would make no difference'.

How effective would a grace focused ethos be in raising your attainment in school?

To analyse this question I have found Ofsted's 'School Data Dashboard' helpful as it contains important information regarding a school's attainment.

My hope for this dissertation was to show that the Grace Academy School in Coventry would be able to achieve the highest attainment due to its grace focussed ethos. However, Ofsted reports: In 2013, 33% of all pupils attained five GCSEs grade A* to C including English and Mathematics. This is a decrease of 17 percentage points since 2012. (www.dashboard.ofsted.gov.uk). Additionally, 67% of students in my questionnaires in Grace Academy Coventry believed that a grace focussed ethos would not positively impact the way they learnt, treat others or think about themselves. Both Chilwell and Bluecoat both had substantially higher attainment:

- Chilwell School - In 2013, 57% of all pupils attained five GCSEs grade A* to C including English and mathematics. This is a decrease of one percentage point since 2012. (www.dashboard.ofsted.gov.uk)
- Bluecoat Academy - In 2013, 66% of all pupils attained five GCSEs grade A* to C including English and mathematics. This is a decrease of five percentage points since 2012. (www.dashboard.ofsted.gov.uk)

In both schools there were also a higher number of students who believed that a grace focussed ethos would not positively impact them, 56% in Chilwell (although 7 people did not answer the question at all) and 60% in Bluecoat (this time with only 3 people who did not answer the question).

This was different, however, to what many of the participants said my focus groups. In Chilwell, one student said:

'Very... it would be more effective because everyone would be in a happier learning environment and there wouldn't be any distraction and there wouldn't be any pressure to succeed or there wouldn't be that having to live up expectations and everyone would just be good as they are'.

In Bluecoat students also said:

'If you know someone loves you, you wouldn't want to let them down, so you'd work harder'

'We would get more chances to have another go, and we'd be able to do better than just being labelled from our first attempt'

There was however disagreements again, as some believed: 'It wouldn't make any difference, or at least it wouldn't be any better or worse' One student from Chilwell also remarked: 'People don't follow the ethos we have now, so I don't see why if we had a grace one why people would follow it'.

Despite Grace Academy having the lowest attainment, Serena McCarthy gave me some feedback regarding grace, attainment and a student with SEN. She said: 'grace enables him to function... In a way that he wouldn't be able to if there wasn't grace. And our students understand that about him because they understand grace'. She also believes that: 'Grace enables a student to see past their current circumstance, its enables them to see... future and to keep going... it really does'.

As well as SEN, it is clear that there is a link between grace and behavioural needs. Mr Brierly said: 'you've got to separate the person from the behaviour... I think poor behaviour has to have a consequence. There needs to be a connection between that, but we have a very clear line on this, once the punishment is served = blank piece of paper, start again. I think that is a grace focused way of dealing with stuff'. Mr Williams also told me: 'we are taking students who have been excluded from other schools, taking ones who are not able to cope in normal lessons or alternative provision and they will seriously test your patience every day but they are given a fresh start every day and are given chance after chance in order for them to achieve something here'.

Conclusion

The analysis has revealed that my research has given me somewhat of an inconclusive conclusion to whether a grace focussed ethos can effectively raise attainment in secondary education. This is primarily because my data argues both for and against, and also because it raises more questions than it answers.

The final question on my questionnaire sought to give me a simple yes or no answer to my thesis and despite performing research in a school which had a grace focussed ethos, 61% of all the students who answered question 11 believe 'No'.

Also, my analysis showed that the students believe there was very little evidence that the current ethos within the schools were actually evident and 'owned' by the staff and other pupils. 73% of all the students who filled in my questionnaires also believed that their own school's ethos does not impact the way they learn, treat others or think about themselves. As Donnelly writes: 'the official school ethos...often departs considerably from the ethos which emerges from the intentions, interactions and behaviour of school members'; she goes on to say, however, 'a school's ethos wields only a certain amount of power to condition people to think and act in an 'acceptable' manner' (British Educational Research Association Annual Conference: 1999).

I would argue that despite the evidence to suggest that grace cannot effectively raise attainment, there is indeed some evidence to conclude it could.

When we look at Jesus' teaching in the Bible, I believe we see that grace has very little significance to our own attainment. Jesus taught us to live life simply, giving to the poor, looking after the sick and pursuing God rather than worldly desires. He explicitly teaches: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). We are told to look out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:4) and 'to do good and share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased' (Hebrews 13:16). We understand also, that the Christian life leads onto the ultimate form of 'failure' (opposite of attainment) by laying down our life for others (John 15:13). It is only, however, through a life of sacrifice and faith that we can achieve the ultimate attainment: eternal life with Jesus in heaven (Matthew 16:25).

I have already noted earlier that grace is allocated within the doctrine of salvation and it is only through God's grace that we can receive forgiveness and enter into eternal life. 'Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and

justification... Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification... and for the attainment of eternal life' (Jurgensmeier 2012:100).

I therefore believe the Biblical teaching of grace is this: though a life of grace cannot achieve personal attainment (other than that of eternal life), it does cause attainment in the lives of those around us; our gracefulness encourages, inspires and enables others to attain. Consequently, everyone within a school community has the capacity to show grace to each other and attainment can rise.

My evidence has shown that there is clearly a perceived benefit from both staff and pupils if a grace ethos were to be adopted within a school which would in turn lead to higher attainment. The data shows that if teachers unconditionally cared and supported students within school they would be more likely to listen to them, ask for help and try their hardest. It also suggests that if everyone treated each other with grace all the time there would be no bullying, all staff and pupils would have a good, caring and supportive relationship and it would be a fun and happy place to be.

My analysis revealed that the majority of students noted teacher's behaviour and teaching content as being the thing they would change within their school if they could to improve their attainment. Better teachers (more caring, supporting, loving, forgiving and encouraging), because of grace, would have a direct positive influence on a child's behaviour, well-being and capacity to listen and learn. Furthermore, as additional chances to improve on behaviour were a clear desire and need by the students (because it makes it possible to improve and develop), a forgiving ethos within a school would allow students to make mistakes within their work without the possibility of judgement and stress (which, handled well, would give students greater freedom to learn in a way that suits them - as understood by Montessori - Schmidt & Schmidt 2009:183-196).

Additionally, I believe it is worth noting (by way of external verification) that many of the top schools in England are faith based. St Michael's Catholic Grammar School in North Finchley (approximately 750 students) is ranked 96/100, according to the BBC's top 100 schools in England (www.bbc.co.uk) (taken from the Department of Education). Though this is not the highest ranking faith based school on the list (it still has an attainment of 98% of students achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs), it is one that reveals a grace focussed ethos. Julian Ward (Head teacher) writes: 'We are almost unique as a grammar school in that we are also a Faith school. This means that we are first and

foremost a Catholic school... our school's Mission Statement quot[es] Jesus' words 'Love one another as I have loved you'. I hope that everything we do as staff, pupils, parents, trustees and governors can be based on this premise' (www.st-michaels.barnet.sch.uk).

Also, referring again to Dr. Elizabeth Green's work (*Mapping the field*), she states 'that maintained Catholic secondary schools do better, in terms of attainment and pupil progress, than non-denominational schools' (2009:28) and 'pupils who were more socially disadvantaged, on average, did better in Catholic secondary schools compared to their counterparts attending non-Catholic secondary schools' (2009:29).

It is possible to argue, therefore, that the 'school effect' (ethos being a central element) can help raise student attainment and, within this, grace can have a significant role.

Recommendations

For future recommendations I believe it would be particularly important to have a wider range of ages and a broader diversity of participants to gain data from students who have different emotional and academic ability. It is evident that the emotional maturity of some year 9 students is far below that of others in the same year and I must ask myself whether or not year 9 students are developed enough to perceive both grace and ethos? In future research I believe it would be beneficial to gain data from students in year 7 to 11, in order that I can compare the difference of opinion between those who have just begun at the school to those who have almost finished and have participants who are more capable of answering the questions.

In addition, I believe that more must be done to ensure the effectiveness of a school's ethos. My research has significantly shown that students did not believe their ethos impacted their daily lives. For any ethos (not just a grace focussed ethos) to be effective it must be understood, lived and taught by all staff and experienced by the pupils. It must be embedded into all areas of school life (implicitly and explicitly) if it is to stand any chance of making a positive difference.

Words: 10,986

Note: All Bible passages were taken from the (2011) New International Version

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Appendix 1

Chilwell School -



Ethos – Share, Care, Believe, Achieve

Established – 1972

Type – Foundation school

Principal – Ian Brierly

Local authority – Nottinghamshire

Students – Approximately 1,000

Gender – Coeducational

Ages – 11 -18

Current Ofsted rank – Good

Website – www.chilwell.notts.sch.uk

Bluecoat Academy -



Ethos – Believe in yourself, in others, in God

Established – 1706

Type – Academy

Principal – Mrs. S. Hampton

Local authority – Nottingham

Students – Approximately 1600

Gender – Coeducational

Ages – 11 -18

Current Ofsted ranking – Good

Website – www.bluecoat.uk.com

Grace Academy Coventry -



Ethos - Limitless POTENTIAL, Consistent EXCELLENCE, Mutual RESPECT, Genuine INTEGRITY, Amazing GRACE

Established – September 2008

Type – Academy

Religion – Christian

Principal – Colin Boxall

Local authority – Coventry City Council

Students – Approximately 900

Gender – Coeducational

Ages – 11-18

Current Ofsted ranking – Inadequate

Website – www.graceacademy.org.uk

Appendix 2

Hello, my name is Simon Bentley and I am a student at Staffordshire University. For my course, I am undertaking a dissertation entitled: **'Can a grace focussed ethos be effective in raising attainment in secondary education?'** and I would like you to answer these questions for my research. All answers will be anonymous and stored in a safe and secure location. You can answer as much or as little as you would like.

To answer the questions please tick, circle or write your answer on the lines provided.

Male Female

1. Describe your school using four words

.....

2. The school's ethos (motto/slogan) is evident within the life of the school. (Please circle one)

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

3. Does your school's ethos positively impact the way you learn, treat others and think about yourself?

Yes

No

If you circled 'Yes', please give an example

.....
.....

4. How many chances do you believe you should get to improve your behaviour?

None 1-3 4-6 7-9 10+

5. Do you think your teachers show you unconditional care and support?

Yes

No

Depends

If you circled 'Depends', please explain your answer

.....
.....

6. When I know my teachers unconditionally care for me and support me... (circle all that apply)

I believe in myself more

I try my hardest

I am more likely to ask for help

I behave better

I am more likely to listen to them

I am happy

It helps me to get away with bad behaviour

It makes no difference

7. What would you change within your school to help you improve your grades?

.....
.....

‘Grace’ is a Christian term but can be defined as ‘free and undeserved love and forgiveness given by someone to another’. This is not a romantic love, but a caring love. It is difficult to explain what grace is, but you may have already experienced it without knowing it.

- You are shown grace when you get let off after doing something wrong.
- You are shown grace when you received something you did not deserve.
- You are shown grace when you are valued regardless of your abilities.
- You give grace when you continue to be friends with someone, even though they have not been nice to you.
- You give grace when you are patient, kind and caring towards someone you do not like.

8. Have you personally ever shown grace to another person within school?

Yes

No

If you circled ‘Yes’, please describe

.....
.....

9. Please finish the sentence....

If a teacher were to show me grace I would feel.....

10. How do you think your school be different if everyone treated each other with grace all the time? (circle all that apply)

There would be no bullying	No lesson would be interrupted by bad behaviour	All staff and pupils would have a good, caring & supporting relationship	No pupil would be excluded	There would be less pressure and stress around exam times	It would be a fun and happy place to be	It would make no difference
----------------------------	---	--	----------------------------	---	---	-----------------------------

11. Could a grace focused ethos, positively impact the way you learn, treat others and think about yourself?

Yes

No

If you circled ‘Yes’, please explain how

.....
.....

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.

Appendix 3

Focus Group questions and framework

Introduction:

Begin by briefly explaining my research question and clarifying words such as grace (save for later), ethos and attainment. Set out snacks and invite them to eat their lunches.

The purpose of this focus group is to get some useful information and in depth answers for my research. This focus group will last approximately 30 – 60 minutes (however long their lunch break is).

Please can you be as open and honest as possible. (Explain that I will be writing notes during the focus group and the whole session will be audio recorded using a Dictaphone). Some of the questions will be written on pieces of A3 paper and dotted around the room; this way pupils can fill in and answer some of them quickly in order to fulfil everything in the short period of time.

Icebreaker:

Open with a short icebreaker to help relax pupils and encourage openness between everyone – 5min.

Brandon (grace story)

There was once a dad who had a three-year-old named Brandon.

One day, Brandon sees his dad eating chocolate chip cookies in the living room and says to himself, 'Daddy loves chocolate chip cookies with milk. So I'm going to give Daddy a glass of milk'. With that Brandon goes into the dining room and drags a chair from the dining room into the kitchen, leaving a trail of scratch marks on the floor.

Brandon climbs up on the chair and hitches himself onto the counter to pull at the cabinet door. Wham! It smashes against the adjacent cabinet door leaving a gash where the handle hit it. Brandon reaches for a glass, accidentally knocking two other off the shelf. Crash! Tinkle, tinkle! But Brandon doesn't care. He's thinking, I'm going to get Daddy some milk!

Meanwhile, Brandon's dad is watching all this, wondering if he should step in and save the rest of his kitchen. He decides, for the moment to watch and wait as Brandon scrambles off the chair, dodging the pieces of broken glass and heads for the refrigerator.

Pulling violently on the refrigerator door, Brandon flings it wide open – it stays open, of course. Brandon puts the glass on the floor – out of harm's way, supposedly – and grabs, not the little half gallon of milk. But the gallon container that is full of milk. He rips open the top, pours it in the vicinity of the glass, and even manages to get some milk in the glass. The rest is all over the floor.

Finally done, Brandon puts the milk carton on the floor and picks up the glass yelling, 'Daddy, I got something for you!' He runs into the living room, trips, and spills milk all over the place – the floor, sofa, his dad.

Brandon gets up and looks around. He sees broken glass, milk everywhere, cabinets open, his dad with milk from his eyebrows to his toes, and starts to cry. Through his tears, he looks up at his dad with that pained expression and says, 'What are you going to do to me?'

His dad only smiles. He doesn't see a kid that has just destroyed hi house. Instead he sees a beautiful little boy whom he loves very much. It doesn't matter what he's done. Brandon's dad stretches his arms out to hold his little boy tight and says, 'This is my son!'

Questions and activities begin:

Question		Time
	Ethos	
1.	What do think of your schools ethos and how does it impact your daily life? (List Positives & Negatives – A3 paper)	10min
	Staff/Pupil relationships/behaviour	
2.	What difference does it make when you know your teachers unconditionally care and support you in school? – (Discuss and Prioritise order of results) Hand out envelope containing: 'I believe in myself more', 'I try my hardest', 'I am more likely to ask for help', 'I behave better', 'I am more likely to listen', 'I am happy', 'It helps me get away with bad behaviour' & ' It makes no difference'	10min
3.	When trying to deal with bad behaviour, how important is it for you to be given another chance and why? (Comment on A3 paper)	10min
	Attainment	
4.	What would you change within the school to help you improve your attainment? (Mind map A3 paper)	10min
	Grace	
	Explain grace (free and undeserved love and forgiveness given by someone to another) and tell the story of the boy making a mess in the kitchen.	
5.	How would your school be different if everyone treated each other with grace all the time? – (Agree/Disagree and discuss answers) Hand out envelope containing: 'There would be no bullying', 'No lesson would be interrupted by bad behaviour', 'All staff and pupils would have a good caring & supporting relationship', 'No pupil would be excluded', 'There would be less pressure and stress around exam times', ' It would be a fun and happy place to be' & 'It would make no difference'.	10min
6.	How effective would a grace focused ethos be in raising your attainment in school? (Discuss)	10min

Conclusion

Thank you for taking part and being open in this focus group, it has been very helpful for my research.

Focus Group Participant Information Sheet

28th January 2015

Hello, you have been invited to contribute to a research study as part of my degree in 'Schools, youth and community work with practical theology' at the 'Institute for Children, Youth and Mission' (CYM) at Staffordshire University. Please take your time to read the following information before you sign and complete the consent form.

Whilst studying my degree at St Johns College in Bramcote, I have had a particular interest in schools work and how I can best work in that environment as a youth worker. One of the areas I have spent time thinking about is the relationship between teacher and pupil, and the difference and impact a good or bad relationship can have on a young person.

As a Christian, I have also wanted to think through the implications of a grace focussed relationship; grace being loosely defined (not specifically within a Christian context) as the free and undeserved love and forgiveness given by someone to another.

For this research, you are being invited to help me understand further whether a grace focussed ethos can be effective in raising attainment in a secondary education context. As a member of the school I would like your insights, knowledge and personal experience in order to form a better understanding and gain data for my research. The focus group session will be audio recorded and I will also be taking notes myself.

The information that you contribute will be kept secure and any data imputed into my laptop will be protected by password. In the consent form you also have the choice as to whether to remain completely anonymous, be given a pseudonym, or if you choose, use your name. Additionally, if you choose, you may withdraw your responses up to one week after the date of the focus group.

I will be happy to answer any further questions you may have before you complete the consent form and take part in my research. Or you may wish to contact my dissertation supervisor – Nigel Roberts - nigel.roberts@yfc.co.uk

Thank you

Simon Bentley

Nottingham YFC

simonpbentley@hotmail.com

07791419595

Focus Group Participant Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project.

Title of Study: 'Can a grace focussed ethos be effective in raising attainment in a secondary education?'

Researcher: Simon Bentley

Please circle your answer:

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. I have understood the information sheet provided and have had the opportunity to ask questions | Yes | No |
| 2. I agree to take part in the research described in the information sheet | Yes | No |
| 3. I agree to note taking and the session being audio recorded | Yes | No |
| 4. Options regarding confidentiality and anonymity (please circle one) | | |
| I would like any contributions I make to be completely anonymous | Yes | No |
| I am willing for my contributions to be used with a pseudonym | Yes | No |
| I am willing for my name to be used in relation to my contributions | Yes | No |
| 5. I understand I must contact the researcher within one week of the interview to withdraw any contributions | Yes | No |

Name of participant	Date	Signature
.....

Name of person taking consent (researcher)	Date	Signature
.....

Parental consent to participate in this study (if required by the school)

Name of parent or guardian	Date	Signature
.....

Appendix 4

Interview questions

1. How do you practically see the school's ethos working out in the daily life of the school?
2. How did the school come to adopt the current ethos and why?
3. Do you believe the schools ethos is 'owned' by the school community?
4. In what ways does the school try and improve student attainment?

Grace related questions

My research hopes to discover whether a grace focussed ethos can be effective in raising attainment in secondary education. With the definition of grace being: 'free and undeserved love and forgiveness given by someone to another',

5. Is there any way in which you believe a grace focussed ethos could positively or negatively raise or effect a student's attainment.
6. How important do you think this theory of grace is within secondary education? (for example when working with SEN children or pre-exclusion pupils, encouraging good staff/pupil relations or keeping pupils from getting too stressed with near exam deadlines, maintaining a positive and healthy environment within the school community).

Participant (staff member) Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project.

Title of Study: 'Can a grace focussed ethos be effective in raising attainment in a secondary education?'

Researcher: Simon Bentley

Please circle your answer:

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. I have understood the information sheet provided and have had the opportunity to ask questions | Yes | No |
| 2. I agree to take part in the research described in the information sheet | Yes | No |
| 3. I agree to note taking and the session being audio recorded | Yes | No |
| 4. Options regarding confidentiality and anonymity – The school and ethos must be able to be contributed for my research (please circle one) | | |
| I would like any contributions I make to be completely anonymous | Yes | No |
| I am willing for my contributions to be used with a pseudonym | Yes | No |
| I am willing for my name to be used in relation to my contributions | Yes | No |
| 5. I understand I must contact the researcher within one week of the interview to withdraw any contributions | Yes | No |

Name of participant

Date

Signature

.....

.....

.....

Name of person taking consent (researcher)

Date

Signature

.....

.....

.....

Please note: I have had feedback from my university requiring that I have written documented evidence that each school I carry out research in is happy for me to do this. Please write a summary of this statement and sign.

Appendix 5

Chilwell questionnaire raw data – 23 out of 170 (approximate) students in year 9 = 14%

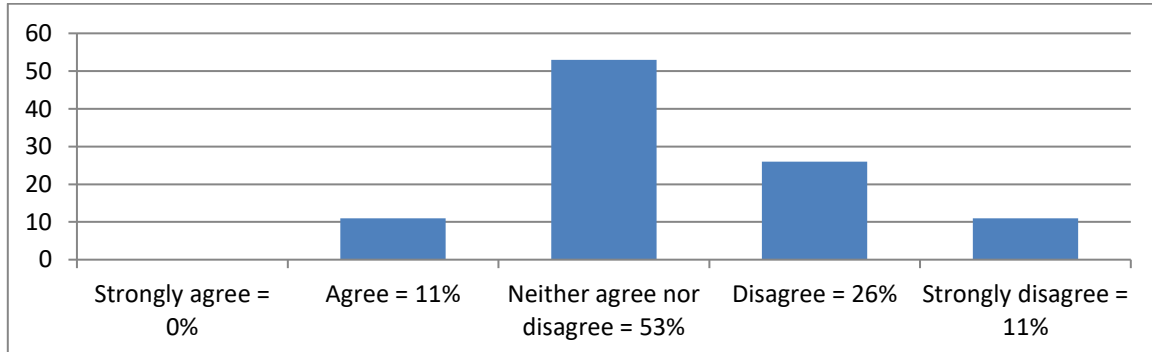
Questionnaires completed = 9 Boys & 14 Girls

1. Describe your school using four words

- Crap – Boring – Sometimes ok – Tiring
- Poor – Unfair – Unsupportive – Unclean
- Unfair – Welcoming – Unsupportive
- Ok – Smallish – Well-populated – Professional (kinda)
- Could be better – Ok – Careless – Small
- Ok – Small – Unfair – Unprofessional
- Unfair – Interesting – Boring – Alright
- Boring – Interesting – Okay – Fun
- Strict – Unfair
- Strict – Unfair
- Ok – Simple – Grotty
- Simple – Ok – Rundown
- Fun – Unclean – Friendly – Poor
- Rundown – Dirty – Fun – Has no money
- Unclean – Genuine – Friendly – Fun
- Boring – Want – More – P.E.
- Good – Gone – Down – Hill
- Good – Boring – Old – Loud
- Sometimes – Can – Be – Good
- Boring – Not – Fun – Cold
- Care – Share – Believe – Achieve

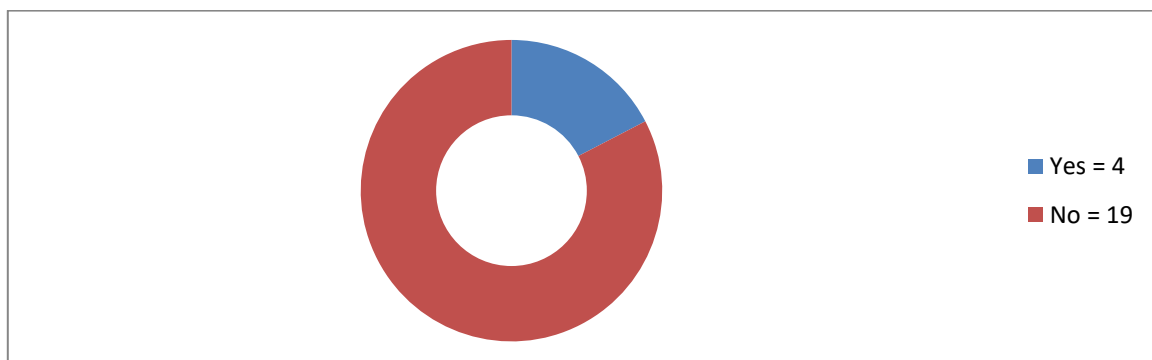
2 didn't answer

2. The school's ethos (motto/slogan) is evident within the life of the school?



4 didn't answer

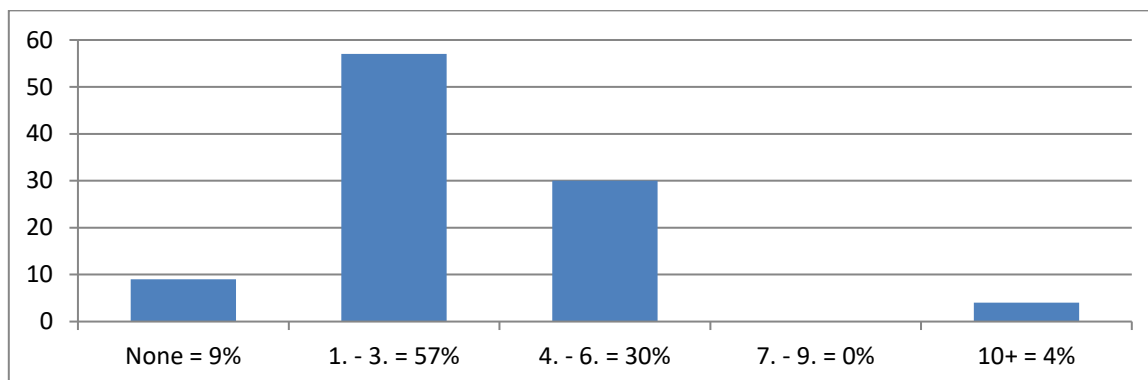
3. Does your school's ethos positively impact the way you learn, treat others and think about yourself?



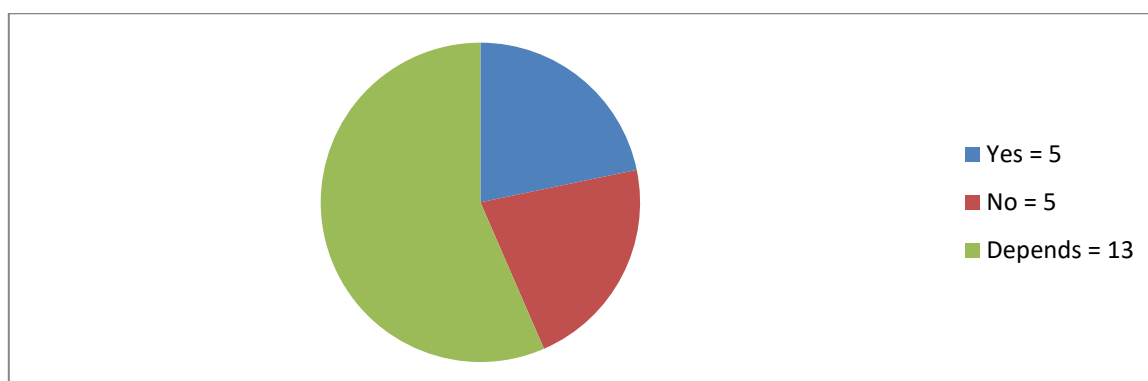
If you circled 'Yes', please give an example: (1 did not give an example)

- When you share what you have learnt
- Because you think about it brings you on
- Because I am at school more than another place where I am the else I am
- I think of it at the start of every lesson

4. How many chances do you believe you should get to improve your behaviour?



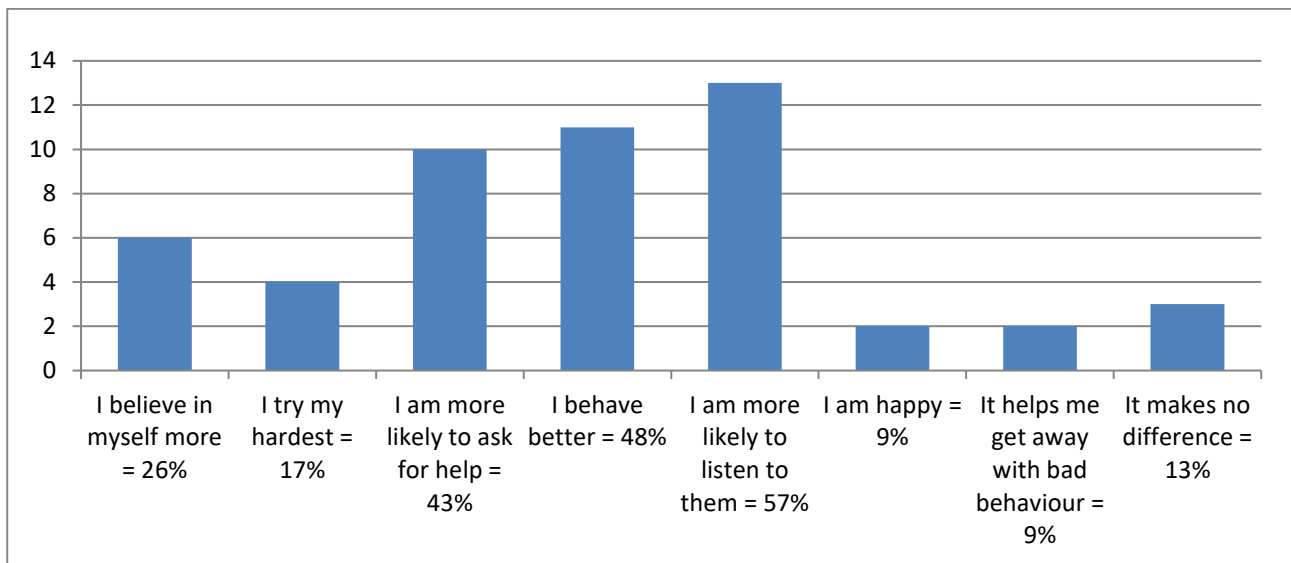
5. Do you think your teachers show you unconditional care and support?



If you circled 'Depends', please explain your answer:

- Depends what you mean
- Only a few, most teachers don't seem bothered
- It depends which teacher it is, some care, some don't, they just want to get paid
- Because some teachers do, most don't care
- If it miss ...
- What teacher and who the pupil is
- It depends on the situation
- The teachers can be nice and caring, however, sometimes some teachers can be uncaring and disciplining
- Some teachers do, some don't
- Some teachers do, some don't
- Some show more respect than others
- Not all teachers show 'unconditional care and support'
- Not every teacher does

6. When I know my teachers unconditionally care for me and support me... (circle all that apply)



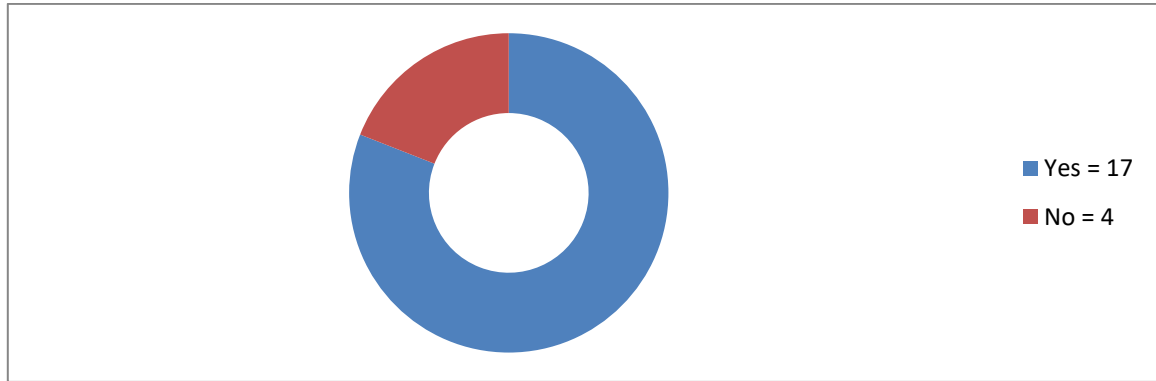
I did not answer

7. What would you change within your school to help you improve your grades?

- Better teachers
- Better teachers
- Better teachers
- Treat all pupils the same (badly behaved pupils get away with things)
- Style of teaching (more practical's), seat plan
- Teachers, how they teach you, seating plan
- Different size of classes
- Teachers
- Some teachers
- Different sized classes, change in teachers every term (new timetable)
- More P.E. more I.C.T.
- Don't treat people differently, more fair. Sack some teachers
- Get better teachers, more practical
- Better teachers
- Teachers, quality of lessons, style of teaching, maybe lessons more exciting, seating plan
- Take out the people who don't want to learn
- Make it cleaner to improve the working environment
- Have a rebuild so you have a better place to work
- Sack some teachers, employ better maths teachers and other subjects
- Better teachers
- The consequence system
- A swimming pool

1 did not answer

8. Have you personally ever shown grace to another person within school?



2 did not answer

If you circled 'Yes', please describe

- One of my friends
- If I need a pen
- Forgave people
- Forgave people that are in the wrong
- I was kind towards someone I don't like
- My friends etc.
- When I need a pen/paper I get it
- Forgave and be nice
- My friends, but you don't need to know what happened
- Forgave people
- Help people learn
- If I have fallen out with someone I try and make up with them
- Said thank you to dinner lady

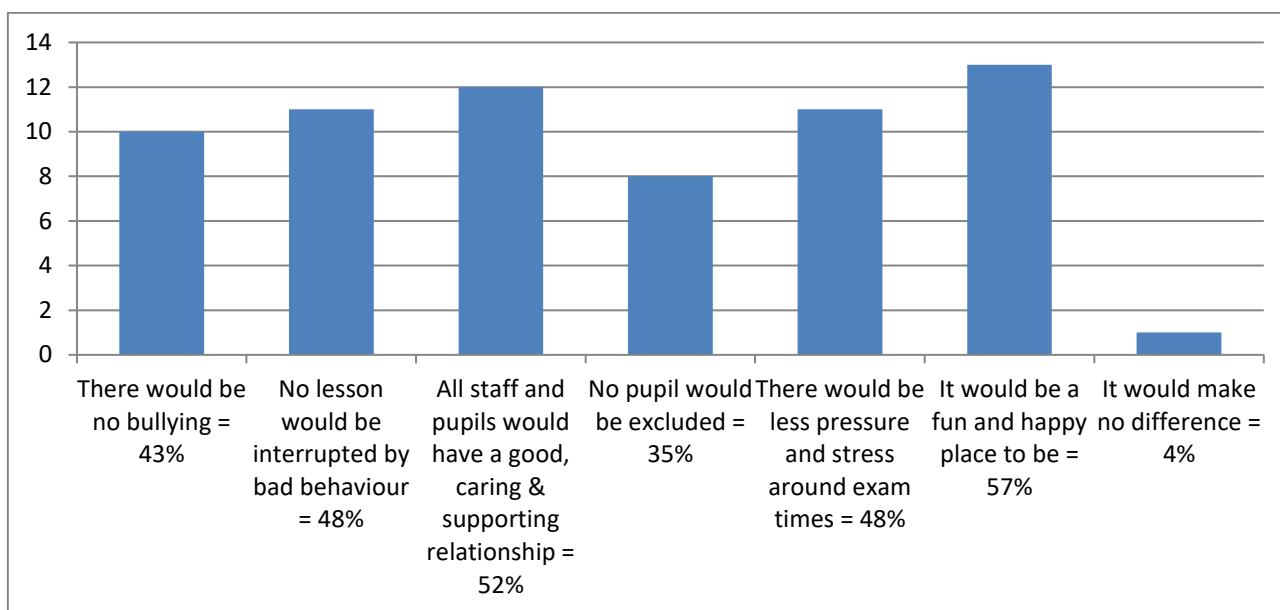
4 did not describe

9. Please finish the sentence... If a teacher were to show me grace I would feel...

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Happy | • Better | • Surprised |
| • Normal | • Good and cared for | • Like a teacher is being nice to me |
| • Feel sorry for her | • Happy | • Confused |
| • Happy | • Alright | • Confused |
| • Good | • Surprised | • Satisfied |
| • Happy | • Better than if they didn't | • Happy |
| • Alright | | |
| • More determined | • Happy at least | |

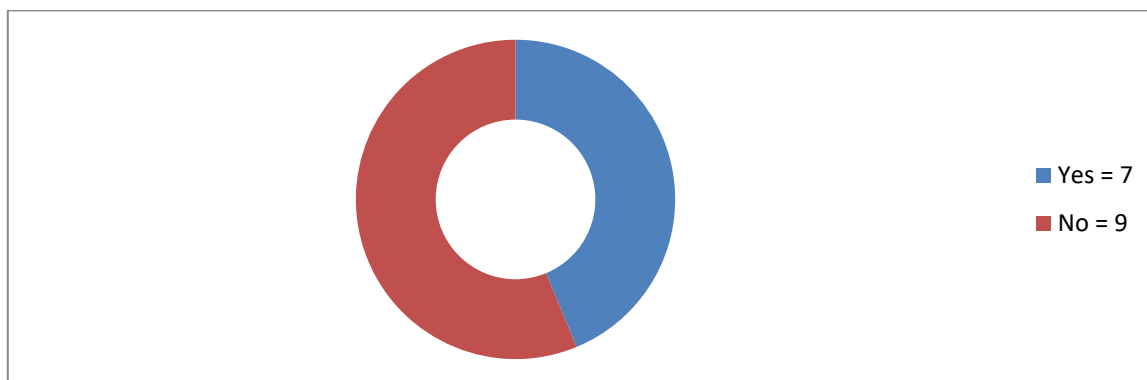
2 did not answer

10. How do you think your school would be different if everyone treated each other with grace all the times? (circle all that apply)



1 did not answer

11. Could a grace focussed ethos, positively impact the way you learn, treat others and think about yourself?



7 did not answer

If you circled 'Yes', please explain how

- People would listen properly to it
- Everyone will be nice to one another
- It would be a lot better
- Because it would be influencing good behaviour
- It just would

2 did not explain how

Chilwell focus group notes

Discussion notes for question 2

What difference does it make when you know your teachers unconditionally care and support you in school?

They don't...

I'd ask for help more

Some people think "teachers get paid to care, that's their job", so it's just not gonna make any difference is it?

I wouldn't put 'I am happy' near the top...

I think you'd be happier... if you knew someone cared about you.

I'd put behave better higher up.

Discussion notes for question 5

How would your school be different if everyone treated each other with grace all the time?

There wouldn't be bullying

There's always gonna be bullying, somebody would still pick on someone... if you had new glasses, or you were fat...

If this is the perfect world where everyone treated each other with grace, then there would be no bullying

Most of the bullies are doing it for attention, so if they're just gonna get forgiven, they're not going to do it

I think that would be an important one 'there would be less pressure and stress around exam times'.

Not all staff would have a caring and supporting relationship

You wouldn't find it happy, you'd find it creepy

There'd be no exclusions because you'd get forgiven

I don't think it would necessarily be a fun and happy place to be... because some people just don't like history for example.

Discussion notes for question 6

How effective would a grace focussed ethos be in raising your attainment in school?

Very... it would be more effective because everyone would be in a happier learning environment and there wouldn't be any distraction and there wouldn't be any pressure to succeed or there wouldn't be that having to live up expectations and everyone would just be good as they are.

If you're in the top set, all the teachers expect not to give you any support or anything because they think you're clever enough to do it on your own, but if there was grace you would get support too.

I think it would make everyone feel equal

It wouldn't be effective because your always gonna some people who take advantage of it and wouldn't do it... they would think, 'if I do something bad, I'm just gonna get forgiven so I can take advantage of it'.

People don't follow the ethos we have now, so I don't see why if we had a grace one why people would follow it.

If you asked whether teachers and pupils lived up to the current ethos... they'd say 'no...'

Some teachers really do though...

I don't think we stick to the ethos or that it doesn't make a difference to the way we behave or work because of the things that happen at home and the area we are in and it leads us to behave like this in school... its you're upbringing too.

I think, rather than only those people who display bad behaviour who getting support through the learning support, a grace focussed ethos would mean everyone would get the support they need.

when trying to deal with bad behavior, how important is it for you to be given another chance and why?

> The punishment should fit the crime

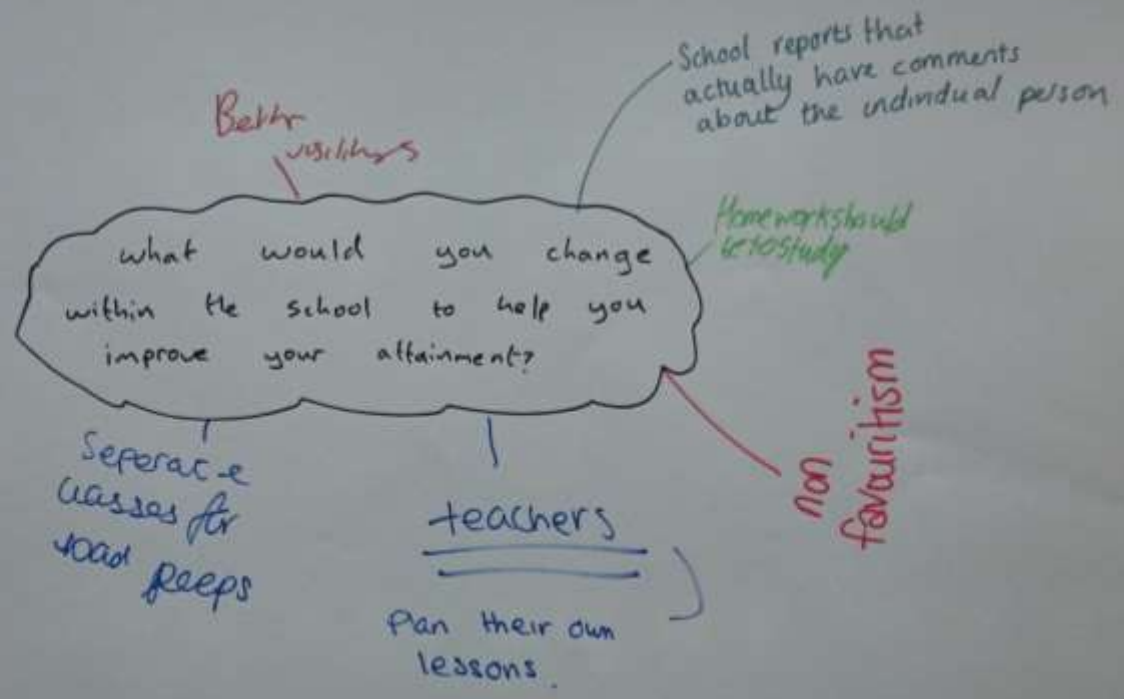
If you do give another chance then they will be good.

People would not progress if they did not have a second chance.

depending on the bad behaviour you should forgive & forget.

Punishment should scale with behavior

important or we won't achieve anything in lessons



what do you think of your school's ethos and how does it impact your daily life?

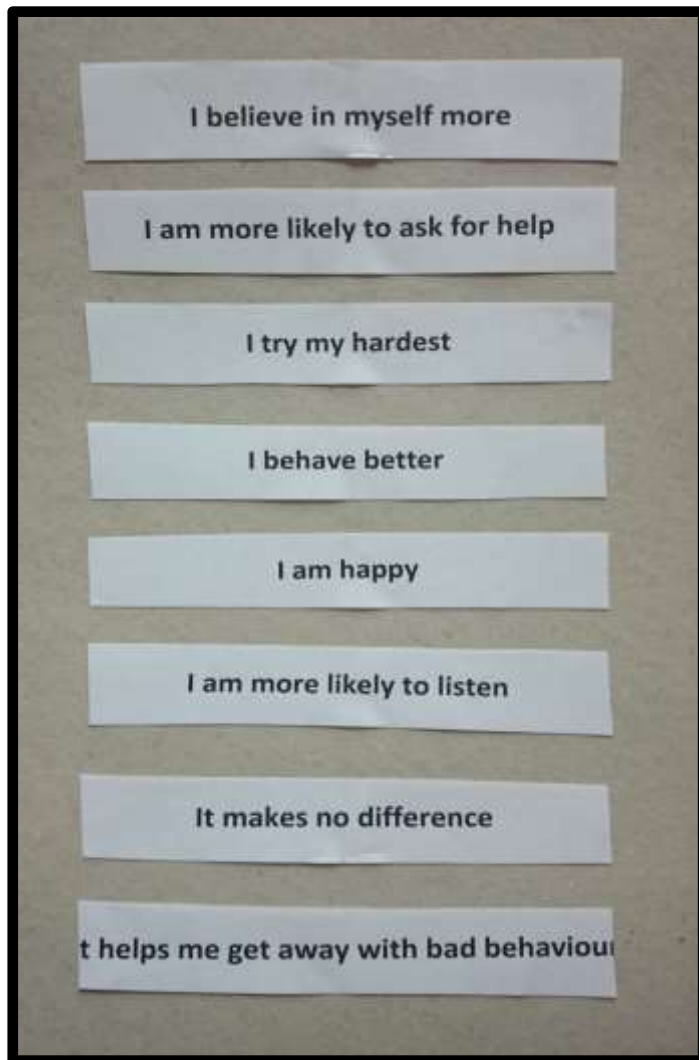
Positively

- people get good GCSE's grades (achievement)
- It's not just about what we should be like

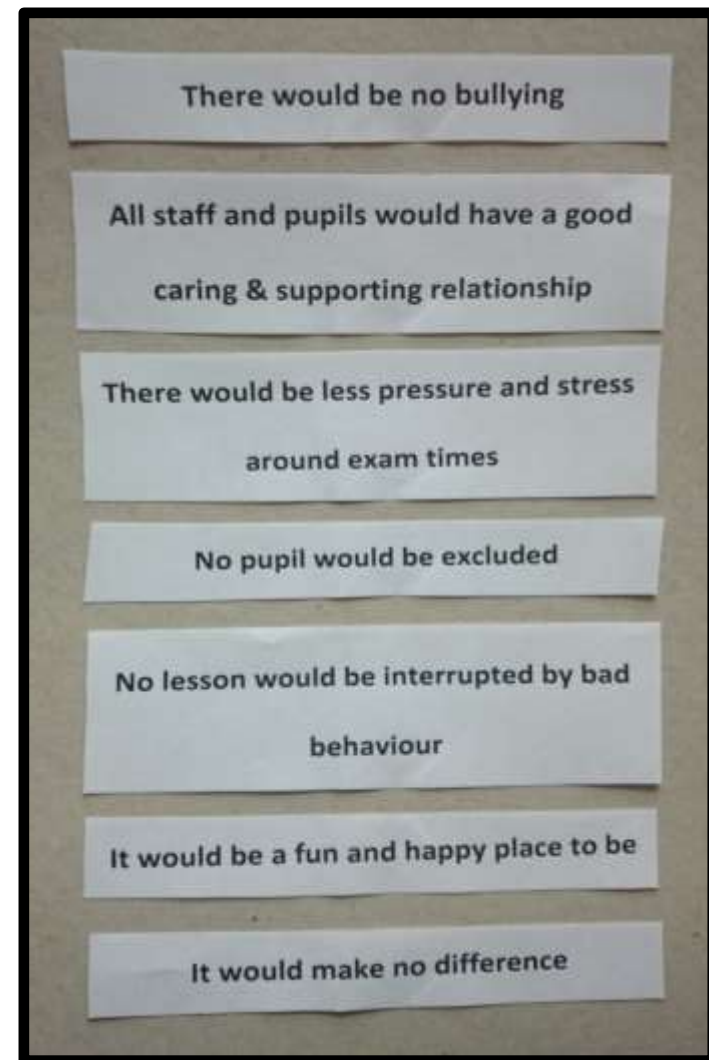
Negatively

- > It doesn't impact us at all
- It does not show, it is not coming
- It's crap.
- It is not interesting to us

What difference does it make when you know your teachers unconditionally care and support you in school?



How would your school be different if everyone treated each other with grace all the time?



Chilwell interview write up – Ian Brierly - Head Teacher

1. How do you practically see the schools ethos working out in the life of the school?

Ian: Practically... I think, the ethos of the school needs to underpin everything you do really, and in order to make it work practically as opposed to just a few words hidden away somewhere, you got to make it visible all the time, all the time. You have to put it in common things the students come across on a daily basis, so classrooms, (it's not enough for the words to just be there obviously), but every time in the assembly themes, the thought of the week, have underpinning them the ethos statement of the school. Every time we challenge something, or we might say to a child, you know that's not good behaviour because that not within the ethos of the school. You're constantly coming back to it all the time, so that pupils understand that it's not just words plucked out of the sky but actually it's a principle that underpins how the school operates. So I think it's about the day in day out visibility, of it, and then the application of it to everyone who works here, including staff as well.

2. How did the school come to adopt the current ethos and why?

Ian: That's a really good question. When I got here, I felt that the school needed redefining. So we did a lot of work as a whole staff, so we explored what we wanted the pupils leave Chilwell with and then from that it was clear that it wasn't just a results based type school, it was more than that. There was a sense of community, which is a part of my principle and there was a sense of family I guess. So I quite liked the idea of a rhyme, because I do, so Share, Care, Believe, Achieve. Was very much, we want people to share their experiences, we want people to share what they do, share with each other. Care was key, to unpin our principle of 'are we caring for each other'. Belief is a really important area for children. And believing in themselves, which I think were not very good at developing in people. Just that belief doesn't matter how bright you are, but if you've got belief in yourself, you can go a long way. Forth thing being achievement, so you had four parts, but only a quarter of it is about the achievement, even though that's primarily what you get measured on.

These were the inspirations really..... couple of quotes one from Jesse Jackson, there was wonderful guy who was the victim of the holocaust, we got this idea of mind, body, spirit, holistic... And we put this all together and came up with the strap line from that really. The mind, body, spirit thing being also a key element that triangular... we're educating healthy, academic, but also that spirituality, whatever that means for somebody and that sense of wellbeing. (Show picture). We got all those things together and we did that early one, and then it was a matter of getting it out there, in a punchy way, so that the pupils would remember and not forget. And then just making it unpinned everything we do, parents evening, when we do open evenings when we have parents coming to the school, it focus is one those four words.

3. Do you believe the schools ethos is owned by the school community?

Ian: Yeah I do, because the teachers use it (I was in the assembly this morning) all the time, I think ownership is believing in it. If you believe in a schools ethos you kinda own it. So I would say that, I think they do, when I walk around the school you get that sense that the pupils are 'not' following the ethos, but it's within them with the way they are behaving, which is what it's all about. It's taken a while to really engrain it, I'd say in the last two years it's been really engrained. It takes a while for it to sink in; the head constantly saying it and it can almost become amusing to other people. I know over time, people say, that's what we're working on, I use it in leadership meetings and someone might come up with an idea and we'd say 'does that fit in with what we're trying to

do?' 'Where's the care in that then?' There is a sense of ownership to it because it reflects the kind of school it's always been. I would hope, I would like to think that when the pupils leave, when they move on, when they go onto university, when they have a family, they'll look back and think 'oh yeah, Share, Care, Believe and Achieve' and they'll remember that, I like to think that. I can't remember mine schools ethos statements...

4. In what ways does the school try and improve student attainment?

Ian: A robust focus on improving teaching and teachers to optimise their skill set and keep them up to date with current practises.

A focus on pupil motivation.

Frequent data analysis and interventions where necessary.

Attempting to develop a culture of application and internal motivation.

5. Is there any way in which you believe a grace focussed ethos could positively or negatively raise or effect a student's attainment?

Ian: I think, I've always said you've got to separate the person from the behaviour, so I think poor behaviour has to have a consequence there needs to be a connection between that, but we have a very clear line on this, once the punishment is served = blank piece of paper start again. I think that is a grace focused way of dealing with stuff, we get very irate as leaders when a child is approached the same way or the same stereotypical view of a child because of what they've done x, y, z in the past, no matter what the child has done we say 'come one let's try again' because I think it's important that the child understand that you can get something wrong but it doesn't live with you for life. I think a grace ethos that the outline does have that impact because your role modelling forgiveness, which I think is not done enough. I think in a very opinionated, sanctimonious kinda society, not enough people stand back and say 'actually, if we forgive that person, they might do much better'. And it's a school, these are children learning in a safe environment, so to some degree they make the mistakes here, in school that if they were adults they get into a lot worse trouble for, so we can in this situation manage that in such a to help them learn. I think it's important that forgiveness is there but the learning has got to be there as well, for some 'for a very small minority' number of people that can be strained. When for forgiving them for the 10th time and your thinking to yourself, 'I'm trying to work with you here'. I think for most children they understand that it's a bit like tough love, you're tough because you've got to put the sanctions in but actually the love part is the forgiveness and were going to move on from this and were not going to fob you off for life just because you've made an error here. Plus need got to take into a account for circumstance the children live in, where it's unforgiving I think all they will learn is this sense of unbending authority, which I don't think does anyone any good.

Einstein quote (picture) We're very strong on this, I did a lot of research on motivation and external motivation not being g good for the children, i.e. you know, do this and we'll give you a laptop, do this and we'll give you £50. We were very much like, 'it's got to be internalised, got to get children to motivate themselves internally they've got to believe in themselves, but they've also got to work within the realms of 'I can make a mistakes, but I can learn from it and not be punished, and not take risks.. This is the same with the staff, we want staff to take risks with their teaching and if something goes wrong... you know... don't do it all the time, but actually it might

go right, in order to get to get that risk cultural going and that moving forward thing going on you've got to be quite forgiving in a number of ways.

Again, restorative justice, I don't know if you'd heard of this, but the police use it a lot, they bring the people together and it's about the victim to describing their feeling and the perpetrator to try and understand empathy. And that's a very forgiving thing, it's difficult. I think what people call the soft skills are a damn sight harder to do than the hard ones 'have you got any qualifications' etc. but it's actually the soft which are the tough ones forgiving people is not an easy skill to do because it requires an element of humility to do that I think. And some people that's a bit of a weakness, when in actual fact it's a major strength. But I think the successful people I know have got a really high level of forgiveness and humility and we can move forward I don't want to dwell on this rubbish stuff. Yeah I think it works.

6. How important do you think this theory of grace is within secondary education? (for example when working with SEN children or pre-exclusion pupils, encouraging good staff/pupil relations or keeping pupils from getting too stressed with near exam deadlines, maintaining a positive and healthy environment within the school community).

Ian: Particularly where pupils are vulnerable, they need to know that when they come into schools there not going to be judged for some of the difficulties they have, there's going to be someone there to support them and whatever myths or rumours there might be about them there not going to be in the classroom, they can forget those things and move on with their education. Because ultimately it's true, the safer you feel the better you learn, the more at peace you are the better you learn. And if you can feel safe within a school environment you'll just learn better. Certainly with children with difficulties, it is a scaffold to help them and get through the day. Slightly different from the behaviour ones and SEN ones on the whole, children with needs are given that anyway. It's the children which have the really difficult behavioural issues that... especially when it's a combination of both, so if you've got a combination of autism and behaviour issues which might be related to that, that can make a child seem very detached, very cold and it takes a lot for teachers to be constantly forgiving and supporting over a child like that. It's quite hard.

I think we have ethos, or we try to anyway.

Appendix 6

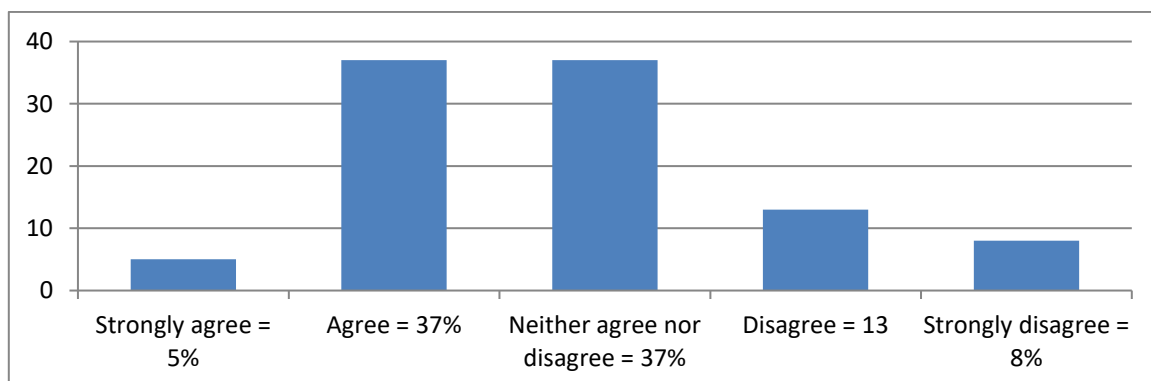
Bluecoat questionnaire raw data – 39 out of 260 (approximate) students in year 9 = 15%

Questionnaires completed = 19 Boys & 20 Girls

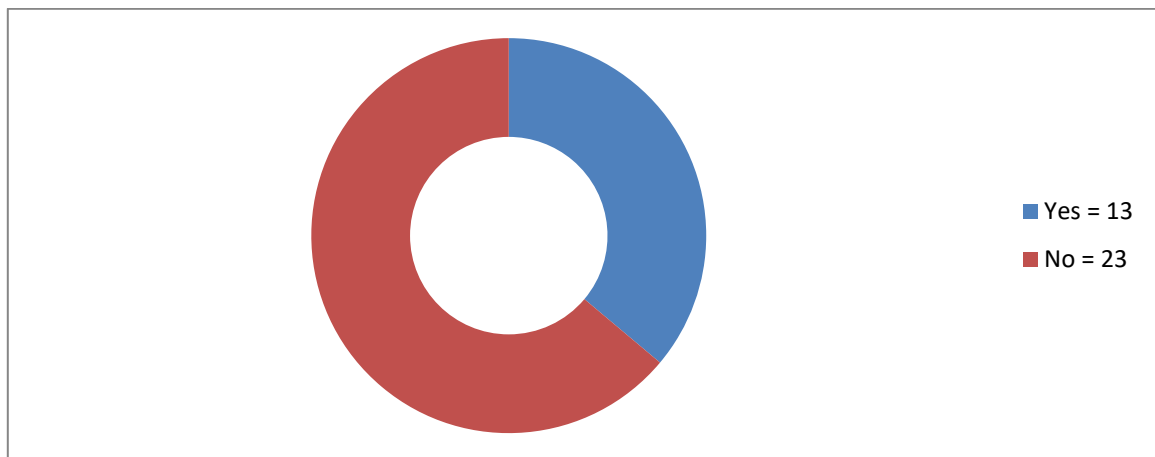
1. Describe your school using four words

- Fun – Amazing – Fantastic – Great
- Fun – Amazing – Fantastic – Great
- Old – Boring
- Boring – Old – Crap
- Exciting – Amazing – Interesting – Fun
- Safe – Friendly – Learning – Fun
- Interesting – Big – Fun
- Fun – Boring – Fine – Happy
- Boring – Exciting – Amusing
- Drama – Beefy – Stupid – Dry
- Safe – Drama – Fun – Exciting
- Good – Safe – Nice – Lovely
- Full – Of – Complete – Rubbish
- Boring – Bent – Unsafe – Dealing
- Old – Dirty – Big – Happy
- Big – Happy – Old – Fun
- Strict – Disciplined – Educational – Good
- Strict – Organised – Big – Fun
- Safe – Comfortable – Big – Educational
- Good – Boring – Lessons – Ok
- Unfair – Safe – Educational – Horrible
- Alright – Safe – Educational – Large
- Dry – Long – Too much – Boring
- Boring – Strict – Nice – Weird
- Joyful – Fun – Weird – Dangerous
- Boring – Long – Too much – Tiring
- Boring – Annoying – Dull – Boring
- Boring – Boring – Boring – Dull
- Boring – Fun – Violent – Exciting
- Average – Sometimes good – Decent – Fun
- Fighting – Argument – Smelly – Bullying
- Nice – Fighting – Bullying – Smelly
- Boring – Happy – Fun – Friendly
- Nice – Safe – Friendly – Educational
- Big – Annoying
- Boring – Great – Decent
- Boring – Unsafe – Unfriendly – Dirty
- Fun – Tiring – Exhausting – Amazing
- Safe – Secure – Good – Excellent

2. The school's ethos (motto/slogan) is evident within the life of the school?



3. Does your school's ethos positively impact the way you learn, treat others and think about yourself?

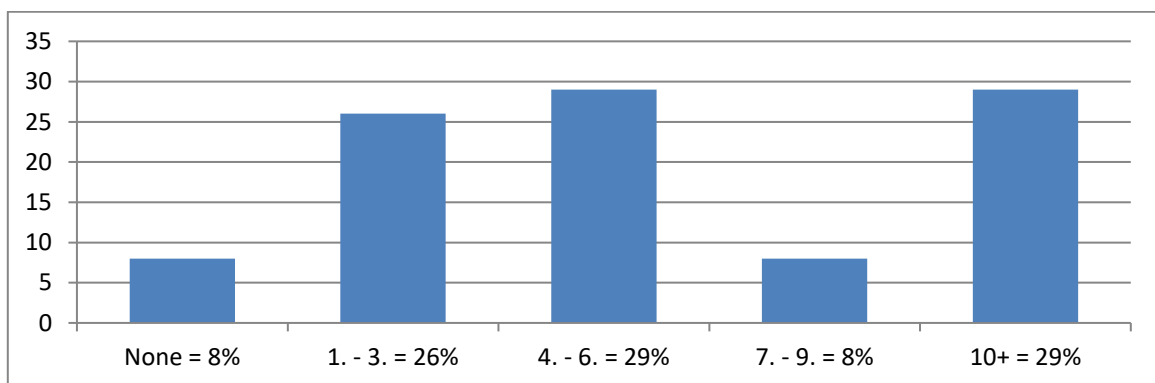


If you circled 'Yes', please give an example: (1 did not give an example)

- Helps me believe what I can do
- Helped me be more nice, kind and generous
- I work hard
- I'm making progress
- The slogan says 'believe in yourself' this really makes me have more self-confidence
- The staff in learning support
- When I believe in myself, I always achieve the best
- We learn to respect each other and their beliefs
- It helps you believe in yourself
- I was brought up in a Christian family also the school is Christian so I behave as one.
- I never give up no matter how hard
- I feel really happy at school because I like the work what teachers give me

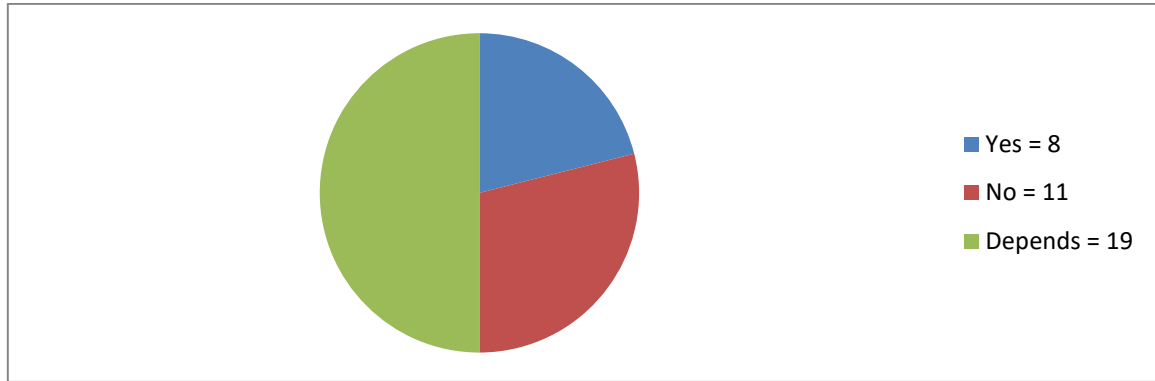
3 did not answer

4. How many chances do you believe you should get to improve your behaviour?



1 did not answer

5. Do you think your teachers show you unconditional care and support?

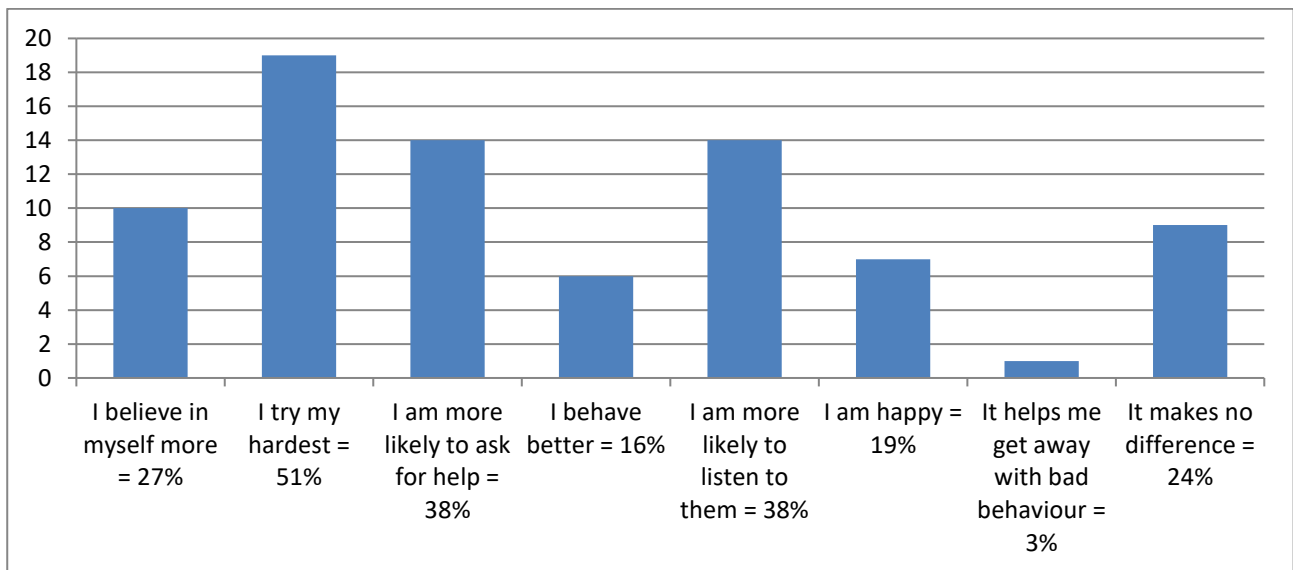


If you circled 'Depends', please explain your answer:

- Not all teachers do but quite a few does
- You see some people get help and some not
- If I have a test they can't give me answers
- If they similarities then there will be more
- It depends and your situation
- Depends on the teacher
- Some teachers are unfair to students just because they might have had a bad day
- Some teachers are unfair and unjust
- They don't care sometimes, for example when I was getting beat up they just left me, didn't even say 'get off him' I felt alone no help or support
- If they are in a good mood
- Some teachers are different
- Some teachers are different to others
- Some do but the English teacher ... don't like me and never helps me
- ... don't like me
- Sometimes they don't listen and jump to conclusion
- Depends if they like me or not
- Depends on the teacher
- Some teachers do but others don't
- Depends because teachers always help you when you need it

1 did not answer

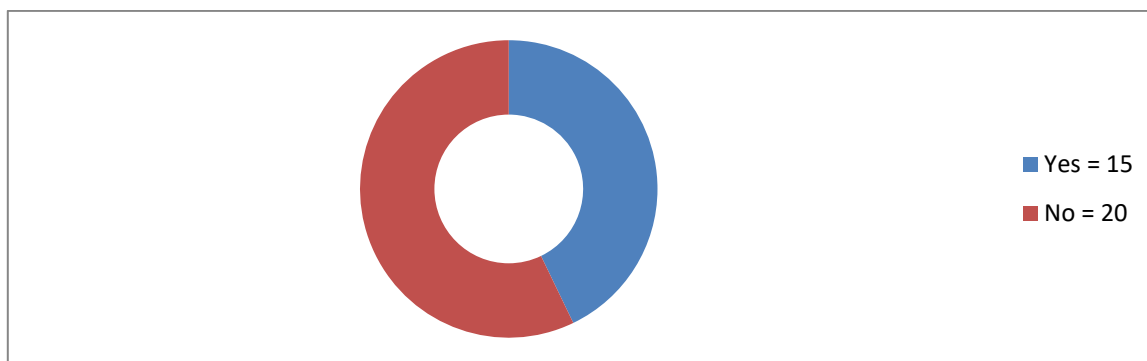
6. When I know my teachers unconditionally care for me and support me... (circle all that apply) – 2 did not answer



7. What would you change within your school to help you improve your grades?

- Teachers
 - Less stress
 - Less tests
 - To put safety glass on the windows
 - Better teachers
 - More time to revise
 - Provide free learning guides for all subjects
 - Better teachers
 - Classes
 - I would make the lessons more fun
 - Teachers need to help everyone
 - More support
 - To have grades like A, B, C
 - Ringing
 - Teachers
 - Nothing
 - Make lessons more fun for a change once in a while
 - Seating plan in lessons and the way teachers treat students
 - The seating plan in lessons and the subjects we get to choose to learn about
 - The seating plan and choose what we like
 - Less stress
 - Listen to music while working to concentrate more
 - Teachers behaviour
 - Less stress
 - We need to have more trips so that when we do an assessment about the topic we remember what happened on the trip
 - Fun lessons
 - More teachers who can control the class
 - The girls who are rude and the teachers who hate me
 - The girls that are rude and disrespectful and the teachers that don't handle the class
 - Teachers and their attitudes
 - To be able to have one to one sessions if needed
 - Mix the dumb people with smart people, dumb will learn
 - The food
 - Study periods
 - I would do my work carefully and get the answers right for a higher grade
- 4 did not answer

8. Have you personally ever shown grace to another person within school?



If you circled 'Yes', please describe

- I open doors for members of staff
- When someone is worried, you tell them to believe in themselves
- No homework
- Donated
- My first best friend told me to be more nice to people
- By being kind to everyone even though they have been mean to me
- I carried on being nice to a girl in my year after she had been really quite nasty to me
- I try to be kind and be friends to everyone regardless with what they do
- I be nice to anyone even if they aren't friends with me
- I helped a disabled child
- I have helped when they was getting bullied
- My friend wasn't good at basketball but I showed him grace and helped him improve
- I've given money for friends fair and not asked for anything in return
- I have been friends with someone even though they use to bully me
- If my best friends are mean to me I forgive them

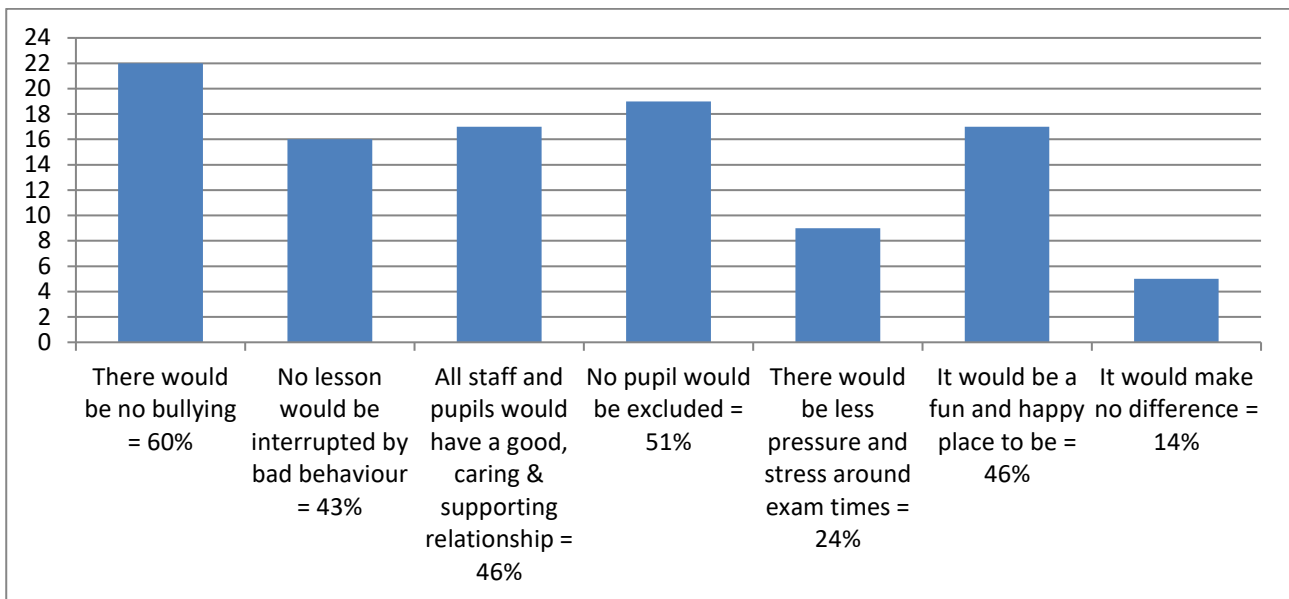
4 did not answer

9. Please finish the sentence... If a teacher were to show me grace I would feel...

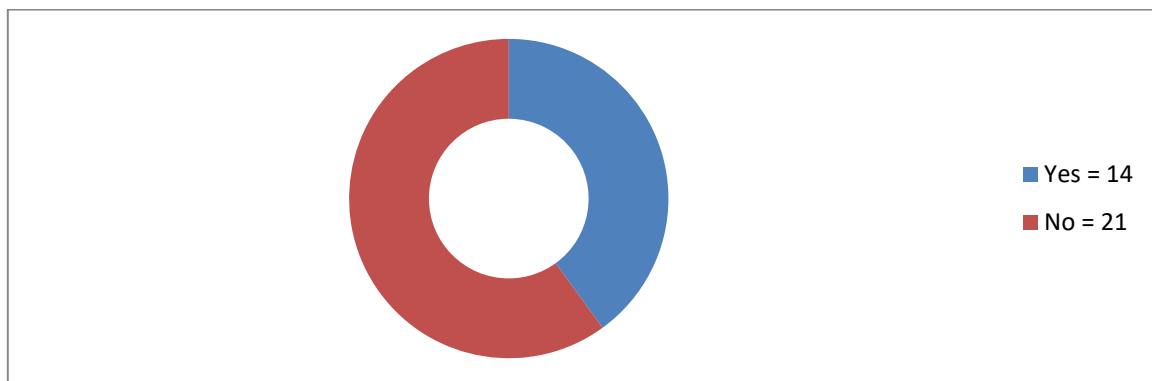
- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| • Happy | • Ok | • Comfortable, | • Happy |
| • No different, it | • Loved | confident as if they | • Ok |
| don't bother me | • Happy, confident | care about me | • Decent |
| • Happy | • Normal | • Content | • Happy |
| • Happy | • Better | • More than happy | • Loved |
| • Happier and would | • As if they really care | • Happy | • Like I'm being |
| listen more | • Comfortable to ask | • Happy | perved on |
| • The same | for more help | • Good | |
| • The same way | • Ok | • Happy | |
| • Grateful | • Thankful | • Cared for | |
| • Happy | • Ok | • Happy | |

5 did not answer

10. How do you think your school would be different if everyone treated each other with grace all the times? (circle all that apply) – 4 did not answer



11. Could a grace focussed ethos, positively impact the way you learn, treat others and think about yourself?



If you circled 'Yes', please explain how

- Everyone would enjoy themselves
- It would be a better environment to study in and focus
- People be kind to other people and share things
- It changes me to be good
- Thinking positively helps me be nice and helps us
- Everyone would think that they could all show grace and school would be a nicer place to be
- It will show people how to act in the school
- Better grades
- Because you would be able to get better grades and focus more
- I'll be nice to people
- Because people would be happy
- Good
- You would be able to forgive more
- Then everyone will be kind to others

3 did not answer - 1 didn't know

Bluecoat focus group notes

Discussion notes for question 2

What difference does it make when you know your teachers unconditionally care and support you in school?

Initially many of them said it would make no difference (probably because they didn't think it could happen), so I had to give them a vision for it, saying "in a perfect situation".

'I'm happy when I know the teachers care and support me which makes me try harder'

'A teacher has said to me "I'm not here to be your friend; I'm here to teach you", I don't think the teachers could unconditionally care and support me all the time'.

'I'm more willing to have a go when answering questions, because I wouldn't be afraid that my teachers would have a go at me'

(There was no mention about being able to get away with bad behaviour – though this could have been because they didn't want me to know they were naughty, or because Naomi was in the room)

Discussion notes for question 5

How would your school be different if everyone treated each other with grace all the time?

Many of them found putting them into an order difficult because they were all things they agreed with (just because it was put into an order didn't mean that was the biggest way the school would be different)

'It would make a huge difference'

'Everyone would be happier'

'You'll feel more comfortable'

'Students wouldn't be afraid to come to school because if everyone treated each other with grace there would be no more bullying'

'Parents would like to bring their children to the school because they know that whatever the needs their children may have they will know they will be looked after'

Discussion notes for question 6

How effective would a grace focussed ethos be in raising your attainment in school?

'It would make you think about your GCSE's more, because you'd have help whenever you want'

'It would make you work harder, but you'd also feel more comfortable'

'If you know someone loves you, you wouldn't want to let them down, so you'd work harder'

'It wouldn't make any difference, or at least it wouldn't be any better or worse'

'It would be good because there would be less pressure for our exams'

'We would get more chances to have another go, and we'd be able to do better than just being labelled from our first attempt'

when trying to deal with bad behaviour, how important is it for you to be given another chance and why?

It depends how bad it is, if it's not as bad then yes.

With no 2nd chance you can't improve on your mistakes

If a teacher don't give you another chance then were stuck.

Yes because you can change your ways.

No you should know right from wrong.

Yes because you can change

It's great to have second chances.

What would you change within the school to help you improve your attainment?

More (resources) available in the classroom

Some lessons are real boring.

activities in our time to do

Some lessons are really boring so they could be more fun. Working more with our friends

Make lessons more interesting to learn by playing games and working with friends.

Make lessons more entertaining. Because the teachers just talk for ages & put me off wanting to learn. I would like it if we could do more active projects like many others and plus that increases creativity.

-Valerie

What do you think of your school's ethos and how does it impact your daily life?

Positively

It impacts me because I'm a Christian

Negatively

doesn't impact me

Doesn't impact me because nobody uses it.

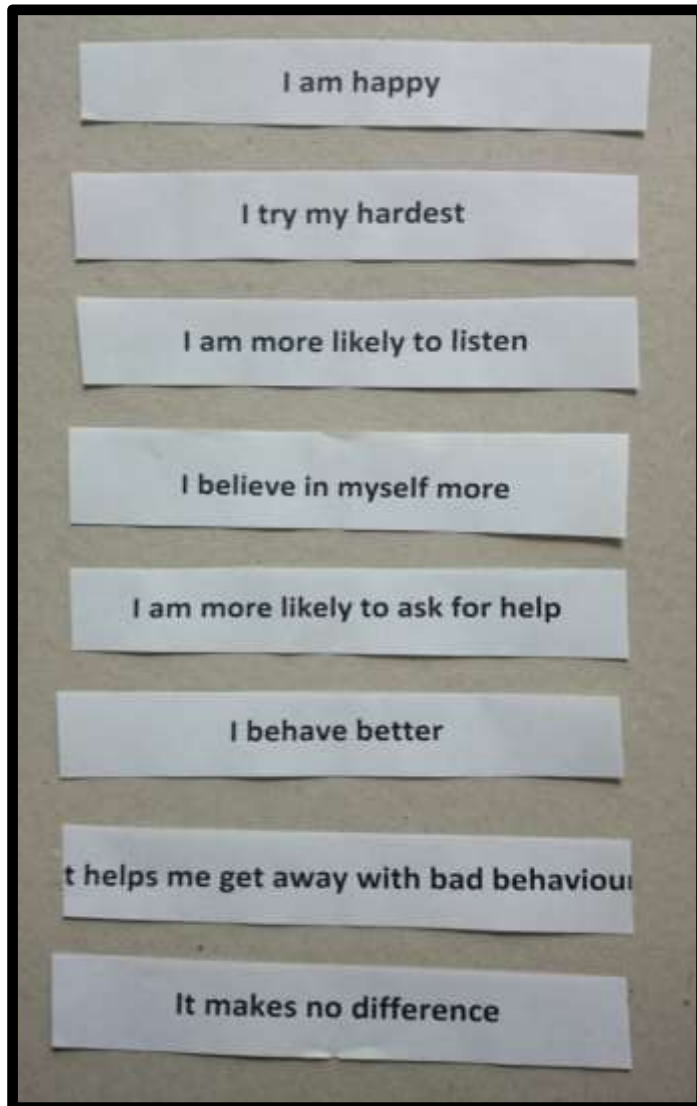
doesn't impact me at all.

Doesn't impact me

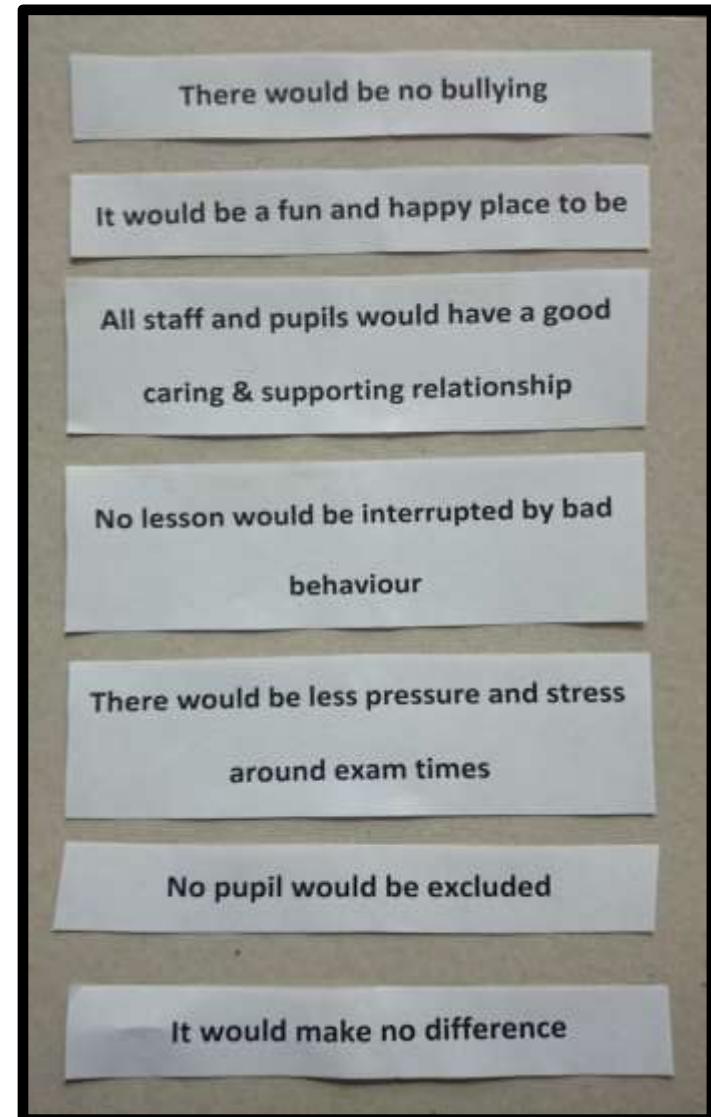
It doesn't impact me at all either.

It does impact me.

What difference does it make when you know your teachers unconditionally care and support you in school?



How would your school be different if everyone treated each other with grace all the time?



Bluecoat interview write up - Rob Williams - Head of year 8

1. How do you practically see the school's ethos working out in the daily life of the school?

Rob: So, the most important thing for bluecoats ethos is for me is based on Luke 10:27, so to love God with all your heart, with all your strength and to love others. I think bluecoat is really really good at putting this into action through its inclusiveness. Things like our huge learning support department. A very strong student support department where students can go if they got behavioural, emotional, social needs and I think bluecoat has got a way in which other school I've seen aren't as strong at making every member of the school, they are unique and special and important. Instead of having those students... for instance I've been in other schools where exclusion is something which is pushed and if you get to a certain level, they'll just bin you off. Whereas bluecoat has not excluded somebody permanently I think for 3 -4 years now because there is chance after chance because there's that belief that everybody is unique and individual and should be given a chance to succeed.

2. How did the school come to adopt the current ethos and why?

Rob: In terms of having a Christian ethos, it was always... setup as a Christian school to care for the needs of the poorest in society and I think that still lives on even when the individual wording of the ethos changes. But in terms of when it actually became the believe statement... believe in yourself, believe in others and believe in God... I'm not completely sure when that came in... I reckon 2010.

I think because its simplifies the message of Luke 10:27 and I think it gives a broad meaning to the scripture, in that its actually focussing on others, but its also about making the best of yourself and then also that element that we are here because we are created by God and we've got a potential. We're not just living for ourselves, we're not just living for others but we've also living for God.

3. Do you believe the schools ethos is 'owned' by the school community?

Rob: That's a difficult question.... I think when you look at the actual wording of it and its actually there in front of you; it's not something which I would say the students are aware of particularly. It think it is put on everything, its put stationary and things like that but I wouldn't say it's something that is drummed in. However, I would say that the message is something that is accepted by the students and it is something that is lived by the students. And there are a lots of initiatives which the school and which the children get involved in which lives out that message, so things like engagement in the community... charity Wednesdays, which is a massive event for the school which raise a lot of money for the school. I think those sorts of things, without those people realising is actual living out the ethos.

4. In what ways does the school try and improve student attainment?

Rob: So from my perspective, if we have a student who is struggling, then we would look at things like, mentoring – in either the student support department or with your year leader. We'd also put on short courses, which is with a group of students which will go through a certain issue together. For example you have friendship groups, or self-esteem groups and things like that... if that was the underlying cause of the problems of attainment.

We also have study clubs on every night of the week now, including specifically for my year, we have an extra English and an extra maths one on Monday and Wednesdays.

We also work really really closely with parents. Every half term we send a data snapshot home, including their attitudes to learning grades, which are what we call effort grades to see if they've fallen below a certain standard of effort, then parents can see that and they can come in for a meeting and just go through grades with us.

They're the biggest things we put in place to improve attainment. We also give opportunities outside of school. So things like 'into university' and things like working with local organisations, I think that's another thing which drives up attainment because it gives them an insight into the world that they will be going into, and sort of broadens their experience of work.

5. Is there any way in which you believe a grace focussed ethos could positively or negatively raise or effect a student's attainment.

Rob: I can only see how it would improve attainment, because I think with the cohort that we have here, the most important thing is that they come in and that feel valued and that they come in everyday with a blank slate... and a chance to start again. I can't see any negative impact of that at all. I think that's part what we try and do already, if I'm honest... for every child to be given that basic level of respect which they haven't learnt, they get that on the basis that they are a human being, an individual who is here and regardless of who they are or where they've come from, we are going to give them the support and love that they need.

6. How important do you think this theory of grace is within secondary education? (for example when working with SEN children or pre-exclusion pupils, encouraging good staff/pupil relations or keeping pupils from getting too stressed with near exam deadlines, maintaining a positive and healthy environment within the school community).

Rob: I think, a theory of grace, like a say is already a part of our... learning support and student support departments... are already in place I would say, from working really closely with those departments... because particularly with your student support we are taking students who have been excluded from other schools, taking one who are not able to cope in normal lesson or alternative provision and they will seriously test your patience every day but they are given a fresh start every day and are given chance after chance in order for them to achieve something here.

I think where we could improve... is exams, I think sometimes schools can towards the business end of school, it can feel a bit like a result factory and I think what we need to do better, is explaining that actually although these grade and these results are important, that actually they are not the be all and end all. Actually they will be loved and they will be respected, and they can have a great life no matter what in May... and that actually, they're not just number. That's where a grace centred approach... that's where we could probably improve and that would make a difference.

I think it needs to work both ways. That's probably another we could work on. I do feel the majority of teachers do have a grace centred approach without that being verbalised, they have a grace centred approach towards our students, I think what would be helpful and something we could work on again would be for our students to sometimes realise that our teachers are human beings and that they are knackered and that they've been working really hard till late at night to get these lessons together and I think that's something we could work on and is something we are trying to work on, that everybody is treated as a human being first and for most, before we actually get on to teaching.

Appendix 7

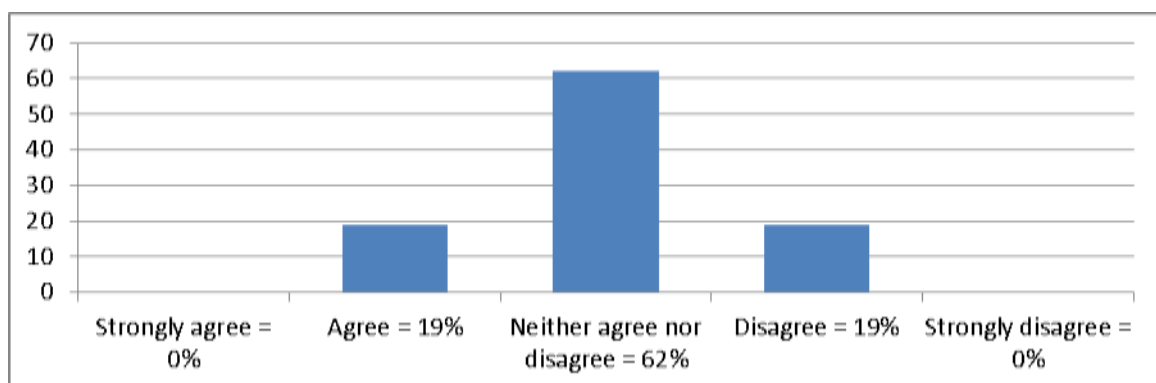
Grace Academy Questionnaire Raw Data – 16 out of 140 (approximate) students in year 9 = 11%

16 Questionnaires completed = 8 Boys & 8 Girls

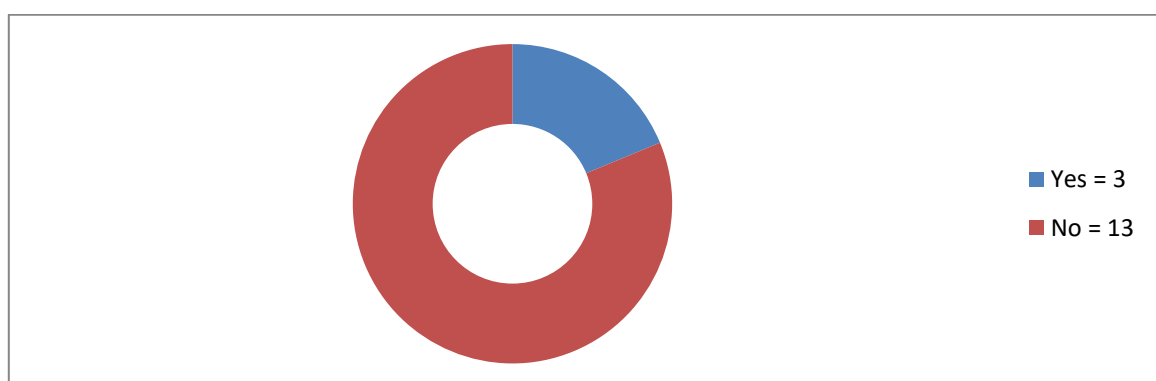
1. Describe your school using four words...

- Boring – Not interesting
- Fun – Friendly – Entertaining
- Unhygienic – Unequipped – Modern – Dirty
- Unhygienic – Dirty – Unequipped – Modern
- Relatable – Stressful – Caring – Busy
- Respect – Integrity – Potential – Excellence
- Terrible – Untrustworthy – Awful – Annoying
- Boring – Hell – Fun – Ok
- Fun – Pushing – Expectations – Friendly
- Big – Good – Inspiring – Cool
- Big – Encouraging – Good – Pushing
- Boring – Jail – Sad – Hell
- Boring – Jail – Okay – Hell
- Terrible – Appalling – Awful – Boring
- Boring – Horrible
- Fun – Exciting – Awesome – High tec

2. The school's ethos (motto/slogan) is evident within the life of the school?



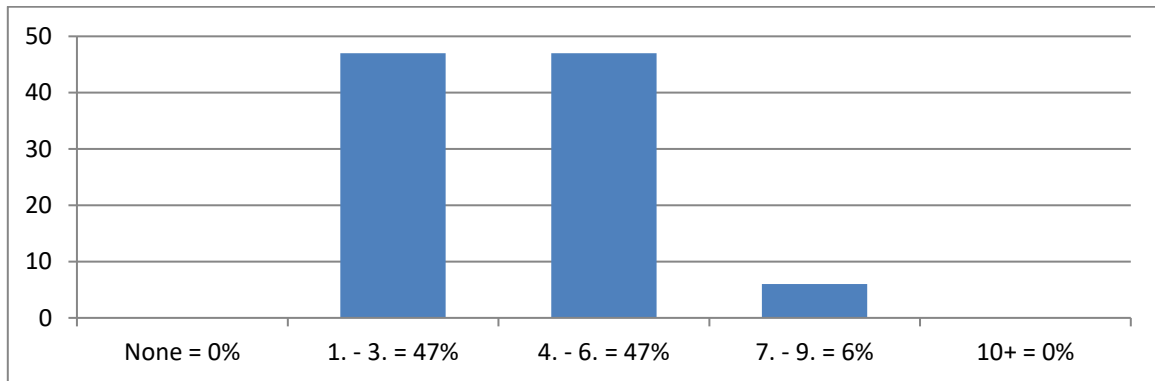
3. Does your school's ethos positively impact the way you learn, treat others and think about yourself?



If you circled 'Yes', please give an example:

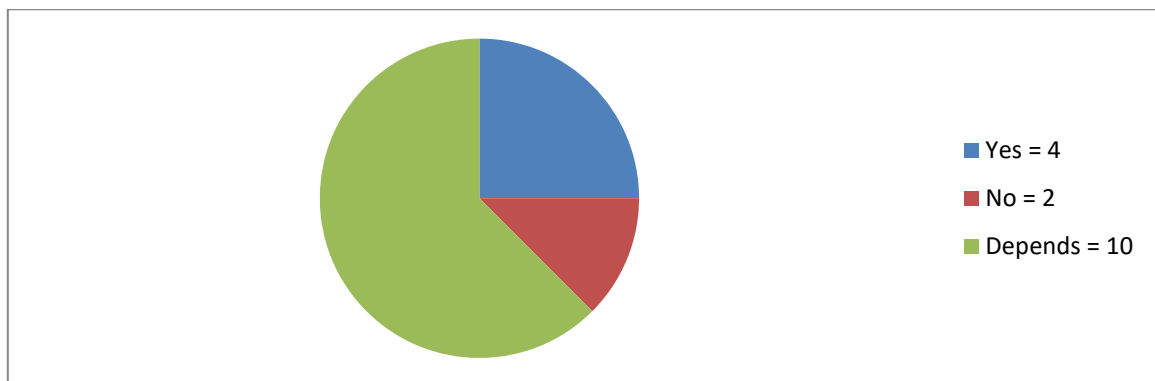
- It helps me believe
- It helps our learning environment

4. How many chances do you believe you should get to improve your behaviour?



1 did not answer. 15

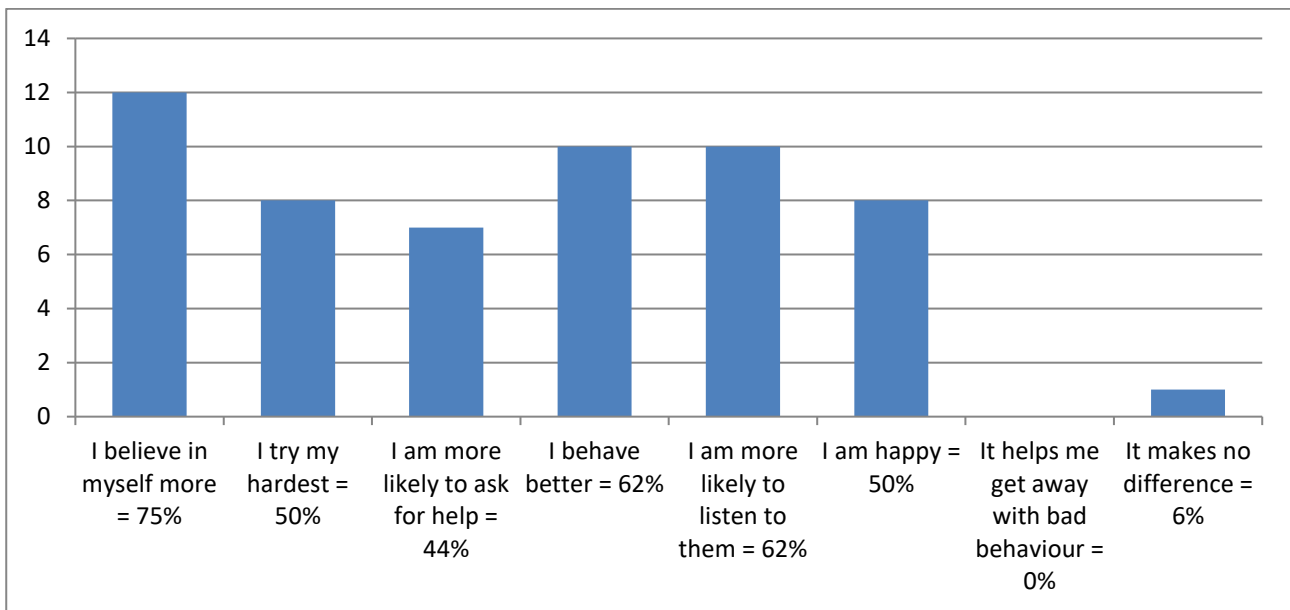
5. Do you think your teachers show you unconditional care and support?



If you circled 'Depends', please explain your answer:

- Sometimes they care, sometimes not
- Some teachers teach you pointless stuff and some teachers help us out and everything
- Some teachers are more caring than others
- On the teacher and the subject
- Some teachers are wonderful, honest and caring people whereas others seem to have "schadenfreude"
- Because some teachers care about me and my education. But most of them don't
- Sometimes they do but a lot of the time they tell me to be quiet and not help me
- Some do and others horrible
- No because they don't care for me
- Depends what teachers

6. When I know my teachers unconditionally care for me and support me... (circle all that apply)



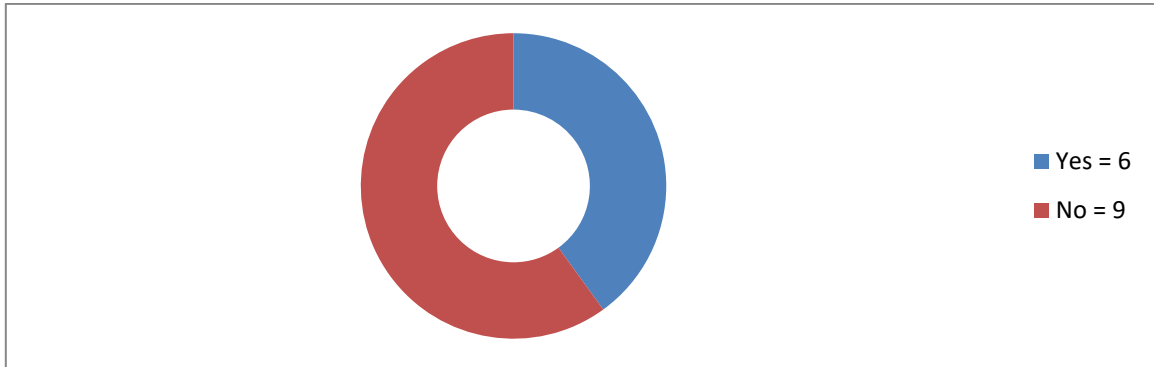
1 circled 'It helps me get away with bad behaviour' and then cross it out.

7. What would you change within your school to help you improve your grades?

- Take all of the bad people out of the school and make it more fun
- Better teachers
- Stop working out of text books, stop copying off the board
- Stop working in our book
- Unhelpful environments (such as disruptive people)
- The people
- More teachers for specific subjects
- Engaging with students
- The teachers give you more notice before they do something and they should be here at all times, or if they are off they should give proper work for the subs
- The teacher
- Fewer rules. Wear me out here. A school with less rules to lead to happier thinking which in turns leads to less bullying and a happier healthier work environment. Thus more rules means more rebellion.
- The teacher
- Some of the teachers and their attitudes
- Different people in my class because I get distracted sometimes
- Do a bit more than just sit in a classroom for hours on end. Go outside do something. I believe people will enjoy the lesson more

1 did not answer

8. Have you personally ever shown grace to another person within school?



1 did not answer and wrote "I don't understand"

If you circled 'Yes', please describe

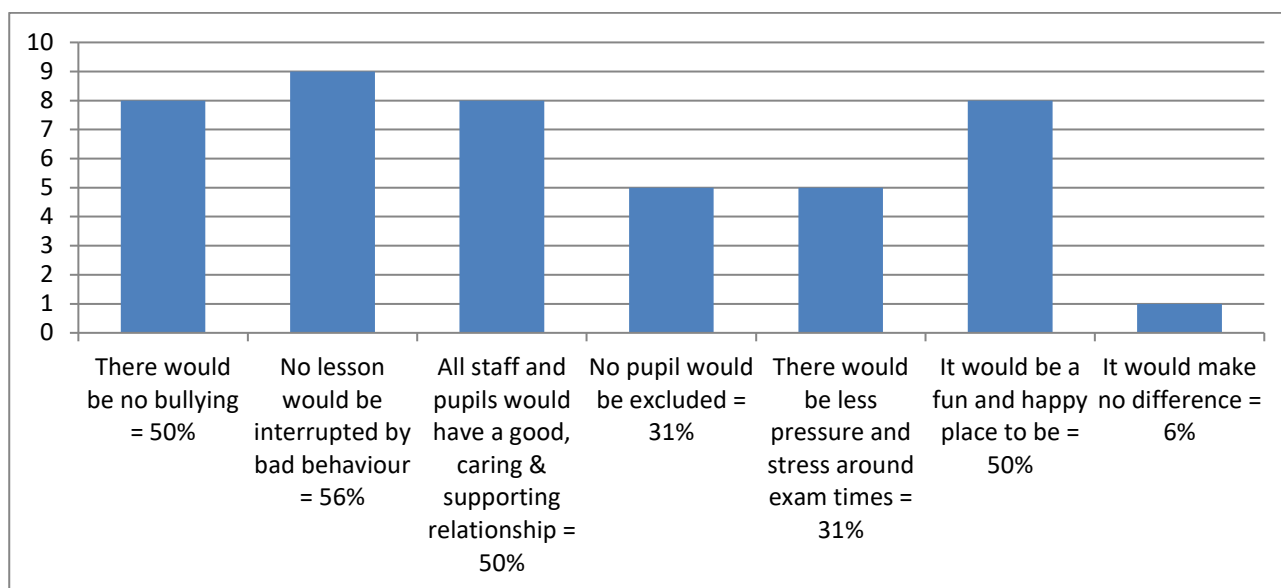
- I have forgiven a person after falling out
- I have forgiven when they have done wrong
- Forgiving someone
- I hold doors
- Sometimes my friend can be an idiot but I won't fall out with him over it
- I helped an old person cross the road

9. Please finish the sentence... If a teacher were to show me grace I would feel...

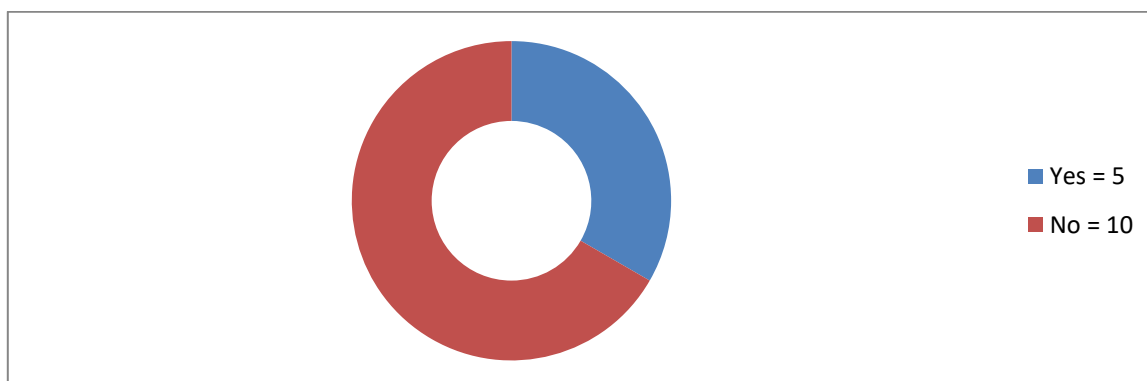
- Happy
- Happy
- Scared
- Happy and respected
- Happy
- Happy
- Happy
- Happy/scared
- Better treated
- Appreciated
- Approved
- Appreciated
- Considerate
- Happy
- As if they actually cared and I would listen and be involved more

1 did not answer

10. How do you think your school would be different if everyone treated each other with grace all the times? (circle all that apply) – 2 did not answer



11. Could a grace focussed ethos, positively impact the way you learn, treat others and think about yourself?



If you circled 'Yes', please explain how

- Happier environment
- Because it would help me learn
- It could help during exams
- It would make me more confident with my work and there would be less stress around exam times
- There will never truly be grace within everyone. It's human nature but those who use it will be better people

1 did not answer

Grace academy interview write up – Serena McCarthy - Assistant Principle for Ethos

1. How do you practically see the school's ethos working out in the daily life of the school?

Serena: Ok, so when a student is challenged on their behaviour, we would point out which of our values they have infringed. So, say for example there's an incident of name calling, we would say, 'ok, our value of respect is not being worked out here'. We've also tried over this past year to try and get it embedded into the curriculum more. So for example in our year 8 drama students, were doing a unit based on the pied piper and they were encouraged to look at who showed integrity when... and how they lost their integrity.

We also have assemblies and during the course of the school year we have assemblies based on each of our values and then it comes across in everything that we do. Values are our shared road map in our school. We know were on a journey, we know more and more what we're looking for is that it becomes the central part of our school. We had a cross academy... all three of our academies... training day at the beginning of February, and the example we used was shared values, and we talking about our shared values, but we also gave the example of a chocolate cake, so we had these huge chocolate cakes made, and we asked... what is this cake, what is it that makes it chocolate? The cake was chocolate, the frosting... the filling was chocolate, the icing was chocolate and there were chocolate sprinkles, that's what is like with our values, every time you come into contact with anything, our values go through it, and that's a journey that were on.

But the thing that was important on that day was the buy in, we got from the teachers... all our teachers have these little cards which have 'time for values' on, (time for values) and they wrote on the other said, how they want to use their time better, how they want to put these values into practice, and some of the things that they wrote really showed a genuine buy in, and of course we are on a journey like all schools, but we are looking more and more to try and get it into the curriculum. To get it so that literally it's like that cake, every time you come into contact with us, you come into contact with our values.

2. How did the school come to adopt the current ethos and why?

Serena: Wow, a really big question. Our school is an academy, our sponsor is a Christian and a very wealthy business man, he's done a lot of work abroad and he wanted to do something in the UK, so he decided he would invest and support the school... and the school is a Christian ethos school. We identified these five values: grace, respect, integrity, potential and excellence. We had this role created within the school – Assistant principle of ethos created, my role, that champions the Christian ethos. So we realised that, grace, respect, integrity, potential and excellence really have very broad... and then just this last summer, we thought well what do they actually look like... so it's like: amazing grace, limitless potential, intention excellence... so we've got these adverbs to describe these words and sentences too... success doesn't happen overnight, you have to work at it. Limitless potential, we can do more than we think we can, genuine integrity, who you are and what you do is more important, especially when nobody sees. My favourite is amazing grace because life is better with second chances. So our students... like were... were fleshing the out but we've been in existence for 7 years now and were beginning to flesh out like what does that actually mean, we also have ... for the ethos team... we have 3... what are our shared values?, how can in understand Christian perspectives? And how can I develop healthy relationships? Really our values underpin all of those. We feel like that's the way to be the most effective, we are consistent, we're all on board with the values, were consistent in applying them and we look for opportunities for our students.

We have... we call it... we made it up ourselves... the deep scale; so they can discover Christian values and then explore Christian perspective, engage in the Christian message and then participate. So we've find that our students because of their backgrounds, and because there are very few Christian students here, in terms of very few Christian families, there's probably about 5%. Very few come from a Christian faith background. So they're not asking questions like can I believe the Bible? That's so far from their experiences, but they are asking questions like why did my gran die, why is there suffering if God's good? How can we believe in something we can't see? Why should we? In some ways they're a lot more philosophical in their understanding with it or their desire.

3. Do you believe the schools ethos is 'owned' by the school community?

Serena: I think we're getting there, I have seen instances when... just last week there was a teacher who said to a student... well the student said: 'No... I'm not taking my hoodie off I look gay'. And this teacher was like: "ok that is massively disrespectful, to people in the homosexual community, being gay is not necessarily a bad thing, it's not a bad thing. So we have to think of a different word and you still have to take your hoodie off to maintain the integrity of the school uniform, so there was like... using the values... and they were like: "urrgghh!" they can fight it but they know...

The other day... this is anecdotal, but the other day I was behind some students and they were talking about a teacher... well they were actually talking about me, cause I teach a bit of RE, and they were like: "I don't have my homework, and you know what Miss McCarthy will say"... And I was like: what would I say, what would I say?... You've lost your integrity because you've not turned in your homework in and you've disrespected me so I have no choice but sanction you. And there grace because you were sick or whatever. "She'll say: how are you gonna reach your potential if you don't do your homework?" So that was kinda encouraging to see that kind of thing.

We had a bullying focus ethos day and we had some outside presenters who come in... so each year group has a focussed bespoke values day... so in year 7 its quite generic we expose them to the values, in year 8 we call it values and.... So values and sport, how do they fit together? Values and academics, values and performing arts how do they fit together... and then in the afternoon it was bullying focussed. Then in year 9, 10, 11 it changes to be relationship focuses. They get to meet married couples who have been married for 25 years and get to ask them questions. For them... some of the students were like... 'Wow... I just don't have that'. Their parents are divorced and in their community there's just not that role modelling. That is very much the exception not the norm for them, so there were like 'wow'. Some of feedback statements from that were just incredible, and it's given me hope for my relationships. Then we get some pretty hard hitting weeks... We get the naked truth group to come in and they really... they're so great and they have the Christian message at the heart of it and some of the boys actually as a result of that... we've had sort of mentoring for guys called the 'mission' talking about dangers of pornography and help them to overcome that and they get to build fire at the same time because that's what boys like to do apparently. We've got all kinds of mentoring programs for boys and girls because of seeing those kinds of needs.

So, I think we're getting there, in the tutor times that we do the schemes in and the learning and exploring our values... have got more increasingly people on board with it, so that's exciting.

4. In what ways does the school try and improve student attainment?

Serena: Wow, big question again...

So, we have a reward system that we use which is called vivo's. And we tie all that into our values. So 'you showed excellence, outstanding homework', 'you showed you were working to your full potential there', 'you showed integrity'. So we use that, were improving teaching and learning. So that's its 80% good or better. That's our academy bench mark.

We... ermm... that's kinda it.

At GCSE's all our students are doing 9... and were doing the national curriculum and progress 8 and all those sorts of things. We are very committed; we've got 'Go 4 Schools', which is a data analysis... so we can see exactly where every student is at every time so we can put intervention in. So I can look at... students who are below where they need to be and so we can put in specific intervention in place for those students.

I think were intrinsically trying to bed in our students that they are of value because when a students understand they are of value, they begin to see the value in others things and they begin to put value into other things and achieve something of value.

5. Is there any way in which you believe a grace focussed ethos could positively or negatively raise or effect a student's attainment.

Serena: I think... one of the keys for its success that we've identified within the ethos team, is grit. The ability to just 'Urrgghh' 'press through... keep going' and when really understand... For example in the assembly the other week we were playing this game 'a minute to win it challenge' where they had to blow up a balloon and use the balloon to blow the cups off the table and they had a minute to win it. And I had a girl and a boy up. And the girl didn't quite blow it up enough and it didn't blow any of the cups over and she said 'right I'm giving up'. But the lad had the exact same thing happen to him but he just kept going, and in the end he didn't quite manage to knock down all the cups but he kept going and I gave him an award because he kept going. He had grace for himself and so I think the more they understand the more they see it modelled... I think it does give birth to grit, but these sorts of things take time.

I think it's also different strokes for different folks. Some students need that grace, that ability to have a fresh start, that ability to try again, but other students need the... tough, sort of... this is not acceptable you need to change that kinda line.... And it's hard to know how to draw that line... separate from God. Which I think is sometimes hard. Otherwise it just becomes... you can do whatever you want all the time.

6. How important do you think this theory of grace is within secondary education? (for example when working with SEN children or pre-exclusion pupils, encouraging good staff/pupil relations or keeping pupils from getting too stressed with near exam deadlines, maintaining a positive and healthy environment within the school community).

Serena: I think grace is really really important. Do you want me to tell you why?... I think grace is really important because it underpins everything that we do in society. There's a measure of that every time... you cross a road every time... you do anything.

Grace enables a student to see past their current circumstance, it enables them to see... future and to keep going... it really does. We have a pretty high profile student here, who is Asperger's, he really struggles with hard boundaries and so grace enables him to function... In a way that he wouldn't be able to, if there wasn't grace. And our students understand that about him because they understand grace. Some students complain 'so and so doesn't have to wear a tie' well... if he was wearing a tie he'll probably punch you in the face, it makes him that angry... so we say that rule doesn't apply for him... we're gonna have grace for that situation knowing that it's unique or bespoke. At the same time... 'Your shoes are broken...' we have a boot fund here... and we just take a child out quietly to Clarkes and buy them a really good pair of shoes, better shoes than their parents could ever afford for them... and that's grace and then we talk to them in the car on the way home we say to them... 'this is grace for you'. We bring it to bear in their lives; we show them where grace has been showed to them.

I think that's part of what our sponsor understands and what we provide...

STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY - FACT (*Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies*)

FULL ETHICS DECLARATION FOR RESEARCH/PROJECTS

STUDENT – COMPLETE AND SAVE THIS FORM USING THE FOLLOWING FORMAT FOR THE FILE NAME

– FAMILY NAME FIRST NAME, STUDENT, FULL

– E.G. WHIZZ BILLY STUDENT FULL – AND E-MAIL IT, AS A WORD ATTACHMENT, USING THE FILE NAME AS THE SUBJECT (IN THE SUBJECT BAR OF THE E-MAIL), TO YOUR SUPERVISOR.

* THERE IS NO NEED TO PRINT THIS FORM *

SUPERVISOR – READ AND CHECK WHEN RECEIVED FROM THE STUDENT, IF SATISFIED ADD YOUR NAME AND DATE WHERE INDICATED, SAVE AND SEND AS A WORD ATTACHMENT BY E-MAIL, USING THE FILE NAME AS THE SUBJECT (IN THE SUBJECT BAR OF THE E-MAIL), TO: ethics-FACT@staffs.ac.uk

* THERE IS NO NEED TO PRINT THIS FORM *

STAFF RESEARCHER – COMPLETE AND SAVE USING THE FOLLOWING FORMAT FOR THE FILE NAME

– FAMILY NAME FIRST NAME, STAFF, FULL

– E.G. WHIZZ BILLY STAFF FULL – AND E-MAIL IT, AS A WORD ATTACHMENT, STATING THE FILE NAME IN THE SUBJECT BAR TO: ethics-FACT@staffs.ac.uk

* THERE IS NO NEED TO PRINT THIS FORM *

YOU WILL RECEIVE ACCEPTANCE OR REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OR AMENDMENT BY E-MAIL – PLEASE SAVE SUCH E-MAILS AND KEEP HARD COPIES.

1. APPLICANT

Name: Bentley Simon

Student Number (for student applications): 11017644

Faculty: Arts, Media and Design

Award (for student applications): BA Schools, Youth & Community and Practical Theology

Award Level (for student applications): 6

Module code and title (for student applications): AM75293-6 – Dissertation

Title of research/project: Can a grace focussed ethos be effective in raising attainment in a secondary education?

Supervisor/ head of field (for student applications): Roberts Nigel

Academic status of applicant: Undergraduate

Commencement and expected duration of project: 1st February 2015 – 20th April 2015

2. THE RESEARCH/PROJECT

Nature of research/project State what it's about, what you do and how you do it, including reference to participants and procedure (methods, tests used etc). Please be concise, no more than approx. 250 words. You **MUST** provide this description. Please include brief answers to the following questions, where relevant (later sections of this form will require more detailed responses about specific aspects of your endeavour):

- where the research is carried out;
- whether adequate facilities are in place enabling the project to be properly carried out;
- whether procedures are in place given the occurrence of any adverse event;
- names of other individuals or organisations involved in the project;
- whether other approvals have been gained or are to be sought.

My dissertation seeks to explore the effectiveness of a grace focused ethos in raising attainment in secondary education. I will not be using the theological understanding of grace or one of the many dictionary definitions but the virtuous understanding: free and undeserved love and forgiveness given by someone to another.

I will therefore be exploring the link between a schools ethos and its pupil's attainment.

My research will hope to take place in five different secondary schools; a Church of England school, a Catholic school, a public/independent (non-Christian), a state school and a Christian academy (specific schools yet to be confirmed). I will be using questionnaires for the pupils, an interview with a member of staff (head, deputy or pastoral worker) and a focus group with a small number of pupils. I will personally be contacting each school and undertaking this project independently. However, I will be relying heavily upon my gatekeeper from each school to organise participants and enable my research to go ahead.

All my research will take place in the school buildings either during a normal school day or afterschool has finished. Normal good youth work practice and safeguarding procedures will be adhered to during every aspect of the research.

I do not anticipate any adverse affects or events from the undertaking of my research. My research tools and content will only be exploring common school related issues and situations such as working relationships between staff and pupils, school culture and pupils individual attainment.

3. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH/PROJECT

Please offer a brief paragraph indicating:

1. the aims and objectives of the project;
2. its rationale;
3. the research question or specific hypotheses being tested;
4. the background to the project.

The aim of my research is to conclude that a grace focussed ethos can be effective in raising attainment in secondary education.

My objectives will be:

Discover through my literature review whether the virtuous understanding of grace is within educational policy, aims and/or history.

Using case studies of five different schools analyse whether or not there is a correlation between ethos and pupil attainment.

Research within these five studies whether schools with a grace focussed ethos have higher attainment than those who do not.

Explore what factors contribute to attainment and how they help raise it.

My research hopes to discover whether when this understanding of grace is evident within a school, through the relationship of pupils and staffs it may impact it positively and help pupils to improve their behaviours, academic studies and well-being (which goes onto positively impact their attainment).

As a youth worker who works in schools, I have witnessed many occasions how giving pupils grace significantly determines the way they respond to discipline, deal with work deadlines and results and attitudes towards the school as a community. This research plans to prove the academic worth of grace within education.

NB. It is not the job of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee to consider the methodology of the research project. However this Committee does need assurance that the appropriate methodology has been properly considered before it can consider whether the project is ethically justifiable.

4. BRIEF OUTLINE OF PROJECT PROCEDURES

Please offer a summary of the procedures followed in carrying out the project. Such descriptions might vary according to the nature of the project and the academic area involved, but they should normally include at least the following:

1. the design of the project (including, where appropriate, issues of statistical power);
2. the procedures followed;
3. the participation of subjects in the project;
4. how the design of the project and the procedures followed assess the research question or test the hypothesis in question or establish some significant result.

For my research I will be using both primary and secondary forms of data. My primary data will take the form of questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. My secondary data will be found through Department of education websites, school websites and local government.

For my primary data, I will first make contact with the school either by phone or email and make them aware of my research and permission will be sought before any research is undertaken.

Once the research has been completed, I will then collect my data (both primary and secondary) and begin to analysis it. It will then be at point that I begin to assess and test my hypothesis and establish a result.

5. RECRUITMENT OF SUBJECTS

This section should contain clear information indicating the basis on which the proposed participating subjects are appropriate to the project. Normally researchers should adequately answer the following questions:

1. the number of subjects involved in the study (including the adequacy of the sample size) and how they are recruited;
2. whether there are any inclusion or exclusion criteria, together with their justification;
3. the age range of subjects; the gender balance of subjects; and the state of health of subjects;
4. whether there is any inducement to participate in the study;
5. whether the project involves any special groups requiring some additional justification or permission (e.g. whether subjects are especially vulnerable, i.e. children, students aged under 18, the elderly, those with learning difficulties or mental health problems, those with some disadvantage or dependency, those in hospital or those in prison).

NB Student researchers must also ascertain from their supervisor whether or not they need to obtain Disclosure and Barring Service (*previously Criminal Records Bureau*) clearance to enable this project to proceed. If this is the case the application must make clear whether or not it has been obtained. Staff researchers must also consider whether or not they need DBS (*previously CRB*) clearance for their work.

In each school I plan to have in the region of fifty subjects. This will largely be made up of pupils filling in questionnaires (40ish), 6 - 8 subjects will take part in my focus groups and 1 subject (member of staff) who I will be interviewing; making a total of 250 subjects.

I will endeavour to have an equal amount of male and female pupils all from year 9. I will be working closely with the gatekeeper in each school to determine which subjects are chosen and my only criteria would be that they are competent in filling out a questionnaire in order that I might receive good and useful data. All participants will be taking part within my research on a voluntary basis and no inducement will be necessary.

Before taking part in any of my research, subjects will be educated in the purpose and benefits of my study through the form of an information sheet and the ability to withdraw from the research at any moment will be available.

All of the questionnaires will be filled out anonymously and therefore no additional permission will be required, however for my interviews and focus groups, consent forms will be given out and parental consent will be acquired in accordance to the schools policies. Each school will be given the opportunity to see my research and retract any data they wish before I publish it.

6. PARTICIPATION OF SUBJECTS

Please provide two documents where appropriate. These are an Information Sheet and a Consent Form, and each should be included with your application when you submit the form by email. The first must ensure that the subject has a proper understanding of their participation in the project, and the second that they have given informed and voluntary consent to their involvement in it. Some notes for guidance follow.

INFORMATION SHEET

This will be provided to the subject prior to taking consent, and must explain the broad purpose of the project, the basis on which the subject has been chosen, what is required of the subject in the project, whether there are any possible disadvantages or risks in taking part, the benefits gained by taking part (either to the subject, the researcher or the scientific community), what will happen if something goes wrong, what happens to any information obtained about the subject, the expected results of the study, who is responsible for it, and a contact name. The Information Sheet must be written in a clear, informative, and intelligible way.

The Information Sheet must include a description of how subjects are involved in each stage of the study. This should relate back to S4 above. Their participation will vary according to the nature of the project, but will explain what is required of each subject (i.e. what kinds of measurements or observations will be undertaken, and by what means) and especially those that involve some risk or discomfort or which have other ethical implications (i.e. administration of substances, sampling of bodily fluids or tissue, or placebo or control groups, or genetic information).

CONSENT FORM

A properly designed Consent Form must also be attached to this application. It should include [a] the title of the research project as in Section 2 above, [b] opportunity for confirmation by the subject that they have read and understood the Information Sheet (see above) and have been able to ask questions, [c] that their involvement is voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw at any time without providing reasons and without their rights being affected, and [d] that they understand that personal information about them may be looked at by researchers or other responsible individuals.

The Consent Form should indicate how individual informed and voluntary consent will be obtained. Sometimes (as in the case of Question 5 in S5 above) it will be necessary to indicate how parental or guardian agreement will be obtained.

The Consent Form must include space for properly dated signatures of the subject that they agree to participate in the project, together with the names of the person taking consent and/or the researcher.

7. INFORMATION AND DATA

The application must contain a clear statement of what information will be collected about each subject, the data obtained as part of the procedures described in S4, how it is proposed the data will be stored, how the data contributes to the project, together with a statement of how long it will be stored and how eventually discarded.

Please offer answers to the following questions:

1. what information about the subject do you wish her or him to disclose to you in order to take part in the project?
2. what data will be gained about the subject in the various stages of the project?
3. what form does this data take (measurements, observations, audio/video tape recording)?
4. how will this data be stored (manually or electronically)?
5. how is protection given to the subject (e.g. by being made anonymous through coding and with a subject identifier code being kept separately and securely)?
6. what assurance will be given to the subject about the confidentiality of this data and the security of its storage?
7. is assurance given to the subject that they cannot be identified from any publication or dissemination of the results of the project?
8. who will have access to this data, and for what purposes?
9. how is the data relevant to the project and the determination of its results?
10. how will the data be stored, for how long, and how will it be discarded?

There will be no need for any pupils to disclose any information in order to qualify as a subject. I simply want a number of typical pupils from a school environment.

Each subject will give data (whether questionnaire, interview or focus group) regarding the schools ethos and its ability to raise attainment, I will also hope to gain insight into their personal interpretation of factors that help raise attainment. This data will take the form of filled in questionnaires, audio recording and note taking in the interviews and responses noted on paper given in the different activities take part in at the focus group.

All data (physical and electronic) will be stored safely and securely on a password protected laptop or locked away at my address (all of this information will be made known to the subjects before conducting any research through my information sheet).

No subject will be asked to write there names of the questionnaires ensuring anonymity. All subjects taking part in my focus groups who require further consent (due to the polices of the school) will have all their personal details protected upholding confidentiality.

8. RISK, HARM AND OTHER ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This final section invites an estimate by the researcher of the perceived benefits or outcomes of the project weighed against the possible harms caused to the participating subject. Please submit two brief paragraphs. The first should identify both [a] any potential risks or hazards that might be caused to subjects or the researcher, in addition to any discomfort, distress or inconvenience to them, together with any ethical problems or considerations that the researcher considers to be important or difficult in the proposed project; and [b] offer an explanation of how it is proposed to deal with them, along with any justificatory statements.

There would be a very low chance of any harmed caused to the subjects in my research study because it's content relates only to common occurrences in school life. I am not referring to anything of high risk, but only working relationships between pupils and staff. The only possibility of causing harm would be if a participant had had a negative or upsetting experience with a member of staff in the past and this was brought to mind through the conducting of the research.

I would personally be on hand if such an occasion was to arise and I would ensure pastoral support would be available to that participant within the school before leaving.

This second paragraph provides an opportunity for the researcher to highlight any remaining ethical considerations and to respond to them in a way which may assist the Research Ethics Committee in arriving at some judgement upon the proposal. This second paragraph is not an invitation to take on the work of the Committee, but rather emphasises the expectation that both researcher and Committee share the responsibility for assuring that the proposed research will be carried out ethically and with full regard to ethical principles.

I am aware of the ethical issue of 'looking down upon' schools without a grace focussed ethos, which may arise when trying to prove that a grace focussed ethos would be effective in raising attainment. When communicating with schools that do not have an ethos which is grace based I will have to be very aware and be careful not to use judgement language.

9. AGREEMENTS OF RELEVANT PERSONS

STAFF RESEARCHER/STUDENT

I undertake to carry out the project described above in accordance with ethical principles. I have completed the application in good faith. I accept that providing false information constitutes fraud and will be subject to appropriate disciplinary procedures.

Name of researcher

date

Simon Bentley

13/01/15

SUPERVISORS OF STUDENT RESEARCH/PROJECTS

I have examined this proposal, confirm that the rationale and methodology are appropriate and that it can proceed to the stage of ethical consideration.

Name of supervisor/relevant head of unit

date

For Office Use Only:

Receipt of Application logged ___

Recommendation logged ___

Approval logged ___

ETHICS PANEL

This research proposal has received ethical approval either by a supervisor on behalf of the committee or has been considered by the committee and received ethical approval.